

D.K.

Maurycy Neufeld

On the eve of *Rosh Hashanah* 5702 (1942), the renowned businessman and public activist Maurycy Neufeld died in Częstochowa. (He had the great fortune to die in his bed, just ten days before the gruesome annihilation of Częstochowa Jewry, for which he had worked long years in various fields - financial, social and political.)

We should present a few details on his rich life over the last years before the Second World War and during the War itself.

Neufeld had his own modern opinions regarding culture and freedom movements. He never supported the ideology of those who oppressed them. When he left the Assimilationist Movement and moved over to the Jewish nationalist camp, he always openly and courageously defended Jewish honour.

When the dark Nazi slogans from Germany began penetrating, Maurycy Neufeld took up arms very courageously. His bold, public appearances were with such disregard for his own life that, very often, the elderly fighter needed to be escorted home from the public meetings, because the Polish hooligans threatened to assassinate him. Even in very old age, Neufeld never wanted to pull back from fighting for a just cause.



(In the first days of the Second World War, when the Nazis had occupied Częstochowa, his large medicine and chemical products business was seized. However, without his expert knowledge, the Nazis were unable to run the business and they forced him to stay on and manage the business they had robbed from him.

On *Rosh Hashanah* 1939, several hundred Jews from the surrounding area, whom the Nazi murderers had captured on the roads, were brought to Częstochowa and concentrated in the German barracks.

The plight of these poor refugees was a great, with hunger and illness prevailing amongst them. On the second day of *Rosh Hashanah*, Professor Brandlewicz, with two Jewish doctors from this same group, and I, came to Neufeld's establishment and asked for medicines. Upon hearing the situation, Maurycy Neufeld at once went to the German military commissioner and requested the necessary medications. With much effort, he was able to obtain a bit of cotton wool, bandages, iodine, and a few thermometers.



The first Polish mayor to be appointed by the German military was the ethnic-German H. Belcke [?], the owner of a small technical appliances shop. Maurycy Neufeld once requested an "audience" with this mayor. The respectable Częstochowa burgher was forced to wait for two hours to be "admitted" to the "newly-baked" mayor. The visit lasted for only two minutes and he emerged with a face reddened by anger and humiliation.



As is known, the Polish population aided the Germans extensively in oppressing the Jews. It was decided to send a Jewish delegation to Bishop Kubina so that he should convince the Poles to cease. The majority of the Jewish public figures had by then already left Częstochowa and I was sent to M. Neufeld to ask him to lead the delegation. He was then an already utterly broken man and he almost begged to be freed of this mission, saying, "It would be better if you sent me to the Germans instead. To the henchmen I will go, with them I will speak as with our enemies, but not to the criminals, the false Poles, for whom I've done so much in my life", but he went nevertheless!

In the first days of the Second World War, M. Neufeld headed a committee to create the means to maintain the Jewish Hospital.

In November 1939, some members of the *Kehilla* Council, together with the Rabbis Klajnplac and Grinfeld, were taken as hostages, until a stipulated contribution was paid. After eleven days of imprisonment in the jail in Zawodzie, the hostages were transferred to the square at the old Catholic cemetery on ulica [Orlicz-] Dreszera, where a few dozen prisoners already sat, including Neufeld. Not looking at his advanced age - he was then over eighty - he was a model, with his proud bearing. When they wished to release him the first, he on no account agreed to be "privileged" and he waited until all the hostages had been freed.

(He lived and suffered together with all the Jews for three years. When he died, his daughter, the renowned musician Mrs Kopecka, was at his bedside. His funeral was held on the first day of *Rosh Hashanah* 1942. May his soul be entwined in the thread of life!)