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With the Harassed Folk of Częstochowa

I remember the large, beautiful city of Częstochowa, where I was born and brought up, from my earliest childhood when, as the child of poor parents, I went to the *Machzikei Hadas cheder*. From my earliest years, abominable acts of antisemitism are etched into my memory, which I shall never forget.

In 1920, a father and son were murdered in their own dwelling above stables. They were the baker Szyja Gotajner and his son Zelig. Those who murdered these Jews were never found by the police.

Częstochowa had numerous industrial enterprises and factories, the majority of which belonged to Jewish owners, with thousands of Poles working there.

But, in the medium and small Jewish factories, such as Rozenberg, "Kosmos" and others, the workers were mainly Jews.

Great Need

I remember the poverty and the need which were great amongst the Jews of Częstochowa. There were homes - my family included - where, for Shabbes, they only cooked a pot of water, because there was nothing else to put into it.

The need was particularly great in winter, when many Jewish families did not have with what to kindle the cooker during the frosts. The water at home used to freeze and the ice on the [window] panes would only relent on *Pesach* Eve [viz. springtime].

Three Pogroms

I remember the pogrom in 1936, when the tavern owner Hercberg, in his tavern, shot the underworld identity Staszek Czerwinski, for attempted assault and robbery. The windows of Jewish shops were shattered. Jewish property and goods were robbed and Jewish warehouses were set on fire.

A second pogrom took place when Mancze Rozental, with his brother Zelme one Friday night in the Old Market, with an axe, killed another criminal, who had attacked them with a knife.

A third pogrom occurred in 1938 when, on *Shabbes*, Josel Pendrak shot the primary figure of the underworld, who had assaulted him, demanding he should provide him with liquor. In all these pogroms, the *Endecja* people and their collaborators took a large part.

The Jewish workers and the simple Jewish commoners would put up an opposition and drive the *pogromszcziki* [pogrom perpetrators] away from the Jewish streets.

The Enemy is Sharpening the Knife

I remember the electoral assembly for the last City Council elections, when the Bund set forth in unity with the left *Poalei Zion*. The assembly was held on *Shabbes*, at the *Maccabihall* on ulica Katedralna. The speakers were Rafail Federman from the Bund and Genia Lewi from the left *Poalei Zion*.

In her last words, she said that the enemy was sharpening its knife and preparing it for our shoulders¹. These were prophetic words.

One year later, the War broke out.

¹ [TN: Meaning the neck, which is at the height of the shoulders.]