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The *Stary Rynek* [Old Market] During the Day (A Description of its Former Appearance)

I wish to describe here how the *Stary Rynek* looked in the 1930's, when no booths stood there anymore and, in place of a little house, Gajsler had erected a huge *kamienica* [tenement house]. It is possible that I may forget someone and, for this, I ask your forgiveness.

In order to describe the different characters that lived and worked in the *Stary Rynek*, we shall chronologically¹ go through the buildings which surrounded the marketplace and which, together, formed a four-sided figure.

I begin with the houses at Number 1. Coming from the *Nowy Rynek* [New Market] into the *Stary Rynek*, one crosses a narrow street, which runs parallel to the *kościół* [church], which religious Jews used to call "*Die Tymme*" [the impurity].

Sadly, an entire row of houses is now missing. A whole block of buildings was "shaved" off by the Nazis, who desired to create an open space connecting the *Nowy Rynek* with the *Stary Rynek*. They "tidied up" the houses and, now, one can stand on the First *Aleja* and, already from there, make out the *Stary Rynek*.

As [some of] you surely still remember, the first building (on the corner) began with Welgryn's little herring-shop, to which one needed to descend a few steps. Then came a Christian pharmacy. Next was Rozen's small flour-shop and, then, Hofman's paint-shop, which was crammed full of merchandise, in addition to the storerooms in the yard. After the old Krauze house came Grundman's ironmongers and Karmazin's haberdashers. In the courtyard, one of the "Leischlech"² brothers sold shoes and the religious gaiter-maker Ajchenwald, with his secular, leftist children, supplied shanks for shoes and boots.

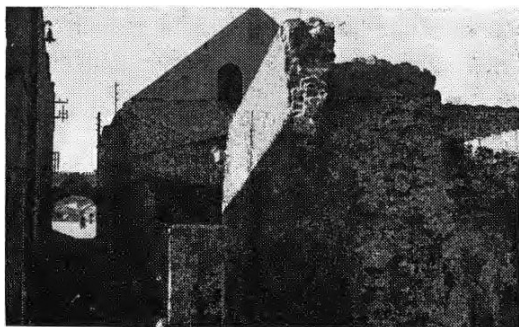
Szajek Gold's building contained his large wine-shop and Jakubowicz had a small glassware-shop there. The *melamed* Pinches Arkusz conducted his *cheder* in its courtyard, where he taught his pupils Torah. The great scholar Reb Wolwisz Borensztajn also lived in that same building.

Then we walk on and come to Jakubowicz's ironmongers, or "Pulipipa" as it was called, and to Szlezinger's confectioners, after which was Cymberknopf's leather goods. Now we stand at Kasriel Szenker's [building], which was really something. Other living here were the Kaufmans, Abale *Shoichet*'s dynasty and the Złotniks with their glassware-shop, Kromołowski with his leather goods and Rajchman with his grocer's. Aleksander *Chassidim* continually crossed the courtyard on their way to attend prayer services at their *shtiebel* there. Next begins "Gajsler's House" - the great fortress built of red brick, with very many shops, which encompassed three streets. Then we would enter Frania's to eat a nice bit of marinated herring with a glass of beer. You could smell the distinct aroma of the "delicacies" from the street. Further on, there was Funtowicz's leather goods and, on the other corner of the alley, Gittel Esterlele had her haberdashery and Monowicz his grocer's. Opposite him, Sziffer baked his wares. Earlier, the long-bearded Elio Ber had had his little perfumery there.

¹ [TN: As no chronology follows, it is almost certain that the author meant "clockwise" or "numerically", instead of "chronologically".]

² [TN: ליישליך, with quotation marks in the original; "The little Leischels". It is unclear whether Leischel was a surname or a nickname; the meaning is unknown.]

Next, we come to Abale Krumkopf's building. Here too, Groskopf had once baked bread. Further on, at the second house, lived another of the "Leischlech" brothers, who were shoe-sellers. Now, we would come to Kupka-Zomper's fine bit of butter and a little, fresh cheese and, in the courtyard, we would find the long-standing Szydłówer *shtiebel*.



The "Old Border" – a remnant of the historical ghetto in the Old Market

Then came Turner's vinegar and oil shop and we would pass through a dark gate to the "Cossacks' *Shtiebel*" (of Radomsko) and the "Keser Torah" *Yeshiva*. In that same building, which ends on the "old border"³, lived the "unwashed" and here the "Semicircular Gate" is a remnant of the Old Ghetto. This narrow alley leads us to ul. Garncarska and ul. Nadrzeczna - even straight to the "crates"⁴. Right at the end of this alley lived the "Lemelech"⁵. And from there, one could enter Luzor the Hunchback's public-house and [also] see Klajnman's little shop crammed with leather.

We continue our promenade.

At Kopinski's House once stood Wargoń's public-house, where Radoszycki later opened a haberdashery. The *shoichet* Bergman lived in this building as well as Klajnman, who had leather for sell. He was a very Chassidic Jew, who had - heaven preserve us - a daughter who was not only an intellectual, but also held extremely leftist views.

Next is Szama Tenenbaum's House, which later belonged to Zusman Krauze. This house was famous due to the fact that the *Rebbe* of Żarki lived there for several weeks when he settled in Częstochowa.

In the yard, the Zajdmans sold parsley. Mojsze "*Chussid*"⁶ had been making gaiters and soles here for many years. Ordon had his *skład aptecznych* [wholesale chemists] here, which his Jewish employee Praszkiwicz bought from him. Celka, Rubin Szaulewicz's daughter, had a little grocery shop and the Nudelmans sold suits of clothes here.

The nearest house was one of the most famous on the *Stary Rynek*, because of the bookseller Emanuel Bajgele. Who did not come to him to buy *sforim* [religious books] and textbooks? On the threshold, one could buy gherkins from "Binibut" [nickname?]. At the top lived the cap-maker Eli-Ber Zajdman. Nearing elections, his windows were always filled with posters of [both] Left and Right *Poalei Zion*. In the front was Tobiasz's ironmongers, which he later sold to the leather merchants Jesionowicz and Szlingbaum. Nudelman the "jester" [at weddings] also lived in this house.

Thus we arrive at Rotbart's "Stables" House. Here were more leather shops - those of Lichter and Laks. One house there also belonged to a Christian. The gaiter-maker Mojsze Działowski lived there. He used to tell interesting stories of the bygone Russian-Japanese War.

Next, we come to a building which was well-known because the bookseller Lapidés lived there. Here, also lived scribe and fisherman, Natan the Mute, and Helfgot had a leather-goods shop. There was also a tiny, little shop there which sold sweets for one *grosz*. It was called "the little red shop", because its doors were smeared with red paint.

³ [TN: See earlier article]

⁴ [TN: See above, same place.]

⁵ [TN: Yid.; lit. "little sheep", viz. gullible, innocent folk. Perhaps this nickname was given to a family with the surname Lemel.]

⁶ [TN: Polish pronunciation of "chassid".]

And then, at the corner, Mancia Truskolaski had his famous public-house, which he sold in the last years to a Polish leather merchant named Olczyk. On that alley also lived the Szajn, Dorfgang [and] Swerczynski families and, across it, was Bejnisz Broder's public-house and Jossel [Józef] Goldberg "Ze'eviuks"⁷ barbershop.

We then come to where Grinbaum's leather-goods shop and Gonszerowicz's spirits shop stood.

In the second building, gaiter-makers Tazewicz and Kozusznik lived and Włodowski had a fruit shop there for many years.

And now we stand already at Żubrowski's building, with his Christian public-house, where Wajnberg once had a wine-shop and the Edelist, Wajsfelner and Wolski families also lived.

Then there is a small building where Herc had his little ironmongers, Gewircman a haberdashery and Fajerman a large oil and soap shop. And there already begins the meat-market [Targowa] street.

Apart from this all, the *Stary Rynek* also had various characters who made the rounds there, such as the well-known "*Po pięć i za pięć* [Pol.; "For five (*groszy*) and in five (minutes)"], who went about wearing a vintner's apron and sold "a bite to eat" for five *groszy*. Or *Shokele* [Yid.; "Nodder"] with the tilted head and a cane in one hand, and a pair of trousers or a *marynarka* [Pol.; jacket] to sell in the other. A yellow-haired Jew sold *papier na muchy* [Pol.; fly-paper] in the summertime and "piping hot chickpeas" in the winter. A lady sold hot potato cakes.

A tall gypsy, whom people called *Szaje Schlitten* [Yid.; "Sledge"] sold herring from a barrel, roaring and shouting, "*Uliki, uliki – jak te pajnski byki*" [?], and a tall Jew with a little yellow beard [also] sold herring at a small table.

Among the stallholders was a cobbler, whom people referred to as "The *Kozioł*" [Pol.; "Goat"]. He was a tall Jew with a blonde beard. When someone had an urge to taunt him and, passing through the marketplace yelled out "*Meh-meh!*", he would chase him over all the streets until catching him and properly breaking all his bones.

The merchants themselves waged a strenuous war against each other. Each had his own "criers", who brought him the "*Szlonzokes*"⁸ directly from the train-station. They ended up actually physically pulling clients one from the other. The hardest battles took place among the tailors.

The most interesting were the "Annual Fairs". The peasants brought their butter and hens to sell. They came to sell off their merchandise and buy their necessities.

Every morning, the *pachciarze* [leaseholders], who came from the villages with dairy products, would stand by Bajgele's house.

The "*Shtarke*" [Yid.; "Strong"], or so-called "Good Boys"⁹ also operated around the *Stary Rynek*. For a long time, "Jankel-Hudis" also stood there with fish. He was so strong that people said that, when he walked, the stones shook under him.

⁷ [TN: זעװינק with quotation marks in the original Yiddish; perhaps his middle name was Ze'ev (Hebrew for Hersz) and the -iuk is a diminutive suffix.]

⁸ [TN: From "Szlonzok", which was a dialect spoken by the inhabitants of Górny Śląsk [Upper Silesia]; here obviously a reference to Christian visitors in Częstochowa.]

⁹ [TN: Gang of ruffians; see above, p.163.]

Szymon “Express-train” Małpa, and the “Zompers” also went around there, seeking their livelihood. The marketplace stalls were set up in a specific order. First came the flour-sellers, then shoes, suits, leather, then fish, and at the end – chickens and butter. Each stallholder had his permanent place in the market. Every morning, he would erect his stall with poles and linen sheets and then pack it up before the night.

The porters also had their places - healthy Jews girded with ropes, with the red faces, stood with their carts in front of Szajke Gold’s house. To lift a sack of sugar or flour was, for them, the easiest feat. They were simple folk, but good, warm-hearted Jews.

On *Shabbes* afternoons, following their *post-prandial* nap, the men would go to study a chapter in the study-hall. The *Chassidim* [among them], obviously, went to their *shtieblech* for the Third Meal, and the women took benches out to the front of the house and sat down to a session of gossip.

The youth at the *Stary Rynek* were active in all areas of social and political life. Various sports clubs stood here and it was here that the amateur-circles made their start. Theatrical performances were held and, more than once, one could hear at night, from under the windows, [Levin] Kipnis’ Jewish folk-songs being sung and *zmires*¹⁰ on *Shabbes*, [or] a recital of Józef Kamien’s¹¹ declamation. Around us, also, echo the little songs by Misha Kolodny [later Moishe Kol], Dziek Rechtszajt¹² and the heart-rending melodramas of [Izrael] Białkowicz and other Jewish actors, who so often visited Jewish Częstochowa.

(Alas, my description is [only] a result of my old memories. When I came to Częstochowa in 1945, my mind was a web of bygone fantasies

In reality, I stood on the ruins of my so-cherished Jewish Częstochowa.

Our bloodthirsty enemies had celebrated their demonic victory over Jewish Częstochowa, [with] its *Stary Rynek* and *Nowy Rynek* - everything was washed away in the bloody deluge of Poland’s Jewry!)

¹⁰ [TN: Heb.; melodies. “Zmires” are the traditional songs which are sung at the *Shabbes* table.]

¹¹ [TN: An actor in Yiddish theatre.]

¹² [TN: Most probably Seymour Rexite, the Yiddish theatre singer and actor.]