

I.L. Peretz Educational Institutions

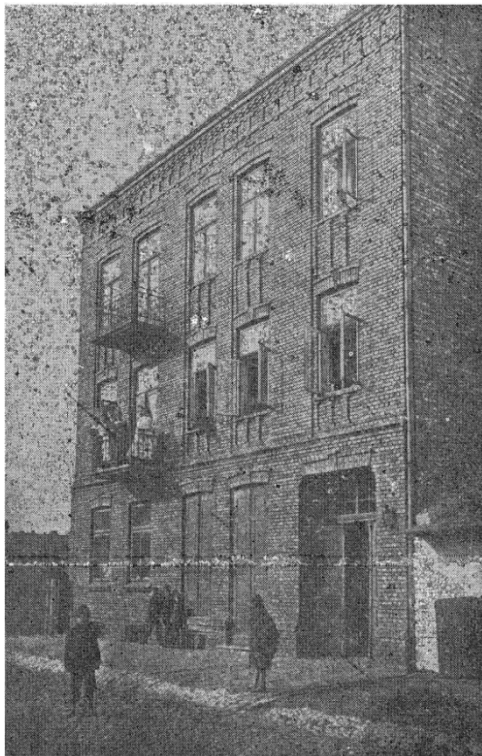
At the time of the First World War, the first sprouting of an organised Jewish communal life began to show itself on the Jewish street. This, of course, did not bypass Częstochowa either.

During that difficult period, when normal everyday Jewish life became disrupted, entire Jewish communities were expelled from their long-established homes and were forced to take up the wanderer's staff and become homeless-roofless refugees. The greatest surge was, usually, to Warsaw.

I.L. Peretz, the great friend of the broad Jewish masses and his right-hand man, the true "*Lamed-Vavnik*"*, Jakób Dynenson, flung themselves into the fray to save homeless children and orphans from destruction and began creating the first children's homes and, later, primary schools also.

The first to rally to their appeal were the working classes and the radical Jewish intelligentsia.

The start was made in Warsaw, but the work developed and also spread to the larger Jewish cities in Poland, including our Częstochowa.



The building at ul. Krótka 17, where the first children's home in Częstochowa was located

The first children's home was opened in Częstochowa by the S.S. Party and was managed by Chaja Waga, Mojsze and Riwke Weksler, Ester Fuks, Rajzla Fajertag, Rafail Federman and Dudek Szlezinger, who rented an attractive five-room dwelling at ulica Krótka 17. They provided the children's home with primitive, used furniture and with various playthings, which they had gathered from among members and good-hearted Jews.

They were also able to receive a vertical piano and also to find a good teacher as well, Juzka Sztam, who was well-qualified and was also endowed with love and commitment for the creation of Jewish secular schools.

At the children's home, she brought together children, between the ages of four and seven, from the poorest strata and tended to their physical and spiritual development. Over the course of time, a second children's-home was opened - [that] of the "*Vereinigt*" [United], at ulica Strażacka 10, which was managed by Mrs Chaja Waga.

The children were taught little Jewish songs, they performed and the [more] capable among them also learned music.

* [Translator's note: According to Jewish tradition, there are "*Lamed-Vav*", i.e., **thirty-six** (numerical value in gematria) righteous individuals in each generation, who are usually "*hidden Tsaddikim*", due to their great modesty. The term is commonly used in reference to an extremely modest person with very great virtues.]

The little children grew and became the nucleus for a Jewish primary school.

The first class of the primary school was opened, with the first teachers being Mrs Nadzia Warszawska and Mrs Rajzla Fajertag. Later, there was Mrs Riwke Cuker and the second class was taught by Fala Fridman. Both of the primary school's classes were located together with the "children's-home" at ulica Strażacka 10.



Częstochowa committee of The Central Organization of Yiddish Schools – CYSZO (together with the delegates from the Częstochower Relief in New York). Sitting (from right to left): A. Chrobołowski, L. Szwarc, J. Szymkowicz, R. Federman and Sz. Nirenberg. Standing (as above): W. Fajga, N. Wajs, R. Berkensztadt, Sz. Wierzbicki and M. Alter

In 1922, two delegates from the *Częstochower Relief in America* came to Częstochowa, Louis Szwarc and Louis Szymkowicz, and brought with them a large sum of money in order to purchase a building for the children's homes and the primary school, but on condition that all three parties – "*Vereinigt*", "*Poalei Zion*" and "*Bund*", should first unite and manage the Jewish educational institutions with joint forces.

This unification took effect and a fine location was purchased at ulica Krótka 23, where the house was built with the best conveniences.

On Sunday, 6th July 1924, the official opening took place, at to which representatives from all three workers' parties attended - Yaakov Zerubavel, Bejnisz Michalewicz and our townsman, Dr Józef Kruk. Many guests from the vicinity also came.

A grandiose celebration was held and, afterwards, the "children's home" at ulica Strażacka 10 was also re-located there. All these institutions bore the name of I.L. Peretz.

In the summer of 1929, the school released the children who had spent nine whole years there, beginning from the children's home, through to completing primary school. Of these, Fradel and Szymon Berkowicz, Rayzel Grajcer [and] Gittele Rozen distinguished themselves in particular.



A governmental primary school in Częstochowa, in 1935, under directorship of Mrs Szacher

But it was not always a holiday. Hard times came and the I.L. Peretz School closed down. The reactionary Polish government viewed [things] askew and did not subsidise the Jewish schools.

(The school wrangled for its existence, until the Hitler hordes brought about its end as well.)