

looting attacks on Jews, cut off beards and threw Jews off trains.

General Haller later played a prominent role in political life, as one of leading personalities of the Polish National Democrats (Endecja).

From time to time, various false rumours were spread to the effect that Jews were shooting from windows and, on that ground, pogroms and raids took place.

One of the largest pogroms took place on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919, at five o'clock in the afternoon. Under the pretext that Jews had shot a *Hallerczyk*<sup>2</sup>, five Jews were murdered, a couple of dozen injured, and Jewish property was looted and destroyed. The course of the pogrom ran as follows:

On Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1919, at five o'clock in the afternoon, the Jewish barber-surgeon Nasanowicz was called out to supposedly administer first aid to a wounded person. On the way, he was attacked by a frenzied Polish mob and murdered. The wild crowd ran with axes, stones and sacks for plunder. Arriving in the Old Market [Stary Rynek], they came upon Mojsze Działowski, who was known as "Mojsze *Korek*" [Pol., Cork]. He was assaulted with axes and killed. At the same time, on ul Mostowa, the young Brokman - a confectioner - was slain. The mob ran to demolish the synagogue. In the courtyard was the abattoir. They attacked the ritual slaughterer Nechemie Gotlib and murdered him by a blow to the head with a forty-kilogram stone. Another victim, by the name of Borzykowski, [also] fell at the time.

The renowned Częstochowa philanthropist, Henryk Markusfeld, turned to the authorities and offered a large sum of money for charitable purposes, if they showed him the dead *Hallerczyk*, who was the cause of the pogrom. Needless to say, the story with the murdered *Hallerczyk* had been fabricated. The funeral of the five murdered men took place with the participation of the entire Jewish population, numbering 28,000 people. The bodies were carried from the purity room<sup>2</sup> in the Jewish Hospital to the cemetery (3 km).

Eulogies were delivered by Rabbi Nachum Asz, the *Częstochower Maggid* [Heb., preacher] Reb Josef-Szymon Koblenz and Reb Mojsze Halter.

A common headstone was erected for the fallen victims. During Nazi rule, this tombstone was destroyed.

### III

The general impression Częstochowa made was that it had a subtle and solid Jewish populace. The town stretched from Zawodzie to the park, with the streets to the right and left of the *Aleja*. These avenues divide the city into two parts - north and south. The town's centre is the *Aleja*, and that is where the Jewish houses and large businesses were located.

The movement in town characterised Jewish life. In the early morning hours, Jews went to their employment in the factories and shops, the craftsmen to their workshops, and the children to the schools and *gimnazja* [Pol., secondary schools].

The bourse was at Weksler's *kantor* (a bank for currency exchange and the sale of lottery tickets). There, Jews would gather, who had steady clients and knew each one's material situation and all that was going on in his home.

There were almost no idlers – everyone worked and was employed.

In the evenings, the city took on a different appearance. The youth promenaded down the *Aleje*, carrying books under their arms, cheerful, merry and lively, and spent time at the [political] party centres. Other slipped round to Sosnkowski's for billiards, or to Leon Altman at the confectionery for an "*orliczk*" [?]. There were also many at Lajzer Hunchback's, at Bajnys's and at Mancja's tavern.

A small number of the so-called "golden youth" went to the Polish patisseries "*Savoy*" and "*Europa*", where orchestras played.

Between ten and eleven at night, there was a bustle, with the desire to repose at home, to restore one's strength for tomorrow's working day. The people left the party centres, professional unions, sports clubs and different cultural and entertainment venues.

The Częstochowa Jewish population was a peaceful one. Even the most heated discussions were conducted serenely, in a respectable, solid form.

In the summertime, those going home would stop at Frania Landsberg's shop. She was famous in town for her ices - people stood in a queue at her shop to buy the delicious ice cream.

On Fridays the town took on a different appearance. Already at four in the morning, there is a great movement on the part of the fish merchants. Tubs with water are prepared - carts arrive with barrels of fish from noblemen's courts. There is a hubbub at sorting the barrels of fish – carp, bream, pike and various other kinds.

The women selling fruit sang like a chorus, "*At fifty groszy for a kilo!*" All of them advertised their wares - cherries, apples, pears and other fruits. At the side, near the gutter, Polish women stood selling butter, cheese, eggs, blueberries and dried sponges. [I.L.] Peretz's *At Night in the Old Marketplace* came to mind. From all sides, they called to the customers, "*Madam! Balebuste!*" Mrs Such-and-Such! Buy from me! Buy from me!" The Jewish *balebustes* bought everything *lekuved Shabbes*<sup>4</sup>.

Friday nights were cheerful. The town Synagogue Committee engaged a special choir, and music lovers delighted in the melodies. It was the same at the German Shul - not to mention the Chassidim in their *shtieblech*, as well as at [the study-hall of] the Rebbe of Żarki (Trisk<sup>5</sup>) when he welcomed the *Shabbes*.

After the [Friday evening] meal, the social life began in the institutions and unions.

On Saturdays, the city had a unique appearance. First thing in the morning, the Chassidim went to "*hashkume*" [Heb., early rising] (the earliest prayer service). The merchants and craftsmen dressed up in their *Shabbes* clothes, with unbuttoned coats, to display their gold watch chains and hanging medals.

<sup>1</sup> [TN: Viz. one of Haller's soldiers.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: A room where the Chevre Kadisha (Burial Society) ritually cleanse the body and prepare it for burial.]

<sup>3</sup> [TN: Yid., female form of "balebust", or burgher.]

<sup>4</sup> [TN: Heb., "to honour the Sabbath".]

<sup>5</sup> [TN: [TN: Reb Duwid-Aron Twerski of Żarki, who lived in Częstochowa, was the son of Reb Yankev Leib of Trisk (Turisk, Ukraine); son of Reb Mordechai Zishe of Trisk-lasi; son of Reb Menachem Nuchem; son of the "Trisker Maggid", Reb Awrum; son of Reb Mordche, The "Maggid of Chernobyl"; son of Reb Menachem Nuchem of Chernobyl, one of the distinct fathers of Chassidism.]

Some strolled, others slipped round to the confectioneries for a [game of] billiards or dominoes.

The Old Market element went over to the confectioneries "Ziemiańska", Sosnkowski's and Leon Altman's. Regular attendees entered Godl-Chanina's or Luzer Hunchback's, all in a Shabbes mood, with a cheerful expression and a smile on their lips. Others went down to the pubs for a schnapps and a fish head – to Mojsze Chana's on Gancarska, or to Kapkete<sup>6</sup>, in Prozer's building at ul Narutowicza 14.

Between eleven and one o'clock was the proper pre-lunch promenade. The women adorned themselves as if for a [beauty] contest - each tried to surpass the other in her external appearance. In summertime, the stroll was down the "Czeletnyk" [?], which was the pavement leading up to the "Nowy" cinema<sup>7</sup>. In the winter, the walk crossed over to the other side of the pavement, to the "Deptak" [Pol., Promenade].

On Shabbes in the afternoon, the general stroll about took place. The office employees - they earned little - streamed to the box office of the municipal theatre and to the cinemas. They were experts at buying up the cheapest sixty-grosz tickets. On Saturdays, the municipal theatre and cinemas were overfilled exclusively with our brethren, the Children of Israel.

The Chassidic world was not asleep. They gathered at the *shtieblech* and fetched barrels of "Szwede's<sup>8</sup>" beer from Szczupak or from Gecel Lewenhof of the Old Market (a grandson of Kasriel Tavern-keeper), already bringing with them a tap with which to pour the beer into the glasses. The Chassidim wanted to show off their dexterity in installing the tap, meanwhile drenching everyone with beer. Other religious Jews went over to Machzikei Ha'Das to listen to a lecture on the Pentateuch by Mojsze Halter, or to the study-hall to listen to Lajzer Jakubowicz or Abram-Szaja Lewenhof.

On Shabbes day, the [political] parties mobilised all their forces. The General Zionists arranged "a cup of tea", while listening to a lecture from Dr Bram or Szapiro and, straight after the lecture, they sat down to a [game of] poker at the Merchants' Union.

In Beitar - the Revisionist youth organisation - it was even livelier. At the "Iron" grounds, or at the *Klejarnia*<sup>9</sup>, they held drills - "Achat, *shtaim*, *shalosh*, *arba*..."<sup>10</sup> Some had conversations. Others sat in the library reading books.

With the older Ha'Tzohar<sup>11</sup> members, one also felt that it was a Saturday afternoon. The "Oyneg Shabbes"<sup>12</sup> [gatherings] had already become a tradition. Almost every week, a fellow member arrived from the Centre to complement the *Oyneg Shabbes*. A very frequent guest of the Częstochowa Revisionists was Josef Klarman who, at the time, was living in Sosnowiec.

The Bund gathered for a lecture or a meeting. Fiery speeches were held on socialism and freedom. The Right-wing Poalei Zion [Workers of Zion] and "Hitachdut" [Union<sup>13</sup>] also did not keep silent - they held a lecture, sang songs, and then went for a stroll in the park.

The Left-wing Poalei Zion got together and listened to a lecture from Gerszon Prędko, and they made plans for the whole week.

With the craftsmen, it was lively at the buffet - they ate a piece of fish, some beans, a helping of chickpeas, and also listened to a little something for the soul.

It was similar with the rest of the parties, organisations, sports clubs and communal institutions.

The communal campaigns and public events were always impressive. Already back in 1917, during the First World War, when Częstochowa was under German occupation, 28,000 Jews – from small to great – participated in the Lag Ba'Omer celebration. The huge mass-parade marched across the city to Bieszno - this was a *gut* (estate), which belonged to the Jewish landowner Rozenbaum.

Every year, Lag Ba'Omer celebrations were held, in which the entire Jewish population took part, enjoying various entertainments, singing, and sporting competitions.

Regardless of the fact that Jews had built up the city, the industry, the export, import and commerce, Polish society repaid them with malice, hatred, false accusations, incitements, excesses and pogroms.

#### IV

On Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, the Nazi forces conquered the city of Częstochowa - the 150-year Jewish settlement.

Immediately upon the following day, Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1939, the Jews felt the cruelties of the Nazi regime through days of blood. Every day, various decrees - such as unpaid forced labour, deportations to camps, the Judenrat, contributions, hostages, marks of shame, a ghetto, the requisition of Jewish factories, houses, apartments, furniture, merchandise, diamonds, gold, cash, silver, furs and other things - pelted down like hailstones.

All these edicts ruined Częstochowa Jewry materially from the one side, and morally from the other, by degrading the Jew to a being of little worth, without any moral honour and dignity.

The Nazi authorities endeavoured to influence degenerate elements to put themselves in their service. Just like in other ghettos, there were Jewish traitors and informers also in the Częstochowa ghetto. In this atmosphere of annihilation, death, internal Jewish traitors and Polish collaborators, the Jewish underground movement – the Jewish Combat Organisation [ŻOB], which was made up of heroic figures – shines forth like a radiant star. They raised the flag of battle and, with weapons in their hands, waged war against the bloody foe and internal betrayers.

Each hero of the Jewish Combat Organisation, who fought and fell for the honour of the Jewish people, is enveloped in pride and glory. With their blood, they inscribed themselves in golden letters in the history of Jewish heroism during the Nazi era.

In the general destruction of the Jewish people in Europe, Częstochowa Jewry gave up 50,000 victims.

<sup>6</sup> [TN: Apparently female nickname, most likely derived from the Yiddish word "kopke", or woman's bonnet.]

<sup>7</sup> [TN: This cinema was located on the corner of the Second Aleja and ul Centralna (nowadays ul Ślqska).]

<sup>8</sup> [TN: Karol Szwede was a Częstochowa-based beer manufacturer.]

<sup>9</sup> [TN: "Iron" was a foundry and machine factory at ul Kościuszki 5, and the "Klejarnia" (Pol., glue factory) was a factory founded by Henryk Markusfeld.]

<sup>10</sup> [TN: Modern Heb., "One, two, three, four..."]

<sup>11</sup> [TN: Heb. acronym for Ha'Tzionim Ha'Revizionistim, lit. The Revisionist Zionists.]

<sup>12</sup> [TN: Heb., lit. "Delight of Sabbath"; a festive gathering with refreshments held on Saturday.]

<sup>13</sup> [TN: "Hitachdut" was also a Zionist Labour party.]