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From the Cultural and Artistic Life of Jews in Częstochowa (1918-1939)

Jews have been linked to Polish soil over many centuries. Up to the time of the Holocaust, they created an important, large and diversified, culturally distinct community, different from Catholic traditions and values, in a country where the majority of the population had strong and deep-rooted Christian traditions. The tragic wartime events of 1939-1945 irretrievably destroyed a considerable part of their economic, political, cultural and artistic achievements. That which remained is still being discovered anew by researchers and by experts in Jewish society and culture. Polish Jews, in creating a caste¹, constituted a socially isolated community but, at the same time, participated in wider economic processes. The phenomenon of isolation, the cultural ghettos, was particularly noticeable in small *shtetls*² or in the Jewish districts of large cities inhabited, in the majority, by religious Jews.

Jews were engaged in a variety of professions. They were merchants, craftsmen and stallholders, and demonstrated a great practical and social mobility. Itinerant Jewish traders often became instruments for spreading news, which resulted in an exchange of experiences and the creation of numerous interpersonal contacts. That is to say that Jews not only carried with them their stock in trade, but it would appear they also carried essential, cultural values³.

Among others to analyse the real contribution by Jews to Polish culture was Aleksander Hertz, author of the book *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej (Jews in Polish Culture)*. A keen view of others, their scepticism, critique, irony, sarcasm, a feeling of their own mission and intellectual meaning, a love of knowledge, a tradition in the spoken and written word, a tradition of books – all these, in his view, formed the Jewish ethos and, at the same time, explained the Jewish participation in the world of intelligentsia⁴. "They could be difficult", Hertz stated, "but it would have been boring without them. Like it or not, they were a factor of ferment and unrest. They played a great cultural role and served Polish culture well."⁵ Over many centuries, its detachment from the surrounding Polish culture was a

¹ A. Hertz states, "Over all the centuries of their presence in Poland, all the way to the time of the Holocaust, Jews created a caste. A caste is something broader than a ghetto. The latter is a closed-off, territorial unit. However, a caste includes the entire, wider group in a given area, irrespective of where sections of them or individuals may be located. Polish Jews, mainly living within local ghettos, as a whole, created a caste". A. Hertz, *Żydzi w kulturze polskiej (Jews in Polish Culture)*, Warsaw 1988, p. 83.

² *Shtetl (Yiddish, a small village)* – a small, provincial Jewish community in pre-War eastern Europe (i.e. Russia, Lithuania and the eastern stretch of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). The majority of Jews, living in that area, lived in *shtetl*-like small towns or villages, often constituting a majority of the population and, in some instances, the entire population. In the 19th century, the *shtetl* was central to Ashkenazi Jews. Its lingua franca was Yiddish, known to Jews as the *mamalshen* (the mother tongue). Judaism, to them, was *Yiddishkeit*, centred on small synagogues, colloquially known as the *shule* or *shtiebel*. The foundation of *shtetl* life was the extended, multi-generational family, the *mishpocha*, with many branches and a large number of children. Boys' education took place in a *cheder* and, at a higher level, in the *yeshiva*. Social status was achieved through education, but also through affluence. Families took great pride (*yichus*) from eminent ancestors which guaranteed better marriage prospects, with the help of a matchmaker (a *shadchen*). The *shtetl* had, at its disposal, various systems for helping those in need. Charitable donations were collected from everyone. Local beggars (*schnorers*) were an integral part of the community. Despite any tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish residents, and the sudden explosiveness of a pogrom, both communities were linked in numerous ways. Gentile could perform the role of *Shabbas Goy* for his Jewish neighbours." A. Unterman in *Encyklopedii tradycji i legend żydowskich (Encyclopaedia of Jewish Tradition and Legend)*, Warsaw 2000, pp. 272-273.

³ More A. Hertz, *Żydzi.. (Jew..)*, see p. 282.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 289-295.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 295.

characteristic feature of Jewish culture. Up to the 19th century, the Jewish community lived in almost total religious-cultural isolation⁶.

Only at the end of the 19th century, and during 1914-1918, did external factors more strongly influence the Jewish population. New ideologies, such as Zionism, political movements, among them socialism and communism, economic changes as well as intensive industrial development caused transformations in the deeply-rooted traditional and religious everyday lives of Jews⁷. Thanks to universal, compulsory primary education, the activities of political parties, cultural institutions as well as youth organisations, a current of secular Jewish culture was created⁸. Absent until then in the lives of Jews, theatres, libraries, cultural, artistic and educational associations, as well as printing houses came into existence. An important role was played by the amateur drama and music movement. A local press was established, promoting magazines and literature which aided in education⁹.

A basic element in the culture of Polish Jews was the Jewish community council, which influenced all fields of community and religious life. Apart from matters relating to the maintenance of the rabbinate, the synagogues, the ritual baths and cemeteries, councils were active in the areas of charity, culture and education¹⁰.

The social-cultural transformations, which took place at the end of the 19th century, brought about changes in the structure of Polish society. Within the Jewish community, industrialists and a proletariat appeared next to stallholders and craftsmen. Jewish workers' circles were formed¹¹. The intelligentsia, who, in both smaller and larger cities had established more contact with Poles, began to participate in cultural and social life¹². As is generally known, the relationship between Poles and Jews fluctuated. We know of many instances of antisemitic activities. On the other hand, the two communities, Polish and Jewish, so culturally different, and against their own wills, beliefs and different religions, lived closely together, in one country, for hundreds of years. Today, we can say that, without the participation of Jews, Poland, at the turn of the 20th century until the outbreak of World War II, would have been considerably poorer economically, commercially and culturally.

Częstochowa serves as an example of the role Jews played in the creation of culture in Poland. The first mentions of Jews in this city date back to 1620 and 1631. According to P. Burchard, 75 Jews lived in Częstochowa in 1765. Some sources speak of traces of Jews as far back as 1610, as evidenced by a Jewish inscription on a beam in a house at ul.Ptasiej 18¹³.

So when, exactly, did Jews begin to be an important and meaningful community, not only in terms of numbers? The long-term and laborious research conducted by Marta Pawlina-Meducka, Regina Renz, Zbigniew Jakubowski, Jerzy Mizgalski and many others, as well as evidence provided by those interested in the history of Częstochowa Jews, show that, by the turn of the 20th century, Częstochowa had become a cradle for Polish-Jewish culture. Rapid industrial development, the

⁶ Por. R. Kołodziejczyk, *Przemiany społeczno-kulturowe w środowisku ludności żydowskiej w Królestwie Polskim w XIX wieku (Social-cultural Transformations Within the Jewish Population of the 19th Century Congress Kingdom of Poland)* [in:] *Kultura Żydów Polskich XIX i XX wieku (The Culture of 19th and 20th Century Polish Jews)*, Kielce 1992, p. 16.

⁷ Por. M. Pawlina - Meducka, *Kultura Żydów województwa kieleckiego 1918-1939 (The Jewish Culture in the Kiecie Province 1918-1939)*, Kielce 1993, pp. 9-15.

⁸ Por. R. Renz, *Mój dom, moje miasto i miasteczko (My Home, My City and Small Town)* [in:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie. Losy Żydów (The Fate of Częstochowa Jews)*

⁹ See M. Pawlina - Meducka, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁰ See R. Renz, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-70.

¹¹ See J. Mizgalski, *Tożsamość polityczna polskich Żydów w XIX i XX wieku na przykładzie Częstochowy (The Political Identity of Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Using Częstochowa as an Example)*, Częstochowa 2008, p. 197.

¹² See M. Pawlina - Meducka, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹³ See Z. Jakubowski, *Częstochowscy Żydzi. Charakterystyka problematyki i perspektywy badań (Częstochowa Jews: The Characteristics of Issues and Research Perspectives)* [in:] *Z dziejów Żydów w Częstochowie (From the History of Jews in Częstochowa)*, ed. Zbigniew Jakubowski and Stanisław Podobiński, Częstochowa 2002, pp. 11-12.

progress of civilisation and the city's favourable location on the Warsaw-Vienna railway attracted people to Częstochowa from all over the country – among them Jews. Local residents supported Jewish settlement openly and willingly accepted those from other cities and foreigners¹⁴.

In the face of an increased public demand for certain services, the acceptance by the community of the social usefulness of the culture and independence of foreign groups, resulted in the development of a multicultural society¹⁵. It was mainly village and small town Jews who arrived in this developing city¹⁶. By the end of the 19th century, in 1897, 11,764 Jews lived in Częstochowa. This represented 29.5% of the city's population. Prior to the outbreak of World War I, there were 23,790 Jews (31.8%). However, prior to the start of World War II, Jews comprised 21% of the city's population, 28,486 in number. (In 1939, Częstochowa's population stood at 137,623)¹⁷.

The greatest concentration of Jews could be found in Stara Częstochowa (the "Old City"). A certain number of Jews also settled in Nowa Częstochowa and on I Aleja NMP, which linked, so to speak, the two worlds – the Polish and the Jewish. Wealthy Jews lived on II Aleja NMP which is recalled by, among others, Lea Sigiel-Wolinetz, Executive Director of the *World Society of Częstochowa Jews and Their Descendents*: "My mother was an only child. She grew up in a rented apartment near the Bank Polski building in Częstochowa at Aleji 32. Before the War, it was a good, even luxury district. Doctors, lawyers and businessmen, for example, lived there."¹⁸

One's place of residence did not limit or determine the social, economic or cultural activities of Częstochowa Jews. The extent of their influence, in all these spheres, went far beyond the so-called "Jewish part" of the city¹⁹. Częstochowa Jews were entrepreneurs – owners of the biggest factories of the time, craftsmen, shopkeepers, founders of print works and bookshops, magazine publishers, journalists, actors, musicians, architects, painters, goldsmiths, community activists, organisers of cultural life, both film and theatre, and, last but not least, philanthropists²⁰.

When we think about their role in the creation and promotion of culture throughout Częstochowa, we must take into account not only their activity within the scope of their separate culture, marked by religion, mores and membership of an ethnic group, but also within the scope of the culture developed throughout the city which affected the lives of all residents²¹. Organisation of various types, established by Jews, could fall into the first category. The ever-increasing number of Jews at the beginning of the 20th century saw the establishment of charitable and philanthropic organisations.

One of them was the *Jewish Charitable Association (Towarzystwo Dobroczynności dla Żydów)* which, by 1900, already had almost 300 members. It ran two orphanages for Jewish children, homes for the Jewish elderly, disabled and orphans and, at the turn of the 20th century, began the construction

¹⁴ Por. J. Mizgalski, *Dzieje, dziedzictwo i tożsamość kulturowa Żydów Częstochowy (The History, Legacy and Cultural Identity of Częstochowa Jews)* [in:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie - współistnienie, holocaust, pamięć (The Jews of Częstochowa - Coexistence, Holocaust, Memory)*, Ed. Jerzy Mizgalski, foreword by Sigmund Rolat, Częstochowa 2006, p. 49.

¹⁵ See J. Mizgalski, *Dzieje, dziedzictwo...* (*The History, Legacy ...*), op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁶ Por. J. Mizgalski, *Tożsamość polityczna...* (*The History, Legacy ...*), op. cit., p. 197.

¹⁷ Por. J. Mizgalski, *Dzieje, dziedzictwo...* (*The History, Legacy ...*), op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁸ Interview with Lea Sigiel-Wolinetz conducted by Magdalena Mizgalska in September 2010 [in] *Żydzi Częstochowianie. Losy...* (*The Fate of the Jews of Częstochowa...*), op. cit., p. 383.

¹⁹ Por. J. Sztumski, *Kulturowa rola społeczności żydowskiej (The Role of the Jewish Community in the Creation of Culture)* [in] *Z dziejów Żydów...* (*The History, Legacy ...*), op. cit., p. 69.

²⁰ See J. Sętowski, *Markusfeldowie. Wizerunek rodu częstochowskich przemysłowców, filantropów i społeczników (The Markusfeld Family: An Image of the Częstochowa Family of Industrialists, Philanthropists and Community Workers)* [in:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie - współistnienie...* (*The Jews of Częstochowa - Co-existence ...*), op. cit., pp. 226-232.

²¹ See J. Sztumski, op. cit., p. 70.

²² See Z. Jakubowski, *Częstochowscy Żydzi...* (*The Jews of Częstochowa ...*), op. cit., pp. 24-25.

of a Jewish hospital in Zawodzie²². The Association also organised concerts, the income from which was donated to charity for things like a kitchen for the poor and for the treatment of tuberculosis sufferers.

Apart from the *Jewish Charitable Association*, there were also many Jewish cultural-educational organisations in Częstochowa. The most important amongst them were the *Żydowskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczno-Sportowe* (the *Jewish Gymnastic-Sports Association*), the *Żydowskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze* (the *Jewish Tourist Association*), the *Stowarzyszenie "Strzecha Robotnicza"* (the *"Thatch Workers'" Society*), the *Żydowskie Biblioteka Robotnicza* (the *Jewish Workers' Library*), the *Przyjaciele Sztuki Żydowskiej* (the *Friends of Jewish Art*), the *Związek Żydowskiego Harcerswa* (the *Jewish Scouting Union*), the *Żydowskie Towarzystwo Dramatyczno-Muzyczne "Lira"*, (the *Jewish Drama-Music Association "Lira"*), the *Stowarzyszenie "Kluby Towarzyskie"*, (the *Society of Friendship Clubs*), the *Stowarzyszenie Kursów Hebrajskich w Częstochowie* (the *Częstochowa Society of Hebrew Education*), a branch of the *Komitetu Pomocy Studentom* (the *Student Aid Committee*), the *"Auxilium Academicum Judaicum"* and a branch of the *Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej* (the *Jewish Health Care Association*) in Częstochowa²³.

Many of the above-named organisations also ran libraries and reading rooms. The first legal library after 1905 was established by the youth arm of one of the political parties - the *Bund*. However, by 1911, it was shut down by the Tsarist authorities. Its rich collection of over 2,000 books in Yiddish, and around 600 titles in Hebrew, was taken over by the *Towarzystwo "Lira"*. Following its dissolution, the library collection found its way to Zionist organisations²⁴. This did not stop the activity of librarians. After 1918, numerous institutions were formed, the purpose of which was to educate and develop literary sensitivity within the Jewish community. In 1922, the *Towarzystwie Zjednoczonych Szkół Żydowskich w Częstochowie* (the *Częstochowa United Associations of Jewish Schools*) established the *Żydowską Bibliotekę Robotniczą* (the *Jewish Workers' Library*). This institution was re-organised frequently. Firstly, it was attached to the Medem Library. Later, thanks to a decision by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, it was entered into the Registry of Associations and Unions and, from that moment, operated as the I.L.Perec Jewish Library. Another Jewish library was established in the 1930's – the D.Hercl Library. Rabbi D.Hirsberg participated in the opening ceremony which took place on 27th September 1931²⁵.

Apart from the libraries, gardens, cafes and tearooms played a significant role in the development of the cultural life of Jews. Although, it is necessary to stress that, in this instance, the cultural element was closely connected with the financial. Nevertheless, small gardens and tearooms certainly created important cultural elements as meeting places for the elite of the Jewish community, as ideas exchanges and for the promotion of artistic life. The tradition for these types of institutions arose in the mid-19th century. By 1878, there was already an idea to create a small tea garden in a tenement at Aleja NMP 2. Due to a lack of archival material, it is difficult to say, today, whether that idea was ever realised.

During the inter-War years, there were breakfast rooms in another tenement at Aleja NMP 5, which hosted social and cultural gatherings. Jews most probably visited there as it was owned by the

²³ See M. Meducka, *Udział Żydów częstochowian w kulturze miasta (The Participation of Częstochowa Jews in the Cultural Life of the City)* [in:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie... (The Jews of Częstochowa ...)*, op. cit., p. 191. op. cit., s. 239-245.

²⁴ Zob. J. Mizgalski, *Życie społeczne częstochowskich Żydów wXX wieku (The Communal Life of Częstochowa Jews in the 20th Century)* [in:] *Z dziejów Żydów... (from the History of Jews...)*, op. cit., pp. 239-245.

²⁵ See M. Meducka, *Udział Żydów.. (The Participation of Jews ...)*, op. cit., p. 194.

²⁶ See J. Mizgalski, *Życie społeczne... (The Communal Life ...)*, op. cit., pp. 240-241.

²⁷ See Z. Jakubowski, *Życie kulturalne w Alei NMP (Cultural Life on Aleja NMP)*, „Informator Kulturalny Województwa

Hamburger family. One member of that family, Abraham Hamburger, was a board member of the Częstochowa Jewish Community Council.

Another of these gardens, the *Tivoli*, was located at Aleja NMP 14, in a building owned by Adolf Frank. Social gatherings and concerts were also organised here and, in summer, it operated as a summer cafe. The garden operated right up until Frank's death. After 1923, it no longer played any significant role²⁶. Perhaps the most important and significant of the city's tea gardens was *u Wolbergów*, located at Aleja NMP 12. Over many years, it hosted plays, cabaret performers, readings and social gatherings. In 1915, the Wolberg family opened the *Teatr Apollo*. Shortly thereafter, it was renamed *Teatr Nowości* and, in 1919, it was ultimately called the *Teatr Polonia*. Among those to appear there were actor Romuald Gierasieński, writer Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski and cabaret artist Franciszek Stróżewski²⁷. In 1922, the latter wanted to open an equivalent of Warsaw's *Qui Pro Quo* cabaret in Częstochowa. He even hired the highly-regarded vaudevillian Waleria Dobosz-Markowska to join the newly-formed Stróżewski group. Despite all the effort of getting it off the ground, it only lasted a few months, and then closed. Later, a cinema was established in the popular *u Wolbergów* theatre hall²⁸.

During the inter-War years, periodicals became popular in Jewish culture. At that time, there were as many as twenty two different titles in Częstochowa which was astounding for the Kielce province of the time. It should, however, be stressed that those magazines were not independent. They were under the strong influence of political parties. For example, *Dos Naje Wort*, published between 1920 and 1925, was the press organ of the Częstochowa *Ferajnigte* organisation. Another weekly, *Czenstochower Cajtung*, published from 1918 until 1939, was the propaganda tool of the Zionists. The *Express Częstochowski* was published in Częstochowa between 1928 and 1930. This Polish language periodical was also linked to the Zionists, aimed at the Jewish bourgeois mind and also promoted an assimilationist concept. The owner was Ido Siemiatycki who, daily, worked together with Marcin Łaski and Dawid Horowicz²⁹.

Theatrical initiatives were also among the greatest influencing factors on the development of culture within the whole of Częstochowa. Even though it took until the late 1930's for there to be a permanent theatre within a modern building, this by no means meant that theatrical life stagnated. Quite the reverse, professional and amateur dramatic groups had been entertaining Częstochowa audiences since the beginning of the 20th century. Warsaw journalist J. Podoski, who visited Częstochowa in 1929, emphasised that even though it was a provincial city, it had two Polish theatres – *Rozmaitości* and *Ludowy*, in which three performances were held on holidays (Podoski pointed out that theatre enjoyed a great popularity: "Thousands of working class people go to the theatre.")³⁰. If we add to that two other theatrical halls used by the Jewish community, *Straż Ogniowa* and *CKS Warta*, which presented shows, revues and operettas almost all week, it is certainly possible to state that Częstochowa was not a theatrical backwater.

In order to show how great was the Jewish participation in this, it is worthwhile examining the 1928/1929 theatrical season, which was filled with visiting well-known artists, professional and

Częstochowskiego", 1981, No. 5, pp. 12-15.

²⁸ Por. Z. Jakubowski, *Częstochowscy Żydzi... (Częstochowa Jews...)*, op. cit., pp. 26-27. See also Z. Jakubowski, *Życie kulturalne... (The Cultural Life ...)*, op. cit., pp. 12-15.

²⁹ Zob. W. Tyras, *Budynki i sale teatralne w Częstochowie w latach 1870-1939 (Theatrical Buildings and Hall in Częstochowa 1870-1939)*, „Ziemia Częstochowska”, Vol. VI and VI, Częstochowa 1967, p. 153.

³⁰ Por. M. Meducka, *Udział Żydów częstochowian... (The Participation of Częstochowa Jews...)*, op. cit., p. 196. More about the Jewish press [in:] Marta Pawlina-Meducka, *Kultura Żydów województwa kieleckiego 1918-1939 (Jewish Culture in the Kielce Province 1918-1939)*, Kielce 1993.

³¹ „*Express Częstochowski*”, No. 6, 1929.

amateur dramatic groups, and into events which contributed to the development of a theatre culture in the city.

In June 1928, Częstochowa played host to an independent, Jewish operetta company under the direction of one of the best Jewish comic actors, Sz. Herszkowicz. Its first performance at the *Warta* was before a full house. According to the press, "The thunderous applause gave evidence of the troupe's high level of performance. The masterful direction, great acting, beautiful voices and original folkdance creations aroused admiration amongst art and music enthusiasts"³¹. Herszkowicz's company remained in Częstochowa until July 1928 and put on the following shows: *Idele Barmicwe*, *Ślepy malarz*, *Piąte przykazanie*, *Alma, gdzie mieszkasz?*, *Berele Szmadnik*, *Low-ke Mołodiec*, *Pensjonarka*, *Tojwie Der Milchige*, *Żona amerykańskiego rabina*, *Dzień ślubu*, *Szarlatan*, *Miłość palestyńska*, *Gwałtu, to komorne* and *Wieczni głupcy*. It is worth adding that performances most often included the participation of stars of the time such as Malwina Weiland and Kraków artist D. Szerman³². One performance caused a scandal due to the participation of Anna Białkowicz, wife of Izrael Białkowicz, who was Herszkowicz's theatrical competitor.

It was during the second interval, that Mrs Białkowicz suddenly approached Wajsberg, editor of the *Cajt*, a Częstochowa weekly. She is the wife of the manager of a troupe which had performed in Częstochowa, and was now performing in Sosnowiec. Without any fuss, Mrs B. slapped Mr Wajsberg twice across the face. [...] From explanations provided by Mrs B., she wished to settle accounts with Mr Wajsberg who, within the pages of his publication, had published an unfavourable review of the Białkowicz troupe, according to an *Express Częstochowski* reporter"³³.

Performances by the Herszkowicz troupe ended in Częstochowa, not only with the Anna Białkowicz scandal, but also in a conflict with the Union of Jewish Theatrical Artists. Herszkowicz even submitted a special statement on the matter which was published in the press:

I have become convinced that the unpleasant conflicts between my independent troupe and the Union of Jewish Theatrical Artists have been harmful to the interests of Jewish theatre and Jewish theatrical companies. I publicly declare that I have decided to cease further performances in Częstochowa, to dissolve my non-union troupe and to await further decisions and regulations of the Union of Jewish Artists and their relationship to my troupes. At the same time, I am withdrawing all my charges and accusations against the Union and its director Mr Juwiler and the Kulturamt, whether expressed orally or within the press. I withdraw them and apologise for them, at the same time offering my thanks to the local Kulturamt for its impartial dealings with me and my troupe and for its fervent efforts in resolving my wrangle with the Union³⁴.

That "wrangle" was most probably headed off because, in September 1928, Herszkowicz again appeared in Częstochowa and a permanent Jewish theatre was opened at the *Warta* under his management. The best of the best were to be found in that theatre company – soubrette Malwina Weiland, singer Fania Laszer, the Gottlib couple, opera artist Regina Cukier (London), Hardt-Getlicherman (Bucharest), Kalisz from the Jewish theatre in Warsaw, as well as Cymbalist, a world famous artist who was then enjoying success in London. Management of the ballet was entrusted to Adolfin, a ballet dancer from the Warsaw Scala Theatre, while the music came under the direction of

³² „*Express Częstochowski*”, 1928, No. 130.

³³ „*Express Częstochowski*”, 1928, Nos. 130-159.

³⁴ „*Express Częstochowski*”, 1928, No. 132, see also Anna Białkowicz's statement in issue No.136 of „*Express Częstochowski*” of 1928: "The publisher of the Częstochowa *Cajt* Weekly, Wajsberg, called my husband, a man of unblemished character, an experienced actor and the manager of the theatre troupe, an immoral individual. He accused him, without any basis and without the possibility of any basis, of forcing subordinate actresses to immoral work, that he sold his art for a złota. (...) In defence of my husband's honour and my feminine dignity I publicly slapped the face of this satirist, considering that a louse of this sort was beneath contempt. I sincerely apologise to the public and Mr Herszkowicz's troupe for unwittingly taking them down this path. Anna Białkowicz Częstochowa 14-06-1928".

kapellmeister Kochanowski. The plan for the repertoire included, not only operettas, but also the newest, popular plays, as well as dramas of deeper ideological and artistic value. The company's inaugural performance was in front of a full house, all tickets selling out two hours before starting time. Audiences were entertained by the latest hit from America, *Synku rabina* (*The Rabbi's Son*). Performances by the artists were well-received. A review pointed out that "the company's performance was wonderful, with a select orchestra and first-rate dance"³⁵. To the end of October 1928, the Jewish Theatre in Częstochowa also put on productions of *Pierwszą miłość*, *Słodki sen*, *Cypke Fajer*, *Rumuńskie wesele*, *Dziecko ulicy*, *Krawca i szewca*, *Chackiele Kołbojnik*, *Gdzie są moje dzieci*, *Wesołą Kidi*, *Niewidomego malarza*, *Dzwony Sybiru*, *Dar Symchat Tora*, *Hercele Majuches*, *Szabos Kojdesz*, *Amerykaner Rabecyn*, *Macochę*, *Niemowę żonę*, *Żonę Rabina* and *Dziewczę ze wsi*³⁶.

Częstochowa Jewish culture, during the inter-War period, was also enriched by performances from well-known Jewish theatre groups, with the participation of the biggest stars of the time on the drama scene. At the end of August 1928, performances by dramatic actor Beni Adler were met with enormous popularity at the *Rozmaitości* theatre. Audiences applauded the artist in *Zemście męża* (*The Husband's Revenge*), *Jedynaku* (*An Only Child*) and in *Miłości studenckie* (*Student Love*)³⁷. In September 1928, on the stage of the *Rozmaitości* theatre, a Kraków theatre company performed Sholem Aleichem's *Jak trudno być Żydem* (*It's Hard to be a Jew*)³⁸. In January 1929, the Kameralny Jewish Theatre visited Częstochowa, headed by Shoshano, a star of Warsaw Jewish theatre. During one performance at the *Warta*, the artist (together with Abraham Kurtz and Abraham Wolfstztat) performed Bachwitz's *Jo-shi-wa-ra* (*A City of Delights and Debauchery*)³⁹. From March to May 1929, mainly operetta and review companies performed in Częstochowa. The Jewish Warsaw *Azazel*⁴⁰, with Ola Lilith, Władysław Godik, Strugacz and Potasiński, appeared twice at the *Warta* in a programme of popular song and dance. Actors were praised for their high artistic level, for their characterisations and subtle performances, and were compared with the old Moscow's *Blue Bird* and Paris' *Chat Noir*⁴¹.

One of the city's biggest events, in 1929, was the visit of Vilna's Operetta-Drama Company, popularly known as the *Vilna Troupe*⁴². Its contribution to the development of cultural life in Częstochowa is attested to by the fact that its audiences also included Poles which was rather a cultural sensation at the time. The magnificent turnout and the heterogeneous nature of the audiences decided, in large measure, not only the artistic level of the troupes, but also well thought out repertoires in which dramatic works featured alongside popular operettas and melodramas. So that guest performances represented the entire range of artistic and program possibilities. Headliners included Nechama, Kadysz, Chasz, L. Szryftzecer, as well as well-known director and Polish-Jewish poet Andrzej Marek (Marek Arnstein). Kalman's melodic operetta *Bajadera* was chosen to open the season. Częstochowa audiences could then see Antoni Słonimski's *Murzyna Warszawskiego*, the drama *Rasputin i caryca*, Fajnmán's operetta *Kiedy się kobieta zapomina*, or *Dzisiejsze panny*, *Ofiarę Izaaka*, *Księżniczkę Czardaszka*, *Lowke Zuch*, *Kaukaską miłość*, *Różę z Stambułu*, *Żydowskie wesele*

³⁵ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No.163.

³⁶ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, Nos.210-215.

³⁷ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, Nos.217-237.

³⁸ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No.194.

³⁹ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No.217.

⁴⁰ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No.19-20.

⁴¹ M. Pawlina-Meducka also writes about the cabaret *Azazel*, *Kultura Żydów... (The Culture of the Jews...)*, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴² *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No.56.

⁴³ M. Pawlina-Meducka also writes about the avantgarde performance of the Vilna Troupe, *Kultura Żydów... (The Culture of the Jews ...)*, op. cit., p. 127.

w Polsce, Shalom Ash's *Kidusz Haszem*, Kataiev's *Matżeństwo a rewolucja*, Nikolai Yevrov's *To co najważniejsze*, I.L.Peretz's *Złoty łańcuch* and *Szczęśliwe małżeństwo*.

The biggest event, however, was the premiere of Halpern Leiwick's *Golem*⁴³, directed by Mark Arnstein at the *Warta* Theatre. The performance was preceded by a lecture entitled "When Will the Messiah Come? The *Golem* and Other Messianic Legends". The lecture was intended to acquaint the audience with the contruction and staging of this unusual mystic play from Jewish literature. The first performance took place in front of a full house at the *Warta*. Among those who took part in the celebrations were representatives of the national and local governments, including the Mayor Romuald Jarmułowicz. Critic, Marcin Łaski, enthused, "This was no ordinary theatrical evening, rather it was a vibrant event. The imigation, the royal charm of the poetry, the many picturesque moments and the massive scenery, under the director's iron baton, captivated even those to whom Jewish language and literature is completely alien"⁴⁴.

Following the *Vilna Troupe*, a visit to the city by the Warsaw Artistic Theatre, led by Zygmunt Turkow and Ida Kamińska⁴⁵ was also met by great acclaim. They came to Częstochowa to perform at the *Rozmaitości* Theatre in March 1929. Audiences admired their so-called high repertoire of plays - Jakub Gordin's *Bez domu*, Juskiewicz's *Szczęście biedaka* and *Ongiś był królem* by Ida Kamińska⁴⁶. By popular demand, Łódź's famed Ararat Artistic-Literature Company performed in Częstochowa in June 1929. Under the direction of Mojżesz Broderson and D. Bajgielman, the company performed *Szoszanas Jakow* and *Wszystko tańczy*⁴⁷. At the beginning of July 1929, Anschel Schorr's Jewish Theatre from America performed at the *Rozmaitości* Theatre, headed by Dora Wajsman⁴⁸. Częstochowa audiences saw this world-famous artist in *Żona i kochanka* (*Wife and Lover*), as well as in *Złamane życie* (*A Broken Life*)⁴⁹.

The abovementioned professional theatre companies, which travelled around the major population centres throughout Poland (and to which Częstochowa also belonged at that time), built an image of the theatre as having great cognitive and artisitic values, prepared with great thought regarding the audience and possessing a cultural awareness⁵⁰. Amateur theatre played no lesser role in cultural development. It was directed more at lesser educated, less demanding audiences who looked more for emotion in theatrical performances.

Even though theatre, both professional and amateur, developed at a rapid pace, a dedicated building for theatrical activity was still lacking. Halls in which, to that time, performances had been staged, did not entirely satisfy the needs of either the artists or the demanding audiences. For obvious reasons, small halls could not accommodate large audiences⁵¹. However, the city's greatest problem was not the lack of a permanent theatre. Finance remained the issue. Running a theatre or importing

⁴⁴ A. Kozłowska recalls the premiere of *The Golem* [in:] A. Kozłowska, *Żydowski ruch teatralny w Częstochowie* (*The Jewish Theatrical Movement in Czestochowa*), Biuletyn Instytutu Filozoficzno-Historycznego Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1996, 7/1, p. 46.

⁴⁵ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, Nos. 58-66.

⁴⁶ M. Pawlina-Meducka also recalls performances by Kamiński and Turkow in the Kielce Province, *Kultura Żydów..* (*The Culture of Jews ...*), op. cit., p. 127.

⁴⁷ *Express Częstochowski* 1929, Nos.67-70.

⁴⁸ M. Pawlina-Meducka also writes about the Ararat troupe, *Kultura Żydów...* (*The Culture of the Jews...*), op. cit., p. 141.

⁴⁹ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No. 121.

⁵⁰ M. Pawlina-Meducka also recalls Wajsman's performances in Poland, *Kultura Żydów..* (*The Culture of Jews ...*), op. cit., p. 128.

⁵¹ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No.152.

⁵² Por. M. Pawlina-Meducka, *Kultura Żydów...* (*The Culture of Jews ...*), op. cit., p. 142.

⁵³ Częstochowa theatres were subjected to regular inspections. The Provincial commission systematically checked whether the premises complied with sanitary and building regulations. The paid particular attention to whether the number of seats equalled the designated room capacity. During one such inspection in 1928, a lack of fire hydrants next to the stage was noted. See *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, Nos.258, 270.

artists cost a great deal. In 1928, M. Juwiler, a delegate of the Union of Jewish Theatrical Artists, together with the then City Councillor Rafael Federman⁵², asked Mayor Jarmułowicz to allocate a subsidy towards a permanent Jewish theatre and, first of all, to exempt it from all payments to the city. Since an ongoing theatre had been temporarily hosted in the *Warta* Theatre, where it had been performing up to five shows every week, the Mayor was sympathetic to the proposal⁵³.

It is worth adding that even though the organisers of cultural life managed to complain about everything, especially finances, they certainly could not complain about a lack of audiences. The Jewish public not only eagerly and frequently attended these shows, but they showed an equal interest in lectures organised by the driving forces behind theatrical life. Thus the *Warta* Theatre fulfilled more than just one function. It performed an educational function, with eminent guests from around the country and from overseas. For example, a regular speaker was the already mentioned winner of the Henryk Sienkiewicz contest, director and writer Andrzej Marek, who enlightened the lesser-educated stratum of the Jewish population.

A highlight for the Jewish community took place in 1929 with the visit of an outstanding activist from Palestine, Samuel Zuchowiecki. Again, the theatre was filled to capacity, this time in aid of charity. Frequently, profits from performances were transferred to various social welfare organisations such as the *Towarzystwo Dobroczynności dla Żydów* (Jewish Charitable Society), the *Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia* (Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population), the *Towarzystwo Kolonii Letnich dla Żydów* (The Society for Summer Camps for Jews) or the *Żydowskie Towarzystwo Gimnastyczno-Sportowe* (The Jewish Gymnastics-Sports Association)⁵⁴.

It is worth devoting a few lines to the culture of the drama companies which visited at the beginning of the 20th century. Lea Sigiel-Wolinetz recalls that her grandmother, Lea Siemiaticki, adored such theatrical and operatic visits:

Her favourite plays were *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. The moment that the opera came to Częstochowa, [...] she would drop everything and went straight to theatre for the performance⁵⁵.

Because for those of the Jewish community living in almost constant isolation and alienation, a trip to the theatre (just like a visit to the synagogue), was a kind of holiday⁵⁶, and the theatre itself, in their minds, could be like a "temple".

The community gathered there, those who were usually enclosed with a social ghetto and who shared the same emotions and values⁵⁷.

Similarly as was the case with cinema, the influence of the Jewish community resulted in the theatre to perhaps develop intensively and more strongly. To date, not a great deal has been written about the involvement of Jews in the culture of cinema and in film production in Częstochowa. Sources for this article are issues of the *Express Częstochowski* and *Goniec Częstochowski*, thanks to which we know that Jews took an active part in the life of the cinema.

⁵⁴ M. Pawlina-Meducka also recalls the commitment and help of Councillor Rafael Federman, *Kultura Żydów...* (The Culture of the Jews ...) op. cit., p. 138.

⁵⁵ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No.18.

⁵⁶ See *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, Nos. 38, 52, 275, 292, as well as *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No.74.

⁵⁷ An interview with Lea Sigiel-Wolinetz conducted by Magdalena Mizgalska in September 2010, [in:] *The Fate of the Jews of Częstochowa...* op. cit., p. 383.

⁵⁸ M. Pawlina-Meducka states, "The custom of walking to a show after the Shabbat chulent was begun not only amongst the city craftsmen. It also became a holiday when travelling companies arrived in the provinces". M. Pawlina-Meducka, *Kultura Żydów...* (The Culture of the Jews ...) op. cit., p. 124.

⁵⁹ See M. Meducka, *Z życia teatralnego Żydów w województwie kieleckim w latach 1918-1939* (The Theatrical Life of the Jews in the Kielce Province 1918-1939) [in:] *Kultura Żydów Polskich XIX i XX wieku* (The Culture of Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th Centuries), Kielce 1992, p. 178.

American philanthropist Sigmund A. Rolat (Zygmunt Rolat), a Częstochowa Jew who survived the ghetto and who, after the War, emigrated to the United States, describes the way he liked to spend his spare time, "Almost every Saturday, my dad would come home from work early for lunch. It was what followed which I loved the most. After lunch, my dad would take me by the hand and, together, we would go to the barber shop on ulica Berka Joselewicza. My dad would sit comfortably in the chair and the barber would shave him carefully with a straight razor. Meanwhile, I would carefully study the colourful film posters on the shop's walls. I would stand on a chair and lift the top poster so I could look at the ones under it. There was a wide choice because, in Częstochowa, there were as many as four cinemas – the *Luna* on Kościuszki was the most elegant and the biggest. The *Eden* was the closest to our home. For reasons unknown to me, the *Atlantyk* screened the most exciting films such as *Captain Blood* or *Robin Hood*. The *Świt* did not enjoy a good reputation and people with self-respect, such as my dad, tried to avoid it. However, I loved the cowboy films shown there"⁵⁸.

Up to 1914, there were a dozen or so nickelodeons in the city. It is worth stressing here that, even though many of them bankrupted, even though owners and names were changed, they always offered entertainment at a high level, with a diverse repertoire. From one year to the next, the popularity of cinema in Częstochowa grew. Convenience of location was certainly a contributing factor. The majority of cinemas were located on the main artery, the Aleja Najświętszej Maryi Panny, or in streets adjacent to it. The lack of a professional theatre scene also contributed to the high numbers of cinema-goers⁵⁹. During the inter-War period, the cinemas survived a real siege. According to a press report, "The triumphant *X Muza* continues its conquests, chaining new and more abundant layers of the population to its victorious chariot". For example, in 1928, 582,184 people attended a cinema, of whom 505,207 purchased ordinary seat tickets, while 45,783 bought tickets for boxes and 31,394 for the so-called *gallery*. Sundays and holidays saw the greatest attendances. On those days, as many as 216,000 tickets were sold. The best month for cinema was September, while the weakest was July⁶⁰.

Not only were the attendance numbers attesting to the growing popularity of the cinema. There was also a growing number of forged tickets. One cinema owner, Waclaw Gogut, was confronted with this practice⁶¹. Cinema crowds also provided the perfect opportunity for thieves. Audience members systematically lost money, while the cinema entrepreneurs lost equipment. The *Express Częstochowski* reported on the theft of electric lights, flowers, napkins and ashtrays which belonged to the *Nowości* cinema owned by the aforementioned Gogut⁶².

In order to attract new audiences and to maintain current levels, cinema entrepreneurs very often needed to mix culture with business. They not only had to care about their repertoire and cinematic new releases, but they also were required to buy the newest technological equipment, renovate their cinema halls and constantly introduce innovations. The owner of the *Nowości* cinema purchased a second film projector thanks to which it was no longer necessary to break into the film at a moment of high tension (a break which detracted from the illusion for the audience)⁶³. Apart from film

⁶⁰ S. A. Rolat, *Garstka wspomnień (A Handful of Memories)* [in:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie - współistnienie... (The Jews of Częstochowa – Coexistence ...)*, op. cit., p. 7. Also, see the documentary film *Jakby to było wczoraj... (As If It Were Yesterday...)* dir. Michał Nekanda-Trepka, 2004.

⁶¹ Por. A. Pobratyn, *Częstochowskie iluzjony do 1914 roku - nazwy, lokalizacje, programy*, „Ziemia Częstochowska”, Vol. XXXVII, 2011, p. 116.

⁶² *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No. 92.

⁶³ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No. 114.

⁶⁴ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No. 270.

⁶⁵ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No. 17.

screenings, there were also the so-called *peepshows* in adjacent rooms, in which one could view pictures of travel, tourist destinations, and the lives and customs of other nations⁶⁴.

The Jewish community was important because it constituted a large section of the audience. In order to attract them to the cinema, entrepreneurs organised various events. One such initiative was "A Day for the Jewish Community". For example, in 1934, Goldberg, owner of the *Luna* cinema, brought in the film *Moses' Uncle* (directed by Sidney M. Goldin, 1932), based on the story by Sholem Asz⁶⁵. Films in the Yiddish language were rarely screened and, if they were, it was only for short periods⁶⁶. Apart from feature films, cinemas also screened documentaries which would be of interest to Jewish audiences. In 1928, in the *Odeon* cinema, the Krzemiński brothers, apart from their regular program, showed pictures of the *Miss Judea* contest, which looked for the most beautiful Polish Jewish girl⁶⁷.

It is worth emphasising that, during the inter-War period, at least half of the cinema owners were Jewish entrepreneurs⁶⁸. Perhaps, the biggest, most popular and most elegant cinema was the *Casino*⁶⁹, which opened on 14th November 1929 at the initiative of three wealthy Jews - Maurycy Neufeld, Dr. Ludwik Batawi and F. Silber. Owners of the new cinema were Stefan Kaczmarek and Maurycy Częstochowski. Project architects were Jerzy Gelbard from Częstochowa and the brothers Grzegorz and Roman Sigalin, who had earlier been successful in eighteen government tenders. The *Casino*'s modern building was the architectural pride of ulica Kościuszki (the roof was constructed by a Polish inventor). The cinema could hold an audience of around 1,200 people and was equipped with the latest 1929 projection system from the international firm of Erneman. It had three waiting rooms, six public telephones, central heating and furniture especially ordered from a manufacturer in Radomsk. The projection room was constructed with reinforced concrete using the latest techniques and had an entrance separate from the auditorium. At the cinema's opening, the film *Z dnia na dzień* (*From Day to Day*) was shown. It was based on a story by Ferdynand Goetel. According to an *Express Częstochowski* reporter, "The public came in droves. Many were turned away from the box-office, having to return on the following days. Representatives of government and the intelligentsia were among those at the first screening. The building and the establishment of the cinema have become objects of unabashed admiration"⁷⁰. From 1931 to 1935, the *Casino* became the *Grand-Kino* and, finally, as the *Luna*, it survived the War. Just prior to the War's end, it became the *Wolność*.

Other cinemas were also owned by Jews – the *Bajka*⁷¹. And the *Nowa* was owned by the aforementioned Jew, Maurycy Częstochowski.

It is worth mentioning here the "Each to His Own" campaign which took place in 1913 in the Congress Kingdom of Poland. Its purpose was to remove Jews (*odżydzenie*) from industry and trade. The campaign suggested avoiding cinemas run by Jews, pointing out that they were contributing to the corruption of young people. The campaign caused losses not only for Jewish cinema entrepreneurs, but then Jews also began boycotting cinemas run by Poles. In an act of desperation, Polish cinema owners initiated discussions with rabbis for them to influence the Jewish community.

⁶⁴ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No. 150.

⁶⁵ See S. Siwczyński, *Od „Casina” do „Wolności” Historia jednego kina (From 'Casino' to 'Wolności'. The Story of One Cinema)* (Chapter 6), „Informator Kulturalny Województwa Częstochowskiego”, 1/(95), 1986, p. 33.

⁶⁶ Por. K. Urbański, *Kino żydowskie w Kielcach w latach 1909-1939 (Jewish Cinema in Kielce 1909-1939 [in:] Kultura Żydów Polskich XIX i XX wieku (The Culture of Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th Centuries))*, Kielce 1992, p. 209.

⁶⁷ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, Nos. 79-80.

⁶⁸ Por. M. Meducka, *Udział Żydów częstochowian... (The Participation of Częstochowa Jews...)*, op. cit., p. 197.

⁶⁹ J. Sętowski also writes about the opening of the *Casino* cinema, *75-lecie kina przy ulicy Kościuszki*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Częstochowa supplement, 2004, No. 302.

⁷⁰ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, Nos. 124, 213, 235, 241, 262, 264.

⁷¹ See K. Urbański, *Kino żydowskie (Jewish Cinema)* op. cit., p. 203.

However, all attempts at dialogue ended in fiasco. The rabbis considered that the cinema, just like books, newspapers or pamphlets written in the Yiddish language, pulled youth away from religion and a spiritual life and, in effect, contributed to their demoralisation⁷².

Was cinema, in fact, a demoralising factor? We should here look at the repertoire of the cinemas. It is necessary to remember that in the years 1908-1912, dramas, comedies and documentaries ruled. They were joined by vaudeville acts and operettas performed on the stage by theatrical troupes. The outbreak of World War I resulted in several years of crisis within the cinema industry. Firstly, the number of films imported from the West reduced. Secondly, there was a massive reduction in the number of new films produced. It was only Polish independence that brought in changes and caused cinema to once again bloom⁷³. For example, let us look at the years 1918, 1929 and 1938, during which the cinema developed and rapidly came as a novelty to Poland.

In 1918, in the *Paryski* theatre showed such titles as *Męczennica*, *Niewolnica Maharadży*, *Detronizacja Króla*, *Życie Tytana*, *Wróg kobiet*, *Żądza władzy*, *Cudzoziemka*, *Mąż za 500 milionów*, *Rasputin*, *Hrabianka Stachowska*, *Gdy serce nienawiścią pała*, *Gdy struny duszy zamilkną*, *Zbudzona z letargu*, *Tajemnica matki*, *Krzyż życia*, *Panienka z okienka*, *Jej grzech*, *Demon zła*, *Dama Kameljowa* (original text - A.W.), *Piętno Kaina*, *Urwis*, *Tryton (Król Peret)*, *Bachantka śmierci*, *Skazaniec losu*, *Ciernista miłość*, *Rozdarta dusza* and *Okrutna rywalka*.

Sensationalist melodramas dominated the repertoire. It is worth stressing that amongst the films shown at the *Paryski* theatre in 1918 which took up a Jewish theme were *Sulamita*, with music by Abraham Goldfaden and *Żyd wieczny tułacz (The Life of Jews in America)*⁷⁴. In 1918, the *Odeon* showed *Ofiara miłości*, *Sąd Boży*, *Księga grzechów*, *Czarny szofer*, *Mężczyzna*, *Złota śmierć*, *Ludzie samotni*, *Miłosny list królowej*, *List umarłej*, *Złote bagno*, *Przysięga Halki*, *Róża Haremu*, *Pamiętnik Zosi*, *Wykolejony*, *Otchłań*, *Czar młodości*, *Kłątwa piękności*, *Mandaryn Wu*, *Pieśń Colombiny*, *Dziwni ludzie*, *Oczy Mumji Ma (z Polą Negri)*, *Carska faworyta*, *Demon namiętności*, *Cowboy*, *Pod maską*, *Maria* (with Pola Negri), *Piękna Józia* and *Pieśń weselna*⁷⁵. Romances, sensationalist melodramas and dramas again dominated the program. Although varied, it was hard to call them ambitious. And, in this instance, it is hard to find films on Jewish subjects. The exception is *The Golem* which could only be seen at the *Odeon* over three days in January 1918⁷⁶.

The year 1928 was a triumph for Polish productions. Częstochowa screens featured such films as *Przedwiośnie*, *Ziemia obiecana* (with Jadwiga Smosarska), *Mogiła nieznanego żołnierza*, *Niewolnica miłości*, *Tajemnica starego rodu*, *Polonia Restituta i Pogoń za szczęściem* (the first Częstochowa film produced by the IRA-FILM company). Overseas productions were also not lacking. The *Odeon* showed *Bestja Morska* (original text - A.W.), *Niewolnica Szeika*, *Upiory*, *Cyrk* (Charlie Chaplin), *Metropolis*, *Miłość Joanny Ney*, *Król królów*, *Korsarz oceanu*, *Pantera* and *Dzikuska*⁷⁹. And again there was a lack of films on Jewish subjects. In 1928, the *Nowy* cinema showed such films as *Gehenna miłości*, *Sąd Boży*, *Syn Szeika*, *Czarny pirat* (with Douglas Fairbanks), *Córka szatana*, *Dama w wagonie sypialnym* (original text - A.W.), *Król dżungli*, *Burza* and *Cyrkówka Rita*⁷⁷. Again, sensationalist adventures and dramas dominated the repertoire. Similarly as with the *Odeon*, the *Nowy* also lacked films on Jewish subjects. At the *Nowości* cinema, one could see *Królową*

⁷⁴ Ibidem, p. 199.

⁷⁵ Ibidem, pp. 198-201.

⁷⁶ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1918, No. 1-282.

⁷⁷ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1918, No. 1-282.

⁷⁸ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1918, No. 9.

⁷⁹ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No. 1-298.

⁸⁰ *Express Częstochowski*, 1928, No. 1-298.

półświatka, Annę Laurie, Verdun, Ben-Hura, Morze, Golgotę miłości, Serce (with Mary Pickford), *Córkę szejka, Ostatni rozkaz* (with Emil Jannings) and *Godzinę zmysłów* (with Pola Negri)⁷⁸. This repertoire left no doubt that it was to light, simple and pleasant, stirring up emotions and showing audiences that which was distant and unavailable to them. In 1928, the Jewish community does not see topics which relate closely to themselves or to their religion.

It was only the 1930's which marked a turning point. In 1936, *Yiddle With the Fiddle* screens in cinemas. Other Jewish productions appear in 1921 - *Dybuk, Weseli biedacy, Błazenpurimowy* and *Ślubowanie*. However, in 1938, *List do matki i Mateczka! Enjoyed a great success*⁷⁹. In 1938 it was possible, in Częstochowa cinemas, it was possible to see films by Jewish directors and scriptwriters - Józef Lejtes' *Granica, Barbara Radziwiłłówna, Dziewczeta z Nowolipek* and *Młody las*. Apart from those, other Polish productions reigned supreme - *Wrzos, Skłamałam, Pani minister tańczy, Niedorajda, Ułan księcia Józefa, Kościuszko pod Racławicami, Profesor Wilczur, Kobiety na sprzedaż, Znachor, Ordynat Michorowski*, with such overseas hits as i zagraniczne hity: *Ludzie za mgłą* (with Jean Gabin, Michele Morgan), *Cienie Paryża, Księżę i żebrak, Heidi* (with Shirley Temple) as well as *Towarzysze broni* (with Jean Gabin)⁸⁰.

Within the history of Jewish culture in the Częstochowa region, it is possible to find instances where some films, presented in cinemas, have been boycotted. In 1918, the *Krzepice Stowarzyszenie Żydowskiej Młodzieży* (Jewish Youth Association) asked for the removal of the *Flisacy* (*The Rafters*) by W. L. Anczyc. The organisation believed that the piece harmed the good name of Jews, ridiculing the Jew as a usurer. "Poles and Jews should cooperate with one another in the broadest arena, not instigate (!!!) one citizen against the other. Instead of contempt for usurers, the audience will hold the entire Jewish people in contempt", wrote A Tyzber, President, and Ch. Lederman, Secretary, in their letter of protest⁸¹. Then, in 1935, Jewish organisations boycotted the film *Ich liebe alle Frauen* (*I Love All Women*), starring Jan Kiepura, screening at the *Stylowy* cinema in Częstochowa. They considered the film to be a purely German product and one that would fuel antisemitism. They even distributed pamphlets in front of the cinema in order to discourage people from seeing the film⁸².

Even though the cinemas and the films screened within them repeatedly aroused extreme emotions, they did take root in the cultural life of Częstochowa. On the one hand, the cinema provided entertainment. It permitted escapism (the forms of escapism were unusually diverse and could be associated not only with light-hearted films, but also with films of great artistic value). One should also not forget the other function – film provided the opportunity for charitable works. In the summer of 1918, for example, proceeds from the sale of tickets to *Sulamita*, a tragedy with music by Abraham Goldfaden⁸³, were donated to the workers' *I.L.Perec Strzecha Dziecięca*⁸⁴. Then, from 19th to 24th March 1918, the *Odeon* cinema screened *Rafała albo potęga miłości* (*Rafael or the Power of Love*), the proceeds from which went to the *Związek Szerzenia Oświaty wśród Robotników Żydowskich* (*The Union for Promoting Education Amongst Jewish Workers*)⁸⁵.

⁸¹ Ibidem

⁸² See K. Urbański, *Kino żydowskie... (Jewish Cinema ...)*, op. cit., p. 202.

⁸³ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1938, No. 1-299.

⁸⁴ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1918, No. 86.

⁸⁵ See S. Siwczyński, *Od „Casina” do „Wolności”.. (From ‘Casino’ to ‘Wolności’..)*, op. cit., p. 21.

⁸⁶ For more about A. Goldfaden, see M. Pawlina-Meducka, *Z życia teatralnego Żydów... (From Jewish Theatrical Life...)* op. cit., pp. 166-168.

⁸⁷ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1918, No. 29.

⁸⁸ *Goniec Częstochowski*, 1918, No. 48.

The involvement of Częstochowa Jews in film production within the Częstochowa area has yet to be sufficiently researched. It is known that the first Jewish film was made only in 1930. Meanwhile, the Krzemiński brothers, perhaps the best known of Polish film producers, had already begun making films from the beginning of the 20th century. The film *Farma szomrów w Częstochowie* (original title *Hachawa szel Haszomrim be-Częstochowa*), directed by Saul Goskind and filmed by Eugeniusz Modzelewski, tells of the farming work of one of the Jewish youth organisations - *Hashomer Hatzair* (*The Young Guard*). The twenty-minute film was then sent to Palestine and, after the War, it could be viewed in the *Hashomer Hatzair* archives in Kibbutz Merchawia⁸⁶.

The artistic life of Częstochowa Jews during the inter-War period is also interesting. There were many musicians and painters amongst them. The best known Jewish artist from Częstochowa was the world famous violinist Bronisław Huberman, who was born in 1882. In Częstochowa, there was also Abraham Ber Birnbaum who, in 1906, opened the first school for cantors⁸⁷.

A well-known and respected artist connected to the city was Perec Willenberg, a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and St. Petersburg, a student of Riepin and Gerson. In Częstochowa, he established the School of Fine Arts which was attended by both Jewish and Christian youth. In 1918, the *Goniec Częstochowski* reported that "Mr Willenberg's long-standing school of fine arts (ul. Fabryczna 3) has commenced its summer semester during which practical classes and lectures will be held outdoors to allow students to paint and draw from nature. The program is modelled on the program at the St. Petersburg Academy".⁸⁸

During 1928-1929, Willenberg interrupted his teaching duties to renovate the Old Synagogue in ulica Nadrzeczna⁸⁹. The *Express Częstochowski* reported on the progress of the work stating that, "Always and everywhere, his work is characterised by truly artistic expansiveness".⁹⁰ In October 1928, Professor Willenberg took a journalist on a tour of the synagogue which he had already partially redecorated. In accordance with the spirit of the Jewish religion, the paintings lacked any human figures. Instead, there were biblical scenes featuring the Ten Commandments given on Mount Sinai, Rachel's Tomb, the Wailing Wall and the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The ceiling was decorated with two Shields of David and a seven-branched candelabra. The entirety was in Willenberg's style – rich, ornamental, using a harmonious vividness of colour, an original use of Hebrew characters and a stylish frieze⁹¹. After almost a year, the redecoration work was completed. Representatives of the Częstochowa Christian community came to view the new artistic robes of the one hundred year old synagogue, among them being District Administrator Kazimierz Kuhn, Director of the Bank of Poland Baranowski, lawyer Ludwik Mężnicki and painter Mączyński⁹².

Apart from Willenberg, another well-known Polish-Jewish painter and sketch artist who lived in Częstochowa, in the years 1916-1922, was Eugeniusz Zak⁹³.

Up to 1939, Częstochowa Jews were active and dynamic in various social fields. They were especially visible in business, social and cultural life. The dynamic development of Częstochowa, with the participation of the Jews, was stopped by the War. The greatest tragedy in the history of

⁸⁹K. Kasprzak, *Produkcja filmowa w Częstochowie w I połowie XX wieku*, „Almanach Częstochowy”, 2010, s. 194.

⁹⁰J. Mizgalski, *Dzieje, dziedzictwo...* op. cit., s.55.

⁹¹ „Goniec Częstochowski”, 1918, nr 69.

⁹² O renowacji Starej Synagogi piszą również J. Mizgalski [w:] *Dzieje, dziedzictwo...*, op. cit., s. 55-56 oraz S. Willenberg, *Perec Willenberg* [w:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie. Losy...*, op. cit., s. 402-404.

⁹³ „Express Częstochowski”, 1928, nr 248.

⁹⁴ Ibidem.

⁹⁵ *Express Częstochowski*, 1929, No. 198.

⁹⁶ J. Mizgalski, *Dzieje, dziedzictwo... (The History, the Legacy,...)* op. cit., p. 56.

Częstochowa Jews took place in 1942. More than 30,000 of them were transported to the Treblinka death camp. The majority of them never returned. According to various reports from the day Częstochowa was liberated in 1945, only around 5,200 Jews remained in the city⁹⁴.

⁹⁴ H. Wasilewicz, *Moje życie w Częstochowie (My Life in Częstochowa)* [in:] *Żydzi Częstochowianie. Losy.. (The Fate of the Częstochowa Jews ...)*., op. cit., p. 395.