

**ARONOWICZ** Józef (1887–1940), teacher, political and local government activist, born in Wilno.

At the beginning of the 20th century, he entered the famous Wilno Teachers' Institute, from which he graduated after four years. He also completed two years of university studies. At that time, he became a member of the Bund, with which he was associated until the end of his life.

He came to Częstochowa, in 1910 or 1911, as a teacher, working at the local Jewish boys' school at ul. Dojazdowa (Piłsudskiego) 31. From the beginning, he involved himself in the circle of Polish-speaking Jewish intellectuals. His Yiddish (he spoke a good Wilno Yiddish) was readily accepted by even the assimilated Jewish intellectuals, who regarded the language as jargon.

Aronowicz began active in the Częstochowa branch of the St. Petersburg Jewish Literary Society which, however, was disbanded by the Russian authorities. In 1911, the Literary Society was merged with the assimilationist-Zionist "Lira" Literary Society. Aronowicz was elected to its board and fought fierce battles, within the Society, for the recognition of the Yiddish language. When, in the spring of 1912, the Yiddish writer Icchak Lejb Perec visited Częstochowa for the first time, Aronowicz was one of the first to greet him. When, in October of the same year, the writer came to the city for a second time (in connection with the opening of the Jewish library), Aronowicz gave the inaugural speech.

He took part in the work of the drama club as both an actor and a director. On 10th June 1916, he appeared at the memorial service following the death of Sholem Aleichem. He delivered a lecture about his work, read his monologue *Di gimnazie* and appeared in his comedy *Menschen* (People). From 1913 or 1914, he belonged to the Association of Industrialists and Merchants, which was a stronghold of the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia. In 1916, he became a delegate to the inaugural conference of the Union of Gymnastic Societies, which took place in Łódź. There, he fought for the recognition of Yiddish. Under his influence, the Częstochowa Jewish Gymnastic- Sports Association, precisely due to language, remained outside of the national structure for some time.

During World War I, when the Bund in Częstochowa revived its activity (at the same time as the Groser Club was established), he became the First Secretary of the Bund organisation and became its leader. In 1918, Aronowicz (who was already fluent in Polish) led the Bund faction on the Częstochowa Workers' Council. From November 1918, he belonged to Council's Executive Committee. In 1919, standing on the list of the General Jewish Electoral Committee of the

Bund, he became a city councillor. On the City Council, he served on the Finance and Schools Committees. In that same year, as a Bund candidate, he stood for the *Sejm*, but was unsuccessful.

From 1919, he headed the Bund in Częstochowa and was one of the most active in the party. He was one of the founders of the Central Council of Workers' Trade Unions. His radical activities during the war with the Bolsheviks, demanding that all defensive operations cease, resulted in the authorities arresting him on the night of 23rd July 1920, together with the entire Bund committee. For eight months, he was held in an internment camp in Dąbie near Kraków. He was only released at the end of the war. He returned to Częstochowa, but he could no longer work in a state-run school.

He left for Wilno. In 1921, at the request of the councillors of the Częstochowa Polish National Union [*Związek Ludowy-Narodowy*], he lost his seat as a councillor. In Wilno, he worked as a teacher in the Mathematics-Natural Sciences High School of the Central Education Committee (CKO). When, in 1923, the CKO's Humanist High School was opened, he also began working there (as a history and Jewish language teacher). He continued being active in the Bund and, for that reason, after a few years, the authorities forbade him from working at the school.

He was a member of the Bund committee and was elected as a workers' representative to the *Kasa Chorych* [Health Insurance Fund]. He was a senior member of the Wilno Jewish Gmina and a Wilno city councillor. He was also active within trade unions. This activity was ended by the Soviet occupation of Wilno and Aronowicz's arrest by the NKVD in September or early October 1939. In July 1940, he was held in the Minsk prison. In August 1940, his interrogations, harassment and torture began. In October 1940, the prison doctor stated that he had a serious heart weakness which was life-threatening. Following the protests of other prisoners, Aronowicz was then transferred to the prison hospital. He probably did not live to see out his sentence and exile.

His wife was Masza, with whom he had two children - a son and daughter, probably born in Częstochowa.

*Spis nauczycieli 1926*, pp. 321, 322. – R. Federman, *Josef Aronowicz*, in: *Czenstochow*, pp. 141–143; Mielczarek, *Organizacje robotnicze partii żydowskich*, pp. 46, 47; Mizgalski, *Tożsamość polityczna*, p. 209; Prüffer, *Szkolnictwo w Częstochowie*, p. 11; Sobalski, *Związki zawodowe, stowarzyszenia*, p. 132; Szwed, *Żydzi w samorządzie m. Częstochowy*, pp. 156, 165; R. Szwed, *Wybory do Sejmu Ustawodawczego*, p. 19. – “Goniec Częstochowski” 1917, No. 166, p. 3,

1920, No. 178, p. 3. - *Handlowiec. Kalendarz 1914*, p. 192. – APCz, Mag.Cz. 4998, 5012, 5026, Book 8, 5583.

**Wiesław Paszkowski, Juliusz Sętowski**