

BIRO Szymon (1899–) actually Szymon Jakub Birencwajg. He was born on 2nd April 1899 in Częstochowa (birth certificate No. 147), the son of Icek Majer and Bajla née Kurnendz, the brother of Mariem Ruchla, Pinkus and → Machel Birencwajg. His parents, a middle-class couple, endeavoured to provide their children with a good education. Initially, Szymon attended a *cheder*. Fortunately, his teacher was Tański, a kind of modern *melamed*, who taught without the use of a rod. He studied secular subjects with Jakub Wolf Edelist. When he was ten years old, he attended a government *gimnazjum*.

When the war broke out in 1914, the school was closed and the Germans began round-ups of young men to work in the coal mines and steel mills. Szymon was sent, with a group of Częstochowa residents, to a coal mine in Königshütte (Chorzów). The German overseers were brutal and there was hunger. For that reason, many of the forced labourers fled, without documents or money, to other German cities.

In 1917, Szymon managed to return to Częstochowa. The Jewish parties had created a semi-legal labour movement there and carried out branches of cultural work. Szymon joined the Groser Club, a Bund cultural institution led by → Josef Aronowicz. However, he soon left for Berlin, where he joined the *Umophengike Socialdemokratische Partei*. At that time, in Berlin, there was a group of Bund leaders, including → Dr. Aron Syngałowski. Almost all of them were involved in anti-war activities.

At the beginning of 1918, Szymon was arrested by the German military secret police. He spent six weeks in a Berlin military prison, after which he was sent to the Modlin fortress, where more than 150 men and women were being held under arrest. At the end of the war, following a five-day mutiny in the Modlin prison, they were released.

Szymon returned to Częstochowa. He again became active in the workers' movement, even being elected to the Workers' Council. Following its dissolution, he returned to Berlin, where he met → Mendel Szuchter, who helped him to leave to the United States. There, he became involved in Częstochowa organisations, with varying levels of activity.

His wife was actor → Fela Biro-Fajnrajch.

Czenstochower Jidn, pp. VI, VII. - APCz, group No. 58, birth certificate 147/1899.

Wiesław Paszkowski