

**ROTMAN** née WAGA Chaja (1898-) teacher, librarian, political and education activist. She was born on 8<sup>th</sup> February in Częstochowa, the daughter of Jakub Hersz Cwi Waga (-1942) and Bajla Gitla née Binder (-1942). Her brothers were Mosze and → Szlama Stanisław Waga. Her sister was Fajgla (-1937 Częstochowa).

She came from a traditional Jewish family. Her mother was a religious person, mainly devoted to charity and raising her children. Her father was a manufacturer of cheap mirrors (made from window glass), which he sold massively on the Russian market. Following the outbreak of war in 1914m he lost his Russian buyers and began producing toys. His two sons helped him in the factory.

Her older brother was gifted with a beautiful voice and studied with Częstochowa cantors. For some time, he also studied in a Warsaw school, however, he did not become a synagogue singer.

Her parents and brother Mosze, and his family, perished in the Treblinka extermination camp in 1942.

Chaja graduated from a Jewish boarding school and a Polish *gimnazjum*. During World War I, she joined the communal activity mainstream. Influenced by a paper by → Rafał Federman ("Dr Chaim Żyłowski – a Jew and a Man"), she became interested in Jewish books and the Yiddish language. During this period, she became friends with Estera Fuks (later, a teacher in the Soviet Union).

Following the creation, in Częstochowa, of the Jewish Union of Leather Industry Workers (office on ul. Spadek), she began to work with it, including as its librarian. She was also active in the Jewish Workers Education Union. She co-organised courses for adults, literary evenings and took part in the creation of a reading room in the library. She was an assistant teacher to Józka Sztam in the children's home (later named after I. L. Percec).

During this period, led by Magdalena Zalcman, she conducted two-year Polish language courses for free-student girls. A year later, she assumed the management of the second home for children – "Farejnikte". For four years, she was linked with children's homes and Jewish secular schools in Częstochowa.

Unknown dramatic circumstances, of a personal nature, forced her to leave the city. For three years, she ran a children's home in Warsaw, then for a year in

Noworadomsko (Radomsko) and the same in Grodno (where she founded a children's home).

She combined her social activity with politics. She was a member of the Socialist Zionist Party (from 1918, *Farejnikte*). She was active in the union movement, representing Częstochowa at a party congress. Again, representing the party, she stood for election, without success, to the Częstochowa City Council. After 1922 (when *Farejnikte* was dissolved), she left politics and devoted herself only to Jewish education.

In 1927, she married B.M. Rotman and, in that same year, she left with him for America. There, she worked in the Sholem Aleichem orphanage. In the 1930s, with her husband, she visited Europe, including Częstochowa. After the war, she lived in New York with her husband and son Lajzer (1934-).

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**Wiesław Paszkowski**