

SZUCHTER Mendel (1890 or 1891-1931) lawyer, union activist and communist, social activist. He was born in Częstochowa. His father was a poor shoemaker, who lived at ul. Garncarska 70. His mother died early.

Mendel learned to be a tailor. In 1905, he became one of the pioneers of the worker's Socialist-Zionist groups, which were organised by → Izaak Kruk and → Icchak Górski. In that same year, he left for London and, in the following year, he returned to Częstochowa. In 1908, he was arrested during a police raid on the Socialist-Zionist printing house and, in 1909, he was sent to Siberia. He managed to escape and, after a short time, he came to America and settled in Chicago.

In Chicago, he worked as a tailor making coats. He became involved in the activities of trade unions and became one of the leading union activists. He was also active in the American Socialist-Territorialist Organisation. He was one of the pioneers of Jewish education created by those in *Poalei Zion*. Following the Balfour Declaration, along with most of those in the Socialist-Territorialist Organisation, he joined the *Poalei Zion* party. Following the split, he joined the *Poalei Zion* Left and became one of its leaders.

Following the end of the war in 1918, he became one of the main organisers of activities to aid Polish Jews. In 1920, he was sent to Berlin as a delegate to an aid conference. He visited Poland (including Częstochowa), helping many people and institutions. The poverty and the suffering of the people, caused by the war, made a great impression on him and impelled him to become active in the workers' movement.

He became one of the organisers of the *Yiddish Arbeter Hilfskomitet* [*Jewish Aid Committee*] and an ardent supporter of the Soviet Union. The Jewish colonisation within the Soviet Union, and the creation of an autonomous state Birobidzhan, delighted him. He even became one of the founders and a member of the national executive of the international supporting these projects - ICOR (The International Coordination of Revolutionary Parties and Organizations).

Over all that time, he continued improving his education. He enrolled in the Chicago University, first studying agronomy, then law. In 1924, he earned a doctorate in law. In his last years of study, he was also a teacher in a Jewish school near Chicago. When he became a lawyer, his popularity grew considerably. He was a lawyer and a fighter for the rights of ordinary people and trade unions.

He became radicalised and, in 1927, officially joined the Communist Party. In 1929, during the Arab attacks on Jewish settlements in *Eretz Izrael*, he refused to speak at public meetings to justify the Party's position (supporting the Arabs) and was expelled. He was re-admitted into the party, but suffered a mental breakdown. He spent several months in a clinic, then suspended his legal practice. For a long time, he did not recover. His saving was to be starting work as an agricultural organiser in the ICOR.

He died near New York at the end of February, or in the first days of March, 1931.

Czenstochower Yidn, pp. C, Cl; A. Kowalińska, W. Paszkowski, *Z dziejów opieki nad dzieckiem żydowskim w Częstochowie w XX wieku*, Prace Naukowe AJD. Pedagogika 2016, p. 604. – “Częstochower Cajtung” 1931, No. 10 (6th March), p. 1 and 6.

Wiesław Paszkowski