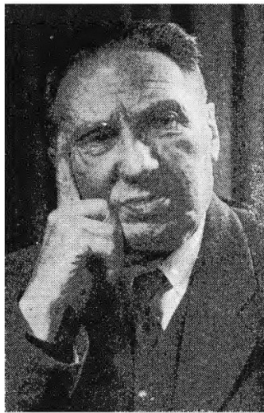


E. Ben-Moshe

## Dr Józef Kruk

Częstochowa gained a reputation throughout Poland as an active and organised community and its people displayed a great understanding in public matters [and in] cultural and artistic enterprises. Many community members donated their might and means, [and] their skills and capabilities to the public benefit. But there were two chosen among the tens of thousands, whose achievements gained them worldwide fame. They were the famous violinist Bronislaw Huberman and Dr Józef Kruk - a thinker, socialist, fighter [and] very accomplished activist.



Dr Kruk was the son of a wealthy, assimilationist family. He found himself as a revolutionist and a fanatical socialist - in the same ranks as those fighting for the liberation of Poland from the control of the Russian Tsar. He was a fighter for its independence and its language.

Already, from the dawn of his youth, Dr Kruk was drawn to the socialist ideal. He would frequent the slums and suburbs, mingling with the toiling masses, preaching, instigating to rebellion and recruiting souls for the equality of classes, the realisation of the socialist ideal and the war against the Tsarist reign.

In the 1930's, upon his return to Częstochowa from the wide world, he delivered lectures [and] organised public meetings - especially towards the elections to the Polish Sejm. He would also give speeches in the Jewish neighbourhoods, on the banks of the Warta, next to the *Kastenes* - the crates of fish - and in other locations.

From my deceased father, I heard the story of when Dr Kruk was still a young lad, in 1904. Those were the first days of the awakening of socialism - a very stormy period of heightened tension and fervour - and, here, Dr Kruk appeared at the head of his group on fair day, when the marketplace was filled to the brim with a multitude of people - peasants and commoners. He went up to the balcony of one of the apartments which overlooked the marketplace and began a speech in Polish against the oppressive Tsarist regime. In his speech, he called the masses to rebel against the foreign power and to fight for Poland's independence. The reason for the assembly was the murder of a Polish labourer by the Tsarist regime's troops. But, before Kruk managed to finish his inflammatory address, the Russian police appeared and, only with difficulty, was he able to flee to safety.

Upon his arrival in Israel, Dr Kruk visited, among other places, *kibbutzim* and, when he was in Ein-Harod, he met with the old *Częstochower* Reb Berisz, the father of the poet Shoshana Częstochowski.

During their encounter, [Dr Kruk] experienced quite a particular "incident".

When Dr Kruk was introduced to Reb Berisz, he remembered and exclaimed, "But if it isn't the well-known socialist and revolutionary *sheiget* [hoodlum] Kruk, whose hand did not spare me either!"

It turns out that, back in the day, Reb Berisz was a shop-owner and employed a worker, who had demanded higher wages. But Reb Berisz was in no hurry to fulfil his request and so the labourer turned to the trade union which was under the leadership of Dr Kruk. The matter was examined and the

results were not long in coming - one fine day, Dr Kruk, with his retinue, stormed into Reb Berisz's shop, holding drawn pistols. They closed the shop's shutters, locked the doors and threatened that unless he raised the worker's wages by one rouble, as he rightly demanded, "such and such" would happen to him. On this "festive" occasion, they also honoured him with ripe epithets, such as "exploiter", "leech", among and others.

The ending was less dramatic because Reb Berisz, taking their impressive appearance into account, declared he was prepared to add 2-3 roubles.

Dr Kruk and his wife now live permanently in Israel - in Jerusalem, the capital. He was a good friend to the deceased President Yitzchak Ben-Zvi and, nowadays, is a [regular] visitor in the home of our current President, Zalman Shazar.

In Israel, Dr Kruk occupies himself with writing. He pens articles and essays for the press and also sends articles abroad. He serves as Honorary President of The Association of Częstochowa Jews in Israel.