

Chapter Eight

In the Shadow of the “Great Selection”

A. The Factory at the Time of the Turnaround

The July selection had a huge impact on the prisoners’ attitude towards their work in HASAG. This time it was made clear to them that even their integration into the most important production was no guarantee of their lives. From now on, in their eyes, the German foremen also became masters over life and death.

The selection was a traumatic event, leaving behind a sea of tears and suffering, but who had time to mourn? The machines were already waiting for working hands, and the Apparatebau factory was in the midst of important transformations.

Back in February 1943, Paul Budin’s message was sent to the German staff, stating that, beginning from 1st March 1943, our firm would have a new name: HASAG – Eisen – und Metallwerke G.m.b. Apparatebau Tschenstochau¹ (see p.112).

This meant that the Apparatebau had transformed from a factory “under commissar management” into a privately-owned firm. At the same time, the Wehrmacht established a “Heeres Abnahmestelle b.d. Fa. HASAG – H-Abnst” (Army Reception Office) at the factory. The duties of the “office” included supervising production, checking the quality of the products and accepting them for shipment to the front.²

As mentioned, in July, the Pelcery firm finally passed into the ownership of HASAG³, and this was another reason for the management’s desire to increase the scope of production – but the prospects did not look good.

Back in May 1943, General Schindler sent a secret report to Albert Speer, in which, alongside complaints about transportation deficiencies and difficulties in supplying raw materials, Schindler pointed out the shortage of professionals:

“The situation is particularly serious now, when, due to the increase in Wehrmacht orders, an expansion of the production of ammunition for the infantry and air force is planned at the HASAG-Częstochowa firm.”⁴

¹ “Mitteilung an alle Reichsdeutschen” 23/02/1943, APCZ, zesp. 192/2, ref. no. 7, p. 87

² Dienstordnung des Heeres – Abnahmestelle b.d. Fa. Hasag Eisen u. Metallwerke, Apparatebau, Radom 01/11/1943, APCZ, zesp. 192/2, ref. no. 7, p. 96

³ See Chapter One, note 25.

⁴ Der Vorsitz der Rüstungskommission in GG, Krakau, 24, März 1943, MA, RH 53 - 23/66, Bl. 67-73

Schindler's expectations were primarily related to the Apparatebau. According to the data on the "factory card" (*Betriebskarte*) of 30th June 1943, 4,462 men and women in total worked at the factory, of whom there were 89 Germans, 985 Poles, five Ukrainians, 3,350 Jews and 3 others.⁵

Following the selection in July, the number of Jews decreased by three hundred, leaving about 3,100 people (see *Betriebskarte*).

These figures imply that less than a hundred Germans were responsible for production which, at this stage (summer 1943), included these main industries:

- Factory construction (*Betriebsbau*);
- Generator manufacturing (*Generatorenbau*);
- Ammunition cartridge recalibration (*Rekalibrierung*);
- Production of small arms (*Infanterie*);
- Toolmaking (*Werkzeugbau*).

Each branch consisted of several departments, an office, a warehouse and a blacksmith shop.

For a while, in addition, a production of rocket launchers (*Stossrohren*) and a department for the assembling of anti-tank missiles (*Presserei*) were also operated. A department for the production and repair of machines (*Maschinenbau*), an electro-technical department and a carpentry shop were at the disposal of the entire staff.

Apparatebau used a special railway, that entered the factory and had an independent power plant. Not far from the industrial buildings were a vegetable garden, a stable, a pigsty, a cowshed, chicken coops for geese and chickens, etc., which, within the framework of the economic department (*Wirtschaftsabteilung*), provided supplies for the German kitchen.

The change in ownership of the company did not affect the composition of the management and the distribution of senior positions

- Ernst Lütt remained the general manager and head of marketing, as did
- his deputy, Dr Herbert Brettschneider, who was also in charge of production.

Subordinate to the two general managers were four department managers (*Betriebsleiter*).

According to the report of the "Reception Office" (*H-Abnst*) dated 26th July 1943, these were:

⁵ Hasag Eisen u. Metallwerke, Apparatebau – Tschenschtochau, *Betriebskarte*, Stand 30/06/1943, BA, R 3/2040

- Chief Engineer Walter Fasold, who was also the Commissar the political of the factory;
- Johann Arndt, Defence Service Representative (*Abwehrbeauftragte*);
- Engineer Alfred Franzke;
- Engineer Waldemar Spalteholz (See p.119).⁶

The ranks of junior managers were:

- chief foreman (*Obermeister*),
- shift foreman (*Meister*),
- deputy foreman (*Vizemeister*),
- shift leader (*Schichtführer*),
- machine group supervisor (*Einrichter*), and
- worker group supervisor (*Vorarbeiter*).

It is worth noting that there was a big difference between the workers of HASAG from Leipzig, members of the famous "*Gefolgschaft*"⁷ and temporary workers, many of whom were referred to work at HASAG from other firms and were not imbued with the spirit of Budin's "local patriotism".

But the defeat at Stalingrad and the bombings in Germany caused the morale of the entire German staff to drop and this was **the decisive turning point in the general atmosphere prevailing in Apparatebau.**

In a circular by Paul Budin from October 1943, which was distributed in all HASAG factories, he warns against the shortening of working hours, which the German workers set for themselves:

"What the Germans are doing sets a bad example for foreign workers, who imitate them a hundred times fold."

The *Werkschutz* in each factory received orders to arrest any German, who wandered around the factory gate, without permission.⁸ This meant that all staff members were, once again, required to increase production levels, and the pressure on everyone increased, from the two directors to the most miserable Jewish prisoner.

⁶ *Entwurf*, Tschenstochau, 26/07/1943, APCZ, zesp. 192/2, ref.no. 7, p. 107 (129)

⁷ *Gefolgschaft* – Here refers to the "employee association" that excels in loyalty and willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the workplace.

⁸ *Rundschreiben*, Leipzig 18/10/1943, APCZ, zesp. 192/2, ref.no. 6, p. 3