

## B. Production or Livelihood? That is the Question

During the summer and autumn of 1943, a camp for the Jews was established on the factory grounds. Residential barracks were built, to which the Jews, who were sleeping in the factory halls, were gradually transferred.

About 450-500 Jews (men and women) worked on the construction site under the guidance of German foremen (*Meister*). Regarding those, the question arises - did the pressure from management and the growing frustration, due to the news from the front, contribute to an improvement in their attitude towards Jews compared to the previous period or to a deterioration? What role did their level of education, working conditions, social origin and party affiliation play in this matter?

It should be noted that, in terms of the amount of information, there are enormous differences between one manager and another. As is known, the most memorable are the best or the worst. The mediocre are forgotten.

Among the management, the prisoners noted the brutal treatment of Dr Brettschneider.

Of the four department managers, the most "popular" was the engineer Fasold, the chief supervisor of the construction work. His appearance alone inspired terror. He was almost as wide as he was tall and his black beard resembled a lion's mane. His strength was famous - he broke Gerszon Laks' teeth, and, when he caught Josl Tendler smoking a cigarette near an acetylene torch, he broke a stick on his back. In 1952, Fasold was tried before a court in Frankfurt and was sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> Surprisingly, the testimonies also reveal expressions of kindness on the part of this formidable *Meister* (Juda Jedliński, Szymon Gelbard).

In the context of the construction industry, it is necessary to again mention Karl Opel ("Morsch"), known as the "terror of the camp". Born in 1899, he was the father of three children and an expert in building fusion reactors. He was not a member of the Nazi Party. In Apparatebau he controlled a group of 75 prisoners. He was a tall and strong man. It was said that he did whatever he wanted with girls. He beat them right and left, with his fist, stick, hammer or any device that came to his hand. Why? "He could not stand Jews!"

According to the testimony of Chaim Koenigsberg, it was impossible to talk to Opel, in response to a question, he would immediately beat them. However, Dawid Sandler admits that he actually liked this "Morsch". Was there a reason for this? It is unknown. What is known is that the supervisor in the construction department, Menachem Birenholc, was loved by "Morsch", because he brokered all kinds of deals between him and the prisoners, including **releasing them from beatings in exchange for a ransom**.

At his trial, Opel was sentenced to death.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Benclowicz, Zeugenaussage, YVA, TR-10/2767-1, p. 74

<sup>2</sup> Tschenschow Prozess, pp. 5, 28, 85, 100

*Meister* Schuster, who was not described much in the testimonies, was associated with the construction industry – the same as was *Meister* Wolf, who supervised one-hundred and twenty female workers.

Better known, was Gustaw Feilscher, born in 1899, known as “*Zandziarz*”, because he supervised a group of Jews working in a sand quarry (“*Sandgrube*”). According to his German friends, he was an anti-Nazi, a quiet man, did not beat prisoners and even smuggled bread for them. According to the Jews, the picture was less idyllic - he would throw stones at his workers and beat them profusely. He did steal bread, but he sold it to Jews at exorbitant prices. It seems that he learned about the “ransom” patent from his friend Opel - he was cruel to Szepsel Rotholc, but when, through the mediation of his supervisor, Mandelbaum, he received money – the beatings stopped!<sup>3</sup>

What were the wages and working conditions of the Germans at the Apparatebau factory? According to the details appearing in the “*Częstochowa Trial*”, the defendants were mostly from the working class or the petty bourgeoisie, had no property and lacked general education. Some were sent to *Częstochowa* by another firm and some were veteran employees of HASAG.

As for the wage conditions, an example can be given of foreman Walter Horn, born in 1901, a welder by profession. He received a monthly salary of 450 RM, which was paid directly to his family in Germany, plus 125 zł. for alimony and current expenses. By comparison, Heinz Günther, deputy foreman in the welding department, received a monthly allowance of 250 zł.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, all Germans received housing in the “colony” houses, free meals in the canteen, Sundays off and holiday vacations. They were promoted and enjoyed improved pay. And most importantly, in most cases, the position protected them from being drafted to the Eastern Front.

Gottfried Staubitzer, a parquet floor layer (*Parkettzieher*), also arrived in HASAG. Born in 1906, he managed the construction department’s carpentry workshop. Twenty-three men worked for him, among whom he earned the nickname “*Ahasuerus*”. He was not a member of the NSDAP. According to his version, “his” Jews enjoyed improved conditions - he allowed them to build cooking facilities, installed small cabinets for storing things and brought them food supplies. After such “humane” acts, it was difficult for Staubitzer to admit that he had beaten all the impecunious ones with a plank. Bribe payers could avoid hard labour or flogging.

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<sup>3</sup> Churban Czenstochow, p. 160, 219, 267

<sup>4</sup> Tschenstochau Prozess, pp. 57, 28-30

Tschenstochau, den 26.7.1943 Bl.Nr.1

Heeres-Abnahmestelle b.d.Pa. Hasag Eisen- u. Metallwerke GmbH 129  
 Apparatebau Tschenstochau in Tschenstochau GG

Postanschrift: Tschenstochau GG  
 Fernsprecher: Heeresvermittlung n. Nr. d. H Abnst 767  
Post 2210 u. 2514  
 Versandanschrift für Behngendungen: Abn Stempel Nr. 716  
 a) für Waggonladungen: Stradom, Anschl.Gl.Pelzer Errichtet am: 18.7.43  
 b) für Stückgüter: Stradom GG

2. Dienststellenleiter: Offz.i.Frw.D. K o s n e y ab: 18.7.1942  
Oberfeuerwerker B r a n d t 1.2.1943

3. Abnahmepersonal:

(Offs.u.Beaute s.Ziff.8)	technisch	Verwaltung
a) Offs.u.Mannschaften	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
b) Angestellte, männlich	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
weiblich	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
c) Arbeiter	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

4. Abnahme bzw. Fertigungsgebiet: wh.2cm Patr.(St)  
15 cm Gr. 19 Stg.  
T.M.Z.42  
Flachstahl St.C.45.61

5. Außerdem Abnahme bei: 3 Firmen lt.Anlage

6. Angaben über Firma: Hasag Eisen- u.Metallwerke GmbH Apparatebau  
Tschenstochau T s c h e n s t o c h a u G G

a) Postanschrift: Tschenstochau  
 b) Fernsprecher: 2210 u. 2514  
 c) Direktor: a)kaufm.Herr Luth, b)techn.Herr Dr.Bretzschneider  
 d) Betriebsleiter: Herren Arndt, Fasold, Spaltchols, Franke  
 e) Berliner Vertretung: Dr.Moyer-Waldeck Berlin SW 68 Ritterstr.59  
 Fernsprecher zu e): 17 76 34  
 f) Belegschaft: a) insges:mt: 4 197  
 b) hiervon für abzunehmende Aufträge: 1076  
(davon 895 Juden)

7. Firmenhilfskräfte:

	technisch	Verwaltung
a) Angestellte, männlich	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
weiblich	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>
b) Arbeiter, männlich	<u>4</u>	<u>-</u>
weiblich	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>

8. Offiziere u. Beante: -----

Report of the admissions office from 26<sup>th</sup> July 1943 (Source: see note 6)

What Staubitzer did not tell concerned the matter of "*Cherchez la femme*" - the entire department knew that he had a Jewish lover, the beautiful Roma Frajtag. She often stayed with the boss in his office, even overnight. When she became pregnant, she had an "operation", as a result of which she died. Staubitzer did not grieve for long and took a new lover, her sister.

These examples of the foremen prove that, for the most part, they were ordinary people, neither SS men nor members of the Nazi Party, and their main concern was not centred around expanding production.

The ease with which any manager, senior or junior, could earn a side income in addition to his modest salary silenced patriotic reasoning and qualms of conscience - "Each of us was knowledgeable about Jewish affairs",<sup>5</sup> meaning that every German knew that the Jew was helpless. Officially, the managers were not obligated to punish the "negligent". On the contrary, the management recommended handing them over to the *Werkschutz*, which was the second arm of power in the factory.

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<sup>5</sup> There, p. 86-87