

Chapter Eleven

“Infantry Above All!”

A. What Happened to the Generators?

Anyone who follows the history of the HASAG company will soon discover General Manager Budin’s weakness for innovations and inventions. The same thing happened with the generators, those same “heaters”, which were intended to supply the engines of trucks with gas instead of gasoline. As you may recall, back in 1942, Budin intended to expand production and achieve a monopoly in the entire *Generalgouvernement*, but reality slapped him in the face.

The beginning was good - for the generator industry (*Generatorenbau*), six departments were established in Apparatebau back in 1942, including a pressing department (*Presserei*) and a welding department (*Schweisserei*).

According to the production inspector’s notes from February 1943, one thousand generators were produced that month, and production of three thousand was planned for April. However, the implementation of the plan was only possible on the condition that the firms supplying the necessary machines and the parts for assembly kept up with the pace of supply.¹

Added to these difficulties was the lack of professional personnel in the welding department. Therefore, women worked here, among whom were four girls - Hadasa Wizenberg, Lunia Goldstein, Natka Glazer and Jadzia Dankowska. Hadasa Wizenberg says:

“The mutual relations were good. A young Polish woman worked with us, Wanda, who befriended us and would bring us food. We didn’t pay her - she knew we had no money.”²

Of course, the inexperience of the workers also affected the quality of production. In the generator control department (*Prüferei*), the boilers were checked for tightness. The worst was a surprise visit from some “big” manager. If he found a defect in the boiler, woe betide the whole team!

The German overseer here was Gustaw Walther, one of the defendants in the Częstochowa trial. His co-workers said that Gustaw hated Jews. It seems, therefore, that he was rightly sentenced to three and a half years in prison.³

As mentioned, one of the departments related to the production of generators was the press department, within which the department for the production of shell launchers (*Stossröhre*) was also operated, which employed about forty men. It was headed by *Meister Wirbatz*.

¹ Protokoll über die Besichtigung der Generatoren Fertigung im Werk Apparatebau... (February 1943), APCZ, group 192/2, ref. 23

² YVA testimonies: Hadasa Wizenberg 0-33/7147; Bela Sandler, 0-33/6882.

³ Riger Sandel, YVA M-1/E/2620, Tschenstochau Prozess, pp. 54, 57, 63

Here too, production encountered many difficulties. In a letter to Paul Budin, dated 6th October 1943, Dr Brettschneider complains about the shortage of many parts and the incompleteness of the control system. All of this made it difficult to complete the production of the first 2,000 launchers.⁴

Over time, the number of orders for generators from the German and Italian governments decreased, because the invention was found to be cumbersome, and the boilers rusted and were unusable.⁵ Despite this, the liquidation of the department continued until 1944.

From the spring of 1943, the chief director of *Generatorenbau* was the engineer Horst Waldemar Spalteholz, born in 1911, who was nicknamed "*Der blasse Joseph*" (Pale Joseph). A member of the Nazi Party and a member of the SS, he was known as a "*Judenhasser*" (Jew-hater). He abused prisoners and, during the July selection, personally drove the families of Jewish police officers into the trucks.

At the Cześćochowa trial, he did not admit to any guilt. During the trial, an interesting incident occurred - among the guests in the hall were also Spalteholz's wife and her friend and, in front of them, sat the student, Irma Rommelsburg. When the Jewish witnesses entered the hall, a call was heard from Mrs Spalteholz direction, "Here come the animals (*Viehzeug*)!"

Irma Rommelsburg testifies:

"I was shocked, and no less shocked by the results of the interrogation, especially by the fact that everything was taken from Jewish prisoners. I couldn't help but to say to the two ladies sitting behind me. 'Now I know where the furs and jewellery you are wearing were taken from!'

"In response, I heard a reply. 'What you are saying is rude, I will remember you for it!' I wrote down everything that I heard and then an usher came up to me and demanded that I destroy all my notes!"

Nevertheless, Spalteholz was sentenced to death.⁶

As for the other foremen, there is the well-known case of Rackwitz, the head of the welding department, who committed suicide in the summer of 1943. According to rumours, he left a letter in which he explained that Germany was doomed and there was no point in living.⁷

Thus, he preceded *Meister Herr* by several months, whose circumstances of death are already known.

⁴ Durchspruch No. 115, 6. Oct. 1943, APCZ, section 192/2, ref. 23, p. 125

⁵ *Churban Czenstochow*, p. 260

⁶ Tschenstochau Prozess, pp. 55, 188

⁷ Wizenberg, YVA, 33/7147

For some time, Spalteholz also had Heinz Günter under his command, who had a distorted face, for which he was nicknamed "*Krzywousty*" (Crooked Mouth). He soon became famous for his cruelty - he also beat women, which did not prevent him from employing a very nice secretary in his office, Franka Gabelska.⁸ And together with him worked Johannes Nicke and it was difficult for the prisoners to judge, which of them was worse.

⁸ Testimonies from YVA: Benjamin Cwajg, 0-33/2826; Majer Wajsblum 0-33/7148.

