

E. The Łódźers are Coming...

During the factory's existence, small transports of a few dozen Jews from Skarżysko or Piotrków would arrive at *Apparatebau* – but this was the first time that several hundred Jews, men and women, had invaded the camp.

Even veteran prisoners, accustomed to suffering, were astonished at the sight of the Łódźers - their clothing was neat, they brought suits and good clothes, but their unusual thinness and grey complexion testified that they were starving to death. When it became known, in the Łódź ghetto, that a transport was being organised to another place and that bread would be distributed to those being sent, volunteers also came.

Among those recruited was Izrael Ajzner, who wanted to be released, and a volunteer was found who agreed to travel in his place, but on the condition that he receive a loaf of bread... But, in the entire Łódź ghetto, it was impossible to find a loaf of bread! And in the end, Izrael went to Częstochowa.¹

For the Jews of Łódź, how great was the shock of the new reality:

“I was locked up in the ghetto for five years; it was a very strange feeling to travel by train... In the ghetto, we became a crowd of Jews isolated from the rest of the world... In Częstochowa, for the first time in years, we saw other Jews and Poles!”².

The newcomers were gathered in the *circus* hall and were still not allowed to meet with the veterans. However,

“While we were still locked up, ‘good’ Jews came to us with the news - do you know about Treblinka, where all the Jews are being exterminated? No one will survive... Maybe you can give us a shirt or a pair of trousers?”

Ruben Gil admits,

“The transition from the ghetto to the camp had a big change in the most important respect to us - the **nutrition** (F.K.: highlighted in the original). For us starving people, the sight of a thick soup, with the possibility of receiving a side dish, seemed like a miraculous sight!”³

And Jeszajahu Horowic adds:

“In the Łódź ghetto, they were rationed two kilos of bread for eight days and, here, I received half a kilo of bread a day, and sometimes an extra helping, too.”

¹ Testimonies from YVA: Izrael Ayzner, 0.3/6942; Yitzhak Rosenwaser, 03/2278.

² Perec Zylberberg, *This I Remember*, Montreal: Concordia University (Chair, 2000), pp. 110-118

³ Testimony of Ruben Gil, YVA, 0-33/6846.

And another wonderful thing: the onion. Chaim Babiacki knew, that the best gift for these starving people was a simple onion, which they lacked for many years in the Łódź ghetto.⁴

The revolutionary innovation for the Jews of Łódź was contact with the Poles. Suddenly it became clear that clothes and various objects, that had no value in the ghetto, had become sought-after merchandise. The Poles bought them and, according to the sellers, gave them a fair price.

In the ghetto, they bought bread for a gold watch and, here a colourful headscarf, was enough... And when they discovered that in this or that department, they could cook the few potatoes which they had bought in a tin can, there was no limit to their happiness...

This extra food, which the Łódźers received, saved them from starvation because, at the factory, they were immediately put into the framework of murderous labour. Additional departments were opened and training was held for machine supervisors. But not everyone had the necessary skills. Max Jakubowicz was a shoemaker and, here, within a month, they wanted to turn him into a mechanic. And the poor man was beaten again.⁵

With all the obstacles, the boxes of produce poured out and production reports piled up on the desk of Gustawa Turowski, the new secretary at the statistical office. She had to deal with them on her own, because the two Poles, who worked with her, did not know German. Nevertheless, mutual relations remained friendly and, from time to time, they would give Gustawa some groceries as a token of gratitude.

The “newcomers” were assigned to various workplaces. Ruben Gil was sent to *Rekalibrierung*. Many were sent to the “Infantry”, where they suffered the beatings of Heinz Günther and Johannes Nicke. Jeszajahu Horowicz became the supervisor of several machines for finishing bullets into rifle bullets.

There was also a share of women - Dina Weichselfisch learned from her neighbour and then supervised eight machines herself.⁶ Frida Dilewska did not remember the name of the department, but she remembered the German *Meister*, who brought her two slices of bread with jam every day. Kajla Kühn received an excellent workplace. She was chosen to work in the printing department, where they printed labels for weapon boxes and various forms.⁷

Ruth Zajdman, who, along with twenty women, was sent from the Raków camp, also worked at the “Infantry”. The machine sorted the bullets by length, width and weight. The work was not difficult, but tiring and, more than once, one woman or another fell asleep next to the machine.

Dr Morel was sent to the “visual inspection” department,⁸ and this is where Hadasa Wizenberg and her friends, who remained unemployed, arrived. This department was ruled by the famous *Meisterin*,

⁴ Testimony of Jeszajahu Horowicz, YVA, 0.3/8690 Chaim Babiacki 0.3/8968

⁵ YVA, M.21/1/672 Max Jakubowicz, Erklärung, 20.2.1949,

⁶ Testimony of Dina Weichselfisch, YVA, 0.3/8810

⁷ YVA testimonies: Frida Dilewska, 0.3/6614 Kajla Kühn, 0.3/4767.

⁸ Testimony of Dr Morel, YVA, 0-2/402.

Klara “the Beautiful” (possibly referring to [Klara Bartsch]⁹). She felt the contradiction between her nickname and her appearance, because she squinted and was lame. And who was to blame? Of course, the Jewish girls, among whom there was no shortage of nice and beautiful ones. Klara would beat them and often sent her victims to the *Wache*. The only one, who managed to gain her sympathy, was Madzia, an elegant woman who knew how to advise Klara on matters of fashion and makeup, and it is no wonder that she “worked” in the department’s wardrobe and not at a machine.¹⁰

The outstanding worker was Miryam Neuman, who was placed at the scales to weigh the department’s produce. Every two hours, she had to report the data to the foremen. It happened that, sometimes, she recorded an excessive weight, in order to cover up for the workers, who did not meet the norm. As luck would have it, she was once caught red-handed by Klara “the Beautiful”, who promised Miryam a suitable punishment.

Upon hearing the threat, a group of supervisors organised themselves. They turned to the *Meister* (probably referring to Niziolek – F.K.) and begged him to soften the *Meistrin’s* heart. In return, he was promised a bottle of vodka and... a torte. After the donations were collected, the matter was “sorted out” and Miryam Neuman could breathe a sigh of relief.¹¹ Who said that there were no instances of solidarity among stthe Jewish workers?

As mentioned, Miryam Zalberg also fell into the “visual inspection” hell after the *Rekalibrierung* warehouse was closed. She also met *Meister* Karl Häussner, the head of the bullet finishing department, and he eventually arranged a good job for her in the final stage of bullet inspection.

Thus, she became the “boss” of twelve machines, twelve women and two supervisors of the machines - the Poles Stefek and Tadek. Both of them were antisemites, harassed Miryam and evaded work. They especially picked on two girls from Łódź, exhausted and poor. The outrage reached its peak when Stefek hid the gloves which they needed for work and both of them were beaten. Miryam found herself in an embarrassing situation - should she complain or not? And to whom should she turn?¹²

The affair with Miryam and her two assistants illustrates the unique situation in which Jews found themselves working in armaments factories. Perhaps the evasion of the two Poles was an expression of the goals of the Polish underground, which demanded disrupting the production process?

⁹ Klara Bartsch’s name is on the list of *Meisters*, see; J. Pietrzykowski *W obliczu śmierci*, (Katowice: Śląsk, 1966), p. 79

¹⁰ Wizenberg, YVA, 0-33/7147.

¹¹ Testimony of Miryam Neuman, YVA, 03/2156

¹² Zalberg, *Moje przeżycia*, IV, pp. 119-132

In a letter dated 18th October 1943, sent to OKH in Berlin, the management of the *Apparatebau* emphasises that the factory had taken all steps to achieve the required productivity by October - thirteen million units of infantry ammunition and six million pistol bullets. This goal was not achieved, and the claim is repeated again that the main obstacle was the evasion of work by the Poles.¹³

And as always, the question arises - was it good or bad for the Jews?

Can this question be answered unequivocally? Miryam did not know either. But she felt, with the beatings that the two girls suffered, that enough was enough. She told the Jewish overseer Bodziechowski about what had happened, and he passed the information on to *Meister* Häussner.

Häussner was angry with Miryam, "Why didn't you tell me about this before?". She took the opportunity to complain about Stefek, "What does he think to himself? He's a worker just like us!" Häussner agreed with her statements and the two ruffians were dismissed from their posts.

One day in June 1944, upon returning to the barrack, Miryam saw several friends gathered. What happened? Somehow it had been known, that tomorrow was the anniversary of the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto". Every prisoner carried, in his heart, the memory of that day, the memory of blood and fire, a day that symbolised the end of Częstochowa Jewry.

In Miryam's barrack and in the others, it was decided to gather in small groups, to dedicate a few minutes of silence to all the loved ones who perished,¹⁴ to those whose last thought was "Do not forget us! And take revenge!"

This was the sweetest hope in the heart of every prisoner - to have the good fortune to see the fall of the Germans! May they burn in flames, as they burned us! So may all your enemies perish, O Israel! For this moment it is worth fighting, suffering and surviving!¹⁵

And Benjamin Orenstein prepared the poem *For Their Death Anniversary* (In lieu of flowers on the unknown graves of the ghetto fighters and partisans):¹⁶

¹³ An OKH, Berlin, 18. Okt. 1943, Betr. Infanterie-Fertigung, APCZ, section 192/2, ref. 8, p. 114

¹⁴ Naomi Zohar, YVA, 0.3/7659

¹⁵ Testimony of Menachem Zylbersztajn, YVA, 0.3/9565.

¹⁶ Churban Czenstochow, p.211

צום יאָר-טאָג

אַנשטאָט בלומען אויף די אומבאקאַנטע קברים
פון די געטאָ קעמפער און פּאַרטיזאַנער.

ניין! איך וועל נישט מער קלאָגן און וויינען,
יאָמערליך פאַרברעכן די הענט.
איך וועל נישט מער זיפצן און צווייפלען,
מאַכטלאָז אָפלאַזן מיינע הענט.

ברידער און שוועסטער, העלדן, מאַרטירער,
געפאַלן זייט איר אין דער בלוטיקער שלאַכט,
אין קאַמף קעגן טיראן דעם פירער,
און קעגן זיינ ברוטאַלער מאַכט.

ניין! איך וועל נישט מער קלאָגן און וויינען,
פאַרגיסן פון די אויגן א טרער.
איך וועל נישט מער יאַמערן און וויינען,
הגם סיקען מיד קיינער טרייסטן מער.

איך וועל פאַר אַיך מיין אַכטונג אויסזינגען,
מיט ווערטער פון האַרץ, וואָס בלוטיקט בייטאָג און ביינאַכט.
טרויעריקע לידער וועלן פאַר אַיך קלינגען,
פאַרן כבוד פון העלדן – געפאַלענע אין שלאַכט.

For Their Death Anniversary

(In lieu of flowers on the unknown graves
of the ghetto fighters and partisans)

*No! No longer I shall lament and weep,
Clasping my hands in grief.
No longer shall I sigh and doubt,
Letting down my hands powerlessly.*

*Brothers and sisters, heroes, martyrs,
You fell in the bloodied battle,
In the fight against the tyrant, the Führer,
And against his brutal regime.*

*No! No longer I shall lament and weep,
Letting down a tear from my eye.
No longer shall I grieve and cry,
Although there is no longer anyone to console me.*

*I shall sing out my reverence for you,
With words from a heart bleeding by day and by night.
Sorrowful songs shall ring out for you,
For the glory of heroes fallen in battle.*