

B. Why Częstochowa

Following the conquest of Poland, its territory was divided into three parts - Pomerania in northern Poland, the “Warta region” in the west and Śląsk, where Poland’s coal and iron mines and heavy industry were concentrated, in the southwest, were annexed to the Reich; the eastern part of Poland, across the Bug River, was transferred to the control of the Soviet Union, in accordance with the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact; while in the “Triangle” in central Poland (which was not annexed to Germany), the *Generalgouvernement* was established, which was divided into four districts (*Distrikt*): Warsaw, Kraków, Radom and Lublin.

Dr Hans Frank was appointed as the Governor-General of the *Generalgouvernement*, and Wilhelm Krüger was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of the police force and the SS (HSSuPF). Each district was headed by a Governor and, by his side, a district Commander of the police and the SS (SSuPF).

Immediately following the occupation, the Wehrmacht made an effort to take control of the local armaments industry. Although, according to the order of 10th October, 1939, several factories were handed over to the Army’s Ground Force, Air Force and Navy.¹

The “Armaments Office of the Ground Force”, whose main concern was the severe shortage of ammunition after the attack on Poland, was interested in launching a new production programme as soon as possible. Hence its interest in the Radom District, within which the former Polish state’s weapons factories were concentrated, including the “munitions production factories” in Skarżysko-Kamienna.

From the summer of 1940, their commissary management (*Komissarische Verwaltung*) passed into the hands of HASAG.² But this did not satisfy Budin, who was interested in taking control of a series of factories, which would ensure the trouble-free production of ammunition in the three main stages: the supply of metallic raw materials, the production of shell casings and bullets, and their filling with explosive materials.

For this reason, Budin tried to also transfer the “Granat” factory in the city of Kielce to the management of HASAG and, in May 1940, he got what he wanted.³

¹ Mieczysław Brones: Some problemy grabieży ekonomicznej w Polsce, dokonywanej przez Wehrmacht w okresie 1.9-25.10.1939, BGKBZHP, vol. XVIII, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1968), p. 56

² Between September 1939 and June 1940, the Skarżysko factories were under joint commissary management of the HASAG company and the Reichling corporation.

³ Felicja Karay, *Heaven or Hell? Two Faces of the HASAG-Kielce Camp*, Yad Vashem, Collection of Studies, Volume 32 (ב"ה), Jerusalem (5764), p. 223.

The “Achilles heel” in Budin’s plan remained the supply of iron and steel. But the loot had already been divided: in the Śląsk region, the government established two foundry corporations, and in the Radom district, the “Reichswerke Hermann Göring” (Hermann Göring Factories) took over the foundries and steel and iron factories in Starachowice and Ostrowiec.⁴

Against such a strong competitor, even HASAG was powerless. Therefore, Budin’s attention was turned to Częstochowa, where a foundry was located in the suburb of Raków. During the period of independent Poland, it was called “Modrzejów Hantke, United Mining and Casting Plants Ltd, Częstochowa Foundry” (Modrzejów Hantke Zjednoczenie Zakłady Górnictwo – Hutnicze Sp. Akc. Huta Częstochowa). In 1936, 1,069 Poles worked there.⁵

Budin wanted to obtain, from the *Generalgouvernement* authorities, the commissary management of the Raków foundry and, in this struggle, he was assisted by the armament inspector (*Rüstungsinspekteur*), General Maximilian Schindler, who was responsible for the supply of weapons manufactured by the *Generalgouvernement*.

In the end, Hans Frank agreed that HASAG would receive, from the Wehrmacht, the commissary management of the Raków foundry. The deal was implemented on 12th October 1940.⁶ Thus, “Raków” became the bridgehead of the HASAG corporation in Częstochowa.

The decisive turning point began with the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The flow of orders increased again and new types of ammunition were developed. It is no wonder that the momentum led Budin to make initial explorations regarding the possibility of purchasing the three factories from the *Generalgouvernement*: in Skarżysko, Kielce and Częstochowa.

On 7th November 1941, a meeting of the board of directors of the HASAG company was held in Leipzig. Budin proudly presented the periodic balance sheet as at 30th September 1941, emphasising that the “picture, reflected in the balance sheet, testifies to the efficient work of the company”.

Budin then reported on the state of the negotiations regarding the acquisition of the three factories

⁴ Czesław Madajczyk: *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), vol. I., pp. 520-521

⁵ Inwentarz of the ensemble akt: Hasag, Hugo Schneider A.G., Eisenhütte Tschenstochau (Modrzejów - Hantke Zejedno Zakłady Górnictwo-Hutnicze Sp. Akc. Huta Częstochowa) 1898-1944, Archiwum Państwowe w Częstochowie (APCZ), ensemble no. 138, Wstęp

⁶ Rüstungswirtschaftlicher Lagebericht, 12/09/1940, Militärarchiv Freiburg (MA), RH 53-23/27, p.118

in the *Generalgouvernement*, and noted that “HASAG would take a wait-and-see attitude regarding the factories in Skarżysko-Kamienna and Kielce, and that towards the foundry in Częstochowa, its attitude would be more positive.

In principle, HASAG would be ready to fulfil its role for the national economy. But, at the same time, it would be ready to take measures that would be appropriate to the structure of the company” (see page 29).⁷

What measures did Budin mean in his vague words?

⁷ Niederschrift über die Sitzung des Aufsichtsrat der Hugo Schneider A.G. am Freitag, den 7 Nov.1941, StAL, ADCA 1044, p. 117