

C. The Beginning of the Awakening

The rise and fall of the resistance movement in the Częstochowa ghetto, and its comparison with similar movements in other ghettos, is a subject worthy of special and comprehensive research.

Here, in the context of the topic “The HASAG-Apparatebau Camp”, the text will focus on clarifying several fundamental questions:

- A. What was the attitude of the HASAG workers towards the idea of rebellion?
- B. What was their contribution to the resistance movement in the ghetto?
- C. To what extent did the existence of the HASAG factories influence the attitude of the ghetto Jews towards the idea of rebellion?

Several movements in the Jewish community, Zionist and non-Zionist, competed for the first place in the emergence of the idea of rebellion.

According to Benjamin Orenstein, a member of the left-wing *Poalei Zion*, the nucleus of the rebellion was already revealed in the “Big Ghetto”, against the backdrop of the activities of the left-wing “Workers’ Council”. In contrast, members of *Ha’Shomer Ha’Tzair* (*The Young Guard*) claimed that the call for rebellion came from the Warsaw Ghetto, which had regular contacts with youth movements in Częstochowa.

In the first stage – between October 1942 and early January 1943 – it can be stated that the **idea of the uprising was born at the same time among the youth of various factions** and under the influence of the same factors: the brutal deportations in the autumn of 1942, which showed in full force the helplessness of the Jews and spread information about their terrible fate in Treblinka.

The first to organise, in October, were the communists led by Henryk Tencer, who later preferred to be active on the “Aryan side”. At the same time, in November, four underground organisations spontaneously appeared in the ghetto:

1. The “Kibbutz”, which included members of *Ha’Shomer Ha’Tzair*, *Gordonia*, *Dror* and non-partisan groups, led by Rywka Glanc and Abram Zylbersztajn.
2. The “66” group, founded by six girls, including Sara Gutgold-Edelist and her sister, Saba Rypsztajn, and others. They lived at ul. Nadrzeczna 66, hence the name. They were also joined by boys, most of whom were former secondary school students. From the end of 1942, the group was headed by Mendel Fiszlewicz, who had managed to escape from Treblinka.
3. The third group included two former TOZ activists: Dr Adam Wolberg, former Polish army officer, and leader of the Bund movement in the ghetto, Liber Brener.
4. A group of communists, led by Adam Sztajnbrecher.¹

¹ Auerbach, History of the Jews of Czestochowa, p. 130.

At that time, Mojżesz Zylberberg was at the HASAG-Apparatebau factory, where he had arrived with the *Metalurgia* transport in September 1942. A member of *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*, he was active in the underground movement in the Warsaw ghetto and when the Gestapo tracked him down, he fled to Częstochowa. Here, he was introduced to the local *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair* members.

When he was sent to Apparatebau, there, he found people, who were broken physically and spiritually, and decided to spread the idea of rebellion among them.

Against this background, he established contacts with Eliezer Szmulewicz and his brother, Ziskind. Mojżesz organised mutual aid among his supporters, and, even before entering the "Small Ghetto", they became a cohesive group.²

With the arrival of the HASAG members in the "Small Ghetto", connections were established between all the groups and, **at the end of December 1942, the Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB) was founded in Częstochowa.** The organisation's alternative name was the "Kibbutz". Mojżesz, Dr Wolberg, Brenner, Fizlewicz, Rywka Glanc and others were elected to its leadership.

The main challenge was determined to be the struggle against the Germans and the defence of the ghetto. No special manifesto was compiled with an indication of the ideological goal, as was the case with the "Warring Pioneer" organisation in Kraków, which was founded by the "Akiwa" movement.³

It is possible that ideological differences between the various groups prevented its compilation.

The main areas of activity were declared - buying weapons, collecting money, building tunnels in the ghetto for storage and defence purposes and developing connections with the Polish underground. It was decided to collect money as donations, and from those who refused – as ransom. The number of members increased to 300. The movement operated in groups of five, Under the command of Mojżesz, with military advice from Dr Adam Wolberg.

Did the Germans know anything about the establishment of the ŻOB?

The Gestapo and the command of the *Schupo* still maintained a network of informers in the "Big Ghetto" and there is no doubt that they continued to operate in the "Small Ghetto" as well.

At the end of December 1942, the Germans arrested Mietek Ferleger, the first commander of "Group 66", while he was on his way to a meeting to purchase weapons. After being tortured, he was executed. He did not betray his comrades, but how do we know that the first information about the organisation of the Jews did not reach Degenhardt's ear from other sources?

² Szmul Ma'in, "*Moitek*" – *Chronicles of a Fighter*, Institute for the Study of Zionism and the Diaspora named after Zvi Luria, Giva't Haviva, March 1981, pp. 68-69

³ Felicja Karay, *Many Faces of Heroism: The History of the Kraków Community During the Holocaust*, Yad Vashem and the Ministry of Education, Jerusalem 2002, p. 75.