

The Period of Bartenschlager's Rule in HASAG-Pelcery From November 1944 to 16th January 1945

Bartenschlager is one of the many SS men who embody the ideological and programmatic essence of National Socialism. At first, he was chief of the *Werkschutz* in Skarżysko and, as such, he was an unlimited ruler over the lives and deaths of the Jewish workers, as well as over the workers of other nationalities.

He always ran about with a revolver in hand and, if he came upon somebody, he shot them. He would pick out the prettiest and youngest Jewish women, force himself upon them [and then] take them away to the woods and shoot them. He took the most critical of the little food rations, which were designated for the enslaved Jews, and sold them for black market prices. He also robbed all the valuables during the searches of the regularly arriving Jewish transports, and, in this manner, became wealthy. He also had a helper, who assisted him in his criminal deeds. This was the Jewish degenerate Jolles. Bartenschlager was the personification of the Nazi regime - pillage, murder, and sexual and criminal offences.

The criminal Bartenschlager came to HASAG-Pelcery to set things in order. He had exclusive authority over the supervision of all the HASAG camps in Częstochowa. He took no account of HASAG's political management and did anything he pleased.

He immediately introduced an entire array of changes, the purpose of which was to break, even further, the morale and the bodies of the enslaved Jews. By his order, at once, a gate was built between the factory and the camp grounds. Guards stood at this gate, day and night. No one was allowed in or out on his own, but only [groups,] in tight formation to and from work.

A Jewish police force was once again formed. Kadziłto, the foreman of the transport department, volunteered to serve as commandant. His deputy was Milek Szperling. An entire group of SS men, sadists from evacuated camps, arrived to carry out Bartenschlager's reforms. "Jewish specialists" were also brought in - a German Jew, Goldstein, as camp leader, and two policemen, Jidl Frenkel and Immerglik from the Warta camp in Częstochowa.

At the gate, they began to rebuild part of barrack №10 into a guardroom, and to make a kitchen within the camp grounds, so that the night-shift workers would not need to leave the camp grounds during the day for lunch.

Everyone's clothes were marked by smearing them with a reddish-black paint – the men, on the back, breast and trousers, and the women, on the back and breast. The terror became acuter from minute to minute.

[Railway] wagons arrived on a daily basis, with machines from evacuated factories. The SS men brought, for themselves, wagons with office furniture and all kinds of fittings - chandeliers and various other stolen items.

One could actually become disoriented as to the strategic situation and as to just how long the War would last. A secondary railway line was quickly built to connect the factory from all sides with the railway station.

Everyone was unsettled by all these phenomena. The foremen also feared the SS men. The Jews stopped manufacturing their own products and also doing business. The Poles no longer wanted to bring in food products, which led to hunger in the camp. The SS men brutally beat the Jewish labourers with long whips, during work, and forced them to complete fantastic work quotas, to which they added that the number of workers was too large for the quantities produced.

A series of lay-offs ensued. Those who had been made redundant were transferred to other camps - some to Warta, others to Buchenwald, and the women to Ravensbrück. The camp took on a new appearance. The policemen, firefighters, foremen and *kapos* [all] wore different coloured armbands. The police and firemen wore special caps. The armbands were blue and red.

Every day, the SS men came to the rollcalls. Every group marched past them, and the *kapo* had to call out the group's number and how many workers [it comprised]. The camp leader, Goldstein, taught the *kapos* how to make these announcements. He trained with them, schooling them in this Nazi doctrine. The procedure was as follows. [When] the groups were lined up to march past the gate, the *kapo* gave the first order, "*Forward march! Caps off! Eyes to the right!*", and then came the *kapo's* report to the SS, namely, "*Kapo nineteen reports thirty Häftlingen*¹." After marching by, came the second command, "*Caps on!*". No one was familiar with the word "*Häftlingen*". On one occasion, the *kapo* announced "*thirty pitlingen*"², and, when Goldstein drew his attention to the fact that the word was not "*pitlingen*", he reported "*thirty hefker-yingen*"³.

This state of affairs continued until Monday, 15th January 1945. In the late morning hours, between ten and eleven o'clock, Bartenschlager and a group of SS men set about evacuating the Jews from HASAG-Pelcery. The night-shift was rounded up and placed into rows of five and groups of one hundred. They were then taken, under the guard of *Werkschutz*, to the railway station. Once the night-shift had been sent off, the turn came for all those who were in the "*cyrk*" and the construction operations. Later, work was stopped in the departments. Many of the foremen were not abreast of the strategic situation and did not allow the work to be discontinued. As soon as they found out about the state of affairs, with lightning speed, they ran to the "*colony*", packed their things and escaped by the shortest route. The same happened in the other HASAG camps in Częstochowa.

The next day, Tuesday, 16th January 1945, a transport of women was sent away and, in the evening, the *Werkschutz* chief, Hermann, took a transport of men with him. The first transport, on Monday, was sent away to Buchenwald. The second transport (women), on Tuesday, 16th January 1945, was sent to Ravensbrück. The last one - the third transport (men) - was taken to Gross-Rosen.

¹ [TN: Ger., prisoners/detainees.]

² [TN: Yid., plural form of "*pitling*", a whole smoked herring with head, tail and fins.]

³ [TN: "*Debauched youths*", made up of the Heb. "*hefker*" (lawless/licentious) and Yid. "*ying*" (youth, derogative form).]

Even in the final moments, the sadist Bartenschlager ran about wildly, brandishing his revolver. He had still wanted to evacuate everyone from Warta and, to that purpose, had called a general rollcall. But he failed to do so and fled hurriedly, for the city was already being heavily attacked by the Soviet army.

That same night, the Soviets entered Częstochowa. The former “heroes” - the *Werkschutz*, SS men, operations managers and other Nazi pests - fled to where the pepper grows⁴. The 5,200 Jewish inmates in the HASAG camps who had not been evacuated, were liberated. A committee was immediately established, which set itself the task of providing the freed Częstochowa Jews with dwellings, food products and clothing.

It was completely different for the evacuees. For them, a new hell began. Many of them perished from hunger, cold, arduous labour and illness. The rest were tortured over another three or even four months, until they were finally liberated as a result of the general defeat of the tyrannical Nazi regime.

⁴ [TN: Pol. and Yid. expression denoting an unknown, distant place, akin to “the ends of the earth”.]