

## Bernard Kurland

Bernard Kurland was one of the most beloved communal activists in Częstochowa. He was endowed with unique capabilities, which manifested themselves in the logical manner in which he viewed social problems and his unwavering will to fight for justice. On top of that, he was a man with an academic education. All this inspired deference and sympathy towards him.

During the earliest years of his youth, he was active as a committee of management member of the "Warta" Sports Club. However, at the same time, he worked in an entire array of communal institutions and was one of the founders of the Commercial Employees' Union. He was concerned with elevating the intellectual state of the members and bringing betterment as regards their economic interests. Bernard Kurland was distanced from politics and belonged to no political party.

Prior to the War, he worked as accountant and, later, was a *prokurent*<sup>1</sup> of the Joachim [Chaim] Dawidowicz firm. Shortly before the outbreak of the War, he became independent, producing different chemical articles, and held the agency for foreign firms.

When Nazi war broke out, Bernard Kurland was faced with a social test. He became a member of the *Judenrat*, in the capacity of chief of the important Employment Bureau department. He did not lose himself, like all the others, and stood guard over the interests of his ethnic brothers and sisters.

He was the only one who risked travelling to Cieszanów and intervening in the greatest murderer of Jews, [Hermann] Dolf [sic Dolp], with the effect that the Częstochowa Jews be released from the camps in Cieszanów and Oszczów<sup>2</sup>. His efforts were crowned with success. He bought off the Nazi murderer and freed the Częstochowa Jews from the camps. This action made him famous in the entire region, such that they came to him from all the *Judenräte* to ask him to intervene for other cities also. Within the limits of his possibilities, he also did everything for Jews from other cities. He supported all the demands of the workers to improve their economic conditions and was the only member of the *Judenrat* who justified the *Arbeiterrat's* proposal to purchase armaments.

During the period of the deportations, Bernard Kurland did everything to save anyone he could, on the grounds that this or that person was a good, professional labourer.

In the "Small Ghetto", he was the manager of the *Arbeitseinsatz* [labour deployment] and, as such, he took advantage of his position to assist the underground movement by enabling [combatants] to go along with different work groups in order to carry out specific missions.

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Pol., authorised signatory/chief clerk.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: Although the author writes above on p.82 that the Częstochowa Jews were sent to work in the Cieszanów and *Hrubieszów* camps, this is not a contradiction, as the Oszczów camp was also along the so-called "Otto Line", or the trenches along the border with the Soviet-occupied part of Poland, of which Hermann Dolp was in charge. (see here: <https://www.holocausthistoricalsociety.org.uk/contents/aktionreinhardt/hermandolp.html>)]

He helped anyone, who wished to flee the “Small Ghetto”, by sending them to such workplaces from which they could disappear with ease.

The day of 20<sup>th</sup> March 1943 arrived and he was taken along with the intellectuals in the Purim *akcja*. He realised that they were all being taken to the cemetery to be shot. So, he jumped off the freight truck and others followed him. He hid in a bunker with Moryc Kopinski and his son. The bunker was uncovered and he was taken together with the Kopinskies to the gendarmerie to be shot. Kurland was granted an amnesty by Degenhardt and was brought back to the “Small Ghetto”, where he continued to hold the position of manager of the Employment Bureau. He had no illusions about the Nazi murderers, and continued standing at the service of the underground movement and helping his brethren in any way he could.

During the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, when 3,600 Jews were made to stand in the [Warszawski] Rynecek, he did everything he could in order to ensure that as many Jews as possible should be led away to HASAG, so as to prevent victims. He, too, arrived in HASAG, where he carried out one of the most important things - the creation of a canteen, where one could buy an unlimited amount of bread.

The tragic day of the selection in HASAG-Pelcery arrived, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1943, and on the following day, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1943 (18<sup>th</sup> Tamuz<sup>3</sup>), he was taken to the *akcja*. He conducted himself like a worthy man - a proud Jew and fighter - and did not appeal to Director Lüth, who would certainly have saved him. Instead, he gave a speech against the barbaric Nazi regime and perished on the [Jewish] people’s altar as a hero and a martyr.

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<sup>3</sup> [TN: One day after 17<sup>th</sup> Tamuz, which is a Jewish fast day commemorating the breach of the walls of Jerusalem before the destruction of the Second Temple.]