

# Częstochower Folklore<sup>1</sup> During the Nazi Period

## I. The Doctor From the AK

The Polish underground movement of General Sikorski's followers was called the "AK" (*Armia Krajowa*, or Home Army).

In the HASAG-Pelcery camp, Dr Bresler was referred to as "the doctor from the AK", due to the fact that he [only] had two medications at his disposal - aspirin and *Kogutek*<sup>2</sup>. Each time a patient came to him, regardless of his malady, he was given either powder A or a K<sup>3</sup>.

## II. Ball

Every *akcja*, on a larger or smaller scale, was called a "ball" in Częstochowa, because the Nazi murderers arrived in a state of drunkenness and always celebrated balls before and after perpetrating the atrocities.

## III. The Ball is Covered

When people were caught up in an *akcja*, it was called "the ball is covered"<sup>4</sup>.

## IV. *Placówka*<sup>5</sup>

Every inhabitant of the ghetto had to be employed. Each type of work location was referred to as a "*placówka*", which is derived from the term "workplace".

## V. Covered

Remaining in the "Big Ghetto" or in the "Small Ghetto" without a workplace posed a mortal peril. One, who had a workplace and a working card, was "covered" as far as the Nazi authorities were concerned.

## VI. A Covered *Placówka*

An easy job, or one in such a place where the foremen had been bought off by the Jews, who did no work at all and received the certificates, was called "a covered *placówka*".

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Viz. colloquialisms.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: Brand name of an inexpensive, commonly used headache medicine.]

<sup>3</sup> [TN: In the author's article in "Czenstochov" (1958), also titled "Częstochowa Folklore During the Nazi Period", he explains that the humour of this witticism lies therein that Dr Bresler's medicines were just as useless as the *Armia Krajowa*.]

<sup>4</sup> [TN: The author provides no further explanation, but the phrase is likely to mean "the attendance of the ball is booked".]

<sup>5</sup> [TN: Pol., lit. "facility/institution".]

## VII. *Fasewen*<sup>6</sup>

Labourers, who worked with the, now ownerless, Jewish possessions on ul. Garibaldiego, would take different things with them into the “Small Ghetto”. Taking such items was called “*fasewen*”. A worker caught with them faced a death sentence.

## VIII. *Fasownikes*

The labourers who engaged in “*fasewen*” were called “*fasownikes*”.

## IX. *Meline*<sup>7</sup>/*Bunker*

A hideout was called a “*meline*” or “*bunker*”. The temporary jails were also referred to as “*bunkers*”.

## X. *Turks*

The tragic events of the extermination of Częstochowa Jewry elicited a reaction, against the passivity of the religious Jews, on the part of the fighting youth.

One time, when a young man was passing through a courtyard, he heard a pious Jew loudly crying out in prayer, “*Atu [Eloyhim] emes y’dvorchu emes*”<sup>8</sup> (You, God, are just and Your deeds are just), to which the youth retorted, “*God does Turkish things to you*<sup>9</sup> - and you praise Him!” Henceforth, the religious Jews were referred to as “*Turks*”.

In HASAG-Pelcery, the appellation “*Turk*” was popular. When a religious Jew arranged [to meet] with someone, he would tell him, “When you come to the barrack and ask for the *Turk*, they’ll show you straight to me.”

## XI. *Kajlehdiks*<sup>10</sup>

A saccharine tablet was called “*a kajlehdiks*”.

## XII. *Podeszwy*<sup>11</sup>

In HASAG-Pelcery, lunch was often made with tinned *buraki ćwikłowy* (beetroots). These beetroots were as tough as leather and could not be softened - thus they were called “*podeszwy*.”

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<sup>6</sup> [TN: Infinitive of a verb, most likely derived from the Yiddish word “*fas*”, meaning “*barrel*”, as goods were smuggled into the ghetto in containers such as a canister for food (also called “*fessele*”, or “*little barrel*”), as mentioned above on p.153.]

<sup>7</sup> [TN: Biblical Heb., “*hovel*”, and “*doghouse*” in modern-day Heb. (pronounced “*meluna*”).]

<sup>8</sup> [TN: אתה אלוהים אמת ודברך אמת; part of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, which is said out loud by the cantor, but silently by the congregation, meaning that this happened during public prayer on Rosh Hashana and that the Jew in question was actually the cantor, and which translates as “*You, God, are true and Your word is true*”. The author’s forthcoming rendering thereof is not the accepted one.]

<sup>9</sup> [TN: As explained on p.197 of Nahum Stutchkoff’s posthumously published work “*Mame-loshn*”, this expression is derived from the (erroneous) stereotype that once prevailed, to the effect that the *Turks* were thieves and murderers and were capable of the most heinous deeds.]

<sup>10</sup> [TN: Yid., “*a round one*”.]

<sup>11</sup> [TN: Pol., “*shoe soles*”.]

### **XIII. Kayaks**

There was a type of slippers made just out of wood, without *cholewki* [uppers], which would fall off one's feet, because they could not be tied. The feet "swam", as it were, in these wooden slippers - which is why they were called "kayaks".

### **XIV. Miotelka<sup>12</sup>**

One of the *Werkschutz* chiefs in HASAG-Pelcery, at the rollcalls, would wear his revolver on his breast. The revolver hung on a leather strap around his neck and, when he walked about, it swung to and fro, like a feather-duster sweeping his uniform, and that is why this *Werkschutz* leader was called "*Miotelka*".

### **XV. Muselmann<sup>13</sup>**

In the concentration camps, a dried-up, emaciated prisoner was referred to as a "*Muselmann*".

### **XVI. Częstochower Muselmänner**

*Częstochower landsleit*, who were evacuated from the Dora [concentration camp] to Bergen-Belsen, were shrivelled and emaciated. At the time, they had not been given anything to eat for eight days and nights and had been transported in sealed train wagons. When they arrived half dead in Bergen-Belsen, people called them "*Częstochower Muselmänner*".

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<sup>12</sup> [TN: Pol., "feather-duster".]

<sup>13</sup> [TN: The term is obviously related to the word "Muslim", although the reason for its use is debated to this day.]