

Janek Krauze

He was born in Częstochowa in 1919 to the manufactured goods merchant Zysman Krauze. After completing primary school, he studied metalwork at the Crafts School at Garncarska 8-10.

As a student, he belonged to the *Ha'Noar Ha'Tzioni* [The Zionist Youth] youth group and to the Makabi sports club, where he distinguished himself in two fields - football and boxing.

When the Germans marched in, his family was materially ruined, because all the merchandise in the manufactured goods shop, which had existed for twenty years, was confiscated by the Germans. His father, Zysman Krauze, opened a café in his now-empty shop, where Janek worked until the day of the *akcja*. He took an interest in the conversations of the clients and actively participated in them.

In 1940, he became engaged to Genia Windman. On 22nd September 1942, his fiancée and her mother were sent away to Treblinka. Janek Krauze became embittered due to his personal and national misfortune, which made him decide to take revenge.

As soon as the Jewish Fighting Organisation ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) was formed, he was one of its first members. He left the "Small Ghetto" and put himself at the service of the partisans, taking part in an entire series of operations. The first mission was in Kamyk, where he and a group of others disarmed the gendarmerie post, took their weapons and three uniforms and destroyed all the documents.

The second "job" was one of the greatest, and it was spoken about all over Poland. Janek Krauze, along with ten other members of the AL (*Armia Ludowa*, The People's Army), launched an attack on the Częstochowa government bank. They arrived in a freight van, dressed in German uniforms, cordoned off the street with guards on either side of the bank and took over two million złoty and various valuables. At the time (April 1943), the entire gendarmerie was mobilised against them, but to no avail. The partisans took the uniforms from Höniger's drycleaner shop on Aleja 35.

After each successful operation, Janek Krauze's lust for battle increased, as did his energy. He disarmed an *Werkschutz*, who was leading Jewish workers and also took part in an entire array of operations.

On 18th March 1943, he was preparing for a major mission of derailing a German train with ammunition and military personnel from its tracks. The base from which they were to leave was the *Möbellager* on ul. Wilsona 20-22. The foreman there was Machel Birencwajg, a member of the underground movement.

[However,] an unexpected incident took place. An eleven-year-old, boy by the name of Kongrecki, emerged from one of the numerous hiding places that were there, in order to go and buy something. A gendarme detained him and gave him a terrible beating, thus extracting from him a declaration as to where he was staying. Unable to withstand the physical pain, the

eleven-year-old boy revealed to him that he was with his mother [and sibling] in a bunker in the *Möbellager*. An SS squad then came to the *Möbellager* and, unexpectedly, entered the room of the partisans, who were unable to put up any resistance. One of the seven partisans managed to escape. The other six, including Janek Krauze, were put in chains and led off to the Gestapo, who tortured them in order to find out from where they had obtained the weapons which had been found in the room. All of them held up worthily and did not utter a single word in betrayal.

On the second day, they were taken to the cemetery, where they were told to dig pits. The heroic partisans did not obey this cynical command. The Gestapo men beat them murderously and then shot them.

Following liberation, the Jewish Committee in Częstochowa sought out the location of the executed partisans and erected a monument.