

Jewish Communal and Cultural Life in the “Big Ghetto”, the “Small Ghetto” and the HASAG-Pelcery Camp

The occupation of Częstochowa by the Nazi regime completely paralysed the city's communal and cultural life. In the first days, all the *gimnazja*, schools and communal institutions were occupied by the German military. Any form of instruction - even private - was forbidden. Life under the constant pressure of bayonets, swords, bloody spectacles, forced labour, deportations and physical terror killed the mental and physical capabilities for spiritual creation. [Nevertheless,] after a short interval, everything began to develop once more, but on a smaller scale. The numerous Jewish *gimnazjum* professors and teachers in Częstochowa began giving private lessons and secretly arranged groups with a general *gimnazjum* curriculum.

At first, there were no newspapers at all but, later, German newspapers published by the Nazis, as well as Polish newspapers, edited by *Volksdeutsche* in the spirit of Nazism, began to appear on sale.

The physical and emotional repressions, which the Nazi authorities employed as regards the Jews, also spiritually poisoned Polish society. Some of the Polish intellectuals were shot and the others were sent to forced labour in the concentration camps. Dark individuals appeared on the horizon, who “sang along” with the general Nazi choir, believing the words of *Generalgouverneur* Hans Frank, that Poland would forever remain part of the German Reich.

Hans Frank's explicit declaration, to the effect that there was no place for Jews in Poland, caused Jewish society to wish to avoid any contact with the German authorities. Every perceived assistance on the part of Polish society turned out to be untrue and hopeless. On the contrary, Polish degenerate elements, as well as the AK, supposedly the underground movement, collaborated in full agreement with the Germans to exterminate the Jews.

In 1941, a Polish-language Jewish newspaper began to appear. The paper was called *Gazeta Żydowska* (Jewish Newspaper). It was published in Kraków, and its purpose was to inform on all the German regulations pertaining to Jews. Despite the fact that the paper featured literary pieces on the Jewish classics and also novels, the attitude towards it was negative, because the newspaper was inspired by the Nazi regime. In one of that same newspaper's issues, a report on the activity of the *Arbeiterrat* in Częstochowa was printed, despite the fact that the executive [board] was opposed to publicising its activity.

It sounds more than fantastical (it is, however, a fact), that an illegal, illustrated, periodical newspaper entitled “*Rasta*” was published in the Częstochowa ghetto. The name is an abbreviation of the term “*Rada Starszych*”¹ (*Judenrat*). This newspaper was published by the *Judenrat*'s opposition. The Jewish populace in Częstochowa thought that the editors of *Rasta* were Dr Adam Wolberg, the lawyer Mendel Goldberg and, to some extent, the lawyer Józef Broniatowski also, as they knew and were familiar with their negative attitude towards the *Judenrat*. They constituted the main spiritual foundation of the opposition to the *Judenrat*'s methods and communal dishonesty.

¹ [TN: Pol., lit. “Council of Elders”.]

The lawyer Józef Broniatowski had made the ruling executive of the *Judenrat* feel uncomfortable by submitting unwelcome questions and he had, therefore, been dismissed from the *Judenrat*. He was personally pleased with his sacking.

The newspaper's purpose was to call to conscience the representatives of the *Judenrat* who, at the time, were the rulers over the life and death of the Jewish population in the Częstochowa ghetto, to the effect that they should not be tools in the hands of the Nazi authorities, who strove to morally and physically destroy the Jews. This was done with satirical pieces mocking the influential members of the *Judenrat*, illustrated with caricatures. This newspaper boosted the morale of the populace and caused embitterment within the *Judenrat*.

Rasta pointed to concrete facts, showing how the leaders of the *Judenrat* made capital and became rich at the expense of the Jewish need and misery. The publication of the paper made the leaders of the *Judenrat* lose their patience, and they sought means to liquidate it. The president of the *Judenrat*, Leon Kopiński, summoned Dr Wolberg and the lawyer Goldberg and accused them of editing and publishing the paper. He demanded of them to cease their further activity - otherwise, the matter would be referred to the Gestapo. Dr Adam Wolberg and the lawyer Mendel Goldberg, in view of the threats, categorically denied having any knowledge of the existence of such a newspaper or of having any links to it.

Following this conversation, the paper continued to be published in an improved and larger format. The *Judenrat* and its individual members were criticised with humour and sharp satire. The pieces were richly illustrated with caricatures and photo montages.

The actual editors were Dr Adam Wolberg and his wife, Master of Philosophy Margareta Wolberg. The caricatures and photo montages were made by the photographer Kuśnir. The newspapers were distributed by post in sealed envelopes to make them appear as letters, and were usually addressed from Warsaw.

The former "Lira" Society, the drama circle of the former TOZ, and the new drama circle founded by the *Arbeiterrat* under the directorship of Chaim Praport and Dawid Orbach, and also the children's choir directed by Jakób Rotenberg, held an entire array of concerts of popular and contemporary creations during the "Big Ghetto" period.

All the political events, including those specifically Jewish, found their expression in the poems, songs and sketches that were written. [Practically] none of these creations survived, because almost all the authors were destroyed, as were their works along with them.

Every evening, heated discussions were held in the streets and dwellings regarding the prospects of the War. The war communiqués were commented upon and, despite the German victories, their defeat was predicted.

The religious Jews studied a *Daf Yomi*² with relish, as in the good, old days, introducing into it various casuistic interpretations regarding the downfall of the Nazi regime.

When the deportations of the Częstochowa Jews commenced, all cultural and communal activities were once more interrupted, until the “Small Ghetto” was formed.

In the “Small Ghetto”, it was mainly the communal activity of the underground movement that was expressed. The *Żydowska Gazeta* (Jewish Newspaper) had ceased to be published and Degenhardt had made it forbidden to read any newspapers at all. Regardless of this ban, almost all the German and Polish publications were read - even the weekly *Das Reich*, which was published by Goebbels. It was through these newspapers that [the Jews in the ghetto] oriented themselves as to the political and strategic situation. The underground movement spread various illegal writings, including radio news and their own typewritten publications.

In the evenings, the youth recited their works, which consisted of parodies of folk songs and recitals on the themes of life in the “Small Ghetto” and in HASAG – in front of small groups of acquaintances and friends.

One of these parodies was as follows:

*“Where am I to go, [now] that the ghetto is closed?
Where am I to go, [now] that guards stand all around.”*³

Creations by renowned poets, such as Dovid Einhorn, were also recited:

*“And bronzed youth answer their call,
To still the anger at the loss of years etc.”*⁴

One of the most popular songs was “Treblinka”:

*“There lies Treblinka;
For every Jew a [final resting] place.
Whoever goes there
Stays forever etc.”*

Religious life was concentrated in the house of the cantor Isroel-Josef Kutner on ul. Nadrzeczna. Rabbi Oliński and other religious Jews lived there in a *shtiebel*. In that same *shtiebel*, prayers were held with a *minyan* [prayer quorum] and they also studied the Talmud.

On ul. Mostowa, there was also a school for the small number of children who had survived, by having been hidden during the period of the deportations.

² [TN: Heb., “Daily Page”; a daily regimen undertaken to study the Babylonian Talmud one folio each day, which was introduced in 1923 by Rabbi Majer Szapira, then Rabbi of Sanok and later dean of the famous Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin (Sages of Lublin Yeshiva), and sanctioned by the vast majority of rabbis in Poland, including Rebbe Awrum-Mordche Alter of Ger, who had the largest Chassidic following in Poland.]

³ [TN: The original song, “Vu ahin zol ich geyn?” is well-known to this day, although it is a “new” version written by Igor S. Korntayer in the Warsaw Ghetto, which in turn was based on a now forgotten older tune by the same title.]

⁴ [TN: This poem is not by Dovid Einhorn but by Moyshe Kulbak.]

In the many discussions that were held in the “Small Ghetto”, they also touched upon the stances of certain presidents of the *Judenräte*. First and foremost, they expressed their acknowledgement of the engineer. Adam Czerniaków, the *prezes* [president] of the Warsaw *Judenrat*. In July 1942, when he was approached by the arch-murderer from the extermination commando, [SS-] *Obersturmführer*⁵ [Karl-Georg] Brandt and his entourage, demanding that he sign a document stating that the Jews were being sent by the *Judenrat* to the east to work [there], he categorically refused, declaring that he would sign nothing before he was informed as to where the “resettled” were going and to what sort of labour. Despite the threats from *Obersturmführer* Brandt, to the effect that he was ordering him to sign and that otherwise he would be shot, he did not alter his stance. The engineer Czerniaków, under the pretext that he had an important telephone call, entered the telephone booth and committed suicide by swallowing a cyanide capsule. With his death, he symbolised the consequential effects of his position and he remained in the service of his people, not allowing himself to be influenced by the murderers of the Jews.

Leon Kopiński, the *prezes* of the Częstochowa *Judenrat*, viewed this in an entirely different manner. He had completely forgotten that, as *prezes* of the *Judenrat*, he always needed to be on guard for Jewish interests. With him, it was the exact opposite. He maintained good relations with the murderers of Jews. Every word they uttered was, to him, like a command. He squeezed money from the Jewish populace in order to purchase gifts and to buy off the Nazis in power. There was not a single instance when he opposed a demand of the Nazi hangmen. He sent Jews straight to forced labour and, in an instant, away to camps. He offered up “contributions” [of] furs and other articles, carrying out everything with the upmost obedience. Faced with the great tragedy of the deportation of the Częstochowa Jews, he agreed to it wordlessly - thinking that the registered employees would remain alive. He did not gauge the Nazi methods correctly and did not possess a broader view of the development of the events. After fulfilling the orders of the Nazi regime, his “German friends”, whom he had given gifts of gold, diamonds and money, shot him at the cemetery in the *akcja* of the intelligentsia on the eve of Purim [20th March] 1943.

During that same period, by way of the underground movement, news arrived to the effect that Artur [Szmul] Zygielbojm, the communal activist and former councillor in the Warsaw City Council and [Jewish] *Kehilla*, as well a representative of the National Council of Trade Union in Poland, after his intercessions with the British government regarding saving Europe’s Jews had been unsuccessful and had committed suicide in the British Foreign Office⁶ building. In the discussions, the figure of this fighter was mentioned as a heroic and positive champion in Jewish history. The numerous *Judenrat* members and the Kopińskis, on the other hand, who were in the service of the German regime, were set down as national traitors.

When the “Small Ghetto” was liquidated, everything was once again disrupted. It seemed that everything had died out. But, nevertheless, in the closed camps in Częstochowa, under the worst and most horrifying conditions, communal and cultural life began to develop.

From time to time, clandestine literature would arrive from the underground movement. There was [also] a Jew in the closed HASAG-Pelcery camp, who listened to news from abroad

⁵ [TN: Ger., “Senior Storm Leader”; according to other sources, he held the rank of SS-Untersturmführer, or “Junior Storm Leader”.]

⁶ [TN: According to other sources, he committed suicide in his home in West London.]

on the radio and, in this manner, the Jews in the camp had accurate information regarding all the political events in the world.

Although, at times, it could seem that Jewish life had completely gone under, there were still some who sang songs, recited, formed a drama circle and even held literary evenings.

With their songs, the singers of both genders awakened, within the inmates of the camp, a yearning for the past and a ray of hope for the future. The songs were sentimental and, more than once, brought people to tears. The repertoire was a varied one and was sung in three languages - Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish. The singer, Leon Oberman, also sang opera arias in Italian. Roma Nadelberg excelled in emotional songs - she often sang *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*⁷ [Psalm 22:1] and *Harmonia*, in the Polish language, which were beloved by all her listeners. Karola Mordkowicz sang folkloric songs, and her favourite song was *Frimorgen* [Early Morning]. The tenor G. Rychter, the current soloist of the Saint Ottilien orchestra, sang folks' songs, and Nechemie Trombkowski was known for the songs *The Little Fish*, *Exile Song*, *Jewish Mother*, *Dudele* and, above all, with the song *Częstochower Mame'le* (*Matuszka Częstochowska* [Little Częstochowa Mother]).

Leon Oberman, with his hero's tenor, became quickly renowned for his "High C" by singing opera arias from *Tosca* [by Puccini], *Manuelo* and *Rachela*⁸. He also sang *Lech Lecho*⁹, *Reb Sender* and other folkloric songs.

Szaja Borensztajn, Częstochowa's "Yiddish Charlie Chaplin", recited humorous monologues by Sholem Aleichem, Mojsze Nadir and "Der Tunkeler"¹⁰, as well as his own works. His monologues *Nothing* and *Building Material* were received with great acclamation.

The one who sang *The Little Fish* - Nechemie Trombkowski - also served as the *de facto* cantor. He led the prayer services on the High Holidays of 1943-44. The prayers were held in the "cyrk" [circus¹¹], in the following manner. The "cyrk" was guarded all around by Jews, who gave signals as to whether they could pray or not, because it was actually forbidden. The worshippers consisted of camp inmates, who had left the machines and stopped working. In the opinion of the Germans, this was considered sabotage - which was punishable by death. The prayers were accompanied by the weeping of the worshippers.

Religious life was concentrated in Barrack №7, where Rabbi Oliński, the cantor Isroel-Josef Kutner and other religious Jews lived. They held public prayers almost every day, studied the *Daf Yomi* and read from a Torah scroll. They baked *matzos* for Pesach, blew the *shofar* [ritual horn] on the High Holidays and said the blessing over the *esrog*¹² on Sukkos. All this was organised inside the camp, behind barbed wire fences all around and guarded by Ukrainian *Werkschutz* or *Volksdeutsche*, and where one could be executed for the slightest trifle.

⁷ [TN: In Hebrew in the original.]

⁸ [TN: We have not been able to ascertain which operas "Manuelo" and "Rachela" are.]

⁹ [TN: Biblical Heb., "get thee out"; from the verse "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:" (Genesis 12:1).]

¹⁰ [TN: "The Dark One"; nickname of Josef Tunkel.]

¹¹ [TN: Although this enclosure is mentioned several times by Orenstein in this book, he does not give any specifications of it. We have as yet not found any other reference to it in any other sources.]

¹² [TN: Heb., "citron"; one of the four species - palm branch, myrtle, willow and citron - which are bound together and waved in a special ceremony each day of the Sukkos holiday, excluding Shabbes. Citrons are particularly hard to come by, even in peacetime.]

In March 1944, a transport of Jewish men and women arrived from the Łódź Ghetto in order to work in HASAG-Pelcery. Among them was the theatre director Dawid Zysman. He soon became acquainted with Częstochowa's acting talents and organised a drama circle, grouping around him Szaja Borensztajn, Zelig Jakubowicz, Zalman Żółtowski, Sabina Goldsztajn, Tyger and Neumüller. At first, the plan of forming a drama circle caused great opposition, because "you do not put on plays in a graveyard", as the opposers argued. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the drama circle was formed.

The first performance was held in secret, in the barrack of the electro-technicians. The revue was called "*Don't Worry*". The programme consisted of monologues, songs and sketches. Szaja Borensztajn, among other items, presented the monologue *The Obituary* about the German foreman, Herr, who had committed suicide by shooting himself. Zelig Jakubowicz recited *Revenge*, written by the director Dawid Zysman. The sketch *A Picture in the Camp* was performed, and [Mordche] Gebirtig's *It's Burning, Jews, It's Burning!* was sung, along with a whole series of song numbers that were performed by the entire "troupe". The concert brought a little cheer in the tragic, depressing camp life. The camp inmates would often repeat the songs of the singers, comforting themselves with the words of the song, [such as] "*A time is yet to come when Israel will be free*". The concerts were held almost every week, in the "cyrk" or in the barracks.

A few of those living in the recalibration barrack, headed by Fogel and Bolek Bendet, took a brazen step by organising two literary evenings, at which the author of this book read the works which he had written in the ghetto and in HASAG-Pelcery. At these evenings, Aks also read his poems, and Zalman Żółtowski and others sang folkloric songs.



Photo №14: Benjamin Orenstein

Modern Technique

*In the stillness of the night, there is a tumult;
Steel and fire fall from the murky heavens.
A metallic eagle is soaring high above the earth,
Displaying its power, its savage and evil force.*

*Mothers clasp their hands in fear;
People, houses and sturdy walls fall;
Disrupted is the stillness of the night,
And the demon mockingly, gleefully laughs.*

*He laughs at Man's culture and hands,
Which spent so much time on all those things.
Of the modern technique, of humanity he thinks,
Which has by itself destroyed this world.*

Forever
(Ghetto poem)

I

*Forever shall a fire burn in my heart,
Forever shall it be to me sacred and dear.
To the blue heavens my eyes are turned,
And with rage my hands are clenched into fists.*

II

*My limbs are weary and tortured;
My soul grieves, smarting, it is aching.
I suffer with my people and for my people;
My sorrow, pain, are my people's suffering.*

III

*Mankind's global conscience is bankrupt;
Annihilation, devastation and death are what decides.
Like a joke sound the words: humanity,
Equality, fraternity, lawfulness and liberty.*

IV

*Radiant, blue Heaven – how can You see this,
That below, on Earth, such things should occur?
How can You witness the savage atrocities
Of horrifying cruelties and outrages?*

V

*On the battle-altar of the happiness and freedom of nations,
Of knowledge, culture, power and human equality,
My brethren have brought offerings for nothing.
We have been robbed, dishonoured and fooled.*

VI

*Forever shall a fire burn in my heart,
Forever shall it be to me sacred and dear.
To the blue heavens my eyes are turned,
And with rage my hands are clenched into fists*

Częstochowa "Small Ghetto", March 1943

Ghetto Poem

*Bitter is the life in the ghetto,
Space is measured down to the inch.
There is nowhere to move,
One becomes sick of life.*

*I fall ill – they save me by operating.
Still, no one wishes me to recover.
What do I want such a life for,
If my desires come to naught?*

*My hair has turned white,
My eyes express hatred and rage.
What do I want such a life for,
If my desires are destroyed?*

*My weary hands clench into fists,
To break down the ghetto's walls,
To remove the barbed wire,
That the spectre should vanish as a shadow.*

Częstochowa "Small Ghetto", March 1943

Sorrow

*Sorrow is on my heart, sorrow;
I have appealed to the conscience of the world.
Yet it has remained indifferent
To the tragedy that has befallen us.*

*I sing my sorrow out in songs and poems,
And express in them my desires;
I have set myself up for an empty reply,
For no one understands my lamentation and pain.*

For Their Death Anniversary

(In place of flowers on the unknown graves
of the ghetto fighters and partisans)

*No! No longer I shall lament and weep,
Clasping my hands in grief.
No longer shall I sigh and doubt,
Letting my hands powerlessly down.*

*Brothers and sisters, heroes, martyrs,
You fell in the bloodied battle,
In the fight against the tyrant, the Führer,
And against his brutal regime.*

*No! No longer I shall lament and weep,
Letting down a tear from my eye.
No longer shall I grieve and cry,
Although there is no longer anyone to console me.*

*I shall sing out my reverence for you,
With words from a heart bleeding by day and by night.
Sorrowful songs shall ring out for you,
For the glory of heroes fallen in battle.*

Enough!!!

*No! I shall no longer stay silent,
Or murmur wordlessly.
I shall not put my hands down,
But clench them into fists, as is my desire.*

*Hate may circle around me,
Pointing its arrows wherever it may do.
I shall no longer stay silent,
Or murmur wordlessly.*

*I shall carry the flag of battle courageously and high,
Fighting for freedom and human rights.
I shall proclaim my word bravely and proudly.
Enough! We shall be slaves no more!*

Częstochowa "Small Ghetto", April 1943



Photo №15: Frania Kornfeld

Revenge

I

*Already long months since we have seen any world,
Both summer and winter only in the camp tent.
All sorts of events happen outside;
After our gloomy day comes the cruel night.
Like robots, robbed of life and soul,
We stand at our work and think of revenge.
May the day of liberation come already for us,
To take REVENGE, REVENGE, REVENGE!!!*

II

*With numbers, like dogs, we have been outfitted.
Much fear and terror among all of us spread.
If you only leave the tent without your number,
Be assured that you will see this world no more.
Suchlike offenses have greatly assisted
Our foe to reach his goal.
But a day of liberation will come for us,
To take REVENGE, REVENGE, REVENGE!!!*

III

*All that was sacred and dear has been lost,
Our most beloved burnt on the fire.
Parents, children, elderly and young,
All have disappeared as if with the wind.
Like branches chopped off from blossoming trees,
Languishing in the camp, we dream of revenge.
May the day of liberation come already for us,
To take REVENGE, REVENGE, REVENGE!!!*

IV

*A new voice has spread in the camp:
Carriages stand ready at the station.
A new transport sent to annihilation,
Or to work at a munitions factory?
With a shudder, the thought envelops everyone.
To be jostled in sealed carriages, jam-packed.
Perhaps the liberation will already come for us,
To take REVENGE, REVENGE, REVENGE!!!*

Częstochowa

I

*There, in Częstochowa, next to its fields,
Where I spent my childhood years.
I enjoyed love, was sprouting with life;
Awakened to life, filled with dreams.*

II

*I have been disappointed in everything,
That there is in the world –
Culture and civilisation and also democracy,
For which humanity is eager.*

III

*My city, too, has strongly deceived me;
It destroyed my dreams and aspirations,
Ruined my life, held me in a concentration camp,
And burnt my most beloved ones into ash and dust.*

IV

*For you, my dearest ones, I write these lines;
For my folk-brethren, fighters and heroes,
I shall stand as a guardian among your daughters,
In the fight against those who wish to ruin the world.*

Holiday

(fragment)

*It is a holiday in the world.
Inside my heart, it is cold.
Frozen and choked is every feeling,
That my parents nurtured and loved.*

*Who will now tell me and pass on to me
The glorious traditions and holiday feelings?
Who will strengthen and nurture them in me,
When those to whom it belongs are missing?*

The Consolation

(fragment)

*Will I ever again find a consolation?
Will humanity come to its senses?
Can I, in my life of pain and suffering,
Find a ray of hope and joy?*



Photo №16: Cwi Rozenwajn

Do Not Forget

*Do not weep, do not lament, but understand
The bloody and gruesome events that happened.
All the sacred goals that were set
Oblige us to fulfil them.*

*Do not forget
The innocent blood that was spilt,
The ghastly scenes experienced,
The devil's laughter while murdering children.*

*It was with these words that each of them met me,
Heartily kissed me and bid me farewell.
They walked in despair their last steps,
Stifling the sorrow and agony inside them.*

*Embittered with the cruel world,
We have set ourselves the task
Our martyrs and heroes not to forget;
Their blood cries, DO NOT FORGET!*



Photo №17: Dawid Zysman

HASAG

(poem)

*You wear clogs, not boots – you are no Morainy¹³;
A cabbage soup, a chunk of bread – that is enough, dayainy¹⁴.
Nothing good to enjoy;
They've locked me up in HASAG.*

*From hunger, suffering and terrible pain –
What can already become of a person?
They've burnt Dad and Mum –
I ask, WHY? TILL WHEN?*

*A HASAG Jew has no way out;
Like a dog, he wears a number on his shoulder.
He is treated just like an animal;
But he still fights for a new world.*

Clogs

(fragment)

*Think! Will it always be like this?
Clenching fists, grinding teeth.
Boots and clogs walk for miles;
Poor and rich – all men are equal.
Already enough of this evil Satan,
Take away the camp fences.*

¹³ [TN: Heb., "Our Teacher" (also pronounced "Moreinu"); title reserved among Chassidim for the sons and sons-in-law of a Rebbe, akin to "Honourable" or suchlike titles used in English in ref. to the aristocracy.]

¹⁴ [TN: Heb., "that is enough for us" (also pronounced "dayeinu"); term which appears in the Haggadah of Peisach.]



Photo №18: Icchok Wiślicki

A fragment of his [viz. Wiślicki's] description of a deportation in Częstochowa:

Children wept and lamented, "Oh, Mummy – where are you going, that you are leaving us?" – "Dear children, we are going to a place whose fields shall later become green because of us."

A *Częstochower landsmann*, who hid in a bunker during the entire time, wrote several notebooks of poetry reflecting his experiences and observations of the tortures which the Jews went through:

Indifference

*Do not weep,
You are wasting your tears –
No one will hear you.
Do not weep,
For it only causes you grief –
Keep your pain inside your heart.*

Embitterment

*My eyes are red and moist with tears;
Biting my lips, I contain my rage.*

Protest

*Where is the conscience of the world,
That it can watch this?
Where is the uprightness?
Who can understand this?*

He describes an *akcja*:

*The murderers become wilder from minute to minute.
Their savage desire is all the more blood.
The Jews are driven on, beaten with clubs at every step.
They yell, "Revenge, revenge!" until the last minute.*

Following the shooting of a large number of Jews in the cemetery:

*You, God, have seen all
That has happened to the Jews.
Your sanctuaries have been desecrated,
Destroyed, and burnt on the pyre.
Millions of Your people have been annihilated;
The murderers have robbed, defiled and laughed.*

Regarding the Nazi murderers:

*The Nazi murderers, with a prearranged plan,
Have carried out the orders of Hitler, the tyrant.*

And, also, courage and hope in connection with the victorious march of the Red Army:

*Forward, forward, with confident steps!
Forward, forward, by war to the victory!*

An entire array of inmates in the Częstochowa HASAG camps also wrote. Their poems reflect life in the ghetto and in the camps. Almost every occurrence was described. Thus, for instance, vests were brought to the camp, that had belonged to murdered Jews from other camps that had been liquidated. Aks immediately wrote about this fact:

*I want no vests from Director Lüth,
Nor do I wish to transport the crates.*

The writer, Aks, worked in transporting crates to the recalibration department. He also composed a song about his forewomen, “Marchewka” and “Pietrucha”¹⁵.

There was also an inmate, who worked in the pressing department, who lost his wife and a fine child – a little girl – in the *akcje*. Whole nights, he wrote poems in their memory. One of the poems is dedicated to his little murdered daughter and is titled “*Alunia*”.

Dr Bresler from Płock deserves special attention. He was in the Częstochowa ghetto and in HASAG-Pelcery. He dedicated his free time to writing lyrical poems. His work *The Vidui*¹⁶ of a *New-Born* is touching.

He was in the claws of death numerous times, and was always saved by chance. In the Purim *akcja* in 1943, he was supposed to be sent away with the professional intelligentsia. As the lucky chance would have it, Dr Bresler was sleeping when the *akcja* took place and failed to present himself for the rollcall, thus avoiding certain death.

¹⁵ [TN: Pol., “Carrot” and “Parsley”, respectively]

¹⁶ [TN: Heb., “confession”; among other instances, said by an adult who knows that he is about to die.]