

Jewish Fighting Organisation [ŻOB]

With the establishment of the “Small Ghetto”, the youth, who were organised in the *Arbeiterrat*, formed the nucleus of the resistance movement. With realistic eyes, the youth looked at the events that were playing out in the general life in the world, at the strategic situation and at the way out of the War.

All of them were one-hundred percent sure of the imminent crushing defeat of Hitler’s Germany. In the meantime, the extermination of Jews was taking place day-in and day-out. The German invaders set upon the Jewish people like venomous snakes, destroying and annihilating its numbers and its power of resistance.

The Jewish youth of the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”, whose thoughts were earnest and noble, took the people’s fate into their own hands and chose the only remaining worthy path - the path of combat.

An organisation was established under the name ŻOB, or *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, which means “Jewish Fighting Organisation”. This organisation was also called “the *Kibbutz*”.

The organisation was a union of all political tendencies. The high command comprised Mojtek Zylberberg, Sumek Abramowicz, Heniek Pesak, Juda Gliksztajn and Szymon Młodynow.

Heniek Wiernik (“Jacek”), Rywka Glanc and Josef Kantor belonged to the headquarters’ council. Włodowski and [Izrael Awigdor] Szyldhaus were later co-opted.

The finance committee was made up of Szymon Młodynow, Leon Zelewer, Baruch, Szyldhaus and Włodowski. Mojtek was the High Commander, who gave all the orders. He was thirty years old, born in Kalisz and, from the earlier years, was known as a “Betari”¹.

Sumek Abramowicz was in charge of the department of communications with all the ghettos, including the one in Warsaw. He sent out couriers and received those from other localities.

Szymon Młodynow was in charge of the of the provisions department. He engaged in requisitioning. At night, he sent out small groups of two or three people to the homes of the well-to-do Jews and requisitioned money, boots, clothes and linen for the partisans in the forest, as well as for those who were being sent away². Sumek Abramowicz and Szymon Młodynow were known, before the War, as communist activists.

Josek Kantor, the son of the flour merchant from ul. Nadrzeczna 32, who belonged to *Ha’Shomer [Ha’Tzair]*, was in charge of the partisans and armed operations. He organised partisan groups, armed them and sent them off to the prearranged locations. He organised armed “fives” to carry out specific missions.

¹ [TN: A member of the revisionist “Beitar” or “Betar” youth group.]

² [TN: Presumably to forced labour camps.]

The goals of the united ŻOB organisation were to mobilise the youth to fight in the ghetto and to form partisan detachments in the forests, in order to wage a more effective war on the Nazi regime outdoors.

In February (winter) 1943, Josef Kantor carried out the following operation at the head of a "five". In the small locality of Biała-Kamyk³, where the boundary between the *Generalgouvernement* and the German Reich was, there was a border post manned by seven gendarmes. The Cześćochowa Jewish Combat Organisation "five" attacked the seven gendarmes, tied them up and took their entire arsenal of munitions and weaponry. The stolen armaments were [then] seized by the Polish partisans from the "Aryan side", who fell in a subsequent operation against gendarmes.

In the Pesach season of 1943, the ŻOB headquarters received information that a large transport of higher German military officers and ammunition would be passing through the Eastern Terminal (Ostbahnhof) on their way to the Soviet front. An operation was immediately organised. Five individuals were chosen to carry out the work. These were Heniek Pesak (the commander of the combat unit), Awiw Roziner (the son of the renowned pre-War TOZ activist), Dawid Altman, Cwi Lustiger and Hari Gerszonowicz. The "five" were given weapons and tools with which to unbolt the rails. They were commanded to go, in the morning, to work with the Ostbahnhof group, to disappear at the appointed location, dismantle the rails and return to the ghetto with the same group.

According to plan, the "five" left the ghetto with the Ostbahnhof group. As fate would have it, the railway guard, who led the Jews and guarded them, precisely on that day, was a *Reichsdeutsch*, who was a notorious Jew-hater and a terrible sadist. When the five fighters left the marching group, the railway guard noticed it. The combat "five" bought off the railway guard and went off to carry out the projected plan. A few minutes later, the railway guard chased them down and a fistfight broke out with him. A large number of railway guards ran up and a battle with firearms was unavoidable. A gunfight ensued and Awiw Roziner and Hari Gerszonowicz fell in the heroic battle. Cwi Lustiger, after using up all his bullets, fell alive into the hands of the enemy. The two others - Heniek Pesak and Dawid Altman - managed to disappear and made it back to the "Small Ghetto".

The gendarmerie was summoned and they arrived, headed by Degenhardt, in full readiness for battle. Cwi Lustiger was tortured in order to give up his collaborators. He withstood all the tortures and fell as a hero and courageous fighter for Jewish honour.

Degenhardt conducted a selection of the Ostbahnhof group, taking out to be shot every second man, one by one. Those selected and the fighter Cwi Lustiger were taken away in a freight van to the cemetery, where they were shot and buried in a mass grave.

This news made a hard impression on the ghetto, but it did not, in the least, deter the ŻOB organisation from its activity. Immediately, a recruitment campaign for the underground movement was held, in order to strengthen its activity and alertness.

³ [TN: Biała (Górna) and Kamyk are two separate localities, both just a few kilometres north-west of Cześćochowa.]

The Jewish Fighting Organisation was also forced to wage a war against harmful Jewish elements. One certain Jew, by the name of Szwimer, organised a group of nine persons who - behind the shield of the partisans - went around the homes of the wealthy Jews, exhorting money or clothes. They put all this to their own use, thus causing a demoralisation in the "Small Ghetto". People even began speaking about Jewish bandits and similar things. The Jewish Fighting Organisation decided that they would not tolerate this situation, and that the nine individuals needed to disappear, because they were harmful and criminal elements. At night, twenty members of the ŻOB came to the house of the nine people, who barricaded themselves and did not let anyone in. The ŻOB members, in a bid to avoid an armed skirmish, proposed holding negotiations with them.

The trick was successful and the nine individuals accompanied them to the ŻOB's rooms at ul. Nadrzeczna 72. There, they were eliminated by way of strangulation and were buried in the bunker of that same house. Provocateurs, who were in the service of the Gestapo, were also liquidated (Rozenberg, Motl "*Kulbajer*"⁴ [Herman] and others).

The *Kibbutz* - viz. the Jewish Fighting Organisation - was preparing for a general, final battle. To this end, tunnels were built so that, when the "Small Ghetto" was attacked by the SS at a decisive moment, appointed groups should put up a resistance, while the rest crossed over to the "Aryan side" via the tunnels to strike at the SS inside the area of the "Small Ghetto", so as to bring about the ultimate uprising against the sanguinary hangmen.

Three tunnels which were built were:

- 1) at ul. Nadrzeczna 86, which stretched out to the municipal canalisation [i.e., drains];
- 2) an exit through a field on ul. Jaskrowska, and
- 3) at ul. Garncarska 42, which reached to Stary Rynek 17.

[It was] members of the underground movement [who] took part in [the digging of] the tunnels. The work was carried out in two shifts - day and night.

Munitions were acquired by winning them in battle, purchasing them from Poles for money and manufacturing them. Grenades were clandestinely produced by members of the organisation's technical group in the "Wulkan", HASAG-Pelcery, Braland, Horowicz, Ickowicz factories, in the *Möbellager* and, on a larger scale, inside the "Small Ghetto".

Contacts with the outside world were arranged by meeting with delegates at various locations, namely Braland, Enro, the *Möbellager*, the "white house" and other places.

In March 1943, the following incident took place. A liaison man named Hajman arrived from Warsaw. Wishing to access the "Small Ghetto", he joined the Enro group. When the group, which consisted of eighteen individuals, passed through the gateway, they were counted and it was discovered that there was one too many. Hajman was apprehended by Ibischer, Degenhardt's deputy, and was handed over to the Jewish police to be held until Degenhardt arrived. He had "Aryan papers", illegal literature and a revolver on him. He kept the gun in his cap and held the cap in his hand.

⁴ [TN: Aka "*Kulebyaka*" or "*Coulibiac*"; traditional Russian fish pie.]

While the underground movement's high command were discussing how to carry out the mission of freeing the detained envoy, the organisation's four youngest members - Lutek Gliksztajn (an escapee from the Majdanek [concentration camp] and the brother of Juda Gliksztajn, the leader of the Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair *kibbutz*), Duwcie⁵ Altman, Cwi Lustiger and Moniek Bram - carved a revolver out of wood, went up to the police precinct, made the policemen stand facing the wall with their hands raised and freed the arrestee.

Just when the youths were [already] in the street, a Jewish constable was returning from his beat. He chased after them and wanted to detain them, because it was forbidden to walk about in the "Small Ghetto" after nine o'clock. The youths put up a resistance, with that same wooden revolver, and the policeman ran away in the greatest fear.

Following this operation, the Jewish police trembled before the members of the underground movement, and the population of the "Small Ghetto" treated them with the greatest deference.

The underground movement's high command was of the opinion that the youths had committed a disciplinary offence and, despite the fact that the operation had met with success, they were punished nevertheless by having their activity suspended for a fortnight.

In that same month - at the end of March - two female comrades arrived from Warsaw with weapons. A Polish agent detained them in the street, recognising them as Jewish girls. They entered a restaurant on the Il Aleja, near Paźderski's clock. The Polish agent repeatedly threatened to hand them over to the Gestapo. Upon comprehending the pointlessness of any further discussion, the Jewish girls pulled out their revolvers and shot him. Due to the great panic that arose, they were unable to make themselves scarce. They fell into the hands of the Gestapo, and paid with their young, combative lives.

The ŻOB organisation waged a bitter war against the murderers of the Jewish people - the bloodthirsty German invaders - and also fought for a clean and ethical Jewish society.

⁵ [TN: Pet name for Dawid, which is pronounced "Duwid" in Yiddish.]