

Life in the “Small Ghetto”

Early every morning, at half past five, a musician blew a trumpet to rouse the people for work. Everyone was required to proceed quickly to the assembly point by the ghetto gate on ul. Garncarska. There, the groups of the different workplaces gathered and marched out to work in tight formation. Upon setting out, the groups were counted, the numbers were verified and each one's belongings were searched – and, if someone did not march straight, they were beaten. Following this procedure, the group that had been checked was encircled by *Werkschutz*, who guarded them, with loaded rifles, all the way to the workplace. It was only here that the true hell of beatings and arduous labour would begin.

Separate streets were set aside for single men, single women and married [couples]. On ul. Nadrzeczna, only men lived, on ul. Kozia, only women and, on ul. Garncarska, the married. After eight in the evening, it was forbidden for the men to be in the women's quarters and vice versa, for the women to be in the men's quarters. The living conditions were very bad. They lived in old, narrow, little houses, in small rooms without plumbing or any comforts. Six to eight individuals lived in each little room - for 6,000 people, there were 1,200 rooms.

By Degenhardt's orders, the keys to the dwellings needed to be left with the concierge. The reason for this was that, once the groups had left for work, the searches and inspections began, in case someone had hidden from going to work. When such individuals were caught, they were immediately shot. Nevertheless, a couple of hundred people stayed behind every day> They carried out the underground work, building underground tunnels and preparing for a bloody battle with the Nazi foe.

In HASAG-Pelcery, people worked in two shifts - day and night. The night shift's insignia was a red armband on the right arm. Whoever had a red armband was “covered”, and was allowed to be in the “Small Ghetto” during the daytime. There were always a couple of hundred armbands more than what the firm had issued. As a result, the colour of the armbands was changed to blue. A few days later, the same phenomenon happened once more - blue bands were also produced. After that, what was implemented was that each person wearing a band needed to have a legitimation. These legitimations were also forged. It was then ordered that each certificate had to be stamped every day and, afterwards, one-day legitimations [were issued]. All this was to no avail - everything was forged and the couple of hundred people did not go to any work and were always covered.

On 4th January 1943, there was a “selection” amongst the inhabitants of the “Small Ghetto”, in order to send away 500 Jews to Radomsko. Rohn, Degenhardt's deputy, also wanted to send along Częstochowa Jews to be annihilated in the Treblinka gas chambers. During the rollcall, when the selection was held, two members of the ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, or the Jewish Fighting Organisation) pulled out pistols and shot at Rohn. The pistols jammed, but they threw themselves at him and at Sapport with their fists. For this, these two heroic youths - Izio Fajner and [Mendel] Fiszlewicz - paid with their lives. Another twenty-five individuals were then also shot. By orders of the German authorities, the bodies of those shot were to be left lying [in situ] until late at night, so that all the Jews returning from work should see the murdered. It was only after that that they were buried at ul. Nadrzeczna 74.

That same night, there were manhunts throughout the dwellings. The Jewish police, on Degenhardt's orders, arrested children and the elderly to be sent away to their deaths.

These phenomena forced everyone to look, with realistic eyes, at what was happening and at what was about to happen. People began to seek means of saving themselves by escaping, false Aryan ID cards, bunkers, arming themselves, joining partisans in the woods or the ŻOB organisation in the ghetto - and even by travelling to Germany.

When the "Small Ghetto" was established, the following incident took place. A wonderfully beautiful child, with curly hair, was found. No one knew whose child it was or how it had come into the "Small Ghetto". The SS assassins did not have the guts to shoot the child. The arch-murderer Degenhardt ordered that a Jewish nurse should poison the child by injection.