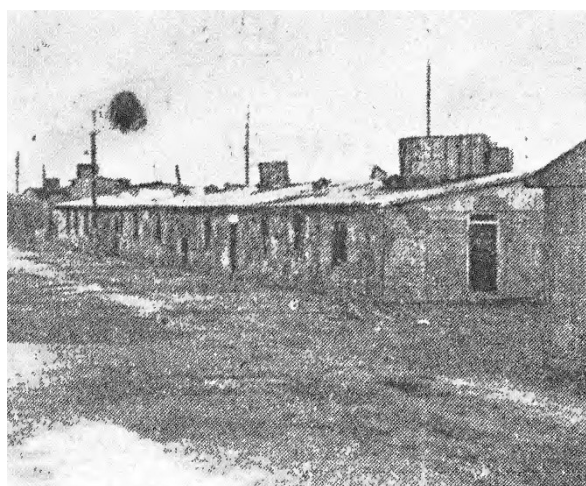


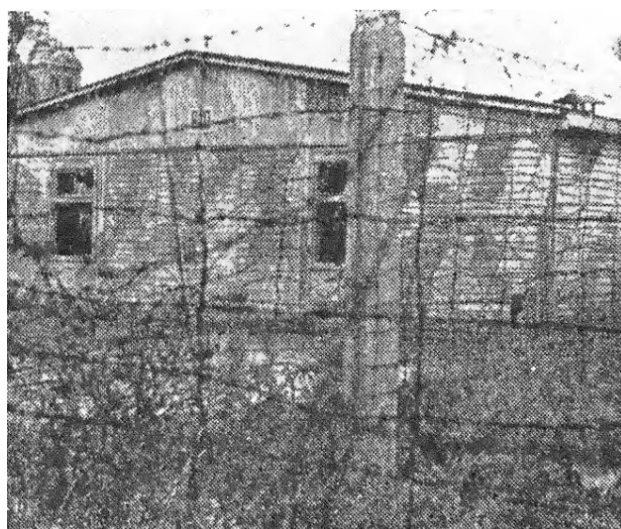
Life in HASAG-Pelcery, Until November 1944, Following the Selection on 24th July 1943

The liquidation of the "Small Ghetto" on 26th June and the selections on 20th and 21st July caused further injuries within the embittered hearts of the small number of surviving *Częstochowers*. Numerous, worthy helpers of the underground movement, who were courageous in battle, had perished. The murder of the meritorious communal activist Bernard Kurland was [also] a great loss for the barracked HASAG Jews.

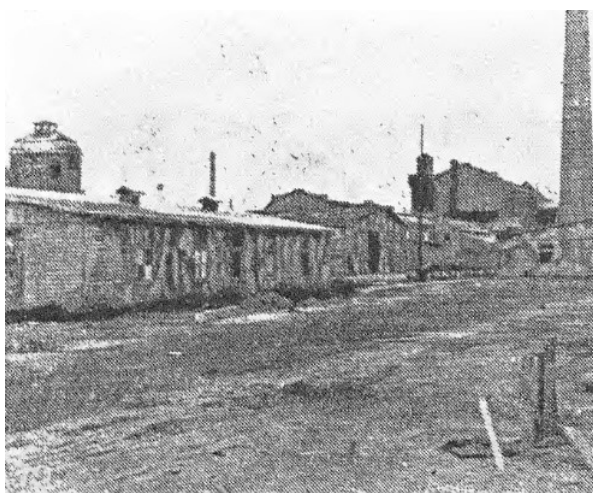
The bread canteen, which he had created, was immediately made away with and the Jews were, once again, reliant upon the high prices of the Polish smugglers. The factory was constantly being built up and expanded. New departments and work halls were added. The halls, where the Jews were sleeping, turned out to be necessary as work halls. So, ten simple, primitive, wooden barracks were quickly built on the factory grounds. Each barrack had its number and name, e.g., infantry barrack, mechanical, recalibration, transport, toolmaking, pressing, etc. The name of the barrack indicated that the workers of that given department slept there.



Picture No. 22



Picture No. 22a



Picture No. 22a

The barracks in the HASAG-Pelcery camp

Half of barrack №7 was used for sanitary purposes. A hospital was arranged there, with some twenty beds (one room for men and one for women), a dispensary and a haircutting facility.

The qualified Jewish labourers sought ways and means to soothe the hunger and need. With the tacit approval of the German foremen of the various departments, who sought ways to become rich, the Jews began manufacturing different things to sell. This was absolutely forbidden and was considered sabotage, which was punishable by death. The German foremen received certain sums of money for not saying anything and for allowing the Jews to produce different objects with the fabrics and materials from the HASAG warehouses. The production consisted of making finished carbide lamps, combs of metal and celluloid replacements¹, finely-engraved metal rings, metal boxes, caps, tailoring and shoemaking jobs and dyeing. Women knitted woollen items. Others, who were not professional labourers, dealt in food products.

The Poles bought the production for ridiculously low prices and took it out with the freight lorries, which transported different goods for HASAG. The vehicles had special hiding places so that, when they were searched, nothing would be found. When they drove in, they brought food products with them, and took the production with them when they drove out. The main foodstuffs business was conducted via the central depot. The freight lorries, bringing the goods to the central depot, at the same time also brought along sacks of bread, potatoes and other food products. The Jewish workers of the central depot sold these products to smaller dealers - "retailers" - who stood in the "cyrk" and sold quarter-kilo portions of bread, single onions, portions of onions, lettuce, tomatoes, cigarettes and other things.

If a *Werkschutz* guard found someone with a loaf of bread in his possession, it was bad. He would take the Jew to the guardroom, search him, take anything that he had and, in addition, the Jew received twenty-five strokes with a rubber baton. In order to avoid falling into the

¹ [TN: Presumably plastics.]

hands of a *Werkschutz*, the “*cyrk* dealers” raised a certain sum amongst themselves and bought off Stieglitz, the deputy of the *Werkschutz* chief, paying him a weekly allocation.

Stieglitz had been an SA² man, one of the first National Socialists - his party card bore the number 25. He had a Golden [Party Badge and a] Blood Order [medal]. The attitude and purpose of all those Nazi idealists, theoreticians and activists - starting from the general governors, governors and *Kreishauptmänner* [district captains] and ending with the common functionaries of the lowest category - was to become wealthy by any ways and means, without shying away from robbery and murder.

As the factory grew, more working hands were needed. To that purpose, a transport of Jewish men and women was brought from Łódź in March 1944. In June 1944, a transport of Jews from Piotrków and Skarżysko also arrived, because the Soviet front was nearing, so that they were evacuated to the HASAG factories in Częstochowa.

A typhus epidemic broke out in the camp, which could have had dire consequences for the entire camp. The doctors devoted all their energy and, as a result of the courageous work of the nurses, the epidemic was stifled in a short time. During the period of the epidemic, another hospital and dispensary were established in the large women’s sleeping hall, on the first floor above the infantry department.

During this interval, the chief of the *Werkschutz*, Klemm, was caught with suitcases of gold, which he had robbed from Jews. He had been supposed to hand them over to the Nazi authorities, but had wanted to send them home to himself. He was sacked from his position and transferred to another camp in Skarżysko. Hermann, an SA man, arrived to replace him as chief of the *Werkschutz*.

In September 1944, the following incident took place. The two German foremen, Horn from the electrical department and Wirbas from the pressing department, decided to take the Jewish couple, Marian and his wife, out of the factory. One Sunday, they brought the Jewish couple into their dwelling in the “colony” and, in the evening, passed the watch with them into the city. At the exit gate, as always, there was a *Werkschutz* standing guard. Seeing that it was the foremen, he paid no heed.

On the following morning, it emerged, at the rollcall, that two Jews were missing - a man and his wife. The *Werkschutz*, who had been on watch duty by the gate, reported that, on Sunday night, the foremen Horn and Wirbas had left the “colony” in the company of a man and woman. Seeing as one of the foremen had walked along, arm-in-arm with the woman and the other foreman had been conversing in a friendly manner with the man accompanying him, they aroused no suspicion, which was why he had not checked their exact identities.

As a result, the following happened. On Monday, between ten and eleven in the morning, when a Jewish barber was giving the foreman Horn a shave, Director Lütt unexpectedly entered with gendarmes. Not allowing him to finish his job, they drove the Jewish barber away and put the foreman Horn’s hands in chains and led him thus out of the factory. The

² [TN: *The Sturmabteilung*, Ger. lit., “Storm Detachment”, was the Nazi Party’s original paramilitary wing.]

foreman Wirbas managed to escape. As it was later recounted, they searched for the foreman Wirbas and caught him. The gendarmes carried out a search of their dwellings in the “colony” and found weapons hidden inside a wall. The foremen were sent, by the Gestapo, to a concentration camp. As it was claimed, they belonged to a German underground movement against Hitler’s regime.

Unlike these two foremen, others stood out for their brutality. These were the foremen at the toolmaking, infantry and recalibration departments and the two foremen of the building operations, Opel, whom people called “Morsz”, and his deputy whose nickname was “Fawisz” or “Zamdziarz”. The foreman of the infantry department, [Karl Ernst] Haussner³, shot a Jewish girl from Łódź during the night-shift without any grounds. He claimed, in his defence, that she had spent too long in the latrine.

The majority of the inmates had no more than one shirt. As a result, they would do their laundry secretly and quickly dry it in the electric drying machines. For such a “transgression”, the foreman of the recalibrations department, Willi Niziołek, would beat everyone, slap them with his hands and kick them with his feet, making no distinction between men and women. Just at about the same time, a *Werkschutz* stuck his rifle into the latrine of the recalibrations department and shot a Jewish worker.

For any triviality, other foremen took their male and female workers to the guardroom to be beaten with rubber batons. When the Nazi German authorities began to feel somewhat unsure due to the approaching Soviet front, the foreman Herr committed suicide by shooting himself.

In the HASAG-Pelcery camp, there was also a group of religious Jews who, in the moments of the greatest tests, disillusion and most terrifying experiences, remained true to their faith and convictions. These were Rabbi Oliński, Edelist, the cantor and ritual slaughterer Isroel-Josef Kutner and an entire array of others. It is noteworthy that [even] with the strict inspections and searches, they managed to smuggle into the camp a Torah scroll, a *megilah*⁴ and several prayer-shawls and pairs of phylacteries [*tefillin*]. Once, during a general search, the *Werkschutz*, known by the name of “Piotrus”, took away the Torah scroll and other religious items, causing the observant Jews great sorrow, pain and suffering.

The religious Jews secretly organised an entire array of prayer groups, where people worshipped during the High Holidays. This took place in the “*cyrk*”, barrack №7 and other barracks. Isroel-Josef Kutner, Nechemie Trombkowski, Noach Edelist and others served as cantors. On Peisach, they clandestinely baked *matzos*. On Sukkos, they erected a small *sukkah* in barrack №7 and they also “organised” a *shofar* [ritual horn] for the Ten Days of Repentance⁵. That *shofar* is currently in America.

The political and strategic situation began to change. Slowly, the front began to approach. From time to time, alarms sounded, during which the work was stopped for fear that the factory would be bombed.

³ [TN: Sentenced in Częstochowa in 1948 to fifteen years imprisonment.]

⁴ [TN: The Book of Esther in scroll form, which is read on Purim.]

⁵ [TN: The first ten days of the month of Tishrei, starting with Rosh Ha'Shanah and ending with Yom Kippur.]

The foreman, Opel “Morsz”, destroyed the Jewish cemetery by taking away the finest headstones and, using them and other marble slabs, built subterranean air raid shelters.

At the end of summer 1944, panic broke out amongst the German foremen, because the Soviets had burst through the frontline and it was thought that they could arrive in Częstochowa any day. The carpentry workshops manufactured wooden valises around-the-clock. The foremen packed their belongings and sent them to Germany.

The atmosphere of panic amongst the German foremen soon altered, because the Soviets stayed put, in order to fortify their positions. The German papers wrote propaganda articles saying that the retreat from the eastern front had been a strategic manoeuvre, and that the Soviets would not advance anymore. The German foremen believed that and, hoping that the War would continue for a long time, became even more brutal.

For purposes of communication, so that one inmate could let the other know that a foreman was coming, almost all the foremen were “bestowed” with nicknames. It was enough for somebody in the toolmaking department to say “Boxer” for everyone to know that the operations manager Arndt was coming, or “Fajkosz”⁶, in the recalibrating department, and everybody knew that foreman Niziołek was coming. In this manner, the inmates avoided falling into their hands and being beaten by them or in the guardroom. The murderers of Jews, from which one also needed to guard oneself, were also given nicknames.

The most popular nicknames were:

Degenhardt	– “Father” ⁷ - orphans were made in his wake.
Handke ⁸	– “White Head” - he had grey hair.
Kirsch	– “Fessele” [Little Barrel] - he was small and stout, like a beer barrel.
Klemm	– “Lumer Yidl” [Little Lame Jew ⁹] - he limped slightly.
Niziołek	– “Fajkosz” - he smoked a <i>fajka</i> [pipe].
Arndt	– “Boxer” - he gave beatings by boxing.
Körner	– “Berisz the Dumb” - he spoke little or under his breath.
Stieglitz	– “Dwarf” - he was small of stature and wore a light-brown SA uniform.
Schultze	– “American” - he had been in South America.
Steinputzer	– “Achashverosh” [Ahasuerus] - he was not overly bright ¹⁰ .
Haussner	– “Uncle Josl” - he liked to make excuses.
Opel	– “Morsz” - when he took the groups to work, he told them to “morch” instead of “march”.
Opel’s deputy	– “Zamdziarz” [Sand Digger] - he led the construction work.
“Marchewka”	– She was as tall and as thin as a carrot.

⁶ [TN: From the Polish “fajka”, or pipe for smoking.]

⁷ [TN: According to historical sources, the murderer, in fact, referred to himself as “The Father of the Jews”.]

⁸ [TN: Above, spelt “Hantke”; both surnames exist and are pronounced the same, but we have not found any record of this individual in other sources. The case is the same with Schultze, whose surname is spelt “Schultz” above.]

⁹ [TN: Or perhaps “Little Lame Juda”; as the reader will note, some of these nicknames are quite obscure, and it is very likely that they were references to the contemporary Yiddish culture in Częstochowa.]

¹⁰ [TN: According to the biblical account in the Book of Esther, King Ahasuerus did not seem to have much of a mind of his own, and was easily swayed by what others told him – first Haman and then his wife Esther.]

"Pietrucha"
Lange

- She was tall, thin and bad, like bitter parsley.
- *"Chazan"* [Cantor] - he supervised the *Möbellager* and would come, "recite his verses" and go away.

Spaltenholz

- "Josef the Pale" - tall and blond, he beat the Jewish workers murderously.

"Dorożkarz"
[Cabby]

- A foreman in the infantry department, who had been a coachman.