

Marzej Krauze

With the formation of the “Small Ghetto” in Częstochowa, the underground movement was established. The Jewish populace, which numbered fifty-five to sixty thousand souls in the “Big Ghetto”, had been exterminated in the [gas] chambers of the Treblinka death camp. Some five thousand Jews were left - mostly young people, who weighed up what had happened and what was about to happen in a lucid manner. The youth, which had a communal and political past behind itself, evaluated the situation clearly, and categorically rejected the idea of passivity. They elected the path of armed combat. Marzej Krauze, as a former officer in the Polish army, received the news of the foundation of the ŻOB (Jewish Fighting Organisation) with satisfaction and became an active member.

At the request of the members of the ŻOB organisation’s high command, Rywka Glanc, Heniek Pejsak and Josef Kantor, he takes a position as an employee in the *Arbeitseinsatz*. The chief of the *Arbeitseinsatz*, Bernard Kurland, was well-enough informed regarding the underground movement and supported it through all possible means.

The *Arbeitseinsatz* in the “Small Ghetto”, which had been created by the German regime as its enforcer, was in reality a self-help institution for the underground movement.

In the “Small Ghetto”, the procedure of rationing was as follows - in the morning, the groups went out to work and, after the people were counted, the foreman received tickets for rations. Eighty percent of the members of the ŻOB organisation were poor, and they presented themselves for the rations. But they could not go to work, because they were employed in digging tunnels connecting the “Small Ghetto” with the “Aryan side”.

This is a matter which Marzej Krauze already had to take care of. He added all sorts to the lists of the work reports [to reach] the necessary number, thus providing the members of the organisation with ration tickets.

At the HASAG-Pelcery munitions factory, they worked in two shifts - one week in the daytime and one week at night. Those working night shift were issued special permits allowing them to be in the ghetto during the day. These permits were constantly changed, to avoid them being forged. It was with these permits that Marzej Krauze provided the members of the underground movement who, thanks to that, could move about freely in the “Small Ghetto” during the daytime. The significance of these permits was colossal, because if a Jew was found in the “Small Ghetto” instead of at work, the SS shot him directly.

On 23rd or 24th April 1943, Rywka Glanc, a member of the ŻOB organisation’s high command, returned to the ghetto from the “Aryan side” after a two-day absence. She summoned Marzej Krauze and gave him a typewritten announcement in Polish, and ordered him to have 4,000 such flyers ready by 27th April in the morning.

Marzej Krauze had great technical difficulties but, nevertheless, that same day, he obtained four thousand-page packs of paper, prepared the ink and made the plate. On 26th April, at

ten¹ o'clock in the night, he entered the office of the *Arbeitseinsatz*, closed the shutters and vigorously applied himself to the task at hand. Two members of the organisation [viz. the ŻOB] stood outside as lookouts. Suddenly, he heard the pre-agreed signal from these [two] comrades. He turned off the light and the sound of a car was heard. Degenhardt, the one responsible for the annihilation of Częstochowa Jewry and that of the entire Radom district, had just then arrived. He was the commander of the "Small Ghetto", and would arrive unexpectedly during the day or night, seeking victims to shoot. He went about in the ghetto for twenty minutes and, after he travelled away, Marzej Krauze received a new signal and the work was completed on time.

At exactly five in the morning, a freight van arrived and two men approached the barbed-wire fence of the "Small Ghetto" They gave Marzej the agreed countersign. In the blink of an eye, he handed over the printed proclamations, two typewriters and a multiplying apparatus² with all its components. Rywka Glanc and Mojtek, the commander of the ŻOB, appeared and they spoke with the two comrades who were standing by the fence. The freight van quickly drove off in the direction of the *klejarnia* [glue factory], and duly arrived at the appointed location. The typewriters and multiplying apparatus were for the staff of the partisans in the Koniecpol woods.

After the work that had been done, a break-in was staged at the *Arbeitseinsatz* and the Jewish police had to conduct an investigation. This incident caused a commotion amongst the organs of power in the "Small Ghetto", but it quickly died down.

Every time members of the organisation went away to the forest or to operations and were not supposed to return, Marzej Krauze would report an accordingly smaller number of people, because the SS were liable to count them upon returning from work, and then there might be a misfortune which could end in victims.

There were also instances when the *Werkschutz* was paid off to encourage groups to appointed locations, from where they went off into the forest. Once, at five o'clock in the morning, a bribed *Werkschutz* named Michaś Deres was leading away a group of ten members of the underground in the direction of Polish Kamieniec. They were then supposed to join the Jewish partisan detachment, which was led by Bolek Gewercman and had been operating there for several months. Suddenly, the group was noticed by the ghetto's Polish supervisor, the police sergeant Majznerowicz, who immediately informed Lieutenant Sapport, Degenhardt's deputy. On these grounds, Marzej Krauze was arrested and led away to the Jewish police.

An investigation was immediately carried out. Knowing that 10-15 workers had remained overnight at the "*Heeresbauamt*" [military construction department] workplace, Marzej Krauze declared that he had sent the ten workers there, because they had needed to be unloading carriages early in the morning. Based on this declaration, all the workers were held in the "Small Ghetto" and were not let out to work until the facts were ascertained.

¹ [TN: According to Marzej Krauze's own account of the event in his article "Ready for Battle", in *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. II, col.113, he began work at **seven** o'clock in the evening (see more details there).]

² [TN: In Krauze's own 1958 version, he calls this apparatus a "papyrograph", which Webster's Dictionary of 1913 defines as being "an apparatus for multiplying writings, drawings, etc., in which a paper stencil, formed by writing or drawing with corrosive ink, is used. The word is also used of other means of multiplying copies of writings, drawings, etc."]

With two Jewish policemen, Sergeant Majznerowicz went to the *Heeresbauamt* to confirm the matter. Once Sergeant Majznerowicz had left with the Jewish constables for the *Heeresbauamt*, ŻOB high command members Mojtek and Josef Kantor appeared at the police precinct and asked Krauze whether they should undertake an operation to free him. Marzej Krauze, knowing full well that there was a group of Jews in the *Heeresbauamt* and that everything would go well, declared that an operation of that sort was, for the time being, unnecessary.

When Majznerowicz and the two policemen arrived there, it emerged that was a group there, who had been brought to the "Small Ghetto" and sent away to HASAG as a punishment. The group of workers had no idea of what they were being punished for (HASAG was an evil *placówka* [institution] - the guarding and terror were excessive and the labour was arduous).

The group which had gone into the woods made it there in its entirety and Marzej Krauze was released. He immediately went to work sending the groups out to their workplaces - but he was warned that, if he ever again sent people out at an hour that had not been previously arranged, he would pay with his head.

Before the ŻOB's underground bunkers had been set up, the weapons and money were hidden in Marzej Krauze's own home at ul. Garncarska 42. Also, during police-raids, the members of the high command locked themselves up in his apartment, because on the door hung a note, signed by Lieutenant Sapport, that the keys were at the *Arbeitseinsatz*. As a result, no suspicions fell on the apartment.

Following the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto", the Jewish workers were barracked in HASAG-Pelcery, and Marzej Krauze was also amongst them. He held the same office there, and helped the underground movement by all possible means. More than once, he found himself in complicated situations due to his good will and deeds, but he always wriggled his way out with different excuses.

Marzej Krauze was freed in Częstochowa on 16th-17th January 1945, [thus] avoiding the evacuation to Buchenwald. He immediately set himself to activating communal activity in the *Częstochower* Committee. He is currently in Zeilsheim, near Frankfurt, and works as a mess officer.