

Mojsze Domb [Dąb]

In the times of the Nazi occupation, there were many *Częstochowers* fighting in the underground movement in various ghettos, and also in the woods with the partisans. One of those, who fought in other ghettos and with the partisans in the woods, was Mojsze Domb, .

He was born on 26th May 1906 to Szmul and Chaja-Ruchel née Laterstajjn. He was a carpenter by trade and had a joinery workshop in the Lewkowicz building at ul. Berka Joselewicza 8. Before the War, he was the vice-chairman of the right-wing *Poalei Zion* and chairman of the *Ha'Oved* [The Worker] sports club in Częstochowa. In 1936, he was a candidate to become a representative in the *Kehilla* management committee.

When the Polish-German War broke out, he was mobilised into the Polish army, into the 27th infantry regiment, under the command of Captain Wujcik. He took part in the battles of Częstochowa, Koniecpol, Szczekociny, Kielce, Łódź and Warsaw. When the Polish army capitulated, he cast aside his military uniform and went to Terespol, four kilometres behind Brisk (Brześć nad Bugiem). Not wishing to be under the German occupation, he swam across the Bug River, went over to the Soviet territories and travelled away to Łuck [Lutsk].

As a qualified master carpenter, he found employment in the castle of Count Potocki¹ in Ołyka. This castle, besides having an entire array of facilities, also had 365 rooms, each of which was furnished differently for each day of the year. Mojsze Domb, as a master conservator, was in charge of this furniture of immeasurable historical importance, with which he worked until 22nd July 1941.

Near this *shtetl*, which was part of the Western Ukraine territory, great battles were played out between the Soviet and German armies. The Germans invaded it four times, and four times they were pushed back. After a general battle, the Germans entered on Thursday, 30th June 1941 and destroyed the entire *shtetl*. They rounded up all the Jews, who numbered 900 people, with the Rebbe of Ołyka² at their head, took them in the direction of the train station at a distance of eight kilometres from the *shtetl* and shot them all.

Domb, taking his tools with him, managed to flee to Łuck, where he began to work as a carpenter in the editorial building of the Ukrainian newspaper that was edited by Kreluk - *apodpułkownik* (lieutenant colonel) in the bygone Petlura army, which had perpetrated pogroms on Jews. That same Kreluk was the organiser of the Ukrainian police who, alongside the Germans, murdered Jews and robbed them of their possessions.

On 26th June 1941, the Germans rounded up 7,000³ Jews from Łuck, took them to the [Lubart] fortress and shot them all. Four days later, on Monday, 30th June, another 5,000 Jews were

¹ [TN: Count Józef Alfred Potocki was the son-in-law of Prince Janusz Franciszek Radziwiłł, the owner of the Ołyka Castle.]

² [TN: Rebbe Alter-Josef-Duwid Landau.]

³ [TN: According to other sources (namely *Yad Vashem*), although about 25,000 Jews were murdered in Łuck during the Holocaust, the number of those executed in the Lubart fortress was 1,460 – 300 were killed there on 30th June, and another 1,160 on 2nd July. It may therefore be that the numbers here are misprinted, and should be 700, 500 and 60 instead of 7,000, 5,000 and 600.]

rounded up. This time, they already selected 600 professional workers - cobblers, tailors and carpenters - and the rest were taken to the fortress and shot. Every day, the Gestapo captured Jews from the streets and took them in vehicles to ul. Wilka [?], to be shot behind the abattoir. The Jews were easy to recognise and capture because, according to regulations, they were required to wear patches on their shoulders⁴, walk in the middle of the street and salute every German - otherwise, they would be terribly beaten.

Once, a German officer named Ullmann - an employee of the city headquarters who knew Hebrew and even sang "*Ha'Tikva*" - entered the printworks and had a conversation with Kreluk, during which Kreluk said to the German officer, "You liberated us - now give us independence. We want a free Ukraine. We want to govern ourselves and for you to leave our territory!" The result of this conversation was that, in October 1941, Kreluk, along with 500 Ukrainian policemen, was shot at the seminary on ul. Krasne⁵.

During that same period, a ghetto of the few remaining Jews of the surrounding region was established in Łuck. These Jews were forced to work in forced labour. One of the *Sonderdienst* (SD), who was named Feiertag, established a special camp of professional workmen, which he sent out to perform various qualified jobs in the factories, taking nine marks a day in payment. He was cruel to the Jewish labourers. There was a professor from Vienna in the camp. Feiertag made him stand inside a pit and threw bottles at his head for two days on end and, when he was already half-dead, he shot him.

Once, Domb was taken away to unload a cartload of timber and, due to the great frost, his fingers froze. The doctor released him from the professionals' camp and sent him over to the ghetto. There, a round-up immediately took place, during the course of which he and others - 250 Jews in total - were taken outside the ghetto, on 20th March 1942, guarded by Ukrainian policemen. They were loaded onto wagons without food or water. The Ukrainians beat the Jews with rubber batons, stabbed them with knives and poured cold water on them. The crowdedness was horrific. The Ukrainian policemen demanded to be paid gold coins for handing over a bucket of water. More than half of the Jews died of the crowdedness, hunger and exhaustion. In one station, SS men boarded the train, beat everybody and commanded them to sing "*Yesli zavtra voyna*" (*If tomorrow war* – a Russian song).

The train arrived in Winnica [Vinnytsia]. There, the Jews were taken into a detention camp. The local guards, once more, beat the Jews and stole anything that they still had.

The German police took the Jews to work in the 1st regiment's military barracks. After working for several hours, they determined that the electro-technician Klajn, a Jew from Wieluń near Częstochowa, had done a bad job. They, therefore, beat him terribly with a piece of wood, counting twenty-five blows. [Then] the chief of the Gestapo, who was named Trittel [?], gave a speech, in which he declared that if someone escaped, ten people would be shot and, for not carrying out a task properly or falling ill, the guilty party would be shot.

⁴ [TN: As of August 1941, all Jews had to wear a white armband; this was replaced in September by two yellow patches, one to be worn on the chest and the other on the back. (*Yad Vashem*)]

⁵ [TN: Krasne is not a street in Łuck, but a neighbourhood.]

The rations were bad and the people slept in horse stables. Everyone was woken up at three in the morning to work in the barracks until nine and, afterwards, in town until six in the evening.

On 9th Av⁶ [10th August] 1943, the Ukrainians surrounded the camp (viz. the horse stables) and drove everyone out into the yard. Twenty-five qualified professionals were selected. All the others were ordered to strip naked and were taken away to Winnica to be shot. These were the last remaining Jews of Łuck, Kowne [sic Równa], Sarny and Rafałówka, and the last 150 Jews of Winnica.

The twenty-five Jews remained to work. After six weeks of working, the Gestapo wanted to take them over to work for themselves. During this period, Mojsze Domb, who was among the twenty-five, made connections with the Russian partisans in the Winnica region. He joined the detachment that was under the orders of Commander Leszczyków. Having received a revolver, he shot the guard who tortured the Jews and left on 11th October 1943 to the woods.

He participated in a large number of operations, including one when he and three other partisans - a Jew, a Russian and an Uzbek - blew up a railway line and destroyed the adjacent German construction company.

On one occasion, a Ukrainian caught Domb and led him to the nearest headquarters. On the way there, on the bridge, Domb threw himself on top of the Ukrainian - who was in service of the Germans - and threw him into the Bug River.

Domb, along with other partisans, received orders to free twenty-eight Jews from the death row cell in Winnica. The partisans donned German uniforms and freed the Jews two hours before the execution and sent them away to Romania.

The partisans in that region also maintained with food 500 Jews who were working in Schwede's factory, which manufactured German uniforms. Several Jews fled from there to Żmerynka (Romania⁷).

In Mogilów [Mohylów Podolski] (a territory next to Romania), Mojsze Domb, along with other partisans, blew up a bridge and, as a result, a train with German military [personnel] and ammunition fell into the water. They also set fire to an entire array of storerooms in the region. The systematic operations in that region shook the Germans, and they employed precautionary means of testing the railways lines to check if they had not been blown up. They would send an empty train first and then the real transport. The partisans were informed of this well enough, and they always carried out the operations at the right moment.

As a result of the partisan operations, the Jews, who were still alive in 1944, were saved, namely: in Murafa - 5,000 Jews; in Mogilów - 3,400; in Żmerynka - 3,500 and in Stanisławczyk - 1,000 Jews. Before the Soviet army marched in, the partisans carried out terrorist attacks on 65 gendarmes, 40 Germans, and 25 Romanians who were in service of the Germans.

⁶ [TN: Jewish fast day mourning the destruction of the two Jerusalem Temples.]

⁷ [TN: Although Żmerynka is – and was – part of Ukraine, it was occupied by the Romanian Army from 17th July 1941 to 20th March 1944.]

On 20th March 1944, the Soviet army marched into Winnica, liberating the entire territory from Nazi rule. Mojsze Domb is currently in [the] Pocking-Waldstadt [DP camp] in Bavaria, where he is the chairman of the *Częstochower Landsmannschaft*.