

Mojtek Zylberberg

Commander of the ŻOB Underground Movement in the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”

Mojtek Zylberberg was born in 1910 in Kalisz. He was noted for his intelligence and ability to take the initiative. He had a *gimnazjum* education. Before the War, he was active in the Revisionist movement. At the end of 1940, he left Kalisz and came to Częstochowa, where he was active in the *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair* organisation. During the period of the “Big Ghetto”, he was an unknown refugee and earned his living from trade.

In the time of the tragic deportations, he was selected and sent to “*Metalurgia*” and, from there, to HASAG-Pelcery, where he was barracked. When he was in the camp, sharing the tragic fate of Częstochowa Jewry, he decided to organise an underground movement. To this end, he became a policeman.

Under the worst and most horrifying conditions during the period of the first barracking in HASAG-Pelcery, when everyone was depressed and mentally and physically broken, he began to secretly promulgate the idea of resistance and organised a group made up exclusively of those who, before the War, had been active members in different organisations. The idea was received with enthusiasm, and the group grew from day to day.

Once the “Small Ghetto” was established, the Jews barracked in HASAG-Pelcery were sent there to live. When Mojtek Zylberberg arrived in the “Small Ghetto”, he found that the groundwork had already been laid. The *kibbutzim* had already been reorganised as separate organisations. There were three *kibbutzim*:

- 1) *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*, under the leadership of Juda Gliksztajn, who was later active in the Konięcpol woods with a group of partisans and was killed by the AK;
- 2) *Dror*, under the command of Rywka Glanc, who fell in the battle during the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, and
- 3) *Gordonia*¹.

Mojtek Zylberberg unified all these groups by calling conferences and, as a result, the Jewish Fighting Organisation ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) was established.

Mojtek Zylberberg became the leader of the combat organisation and the one who set the tone in it, issuing orders in all matters. The tasks were colossal and he out carried everything with an iron will. [The tasks were]:

- connections with the existing ghettos, including that of Warsaw;
- connections with the AL [*Armja Ludowa*];
- production of munitions;
- organising forest partisan detachments and combat units - the so-called “fives”;
- armed operations on smaller and larger scales;
- building underground tunnels;
- training the members to handle weapons, and

¹ [TN: According to *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. II, col. 74, this group was led by Lajzer Geller.]

- imposing a forced taxation on the wealthier population in the “Small Ghetto” – and, if someone refused to pay the tax, he was arrested and imprisoned in the underground movement’s detention bunker.

And besides the general struggle against the Nazi powers-that-be, he also waged a war on the Jewish provocateurs and denouncers.

During the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, Mojtek Zylberberg stood his ground heroically, holding an automatic in each hand and shooting incessantly at the Nazi tyrants. He fell heroically on the battleground, with glory and dignity.

The name Mojtek Zylberberg has grown into a symbol of the fight for freedom, being set down in history as a hero and martyr of the Częstochowa resistance movement.