

## Aron Gelbard



[Photo № 49]

Chairman of the ceremony for the third anniversary of the liquidation of the Small Ghetto in Częstochowa. Summary of the speech delivered at the memorial ceremony in Feldafing on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1946:

*Today, one year after the Liberation, after living for six years under the yoke of pain and death, we have gathered to honour the heroes and martyrs of our ghetto fighters.*

*Today, we shall put before progressive humanity the conditions under which our underground combatants lived, fought and fell for Europe's freedom and for the honour of the Jewish people.*

*Częstochowa's underground activity factually began in April 1941, because it was then that it was already clear that war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany was unavoidable. The conscientious working circles comprehended that the order of the day was to be organised, so as to be able to put up a proper resistance. The prediction was that it was on the heads of the Jews that the brown beasts would pour their greatest wrath.*

*Consciousness dictated that, in that moment, there was no difference of opinions between the different political currents. One underground committee was established, whose members were representatives of all the parties, namely Poalei Zion, Bund, Communists and of all the [Zionist] pioneering groups. The main task that the committee set itself was to awaken and encourage the Jewish masses to activity and readiness for battle.*

*In order for the struggle to be crowned with success, we put ourselves in contact with the Polish workforce which, at the time, was completely disorganised. This was no easy feat. We were not allowed to leave the ghetto - this was punishable by death. The Polish workers had the possibility of coming inside the ghetto, but they very seldom did so. This made the meetings very difficult.*

*For more than a year, we roused and urged the Polish workforce to purchase weapons for money (ours!), so that they should be ready for battle in the hour of need.*

*The battle plan was as follows. If the ghetto was attacked, the Polish workers were to set fire to houses in all parts of town, thus causing a panic outside the ghetto. The Jewish Fighting Organisation [ŻOB] would go to several points in the ghetto, with weapons in their hands. First of all, the women and children would be saved. Members of the Jewish Fighting Organisation would then leave the ghetto and position themselves at the indicated points that would be designated.*

*The day, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1942, hit us like a bolt [from the blue]. The ghetto was surrounded by bands of SS. We immediately sent a delegate to the Polish comrades and told them about the actual situation and the necessity of immediately carrying out the plan that had been made at the joint conferences. Regrettably, our delegate returned with a negative reply. The Polish workforce was not ready for battle - they had not yet managed to purchase weapons with our money and, as a result, our whole plan fell through. The result was a fatal one. Of the 60,000 Jewish inhabitants of Częstochowa, after the "akcja", "resettlements" and selections, [only] 5,000 Jews were left in the "Small Ghetto" which consisted of four narrow alleyways.*

*Following this tragic occurrence, the whole organisation was paralysed, because the majority had been sent away to Treblinka. I, too, was one of those, who were at the threshold of death in Treblinka. There, I met the Częstochowa Poalei Zion activist, Gerszon Prędko. After several negotiations, it was decided that I needed to flee back to Częstochowa, to tell them about that hell and to, once again, organise the underground movement. After spending nineteen days in Treblinka, I escaped on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1942 and arrived in the "Small Ghetto".*

*A combat organisation was once more established. This time, we did not rely on the Polish workers. We made contact with [the ŻOB in] Warsaw ourselves, manufactured grenades on our own, built subterranean channels [viz. tunnels], purchased arms, organised combat "fives", sent groups to carry out operations, sent armed "fives" out to the woods and also made contact with the Polish People's Army (AL – Armja Lutowa).*

*The Nazi authorities did not rest. Day in and day out, they carried out selections and individual and mass robberies and shootings. Already, on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1943, the first clash took place. The Nazi authorities wanted, then, to send five hundred Jews away - older people and children. Our members reacted immediately and threw themselves at Rohn and Sapport, brandishing weapons. Our heroic members [Mendel] Fiszlewicz and Izio Fajner fell in the battle.*

*The underground organisation carried out an entire array of operations of great significance, destroying whole trains, with ammunition, that were travelling to the Soviet front. Our members always withstood the test and stayed true to the conspiratorial principles of our work. I can give our comrade Hari Potaszewicz as an example. The Gestapo [tried to] force him to give up his fellow comrades and, as a disciplined member and fighter, he chose death and did not do the Gestapo's bidding.*

*During the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto," our members fought to the last minute. They fell in battle, but did not give in to the enemy.*

*The blood of our hallowed heroes and martyrs has not yet chilled. Their roaring, fighting blood calls us to continue the struggle, which they began for a free, humanitarian world and a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.*