

The Unpaid Forced Labour

On a daily basis, the German occupation forces sent out Gestapo men to capture Jews for forced labour. The *obławy* [manhunts] took place in the streets, in courtyards and in dwellings. Several Germans, in uniforms or in civilian clothes with swastikas on their lapels, were the captors, and other uniformed men, armed with revolvers and rifles, guarded the captives until the quota was reached. The prisoners were put in files and were led off to various workplaces. These were jobs for the occupying forces. The first Jew to be caught in the street was Wajnryb. As a consequence, the Gestapo appointed him as the supplier of Jewish manpower. Once the *Judenrat* had been established, he became the liaison man between the Gestapo and the *Judenrat*.

The captured Jews performed [both] qualified jobs and dirty ones. The qualified labourers worked in their own trade and those unqualified did the dirty jobs, such as unloading coal, iron, cement and other materials from the carriages at the railway station or in the factories which were working for the German government.

Besides these jobs, Jews were also employed in agriculture, gardening, digging pits, sweeping the streets, various jobs at the airfields, clearing snow, carrying rails, scrap [metal] and coal, railway work, construction work, cleaning the barracks and various other kinds of work. This employment was unpaid. Most often, the labourers were beaten and kicked after work. This was done by the sadistic overseers.



Photo № 8:

During the time of the "Big Ghetto", three Jewish youths at forced labour. The first from the left side is named Leon Unglik. He lives in Bavaria, in the town of Bamberg. The other two perished the Nazi massacres.

There was a certain change once the *Judenrat* was established. The Germans stopped catching people. It was the *Judenrat* who decided who would go to work. Understandably, no one wished to go to work for free for the Germans. The affluent Jews bought their way out with money. They paid a special tax by which they were exempted from going to work. The poor, who did not have any possibility of buying their way out and had no means of livelihood, were forced to go to the unpaid work, where they suffered hunger, need and cold. Their clothes were torn and, often, they would also be beaten. Over time, some withered away and became exhausted and some also succumbed to illness.

Due to the fact that the wealthier Jews bought their way out of this work, the *Judenrat* had large sums of money with which to support the workers. The issue of paying the labourers was a burning one. The *Judenrat* did this in the form of an allowance. Workers were opposed to this system and formed an organisation named the "*Arbeiterrat*" [Workers Council].

A worse plague than the unpaid forced labour were the deportations to the forced labour camps. This ruined the deportees' families emotionally and physically, having thus lost their only provider, on the one hand – and on the other, the person sent away to arduous labour, bad conditions and continuous hunger and yearning [for home] was [also] emotionally and physically broken [himself].

The deportations began immediately in 1940. The first deportation was to Hrubieszów to build fortifications, which were to run the entire length of the Bug River - to Bełżec and Cieszanów. They were to dig deep trenches between the *Generalgouvernement* (the German side) and the Soviet border zone.

The main leader of these camps was the bloody murderer Dolf¹, the founder of the Dachau² camp. He was one of Hitler's closest collaborators. Jews, gypsies and prisoners of war worked in these camps. The conditions were unbearable. Thousands died of exhaustion, hard labour and starvation. Every day, dozens of inmates were shot by the bloodthirsty Dolf. The living conditions were horrifying - people slept in the cellars, [former Jewish] prayer-houses or churches. Within a short time, everyone got lice and, as a result, epidemics and various diseases broke out.

Others were sent away to different factories, mostly those producing munitions, and in particular Skarżysko-Kamienna, which had once been the Polish government's largest munitions factory and which the Germans had taken over control. It was managed under the directorship of the HASAG munitions producer - the Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft [Corporation], based in Leipzig, as well as the [Hermann] Göring Werke in Skarżysko and Bliżyn.

¹ [TN: Although often mentioned in Yiddish sources as "Dolf" with an "F", his actual surname was **Dolp** - SS-Sturmbannführer Hermann Dolp.]

² [TN: According to historical sources, he was briefly deployed to the Dachau concentration camp in the summer of 1934. The founder of the Dachau camp is considered to be Heinrich Himmler.]