

From Ghetto to “Labour Camp”

The new “Small Ghetto” did not exist long. The appellation of “ghetto” was done away with, and it was given the name “*Judenarbeitslager*” [Jewish Labour Camp].

In this “labour camp”, as well as in the Craftsmen’s House at *Aleja* 14, the white bands with the Star of David on the right arm were abolished. Simultaneously, however, the names of the Jews were also “abolished”. Everyone became nameless and each Jew received a tin [plate with a] number [engraved on it], which one was required to wear on one’s chest. The Jews felt even more degraded and downcast.

At the beginning of December 1942, *Hauptmann* Degenhardt ordered all the Jewish doctors to present themselves in the former ghetto’s large square. This order made the doctors anxious, but all presented themselves at the appointed location. The *Hauptmann* explained to them that there were many Jews in Radomsko and a lack of doctors there. Therefore, the German authorities there had requested six doctors from the Częstochowa “labour camp”. And, considering that, here, there were too many, he would send six away from here to there. He asked no one, of course, if they desired to travel, but chose six doctors himself, and told them that they and their wives and children were to make ready to travel to Radomsko within a few days. During the conversation with them, the *Hauptmann* was very courteous and smiled continually. He said that it would be so good for them there, that in three weeks’ time the six doctors, who were to travel there, would be grateful to him. Naturally, no one inquired as to why, in precisely another three weeks, they would be grateful to him.

Several days later, the *Hauptmann* exchanged two of previously chosen doctors for two others. People said that the hand of someone from the *Judenrat* had been meddled into this, because the consensus was that it was better to stay put here in the “labour camp”, than to travel to some place to [meet] an unknown fate.

The doctors were sent off in mid-December. They presented themselves with their wives and children at the square, where a freight truck awaited them.

The *Judenrat* came out to bid them farewell, and gave them food and warm clothing. The remaining doctors and other Jews stood in the “labour camp” – the former ghetto – right behind the barbed-wire, from where they bade farewell to the doctors travelling away with teary eyes.

A bad premonition pervaded everyone. The *Hauptmann* arrived in the square at the last minute and, once more, said that in three weeks the doctors would be grateful to him.

The residents of the Craftsmen’s House were not allowed to leave the building. But, if someone needed a doctor, he was permitted to apply to the Jewish deputy of the police, who lived in the same building. They would then be escorted by a Jewish policeman to the “labour

camp” and back. Besides that, the residents of the Craftsmen’s House were allowed to spend time, every Sunday, at the “labour camp” with their family and friends. After visiting the “labour camp” for the first time, each of the craftsmen returned depressed. I, too, desired to have a look at the “labour camp”, so one afternoon I went there along with others.