

XXVII

Intensified Terror

Signs appeared of intensified terror in relation to the Jewish population.

A member of the Gestapo once detained a young Jewish man outside the ghetto, took him into a courtyard and, in a corner, shot him there. Two hours later, the Jewish police received a notification, by telephone, that they should come with a horse and cart and take away "*das dreck*" [the rubbish] (viz., the young man) that would be found at the indicated address.

Several days later, after eight o'clock at night, two young men were detained, in the ghetto, by Gestapo men in a passing car. The young Jewish men showed their night passes, which the Gestapo men took away from them and ordered them to sit in the car. They drove the young men to the cemetery, where they robbed them of everything they had and shot them.

A few days after that, another event took place, which revealed the new, intensified course [of events]. Dr Wolberg, the Jewish chief of the ghetto sanitary system, was summoned to the *Stadthauptmannschaft*. Forced to wait for a long time in the corridor, the doctor began reading a German newspaper. All of a sudden, the deputy of the *Stadthauptmann*, with whom the doctor was well acquainted, passed by and angrily tore the paper out [of his hands]. After that, the German dealt the doctor several slaps and said that a Jew should not read any newspapers - especially German ones.

The *Judenrat* received an order from the authorities to move, within two days, out of the building at Aleja 11 and to set up their offices at ul. Garncarska, in the building where, for decades, the Jewish Crafts School had been located. All the [School's] machines and equipment of the metalworking, carpentry and electrical departments had been removed and had been given away to the Polish Crafts School. The *Judenrat* made every effort to carry out the order within the designated time limit and turned the building over to the authorities. Two days later, the adjacent building at Aleja 9 was made "*Judenrein*" [clean of Jews] in the familiar manner. The residents of the First Aleja feared that all the buildings on that street would be made "*Judenrein*" and they began carrying whatever they could out of the dwellings, to acquaintances in the streets further inside the ghetto. Others, on their part, carried goods and valuables away to Poles of their acquaintance for hiding. Every day, they expected that gendarmes would arrive and drive them out of their residences - thus they lived in fear and uncertainty.

The panic grew even more, at the end of August, when terrifying reports arrived from the Warsaw ghetto. Rumours spread that the "*Juden Ausrottung Kommando*" would be coming to Czestochowa. Many began to set up secret hiding places in the cellars and attics.

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The *Judenrat* received an order from the *Stadthauptmann* to pay a contribution in the sum of 550,000 złoty, without any explanation. At a meeting of the *Judenrat*, it was decided that this sum had to be paid, like all the previous contributions. Some voiced the opinion that, if they managed to pay this sum over quickly, it would save the Jewish populace from the danger that was approaching us. But the question presented itself – from where to quickly take so much money? To tax a large number of people would take a long time. It was, therefore, decided to demand the well-to-do Jews to immediately lend this sum to the *Judenrat* and, once it had been collected from the population, 70% of the money borrowed would be returned to them.

The ghetto's affluent Jews were summoned to the *Judenrat*, where the *prezes* described to them the impending peril threatening all the Jews should the sum not be paid in due time. The greater number of those assembled gave proper sums immediately, and the rest paid on the following morning. As for those, who had not fulfilled the *Judenrat's* request, they were jailed by the police in the cellar, until they paid the required sums.

The money was handed over to the *Stadthauptmann*. It seems that the *prezes* must have received compliments from the *Stadthauptmann* because, from that day onwards, the *Judenrat* spread a rumour to the effect that what had happened in Warsaw would not happen to us, because we were complying with the demands of the authorities [and] that, when the *Juden Ausrottung Kommando* would come to us, the German authorities in Częstochowa would show them that the Częstochowa Jews were working and fulfilling all their obligations as regards the authorities and, in this manner, the Jewish populace would be saved.

The *Judenrat* sent out demands to all those whom they suspected still had something. A special committee was formed, which set the sums that each one had to pay. The majority paid and those who were stubborn were, once again, coerced by the police. But the *Judenrat's* monetary needs were so great, that the newly-collected money dissolved under their hands – and the few dozen wealthier individuals never again saw the money which they had lent.

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A local man, a well-known Jew in the city, received a letter from his daughter in Berlin through a clandestine channel. Years earlier, she had married a German, who was an important figure in Germany. She had managed to remain with her husband. She writes to her parents, who had always been the dearest in the world to her, that she knows, with certainty from reliable German sources, about the extermination of the Jews in the countries occupied by the Germans. She therefore advises her parents to commit suicide. She indicates various chemical means with which to painlessly poison oneself. She writes that her parents should do this as soon as possible, as time is short.

Should she and her son Heinrich be fated to remain alive, she wishes to be able to come once to their grave. Only if they commit suicide will she be able to find their tomb - and if they fail to do so, but wait for the general extermination, they will be forced to suffer a great deal. But should she and her son not survive these terrifying times, and this is quite possible, should they find out that she is Jewish - her husband will do it, and will also write to her sister Lisa in

Palestine, that she should know where to find her parents after their death. She bids her parents farewell in the letter with touching words. Her son also says goodbye to his grandfather and grandmother in a heartfelt manner. Her husband also writes a warm letter to his parents-in-law and assures them that he is doing everything possible to keep his beloved wife and only son alive.

The paper on which these uncommon and tragic words from the daughter to her parents were written was in some places crumpled, as if shrunken. The paper had become wet from the daughter's tears while she was writing the letter and the paper had later dried. She wrote that she would have preferred to send the tears over wet and hot straight out of her eyes, but she asked them to accept them from the crumpled paper, like she once would send dried flowers in the letters to her parents.

The contents of this letter loomed over the ghetto as a spectre. It cast terror on all those who heard of it or read it. People considered the state of affairs – if a daughter brings herself give her parents such advice. This letter increased people's fear and intensified the panic.

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<h2>BEKANTMACHUNG</h2> <p>Betrifft: Beherbergung von geflüchteten Juden.</p> <p>Es besteht Anlass zu folgendem Hinweis: Gemäss der 3. Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkungen im Generalgouvernement vom 15. 10. 1941 (VO. Bl. GG. S. 595) unterliegen Juden, die den jüdischen Wohnbezirk unbefugt verlassen, der Todesstrafe.</p> <p>Gemäss der gleichen Vorschrift unterliegen Personen, die solchen Juden wissentlich Unterschlupf gewähren, Beköstigung verabfolgen oder Nahrungsmittel verkaufen, ebenfalls der Todesstrafe.</p> <p>Die nichtjüdische Bevölkerung wird daher dringend gewarnt:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><u>1.) Juden Unterschlupf zu gewähren,</u><u>2.) Juden Beköstigung zu verabfolgen,</u><u>3.) Juden Nahrungsmittel zu verkaufen.</u> <p>Tröschow, den 24. 9. 42.</p>	<h2>OGŁOSZENIE</h2> <p>Dotyczy: przetrzymywania ukrywających się żydów.</p> <p>Zachodzi potrzeba przypomnienia, że stosownie do § 3 Rozporządzenia o ograniczeniach pobytu w Gen. Gub. z dnia 15. X. 1941 roku (Dz. Rozp. dla GG. str. 595) żydzi, opuszczający dzielnicę żydowską bez zezwolenia, podlegają karze śmierci.</p> <p>Według tego rozporządzenia, osobom, które takim żydom świadomie udzielały przytułku, dostarczały im jedzenia lub sprzedają artykuły żywnościowe, grozi również kara śmierci.</p> <p>Niniejszym ostrzega się stanowczo ludność nieżydowską przed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><u>1.) udzielaniem żydom przytułku,</u><u>2.) dostarczaniem im jedzenia,</u><u>3.) sprzedawaniem im artykułów żywnościowych.</u> <p>Częstochowa, dnia 24. 9. 42.</p>
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**Der Stadthauptmann
Dr. Franke**

Notice regarding the death penalty for Jews for leaving the ghetto

[Translation below by Andrew Rajcher:]

ANNOUNCEMENT

Referring to:
supporting Jews who are hiding

It is needed to remember that, according to # 3 of the Regulations regarding limitations of residence in Gen. Gov., dated 15th October 1941 (Journal of Laws for the General Government, p. 595), Jews, who leave the Jewish district without permission, face the death penalty.

According to this regulation, people, who provide such Jews with shelter, provide them with food or sell them food products, also face the death penalty.

The non-Jewish population is strongly cautioned against:

- 1) providing Jews with shelter,**
- 2) providing them with food,**
- 3) selling them articles of food.**

Czestochowa, 24th September 1942

Der Stadthauptmann
Dr. Franke

On Yom Kippur, in the morning of 21st September 1942, the streets of the ghetto looked as they did on any ordinary day. The workgroups were going to their workplaces. The Jewish women were not going to pray, but were cleaning the floors, windows and doors in the various German offices. The teachers, lawyers and all other intellectuals were marching in files with brooms on their shoulders to their workplaces. All the other Jews, who only had somewhere to work were rushing down the street with quick steps, tapping out the slave-beat with their wooden clogs.

Only here and there, one saw figures shuffling along the walls, as if taking care not to be noticed too much. These were elderly people going to the synagogues, to remain there all day in prayer.

At the offices of the *Judenrat*, the officials sat without any work. Today, no applicants came. An official held a conversation with the German chief, Herr Frentzel. He told him of the fear that reigned among the Jews that there would be a "resettlement". Frentzel was angered, and said, "*Ihr seid alle verrückt geworden – es kommt nichts vor!*" ["You've all gone mad - nothing will happen!"] At the official's request, Frentzel rang several places and assured that nothing would happen, because where would he find the thousands of people that he needed to have for the work?

Nevertheless, an atmosphere of fear still reigned in the ghetto. Some [even] said that, on the following morning, on 22nd September, the “resettlement of Jews” would take place in Częstochowa. News came from the “Aryan side” that there were already Latvians and Ukrainians in the city, who had boasted somewhere that they had come here to put an end to the Jews. A Polish lady, the owner of a restaurant, said that Ukrainians and Latvians, who had come from Warsaw the previous day, were being fed at her restaurant. They had told her that they had been two months there, in the ghetto, and had liquidated the Jews. Now they would do the same with the Jews of Częstochowa. This information swept across the ghetto like a windstorm and the terror grew from minute to minute.

At the large square, by the ghetto boundary, we could see assembled all the familiar sergeants of the gendarmerie, who had received nicknames from the Jewish peddlers¹ for their cruelty – “The White Head”, “The Keg”, “The Murderer”, “The Throat” and others. They stand there with their bicycles, having a discussion. They talk and talk. An hour passes. One rides off and, afterwards, returns with another. Then, yet another rides off and returns. Quietly, they hold a conversation amongst themselves. With their hands, they indicate here to one street, there to another. The impression is that something is being planned here. One Jew shows this to another and the panic grows.

In the late afternoon hours, calming news from the *Judenrat* president was spread, to the effect that he had received a notification from the authorities to calm the Jews, that nothing would happen and that all the gossiping was groundless.

The lawyer Pohoryles, the organisation chief of the *Judenrat* – a older and composed man – came to the Craftsmen’s House and assured that he knew, from reliable sources, that there was no reason to be afraid. Tomorrow – and not only tomorrow, but in general – nothing would happen.

At that same time, an officer from the gendarmerie and his wife came to a craftsman and commissioned items, the production of which would take a fortnight. The craftsman quietly remarked, that according to what people were saying, “something” was to happen tomorrow that made the completion of his order was uncertain. The officer laughed at this and promised that nothing would happen in our city. If he was giving work for such a timeframe, it was indeed certain that nothing would happen.

The good news spread throughout the ghetto with lightning speed. Once more, the fear fell from people’s faces, and they again breathed more easily.

¹ [TN: See above, p.107, in the chapter “Ghetto”.]