

XXIII

Life Goes On...

The First Aleja, up to the railway bridge, was also made part of the ghetto. This was accomplished through great efforts. All connections with influential Germans were put to use to this end. The *Judenrat*, the best Jewish craftsmen and also other Jews did whatever they could in order for the First Aleja be annexed to the ghetto, because this was of great importance for Jews. It was the only comfortable street in the ghetto, where there were large buildings that could take in a large number of tenants. The flats were also better there. Jews knew that, without the First Aleja, the ghetto would be very poor. The centre of Jewish trade was on that street. Had the First Aleja remained outside the ghetto, two-thirds of Jewish property would have vanished. The Polish merchants and the Polish city administration, headed by the mayor, did everything so that we should not receive the Aleja. But, after great efforts and for a very high price, this street was made part of the ghetto and the yellow boards, which marked the ghetto border, were set there into the ground on either side where the First Aleja ended.

The last building of the First Aleja, which bore the number 14, was not included in the ghetto. It belonged to the "Aryan side". This house was one of the most beautiful buildings in our city. It had large and broad entrances with marble stairs, beautiful, spacious and sunlit apartments with large concrete balconies, and other facilities. The building's owner - a *Volksdeutscher*, the engineer Artur Franke - was summoned to the *Stadthauptmann*, where it was explained to him that in his building, which stood directly adjacent to the ghetto, twenty-three Jewish craftsmen would be living. This building was suitable for the craftsmen, because there were the appropriate entrances and apartments there which were fitting for the German clients that would continue visiting the Jewish craftsmen. The house was vacated of the Polish tenants and the Jewish craftsmen moved there in their place.

Immediately following the German *Ostern* [Easter] holiday, when the ghetto was already in its tragic state, the furniture and all the effects of the twenty-three craftsmen, from whom the Germans took nothing away, were brought over. The large mirrors for fitting their garments and the armchairs for sitting were left, in order that the Germans should also have comfort with the Jewish craftsmen.

The German clients immediately placed orders and the Jewish craftsmen continued to please them in their new, beautiful residences.

Every master of a workshop received, from the *Stadthauptmannschaft*, an appropriate pass which enabled him to circulate throughout the entire city, because the masters needed to visit their clients in their homes, at their behest, for measuring for clothes. The Jewish residents of the craftsmen's house and the workers [and] journeymen working there received passes that permitted them to go into the ghetto and back.

The craftsmen of the house at Aleja 14 settled there very comfortably and lived relatively well. Besides Germans, Poles also came into this building, who were glad to be dressed by the best Jewish craftsmen. The craftsmen took good prices from these clients.

The craftsmen took advantage of their acquaintance with the Germans to help out individual Jews, who had got into difficulties with the authorities. Jews were very frequently saved from the Gestapo in this manner. The Jews in the ghetto were happy with the craftsmen's house at Aleja 14.

German directors of the local textile factories, who also dressed themselves in this house, were in need of tailors to sew men and women's clothing from paper stock. Therefore, they supplied great quantities of goods, which were distributed among the poor Jewish tailors in the ghetto. Later, non-tailors also took to this work and earned for sustenance. Hundreds of Jews, who had already sold all their property and goods and had no means of livelihood, were employed in this work.