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How the Party Banners of the Left-Wing *Poalei Zion* were Hidden

On Monday, 4th September 1939 – “Bloody Monday”, when all the adult men in the city, by order of the German military authorities [and] on pain of death, gathered in the appointed locations, a group of members, risking their lives, went to the Party’s premises in order to hide the banners of the party and of the *Jugend*.

While the shooting of rifles and machine-guns echoed in Częstochowa’s streets and dozens of people fell in the assembly points and in the streets, the comrades stood in a top-floor room at Stary Rynek 18, hacked out holes in a wall, wrapped the banners in the last issue of the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, and sealed them up inside the wall.

During the liquidation of the Częstochowa Jewish community in September 1942, on their way to the train-wagons to Treblinka, dozens of comrades bade farewell, with their gazes, to the place where their banners were hidden. The majority of them said goodbye forever.

Before entering the gas chamber in Treblinka, Comrade Gerszon Prędko’s last cry to Comrade Gelbart, who escaped Treblinka, was “Aron, do not forget the banners!”

In the “Small Ghetto”, we, a group of members, came together every evening after the arduous work, told one another about the day’s suffering and pain, and discussed the political situation, as well as our participation in the preparation for armed resistance.

Before the “Small Ghetto” was liquidated, we often approached the barbed wire of the ghetto fence and gazed over to the wall where our banners were sealed up and found, in this, solace and hope.

When the fallen Comrade Izrael Szymonowicz lay on his deathbed in the Mauthausen camp (Austria) and I said goodbye to him, he gave me the location of where the banners were sealed up – “Right there, beside the window”.

Soon after the Liberation, we, four of the members, went to the former party premises in order to retrieve the banners. However, we could not find them. It was only in September 1945, when Comrade Aron Gelbart returned from the camp in Theresienstadt [Terezin, Czech Republic] and Comrade Rotholc was demobilised from the Red Army, that we found the place in the wall containing the banners. With heavy hearts, the few comrades, who had lived to see it, unfurled the immaculate banners and paid their respects to those who had not survived to experience it.

By decision of the Central Committee of the Left-wing *Poalei Zion* in Poland, the banners - as the only remaining ones of all the Jewish and Polish workers’ banners in Poland - were handed over to the Central Committee. During Comrade Zerubawel’s visit to Poland, the flag from 1928 was given over to him as a gift for our World Union Bureau, as a symbol of the Jewish fight and destruction.