

J. Soski

The Mobilisation



“Tomorrow, you are not going to work. Tomorrow morning, you will come, with the bare essentials, to the Chajutins’ apartment. Let the others in the group know.”

This was the command that a “connector” [viz. contact person] from Headquarters delivered to me at the gate of the ghetto. We had just returned from work at HASAG.

It was an early spring evening in 1943. In the trampled, narrow, little streets of the ghetto, the masses of enslaved labourers shoved each other in a great throng, returning from a whole day of arduous, physical labour and moral persecution by the Nazi murderers. I, too, was tired. The short, but clearly-transmitted order revived and refreshed me. It was clear to me that I needed to prepare myself to leave the ghetto and to join the combat groups in the woods around Częstochowa. I had been supposed to relinquish the ghetto twice already, but the “connectors” had fallen through and I could not be sent out. I was filled with hope that, this time, everything would go well and that I would finally be sent out from the ghetto.

With hastened steps, I went up to my lodgings in the so-called “HASAG houses”. My brother was already there and I immediately told about the command.

That night, I could not fall asleep. Before me, the images of the not-so-distant past hovered - images of misery and despair. I thought of those closest to me - parents, sister, friends and comrades, whom the bloody murderer had killed off with such cruelty. I thought of revenge and dreamt of the freedom that was to come - until the trumpet, which early every morning awoke the slaves for work, woke me up.

My brother and I hurried down to the still half-dark street but, instead of going to the gathering place to set out for work with all the labourers, we both slipped off to ul. Garncarska, to our group’s mobilisation point, to the lodgings of the Chajutin brothers. It was not long before twenty-five young men had gathered, [all] members of the united Fighting Organisation [ŻOB]. [Szymon] Młodynow, the leader of the group, on behalf of Headquarters, gave us the necessary instructions on how we were to conduct ourselves and asked us to keep calm, so that the German guards would not notice any difference in us.

The Chajutins’ house was next to the [barbed] “wires”. Młodynow also made it clear to us that, as soon as the “connectors” from the other side of the ghetto arrived, we were to exit as a group.

We sat wherever there was a free spot, fellows sat or even lay, and quietly talked about our plan. The mood was very elevated. From one corner were heard the silent strains of a battle-song. Bit by bit, it became completely light. A gloomy silence carried itself over from the ghetto. All had already gone off to work. Only the rhythmic footfall of the guards from the other side of the barbed wire was heard.

Around lunchtime, a messenger, who brought food for us, arrived from the High Command. To our inquiries [of] “Any news we should hear?”, he only said we had to have patience.

The day passed with us talking and whispering to each other. Evening was nearing. The ghetto slowly filled again with those returning from the workplaces. But we waited, all crammed together in that room, for further orders. It became dark and night fell. It became quiet in the ghetto, everything slept. Only we kept watch, waiting for the command to march. Headquarters let us know that the "connectors" had not yet arrived. We needed to have patience, and to wait.

The night began to disappear. It was again an early, grey morning. We were still waiting. Outside, the trumpet was again waking the slaves for work. Row after row, they marched to the various workplaces. In the ghetto, it again became quiet. And we were still waiting - we had the feeling something had happened. From Headquarters, silent warnings continued to arrive, together with words of comfort - "Have patience!" In waiting and in suspense, the day slowly neared its end. Finally, the tearful news was brought to us from Headquarters, that our "connectors" had failed in their mission and that our march out was therefore suspended.

Early next morning, we, too, already stood in the rows, back to the slave labour. Nothing had become yet of that beautiful dream, but we had not lost the hope that we would leave the ghetto once and for all and join the other combatants in the forests.

A fortnight later, small groups of 5-10 individuals began leaving the ghetto. These groups were transported to the woods and united. A very small group survived to Liberation. The majority of them were killed in battle against the Nazi foe. We shall never forget them.