

The Eighth Anniversary of the Destruction of Czestochowa

To mark this occasion, a refugee, who personally witnessed and experienced the great destruction in Czestochowa, has given the *Morgen Freiheit*¹ a few details on those bloody days. He recounts:

Already, at the start of the War, a day after the German legions marched into Czestochowa (4th September 1939), the Jewish populace felt the Nazi bestialities. A bloody spectacle was arranged upon the defenceless Jewish population, which cost the lives of almost three hundred women, men and children.

The Czestochowa Jews call this day "Bloody Monday". From this Bloody Monday, a chain of bloody days stretches, which were cast down upon the people of Czestochowa:

These were bloody days of burning the synagogues, robbing Jewish property and goods, and of deporting the communal activists, sending the Jewish youth away to extermination camps and shootings without reason.

The extermination akcja [Pol., operation], in the Czestochowa Ghetto, began on 22nd September 1942, a day after Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur day, whitewashed [railway] wagons arrived in Czestochowa, along with a division of the Ukrainian extermination squads, who carried out the akcja, under the leadership of the German SS. On the day after Yom Kippur, the first six thousand Czestochowa Jews were crammed into airless wagons and sent away to the gas chambers of Treblinka.

Many elderly people and children, who were unable to reach the wagons, were shot on the spot. Czestochowa's streets were transformed into rivers, flowing with Jewish blood. Between Yom Kippur and Simchas Torah, some 40,000 Jews were transported from the Czestochowa Ghetto to Treblinka.

About 6,000 Jews, mostly those fit for work, were temporarily allowed to remain alive, and they were allotted a demarcated area, within a smaller ghetto - but later, on 25th June 1943, this ghetto was fully liquidated, leaving a very small number of working Jews in the Czestochowa munitions factories.

Here, it is worth mentioning the shameful role, which certain Jews played in helping the Nazis carry through the edict of forced labour against the Jewish population. The Judenrat - which was made up of industrialists, merchants and assimilated intelligentsia - created a system whereby any well-to-do Jew, for a certain sum, could buy his way out of forced labour. As a result, it emerged that, on top of everything, the poor were forced to work for the rich.

¹ [TN: *Yid.*, "Morning Freedom"; New York-based Yiddish newspaper affiliated with the Communist Party, USA.]

The Judenrat assisted the Nazis in their extermination of the Jewish population. However, Częstochowa had, during the War, an organised, illegal professional workers' union - the Jewish "Arbeiterrat" [Workers Council] - which included up to 5,000 forced labourers in Częstochowa, and marked a heroic chapter, not only for the Jewish workforce in Częstochowa, but also for the entire Jewish population of Poland.

The Arbeiterrat arranged protest demonstrations, hunger strikes and other campaigns, which compelled the Judenrat to give in to the demands of the workers and increase the food rations and wages.

Labour representatives were arrested after the demonstrations, but the struggle continued.

The Arbeiterrat organised two kitchens which, daily, provided 4,000 lunches to workers and their families, provided monetary aid, organised a drama circle and a youth choir, and held concerts and performances.

Once the full-scale liquidation of the Częstochowa Jewry ensued, the Arbeiterrat ceased to exist - but the leaders continued their illegal activity against Nazism. The Chairman of the Arbeiterrat, Mojsze Lubling, fell heroically in the resistance battle against the Nazis in the Treblinka extermination camp, and many fell later, in the battle during the liquidation of the Częstochowa "Small Ghetto".

Morgen Freiheit,

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