

The Great Liquidation

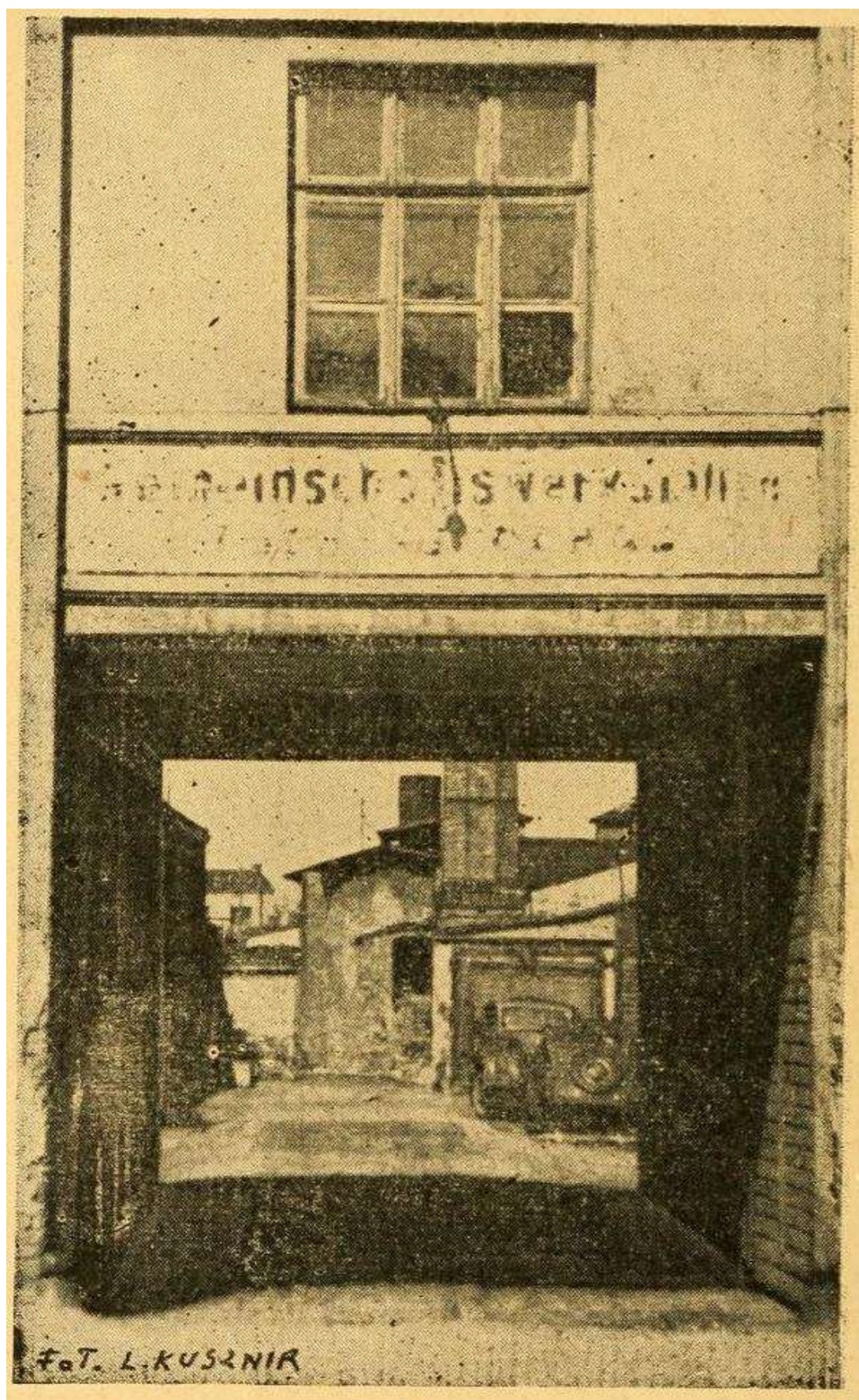
On 22nd September 1942, before dawn, the ghetto was atremble. Jewish policemen apprise their acquaintances of the dismal tidings that the ghetto was surrounded by fascist Ukrainian auxiliary police. Thousands of people run about in the ghetto, from house to house, building to building and street to street. People embrace, kiss each other and say goodbye. The tumult is unimaginable. People weep and scream. They run, carrying packs with them. One carries a pack of bedding, another a rucksack, a third a *tłumok* [wayfarer's bundle] and a fourth some kitchenware. People run as if they were trying to break free from a terrible fire.

I, too, race from street to street. Now I am at the New Market [Nowy Rynek], now I am at the Old Market [Stary Rynek], now I am at ul. Mirowska, now at ul. Garncarska and now I am at ul. Nadrzeczna. Here, I go with the stream of people up to the Rynek Warszawski. I wish to return, but am unable to do so. I am hindered by the crowd and, above all, by the fascist auxiliary police, who make us "understand", with the butts of their rifles. that there is no going back.

Ul. Warszawska, Krótka - the streets are jammed up with people. [There are] dozens of gendarmes and *Gestapowces*, dozens of *Granatowe* [Polish] policemen [and] hundreds of bandits of the auxiliary formations. Under a hail of blows, multitudes are driven to the *Metalurgia*, where the "shops" have been set up. Wives are separated from their husbands and children from their parents. People wrangle with the murderers - they wish to go together. Whoever puts up resistance falls with a shattered skull. The same happens to those who refuse to be separated from wife and child or who dare to bid them farewell.

Ul. Krótka is filled with a dreadful clamour. Mothers, mad with desperation, call their lost children and fall with shattered skulls. The screaming and wailing of hundreds of children, calling for their mothers, tears through the air. The lines in front of the *Metalurgia* become increasingly denser and longer. Human shadows, with outstretched hands, clasping little red books which are to certify the usefulness of their person, stand dark in gigantic files, pressed one to another, before the gates of the former metal factory. The cruel police dog, Degenhardt, calmly strolls here amidst the dense masses, tapping on the heads with his *spitzrute* [pointed rod] and stammering out, "You to the right, you to the left!" He spares no one.

Thousands of little red books are scattered about, torn and trodden, and their owners are driven to the left. Dozens of patients come out from the former [I.L.] Peretz School, where a hospital for infectious diseases has now been set up. They are followed by nurses. From a distance, I recognise the nurse Dzunia Rozen, Dr Rozen's daughter. She is running along with all the patients. Even now, it seems, she is unwilling to abandon them. A revolver shot. Some of the patients fall by the gate of the Peretz School building, and the rest are driven to the left.



Metalurgia "shops"

Hundreds of familiar faces float before my eyes. I notice the always cheerful, vivacious and energetic Rywek Słomnicki, who is now being pushed by gendarmes to the right. Under a hail of blows, he tears back and puts himself on the other side. Here, in his arms, he takes a little girl, who is crying, and moves along slowly, to the left, with the multitude. A young couple is standing next to me, with a small child by their side. They quietly speak among themselves in Polish, "*Dziecku nic złego nie zrobią*" (They will do no harm to a child). They leave the child, who is immediately driven to the left, and they themselves pushing their way to the gate of *Metalurgia*. I see Leon Rozensztajn, dishevelled and wild, fighting with two gendarmes. He falls down, gets on his knees and pleads with them - the gendarmes drag him away and push him into *Metalurgia*. The same also happens with Lajbel Altman, who tears himself away to accompany his wife and children. I, too, am now pushed into *Metalurgia*. My little red book "testified" that I was a master brush-maker and the Germans, who checked the booklet, it would seem held that a professional workman of this kind could still be of use to them.

* * *

The factory grounds are filled with people - and yet it is as silent as in a cemetery. A few of the *Judenrat* members are already officiating here, such as Kopiński, Berliner, Borzykowski and Kurland. The Germans also bring down the elderly *Chevra Kadisha* man, Myski, who is tasked, under the supervision of the gendarme Überscher, with clearing away the dead and taking them to ul. Kawia, where two large pits have already been prepared for mass graves.

A dreadful sadness and unease weigh upon us. People move about as shadows, or sit frozen. Every couple of seconds, a loud groan or an outburst of tears is heard from another place. The harrowing silence, which was held in the first moments, has been broken. Lajb Altman sits by himself on a stone, beating his head with his fists and yells, "*My wife! My children! My radiant children!*" In some corner sits Hela Frank, the wife of the well-known communist activist, the engineer Lajbisz Frank. She is keeping her little three-and-a-half-year-old son hidden under her dress. She recounts how Machel Birencwajg, with the aid of Michał Wajskop (he later became an active member of ŻOB), already after the police curfew, brought her down to the *Möbellager* in order to hide her there, along with the infant, in a bunker. But she had been driven out of there. For three whole years, she had lived in the hope of meeting with her husband, who had travelled away to the Soviet Union - and now all her hopes had been dashed. Leon Rozensztajn is sitting on some rusty, old boiler and staring [straight] in front of him with wide-open eyes. At every step [is] another dejected face, another deranged look. People sit [or] walk about, as if they did not see one another.

At lunchtime two gendarmes appear. They look everywhere, as if searching for someone. They stop next to Rozensztajn, inquire of him whether he is the Jew who had actually wished to go with his wife, and call him to accompany them. A couple of seconds later, a shot is heard, and Rozensztajn is lying in a pool of blood. This shot stirred the dejected crowd, as a portent that here, too, our lives were not safe.

Degenhardt arrives accompanied by gendarmes. They give chase to all the Jews here and order us to line up in dense, long rows. Each file is scrupulously scrutinised. Whoever looks too young or too old, whoever looks weak or has a deformity, is immediately taken out of the row and led away. A couple of rows in front of me stands a boy of fourteen or fifteen. He is

taken out of the row by Degenhardt himself, after which Degenhardt points, with his *spitzrute*, at a middle-aged Jew and calls out, "You must surely be his father!" The Jew remonstrates, but it is to no avail. He is forced to go along with the boy as his "father".

The illusions of those who believed, that in the "shops", our lives would be safe, melt away and here, too, we begin to seek means to save ourselves. The 22nd of September, the first day after Yom Kippur, ended for the Jews of the Częstochowa Ghetto with several hundred murdered on the spot and 8,000 deported to Treblinka.

The packs, that those being deported had with them, were first taken away, and they were even ordered to take off their shoes off and only then were they pushed into the cattle wagons, which had been prepared in advance. The streets Kawia, Wilsona, Krótka, Garibaldiego, Rynek Warszawski, parts of Garncarska and parts of Nadrzeczna, which had been inhabited by Jews for generations, were now completely emptied.

On the following morning, all the ghetto streets were heavily guarded and there was heavy gunfire in the streets from which the Jews had been deported. Here, Jews who had attempted to conceal themselves and not go out to the "selection", were being murdered. In the still, inhabited streets shots also ring out, putting an end to the lives of those who dare look out a window or show themselves on a balcony.

Within a couple of days, a rumour spreads that a certain number of Jews, from the second "selection", had already been sent back into the ghetto from the wagons. A frantic movement ensues. People run to the *Judenrat* members, trying to find out something from the Jewish policemen, from the Polish *Granatowe* policemen, from the gendarmes. Each one wishes to know whether, by any chance, there is not someone of his family, close ones and friends among the "lucky ones". We find out, from the Jewish policemen, that Jews were in fact sent back from the wagons into the ghetto, but they only had the right to return to those streets where there were still Jews left. A glimmer of hope, which is filled with trembling and unease before the upcoming fate, is to be noticed only in a few individuals - the vast majority has resigned itself and does not believe in miracles.

On the third day, I am summoned to Degenhardt's deputy, to the *Schutzpolizei* officer Sapport, who holds office at *Metalurgia* and, in the presence of Kopiński, I am given a command, as a former manager of TOZ institutions, to set up a sanitation point for the remaining Jews. They put a *platforma* [flatbed cart] and horses at my disposal and, under the supervision of a gendarme, a Polish and a Jewish policeman, I had to drive out from *Metalurgia*, twice a day, and fetch the property of TOZ and the sanitation point that had been run by the *Judenrat*.

I seal a deal with my "escorts" and, for a hundred *gilden* [złoty] for each person, they allow me to take Jews, from the ghetto, and smuggle them into *Metalurgia* as workers to help me in the work to which I have been assigned. Later, they later raised the fee to one thousand *gilden* per head.

Dr Icek Szperling is appointed as doctor at the sanitation point. He displays a devotion to his work by dispensing aid among the Jews at *Metalurgia* and also by smuggling Jews, from the streets, over to *Metalurgia*. (In HASAG, that same Szperling did not act well*.)

On my third time being in the street, I came upon a “selection”. Once more, Jews are being driven out of ul. Warszawska, the Old Market [Stary Rynek], Nadrzeczna and Garncarska. Everyone is chased to the large square of the New Market [Nowy Rynek]. Thousands of Jews are lined up here in two long, dense rows. Dozens of gendarmes, *Gestapowces* and *Granatowe* policemen, hundreds from the auxiliary formations and groups of soldiers of the Luftwaffe, encircle this square. All of them hold their rifles at the ready, or revolvers with the barrels pointed at the Jews herded together.

To the left, on the west side of the square near the First Aleja, stands the SS general, Böttcher, with a group of SS officers. There are also a few Jewish policemen in the square and two members of the *Judenrat*, Kopiński and Kurland, who assist during the “selection”. A sepulchral silence reigns. The only thing heard is Degenhardt’s stammering voice, “What are you by occupation?” and, without awaiting a response, he taps the heads with his *spitzrute*, “Right, left! Right, left!” With this characteristic “You to the right, you to the left!”, he decides regarding the life and death of each individual. This “selection” takes almost half a day. Six thousand Jews, on the left, are driven to the wagons and sent to Treblinka. The several hundred Jews, on the right, are sent over to *Metalurgia*. The streets are strewn with corpses and the selection square is, besides that, also littered with prams, rucksacks, bundles, bedclothes and pots. It is desolate and terrifying.

Day after day, I am with my “escorts” in the street. From the houses where there are still Jews, calls reach us, “*Yidn*, get us something to eat!” Through the windows, I recognise children from the TOZ “*światlica*” [day-care centre], who cry, “*What will happen to us? We are hungry!*” Large placards scream down from the walls, with notifications from the *Stadthauptmann*, Dr Franke, in which he threatens the death penalty for harbouring Jews, providing them with food and selling them food products⁹⁸.

Suddenly, a glimmer of new hope— gendarmes have come, bringing a group of Jews to the “shops”. They have ransomed themselves for large sums of money, jewellery and other valuables. We are told that Degenhardt, himself, has taken over a large shipment of colonial goods* from a bunker at the Glatter colonial firm, wherefore he has assured the Glatters that they will avoid the “selection”.

The *Judenrat* members, officiating at *Metalurgia*, undertake further “mediation” and collect, from the Jews, the ransom money for the *Schutzpolizei*. Jews hand over the last possessions they still own. They yield up treasures that have been concealed and walled up, and even the dearest jewels which have been passed down from generation to generation, if only to save their nearest. Bags of gold, jewels and diamonds go over to the *Judenrat* members and, from

* [TN: Dr Szperling’s lack of sympathy for the Jews in HASAG is described in detail in the chapter “Dr Bresler” of Benjamin Orenstein’s book “*Churban Czenstochow*”, p. 270.]

⁹⁸ Placard signed by *Stadthauptmann* Dr Franke based on an ordinance from General Böttcher from 21st September 1942.

* [TN: In economics, colonial goods are goods imported from European colonies, in particular coffee, tea, spices, rice, sugar, cocoa and chocolate, and tobacco. (Wikipedia)]

them, in part, to the gendarmes - but the deceived, sentenced-to-death Jews continue wandering to the cattle wagons in which they are transported to Treblinka.

During this same period, I was forbidden from driving out onto the street, with my permanent “escorts”, without a member of the *Judenrat*. The *Judenrat* member Kurland began travelling along with me and it is likely that, behind my back, he convinced my “guardians” not to permit smuggling Jews into *Metalurgia*, for this was in conflict with the plans of the *Judenrat*, which was collecting “*pidyon nefesh*” money. Therefore, I was compelled to suffice with providing, during my trips out, food for the Jews in the sealed-off streets, through which I was able to drive with food products, which I took out from the TOZ storerooms at ul. Przemysłowa 11 and *Machzikei Ha'Das* at ul. Nadrzeczna. In this, Kurland already did help me.

On 29th September we took ten bags of flour from the TOZ storeroom at Nadrzeczna 36, which we were to distribute amongst Jews who were still in that street. In a poor, dark room at ul. Nadrzeczna 34, we came upon a man who was hanged. The Jew was hanging, in the middle of the room, from towels that had been knotted together. We checked the suicide victim and recognised him as a certain Icchok-Hersz Rug, a native of the small *shtetl* Wyżwa, which lies near Kowel in Wołyń^{**}, [Ukraine].

On ul. Nadrzeczna, at the house of the Rebbe of Żarki, we encounter the former manager of the field kitchen, Jechiel Gomuliński. He agrees to take one bag of flour for the Jews who are still in this building. We give the other nine bags of flour to Zalman Windman's bakery, to bake bread there for the orphans who are at ul. Przemysłowa 6.

That same day, we also visit the aged care home, which is now at ul. Garncarska in the former *Hachnuses Orchim* [Hospitality to Wayfarers] building. The whole courtyard looks like one [big] slaughterhouse. All the walls are sprayed with blood and the passageways are filled with corpses. In every room, there are dead bodies between the beds and in the beds. Some are lying in bed, with half the body hanging down, others lie with their heads under the pillows, as if they had tried to shield their heads from the bullets in this manner. In one room, we find an old woman among the dead. She is sitting in bed with her breast shot through, plucking at the bedspread with her hands and mumbling something unintelligible. The gendarme guarding us snatches up his revolver and [then] puts it back in its holster. The *Granatowe* policeman also shrunk from putting an end to the old woman's deathbed suffering.

On 2nd October, once again, I was in the street. This time, I was tasked with aiding in the distribution of bread amongst the Jews who were being deported. My head reels – there are so many acquaintances and close ones. Here, I notice the former official of the *Judenrat's* social aid, Szlojme Fiszman, who destroyed hundreds of cards of beneficiaries in order to prove that there were not many poor people in Częstochowa, thus guarding them from deportation. Now, he himself is also being sent away. Here, I see the lawyer Mendel Konarski, who is barely dragging himself on his ailing feet and is being propped up by his wife and sister-in-law. There goes the *Arbeiterrat* [Workers Council] activist, Wilinger – next to him, his wife

* [TN: Heb., “redemption [for the] soul”; in Chassidic circles, a “*pidyon nefesh*” is money given to a righteous man to dispose of at his discretion to atone for the giver's sins, thus redeeming his soul. The term is used here sarcastically in ref. to the bribes the *Judenrat* would take from the hapless victims wishing to save themselves and their loved ones.]

** [TN: The author himself was also born in this region.]

and children, who so often brought everyone so much happiness with the capabilities, charm and infantile tenderness that they displayed at the public appearances of the TOZ *świątlicy*.

Flatbed carts, with children in white [school] smocks with blue stripes, and their schoolmistresses among them, stand out from the great crowd of deportees. Rywka Warzecha - formerly the Fröbelian [teacher] at the [I.L.] Peretz Kindergarten and, during the war, director of the orphanage – is sitting in one cart among the children. Walking laboriously, her elderly mother, her husband Szmulewicz, with a violin under his arm, and the very old Sztajer follow this cart. Thus, the 150 children of the orphanage are taken on their last road.

The “selection” square is cleared of the sorrowful procession. All that is left are corpses - some with shattered skulls and others with perforated chests. One looks as if he was sleeping and others lie with arms and legs splayed out, as if they had been publically dishonoured. Also, from this “selection”, several hundred people were retained, and they were sent to the “shops” or other *placówki*, where new “selections” awaited them.

During this same period, while the resettlements were taking place, a wild frenzy of looting began in the ghetto. The Germans swindle those, who have been left alive, out of hidden possessions and, throughout the streets, carts stretch with property and goods from the Jewish dwellings, heading to the *Schutzpolizei*’s prepared warehouses, which now take up the whole of ul. Garibaldiego. Carts with dead bodies proceed towards ul. Kawia, where the *Schutzpolizei* are pulling out gold teeth from the dead and chopping off fingers with gold rings, which are then collected in baskets and taken away. Old people, the sick and children are also brought here, and they are forced to strip naked and lie down in a row, next to the pit facing upwards. Only then do gendarmes go from one victim to the next, shooting each one in the head. Afterwards, part of the clothing of the dead is given away to the inhabitants of this street who, before that, were forced to throw the bodies into the mass grave⁹⁹.

On 4th October, the turn came for the patients at the Jewish hospital that was on ul. Przemysłowa. The doctors and nurses, who were serving there, received an order to administer deadly injections to the patients. Only a few of them submitted to this order. The vast majority endeavoured to soothe the patients. There were also nurses who tried to create a better atmosphere among the patients, handing out their personal linen as gifts among sick women, who had already completed their treatment and needed to be discharged from the hospital.

That very same day, the hospital’s entire personnel was taken out to the “selection”, from which the majority were sent to the transport to Treblinka. The patients, among whom there were also thirteen new mothers with their suckling infants, were led away to ul. Kawia. Here, the gendarmes first shot the adults, who were still alive after the injections, according to their established “custom” of making them lie down in a row in front of the grave. Überschar himself took care of the babies. This German killer seized up each suckling infant, by a little leg or arm, shot it and flung it into the mass grave¹⁰⁰. At that same opportunity, the rest of the patients of the hospital at ul. Krótka 22* were also finished off.

⁹⁹ Reported by Polish inhabitants of ul. Kawia, who were live witnesses to this massacre.

¹⁰⁰ Reported by Polish inhabitants of ul. Kawia, who were live witnesses to this massacre.

* [TN: This was the hospital for infectious diseases which had been set up at the former I.L. Peretz School (see above, p. 77).]

The small factory grounds, where the “shops” are located, are densely covered by thousands of people. There is not a bit of free space where one can move. At the same place where we eat, sleep, sit and grieve for the great catastrophe, there we are also forced to discharge our bodily functions. At every step, people are sitting and weeping. In the other courtyard, in a corner amongst discarded boards, there lies a young woman, writhing in her contractions. Forsaken, broken down and on her own, she lies biting her lips, holding her moans inside and kneading her abdomen with her own fists. A group of women encircle her tightly, that no “evil eye” should take note of her. The new mother-to-be is compelled to be her own midwife.

On the following day, the gendarmes found the new woman with her newborn child and led her away to Degenhardt. All of us are convinced that the fate of these two new “arrestees” has already been sealed. To everyone’s astonishment, that very morning, Degenhardt had ordered that the young mother be brought a litre of fresh milk. He also ordered a special hall to be set up at *Metalurgia*, where she and her child would stay and, furthermore, declared an “amnesty” for all the mothers with children, who had managed to make it into the “shops” and avoid the “selections”. To this end, a large factory hall was cleared on the first floor. Filled with unease and mistrust, mothers with children, depleted by hunger and exhaustion in the hiding places, scraped out of cellars, attics and holes, where they had lain long days and nights in mortal fear, and took their place in the hall [that had been] prepared, where they also received food for themselves and the children. The “comfortable” life of a few dozen mothers, with their children, lasted for seven days. On the eighth day, a “selection” was, once more, carried out in *Metalurgia*. All the mothers, with their children, were also taken prisoner and sent away to Treblinka, along with a new transport of Jews.

Many Jews presented themselves willingly for this transport, as they had already lost the hopes of ever again meeting their nearest, who had already been deported with the earlier transports. Among the “volunteers” were the director of the TOZ drama circle, Ester Roziner, and also her sister Natka Rozencwajg, who could not abandon their sister Hela Frank and her little boy Uszer’l on their own on their unknown, last road.

Also, in other “*placówki*”, such as Golgota, Braland, the Horowicz & Partners factory and the Möbellager, “selections” took place amongst those who had still been left alive. The “*placówka*” Möbellager belonged to the *Stadthauptmannschaft* and had a certain right to travel about, throughout the vacated ghetto, and gather furniture. The Jewish “*gwardia*” [guard] of this *placówka*, under the leadership of the bold and capable Machel Birencwajg, from Jewish dwellings, began transporting wardrobes, settees and coal chests, in which they clandestinely transported rescued mothers and children from cellars and attics, for whom bunkers had been prepared under the very noses of the Germans inside the *Möbellager* itself, which was situated at ul. Wilsona 20-22. In these bunkers, seventy-three people were hidden, among whom were mothers with children and elderly folk, while the deportation was under way and also for some time afterwards. From the meagre portion of food that the workers at this *placówka* received, they first of all brought [some] down for those in hiding and they, themselves, made do with what was left of the starvation rations.

In the first days, as soon as the resettlement had begun, Degenhardt had wished this *placówka* to be liquidated and that the workers be deported. Therefore, the gendarmes took

prisoner all the Jews there and brought them to *Metalurgia*. There was, consequently, a peril that not only would this group be deported, but that those hiding out in the bunkers there would starve to death, having no possibility of getting out of there. But the *Stadthauptmann* and his deputy, Lindermann who, due to their personal safety (Lindermann had “covered” himself here in order not to be sent to the front) and benefit, were interested that this *placówka* should not be liquidated, were ceaselessly intervening, not even shirking from a public quarrel in the presence of the Jews herded together at *Metalurgia*. Only after half a day of intervention did Degenhardt oblige them and let the Jews back into the *Möbellager*, under the condition that he, himself, would be yet to decide how many workers this *placówka* needed.

The situation of the “*bunkerowces*”, for the time being, was safe. There was, however, a danger that, during the “selections” which would be carried out there, the gendarmes might find traces of the bunkers. The small children in the bunkers would frequently make noise and cry. Paul Lange, Lindermann’s deputy, some days worked at the *Möbellager* all day long, taking orders from various German offices and keeping an eye that the Jewish labourers should complete these orders within the time set. It would seem that he, despite being a German, was aware of the bunkers and pretended not to know. Everyone understood this to be so and were not particularly on their guard against him. Yet there was the danger that, during the “selections”, the gendarmes might sometime hear a noise or a cry, and then not only the “*bunkerowces*” would perish. The bunkers were, therefore, supplied with [the sedative] Luminal, which would serve to make the children fall asleep during the day, when the selections took place. Mania Altman (née Małka Kolin), a former nurse at the Jewish Hospital, supervised the administration of Luminal to the children. Nevertheless, it still happened that, sometimes, the dosage was excessive and the children received larger doses of Luminal than what their bodies could take. In such cases, the children would sleep for an entire day and night and sometimes even longer. There were children who, upon regaining consciousness, gave the impression of being intoxicated and not normal.

Even on days when no selections took place, it was necessary to guard that the children in the bunkers should not make noise. On such days, the former teachers, Teni Wajnman and Jadzia Brener, would dig up earthworms in the cellars and amuse the children with their movements. But, above all, these teachers would calm down the children with little stories. The storytelling went on for hours on a daily basis and, when the tongue was already sticking to the palate and could no longer bring out any sound, it was enough for the educators to just move their lips which, at certain moments, also helped calm the children.

The children were also kept in the *Möbellager* bunkers for some time after the deportations. Then, there were cases of dysentery and diphtheria there. But this, too, was quickly put under control, thanks to the tireless work of the previously mentioned nurse, who was assisted by the paediatrician Dr Zajf from Kalisz, whom the occupation had forced to flee to Częstochowa. Dr Zajf would leave the “Small Ghetto” in order to aid the children, who had become sick in the *Möbellager* bunkers. He put himself in danger, sneaking out of the ghetto, and also when getting back into it. The bunkers in the *Möbellager* actually went undiscovered. But every selection that took place, a certain number of Jews emerged from there and were sent, along with others, to Treblinka.

Also, at other *placówki* where Jews were barracked, selections took place, as well as in other *placówki* where there were bunkers. The Jews at the *placówka* Golgota were the ones who suffered the most from the selections that the Germans would carry out in different *placówki* among the Jews that had been left alive just a few days before. At this *placówka*, the Germans perpetrated the greatest destruction. Of the 750 Jews who were barracked there, they left some 300 people.

Degenhardt did not even spare the *placówka* "Aleja 14"^{*}. From the time when the "Big Ghetto" had been established, the Germans had set up the best professionals, amongst the Jewish craftsmen, in the building at Aleja 14. This building was situated at the boundary point between the ghetto and the "Aryan side". This house was not part of the ghetto. Besides the craftsmen appointed by the Germans, who only worked on orders from Germans, no other Jews were allowed in this building. During the entire resettlement *akcja*, the tenants of this building were not touched. Jews believed that nothing bad could happen to the tenants of Aleja 14, because, after all, the Germans needed those professional workmen for their personal use. The tenants at Aleja 14 also believed this. Therefore, they bribed gendarmes, *Gestapowces* and also other Germans, giving them the most beautiful and expensive jewellery that anybody had, in order to get their closest relatives and friends in there. Germans happily let themselves be bought off and Degenhardt also "willingly" permitted the Jews at Aleja 14 to comfort themselves with a hope. It was only once all the selections had already been completed that the Germans applied themselves to the Jews of Aleja 14, carrying out a selection here, according to all the "rules" and sending those taken out to Treblinka.

* * *

The murderous *akcja* "dance" stretched for five weeks. Hunger and death raged incessantly. The number of Jews sent to Treblinka or who perished locally reached up to about 41,000. Of those who perished locally, more than 2,000 were buried in mass graves at ul. Kawia, in a large field which lies across the road in front of house №19. Just the carts that the *Schutzpolizei* put at the disposal of the old *Chevra Kadisha* man, Myski, transported 1,600 corpses there¹⁰¹. Degenhardt allotted a special house to Myski at *Metalurgia*. Degenhardt brought Myski's closest family members here and gave Myski the "mission" of gathering the dead bodies and transporting them to ul. Kawia. For this, Degenhardt assured Myski that he and his family would not be deported. After all the selections, Degenhardt also sent away Myski and his family to Treblinka. When Myski reminded Degenhardt of his promise, Degenhardt replied that one's word of honour is not binding when Jews are concerned.

Officially, 5,185 Jews had been left in Częstochowa - more than 1,000 Jews remained hidden in various bunkers. Those, who had been officially left alive, were, during the *akcje* and for a certain time after the *akcje*, barracked at the following *placówki*: *Metalurgia*, the Braland firm, the Horowicz & Partners firm, HASAG-Apparatebau [equipment construction], HASAG-Eisenhütte [ironworks], Ostbahn [Eastern Railway], the *Möbellager*, Heeresbau [military construction], Golgota, Metros, Aleja 14, the storerooms of the *Schutzpolizei* and at ul.

^{*} [TN: This is the Craftsmen's House which is frequently mentioned in other Częstochowa yizkor books, and particularly in "Churban Czenstochow" by Sz. Waga.]

¹⁰¹ Reported by Polish inhabitants of ul. Kawia, who were live witnesses to this massacre.

Garibaldiego 18, where the Jewish policemen and doctors were billeted, together with their wives and children.

The ghetto has been cleared out - a deadly silence reigns. Wherever [one looks], one notices large pictures of grandfathers and grandmothers on [some] balcony. Through the wide-open doors and windows passes the soundless, horrifying melody of destruction, death and ruin. The orphaned walls of the TOZ *świątlica* are weeping. The orphanage which, during long months embraced 150 little orphans and is now an orphan itself, is weeping

* * *

The state of those left alive was gruesome. The situation of the 856 men and 73 women¹⁰², who were barracked at the HASAG munitions factory, was the most horrifying. Every night, hundreds of people - men and women - were herded here into one large factory hall, where they were guarded by armed *Werkschutz* [factory security] men. On the roofs of the factory buildings, directly opposite, machine-guns were positioned, with their barrels aimed at the hall where the Jews were. They were forced to sleep on the bare concrete floor. In order to answer the call of nature, one needed, lying down, to first ask permission from the *Werkschutz* men. Pain, hunger and filth were the daily bread here. The only ones, who could wash their faces a bit, were those who had enough strength to spare a little coffee for this purpose from the daily half-litre ration, which they were given to drink.

The situation of those billeted in the storerooms of the *Schutzpolizei* at ul. Garibaldiego did not look much different. People here were directly shot for any small "offence". The first victim here was the young lad, Czarnylas, who was caught smoking a cigarette. There was a lighter regime at the site where the doctors and policemen were barracked. Also, at the *Möbellager*, where, thanks to Machel Birencwajg and his closest helpers, who put their lives in danger and set up bunkers for elderly women and mothers with children, the regime was not as terrible as at other *placówki*. But even here, Lindermann sent six people to the *Schutzpolizei* to be shot. Among the six executed was the well-known communist activist, the tailor Flamenbaum.

* * *

The one in charge of liquidating the Jews in Częstochowa was the *Hauptmann* [captain] of the *Schutzpolizei*, Degenhardt. The one who directed the whole *akcja* was the SS and Police Leader of the whole Radom District, was General Dr Böttcher, who was in charge of the extermination of the Jews in the entire Radom region.

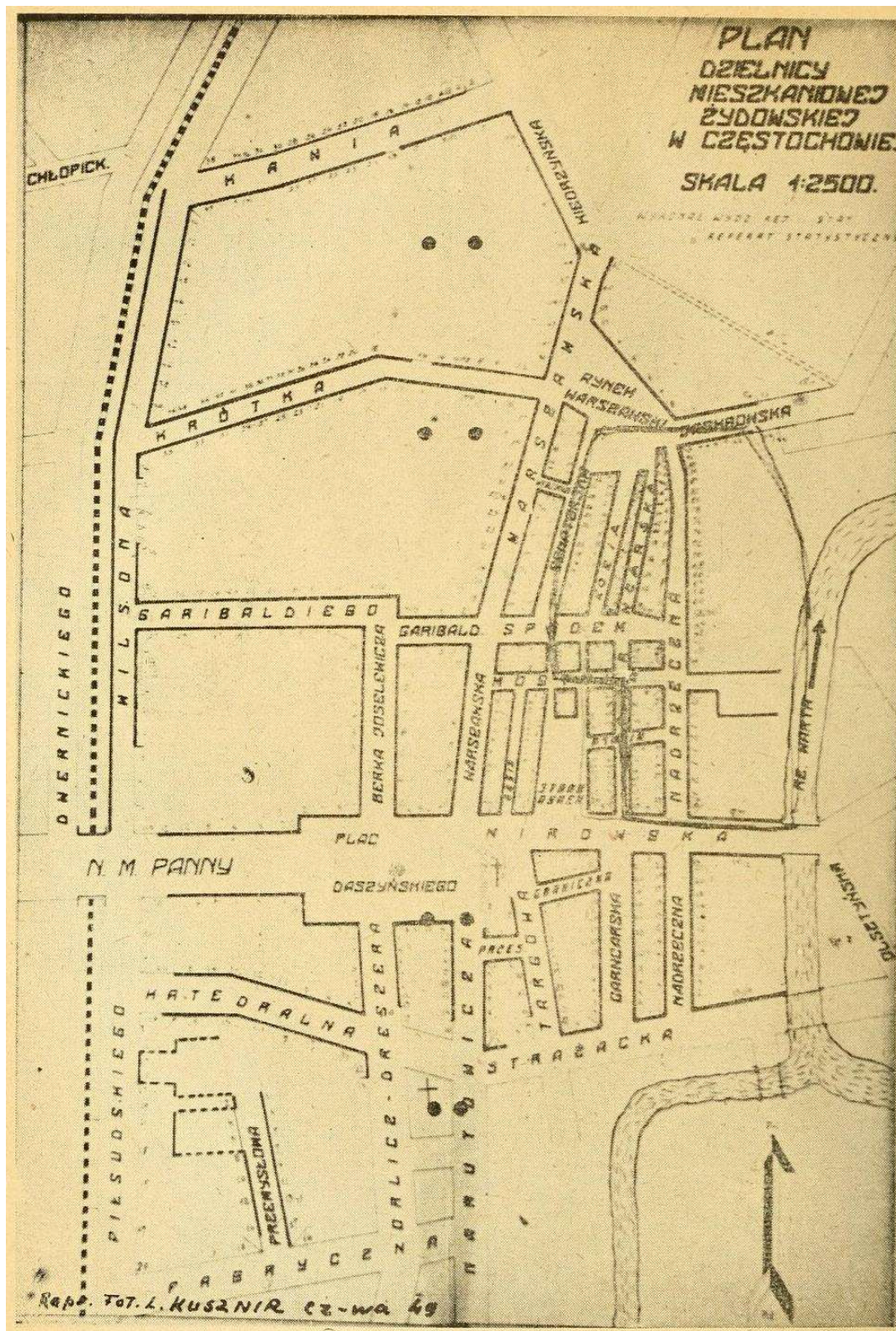
On 1st November, the resettlement *akcja* in Częstochowa officially came to an end, and the Germans began sending over the barracked Jews, who had been left alive, from the *placówki* to a designated small area, which was located in the poorest, filthiest and most cramped part of the former ghetto. The first group to be sent over was the one billeted at *Metallurgia*, and then, following a pre-arranged plan, [those] from the other *placówki*. The last ones to be transferred were the Jews barracked at HASAG-Apparatebau. It was only on 23rd December

¹⁰² Daily reports of the Jewish Labour Deployment in the Small Ghetto.

1942 that this group, in the worst and most miserable state, was transferred to a building that had been specially set aside for it, was located near, but outside, the designated new living area, so that the workers of the munitions factory should not be able to be in contact with the rest of the Jews. It was only sometime later that this building was also incorporated into the new fenced-off living area, which was given the name “the Small Ghetto”.

Now all the Jews, who had been left alive, were here, including thirty-five children of doctors and policemen, who had been officially allowed to remain living. Everyone here received a number. The chairman of the *Judenrat* was given №1, and the one, who received №5185, was a certain woman, Frania Najman, who was assigned to the workgroup at the sanitation point in the “Small Ghetto”¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ Daily reports of the Jewish Labour Deployment in the Small Ghetto.



[Map of the Jewish residential district in Częstochowa]

Der ... und Polizeiführer
im Distrikt Radom

Radom, den 21.9.1942

Tgb.Nr. 1568/42/Dr.BB./Lg.

Verteiler IIIa

des Gouverneurs des Distrikts Radom
- Präsidialbüro - vom 21. Januar 1942.

Betr.: Behorbergung von geflüchteten Juden durch Polen.

Die Erfahrungen der letzten Wochen haben gezeigt, daß gerade aus den kleinen jüdischen Wohnbezirken des Flachlandes Juden, um sich der Evakuierung zu entziehen, fluchten.

Diese Juden müssen durch Polen aufgenommen worden sein.

Ich ersuche, baldmöglichst allen Bürgermeistern und Voigten aufzugeben, ihren Dorfbewohnern auf das Eindringlichste klar zu machen, daß jeder Pole, der einen Juden aufnimmt, sich schuldig macht nach der 3. Verordnung über Aufenthaltsbeschränkung im Generalgouvernement vom 15.10.41, VO.BI.GG.Seite 595.

Ebenso sind als Gehilfen anzusehen die Polen, die den geflüchteten Juden wenn auch nicht Unterschlupf, so doch Beköstigung gewähren, oder ihnen Nahrungsmittel verkaufen.

In allen Fällen trifft diese Polen die Todesstrafe.

Weiter ersuche ich, in den Orten, in denen die Judenevakuierung bereits stattgefunden hat, den jüdischen Wohnbezirk auch offiziell aufzuheben, Ausnahmen bilden die Städte, in denen noch Restghettos verbleiben.

(gez.) Dr. B. S. t. c. h. e. r.,
-Standartenführer.

F.d.Richtigkeit:

M. B. T. u. J.
Obltn.u.Adjutant

The SS and Police Leader
in the Radom District

Radom, 21.9.1942

Daybook letter 1560/42/Böttcher letter/Lg.*

Dispatcher IIIa
of the Governor of the Radom District
– Presidential Bureau – of 21st January 1942.

Subject: Accommodation for fleeing Jews by Poles.

The experiences of the last few weeks have shown that Jews have fled from small Jewish residential districts in the rural areas in order to escape evacuation.

These Jews must have been taken in by Poles.

I urge that all mayors and bailiffs be instructed to make it very clear to their village members as soon as possible that every Pole who takes in a Jew is guilty according to the Regulation 3 on residence restrictions in the *Generalgouvernement* of 15.10.41, Reg.B1.GG., page 595.

Likewise, the Poles are to be regarded as enablers, who, if not harbouring the Jews who have fled, at least provide them with board or food [for money].

In all cases, these Poles face the death penalty.

I also urge that the Jewish residential districts be officially abolished in places where the Jews have already been evacuated. The exceptions are the towns in which residual ghettos still remain.

(Gen.) Dr Böttcher,
*Standartenführer***

For the correctness***:
[Hand-written signature]
Oberleutnant & Adjutant

* [TN: Most likely abbreviation of "Lage", or location, in the context of housing.]

** [TN: Ger., lit. "Standard Leader"; an officer's rank in the SS.]

*** [TN: Old-fashioned German expression synonymous with "on behalf of".]

Everyone believed that, here, they would be granted a little peace and that, here, they would be able to mourn their nearest and dearest. But here, too, in the “Small Ghetto”, those left alive were sentenced to continuing mortal fear and to further “selections”.