

## In the HASAG Camps

Following the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, the nearly 4,000 Jews still left alive were transferred to the HASAG-Apparatebau (Pelcery) and HASAG-Eisenhütte (Raków) munitions factories. These were factories which belonged to Polish and French shareholder companies. The Germans had requisitioned these factories and transformed them into munitions factories.

The *Schutzpolizei* temporarily borrowed 230 people, from these munitions factories, and barracked them at ul. Garibaldię. At the beginning, these borrowed Jews were employed in clearing out the Jewish property and goods which had been left behind in the “Small Ghetto” and also in clearing out the corpses which were scattered about there. The Jewish policemen were also employed in these same [tasks]. Of all the borrowed Jews, some were later transferred to HASAG-Pelcery where, along with many other Jews, they were murdered, while others remained billeted at ul. Garibaldię for a lengthy period, working as professional workmen for the Germans, as tailors, cobblers, metalworkers and sorters in the *Schutzpolizei* warehouses.

The regime at HASAG-Pelcery was stricter than at HASAG-Eisenhütte. Among the German managers at the HASAG-Eisenhütte munitions factory, there was an *Oberwachtmeister* [Chief Constable], [Fritz] Mühlhof who, to a certain extent, alleviated the lot of the Jews who had been put under his control. This same [man], during the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, rescued patients from the hospital and brought them, in freight trucks, to the HASAG-Eisenhütte factory. Mühlhof was subsequently relieved of his duties and sent off to the [Russian] front\*. The young Dr Glatzer, who helped him save the patients and generally did a great deal to ease the plight of the internees, was sent away with all the Jews of that camp to another camp in Germany, where he perished.

The road to Golgotha\*\* of the Jewish inmates of the HASAG-Apparatebau camp had already begun during the great deportation of Jews in September 1942. Of all the *placówki*, where Jews, who had been left alive were barracked, this was the worst. Now, the greater part of the 4,000 surviving Jews was sent here. The mood of the “*Hasagowces*” here is a crushed one. One has lost his last child, another his last relative and a third his last friend. Everyone feels lonely.

During the first period, people sleep in the factory halls, on the bare floor, and food is brought on *platformy* [flat-bed trucks] from the destroyed “Small Ghetto”, from the stocks of food that are still left there. Every evening after work, the “*Hasagowces*” gather at the empty factory grounds. Here, primitive kitchens are set up with a few bricks and they cook a few potatoes or a little coffee in the pots which they brought with them. But not everyone has the fortune to receive some potatoes from a Polish worker of his acquaintance and not everyone has taken a pot with him from the ghetto. The foremen and *Werkschutz*, however,

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\* [TN: Fritz Mühlhof survived the War; he died in the German Democratic Republic on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1975 and was posthumously recognised by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Among the Nations in 1978.]

\*\* [TN: The place to which, according to the New Testament, Jesus the Nazarene was made to walk bearing his cross to be crucified; it is usually referred to as Mount Calvary in English.]

cannot bear this - and the “liberty” of gathering, after work, at the empty factory grounds is quickly taken away. They are left with pushing through the day on half a litre of soup, cooked mostly with dried beetroot (“sole soup” in the HASAG jargon), half a litre coffee [made] of burnt and musty barley and 20 *deka* [200g] bread per person.

The explosions of dynamite and crashing of the houses in the “Small Ghetto” incessantly resound here. At the same time, the *Schutzpolizei* are blowing up buildings, murdering and plundering. The *Werkschutz* leader Klemm and his closest confidants, Stieglitz (a German), [Roman Józef] Kmicikiewicz (a Polish traitor, who was sentenced to death by the Polish court), Steininger (a German), Doroszenko and Paweliak (Ukrainians) leave HASAG and go into the ghetto. They rummage about there, seek out bunkers, loot and kill and take part in mass executions.

Bernard Kurland is appointed here as the Jewish representative with whom the factory management puts itself in contact. He manages to convince the factory director, Lüth, that the internees must be fed better in order for production to be able to improve. The factory management arranges an open bread trade. They, themselves, actually provide the bread. The Jews buy it and the business the management authorities do with it is not bad. With the permission of the directorship, Kurland also sets up tailors’ and cobblers’ workshops, as well as a washroom, where the Jewish professional workers are employed, which is to serve the prisoners.

The implemented regime, however, becomes by no means lighter. *Werkschutz* and foremen fall upon their victims like savage beasts. Groups, gathering in one spot, are shot at like birds. By one such shooting, the young Mrs Wolska (née Wajnrajch) falls and she dies, in the women’s hall, in horrific pain, after suffering for more than a fortnight. Here, we find a labourer with broken ribs, whom the construction foreman, [Karl] Opel\*, has thus “put to rights”, and, there, we encounter workers, writhing in agony, with bruised sides, which have been battered by the *Werkschutz* men using their rifle butts.

But the “*Hasagowces*” start becoming accustomed to the new hell and the feeling of deep pain begins to wear off. A thought steals in - “Could it be? Might we, at least here, remain alive? After all, it is some type of munitions factory - and they do need working hands!”

Hungry, broken, but with a glimmer of new hope, we lived here in this manner for three weeks and two days. For three weeks and two days, we starved, eaten by lice and bedbugs and were tortured by *Werkschutz* and foremen.

It is 19<sup>th</sup> June 1943. The crashing of the buildings in the “Small Ghetto” has not yet quietened down and here, at the HASAG-Apparatebau munitions factory, there is a new upheaval. Every German foreman appears to be compiling lists of the workers who are under his control. The foreman Opel, “Morsz” (he got this nickname from the workers, due to the fact that, after beating someone, he would shout, “Get up and *morch!*” instead of “march”), points at a labourer, who is wearing boots and boasts to another foreman that, tomorrow, these fine

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\* [TN: See regarding this individual and others mentioned below in this German-language source: <https://calendar.boell.de/sites/default/files/6783.pdf>. and in this Polish-language one: [https://www.jhi.pl/storage/file/core\\_files/2020/10/28/0f57e1535225f4f421ae7df342c88a10/Procesy\\_przest\\_pc\\_w\\_344.pdf](https://www.jhi.pl/storage/file/core_files/2020/10/28/0f57e1535225f4f421ae7df342c88a10/Procesy_przest_pc_w_344.pdf).]

boots will be his. Inmates interpret this to mean that they will be taking away everybody's personal effects and changing them for camp clothes. Others maintain that they will only take away boots - but no one imagines that a new misfortune is brewing, which will, once again, bring with it hundreds of victims.

That same night, between eleven o'clock and midnight, all the prisoners are roused from sleep and driven outside. Everyone must march down a narrow alleyway, where a "selection" takes place. This time, it is conducted by the factory's director, [Ernst] Lüth; the technical director, [Herbert] Brettschneider; the political officer, Arndt; the technical head engineers [Horst Erhard Waldemar Ernst] Spalteholz, [Alfred Wilhelm] Franzke and [Walter Hermann] Fasold; the foremen [Heinz Alfred Werner] Günther, [Karl] Opel, Niziołek, [Wilhelm] Wirbatz, [Martin] Köhler, Walter and many other foremen.

The "selection" is also managed by the *Werkschutz* chief, Klemm, who is assisted by the *Werkschutz* men Stieglitz, Szewczenko, Doroszenko, [Roman Józef] Kmicikiewicz, Paweliak and others. At the parade ground, there are also the two *Schutzpolizei* officers, Hantke and Laszynski, who assist and keep watch that everything is properly carried out. Degenhardt and a large group of policemen are at the "colony" (this is where the directors and foremen live).

Hantke and Laszynski continuously give instructions as to how the "work" should be performed. They look at each of us, individually, in the face and evaluate. Whoever appears too old, too young or looks weak is set aside separately. One "qualifies" for death, because he has a bald spot - and another, because he has a fine, thick head of hair and looks arrogant; one because he wears glasses - and another because he walks slightly bent over. Some women are pulled out from the lines, because they are too young and pretty - and because they are not pretty enough.

Each separate foreman is now the lord over the life and death of his slaves. Every foreman pulls, from his group of workers those, who as "*Faulenzer*" [idlers] and are to go to their deaths. Here, Opel pulls out, among others, a young man, who is wearing nice boots. There, Spalteholz pulls out, from the line, the eighteen-year-old Białogórska and leads her to those set aside for annihilation, while so doing calling out, "You, the blonde - you're too pretty for work. Such as yourself are only [fit] for amusement!" Here, Klemm pulls out the young sanitary worker Galster, because he issued a certificate to a patient stating that he needed to be freed from work for a couple of days. At the same time, Fasold and the chief of the *Werkschutz* are already taking along Galster's young wife, who approached them regarding freeing her husband.

All those set aside are led away to the "colony", where the bunker cellars are located, which serve to incarcerate the prisoners and where they are tortured. Also, all the "Small Ghetto" Jewish policemen are summoned and locked up in these bunker cellars. Kurland, who as Jewish camp leader assisted during the course of the whole selection, is also seized and thrown into a bunker cellar.

A dreadful lament resounds throughout the entire factory. Now, those being taken away to annihilation are wailing. The rest, those who temporarily have still been left alive, are also weeping and lamenting. Two hundred and sixty people have now been dragged away from

the lines. Two hundred and sixty people have been thrown into a dark cellar and are living through their last night of horrific nightmares.

On the following morning, foremen pulled out a few inmates, who had appealed to them in regards to rescuing their close ones. Among others, we see how Spalteholz is leading the former chairman of the refugees from Łódź in the "Big Ghetto", Jarociński, who had sought, from Spalteholz, redemption for his wife, who had been thrown into the "bunker" the previous night. All those, who had naively believed that their foremen would help them extricate their nearest from the claws of death, were taken away, by those same foremen, to the "bunker", where they shared the fate of their close ones.

It is eleven o'clock in the morning on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1943. Dozens of people scurry to be as near as possible to the dark cellars, to at least cast a last glance at their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters or children. *Werkschutz* and foremen run about, throughout the factory grounds, seeking additional victims. Here, Klemm is leading away the physician Mrs Wajsberg, whom everyone knows so well and respects. There, a *Werkschutz* is dragging off the young and beautiful Markowicz boy, in whom Klemm himself had shown an interest the whole time. Here, a little eight-year-old girl is being dragged away - she was only sneaked into HASAG a few days ago. Even the sadistic foreman [Martin] Köhler would often play with her. There, *Werkschutz* men are dragging out, from a hiding-place, the much-gifted eighteen or nineteen-year-old Józek Jung ("Walking Encyclopaedia", we would call him) and throwing him in with those sentenced to death.

On that same occasion Degenhardt announces to the Jews, who are barracked at the police warehouses on ul. Garibaldiego, that whoever among them with relatives in HASAG-Apparatebau, who wishes to be together with them, may express his desire and his request will immediately be granted. Women, who have husbands there come forward. Men, who have wives there come forward. Mothers, sisters, brothers and offspring come forward. Degenhardt grants their request.

Over one hundred people receive the permission and opportunity to come to HASAG to be with their only surviving close ones. More than a hundred "fortunate", their hearts pounding with happiness, climb onto the vehicles, which Degenhardt has provided for their journey. The vehicles race speedily down the such well-known, Częstochowa streets - Garibaldiego, Wilsona, II Aleja and Aleja Wolności. The people are taken, with the hope of meeting with their nearest, and are thrown into the dark cellars where death is already hovering. In the end, the wives and children of the Jewish policemen are also taken away and imprisoned in the same cellars. (Only the wife of the policeman Kohn and her little boy concealed themselves.)

A terrible wrangle ensues in the dark cellars of the HASAG-Apparatebau "colony". Here, nearly 500 Jews, sentenced to death, fight against the foremen and *Werkschutz*. They do not let themselves be led to their deaths. The struggle is a bitter one, but this time, too, the victors are the German hangmen. Prior to being dragged out to the vehicles that are to take the victims away to the Jewish cemetery to be shot, each victim is stunned with a hammer. The one, who distinguishes himself the most in this "craft", is the foreman Opel "Morsz" (that is the origin of his later nickname – "*Hämmer*") [Little Hammer]). "Morsz" is already wearing the

boots which, already yesterday, he noticed on the feet of a young labourer. Also other foremen are sauntering about drunk on the factory parade grounds and aggrandising themselves with their "heroics".

Those surviving are weeping silently and, along with them, the dark cellar walls of the arrest bunkers are also weeping, with a few barely, legible inscriptions scratched out by those who have just been annihilated:

*"Rubinko Feldman, goodbye my son. Keep well! Your mother, Ch. Feldman."*

*"Dear Rubin, I go in peace to my death. Do not lose hope! I kiss you! Your mother Chana."*

*"I go in peace! Józef Jung."*

*"Zosia Wigdor says goodbye to her husband Kalman. I go in peace! Zosia Wigdor."*

*"Mr Zalcborg! I believed you would save me. I have been disappointed!"* (Signature illegible – probably Mrs Beatus.)

*"I am already weary of fleeing Death. I go in peace. How will my children live? What will happen to them? – Ch. Sz."*

The Jewish cemetery was, once again, enlarged with a great mass grave of nearly 500 people. The German civilian foremen, the lame *Werkschutz* leader Klemm with his *Werkschutz* men and the entire factory management had shown that they knew the "sacred duty" no worse than did the *Schutzpolizei* and Gestapo.

At the HASAG-Apparatebau camp, in an area of nearly one square kilometre, wooden barracks are now hastily erected. These grounds are fenced all around with barbed wire, with an installed electrical current. Observation booths are put up on the outer side of the fences. In addition, the entire perimeter is heavily guarded on the outside by *Werkschutz* men. Inside the barracks, long, single-storey plank beds are set up, where on the bottom and on the top hundreds of people sleep one next to one another. These become the living quarters for nearly 3,000 men and women.

Each day takes its toll of victims - some are shot by a *Werkschutz* guard simply for amusement, and others by the Gestapo for some offence, some for attempting to escape and others by the foreman, for being "*Faulenzer*." When a child is born, it must be immediately put to death. If someone is gravely ill, the lame *Werkschutz* leader deals with him, also.

Already, in the first days after the "selection" was carried out, there were cases of fleeing from the camp. In reprisal, six young labourers were tied up with wire and were thus held at the parade ground all day under the threat of being shot unless the escapees returned. Later,

the Jewish group overseers (kapos), to whom the fugitives belonged, were held responsible for the escapes.

In the first weeks, abdominal typhus broke out and, thanks to the indefatigable work of the doctor Mrs Wajsberg, the young Jewish physicians Dr Julek Przyrowski from Częstochowa and Dr Lunski from Łódź and also thanks to the nurses, who were here among the internees, the situation was put under control in such a manner that there were no victims and the Germans did not [even] become aware of the event.

There were also a few individual German foremen, rare exceptions, who showed the prisoners benevolence, such as the transport foreman, Hulitsch, who never once raised his hand on a worker and turned a blind eye when some of his workers ran clandestine workshops and made a few *gilden* [złoty] from that.

The foreman Berger also did not beat any workers, but he liked walking about throughout the barracks to seek out religious Jews, who were praying and would mock them to the effect that they were “calling on a god, who had been appropriated by the American Jews”. The mechanical workshop foreman, Horn, even helped Jews flee from the camp and was arrested for that. Hulitsch and Horn survived [the War] and testified against the murderous German foremen of the Częstochowa HASAG at the trial in Leipzig, which was held in the summer of 1949.

But the vast majority of the German foremen — and particularly the forewomen - were sadists and murderers. The forewomen, who displayed particular sadism, were Marianne [Gertrud] Tietge [née Haubold], Frieda [Alwine Maria] Röthke, Klara (“Klara the Beautiful”), “Marchewka” and “Pietrucha”\*. Marianne Tietge participated, alongside the foremen and *Werkschutz*, in the *akcja* on the Jews which was carried out at HASAG-Apparatebau on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

The forewomen would keep their workers at work for twelve hours. After the female workers would sleep for an hour or two, they were roused and, sleepy [and] half-dressed, they were led away to the *Werkschutz* guardroom, in order to “collect” their portion of lashes for not fulfilling the work quota. The forewomen, themselves, would determine the number of lashes which each worker needed to receive and, often, while the flogging was being delivered, they would hold the recipient of the blows by her feet or head. “The Beautiful Klara” made herself notorious with her drive to strike male labourers - and that was not only with her fists, but also with the ammunition crates.

Spaltenholz was not content with just beating people and taking them to the guardroom, but he also forced his assistants to do the same. Martin Köhler would beat the workers, take them to the guardroom for lashings and shaved off women’s hair for the most trifling “offence”. He would torture Polish labourers in a different manner. He would take them for a “bath”. There, he would soap them up and scrub their bodies with a floor brush. Gustav\*, in his treatment of the Jewish workers, always showed that he was a loyal member of the NSDAP [viz. Nazi Party],

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\* [TN: Pol., “Carrot” and “Parsley”, respectively; nicknames given them by the prisoners due to their external appearances, as explained by Dr Benjamin Orenstein in his book “Churban Czenstochow”.]

\* [TN: As we have not found any other mention of this individual in other sources, it is unclear whether this is a surname or a given name.]

and, during the July “selection”, he personally sent forty labourers to their deaths. Walter Prasse would particularly abuse women. Johannes [Franz] Nicke tortured the workers and the flogging did not suffice with the usual twenty-five lashes. For him, the normal quota of lashes was fifty. He beat a certain Wolman particularly badly with a rubber truncheon. Every second Sunday, certain groups of workers would be given a day off. Nicke would then take these groups out of the barracks and force them to wash the concrete floors in the factory halls. The rags with which to clean these floors they were given used, thin kerchiefs, which had previously served for the inspection of casings for bullets. These “free” Sundays, therefore, became days of horror for the female labourers, who were under his control.

Opel and Fasold displayed the greatest sadism. Opel beat anyone, who came under his hand, without any reason at all. He fell upon workers and beat them with anything that came to hand at that moment - with a board, a piece of iron or a hammer. Mostly, with his foot, he kicked people in the stomach and in the groin.

Fasold (“Boxer”) would set upon labourers for absolutely no reason and thrash them, without sparing any women and children. The manner in which he beat the fifteen-year-old Towia Niemiec especially remained in everyone’s memory. Towia worked in the infantry department. He had to take crates, containing damaged bullet casings, from the rapidly moving conveyer belts and carry them away to a different spot, where large bins stood for this purpose. The small, starving and exhausted Towia was forced, for twelve hours, to “stroll” back and forth in this manner with the heavy crates. Twelve hours a day during the dayshift, and twelve hours a night during the nightshift. Due to fatigue, Towia would walk with his eyes closed while carrying the crates. He was already so familiar with the way there and back, that he could allow himself this “enjoyment”. Many times, he felt that his feet would serve him no longer. He would then put down the crate, sit on it and cast his eyes all around him in case “someone” should approach. But there were moments when his eyes became glued shut and Towia began to drowse.

It was at one such “misdemeanour” that Fasold caught him. He raised Towia off the crate by his ear and punched him in the left cheek with his right fist. Towia keeled over to the right and, even before he had time to fall to the ground, he already felt the second box on his right cheek. Towia swayed several times from left to right and from right to left under Fasold’s blows, until he collapsed. Fasold seizes him by the feet, raises him up high and carries him quickly away. Towia makes an effort to raise his arms, so that they should not be dragged along on the concrete floor. He raises his arms and pulls them to his sides, but they fall down powerlessly and continue being dragged along. Fasold stops, with his victim, by a bin of bullet casings that is not full and throws him into it with his head facing down. Only half his body fits into the bin. Fasold, mad with his dominance over the small lad, begins crushing Towia’s genitals with one hand and pressing the other half of his body deeper into the bin with his other hand. Towia’s screams reach the workers, who are by the machines, and the terrifying clamour of the female workers surpasses the noise of the machinery. Fasold is roused from his frenzy, gazes about him as if seeking out the “impudent” women, who have dared interrupt his sadistic pleasure and, hurriedly, leaves the factory hall. From then on, little Towia

was no longer inclined to obey his wearied feet and carried out his obligations out “to perfection”.,\*

Each day or night, yet more dismal tidings. Here, *Werkschutz* men shot into the women’s barracks through the windows and there were casualties. Here, the foreman Hausner shot a lady because she was “lazy” at work. There, a *Werkschutz* guard shot a boy, because he had sat for too long in the latrine. Here, Klemm took sick people away to the Jewish cemetery, where the *Werkschutz* shot them. There, an intoxicated foreman entered the women’s hall, chose himself the youngest girl there and took her away for the whole night. Here, the Gestapo took someone away and he never returned. There, three young workers were arrested for “stealing” a few chunks of bread and were executed. Here, Stieglitz (deputy of the *Werkschutz* leader) beat a woman with his stick, until she began losing consciousness and, only then, did he drag her away to be shot. Here, the *Werkschutz* guard Michał Skolenko hit Liberman, dragged him off to the cellar bunker and there, with the aid of Stieglitz, tortured him to death.

We ceased to believe that we would survive this place, and the only question was, “Who [would die] earlier and who later?” From time to time, smaller groups of inmates were locked up in an unfinished barrack and, from there, were sent away to other death camps.

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The days in the camp are “monotonous”, even if frequent upheavals take place. Every day, at five o’clock in the morning, everyone has to be at the headcount (roll-call). The Jewish camp leader carries out the count with his two aides, in the presence of *Werkschutz* and foremen. Each “kapo” calls out the number of “*Häftlingen*”<sup>\*</sup> for which he is answerable, and provides certificates from a doctor for those in his group who are ill and [thus] missing from the headcount.

The chief of the *Werkschutz* and Stieglitz take the reports. Stieglitz makes a circus for himself - for coming a couple of seconds late to the roll call, he makes the tardy men throw their caps at the roof, until they are left lying up there. Then the “guilty party” must climb up to retrieve it. For the same offence, he makes older women choose young boys from the lines and kiss with them. For similar “transgressions”, he forces young girls to do the same with older Jews. Latecomers are also registered so that, after twelve hours of work, they should report, of their own account, to the *Werkschutz* guardroom and “collect” twenty-five or more lashes there. Some emerge with just a “*kratka*” [grid pattern] (marks on their posterior), and others go from the guardroom straight into hospital.

During the roll-calls, young *Werkschutz* guards also put their cycling skills to the test. They drive in zigzags over the toes of the inmates, while these stand in a perfect line. Should the sufferer dare to make a sound, he gets his due on the spot, or later at the guardroom.

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<sup>\*</sup> [TN: Walter Hermann Fasold was sentenced to life in prison in Frankfurt in 1949.]

<sup>\*</sup> [TN: Ger., prisoners/detainees – a term which is not used in Yiddish and with which the Jewish prisoners were not familiar; there is a humorous story regarding the use of this word by the kapos in the chapter “The Period of Bartenschlager’s Rule in HASAG-Pelcery From November 1944 To 16th January 1945” of Dr B. Orenstein’s book “Churban Czenstochow”.]



During this same period, in the city - outside the camp - a great hunt for Jews is taking place. The *Stadthauptmannschaft* holds a special, anti-Jewish, agitational show titled "*Die Jüdische Weltpest*" [The Jewish World Plague\*], in which the Jews are represented as terrible criminals. In addition, incendiary fliers were spread and [also] calendars with caricatures portraying the Jews as swindlers, criminals, communists and, as such, those who rule the globe.

Poles, with whom Jews are found hiding, are tried and shot. A note from the formerly active ŻOB member Abram Kapłan, who is hiding with Poles, finds its way into the camp, to the effect that his situation is hard and means should be found to enable him to get into HASAG. But we soon received the news that the active ŻOB member Abramek Kapłan, along with other Jews had been murdered in a bunker by a band of robbers. The head [of this band] was the notorious, Częstochowa, antisemitic, merchant Wołoszczyk who, already before the War, had headed boycotts and picketing campaigns against Jewish tradesmen. (The Polish People's Court meted out, to this murderer, the punishment he had earned).

Jews, for whom there is no longer a way out on the "Aryan side", smuggle themselves into the camps with groups of Polish workers, who temporarily lend the Jews the work cards of Polish workers, who have fallen ill. In general, we must mention that Polish labourers smuggled in, to the Jews, food, cigarettes, lard and even medications. Among those who helped actively was the Polish communist Imiołek who, on behalf of the PPR, maintained contact with the Jewish communists the entire time. The Jews, smuggling themselves in such a manner into Raków, remain there, because Mühlhof takes them immediately into the list of the Jewish prisoners - the Germans, besides himself, know nothing of it. It is worse for those who smuggle themselves into Pelcery. Here, they are turned over, by the *Werkschutz* leader, to the Gestapo, where they are killed.

The terrible state of the Jews, who are hiding on the "Aryan side", diminishes the urge of the "*Hasagowces*" to flee the camp, even if the situation here is also horrible. Among those who escaped from the camp was the active ŻOB member Michał Wajskop, who wished to reunite with his comrades-in-arms in the Koniecpol woods. He did not achieve his goal and perished on the way.

During this same period, the following negative phenomenon may be observed - whoever is able to use fouler language feels himself "stronger", and a "competition" develops in this field. They even teach Stieglitz "savoury" jokes. The one, who excelled the most in teaching Stieglitz the Jewish obscene expressions, was the little Gliksman who, due to his serving the *Werkschutz* men with denunciations, became Stieglitz's darling and also began mistreating the inmates.

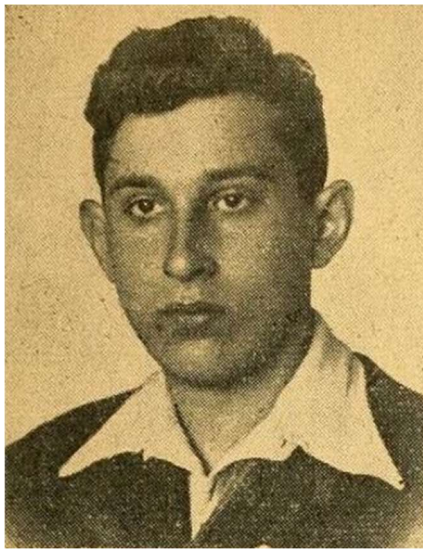
The vast majority of the scanty Jews became one large, numbed, depressed mass. The forced labour between the grey factory walls, the murderous foremen and *Werkschutz*, the heavy machines at which they are forced to work twelve hours standing, sometimes to remain as punishment for another shift and, only after the second shift, being forced to continue working for another twelve hours, along with the group of workers to which one belongs, as

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\* [TN: Presumably based on the anti-Semitic book by the same title which was published in 1933 by the Nazi Hermann Esser.]

well as the hunger with which only some manage to cope - [all] bring their sorrowful consequences.

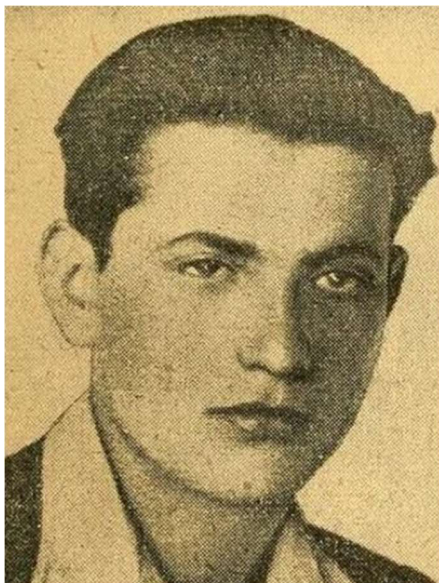
One finds shrivelled people, whose skin only just keeps their bones from falling apart. One also encounters some, who are barely dragging their hunger-swollen feet in the large *treppes* (shoes with wooden soles) or "*hollenderkes*" (shoes made solely of wood). Tuberculosis and other diseases have their hefty share here. Ragged garments and clogs, brought from other liquidated camps, are the normal clothing here. Garment sorters find notes, which the previous - and now already murdered - owners put into the pockets in the last minutes of their lives. They are caught while reading the notes and are killed.



**Michał Wajskop**



**"Zosia" Ruchla Sapszewska**



**Lajzer Szydlowski**



**Abramek Wajskop**

All the time, apathy and resignation were increasingly spreading and were steadily pervading ever more inmates. There was also a case of suicide. A young lad, Fajerman, drowned himself in the little stream which flowed near the factory's *electrownia* [power station]. And still, a group of stubborn rebels endeavoured to do anything to drive away the despair. Political talks, organised by the underground activists for limited circles, and also song and recitation evenings would be held in the barracks. The performers at these cultural evenings or cultural Sundays were the few surviving female singers of the bygone TOZ choir and the two Jakubowicz brothers.

Sometime later, we began suffering great troubles from the new *Werkschutz* chief, Hermann. He was a medic by trade and believed that he needed to assist at every operation in the camp hospital. Other prominent Germans would also attend these operations and the surgeon had to hold a "practical lecture". In such cases, the patients would receive a larger dosage of anaesthesia to enable the surgeon to stretch his "lecture" longer. Often, such "lectures" were a success and the operations were accomplished (the head physician, the surgeon Szperling, was a capable professional), but the patient paid with his life. In these instances, Szperling himself bore no small share of the blame. In the obsequiousness which he displayed towards the Germans, he could allow himself, after having ended an operation on a blind gut [viz. caecum], to reopen the patient's abdomen to demonstrate his professional knowledge to the German "assistants" to the operation who had arrived late. There was much talk in the camp regarding Szperling's culpability in the death of one Bronka Baum, upon whom he had operated and, due to the manner in which he had conducted the surgery on her, she later died, after lying in hospital for a few days.

Szperling was one of the few Jews in camp who aroused hatred towards himself from the majority of the inmates. The prisoners seldom enjoyed the benefit of the large stocks of medicines which were in the camp's dispensary, which originated back from the pharmacies of the *Judenrat* and TOZ in the "Big Ghetto" and, later, in the "Small Ghetto". There were also medications that had been received from the Kraków JUS\*. They rarely received even powders for headache.

In contrast, Szperling generously administered the most expensive items to the Germans and *Werkschutz* men. He treated his subordinate personnel no better than the worst German foreman. He particularly abused his subordinate Jewish doctors and nurses. The physical workers in the staff, under him, found themselves in a better situation. He actually permitted himself to beat them in moments of agitation, but nevertheless also did good things for them, especially when he was in a good mood. He boasted to them about his ideas and achievements and let loose his vocabulary, which surpassed the lexicon of the camp's notorious foul mouths by several orders of magnitude.

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\* [TN: Acronym of the Ger. *Jüdische Unterstützungsstelle* (Jewish Aid Centre); aka JSS – Jewish Self-Help Society (*Żydowska Samopomoc Społeczna*, ŻSS, in Polish).]

The tragic state of the Jews at HASAG, nevertheless, did not kill everyone's lust for life, and nor did it atrophy everyone's human sentiments and fraternal solidarity. The first to begin sending in aid to the HASAG-Apparatebau camp were the "*Garibaldczykes*" - the small number of Jews barracked at ul. Garibaldiego. This group of Jews stole clothing and goods from the warehouses of the *Schutzpolizei* and sold them to Poles in different ways. The "*Garibaldczykes*" taxed themselves for the benefit of the HASAG Jews and sent [the money] over through the trustees whom they appoint - Jechiel Gomuliński and Itta Brenner - who would distribute the sums sent among those suffering hunger and those whom the "*Garibaldczykes*" had indicated in the list they sent. Besides this, there was a group of women, organised within the camp itself, who collected a weekly fee, with which they began running a kitchen for children and sick people. The ladies, Fela Ofman and Zosia Weksztajn, showed great initiative in this work.

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Following the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto", the connection with the Jewish underground in Warsaw was interrupted. [But,] already in the second month after the liquidation, the courier from Warsaw, [Fajga Peltel-]Międzyrzecka ("*Władka*"), found the bunker of the combat units in the Koniecpol woods and, through this group, made contact with "Jacek", who was barracked at the HASAG-Eisenhütte camp. Through "Jacek's" mediation, "*Władka*" also made contact with the Częstochowa underground activists, who were in the HASAG-Apparatebau camp. "*Władka*" began sending money and literature into the camps. From then on, the coordination of the leftist underground activists in the HASAG-Apparatebau camp took over practically the entire maintenance of the illegal kitchen and enlarged it to such an extent, that almost all the sick people, children and youth enjoyed its benefits.

A Polish underground activist from Częstochowa, Mrs Dziuba, also brought money into the camp on several occasions. Mrs Dziuba would make her way into the "colony", hand the money over to the activist Helman, and he would deliver it to the underground activists in the camp.

The cook and manager of the hospital kitchen was the nurse Mania Altman (née Kolin), and she was helped by the other nurses working there. Due to the fact that the patients rarely had the fortune to receive the medications they required from the camp dispensary on time, Drs Przyrowski and Lunski would indicate what medicine was needed for which patient, and this would be purchased in town through familiar Polish workers and smuggled into the camp.

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The religious Jews also conducted small-scale relief activity. Those at the head of the religious group were Nojeh Edelist and Jechiel Landau. There was also a small group of young people, former ŻOB members, who organised a collective life. This group was headed by Natka Wiernik (Jacek's wife), Abramek Czarny and Różka Działowska - "*The Mame'le*" (she received the nickname "*Mame'le*" for her selflessness and the motherly care which she displayed towards the comrades). Abramek and Różka belonged to the PPR group. A second group, which led a collective life, was Bundist. At the head of this collective group stood Eli Sztajnic, Lajb Leber, Josl Krauze and the bakery worker Becalel Altman.

Jewish activists turned to good use their acquaintance with Polish labourers, who were employed at the Pelcery and Raków factories. For the Jews, these workers smuggled in food, medicines, legal German newspapers, illegal literature and everything that arrived from Warsaw with the couriers. Through the mediation of Polish workers, contact was also made between the Jews of one camp and those of the other.

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The camp regime, which led to ailing people, with high temperatures, being afraid to report sick and, with their last strengths, even continued standing at the machines. The pain and humiliation one had to bear on the part of every foreman and every camp guard; the hunger and uncertainty regarding today and tomorrow - all this led to an intense apathy, which was consistently broadening. Nevertheless, the activity of the underground cells brought in a little revitalisation. The moments, when Soviet aeroplanes appeared, introduced a particular revitalisation and faith. As soon as the factory sirens raised their lugubrious alarm and the camp guards and foremen fled to the air-raid cellars, the Jews felt as if they had received a new soul - we felt freer, as it were. Some began to believe that the never-ending troubles would come to an end after all, while others hoped that the factory would be bombarded and that we would have the good fortune to perish under the ruins of the factory and not at the criminal hands of the Germans.

In the dark nights, we were unable to remain standing by the machines or lying down in the barracks. Everyone wanted to know what was happening outside. In the barracks, someone else climbed down from the plank beds every time and stole a glance at how things looked outside. As for inside the factory, every couple of minutes, another worker tore away from the machine and scraped his way outside. People wanted to know what it looked like when the big and long, fiery fingers of the German projectors were groping in the dark heavens, searching and searching. These same long, fiery fingers, which searched the skies night after night, cast a fear on the Germans and aroused hope and a joyous beating of the heart in the Jews. "Could it be, after all?", many thought and comforted themselves. "Might this horrific hell end, after all?" All were confident that the Soviet "birds" would finally bring the salvation.

These feelings are also invigorated by the legal and illegal newspapers, which are smuggled in, bring day after day, [providing] news about the victorious march forward of the Red Army.

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In January 1944, transports of Jews, from the Łódź Ghetto and also from the Płaszów camp, begin arriving. The Jews in the HASAG-Apparatebau camp yield their bread rations to the [new] arrivals. The Jews from Łódź are ecstatic – for a long time, they have not seen as much bread as they receive here. There is a difference of opinions between the *Częstochowers* in the camp and the Jews, who have been brought from the Łódź Ghetto. The *Łódźers* maintain that, compared with the conditions pervading the Łódź Ghetto, HASAG is a paradise. Here, they eat to satiety. The *Częstochowa* Jews maintain that the fact, that more Jews are being brought, is a sign that a new concentration point is being created here, where they wish to annihilate everyone.

The *Werkschutz* chief announces that the arrivals from Łódź have the right to write letters home and they will also be able to receive replies from home. The *Łódźers* make use of the opportunity. They write home about their “good fortune” and do, in fact, receive answers. The belief of the *Łódźers* in their new “luck” is strengthened and, with the earlier “*Hasagowces*”, the feeling intensifies that the permission to conduct a correspondence is calculated to fool other Jews from Łódź into [coming], and to kill them here. The correspondence is soon forbidden and the moods of the newcomers, from Łódź and Płaszów also, become heavy.

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Due to the fact that, in January 1944, transports of Jews were brought from the Płaszów camp and Łódź Ghetto, the number of Jews in the Częstochowa camps increased and two other munitions factories and two other camps for Jews were established - Częstochowianka and HASAG-Warta. The regimes in the newly-established camps are much harder than in the two earlier ones. The situation is particularly difficult for the “*Hasagowces*” in the Warta camp, where their plight is made even harder by the Jewish camp leader, who has been appointed there - a German Jew [named] Jolles.

July 1944 - due to the Red Army’s offensive, the munitions factories in Skarżysko are quickly liquidated by the Germans. The camps of Jews there are also liquidated. The machines from there are brought to Częstochowa and a certain number of Jews from the Skarżysko camps are also sent here. The number of Jews increases in all four Częstochowa camps, even after sending away a certain number of the newly-brought Jews to Germany. There are still about 11,000 Jews left in the Częstochowa camps.

All the control over the HASAG-Warta and HASAG-Apparatebau camps is taken over by the former German camp leader and chief of *Werkschutz* in Skarżysko, the sorrowfully, notorious sadist and murderer [Fritz] Bartenschlager who, already in Skarżysko, had gained notoriety by murdering masses of Jews and, above all, with the night-time revelry that he would organise there. During this type of “partying”, he would conduct a roll-call of the women there, select the youngest and prettiest, hold them all night at the disposal of his drunken comrades and, in the morning, these women were murdered by him, personally. It was this same sadist who began ruling in the two Częstochowa camps and implementing his well-known torture methods\*.

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20<sup>th</sup> July 1944 - a few Jews, from the nightshift at HASAG-Apparatebau, come running over to the barracks and report that the foremen are not guarding so keenly at work and are whispering secretively among themselves all the time. Others say that they caught discussions between foremen regarding some assassination attempt. But no one knows exactly what kind of attempt is in question. We do not sleep and we await, with impatience, what the early morning will bring. On the following day, at dawn, all the Jews go out to the roll-call earlier

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\* [TN: Fritz Bartenschlager was tried on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1945 in Leipzig by the Soviets, who found him guilty, sentenced him to death and executed him on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1946.]

than usual. The foremen walk about worried and the Jews feel somewhat bolder. We already know that there was an assassination attempt on Hitler, and these rumours pass from mouth to mouth. Everyone clings on to this hope and affirms that the camp regime has already become weaker.

Thus pass forty-eight hours. We are already aware of everything that happened and the hopes have been dashed. Once more, we feel the murderous camp regime and the disappointment makes the moods even heavier. Nevertheless, many cling onto this hope - if the Jews in the Skarżysko and Płaszów camps were not finished off, but transferred to the Częstochowa camps, [then] in Częstochowa the Jews will also not be annihilated. Thus, the interpretations of each separate happening are continuously changing and, along with that, the moods also.

In July 1944, contact with Warsaw was completely cut off and, for a certain period, the relief work came to a halt. Inside the camp itself, we already conducted the aid work with the last reserves. At the end of 1944, the Warsaw Jewish underground organisations, once more, sent a courier [codenamed] "Stefan" and, once again, made contact with the camp's underground. We received letters, literature, 10,000 gilden [złoty] aid for the Jews commonly and special funds for comrades wishing to flee the camps.

Together with all that, we also received two letters regarding the liquidation of the Jews in the camps of Pionki and Trawniki, and a demand that, if we were not prepared for an armed sortie, the activists were to flee. This was the last news which we received from the outside, until the moment when the Red Army occupied Częstochowa and we were liberated.