

The Resistance Movement in the “Small Ghetto”

Already, by October 1942, while the great deportation *akcja* was still underway, four communist activists - Heniek Tencer, Daniel Warszawski, Wilek Celnik and Sumek Abramowicz - began to organise a combat group. This group arose in the *Möbellager* and was joined by active figures of other parties and also by the Non-Partisans*. Even earlier, back in the “Big Ghetto”, this group had raised money for weaponry under the “Dar Narodowy”** organisation.

At the head of the newly-organised combat group stood Heniek Tencer, who was already known as an active communist years before the War. Heniek was a grandson of the renowned Częstochowa citizen, Zysser. In the school year 1929-30, he and eleven other *gimnazjum* students - also including Mietek Perec (son of the well-known dentist Aron Perec) and two other of their friends, Olek Behm and Pruszycki - were arrested for communist activity amongst the school's youth. After he was released from prison, once again, he was active in the communist ranks - until he was sent away to Bereza***. From the beginning of the German occupation, he put himself at the service of the anti-fascist underground movement.

As soon as the Jews from the *placówki* started being transferred into the “Small Ghetto”, Heniek Tencer was appointed as the concierge of ul. Nadrzeczna 88, where the workers of the *Möbellager* were to live, and where these workers had built bunkers for the mothers, children and elderly people, who had been saved during the *akcje*. Heniek was given custodianship of the building by the workers at the *Möbellager* for two reasons:

- 1) to have a responsible man in a building, where bunkers had been set up, and
- 2) in order that he should not need to go outside the ghetto to work at any *placówki* and that he should dedicate himself more to his underground activity.

Within a certain time, the custodianship of ul. Nadrzeczna 88 was given over to the writer of these lines and Heniek with his wife moved to a bunker at ul. Wilsona 34. From there they went out to the “Aryan side”, where they continued to be active. They eventually perished, and all traces of them have disappeared. Heniek Tencer is considered to be a pioneer of the resistance movement which arose following the great destruction - the liquidation [of the “Big Ghetto”].

At the beginning of November 1942, the Germans began transferring the groups of barracked Jews from the *placówki* into the “Small Ghetto”. It is here that each survivor first took stock of the horrors that had taken place in the recent five-week *akcje* period. For many, the last hopes, that they would again meet with a relative who had perhaps been saved at another *placówka*, were dashed. Also, the handful of surviving “Big Ghetto” underground activists saw, all around them, that the horrific “plague” had torn, out of their ranks, the vast majority of the remaining activists.

* [TN: Proponents of the pro-Piłsudski Non-Party Bloc of Cooperation with the Government (BBWR).]

** [TN: As mentioned on p.59, the “Dar Narodowy” (National Gift) were bonds sold by the PPR party for the purpose of engaging in active warfare against the occupying Germans.]

*** [TN: The Bereza Kartuska (or Kartuz-Bereza) Prison was a concentration camp for political prisoners, which was run by the Polish Sanacja government from 1934 to 1939; the town Bereza Kartuska is in modern-day Belarus.]

However, no one knew what had actually happened to the 40,000 Jews. Before long, people in the ghetto were reading letters from Hersz-Mendel Wilinger and [Mojsze] Lubling, which they had sent over from Treblinka to Częstochowa via a Polish train conductor, regarding the suicide of their comrade and co-worker Szymzel Jakubowicz and the actual fate of all the Jews being sent to Treblinka. They urged us to do everything to make the world aware of what was happening there to the Jews. The word "Treblinka", which only then first became known in Częstochowa, brought to naught all the hopes of those, who had deceived themselves the entire time and had not accepted the terrifying truth.

It is hard to describe the atmosphere that, from then on, began pervading the ghetto. It seemed as if each person was seized by an apathy and that it was all the same to him as to what would happen next.

Nevertheless, the resistance movement started to cement itself. At the end of November [1942], at ul. Garncarska 56 in the laundry, which was run by Roziner, a discussion was held, in which the participants were Dr Adam Wolberg, Izrael Szymonowicz, Jakub Roziner, Wilek Celnik and the writer of these lines. At this discussion, it was resolved to start gathering armaments and different types of equipment with which we would be able to oppose the Germans in case of some *akcja*. Comrades Frajman and Jochimek, being professional workmen, were also instructed to prepare cutters and tongs with which it would be possible to cut through barbed wire. In addition, it was decided to smuggle in petrol and stash it in all corners of the ghetto so that, in case the battle was lost, the ghetto should be set on fire from all sides. Dr Wolberg took upon himself the military leadership*. This group included Communists, Bundists and Non-Partisans.

During this same period, six young women - Rysia Gutgold, Saba Ripsztajn, Polia Szczekacz, Dosia Szczekacz, Sara Gutgold and Lusja Gutgold - set up a collective at ul. Nadrzeczna 66**. These six girls resolved to draw, into their collective, as many young people as possible, together with some of whom they had worked in the "Big Ghetto" at the TOZ *światlicy* [day-care centres], courtyard committees [of each building] and also in spreading literature.

Very soon, this collective was, in fact, increased by the following of their comrades: Kuba Ripsztajn, Mietek Ferleger, Mendel Fiszlewicz and Icek Windman ("Lala"). Later, it also included Lolek Frankenberg ("Franczek"), Mietek Wajntraub ("Marduk"), Hipek Hajman, Awiw Roziner, Marysia Rozencwajg, Polia Hirs, Jadzia Mass and Lusia Wojdzińska. Later still, this group was joined by Izidor Fajner ("Faia"), Włodek Kopyński and Harry Gerszonowicz – and, finally, by Fela Zborowska and Pinek Samsonowicz. All of the twenty-three young people were aged 17-20, the majority of whom were affiliated with communism.

They immediately began preparing for resistance. They made do with just dry bread for food, skimping and saving money for weapons. After they had already saved up a little money, Mietek Ferleger, with the aid of [a stranger named] Szulman, went off to the Kielce region and purchased two pistols. They declared themselves a combat unit, divided themselves up into "fives" [viz. groups of five], and appointed Mietek as the commander of the whole group.

* [TN: As mentioned in other Częstochowa Yizkor Books, Dr Wolberg was a captain in the Polish army.]

** [TN: See more about this collective in *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. II, chapter "History of the Underground 'Group 66'" by Sara Edelist (née Gutgold), who was one of its founders.]

This was the second - and the youngest - combat group which arose, in the "Small Ghetto", at the beginning of December and was called "Nadrzeczna 66".

The third group was established later at ul. Nadrzeczna 70, under the name "*Kibbutz*" [Heb., group/collective]. This was a group of *Ha'Chalutz*^{***} members, initially, was headed by Rywka Glanc, Juda Gliksztajn and the *Shomer* [viz. member of *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*], Abram Zylbersztajn.

There was one more communist combat group, made up by [Adam] Sztajnbrecher, Swierczewski, Rajch, Sztrozberg, Janek, Jankel Besserman and Brzoski.

At the end of December 1942, a conference of representatives of all the combat groups was held. The conference took place in an atmosphere of complete understanding. The ŻOB¹¹⁰ was founded. A high command was chosen, which set itself the goal of making contact with the general "underground" within Częstochowa, itself, and also outside Częstochowa and with procuring weaponry and monetary means for this purpose.

All those, belonging to the groups, were divided into "fives". Mordche Zylberberg - a young lad, who had already earlier distinguished himself for his energy and certain professional skills, and who had already begun underground activity while still being barracked at HASAG (his codename was "Mojtek") - was appointed commandant of these "fives". The commandant's second in command was Sumek Abramowicz. The *chalutz*^{*} Heniek Pejsak was chosen as the liaisons man between all the units.

At first, the Jews in the ghetto treated the combat units with a certain scepticism - a few mocked them and some even hated them. The sentiment of hatred was palpable among those Jews who still believed that they would survive, and were afraid that those "madmen" would bring the end nearer. Gradually, the Combat Organisation's activity began having the effect that it inspired, in all the Jews, a sentiment of respect - and even fear also. The Combat Organisation grew to become a force such as all in the ghetto were forced to reckon.

All the combat units, which until the unification had numbered about seventy people, increased following the unification to a number of 300, of whom 120 were working actively. Money for weapons was raised through taxation and "thefts". Those taxed were the better-situated Jews, who were forced to pay, within a set time limit, the sums that had been imposed upon them. Those Jews, who did not fulfil these demands, were arrested and were only freed once their relatives had paid the requested sum.

"Thefts" were carried out consistently at the *Schutzpolizei's* storerooms of robbed goods on ul. Garibaldię. The *Judenrat* warehouses were also "burgled" twice and, once, the *Judenrat* pharmacy - where, among the medications, were chemical substances which served for the grenades. The "burglaries" at the *Judenrat's* storerooms and pharmacy were carried out by Abramek Czarny ("Czare"), Heniek Wiernik ("Jacek"), Benjamin Erenfryd, Pinek Samsonowicz

^{***} [TN: Heb., "*The Pioneer*"; a Zionist group which prepared youths in special training farms for life as immigrants in Palestine.]

¹¹⁰ [TN: "*ŻOB*" - Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa - Jewish Combat Organisation]

^{*} [TN: Heb., "*pioneer*"; viz. member of the Zionist *Ha'Chalutz* movement.]

and Lolek Frankenberg ("Franczek"). This was carried out in the months March and April of 1943.

Those, who occupied themselves with collecting the taxes, were Harry Potaszewicz, Abramek Kapłan, Hillel Frydrych ("Chilek"), Młodynow and others from the combat units, whom they themselves took along as helpers.

Herszl Prozer, with the assistance of Mojsze-Szmul Landsberg, Leon Fuks and a certain Guterman, was the one who dealt with stealing uniforms and other necessary items from the *Schutzpolizei* warehouses.

"Jacek" and Josek Kantor were in charge of digging the tunnels. The grenade workshop was run by "Jacek" and "Bastek". The chemist [Szlomek] Kaufman ("Mikrus") dealt with the preparation of the explosive material for the grenades. Michał Wajskop occupied himself with assembling, repairing and cleaning the weapons. Rywka [Glanc], Hipek and "Franczek" were chosen as liaisons people with the ŻOB in Warsaw.

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The purchase of armaments entailed great perils and victims. Already, in December 1942, Mietek Ferleger, as he was walking down ul. Jasnogórska to the appointed location to procure weapons, was stopped by a "*Bahnschutz*" [railway guard]. After a brief struggle, he knocked the German down and escaped. But, in the end, he was captured by the Gestapo. They tortured him for a full twenty-four hours and then shot him. This miscarriage had a terrible effect on everybody, and particularly on the "Nadrzeczna 66" group, who had lost a close friend and a capable and daring commander. Nevertheless, this did not detract from anyone's courage, and the work to procure weaponry was not slackened at all.

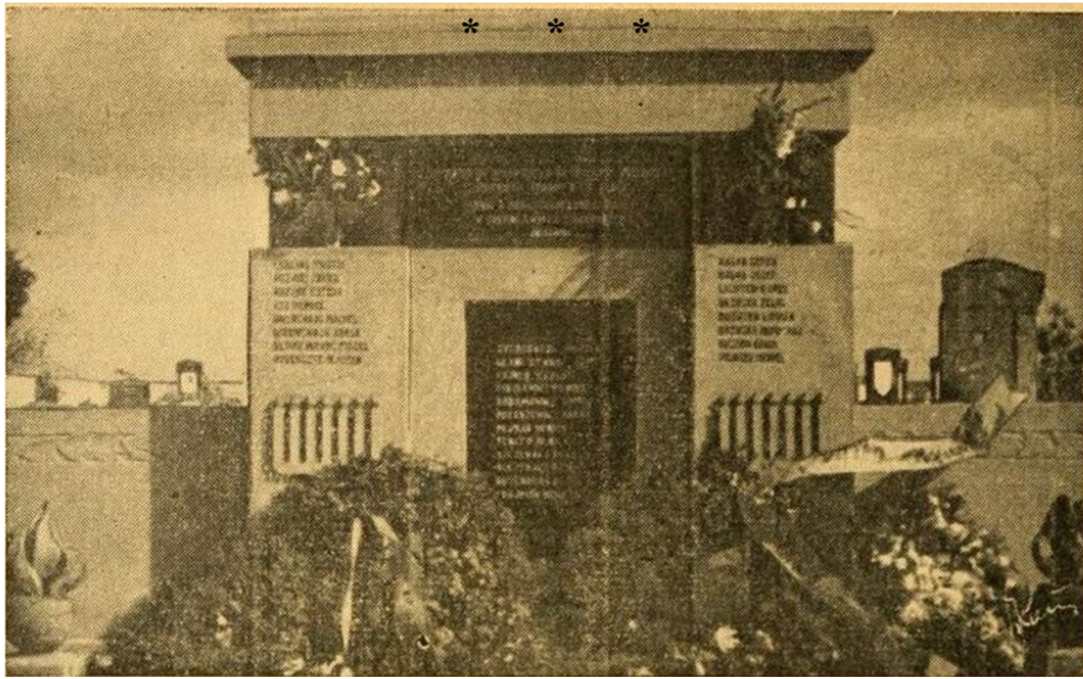
A similar incident took place much later with the [female] courier "Zosia", who was transporting weapons for the Częstochowa ŻOB. When she was already in Częstochowa, she set upon a spy, who had followed her from Warsaw. She fell in the uneven battle against the Germans, who had surrounded her.

The third instance of victims [falling], during the course of purchasing weaponry, was at Kamionka*, four or five kilometres from Częstochowa. Zylberg, Kantor and Renia Lenczner were sent there to receive a shipment of short weapons, which had been ordered, for 250,000 złoty, through the mediation of an arms dealer. This dealer was, presumably, an agent of the German gendarmerie. As soon as they had left the appointed location with the collected weapons, they were encircled by gendarmes and *Gestapowces*, who immediately opened fire on them. Several Germans were wounded during the course of the gunfire exchange. Unverified reports reached us that two gendarmes were killed. Zylberg and Kantor managed to extract themselves from the encirclement of Germans and make it back into the ghetto. Renia, severely injured, was taken alive only after she had fired all the bullets of her two revolvers. In a moribund state, she was still tortured in the Gestapo cellars and did not reveal her sacred secret. All [these] misadventures stirred up the entire ghetto. As for the

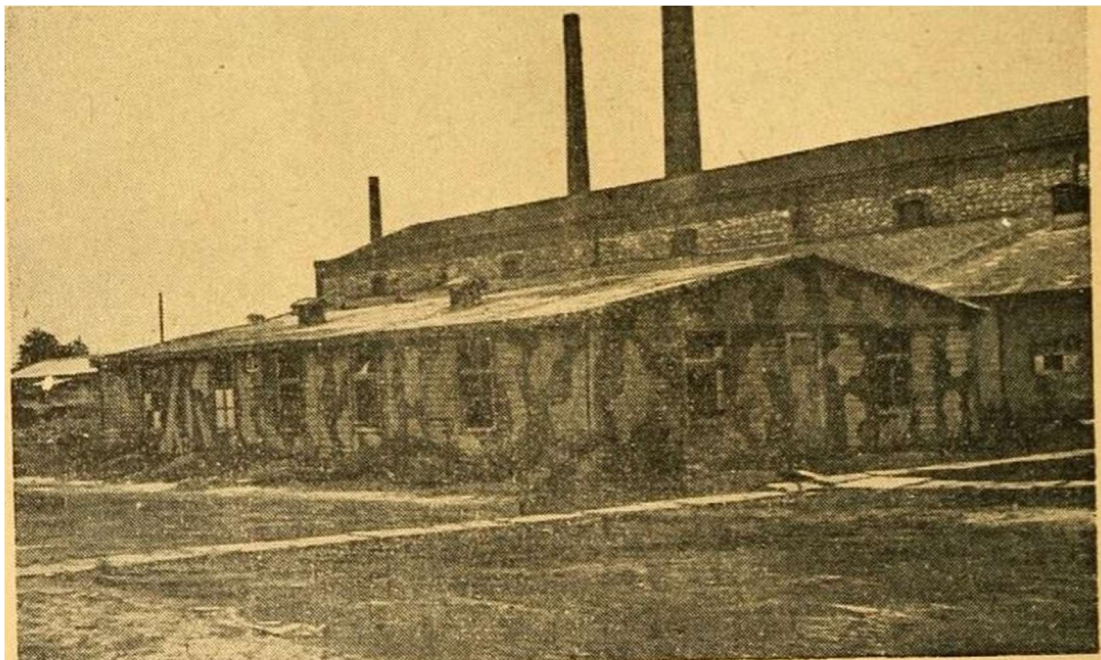
* [TN: Kamionka is a large hill near Raków which, today, is a suburb of Częstochowa.]

combat units, each miscarriage was a hard blow - but the heroism of the fallen comrades filled everyone with pride and roused them to new deeds.

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Memorial monument on the tomb of those killed in the course of the first armed incident, erected by the surviving Jews in Częstochowa



Barracks at the HASAG-Apparatebau camp

The first armed - albeit poorly organised - appearance of the Combat Organisation took place on 4th January 1943. On Degenhardt's orders, all the Jews working at the *placówki*, within the ghetto itself, were to report then to the "Ryneczek". The only member of the Combat Organisation's headquarters, who was inside the ghetto, was Mendel Fiszlewicz from the "Nadrzeczna 66" group, which he represented in the general high command. As for the combat units, most of the "Nadrzeczna 66" group and a few individual members of the general combat units were inside the ghetto. Following a lengthy deliberation, the fighters decided, by a majority of votes, to also go out to the "Ryneczek". They had no weapons. The few revolvers, which the group already did have at the time, had been distributed among the members of the high command, who were outside the ghetto on special missions. Only Fiszlewicz had one revolver. He did, in fact, take that revolver with him and his closest friend, Izidor (Icchok) Fajner, took only a knife with him. It was with these weapons that the young fighters went out to the "Ryneczek". Only Polia Szczekacz remained on guard in the ghetto.

All the Jews of the ghetto had already long since been assembled at the square. The *akcja*, which was headed by [*Schutzpolizei*] Lieutenant Rohn, was already underway. Dozens of elderly, mothers and children had already been separately locked up in the Ukrainian fascists' guardroom. On Rohn's orders, the whole group of young people was immediately surrounded and, as punishment for them having arrived later than all the Jews, they were taken over to the group of Jews, who were already imprisoned.

At this point, this group of fighters resolved. then and there, to die with honour. As soon as they were led out to the square and lined up in a row to be taken away, Fiszlewicz set upon Rohn with his revolver and Fajner upon Lieutenant Sapport with his knife. Rohn was wounded in the arm and Sapport, stabbed and with a slashed uniform and boot, retreated from the square. Fiszlewicz's gun jammed, because the cartridge of the bullet, which had been fired, was left stuck in the barrel. Fiszlewicz began fighting, tooth and nail, and fell perforated by a volley of bullets which the Germans let fly at him from automatic guns. Fajner, too, fell gravely injured.

The murderers did not conclude their bloody lesson with that. They pulled out twenty-five other men from the line, divided them into two groups and shot them before everyone's eyes. Twenty-seven more young lives were cut short and, among them, were the two young combatants Fiszlewicz and Fajner, Herszl Frydman - the renowned *bojowiec* [fighter] since 1905 - the lawyer Natan Rozensztajn, Wernik, Rodał, Sielcer, Trembacki, Haftka, Sztal, Wygodzki, Zylberszac, Eksztajn, Goldberg, Radoszycki and nine other men who were not known to everyone.

Not all the bullet victims fell immediately. A few of them, among whom was Fajner, suffered in death convulsions for hours. It was only after all of them had given up their souls that the rest of the assembled Jews were let back into the ghetto. The group of about 300 detained Jews was taken away to ul. Piłsudskiego 21, the headquarters of the Polish police. Among these 300 people was also a group of combatants who, during the tragic struggle, had not managed to get out of the surrounded group of Jews, who had been designated to be taken away. The only one, who later made it out from the police station, was the young fighter Dosia Szczekacz.

The Combat Organisation's command did not rest. It sent tools to its comrades* with which to saw through the bars. On the following morning, all the detainees, heavily guarded by gendarmes, were transferred to Radomsko, where the deportation of the last Jews, who had been rounded up there, was taking place. The combatants decided to escape on the way. Sura Gutgold was the first to escape. Jadzia Mass was to have been second, [but] she slipped and fell while running. She was immediately recaptured and the guard, around the transport, was greatly intensified. This incident brought to naught any further attempt at escape.

Nevertheless, the high command still did not rest and sent two emissaries out to Radomsko - Icek Windman and Cwi Lustiger - to employ all means, there, to release their comrades. The envoys arrived in Radomsko at the very heat of the *akcja* and it was impossible for them to achieve anything. [Even] those Ukrainians, who were bought off, took the money and afterwards threatened them with shooting, should anyone attempt to flee from there. The female combatants then resolved to take their own lives and not go into the carriages. The first to hang herself was Jadzia Mass and the second was to be Marysia Rozencwajg. The rest of the Jews, who were with them, opposed this by force and did not allow any further suicide. The female fighters, therefore, determined to employ the last [remaining] means – jumping from the speeding train.

With the tools which headquarters had sent in to them already back in Częstochowa, all of them entered into the one wagon. On the way, they filed through the latticed window openings of the horse wagons and, one by one, began jumping out. Others also enjoyed the benefits of this opportunity. Only a handful of women, among whom was also the active fighter Cesia Borkowska, returned to Częstochowa. The majority were shot upon jumping from the carriages and the others were shot while wandering back to Częstochowa.

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Following these tragic events, headquarters resolved to begin procuring armaments more energetically. Everyone well took into account the perils that lay in store, when purchasing weapons through the mediation of unreliable middlemen, who took advantage of the specific situation of the combatants in the ghetto and demanded legendary prices for every bit of old weaponry. It had also already become clear that some dealers were no more than subordinate German spies. In order to be as least dependent on dealers as possible, and thus avoid surprises, it was determined to concentrate most of the energy in producing grenades themselves.

In the late-night hours - while the prisoners of the ghetto are sleeping a heavy albeit uneasy slumber after a day of pain, humiliation and arduous labour - shadows begin darting out from all corners of the ghetto, and they proceed, hastily and cautiously, towards an abandoned, ruined, little house. This is the workshop, where stands the *kuźnia* [forge] where the moulds for the grenades are cast. The smoke does indeed eat at one's eyes, but in everyone's countenance, there are reflected tenacity, human earnestness, energy and a fervour for deeds.

* [TN: The phrase employed here and in the subsequent paragraph in the original Yiddish is "*chaverim un chavertes*", meaning male and female comrades.]

February 1943 - the first grenades are ready. The almost grey fighters tremble with joy. The eyes of the young and very young fighters-technicians are gleaming. Yet a doubt begins to gnaw – “But what *if*?” Maybe all the work has been in vain? After all, the grenades have been made with bare hands and without the least experience! The command is given, “We must test the grenades!” Members of the grenade group smuggle their way out to Mirów, next to Częstochowa, put the explosive power of the grenades to the test and, on the following morning, they bring [back] a cheering “greeting”.

This news encourages everyone. We start to feel more certain and stronger. Until now, we had felt as if we were hanging over a terrifying abyss and, now, we feel a firm support. We begin to spin beautiful dreams of open combat against the Huns of the twentieth century. “Now, we shall no longer go to the wagons like obedient sheep to the slaughter! We shall no longer wait until the murderers come to us -we shall go to them and destroy them - blow up bridges, unscrew rails, blow up trains with military [personnel] and ammunition, kill the German criminals and perish ourselves holding weapons!” These now became the most beautiful dreams of the Jewish fighters in the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”.

We now apply ourselves to the work with much more ardour. A platoon of combatants is trained for special missions. Lajbel Cukerman, the two Nosek brothers, Abramek, Czarny, the two Szmulewicz brothers, “Bastek”, Harry Potaszewicz, “Mikrus”, “Jacek” and others do not rest. They steal aluminium, lead, carbide, quicksilver, dynamite and other chemicals, needed for grenades, from the munitions factories and also other *placówki*. All this is smuggled into the ghetto inside canisters with which [carts] drive to take the lunches, from the ghetto kitchen, to the workers at the *placówki*.

Every night, the work is carried out in the same manner. Some cast the moulds, which go over to the technicians and, from them, to those working in the chemicals department and, from there, to those who finish the grenades and even fit the handles [viz. safety levers], which are manufactured on the lathe in the *Möbellager* and in the carpentry workshops inside the ghetto itself. Boys and girls work here - practically still children - who have risen to the sacred tasks which they have taken upon themselves. Night after night, the work continues. The finished grenades are even lacquered and then they go to the main arsenal at Tunnel №1, which has been built with great effort.

At dawn, the workshops are dismantled and cleaned up, to be assembled once again with the arrival of deep night, to once more cast the grenades with which such beautiful hopes are bound.

During this same period, while one team of fighters was busy producing grenades, another was busy building underground tunnels. The first and most important tunnel began at ul. Garncarska 42 and had its exit outside the ghetto at Old Market [*Stary Rynek*] 17. The second tunnel began at ul. Nadrzeczna 80-82 and had its exit in an empty field at the corner of ul. Jaskrowska. The tunnels had entrances in ul. Garncarska 40, and ul. Nadrzeczna 86, 88 and 90. Both the entrances and exits were well camouflaged and there was no danger that an “evil eye” could notice them. The work of constructing the tunnels continued day and night. The work was done in two shifts, with a hundred men in each shift. Youths, who had not yet

joined the ranks of the Combat Organisation, but were still ready at any call on part of the high command, also worked here.

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Headquarters also issued bulletins and announcements. One announcement was published on 1st May and another to the Polish workforce regarding aid for the Combat Organisation. The bulletins were published based upon radio reports. The radio was set up at the *Möbellager*. The news was taken down here by responsible underground activists. Important news would be delivered separately at the specially called roll calls of the combat units. Among the important reports delivered at the roll calls was the news that the underground Polish radio reported that, in the second half of April 1943, during the expulsion of the Jews in the Netherlands, Dutch women seized Jewish children from the lines and ran away with them and, about the course of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto – and particularly regarding the death of [the ŻOB member] Michał Klepfisz. On that same evening, the Częstochowa Combat Organisation honoured the memory of that fallen Warsaw Ghetto insurgent.

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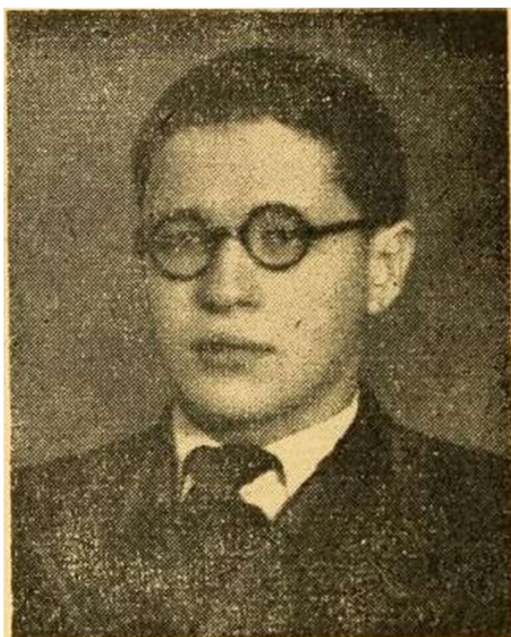
At the end of February 1943, the first scouts, “Franczek”, “Marduk” and Szulman, were sent out. They were to investigate the possibilities of sending groups out into the forests of Olsztyn and Żłoty Potok. After forty-eight hours, they returned with the opinion that it was still too early to send groups out into the woods. No further scouts were ever sent out again because Szulman, who knew his way in the entire Kielce region, was captured by the *Schutzpolizei* and was sent away to the Skarżysko camps and all traces of him disappeared.

At the beginning of March, a reconnaissance “five” was sent out into the woods. This “five” was made up of the young fighters Moniek Flamenbaum, Olek Hirszenberg, Janek Krauze, Heniek Rychter (the son of the well-known communist activist Dawid Rychter) and Jerzyk Rozenblat. This group was later joined by Szliamek Szajn who, for a long time, had already been wanted by the Gestapo. At first, they maintained contact with groups of the Gwardia Ludowa*. Later, the ground began burning under their feet, because they were persecuted by reactionary AK (Armia Krajowa**) groups.

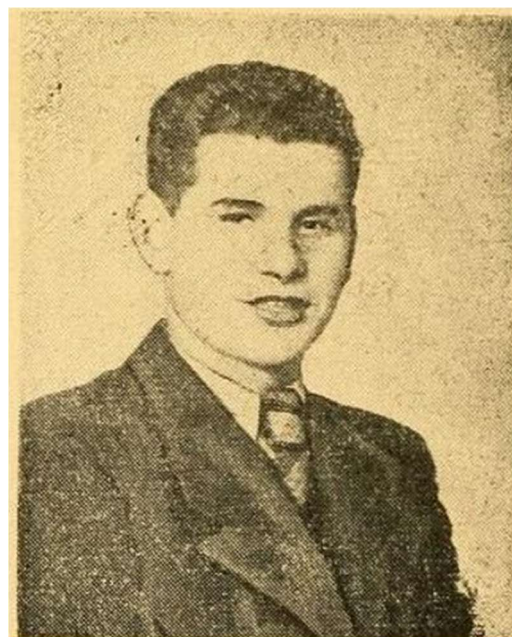
They returned from the forest and barricaded themselves in a bunker in the building at ul. Wilsona 34, where there were storerooms of old, plundered Jewish furniture. These storerooms were now part of the *Möbellager*. It is from there that, from time to time, they would make their “sorties”. In that same building, bunkers were also located, where several Jewish families were staying with their elderly and their children. Among others, Dawid Kongrecki’s wife, with her two children, were also there. Due to an imprudence on the part of the Kongrecki’s older child, on 17th March 1943, the Gestapo discovered the bunker containing the six young combatants. They were suddenly attacked and did not manage to make any use of their weapons. On 19th March they were shot at the Jewish cemetery.

* [TN: Pol., “People’s Guard”; communist underground armed organisation created by the communist Polish Workers’ Party in German-occupied Poland, with sponsorship from the Soviet Union.]

** [TN: Pol., “Home Army”; the predominant resistance movement in Poland at the time.]



Mietek Wajntraub ("Marduk")



Szliamek Szajn

At the beginning of April 1943, Rywka Glanc, Hipek Hajman and Icek Windman returned from Warsaw with literature and with instructions [from the ŻOB headquarters]. Rywka and Icek entered the ghetto, and Hipek, who was to enter along with the workers of the Enro *placówka*, was detained in front of the “*wylot*” (ghetto gate). Literature and a [fake] *Kennkarte* [ID card] were found on his person. He was immediately taken to the Jewish police jail on ul. Kozia and was placed under the guard of Jewish and Polish policemen. He was to be held here overnight, to be put at Degenhardt’s disposal on the following day.

The “Nadrzeczna 66” group, to which Hipek belonged, took it upon itself to extricate him. Those, who took this mission upon themselves, were Harry Gerszonowicz, Lolek Frankenberg, Awiw Roziner, Mietek Wajntraub and Kuba Ripsztajn. These five young fighters carried their task out to perfection, and Hipek departed for Warsaw that same night. A few weeks later, he and Icek Windman, on their way to receive an order of weapons, were stopped by “*szmalcownikes**”. Windman managed to make himself scarce and Hipek was put into the hands of the Gestapo by the “*szmalcownikes*”, who deported him to the [concentration] camp in Trawniki, where he perished.

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* [TN: This term is explained in the book “Czenstochov” (1958), chapter “Częstochowa Folklore During the Nazi Period”, as follows: “*Szmalcownikes* [lard-lovers] – the expression was known in all the ghettos, and in Częstochowa, also. The term denotes the Polish degenerates who gobbled up money from Jews who held up under Aryan papers, or who hid with Poles. They would denounce to the Gestapo, and consequently many Jews were killed through their informing. The term originates in that when this type of degenerate would stop a Jew on the Aryan side, the first thing he would say is: “*Daj na smalec*” [Give me lard].”]

The case of Hipek's release stirred the entire ghetto up. The prestige of the Combat Organisation was greatly raised. We felt proud and, at the same time, feared repressions. Notwithstanding, no repressions ensued. This was because Laszynski and Köstner, the two camp leaders, who had been appointed, following the events of 4th January, as overseers of the ghetto with special powers, as well as Morder^{**}, the German commandant of the Ukrainians guarding the ghetto, hushed up the affair of Hipek's freeing, fearing the consequences for their own "carelessness".

Nevertheless, they began spreading a dense net in order to discover all the threads of the Combat Organisation. Day after day and night after night, they personally visited the ghetto and ferreted about in all its little corners. At the same time, they began drawing, into the espionage work, the Jews of their acquaintance, from whom they could obtain the most important secrets. The organisation, therefore, resolved to employ measures against the traitors.

Firstly, two warnings were given to the gang which was terrorising the Jews in the ghetto, extorting money from them by outrageously using the name of the Combat Organisation. At the head of this gang were the two Szwimer brothers (the sons of a former attendant at the *mikvah*), who considered themselves as "toughs". They took no heed of the warnings and continued their work of terror. A death sentence was passed on them, which was indeed carried out. Later, another death sentence was passed on the baker Motl Herman "Kulbajke", whom we had already long suspected of being in contact with the Gestapo - one of his letters to the Gestapo was intercepted by Machel Birencwajg. This verdict, too, was executed. In each traitor's grave, a sealed bottle was placed, containing paper on which was written the motive for the sentence carried out.

The organisation's work became ever more difficult and perilous. But, nevertheless, no one's courage was diminished and everyone was prepared to carry out anything that was laid upon him.

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In the first half of April 1943, Comrades Abramek Czarny and Mania Szlezinger (both communists) were tasked with manufacturing wrenches which would serve to unscrew train tracks. They produced the tools at the HASAG-Apparatebau (Pelcery) munitions factory, where they worked, and smuggled them into the ghetto themselves. On 22nd April, five saboteurs set out, with the smuggled tools, to unscrew the rails at Błeszno near Częstochowa, through which many transports of military [personnel] and ammunition would pass. The saboteurs were Awiw Roziner, Cwi Lustiger, Lolek Frankenberg, Harry Gerszonowicz and Dawid Altman. They exited the ghetto, along with the workers of the Ostbahn [Eastern Railway] *placówka*. They were to break away, one by one, and, later, regroup in Błeszno. Here, they needed to unscrew the rails, await the results of their bit of work and bring back a gladdening report.

^{**} [TN: Having found no mention of this individual in other historical sources, we have transliterated the surname verbatim as it appears in the Yiddish original.]

The first to break away was Lolek - and it went well. Dawid Altman was to be the second. But he was stopped by the *Bahnschutz* [railway security guard] Karna, a *Volksdeutsch* from Wyczerpy, near Częstochowa. At first, they attempted to buy off Karna off. But, soon another German from the *Bahnschutz* came up. Karna pulled back from taking the bribe and the two began leading Dawid to the "*Wache*" [guardroom].

In a bid to free Dawid, Harry opened fire on the two *Bahnschutz* guards. One of them immediately fell, seriously wounded, and Dawid ran away. Harry, Awiw and Cwi did not manage to escape, because they were encircled by a group of Germans, who shot at them from all sides. Harry and Awiw fell on the spot. Cwi barricaded himself in a farmer's barn and defended himself for as long [as he could], until he was gravely injured by the grenades that were hurled in there. Alive, but seriously wounded, the Gestapo captured him and threw him into their cellars where, firstly, he was tortured so that he should give away his comrades. Cwi did not break down and he was shot at the Jewish cemetery.

In reprisal, the Gestapo and *Schutzpolizei* shot twenty-five men that day - viz. every second Jew working at the *placówka* with which the saboteurs had left the ghetto. Among the twenty-five executed were Jakow-Mojsze Gelber-Litwin, Nachman Enzel, Berl Zeligman, Stefan Montag, Goldberg (Warszawiak), Rusin (a former pupil of the I.L. Peretz school in Częstochowa) and Dudek Lewkowicz.

During this same period, the Gestapo tracked down Władek Kopinski, detained him and also shot him at the Jewish cemetery. As the *Gestapowces* themselves later reported, Władek fought them during the arrest and even when he was already standing in chains in front of his own grave.

The blows that fell constantly upon the heads of the combatants were hard. Yet each one was filled with pride and also with envy, that his comrades perished in the manner which all of them dreamt of - in battle, holding weapons.

* * *

Due to these tragic events, there were changes in the positions [held by members] within the Combat Organisation. Sumek (communist) was often on the "Aryan side" and made efforts to make as many connections as possible with Polish *Gwardia Ludowa* groups, so that as many Jewish fighters as possible should be able to be sent out into the woods.

Juda roamed about in villages around Koniecpol, in order to find bunkers for the groups which were sent out. "Franczek", Staszek Hauze and Heniek Wojdysławski were appointed as liaisons people between Warsaw and Częstochowa. Mojsze Rozenberg (a *Tsukunft* member from Radomsko) and Fajgenblat (Zionist) were chosen as commandants of three "fives", which were sent out into the forests of Olsztyn and Żłoty Potok. According to a later report brought by an emissary of a Polish *Gwardia Ludowa* group, all fifteen men were killed in battle against the reactionary partisans of *Armia Krajowa*.

Before, during and after the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto", over fifty men were sent out into the woods, divided into ten groups. The vast majority of them perished in the fight

against the Germans and the reactionary AK groups. A few of them were in the renowned leftist partisans' division of "Hanyś" [sic Hanyż*] and took part in various operations against the Germans.

* * *

On 1st May 1943, the ghetto was sealed off and no one was permitted to go out to work. The Combat Organisation, just like the majority of Jews in the ghetto, was of the opinion that the Germans would now liquidate the ghetto - and they prepared themselves for battle. Weapons were distributed amongst all the combat units, which were stationed at various points – by the barbed wire fences on ul. Spadek, which were in the direction of ul. Warszawska, by the Jewish police station on ul. Kozia, on ul. Mostowa, to the entire eastern length of the ghetto by the Warta [River], and at all critical points in the ghetto, which could be of strategic importance.

On the following day, on 2nd May before evening, we received two letters - one from Dr Wolberg and the other from Machel [Birencwajg] (both were outside the ghetto) - to the effect that they had accurate information that the current German blockade only had to do with the purpose of not allowing Jews to be able to meet with Poles on the [festive] days 1st and 3rd May. The letters were received by Jakub Roziner and, immediately, he handed them over to headquarters. Notwithstanding that, the high command did not call off its mobilisation. It was only on 4th May in the morning, when the blockade of the ghetto was withdrawn and the Jews were let out to their work at the *placówki*, that the Combat Organisation's mobilisation was called off.

Moods, however, were by no means calmed. The *Schutzpolizei* and Gestapo sought "Zuträger" [informers] amongst the Jews of their acquaintance, and the *Stadthauptmann* was in a rage to make Częstochowa "judenrein". The Combat Organisation, on its part, decided to be in a constant state of alert and to prepare intensively to take up the decisive battle. The *Schutzpolizei* and Gestapo did indeed find two scoundrels from amongst the Jewish policemen, who served them with accurate information on the Combat Organisation. The first was the constable Rozenberg, who served Laszynski and Köstner, and the second was the constable Pławner, who served the Gestapo.

On 8th June 1943, the *Schutzpolizei*, led by Degenhardt himself, affected a raid on the *Möbellager* with the purpose of liquidating Machel and his close associates. With lightning speed, the *Schutzpolizei* men surrounded all the workshops. Several *Schutzpolizei* officers, headed by Degenhardt, entered the room where Machel was. No one was allowed to move from the spot where he was when the police arrived. They carried out a search and found nothing "suspicious". Degenhardt, therefore, ordered not to shoot without his command. Machel, however, was ordered by Degenhardt to call together all his family members. Machel immediately realised that Degenhardt wanted to kill him, together with his entire family. Therefore, he took advantage of the moment [he was given] to supposedly call his close ones together, and crying out to us, "They will never take me alive!" - he disappeared. Three men were shot there and then and two were taken by the *Schutzpolizei* and were later killed.

* [TN: Most likely ref. to the partisan group under the command of Stanisław "Stach" Hanyż, which was active in the Koniecpol area. See "Sefer Częstochowa", Vol. II, chapter "Chronicle of the Koniecpol Unit", where Hanyż is mentioned several times.]

Already that same night, Machel returned into the *Möbellager* grounds and barricaded himself in a bunker, which was known only to a couple of friends. He maintained contact only with Fajwisz Altman and Michał Wajskop, to whom he revealed the locations of the hidden arms and money. Once all the important affairs had been attended to, it was decided to take Machel out, so that he should stay temporarily with a Pole of his acquaintance, with whom he himself had kept in touch the entire time.

Those, who took upon themselves the removal of Machel from the *Möbellager*, were Aron Birenbaum, Chaim the hairdressing worker, Kobryner the decorator worker and Fajwisz Altman. They took him out in a cart, inside a coal chest. With the cart, they stopped ul. Ogrodowa, near by a paint shop. They looked around to see if no one was watching and gave the agreed signal. Machel came out of the chest and disappeared. A Polish woman, who lived in the courtyard where they had stopped with the cart, noticed this and reported it to a *Granatowe* [Polish] policeman, who detained all four comrades and handed them over to the *Schutzpolizei*. They were taken to the police yard at III Aleja 75. At the investigation, they denied [everything] and claimed that they had been sent by the old master-decorator, Abram Grajcer, to receive a shipment of chalk, which had been ordered by the *Möbellager* from the paint shop, which was located in that courtyard.

That same day, the *Möbellager* was surrounded *Schutzpolizei* and Degenhardt, himself, was in charge of the investigation. Those arrested notified the writer of these lines regarding the manner of their defence and this was passed on to the elderly Jewish master decorator Grajcer, who told his co-workers that he would take the entire blame upon himself. To the wailing and entreaties of his offspring (a son and a daughter), that he should not “put a noose on his own [neck]”, Grajcer had but one answer - “I have already lived out my years and wish to be the saviour of four young lives”.

Indeed, Grajcer did not break down under interrogation and explained to Degenhardt that he, as master-decorator, had sent the four men for chalk at his own initiative and his fault had been that he had forgotten to give them an official note with which to take receipt of the chalk. He was also to blame for them having travelled without the escort of a German. (Grajcer lived to see liberation.)

With his courageous conduct, Grajcer saved the lives of all four young men and he, himself, also emerged from it unpunished. During the liquidation of the Combat Organisation in the “Small Ghetto”, one of them - Chaim the barber - perished.

On 28th June 1943, the *Schutzpolizei* found the tracked down Machel, who was hiding with a Polish family - he was arrested and shot.

* * *

On 16th June, Gedalia (an active member of the Combat Organisation) was caught, with literature, outside the ghetto. On that same day, a certain Mrs Tosia Wajnberg was also arrested, while taking merchandise out of the haberdashery storerooms on ul. Garibaldię. Along with her, all the workers who belonged to the “*galanteria*” [haberdashery] group, were detained. All the arrestees were sent to ul. Piłsudskiego, to the jail at the police station of the

Granatowa Policja. The Combat Organisation resolved to do everything to extricate their comrade-in-arms and the rest of the detainees there. Herszl Prozer and Lajb Cymerman were assigned to execute the formulated plans. Herszl and Lajbel prepared a place for the detainees to hide should they manage to escape. They sent them tools with which to file through the bars of the window openings in the detention cellars and, at the same time, bribed the guard of Polish *Granatowe* policemen.

The time of escape was set for 23rd June at night. However, the plan failed because of the cowardice of one of those arrested - Moniek Krauze - who broke down at the last moment. On the same day, viz. 23rd June, their plan was discovered. The entire group, including Gedalia, was shot at the Jewish cemetery.

That very same day, the *Schutzpolizei* requested that Dr Wolberg immediately present himself at ul. Garibaldiego to administer medical assistance to a man employed at the police warehouses, who had fallen ill. At the location indicated, two German *Schutzpolizei* officers, [Kurt] Klipsch and [Josef] Böhle, were already waiting for him. They welcomed him with a friendly mien. One of them took him to show him where the "patient" was lying and the other, who followed a couple of steps behind them, fired his revolver, aiming at Wolberg's head, who immediately fell dead.

At the same time, while the incident with Wolberg was happening, the *Schutzpolizei* arrested a young Jewish couple who, under "Aryan papers", worked as concierges at the police building at III Aleja 75 and were, concurrently, working with the Polish underground movement in Częstochowa. On their way to be shot, the husband managed to escape, while his wife was brought to the Jewish cemetery, where she was killed along with the "*galanteria*" group. The body of Dr Wolberg was also brought there and was buried in one mass grave, along with the entire group of those executed.

According to what was later related by Jewish labourers, among whom was also Herszl Prozer, who were working for the *Schutzpolizei* as professional workmen, a few *Schutzpolizei* men boasted, in front of them, that they had shot "bandits" and told them the following story – that a certain member of *Armia Krajowa* in Częstochowa and who was also an agent of the Gestapo in Radom, had revealed that Dr Wolberg was an important leader of the underground in Częstochowa and also that the couple, working as concierges at Aleja 75, were in fact Jews, who were in contact with the Polish underground movement.

In the ghetto, the Combat Organisation picked up the trail of the two traitors, Rozenberg and Pławner, and issued a death warrant against them. The Jewish policeman, Domb, was also sentenced to death for his particular zealousness during the *akcje* against Jews in the "Small Ghetto". On 21st June 1943, comrades Abramek, Pinek, Wasiliewicz and "Baster" carried out the verdict against Rozenberg. Following the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto", the verdict against Domb was also executed. As for Pławner, the Gestapo itself shot him after the liquidation of the "Small Ghetto", because his informing was no longer required.

The Combat Organisation decided to send out a shipment of arms to the units that were in the forests. For that aim, three members were appointed - Pinek Samsonowicz, Harry Potaszewicz and Lolek Blank. Lajbis Tenenbaum, a former member of the [I.L.] Peretz school

management committee and a member of the Combat Organisation, undertook to provide a vehicle for this purpose. Tenenbaum, through two Jewish foremen at the HASAG-Pelcery (Apparatebau) munitions factory, Wojdysławski and Winter, bribed the German driver of a freight truck, who undertook to drive out with the three comrades and the weapons. As it subsequently turned out, the driver forewarned the Gestapo about everything.

On 24th June, the three comrades drove out with the shipment of arms. On the way, they were encircled by a group of *Gestapowces*. In the course of the exchange of fire, Pinek fell dead. Lolek saved himself by escaping and Harry fell, alive, into the hands of the enemy. In a moribund state, they brought Harry into the ghetto, made him sit by an open window in the Jewish police building and ordered that all the Jews of the ghetto should march past him. Next to Harry stood three *Gestapowces*, horribly torturing him to reveal who, amongst those marching by, were his collaborators.

Each time he began to lose consciousness, they poured cold water over him and continued to beat him. The one, who distinguished himself the most in torturing Harry, was the *Gestapowiec* Winkler. Harry held on with his last strength and did not give in. In the end, the Gestapo gave up on extracting anything from him and took him away to be shot. Tortured, Harry gave his soul up on the way to the Jewish cemetery.

The driver had also informed on Wojdysławski and Winter. Both were tortured to such an extent in the Gestapo cellars, that they broke down and gave away Tenenbaum. The Gestapo detained Tenenbaum, tortured him and then brought him back to HASAG to point out his collaborators. In order to avoid suspicion, he was not taken around the factory by the Gestapo, but by the deputy of the chief of the *Werkschutz*, the cripple Stieglitz. The Gestapo achieved nothing by torturing Tenenbaum. They took him back and shot him along with Wojdysławski and Winter.

* * *

It is 25th June at daybreak. As on any other day, all the ghetto prisoners are led to work at their *placówki*. No one senses, at all, any particular changes in connection with the previous day's happenings. It would seem as if nothing had occurred yesterday. A certain part of the Combat Organisation also goes out to the *placówki*, in order not to lose contact with the outside world and to continue smuggling in what is necessary for finishing grenades from the factories and *placówki*.

But the majority of the fighters still remain in the ghetto. After yesterday's events, we must stand on guard! Everyone is mobilised. All are in the tunnels at their designated roll-call places. The largest group was gathered at tunnel №1, where the cache of armaments is located. Here, there are dozens of pistols, dozens of grenades, two rifles, bottles with "Molotov cocktails", carbide lamps and even German uniforms.

The weapons are distributed amongst all the units and the roll-calls begin. In tunnel №1, the roll-call is taken by Marek Palman of the Warsaw ŻOB. Everyone is solemn. All take clear stock of the serious situation and of the obligations each has taken upon himself. They feel and know what soon awaits the ghetto and they are prepared to go to face the imminent events.

Emissaries from the units, which are already in the woods, take part in the current roll-call. An envoy, from the combat units in Oberschlesien [Górny Śląsk or Upper Silesia] also participates. Reports are delivered and fallen male and female comrades are commemorated. The names of fallen comrades from the Częstochowa combat units emerge, as do those of fallen Jewish fighting men and women from other combat groups. The name "Zosia" arises - the pseudonym of the nineteen-year-old seamstress, Ruchla Sapszewska from Sosnowiec, who was one of the most capable and daring female fighters in the *Gwardia Ludowa* (GL) groups of "Garbaty*", which operated in the Kielce region. "Zosia" was murdered near Włoszczowa by the two traitors, Józef Laskowski and Czesław Stolarczyk, agents of the AK. (She was murdered at a moment where she lay, gravely ill).

The names of fallen heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto arose. Marek tells about the courageous comrades-in-arms in the Warsaw Ghetto and of the tenacious struggles there. He recounts, gives out instructions and calls to walk in the path of the Warsaw Ghetto heroes. He calls to fight to the last bullet. We are seized by his descriptions and are filled with envy for the Warsaw Ghetto heroes, who had the great fortune to die in such a heroic manner.

Scouts bring news from the ghetto every fifteen minutes. For the time being, it is calm in the ghetto. At three o'clock in the afternoon, all the surveillance units report that those working at the *placówki* are returning from their work as usual and nothing suspicious is to be noticed.

The mobilisation is called off. One by one, the combatants leave the tunnels. Only the commander, "Mojtek", who has fallen ill, remains in tunnel №1, and Lutek Gliksztajn, who now has guard duty at the arsenal. It was quiet in the ghetto, but the fighters did not take into account that this could be the calm before a storm.

Just one hour later, the tremendous fire of machine-guns is heard throughout the ghetto. It was with this gunfire that the Gestapo and *Schutzpolizei* announced their entry into the ghetto. The buildings at Nadrzeczna 86, 88 and 90 - the most important points of the Combat Organisation - are surrounded and pelted with a hail of bullets. Blood is spilt in the streets. The members of the Combat Organisation, who have left the tunnels only an hour ago, scurry to get back inside them. They make haste, in order to snatch up arms and pay for blood with blood and death with death! But they fall, even before they manage to make it back in. Izrael-Awigdor Szyldhaus falls. Jozek Kantor falls. Dozens of other comrades fall - without being able to avenge the innocent blood of their close ones, their comrades-in-arms and their fathers and mothers that has been spilt.

The Germans bombard the tunnels with grenades. They murder the small handful of fighters who put up a desperate resistance. Other Jews, who are in the aforementioned buildings, are also killed. Thirty grenades, eighteen revolvers and two rifles fall into German hands. The only one to make it out of there is Lutek, who was guarding the arms depot. "Mojtek" commits suicide at the last moment, so as not to fall alive into their hands. Later, the Germans take revenge upon "Mojtek's" dead body and hang him upside down inside the tunnel.

* [TN: Codename of Stanisław Olczyk.]

Of the combatants, who are in the ghetto, the only ones who remain alive, for now, are those inside the tunnel, which had its entrance through the house at Garncarska 40. This entire group, under Marek's leadership, makes its way outside the ghetto, through the tunnel, and barricades itself in the building at Old Market [Stary Rynek] 17. Here, with their small quantity of weapons, they lie in wait for the enemy.

The following morning, on 26th June 1943, the whole group decided to abandon their position, taking the salvaged weapons with them, in order to take up the fight alongside their comrades in the woods, under relatively more comfortable conditions. They began leaving the barricade in groups of three.

When the majority of them had already left and there were just six fighters left under the leadership of Rywka Glanc, they were encircled by the *Schutzpolizei* and Gestapo. With two pistols and one grenade, the six combatants waged a bitter defensive battle. They only used the grenade after all the bullets of the pistols had been fired. One *Gestapowiec* was killed and the *Schutzpolizei* officer [Otto] Löbel, who later personally related the particulars of this skirmish to several Jewish workers who were employed at the *Schutzpolizei* at III Aleja 75, was wounded. The six combatants continued fighting their battle, already without firearms, but just with stones and, in the end, all of them perished. Those who fell here were Rywka, Heniek, Polia, Dosia, Rysia and "Marduk".

Few of those, who were not killed during these battles, have survived. Marek later perished while travelling on the train. "Franczek" and Sumek fell on the "Aryan side". Icek Windman arrived safely at the group in Koniecpol and was murdered a fortnight later, while travelling with a certain Krzak to Skarżysko for weapons. (It was actually that same Krzak, who brought the news of Icek's death. But the comrades were of the opinion that he, himself, had assassinated Icek, because Krzak's explanations seemed vague.) Fela Zborowska, Juda and Bela Bram were shot by Polish *Granatowe* policemen. Kuba Ripsztajn and Lutek Gliksztajn fell in the battles which the Koniecpol groups waged against the reactionary AK members.

At the same time, while the small group was waging a bitter battle at Stary Rynek 17, the murderous liquidation of the "Small Ghetto" was taking place. Dozens of Jews were shot on the spot and hundreds were taken away to the Jewish cemetery, in freight trucks, and were killed there.

Among those shot on the spot and also among those taken away were also members of the Combat Organisation.

Herszl Prozer had already been set aside at the "Ryneczek" and was to be shot. It was only when a *Schutzpolizei* officer remarked that, as a good tailor, he could still be of use at the police workshops at ul. Garibaldięgo, that he was taken there and left alive. Mojsze Lewensztajn, already standing in the truck, while others pleaded and wailed, shouted at the murderers with a raised fist. At ul. Złota, on the way to the cemetery, Lewensztajn, Chaim the barber and a few other Jews tore open the box of the truck and began to escape. From the fire which the gendarmes opened on the escapees, several fell on the spot. Six of them

managed to dodge the bullets. They were chased by the gendarme Kündel*, who only retreated when those, whom he was chasing, stabbed him with his own bayonet.

The six men came back into the ghetto in the certainty that there were still Jews left there, as well as a few of their own comrades-in-arms. But there were no longer any Jews in the ghetto, apart from a few dozen people, who were still being held to be shot. The six escapees, once more, fell into the net of death, and their lives were cut short along with those already sentenced to death.

In the last days of June 1943, the “Small Ghetto” in Częstochowa was liquidated and the heroic chapter of the Combat Organisation in the “Small Ghetto” came to an end. A small number of Jews remained alive, locked up in the HASAG camps. A number of fighters also survived in the woods and in the camps. This small group of combatants did not desist, and they continued carrying out underground activity, both in the forest and in the HASAG camps¹¹¹.

* [TN: Possibly ref. to the war criminal Adolf Kühnel, who was a member of the Schutzpolizei in Częstochowa.]

¹¹¹ The story of the combat unit “Nadrzeczna 66” is based mostly on the notebook of memoirs (Jewish Historical Institute) by Sara Gutgold, one of the sole survivors of that group. The rest is based on [my] own notes, on the memoirs (verbally transmitted) of Abramek Czarny (a ŻOB member), as well as on the descriptions of the active ŻOB female member, Szlezinger.