

The Fallen Heroes of the Częstochowa Resistance Movement¹

Mojtek Zylberberg

(Commander of the Jewish Combat Organisation
in the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”)

Mojtek Zylberberg was born in 1910 in Kalisz. He was noted for his intelligence and ability to take the initiative. He was physically well-developed and had a *gimnazjum* education. Before the Second World War, he was active in the Revisionist movement. At the end of 1940, he left Kalisz and came to Częstochowa, where he was active in the *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair* organisation. During the period of the “Big Ghetto”, he was an unknown refugee and earned his living from trade.

In the time of the tragic deportations, he was selected and sent to *Metalurgia* and, from there, to HASAG-Pelcery, where he was barracked.

Under the worst and most horrifying conditions during the period of barracking in HASAG-Pelcery, when everyone was depressed and mentally and physically broken from all their experiences, he began to promulgate the idea of armed resistance. He organised a combat group, choosing exclusively those who had been known before the War for their activities in different youth organisations. His call to resistance was received with enthusiasm, and his group grew from day to day.

Once the “Small Ghetto” was established, the Jews barracked in HASAG-Pelcery were sent to live there. When Mojtek Zylberberg arrived in the “Small Ghetto”, he found that the groundwork had already been laid. There were three *kibbutzim*:

- *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*, under the leadership of Juda Gliksztajn, who was later active in the Koniecpol woods with a group of partisans and was killed by the AK [Home Army];
- *Dror*, under the command of Rywka Glanc; and
- *Gordonia*².

Mojtek Zylberberg unified all these groups by calling conferences and, as a result, the Jewish Combat Organisation ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) was established.

Mojtek Zylberberg became the leader of the combat organisation and the one who set the tone in it, issuing orders in all matters. The tasks were colossal and he carried out everything with an iron will - connections with the existing ghettos, including that in Warsaw; connections with the AL [Armia Ludowa], production of munitions, organising forest partisan detachments and combat units - the so-called “fives”, armed operations on smaller and larger scales, building underground tunnels and imposing a forced taxation on the wealthier population in the “Small Ghetto” – and if someone refused to pay the tax, he was arrested and imprisoned in the underground movement’s detention bunker. And besides the general struggle against the Nazi powers-that-be, a war was also waged on the Jewish provocateurs and denounciators.

¹ [TN: This article was originally published in “Czenstochover Landsmanshaft of Montreal”, pp. 200-212.]

² [TN: According to *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. II, col. 74, this group was led by Lajzer Geller.]

During the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, Mojtek Zylberberg heroically stood his ground, holding an automatic in each hand and shooting incessantly at the Nazi tyrants. He fell heroically at his post.

He was known by the name “Mojtek³”. The name Mojtek Zylberberg has grown into a symbol of the fight for freedom, being set down in history as a hero and martyr of the Częstochowa resistance movement.

Rywka Glanc

Rywka Glanc was born in Konin, in the Posen [Poznań] region, in 1915. She joined the *Freiheit* [Freedom] youth movement. She was instructed and instructed others in the Zionist-Socialist spirit. She travelled to “*hachshara*” [training] and was preparing to emigrate to [the Land of] Israel. She quickly gained notoriety for her organisational capabilities and devotion to the movement and, as a result, she was kept from travelling away, in order to lead the *kibbutzim* movement in Poland.

Rywka Glanc headed the “*hachshara*” points for five years and, for a long time, was active in the Borochov *kibbutz* in Łódź until the outbreak of the War. She settled in Warsaw, where she worked actively along with Cywia Lubetkin, Frumka Plotnicka and others. Having an Aryan appearance, she was entrusted with the duties of courier. She travelled about throughout towns and *shtetls*, awakening, encouraging and organising the pioneering movement and taking with her the illegal literature that was being published during the War. On her journeys, she experienced tragic moments due to the constant searches, but always managed to wriggle out of these perilous situations thanks to her quick judgement.

In 1941, the *Arbeiterrat* organised *kibbutzim* in Częstochowa. The Ha’Chalutz Central in Warsaw delegated Rywka Glanc to be in charge of the *Dror kibbutz*. Upon arriving in Częstochowa, she became the one who set the tone of the activities in the *kibbutz*, awakening towards her the warmest sympathies from all the members for her comradely conduct, her guileless manner and, especially, due to her dedicated work for the *kibbutz’s* interests. She also put herself in close contact with the *Arbeiterrat*, which she viewed as the workforce’s greatest communal power, and the only one which helped solve the *kibbutz’s* day-to-day problems. Upon the request of the *Arbeiterrat’s* leadership, she became a permanent co-worker of the secretariat.

With the beginning of the mass extermination of Jews, Rywka Glanc received a message from the Ha’Chalutz Central to organise an armed resistance movement. She called a whole series of meetings of the active figures of the League [for a Working Land of Israel] at the *kibbutz’s* premises at ul. Przemysłowa 2, at which she read the reports of Cywia Lubetkin about the annihilation of Jews and the call to resistance.

³ [TN: This was not a codename, but a diminutive version of his actual given name – Mordche.]

All these reports made an overwhelming impression on everyone, but the broader masses did not believe the information regarding the exterminations and, due to a lack of weapons, the plans were not put into action during the “Big Ghetto” period.

During the time of the *akcje*, when a fierce hunger reigned, Rywka Glanc busied herself with procuring food for the *kibbutz*. In the resettlement *akcja* on ul. Przemysłowa, Rywka Glanc was also taken away to the Treblinka transport. Thanks to his selfless efforts, Bernard Kurland managed to have her taken off the railway wagon.

Following the liquidation of the “Big Ghetto”, with all her energy, she devoted herself to the Combat Organisation. With a group of dedicated members, she organised the *kibbutz* in the building at ul. Garncarska 72, which became the centre of communal life and the resistance movement and influenced the entire population of the “Small Ghetto”.

Rywka Glanc stood at the head of the *kibbutz*. She evoked the greatest affection, admiration and trust. When she showed herself in the little alleyways of the “Small Ghetto”, everyone pointed at her, “That is Rywka Glanc!” She always wore a white blouse, a leather jacket and tall brown boots. She was a model of cleanliness and simple elegance. She had colossal influence upon her co-workers during the worst and most desperate of times. This was due to her unchanging equilibrium and tranquil manner. Her dear smile had an effect upon everyone - even if, in the depths of her heart, she was hurting and bleeding for the tragedy of the Jewish people and roaring for revenge. She therefore worked day and night in order to make preparations for the definitive battle with the enemy - the Nazi forces.

At the same time, she [also] carried out the instructions of the Central in Warsaw, travelling about as an “Aryan” and transporting weapons from the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto” to the underground movement in Będzin.

During the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, she fell in battle along with an entire array of comrades. Rywka Glanc was one of the most heroic daughters that the Jewish people and the pioneering [viz. Ha’Chalutz] movement had produced.

Rywka Glanc has been widely portrayed in Holocaust literature. In the book entitled *Women in the Ghettos*, which was published [in 1946] by the Pioneer [Women’s] Organization in New York, on p. 141, Leib Spizman writes that Rywka Glanc was the soul of the Ha’Chalutz self-defence [unit] in Częstochowa and perished holding weapons, heroically fighting against the Nazi soldiers.

The late Dr Isaac I. [Ignacy Izaak] Schwarzbart, the former Dean⁴ of the Polish Jewry, describes Rywka Glanc’s great heroism in the special [English-language] publication of the Jewish World Congress from 1953, entitled “*The Story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*”.

It emerges, [however,] that an error was made in that brochure, to the effect that Rywka Glanc fell in battle in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It should say that she fell in heroic battle in the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto” uprising, which is what occurred in reality.

⁴ [TN: דײַטש in the original Yiddish; the use of the title “Dean” is unclear in this context, but is likely a ref. to Dr Schwarzbart’s position during WWII as representative of the Polish Jewry in the Polish government-in-exile in London.]

Meilech Neustadt, in his book *Destruction and Rising [– The Epic] of the Jews in Warsaw*, Vol. II, pp. 401-402, provides a lengthy account of the heroic fighter and leader of the struggle against Nazism. He concludes this account with the words:

“A daughter of her people, it was from its depths that she emerged, and in the days of misfortune, she fell together with the people, holding weapons.”

Mojsze Lubling

He was born in Wolbrom in 1904 and, later, lived in Sosnowiec. He was an active member of the [Zionist-Socialist] *Poalei Zion* Party from the earliest years of his youth.

In the spring of 1940, he came to Częstochowa with his family - a wife and two small children. As a refugee, he was materially ruined and, during the entire period with his family, lived in need and hunger.

Mojsze Lubling devoted all his energy to organising the *Arbeiterrat*, which was factually the first form of a unified general organisation of the forced labourers in Częstochowa. He was, concurrently, the forerunner of the armed Jewish Combat Organisation in the “Small Ghetto”.

Mojsze Lubling was a talented public speaker and an excellent organiser. He was a man who evaluated events and developments clearly. Because of this, he was elected as Chairman of the *Arbeiterrat*.

He foresaw the tragedy that was bearing down upon Polish Jewry and the bitter and sorrowful fate of the Częstochowa Jews. Indeed, he called, roused and encouraged [the Jews] to prepare themselves and to organise for the armed struggle. To that end, he put himself in contact with the Polish resistance movement regarding weaponry and cooperation in the fight against Nazism.

Mojsze Lubling was the main organiser of the struggle to improve the material wrangle of the Jewish forced labourers. He organised *kibbutzim* and also organised the radical Jewish intelligentsia, who lent moral support in carrying through all the demands of the forced labourers from the *Judenrat*.

Mojsze Lubling was intensely popular with the forced labourers and, at the same time, was terribly persecuted by the ghetto police. He was arrested on multiple occasions.

On Yom Kippur [1942] at nightfall, the last session of the *Arbeiterrat* was held. At this meeting, it was decided that Mojsze Lubling would leave the ghetto and put himself in contact with Polish labour activists whom he knew well, and that they would find a place of refuge for him, where he would be safe for the time being. Mojsze Lubling categorically rejected this proposal of abandoning the ghetto in order to save his [own] life.

On the following day, 22nd September 1943 [sic 1942], during the deportations, he, his wife and one son shared the tragic fate of Częstochowa Jewry and were sent to Treblinka to

annihilation in the gas [chambers and] ovens. His [other] son Pinches remained in the “Small Ghetto”, where he later perished.

In Treblinka, Mojsze Lubling was selected to work in the sorting camp. He was an eyewitness to the brutal cruelties in Treblinka. True to his fighting traditions, he organised a resistance movement, which conducted highly secret activity. In an extremely secretive manner, through Polish railway workers, he also sent several letters to the Jewish Combat Organisation in the “Small Ghetto”. These letters constituted historical documents and they had an electrifying effect on the members of the Combat Organisation.

He was in Treblinka for eleven months and was one of the organisers of the rebellion which broke out on 3rd August 1943 at 5:30 pm. He perished in this uprising as a hero and a martyr.

Mojsze Lubling is an historic, heroic and radiant figure who the Jewish people and the Zionist-Socialist movement had in its ranks.

Eliezer Szmulewicz

He was born in Częstochowa in 1915. His father, Lewi Szmulewicz, a grain merchant, was a *chussid* [follower] of the *Rebbe* of Wieruszów⁵. Eliezer was brought up in a strict religious spirit, studying first at Jechiel Grylak’s *cheder* and later in the public primary school.

From childhood, he began taking an interest in social problems and, in fact, joined *Ha’Shomer Ha’Tzair* at a very young age. This organisation became his second home and he devoted all his free time to it. He held a leading position in the movement and participated in conventions and conferences. Within the organisation, he was known by the pseudonym “Malay”.

He had a talent for languages, and actually studied languages and also the printer’s trade. After becoming a qualified printer, he worked for the Zionist weekly *Unser Weg* [Our Way] and also took part in the paper’s publication.

Wishing to emigrate to the Land of Israel, Eliezer Szmulewicz, in 1936, travelled to a *kibbutz* in Mława for “*hachshara*”. There, he fell ill and underwent an operation. He then returned to Częstochowa and continued his “*hachshara*” at the Częstochowa [*Ha’Shomer Ha’Tzair*] Horticultural Farm.

On 19th June 1937, there was a pogrom in Częstochowa in connection with the Pendrak-Baran incident⁶. On that occasion, Eliezer Szmulewicz took an active part in the resistance against the pogrom perpetrators who attacked the Horticultural Farm.

As soon as the Germans occupied Częstochowa, Eliezer Szmulewicz organised resistance groups which, at first, engaged in informational work by spreading anti-Nazi literature. He was in contact with an entire array of cities.

⁵ [TN: Ref. to *Rebbe Chanoch Henech God Justman of Pilica, who officiated as Rabbi of Wieruszów before succeeding his father as Rebbe of Pilica upon the latter’s death in 1920.*]

⁶ [TN: A detailed account of this affair is rendered in Dr Benjamin Orenstein’s book “*Churban Czenstochow*”, in the chapter “*Excesses Against Jews in Częstochowa*”, pp. 18-22 (see there).]

Eliezer Szmulewicz took an active part in organising the *Arbeiterrat*. He was one of the main speakers at the foundation meeting.

With the start of the deportations of Częstochowa Jewry on 22nd September 1942, he lost his large family. They were annihilated in Treblinka. He and his brother, Zyskind Szmulewicz, were barracked in HASAG-Pelcery. In the gruesome days of the deportations and the horrific barracking conditions in HASAG, he dedicated himself to the organisation of a resistance group. He met Mojtek Zylberberg, the future commander of the unified Combat Organisation in the "Small Ghetto" and, together, they worked out a plan.

After three months of being barracked in HASAG-Pelcery, everyone was sent back to live in the "Small Ghetto". The foundations of the Combat Organisation had already been laid. Everything was reorganised and unified under the leadership of Mojtek Zylberberg. Eliezer Szmulewicz was one of the most active members of the technical group which produced explosives and hand grenades. His brother Zyskind Szmulewicz also belonged to this group.

On 24th June 1943, two days prior to the liquidation and uprising of the Częstochowa "Small Ghetto", a group of gendarmes headed by the arch-murderer of Jews, Degenhardt, came to the "Small Ghetto" and arrested everyone named Szmulewicz. Eliezer Szmulewicz, not having anticipated anything, was detained on that occasion.

The Combat Organisation's High Command immediately designated a combat unit to liberate the arrested Eliezer Szmulewicz. At the time, the "Small Ghetto" was surrounded by an increased guard, and the final battle of the Jewish Combat Organisation against the Nazi tyrants had already begun. Thus, the plan to free Eliezer Szmulewicz was rendered impractical.

Eliezer Szmulewicz fell then as a hero and fighter against the Nazi tyrants.

Izrael-Awigdor Szydhaus

He was born in Przedbórz in 1914. From the earliest years of his childhood, he lived in Częstochowa, where he was brought up in a strict religious spirit. Due to his parents' bad financial situation, he started working to earn for bread at the age of fourteen, engaging in house painting.

Izrael-Awigdor Szmulewicz [sic Szydhaus] belonged, at first, to *Betar* and later joined the *Poalei Zion* organisation, serving it loyally until the last minutes of his life. He was a very active member and was, therefore, elected to the management committee and entrusted with the organisation of the trade unions. He was a management committee member in the Painters' Union.

When the Nazis entered the city, he was active in the Ha'Chalutz movement and took an important part in the organisation of the *Arbeiterrat*. He was a talented orator and used the common language of the people, which influenced the masses. He was, in fact, one of the three speakers at the founding meeting of the *Arbeiterrat*. He was an Executive member in the *Arbeiterrat* and worked in the secretariat of the *kibbutzim*. He was intensely popular with the forced labourers and, at the same time, was persecuted by the ghetto police. He was arrested on multiple occasions.



Ul. Mostowa in the "Small Ghetto" - the arrow indicates the lime pit into which the murderer of Jews Laszyński, a *Volksdeutsch*, threw the victims of the "Small Ghetto".

In the "Small Ghetto", he was one of the organisers of the Jewish Combat Organisation and displayed great organisational capabilities. He was a member of the High Command and fell in armed combat during the liquidation and uprising of the "Small Ghetto".

Josl Kantor

He was born in Częstochowa in 1917. When he was still a pupil, he was a member of *Ha'Shomer Ha'Tzair*, where he was educated in the spirit of a pioneer and a sportsman, which was expressed in his conduct, external appearance and in the manner he dressed. His greatest aspiration was to make it to the Land of Israel. However, due to some mishap, his plan was not realised before the War.

When the Nazi War broke out, in the winter of 1939, he attempted to travel to the Soviet territories. But he was unsuccessful. The Germans captured him along with hundreds of others and flung them into railway wagons, saying that they would transport them to the Soviet territories. However, in reality, everyone was beaten and taken away to Kraków. From there, he returned to Częstochowa, badly beaten and embittered. Predicting imminent destruction and doom, he turned into a raging, restless man and prepared himself and others for the tragic and heroic tomorrow.

In the period of the "Big Ghetto", he put himself at the service of the Ha'Chalutz resistance movement, conducting scouting-educational activity amongst the youth.

When the "Small Ghetto" was established, he became one of the main organisers and leaders of the armed resistance movement. The friends, who had known him from before the War and from the "Big Ghetto", could not recognise him. He had reached the highest level of lust for battle and readiness to sacrifice his life for the honour of the Jewish people. During the liquidation and uprising of the "Small Ghetto", he fell in the heroic battle of resistance.

Nuta Słomnicki

He was born in Częstochowa in 1914. From his earliest years, he belonged to the *Freiheit* organisation and was the "*Rosh Ha'Ken*"⁷. He later went on to become the life force of the *Poalei Zion* Party and of the *Freiheit* youth organisation. He was also a regular contributor and correspondent of YIVO (Yiddish Scientific Institute⁸) in Wilno.

During the "Big Ghetto" period, he was active in the clandestine pioneering movement as a management committee member of Ha'Chalutz. He was elected as a member of the *Arbeiterrat* and invested a great deal of time in gathering material on the disgraceful activity of the *Judenrat*.

Following the liquidation of the "Big Ghetto", he joined Rywka Glanc's newly-created *kibbutz* together with his younger brother Icek- [sic Izrael-]Majer Słomnicki, who was also an active member of *Freiheit*, and he was elected to the *kibbutz's* management committee. Both brothers took an active part in organising and forming the armed Combat Organisation, and both brothers fell in battle during the liquidation and uprising of the "Small Ghetto".

⁷ [TN: Heb., "Head of the Nest", viz. leader of the cell.]

⁸ [TN: Once the organisation relocated to New York City, it was given the English name "Institute for Jewish Research".]

Jechaskiel Kantor

He was born in Częstochowa in 1917 to the industrialist Lajbel Kantor, the owner of the Stradom mill and a colonial goods shop. After completing the general school, he studied metalworking at the Crafts School at ul. Garncarska 8-10. Once he became independent, he opened a printshop on the First Aleja, which he later relocated to ul. Warszawska.

He was active in the *Askola* sports club, distinguishing himself in football and table-tennis. He was also known as a good chess player and belonged to the chess club.

From the earliest years of his youth, Jechaskiel Kantor belonged to the *Betar* revisionist youth organisation and stood out for his developed political sense and firm, indomitable will and character.

As a twelve-year-old boy, when bloody events took place in 1929 in the Land of Israel and Jews in Częstochowa recited psalms, Jechaskiel Kantor declared that the solution to the unrest could only come by way of an organised, armed youth.

In his social life, he was noted for his humour and occupied the first place in composing up-to-date political jokes.

During the period of the deportations, selections and resettlements, from 22nd September to 4th October 1942, when the majority of Częstochowa Jewry was annihilated, he lost his entire family.

Jechaskiel Kantor was raging for battle and, in the "Small Ghetto", he organised a resistance group. He sought connections with the Polish resistance movement, obtained weapons for himself and the group, and made contact with the officer Langiewicz from the Polish resistance movement. Jechaskiel Kantor held several meetings with him, at ul. Kucelińska 61, regarding the organisation of partisan detachments, military training, armaments and methods of combat.

Once the united Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB) - to which all the youth belonged, regardless of politico-ideological convictions - was established, he joined its ranks, taking an active part in all its work and operations.

He fell in heroic battle during the liquidation and uprising of the "Small Ghetto".

Arje Mandelbaum

He was born in Częstochowa in 1916. He was orphaned at a very young age and struggled with difficult material conditions but, nevertheless, he managed to complete *gimnazjum*. He belonged to the *Gordonia* pioneering youth organisation where, thanks to his innate intelligence, he was one of the most active and revered members. In 1935, he travelled for "*hachshara*" to Zduńska Wola, where he held the office of *kibbutz* secretary.

In the times of the “Big Ghetto”, he was an involved Ha’Chalutz activist and was an active co-worker of the *Arbeiterrat*.

In the “Small Ghetto”, he was active in the Jewish Combat Organisation. He was captured due to some mishap and, with a group of other Jews, was sent away to Bliżyn, near Radom. He could by no means adapt to the murderous regime in that camp and strove to return to the Combat Organisation in the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”.

Together with Alter Szyldhaus and Berl Rudnicki, Arje Mandelbaum escaped from the Bliżyn camp. The Nazi tyrants launched a manhunt and managed to capture Arje Mandelbaum - he perished under severe torture.

Arje Mandelbaum was one of the most ideal figures produced by the Ha’Chalutz youth and the Combat Organisation in Częstochowa.

Janek Krauze

He was born, in Częstochowa in 1919, to the manufactured goods merchant Zysman Krauze. After completing primary school, he studied metalwork at the Crafts School at ul. Garncarska 8-10.

While still a student, he joined the *Ha’Noar Ha’Tzioni* [Zionist Youth] youth organisation and the Makabi sports club, distinguishing himself in football and boxing. The organisation developed his social awareness and orientation, and the sports club - his readiness for battle.

Janek Krauze was one of the first members of the Jewish Combat Organisation in the “Small Ghetto”. His belligerent nature did not permit him to wait to carry out certain operations. He left the “Small Ghetto” and put himself in contact with partisans, carrying out extremely daring operations. His first mission was in Kamyk, where he and a group of others disarmed a German gendarmerie post, took their weapons and three uniforms and destroyed all the documents.

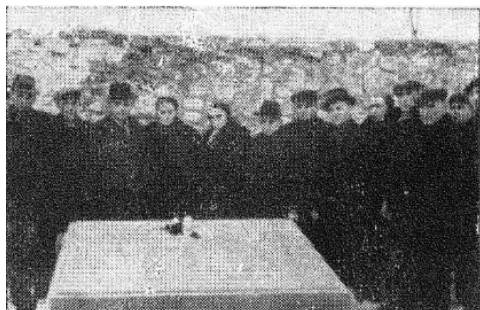
His second mission was with a group of partisans dressed in German uniforms, which they took from Höniger’s drycleaner’s in Częstochowa, at Aleja 35. The operation was on the government bank and, at the time, made a huge impression throughout Poland, for its daring, courageousness and discipline.

After each successful operation, Janek Krauze’s lust for battle increased, as did his energy and daring. He disarmed a *Werkschutz*, who was leading Jewish workers to forced labour, and distinguished himself in an entire array of other [operations].

On 18th March 1943, with a group of seven fighters, he was preparing for a mission to derail a train carrying German military personnel and ammunition. Due to an unexpected event, they were encircled by an SS division before leaving their base of departure. One of them managed to escape, and the other six were terribly tortured. On the following day, 19th March 1943, they were shot at the Jewish cemetery.

Following liberation, viz. following the collapse of the Nazi regime, the Jewish Committee in Częstochowa sought out the location of the six executed partisans and erected a monument. The inscriptions on the monument are in Yiddish and Polish, and the contents are as follows:

"Here rest six young combatants, fallen in the fight for freedom on 19th March 1943.



*Flamenbaum, Moniek – 21 years old;
Herszberg, Olek – 26;
Krauze, Janek – 23;
Rychter, Heniek – 19;
Rozenblat, Jerzyk – 18;
Szajn, Szlamek – 23.*

Honoured be their memory!"

These were a few figures of the armed Jewish Combat Organisation who, with their blood, gloriously inscribed themselves into the history of the Jewish struggle against Nazism.

The Role of *Częstochower Landsleit* in the Uprising at the Treblinka Death Camp

Treblinka is located seven kilometres - about five miles - from Małkinia [Górna]. Treblinka was set up in 1941 as a labour camp. The trees of a forest were cut down and they began to build barracks and facilities and to assemble machines there. It occurred to none of the workers to think as to the purpose of these machines - none could have imagined that the German technicians had come up with such a demonic plan of gassing and burning people.

The first tests of gassing people were carried out in January-February 1942, whereupon the mass deportations from Lublin, Warsaw and the entire region immediately ensued.

The clothes, shoes and all the other belongings from the first gassed transports [in Treblinka] were sent off to Germany. The Nazi powers-that-be sent back the trains with the items, because they had not been sorted. This compelled the Treblinka murderers to formulate a plan as to how to obtain working hands in a manner that no one should know what was happening in the death camp - how to find workers who would not be permitted to leave the death camp alive. They therefore decided that, from every transport, they would select a certain number for work.

A certain number were also selected from the *Częstochowa* transports, including Aron Gelbard, Mendel Fiszlewicz⁹, Gerszon Prędko, Mojsze Lubling, Abram-Lajb Bomba, Jakób Ajzner, Chaim Sztajer, Heniek Szperling, Mojsze Rapoport, Langner, Kudlich and others.

⁹ [TN: This is the same Mendel Fiszlewicz who was killed on 4th January 1943 upon attempting to take the life of the SS officers in charge of the "akcja" (see *Sefer Częstochowa*, Vol. II, "In the Struggle Against the Nazi Beast").]

The number of Jews employed in Treblinka reached 1,250. The work there was varied. Each group of labourers had a specific function to perform and wore a special insignia.

The majority of the *Częstochower landsleit* were communal activists and, as they knew each other, they immediately deliberated - in a highly secretive manner – as to what to do in those gruesome circumstances. First of all, they formed a clandestine group, which subsequently developed into a rebellion movement.

Among the first members of the first clandestine group were *Częstochowers* - including such well-known communal activists as Gerszon Prędko, Mojsze Lubling, and Aron Gelbard – one Jew from Wieluń and one from Łódź.

The tasks of the nucleus (clandestine group) were:

- 1) to investigate the camp from a geographical standpoint;
- 2) to find ways as to how to escape, and
- 3) to seek connections with the outside world.

The perimeter of the camp was fenced all around with electrified barbed wire, so that the merest touch to such a wire was death. The only possibility of escape was to lie down in a [railway] wagon and be covered up with things and, afterwards, once the train was already far away from the camp, open the door and jump out.

The nucleus (clandestine group) decided that Aron Gelbard would be the first to flee the death camp and report as to what was taking place [there]. The plan succeeded - Gelbard escaped, after spending nineteen days in the death camp, where his job consisted of cutting pieces of twine with which to bind together the shoes of the annihilated. He fled Treblinka on 21st October 1942 and, after making a journey of constant perils, during which he was terrorised many times by Poles, he nevertheless arrived safe and sound on 9th November back in the *Częstochowa* "Small Ghetto".

Aron Gelbard immediately became actively involved in the Combat Organisation, firstly relating the horrors of Treblinka. Gelbard also maintained contact with Treblinka by sending letters via Polish railway workers. Eight letters were sent by Gelbard to Mojsze Lubling, but only three replies came, due to the extraordinary difficulties of communication.

The *Częstochower landsleit* were known as people who [managed to] flee from various camps - and quite a few escaped even from the difficult Treblinka death *combat* [viz. camp¹⁰].

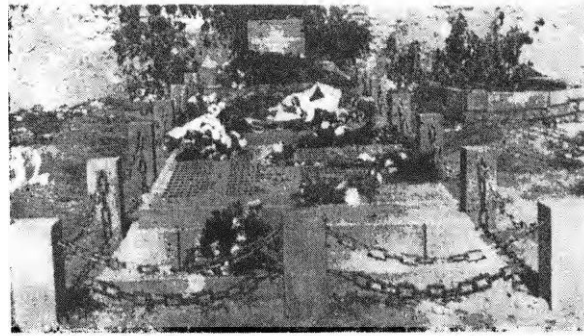
Thanks to the extraordinary organisational capabilities of the *Częstochower landsleit* Mojsze Lubling and Gerszon Prędko, as well as those of many others, the idea of an organised uprising ripened.

Gerszon Prędko did not live to see the rebellion. He perished in the death camp as a result of the arduous labour. Mojsze Lubling, Chaim Sztajer and an entire array of other *Częstochowers* participated in the uprising. Mojsze Lubling, the indefatigable fighter and labour activist, fell

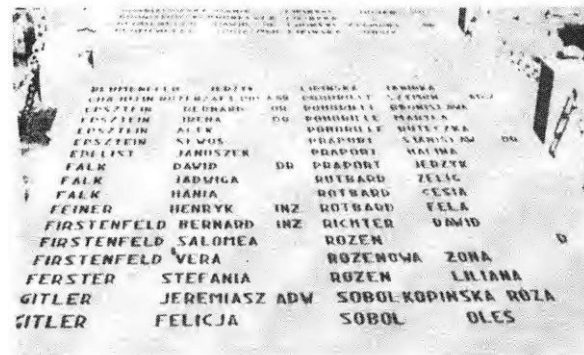
¹⁰ [TN: Although we have not been able to find this word in any other sources, we have seen various instances throughout this book where Dr Orenstein apparently uses it to mean "concentration camp".]

in the uprising. Chaim Sztajer managed to make it into the Małkinia woods and became a partisan.

Organisationally, Częstochower *landsleit* contributed much to the rebellion in the Treblinka death camp.



The headstone over the mass grave of the Częstochowa intelligentsia



Some of the names on the headstone of the mass grave