

A. Gelbard

## The Częstochowa Uprising<sup>1</sup>

People have truly had their fill already, constantly reading and hearing about ghetto uprisings and ghetto liquidations. That might be the case, when more is written about Warsaw - the entire world has heard of the heroic uprising and the selfless fight for human rights and Jewish honour. But Warsaw was not unique in its readiness for battle. Here, we wish to mention Częstochowa, on the third anniversary of the ghetto's liquidation.

The underground work factually began in April 1941, when it was already possible to see that war between the Soviet Union and Hitler's fascist Germany was unavoidable. We foresaw that the brown-uniformed beasts would pour out their greatest wrath upon the Jewish masses.

An underground committee was immediately formed, which included representatives of all political tendencies and parties. We set ourselves the task of rousing the Jewish masses to action.

We also put ourselves in contact with Polish workers who, at the time, were not organised at all. During the ghetto period, our meetings with the Polish workers were understandably not very frequent - we were not permitted outside the ghetto and, although the Poles could come into the ghetto, it was fraught with difficulties.

For more than a year, we constantly encouraged the Polish workers to obtain weapons for our money, and to be ready for battle when it became necessary. I, as a member of the underground committee, would give them the plan that had been decided upon at one of our conferences.

In the case of an attack on the ghetto, the Polish workers were to set fire to all parts of the city and instigate a panic outside the ghetto while we, on the inside, would fight our way through several points of the ghetto with weapons - first of all saving the women and children and, only then, leaving the ghetto ourselves, to make our way to the designated points which they had prepared [for us].

Thus, through hectographed<sup>2</sup> flyers, we roused and encouraged the Jewish masses that, in case of an attack, they were all to be ready to report to the designated points and carry out the corresponding commands.

The day, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1942, hit us like a bolt of lightning. It was Yom Kippur. A commotion broke out in the ghetto, to the effect that the "Blacks" - these were bands of Ukrainians - had

---

<sup>1</sup> [TN: According to Dr Filip Friedman's bibliographical work in the book "Czenstochow" (1958), this article was originally published in the periodical "Unser Weg" № 39, Munich, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1946.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: Copies made with a hectograph, which is a "direct-process duplicator using either gelatine or the spirit process for making a master copy." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, **hectograph**).]

arrived and surrounded the ghetto. We felt the black cloud had come upon us and, immediately, sent a messenger to our Polish comrades, that now was the moment of alert.

Sadly, our messenger returned with a response, to the effect that they were not yet ready for battle. Needless to say, all our plans burst like bubbles.

And what actually happened [instead], were the most gruesome events, for which no human imagination could ever allow. Of the population of 60,000 in the ["Big] Ghetto", [only] 5,000 remained in a little ghetto of four narrow alleys. For a short time, everything was interrupted, because the majority of the members of the underground organisation were sent away to Treblinka.

Spending ten days in Treblinka [myself], I met, during work, with a few individual members of the underground committee in Częstochowa, as well as with the Częstochowa *Poalei Zion* member, Gerszon Prędko, and it was decided that I needed to leave Treblinka and re-establish contact with the remaining "Small Ghetto".

After a perilous and difficult journey, on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1942, I succeeded in making my way back into the Częstochowa "Small Ghetto", utterly broken physically and morally. We reorganised, and attempted to find means to protect the little that had been saved for the time being.

But before we were able to come to our senses, the beasts had already concocted fresh means of pain and misery, by which to keep the small handful of [surviving] Jews in constant fear. This small handful of survivors was split up into small groups and sent off to different jobs.

On 4<sup>th</sup> January, while the greater part of the ghetto was at work, they carried out another selection on the small number of children, whom it had still been possible to save by various means. But this time, the murderers sensed that the despairing and tormented Jews would no longer let themselves be led like sheep to the slaughter, and the first shot rang out - that of Comrade Fiszlewicz, who had also returned from Treblinka. He wounded *Oberleutnant*<sup>3</sup> Rohn of the *Schutzpolizei*<sup>4</sup>. After shooting their bullets, the [two] members of the [Jewish] Combat Organisation defended themselves with bladed weapons and, finally, set upon them with their [bare] fists and fought heroically. Needless to say, the superior force of the brown beasts was too strong - and twenty-six of our comrades fell, with Comrade Fiszlewicz first and foremost. The fight had not been in order to win, but to salvage the honour of the Jewish people! Honoured be their memory!

In this *akcja*, another 300 were torn away from us - mainly children and the elderly. Yet we did not give up the fight. We knew that those remaining were [only] safe for as long as they were still needed for work. After that, all would meet the same fate.

This time, we did not rely on our Polish "comrades" to procure weaponry, but began manufacturing grenades by our own means, and we put ourselves in contact with the [ŻOB]

---

<sup>3</sup> [TN: *Oberleutnant (OF-1a)* is the highest lieutenant officer rank in the armed forces of Germany.]

<sup>4</sup> [TN: *Ger.*, (State) Protection Police, aka "Schupo".]

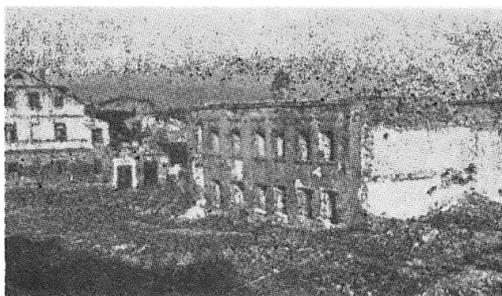
underground committee in Warsaw, where we obtained weapons and smuggled them into the ghetto through underground channels [viz. tunnels], which we had dug ourselves during whole nights.

Over the course of time, we established connections with the Polish AL (Armia Ludowa) [People's Army], and we received the opportunity to send comrades out into the woods. Differences of opinions arose - perhaps it was better for everyone to stay and defend the ghetto. But, nevertheless, the decision was made and we sent groups of comrades out into the forest.

We also encountered various difficulties - first of all on the part of Jewish provocateurs, whom we were forced to kill ourselves, and bury them so deep that the German bloodhounds would not sniff out and [sic that] we had liquidated them. Secondly, we started receiving bad news from the woods, to the effect that us Jews were being hoodwinked there, too, by our Polish "comrades". As a result, we were forced to split off and form our own groups.

We also carried out various acts of sabotage and diversion and, militarily, trained the members. Our headquarters had very difficult tasks, such as transferring groups, from time to time, from one place to another, to hide them from the reactionary AK army (Armia Krajowa) [Home Army], and also maintaining constant contact with the ghetto, and to be able to come to their aid at the right moment.

Here, too, we managed to establish contact with underground movements, as well as maintaining our connection with our groups in the woods. Besides material aid, we also received moral aid in a great measure, being constantly encouraged to persevere. The news from the frontlines and the nearing of the Red Army, indeed, gave us the strength and courage to survive and actually see the political bands<sup>5</sup> shattered.



***Parts of the destroyed  
"Small Ghetto"***



---

<sup>5</sup> [TN: Probably ref. to the abovementioned AK.]

