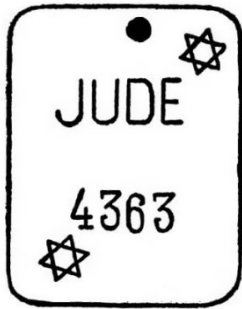


Zvi Rozenwajn

The *Aleje* After the Destruction

When the Nazi army marched into Częstochowa on the third day of the War, the appearance of the *Aleje* was completely altered.



Decree to wear arm-band

Already on the following day, Monday, 4th September 1939, signs of our [forthcoming] destruction were apparent. Under the false accusations that Jews had shot at Germans, the bandits attacked the Jewish population and the *Aleje* gushed with Jewish blood. By each house lay the dead bodies of victims. In many places, one could see mothers with small children clinging onto them, lying together, murdered.

Following the first storming, these decrees were implemented - the closing of Jewish shops and the wearing of arm-bands.

The *Aleje* acquired a different, gloomy facade. The Jewish party locales, social institutions and banks were closed down and others were established in their places, to serve the Gestapo in annihilating the Jews. The locales, which had formerly been the source of effervescent Jewish life, were transformed into a valley of tears. In them were now seen Jewish forced labourers, with their wooden clogs and paper [thin?] clothes/rags, [being] banished to slave-labour, or young Jews being carried away from there to the concentration and death camps.

On the Last Road

It weighs heavily and tragically on the heart when, before your mind, the last images of the *Aleje* appear - visions of destruction and death.

In rows of five they march, the Jews of the narrow *ulicy* - Garncarska, Targowa, [and] Nadrzeczna. Dressed in their finest holiday attire, with and without bundles on their shoulders, with children in their arms and clasping each other's hands, they march to the end of the Nowy Rynek, at the beginning of the first *Aleja*. There, they must march in three single files past the selection point, where the Nazi fiend Degenhardt and his helpers stand. They choose - who to the left and who to the right. The elderly, the infirm and the children are sent to the left. To the right are sent some of the young people capable of working who are retained for slave-labour. Those on the left are conducted to the market square and, from there, they are transported to the gas chambers.

Those on the right are taken along the *Aleja* to ul. Wilsona, which they follow to the Landau Bros. factory square on ul. Krótka.

That same evening, six hundred Jewish men and women were conducted from the Landau Bros. square to the "Golgota" cinema next to Jasna Góra.

In rows of five, they marched, guarded by the villainous ethnic-German *Sonderdienst* [Special Services] men, accompanied by blows from gunstocks and insults, and by the spiteful laughter of the hundreds of Poles out promenading. Just over yonder, in the first *Aleja*, is blood and ruin. And here,

at the other end of the same set of avenues, the windows are bright with light and the sounds of dance-music emerge from the parlours of entertainment.

A Dreadful Emptiness

Later, as well, Jews march along the *Aleje*. They are led out from the gate of the *Small Ghetto* along Krótka, Wilsona, and the *Aleje*, to their designated workplaces. Everywhere, scenes of destruction are seen. By the church at the Nowy Rynek, we see a tall mound of utensils taken from Jewish dwellings. Silken caftans lay strewn about. On a different spot, we see books, jumbled together with linen. Everywhere, we see large puddles of blood intermingled with an assortment of [scattered] homewares. All the houses are empty, cleared out - a dreadful lament seeps forth from all around.

A few of the marching Jews tear away from this environment of slavery. Some, who go, seek the path to the forest and others desire to steal across the border.

Those who decide to escape from the rows, too, walk on their hometown's Last Road, where on all sides thousands of deathly perils lurk, along the *Aleje*.