

Zvi [Hersz; Jacek, Heniek] Wiernik

In the Struggle Against the Nazi Beast



Several days after we had been transferred to the “Small Ghetto”, a few individuals who had managed to escape from the Treblinka extermination camp came to us and revealed that all the Jews who had been transported to the camp had been exterminated in the gas-chambers.

If anyone still had the faintest hope that sometime the horrors, torture, and suffering would end, this terrifying information put an end to all these illusions.

In the light of what was to come, the idea to resist began to mature. But the catalyst for the actual embodiment of the thought of resistance were the many discussions which we held with Fiszlewicz, one of the Treblinka escapees.

Our decision was firm - to seek ways to defend ourselves at the appropriate moment and, if it was decreed that we should give up our lives, a hefty price would be paid for them.

At the beginning of November 1942, by Fiszlewicz, I was put in contact with Heniek Tencer, who was active in the Polish Communist Party and often came to the ghetto.

In my meetings with him and his wife, as well as with Sumek Abramowicz, [and Julek-] Wilek Celnik, I found out that several clandestine groups were organising for a defence. We therefore set ourselves the task to procure burglary tools, fuel, axes, [etc.] which to utilise during the *akcje*, to burn down the ghetto and to also amass implements which would allow us to escape from the railway carriages when there was a window of opportunity and to defend ourselves. The duty which I was charged with was to broaden the framework and to organise groups, each of fifteen people, as well as to gather the abovementioned materials and tools.

But my main duty was the purchase of weapons.

I had many acquaintances in various workplaces, such as the Ostbahn [(German) Eastern Railway], the Wulkan factory, Aleja 75, the “furniture-camp” and Enro, who won my trust I then began to organise groups of five, from among them whom I gave the task, among other things, to procure the required implements. Following preliminary operations, the items were concentrated in one specific spot and, later, were distributed to the intended operation-points.

Heniek Tencer was a very active and energetic man. He maintained close contact with people outside the ghetto and also with the Polish Resistance, from where he brought us printed material, which I distributed amongst the organised members. Reading this material had a positive influence, for it instilled in our members’ hearts the sense that we were not alone in the campaign and this strengthened our spirits. In one of my meetings with Heniek Tencer, I received instructions to make ready to go out to the woods near Pilica and to join a partisan unit there under the command of Rudolf.

I was gratified that I would soon be joining the partisans and avenging the blood of my parents and relatives. I said farewell to my sister, my brother and my girlfriend, and awaited the appointed hour but, to my great disappointment, the contacts outside failed [us].

The contact person never showed up. Several days later, we heard that, as a result of denouncements, the unit was liquidated in a skirmish with the Germans, in which Commander Rudolf was also slain. In that same period, my connection with Heniek Tencer was also surprisingly cut off. I later learned that he and his wife had been detained by the Gestapo, severely tortured and murdered.

These were heavy blows for us, but our conviction in the rightness of our cause helped us overcome the desperate situation. I contacted Sumek Abramowicz, who was Heniek's successor and, through him, [I contacted] Juda Gliksztajn and Rywka Glanc, who represented the "*kibbutz*"¹.

There were other groups inside the ghetto which operated separately, each one within its own framework but, because the ghetto was small and with all the groups having a similar purpose, we soon found out about each other. Be that as it may, it was evident that by uniting forces, we would be able to operate more efficiently. We therefore instigated initial contacts towards unification.

The principal vacillations were around the question of whether the struggle should be conducted in the ghetto or in the forests – to join the partisans or to stay put?

It was finally decided to concentrate all efforts internally - to protect the ghetto. A joint general staff was created, established by the ŻOB, which included representatives from the majority of the groups: Bolek [Berl-Dow] Gwircman, Juda Gliksztajn [and] Rywka Glanc from the *kibbutz* ([Zionist] pioneering youth); Sumek Abramowicz and Mietek [Menachem] Ferleger from the "66" Group. The division of roles was as follows: Rywka Glanc - liaison with Warsaw; Sumek - liaison with the Polish Resistance; Juda - finances; Mietek – the purchase of armaments outside the city and Mojtek Zylberberg was appointed commander of the organisation.

Mietek Ferleger travelled extensively, and was able to purchase the first pistols from around Kielce. His journeys entailed many perils and he displayed great courage. Then, in December 1942, he went out on a mission and, indeed, managed to procure several handguns. But, on his way home, he was found by a patrol of the German Police, who searched him and found the weapons. Mietek was shot in [the] battle [that ensued²]. When this news reached us, the members of the organisation were, at the same time, both saddened and proud. The organisation issued a special announcement, which was read, and members eulogised the first victim.

On 4th January 1943, we were again surprised with an *akcja*. The organisation was in its beginnings and was not yet prepared to respond. The majority of the members had gone out to work in their respective workplaces. The moment that the ghetto was surrounded and the *akcja* was declared, the members remaining in the ghetto assembled, with just one pistol at their disposal, to hold counsel on the line of action to be taken. Having no other option, it was resolved to go out to the *Ryneczek* [Square; Warszawski Rynek] - the concentration point for the *akcja* - and to do anything which the circumstances allowed. Once it became clear to them that the Germans intended to carry out a selection and a transport, the decision was made for them on the spot! Fiszlewicz burst forth from the row, took out his pistol and aimed at Lieutenant Roon, the officer in charge of the *akcja*. Unfortunately, the pistol malfunctioned. But Fiszlewicz did not lose his composure. He fell upon Roon and tackled him to the ground with a struggle. Izio Fajner sprang after him from the row, with a knife in his hand and launched himself at Lieutenant Sapport, ripped his clothes and began wrestling with him. For a second, the Germans did not understand what was happening, but they soon regained control and a wild yell was heard, "Fire!" - Fiszlewicz and Fajner fell, wallowing in their own blood. They had indeed fulfilled their dream - to fall in battle against the German foe, as warriors.

¹ [TN: See above, this volume, col.99, regarding the "*kibbutzim*."]

² [TN: See the book "*Resurrection and Destruction in Ghetto Czestochowa*," p.117 (<https://www.jewishgen.org/vizkor/Czestochowa4/cze113.html>), in which a different version of his death is given.]



The Jewish Warrior in the Ghetto – by Nota Kozłowski

In retaliation for our members' onslaught, the Germans took twenty-seven Jews from the rows, stood them up against the wall and shot them to death on the spot. The murderers then continued with the selection and many people were sent away to Radomsko and, from there, to Treblinka.

I was one of those who had been outside the ghetto during the *akcja*. When I came home in the evening, I learned of the details of the horrifying events, including the bitter news that my brother had been amongst the twenty-seven who had been executed.

Once we had recovered [from the ordeal], the organisation's activists came to realise that a new approach was necessary in the methods of action. It was decided to broaden the organisation's scope and I was adjoined to the general staff. After various meetings and some indecisiveness, in view of the mistakes we had made in the past, we delineated the course of action for the future and agreed that, at the head of our mission, stood the problem of defending the ghetto. We also decided to organise partisan groups in the forests and to adjoin them to the existing armed forces. In order to realise these goals, we needed to change the way we purchased weapons. As it had turned out, the weapons we had bought had not met the requirements in the hour of need and there was a risk that we were being swindled in these deals.

The correctness of our stance was proven when our fellow member, Rywka Glanc, returned from a mission to Warsaw. From her report, we learned of the preparations for defence being made in the Warsaw ghetto. We also found out that the majority of the Jewish population throughout Poland had already been annihilated. We felt as if the ground under our feet was on fire and that we had reached the determined resolve to manufacture our own explosives. The task of investigating the practicability of producing such materials fell upon me and this was no easy chore, for I had no experience whatsoever in such matters. I held numerous discussions with the few engineers, chemists and scientists still remaining in the ghetto, but they were unable to assist me, seeing as how Jews in Poland had never been given access to the explosives industry and they were completely inexperienced in this sphere. I was almost on the brink of despair, when I remembered my friend Szlomek Kaufman ("Mikrus"), who had excelled in his studies of mathematics and physics. I approached him and told him all about the issue [at hand]. At first, he would not listen to me and viewed my plans with doubt and mistrust. He explained to me that he did not see any way of making something from nothing - especially as we had no textbooks, laboratories or the necessary materials to embark on a production of this kind. But I did not give up yet and, after much persuasion and many explanations, I was finally able to convince Mikrus of the propriety of our plan and, once he had already put himself at our service, we established courses of action.

We reached the conclusion that, in our situation, it would be extremely desirable to make a hand-grenade, which would serve both for attack and defence. We had [by then] already been equipped with theoretical textbooks, which we procured with great difficulties and, after many nights of joint analysis and study, we reached the stage of preliminary experimentation.

The issue of securing materials was again brought up. I called a meeting of the general staff and reported our progress. The general opinion was that, theoretically, we could already start experimenting.

We ascertained that the required constituents, above all the acids, were to be found in the storerooms of Jewish belongings on ul. Garibaldiego. With no easy efforts, our comrades managed to obtain what was needed and when, with great trepidation, we were able to begin actual work, our joy was boundless.

We operated under conditions that are hard to imagine - in attics, in cellars and, primarily, in a room around which lookouts were always posted. We finally achieved the production of the coveted powder which is called "mercury fulminate", which constitutes the main basis for making the grenade. With painstaking work, we were able to overcome all the difficulties and obstacles which making the fuse [and] the gunpowder entailed. The body of the grenade was a chapter on its own. At the "Wulkan" foundry, where I worked with my friends, we cast the mould which was [then] smuggled into the ghetto inside a canister of soup. Thus, after three months of supreme efforts, the first grenade was ready for testing.

At the general staff meeting, there was, of course, great excitement when I showed them the grenade. Heniek Fajtak and, I think, also Józef Kantor were given the task to test it outside the ghetto. They returned the following day with the gladdening news that the experiment had succeeded! The blast had been exceedingly violent, even surmounting expectations. Representatives of the Polish Resistance had also been invited to witness the trial and they expressed amazement and admiration at our accomplishment.

In view of the experiment's success, a new stage commenced in our activities. We began planning out new and extremely daring schemes. In the meantime, special groups were put together, which were employed in manufacturing chemical ingredients, casting the grenade bodies, processing them and then assembling them.

We encountered difficulties in procuring funds and the necessary materials for production. To overcome these problems, an intelligence unit was organised, whose duty it was to locate places where these components could be found. In due course, we discovered that they were in the German warehouses and also in the Polish pharmacies. The material was obtained in various manners - part was stolen and part was purchased for large sums of money. We also learned that the materials were to be found in the pharmaceutical storerooms in the ghetto. So, we broke into the warehouses and extracted the available components. The group engaged in processing the chemicals and manufacturing the grenades consisted of Mikrus, my girlfriend Nacia and me. Those casting the bodies of the grenades were Mandelbaum (Michcyk), Erenfryd (Bastek), Ziskind Szmulewicz, Mojsze Rużanski, Mojsze Wilinger, Malia [?] Szmulewicz, Abram Czarny, and the writer of these lines.

Simultaneously, we also made Molotov cocktails, following the diagram from our comrades in Warsaw. We also planned to manufacture bombs, firearms and the like. Until the ghetto was liquidated, we were able to produce about 150 items.

The Fighting Organisation's main plan was primarily based on defending the ghetto. We set up two central points for attack and defence – at ul. Garncarska 40 and the main base at ul. Nadrzeczna 88, where the headquarters' bunker and arsenal were located. The communication point was set up at ul. Mostowa 9 and, in both the points I mentioned above, there were underground passages, [each] with an opening leading outside the ghetto boundaries, which were intended to serve the fighters as a means of escape to the woods when necessary.

Furthermore, intelligence units were organised, whose assignment it was to find out about the Germans' plans regarding the liquidation of the ghetto, to uncover traitors from inside and out and to maintain contact with Warsaw and Zagłębie. There were also groups whose responsibility it was to raise funds, to be in contact with the Polish Resistance, to engage in military training, to inflict sabotage outside the ghetto and to maintain contact with the partisans.

Sabotage Operations

In due course, [some] members went out to sabotage the railway. They made it there safely [and] unscrewed the bolts from the rails. But, unfortunately, the wrench (made by our comrades in "HASAG") broke just as they were taking off the last bolt. Having no other option, they put everything back together and waited until the train with the munitions for the front had passed. The group returned safely to the ghetto and it was decided to operate in the same sector again.

The sabotage unit's task was to dismantle a rail, in order to derail a train with troops and ammunition headed for the Eastern Front. We had received detailed information on the timetables of the transports but, sadly, this operation failed. The fighters were to leave the ghetto with a group of Ostbahn labourers, cautiously detach from the group and carry out the mission. The comrades had already managed to sneak away from the group but, at the last moment, the German guards noticed they were missing and a dramatic pursuit ensued, in the course of which the Germans opened fire. In the skirmish which developed Awiw Rozyner and Harry Gerszonowicz were killed, while Dawid Altman and Heniek Pejsak were able to escape. Zvi Lustiger was wounded and was later captured by the German guards. He was grievously tortured, as the Germans desired to obtain details from him - Who had sent him? Who was the organisation's commander? What had been their purpose in going out with weapons? But Zvi acted with supreme heroism and never opened his mouth, despite the severe torture, until he breathed his last.

In January 1943, a group went out with Bolek Gewircman and Chaim Rozental (Maciek) to the Koniecpol area. Their mission was to set up a base and to organise a meeting with groups of Polish partisans. But their main goal was to establish a safe strategic point in case the ghetto was liquidated. At the beginning of June, a second group went out to the Żłoty Potok woods. The Żłoty Potok group comprised Romek Fajgenblat, the Wiener brothers, the Zborowski brothers, the Chitin brothers and others.

From its first day, fate would be cruel to this group. The Polish contacts did not show up and the fellows could not stop there. The surroundings were hostile and the forests were controlled by Polish Fascist groups, who murdered Jews who had hidden with peasants. It was therefore resolved to send the best of our fighters as reinforcements - Pinek Samsonowicz, Harry Potaszewicz, Lolek Blank and Berl Lemel. And then - another blow - as a result of denunciation, the group was attacked by the Gestapo and a battle ensued, in the course of which Pinek and Berl were killed, while Lolek escaped.

When the Germans conducted an identity parade and demanded of Harry to point out the members of the organisation, he was fiercely tortured, but he did not betray anyone. In torture and unimaginable pain, he gave up his soul.

The organisation's operations were funded, in the beginning, by private donations and also by "robbery". As activities intensified, a tax was imposed on the wealthy individuals. Those who did not respond generously were held under arrest and the money was taken by force. Those engaged in the collection of funds were Leon Zylber, Szymon Młodinow, Dawid Kantor and others.

The organisation also took measures against traitors, informers and thieves. An intelligence unit was appointed, headed by Awigdor Szyldhaus, which tracked the movements of informers. The members were briefed on how they should act and from whom they should guard themselves. A thorough investigation was conducted on the traitors and several death warrants were issued. The last traitor to be eliminated was Rozenberg - the Gestapo's faithful acolyte. The organisation also put to death a group of money-robbers and thieves, who passed themselves off as members of the organisation and who operated in its name, as it were. The ghetto's defences were based on several exit points: [a pair

of] tunnels, tens of metres long. The hard and dangerous [excavation] work was carried out silently, so that even the nearest neighbours did not know what was being done. Taking the soil out unnoticed presented special challenges, as well as reinforcing the walls. But thanks to the relentless toil, the fighters managed to overcome the difficulties and dug two tunnels which led outside the ghetto. Via these tunnels, the fighters were able to escape after the liquidation of the ghetto towards the forests of Koniecpol. J. Kantor particularly excelled in digging the tunnels. The Germans saw to it that all the ghetto's inhabitants should work in military factories and, inside the ghetto, only night-shift workers or those employed in the ghetto services remained. There were often raids and strict inspections. Our comrade Marzej Krauze, who worked at the *Arbeitsamt* [*Judenrat* Labour Council], saw to it that the organisation's members who were digging the tunnels and manufacturing armaments should all be provided with the proper certificates.

During its first stages, the organisation met with a hostile attitude from the ghetto's residents. The Jews were of the opinion that we would hasten the end and that we would be responsible for the consequences. Obviously, this approach hampered our activities very much, but the situation gradually changed. People came to realise that life in the ghetto was by no means guaranteed at all. The Germans conducted "operations" from time to time and sent Jews to camps, such as Bliżyn and Skarżysko [-Kamienna]. Furthermore, the news of the uprising in Warsaw and the liquidation of the ghettos [also] had an influence. And particularly after the members of the organisation forcibly freed our comrade Hipek Heiman from the hands of the Jewish Police, who were about to deliver him to the Gestapo. They became cognisant that a counter-power had risen and they began to acknowledge us as a force to be reckoned with, when they realised that we did not shy away from using weapons, even in the "Jewish front". The public's trust in us gradually grew, until they came to view us as their only means of rescue.

The elimination of the intelligentsia and the children on Purim 1943, during which the Germans murdered 127 individuals by fraudulently taking them away from the ghetto to send them to the Land of Israel, as it were - as an exchange deal for Germans [held] in Palestine - also reinforced the public's conviction that they could no longer rely on miracles and conclusively showed the Germans' true intentions towards us. In that same operation, our comrade Władek Kopiński managed to jump from the vehicle on the way to the cemetery and several others followed suit. He was able to escape but as, a result of informing, he was captured and executed. Rumours spread that the members of the organisation went outside to the forests and other places and many beat at the organisation's gates.

On 1st May, the ghetto was sealed off and the Jews were no longer allowed to go work in "outside jobs". This was a clear sign for us that the end was nearing and the organisation's general staff declared a state of standby. The weapons were distributed and the combatants were sent to positions with a detailed briefing - how to engage the enemy. Post factum, it emerged that we had been mistaken. The ghetto was indeed sealed off for three days, but it turned out that this had been a safety measure, on part of the Germans in preparation for the 1st and 3rd of May, which had been taken for fear of operations by the Polish Resistance.

There was collaboration between the ŻOB and the representatives of the Polish Resistance, headed by Commander Langewicz.

In one of the meetings in the city suburbs, in the Raków-Kamionka³ area, the house was suddenly attacked by men of the S.S. and Gestapo. It was clearly no routine random search. The Germans knew that men of the Resistance were gathered there. The troops threw grenades inside, operated machine-guns and killed several people.

³ [TN: Kamionka is a large hill not far from Raków.]

Mojtek was slightly injured, but managed to jump out and flee. Chaskel Kantor, too, was able to return from there to the ghetto. The Germans were already aware of ŻOB's existence and they introduced informers into the ghetto in order to eliminate it. Our intelligence unit reported intensified German operations and, mere days before the liquidation of the ghetto, the organisation sealed the fate of several Jewish collaborators, among them the baker Kolbe and the infamous policeman Rozenberg, who had come from the Łódź ghetto. Two days preceding the liquidation of the ghetto, the gendarmes shot at Dr [Adam] Wolberg, who was a captain in the Polish army and maintained the connection between the organisation and the representatives of the Polish Resistance's military. Once it became known that the Germans were preparing for operations to liquidate the ghetto, on 25th June 1943, the organisation's general staff issued a preparatory order and a muster of the fighters. That same day, an emissary from Warsaw, Marek Fulman, arrived and a general headcount was held at the main bunker. Marek told of the uprising in the ghetto and of its liquidation and he stressed that the battle was not over. We were convinced that zero hour was imminent and that we, too, would be put to the test in battle against the enemy. The patrols reported that, for the time being, there had been no changes of the atmosphere and that no concentrations of Germans were seen. In the afternoon, the groups returned from their workplaces, as usual, to the ghetto. The leadership of the organisation therefore decided to call off the muster and state of standby. The weapons that had been distributed were stored in the main bunker, in which only the injured Mojtek remained, who lay with a high fever, and with him - Lutek Gliksztajn. The fighters dispersed, each to his own home.

But, as I was walking together with Nacia, as we were already approaching the place where we lived, we suddenly heard gunfire. We started to run back towards the central bunker. As it turned out, most of the combatants were doing the SAME. But, upon approaching the bunker, many of our comrades fell into the trap and also found their deaths there. Among them were Józef Kantor, Heniek Fajtak, Szyldhaus and others. The bunker was surrounded by a cordon of S.S. men, who dared not effect an entrance. They seized a young lad from the ghetto, forced him to enter first and then marched in after him. They found Mojtek, the organisation's commander, already dead. He had committed suicide with a dose of potassium cyanide, which was always at his disposal. Lutek, on the other hand, managed to hide in the escape tunnel and fled after two days. With difficulties, he arrived in the Koniecpol woods, where he joined a group of Jewish partisans with whom he took part in battles and in one of which he fell.

The Germans, who infiltrated the bunker, abused Mojtek's corpse and took from it all the armaments we had managed to amass with such hard work - dozens of grenades, pistols and Molotov cocktails, three rifles, German uniforms, large quantities of food, medicines and more. They then left and the ghetto remained surrounded with a cordon of S.S. guards.

As evening neared, we assembled together with Marek to hold counsel regarding the next steps which we should take. We had been left without almost any weapons and other means of warfare - [and] without a commander. Taking this [German] operation into account, it was resolved to make use of the underground passage at ul. Garncarska 40 and to take groups outside, with the aim of reaching the woods. I was also supposed to be among those leaving but, in the prevailing confusion, my wife⁴ disappeared. So, I decided to go back and look for her. Once I had been able to find her, we returned to the exit point. But, meanwhile, we learned that the chances of leaving the ghetto were practically none. So, we agreed to remain for the time being.

Only a few of those who left managed to make it to the woods. The majority were killed on their way there. Rywka Glanc and Marek, who attempted to escape by one of the tunnels, were discovered by the Germans and, with the meagre arms they had at their disposal, they defended themselves bravely.

⁴ [TN: Above, the author refers to her as his "girlfriend." One may therefore surmise that the couple married sometime during these events, although this is not mentioned.]

Rywka was killed, after defending herself to the last bullet, whilst Marek threw a grenade and was able to escape in the mayhem that ensued. In this battle, one German was slain and several others were wounded.

At the Raków Factory

Together with several of our comrades-in-arms, we hid in the bunker where the gunpowder was kept. The moment we were discovered, we would blow up the bunker, so as not to fall into the hands of the executioners. The following morning, the Germans announced, through the Jewish Police, that everyone was required to go out to the *Ryneczek* assembly point. They promised that they would send the people from there to work at the HASAG and Raków factories and that those who ignored the orders and stayed inside the ghetto - would be burned alive. Thus, they were able to deceive the public, which had been enticed to clutch at the straw of supposed salvation. The Germans' cruel conniving was boundless. At the *Ryneczek* assembly point, an *akcja* took place, led by the chief of the gendarmerie Degenhardt and the residents, who lived next to the central bunker, were loaded onto freight lorries and, together with the others, were taken to the cemetery. There, they were shot to death. As they stood in the lorries, they shouted, "Avenge our blood!".

My wife was sent to the HASAG-Pelcery factory, whereas I took advantage of my connection with a friend, who was employed in the *Arbeitsamt*, and was transferred together with my friends Zyskind, Szmulewicz, Mikrus, Mojsze Rużanski and others to the Raków factory.

It was a *kombinat* [Pol.; plant, works] for the casting and processing of iron, in which over 10,000 labourers were employed, working in three shifts. The hardest and filthiest jobs were given to the Jews. Life was harshly regimented, and under the strict supervision of the internal guard. But, despite everything, we managed to find a breach in the wall of solitude that they had erected around us. Fortunately for us, the Polish workers there were organised and their attitude towards us was more benevolent than in other workplaces.

Our mood was at its lowest. We were horribly depressed. The many thoughts and efforts we had invested in the production of grenades, digging the tunnels, the multi-branched organisation which we had set up towards the great day on which we would be able to fight and seek revenge - everything was ruined and had gone down the drain.

From afar, the thunder of the bombing reached our ears - they were liquidating the ghetto, [together] with the people living in it. And in the ocean of hatred, destruction, and annihilation, there was one German named Mühlhof, who was in charge of our camp. Mühlhof travelled to the ghetto, as if to fetch equipment for the camp and, risking his own life, succeeded in taking several people from out of the burning ghetto and bringing them to the camp. He recounted how they were bombing one house after another, dispatching the sick [and] extricating people who had hidden in bunkers and throwing them alive into the flames. But his humanistic attitude doomed him. When his actions became known to the Germans, he was very soon sent to the front - and killed.

Following the liquidation of the ghetto, a few individuals who had managed to breach the tight ring of Germans who had destroyed the Żłoty Potok unit, came to the camp. Among them were Ignasz Jakubson, Natan Fridman, and Abram Woznica. Bernard Chraport was caught in Raków and murdered, whilst Szulim Laszer was apprehended by the Gestapo. They told us about the group's tragic fate and we helped them however we could.

The thought that the unit in Koniecpol had remained without contact with us, and had not known about what had happened to us, gave me no peace. After we recovered a little, we decided to send

two members - Michał Deres and Bartek Lubranicki - to the forests of Koniecpol, to the village Michałów. Despite the fact that these were alien surroundings, we made a great effort and worked out a detailed plan for our comrades. We also established that, within a week and a few days, they were to return to the camp. This time, our friends were lucky. They made it to the woods after many hardships, found our comrades the partisans and returned exactly on time to the camp, bearing a letter from Juda Gliksztajn, requesting medications for Leizer Szydlowski, who had been wounded in a battle against the Germans. We had again found a reason to live and we wanted to continue the struggle. When our comrades' mission was heard of in the camp, the chairman of the camp's Labour Council demanded of me that [we] cease all activities. Firmly, I replied to him that we would continue no matter what! In "response," I was sent to hard labour, unloading railway carriages. Through Dr Glater, we obtained medications and our messenger, again, went to the forest, with the proper instructions for treatment. After a little over a month, we established regular communication with other workplaces. It was the [female] dentist Lonia Grin, who occasionally came from the other camp, HASAG-Pelcery, to treat the sick. She brought me letters from my wife, in which she told of life in HASAG. The knowledge of our connection with our members outside encouraged the comrades at Raków and instilled in them a spark of hope. Despite the difficult conditions, small units began to organise.

In autumn 1943, Władka, the first emissary from ŻOB, came to us bringing letters from Antek Cukierman and the central committee in Warsaw, as well as a sum of money as aid.

Meanwhile, the connections with HASAG-Pelcery intensified. There, too, the rows broadened - a central council was organised, which unified all the groups that had previously operated separately. The members of this council were Izaak Diamant, Różka Działowska, Izrael Szymonowicz, Gelbard, Adaś, Motek Kusznir, and Nacia - my wife. Contacts were also established between the camp at the Częstochowianka-Warta factory, the HASAG-Skarżysko camp and Bliżyn.

Despite the prevailing conditions in the labour camps, a broad activity was conducted. In adherence to the instructions which we had received from Warsaw, we began to gather documentary material, which was passed on to Warsaw through the Koniecpol forests. We were often visited by emissaries from Warsaw, who brought with them funds and information. Among these was Wiernik's pamphlet about the rebellion in Treblinka, as well as letters from abroad.

I recall the impressive circular on behalf of the Jewish Agency, signed by Izaak Grünbaum and Berl Locker, which was passed from hand to hand among the members of our organisation.

The influence of the financial aid was immediately felt in a substantial manner, as it alleviated the hunger crisis prevailing in the camp. We were again able to care for the sick and needy, extend aid to those hiding in bunkers outside the camp, as well as to children who were concealed with Poles.

Frequently, the Germans conducted thorough searches. In these cases, we were commanded to come out of our living quarters and forced to appear completely naked - absolutely all of us - each holding his clothes in his hands.

As Fate decreed, it was precisely on one of these search-days that we received a package of materials and a huge sum of money, which we were to distribute among all the camps.

I despaired. It was impossible to go to the search with the package and all the entrances and exits were sealed. Only literally, at the last moment, did a solution present itself, when Zyskind Szmulewicz entered the infirmary where Hilek Frydrych lay with a bandaged leg. He shoved the package into the bandage and then we were able to go out to the search. This time, the trick worked, but we did not

always meet with success. One time, our local coordinator Jan Brust, who was a member of the P.P.S., was stopped at the entrance to the factory. He was subjected to a meticulous search (probably as a result of being informing upon), in the course of which a letter to me was found. Upon realising he had failed, Brust started running and, as he ran, he swallowed the letter piece by piece. The sentry shot at him, wounding him severely. Brust was taken to the hospital, where he lay unconscious for two days. Before dying, he regained consciousness and the first question he asked his wife, who sat by his bedside the entire time, was whether, while being unconscious, he had not, Heaven forbid, given Jacek's [viz. the author] name and those of the conspirators. He asked [her] to convey to me all the instructions he had received outside, upon which he immediately died. With his death, we lost a dear friend and this was for us a blow from which we were not able to recover quickly.

Our comrades in the Koniecpol woods energetically saw to it that the communication be renewed. Their regular coordinator, Tolka [Otylia] Hajdas, would send us letters and money from Warsaw through Wojciech Nowialk, who worked in Raków (a member of the P.P.S.), via Koniecpol. The contact was maintained through our chief liaison, Zyskind, who showed commitment and willingness to the cause [and] was always ready to sacrifice himself - both in direct operations and in his treatment of fellow members.

Operations in our labour camp were managed by a small committee, comprised of the Zyskind, Szmulewicz, Leon Zelwer, the barrister Wilczyński, Dawid Kantor, Abram Boruch, Ignasz Jakubson and myself.

On 25th June 1944, the [first] anniversary of the liquidation of the ghetto, we gathered in our organised groups to commemorate the martyrs. We spoke of the tragic circumstances of the ghetto's liquidation and [that of] the Fighting Organisation, and we swore to intensify operations. We planned acts of sabotage, including almost regularly damaging the carriages which brought cargoes into the factory - by putting sand into the bearings.

The effect of the sand was devastating. After travelling a few kilometres, the sand would penetrate the bearings [and] scrape the casings, thus rendering the carriages unfit for use. In this manner, we "treated" thousands of carriages and we were not caught - even once. Another operation we carried out together with Zyskind was directed at the furnaces. Working the night shift, we closed the taps that conveyed the water to cool the steel furnaces. As a result, the walls of the furnace were burnt and, for several days, was unusable for several days as it needed to be repaired.

In our work of sorting the materials that had come back from the front, we were required to set aside any shells that were still loaded with explosives, so that they should not be sent to the furnace. But we did the exact opposite. We threw the loaded shells into the furnace and, obviously, explosions occurred. Our method was to inflict damage in every department.

I recall one brazen operation when, with the help of Szlomek Kaufman (Mikrus), we injected the main underground electrical cable with sulphuric acid. Two days after the operation, all work ceased completely in this gigantic factory and, only after much effort, were the experts able to discover the source of the malfunction. They were forced to take the cable apart in order to start it working again. The Gestapo unit followed the acts of sabotage in the factory alertly, but it never occurred to them that we were the ones behind them. They detained many Poles and sent them to Oświęcim [Auschwitz]. The Polish public, too, were convinced that the operations were the Polish Resistance's handiwork.

At the end of summer 1944, when the Russians managed to crush the German front and to come up to the banks of the Wisła and the outskirts of Warsaw, the Germans began liquidating the labour

camps and the labourers were sent to Oświęcim. The transports passed through the grounds of the factory where we worked and, from within the carriages, notes were thrown out to us regarding the liquidation of the camps and the destination of the transports. We decided to intensify our activity and we informed our comrades and friends of the fate which awaited us all. The news spread quickly and reached from one end to the other. Panic ensued and, that same night, several dozen people escaped from the camp. I also made ready to leave, but Fate decreed otherwise. The liaison Nowiałk approached me that night and informed me that a messenger had arrived from Warsaw with important directives and that I was to stay put. This news struck me as odd. I was placed in a difficult situation as, after the mass escape, I would no longer be able to remain overtly in the camp. The primary traces would lead directly to me, as I was the chief organiser. Indeed, I deliberated seriously on this question. I ended up staying. I found an underground hiding-place in the factory, where I awaited further orders. The following day, the liaison again [?] told me that the messenger was not willing to deliver material and details in the hitherto accustomed manner, but that he wished to meet with me in person outside the camp instead. This aroused my suspicions and I resolved not to go to this tryst. Three days of uncertainty passed. Zyskind, Fridman, Natan and I remained in that same hideout without food, without air, crammed in very tightly. Only on the third day did we learn that that messenger had threatened our coordinator with murdering him, together with his family, because he could not see me and, only once the outbreak of the Polish revolt in Warsaw had become known, did he let him off and retrace his steps.

We pondered on our awkward situation, which seemed to us to have reached an impasse. To return to the camp was impossible. Nor could we flee, for all around was a barbed-wire fence and an augmented vigilance with dogs. But, as there was no other option, we decided to seek possibilities to quit the hideout. Digging with our hands, we expanded our refuge and, at the same time, we maintained contact with the outside through our friends - Lewek Jakubowicz and Szajek Brauner. During the nights, they smuggled in slices of bread to us. The thought that invigorated us was based on the illusion that the front would advance speedily, reach us and redeem us. But, to our sorrow, reality was quite cruel. The Russians progress was halted and we remained buried alive. We continued enlarging our shelter and our friends camouflaged the entrance from the outside.

We remained stuck, this way in our cramped conditions for fourteen whole weeks.

From the depths of our hideout, we sought contact with the outside and with the rest of the camps. Those who knew us were sure that we were outside the camp and that we had been hiding in the woods for a long time already.

But, in reality, for us the end was nearing with confident strides. On 3rd November 1944, we learned of Nacia's arrest in the HASAG camp. Her liaison was caught along with her and, in his possession, was a letter for me, as well as our own contact person, the uncle of the young Pole, Wojciech Nowiałk. Under interrogation, this man gave up Szajek Brauner's name - our direct contact - and, on Friday 6th November, at noon, the Germans surrounded our hideout and ordered us to come out.

From there, we were taken to the guardroom, where we received the first part of the "punishment". We were [then] conducted from the guardroom to the Gestapo on ul. Kilińskiego and, later, to the central prison. Here, we were crammed into a detention cell with thirty other Poles. From time to time, we were dragged to interrogations. This continued to 21st November.

On the morning of that day, we were called outside and saw that the unit that was to carry out death sentences awaited us. They stood us up against the wall with our hands raised and we waited. We heard an unusual bustle all around. Gestapo men appeared, accompanied by the officer in charge of the prison. They passed through the cells, looking for volunteers to extract a bomb that had fallen,

during the previous night, in the bombing of the area next to the prison. It had not exploded. The Poles refused, so that they therefore approached us with the request that we agree to go out on this task. They endeavoured to convince us that we had nothing to lose anyway, for we were facing execution, and here we were given an opportunity because, if we succeeded in extracting the bomb, we would be able to return to the labour camp. We, of course, did not hesitate and we went out to this work, already escorted by regular police.

And while we were still wondering in stress and in fear as to what course events would take, we learned that two of the bombs that had fallen during the bombardment had remained unexploded and, when they had attempted to remove them, one had exploded, causing the deaths of several S.S. men. This was why they had given us the task to remove the second one. When our job was completed, we were returned to the prison. Needless to say, the Gestapo did not keep their promise. The next day, after three weeks in gaol, we were sent to the Gross-Rosen concentration camp, where our ordeals and suffering continued.

From there, I was transferred to various locations and I was liberated, by the Russians in the Sudetes mountains on 9th May 1945.