

TENENBAUM Helenka (1914-1943), clerk. She was born in 1914 in Częstochowie (?), the daughter of Moszek Tenenbaum, owner of the “Adonis” Chocolate Factory, and Toba.

She graduated from the gimnazjum of Dr. Filipa Axer in Częstochowa. She was a very pretty woman and led a casual lifestyle. She worked as a clerk in the Peltzer & Sons factory. During the sections and deportations in the autumn of 1942, her parents were transported to the Treblinka extermination camp.

Tenenbaum was employed in the police warehouses, on ul. Garibaldiego, where she sorted through the times which had been looted from Jews. Hauptmann Paul Degenhardt, the lord over life and death of all Częstochowa Jews, then chose her as his hostess – in fact, she became his mistress.

Every day, on a bicycle, she rode from the “Small Ghetto” to ul. Śląska and back. *Judenrat* members tried to get her to intervene in various matters, usually concerning saving someone from deportation or death. She was credited with having great influence over Degenhardt. More than one of her interventions had saved someone’s life, such as that of her relative → Alfred Abram Kromołowski. It was for this role that she was known as “Esterka of the ‘Small Ghetto’”.

After the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”, she and her younger brother Chaim were moved into the building of the former *mikveh* on ul. Garibaldiego. They were both employed in the vegetable garden next to the camp kitchen. On 20th July 1943, they were killed by Degenhardt (or on his order). Their bodies have never been found.

As Orenstein writes, there were two assessments of her:

“According to the positive assessment, she had great influence over Degenhardt and, thus, the ‘Small Ghetto’ was protected from further atrocities, selections and shootings. All the interventions [...] were discussed with Helenka, thanks to whom everything was organised positively. [...] The negative assessment of her was that she was a wanton woman [...] and committed national treason through her relationship with the principal murderer of Częstochowa Jews, who also murdered her parents. Degenhardt was too cunning to let her know his real plans. On the contrary, he could learn things from her to the detriment of the ‘Small Ghetto’.”

Brener, *Widersztand*, passim; Orenstein, *Churbn Czenstochow*, pp. 247–248; – Kromołowski, *Wspomnienia*, passim; – JW 330531.

Wiesław Paszkowski