

Beno [Benjamin Orenstein]

## The Liquidation of the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”

On 26<sup>th</sup> June 1943, murderous bands of *Reichsdeutsche*, *Volksdeutsche*<sup>1</sup> and Ukrainians, all in service of the SS, surrounded the “Small Ghetto” in Częstochowa and opened fire from all sides.

The “Small Ghetto”, which consisted of a few narrow alleyways - Nadrzeczna, Garncarska, Jaskrowska, Kozia, Senatorska and Mostowa - was transformed into a bloody battlefield.

The inhabitants of the “Small Ghetto”, robbed of the most minimal human rights and any material possessions, humiliated, tortured with slave-like, unpaid forced labour, were put to the last test, face-to-face with the gigantic, armed from head to toe, enemy.

The unexpected, rapid liquidation of the “Small Ghetto” came as a result of an entire array of events:

- 1.) The bloody plan of the Nazi government to exterminate the entire European Jewry.
- 2.) The skirmish which took place with the Polish and German police on ul Kucelińska 61, at the rendezvous point with Langiewicz, an officer of the Polish Combat Organisation, the so-called “Underground Armed Forces”.
- 3.) The battle of the High Command members Harry Potaszewicz, Jakubowicz and Samsonowicz with the German gendarmerie.
- 4.) The denunciations, on the part of provocateurs, to the Nazi authorities regarding the underground movement in the “Small Ghetto”, to the effect that it possessed caches of ammunition, foodstuffs and military uniforms.

Parasol, the Commander of the Jewish police in the “Small Ghetto”, knew [only] one reply to all the demands of the Nazi authorities, which was, “At your orders, *Herr Hauptmann*!”<sup>2</sup>

He never thought of the fact that he was a tool in the hands of refined, sadistic murderers and, that by carrying out the orders, he was helping to exterminate his own Jewish brothers and sisters.

The Jewish ghetto police not only carried out the criminal commands, but also, very often, treated the inhabitants of the ghetto brutally.

The underground movement hoped, in vain, for solidarity on the part of Polish society.

Some members of the underground movement were barracked in the HASAG factories, and they could not come to the ghetto to take part in the battle.

Isolated from the outside world, alone in battle, encircled on all sides by enemies, bloody criminals and provocateurs, the underground movement took up the fight.

The first volleys of shots caused 200 Jews victims in the ghetto. The narrow ghetto alleyways were transformed into rivers of blood.

The members of the underground movement occupy positions in the bunkers to fight the enemy.

The arch-murderer of Jews, Degenhardt, carries out a selection. With the assistance of the Jewish ghetto police, all the inhabitants of the buildings on ul Nadrzeczna 86, 88 and 90 are selected and loaded onto freight trucks and taken away to the cemetery to be shot.

Lüth, the Political Director of the HASAG factories in Częstochowa, arrives. He does not wish to relinquish the unpaid Jewish slave labourers, and requests of Degenhardt those Jews who are working the night shift in HASAG.

Degenhardt wants to kill all the Jews, as this is the will of the “Führer” Hitler – but he nevertheless grants Lüth’s request. He allows the Jews of the night shift to march away to HASAG, in tight columns, under the guard of *Werkschutz* [Factory Security], under the condition which he declared in the speech to the Jews of the day shift: “You live for as long as you work for HASAG, and you work for HASAG for as long as you live”.

The last stage of the battle ensues. The members of the underground movement shoot at the murderers with automatic guns and revolvers and throw grenades, repelling the attacks on the bunkers.

Degenhardt seeks means to make the Jews, who are concealed in various hideouts, come out, to prevent them from joining the underground movement’s combat units. He declares an amnesty until two o’clock in the afternoon - whoever presents himself voluntarily will avoid death, and will be sent to work in HASAG. In order that they should believe him, he gave his officer’s “word of honour”.

Despite the multiple mass-murders which Degenhardt had committed, there was still a group of Jews who believed his “officer’s word of honour” and voluntarily reported to be sent off to HASAG. The disappointment was very swift in coming.

At the appointed hour, Böttcher, Chief of the Radom SS District, arrived and ordered the Jews, who had reported willingly, to be taken away and shot.

The battle with the underground movement lasted several days, until the fighters fell, in a hero’s death, at their positions.

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, a pyre was made on ul Garncarska, next to the ghetto hospital, and all the Jews, who were caught in the “Small Ghetto” and on the “Aryan side”, numbering 500 individuals, were burned alive. This was still too little for the Nazi murderers – with dynamite, they blew up the buildings from which the underground movement led the battle of resistance. The most horrific scenes were played out, which human fantasy cannot imagine. Along with the blown-up houses, heads, arms, legs and other body parts of the Jews, who were in the bunkers, flew up in the air.

Thus, the avant-garde of Częstochowa Jewry fought and perished, during the liquidation of the “Small Ghetto”.

In this last epic battle, when the “Small Ghetto” was liquidated, 2,000 Jews perished.

<sup>1</sup> [TN: German citizens of the Third Reich and ethnic Germans living outside the Reich, respectively.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: Ger., “Captain, Sir!”]