The Liquidation of the Częstochowa “Small Ghetto”

On 26th June 1943, murderous bands of Reichsdeutsche, Volksdeutsche¹ 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 underground movement hoped, in vain, for solidarity on the part of Polish society.

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

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 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 30th 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.

¹ [TN: German citizens of the Third Reich and ethnic Germans living outside the Reich, respectively.]
² [TN: Ger., “Captain, Sir!”]