

ZYLBERBERG Mordechaj “Mojtek” (1910-1943), fighter, Zionist, born in Kalisz.

He spent his childhood and adolescence in his hometown, graduating from the gimnazjum. He was involved in the revisionist movement and probably underwent paramilitary training. Physically, he was well-developed, was intelligent and had leadership skills. At the beginning of the occupation, he was linked with Hashomer Ha'Tzair.

At the end of 1940, he left Kalisz and came to Częstochowa. Not known by anyone, he did not make contact with any organisations and supported himself through trading.

In the autumn of 1942, during the liquidation of the Częstochowa ghetto, he passed through a selection and ended up in the “Metalurgia” and was then sent to HASAG-Pelcery. Contrary to widespread doubts, he secretly promoted the idea of armed resistance. He organised a fighting group, comprised solely of former members of various organisations.

When, in December 1942, he was sent to the “Small Ghetto”, he found the ground already prepared – there were three youth organisation *kibbutzim* – from Dror, Hashomer Ha'Tzair and Gordonia. When, at a meeting of representatives from all the group, in December 1942, the joint Fighting Organisation was established. Zylberberg was elected as commander.

Now it was he who set the tone for the organisation and issued orders on all matters. He displayed a strong will and soon achieved significant successes. He established contact with existing ghettos (above all, with the Warsaw ghetto), organised the production of hand grenades and the purchase of firearms. He united the combat groups (“The Five”), ordered weapons training and combat operations (e.g., tracking down and liquidating agents of the German police).

He took over two houses on ul. Nadrzeczna and, there, set up an arsenal, where all weapons were stored. Two tunnels were dug from the “Small Ghetto”. He also ordered raids on the apartments of wealthy Jews, mainly those employed in the *Säuberungskommando* (those who sorted items stolen during the liquidation of the “Big Ghetto” in the autumn of 1942). The apartments were thoroughly searched for gold and money, which were needed for the purchase of weapons. Footwear and clothing for the fighters were also collected. This made it difficult to keep the activities secret and soon, the “entire ghetto” knew about ŻOB.

Mojtek personally took part in the more important activities – an unsuccessful expedition in order to buy weapons (it was Gestapo trap) and in a meeting with “Langiewicz”, a representative of the AK [Home Army]. During that meeting, the Gestapo arrived. Mojtek escaped, leaving behind his jacket containing documents. During one of those activities, he was probably injured.

On 25th June 1943, he expected an attack on the “Small Ghetto” by the German police, he ordered a battle emergency, but cancelled it on news of the first work group sent back from the factories. He ordered that all the weapons be deposited into the arsenal, at which only a guard and a liaison officer remained.

A massive attack was then launched by the Schutzpolizei commando. Initially, he fired back but, so as not to fall into the hands of the Germans, Zylberberg committed suicide.

Brener, *Widersztand*, pp. 116, 118; Orenstein, *Churban Czenstochow*, p. 44; *Czenstochower Landsmanschaft in Montreal*, Montreal 1966, pp. 200, 201; *Ten jest z ojczyzny mojej*, pp. 385–386.

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