

Ghetto and Occupation

translated by JK,

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Before the onset of the war, 8000 Jews were living in Kutno. German troops entered Kutno in September 1939, and then began the looting of Jewish property, humiliations, brutalities and other acts of intimidation.

Then Germans selected some Jews and sent them to forced labour camps in Łęczyca and Piątek. In Kutno district, three ghettos were created: in Krośniewice (May 10, 1940), in Żychlin (July 20, 1940) and in Kutno (June 15, 1940). Jews of surrounding cities were then deported to the Kutno ghetto, including Dąbrowice. The ghetto, created on the model of Warsaw ghetto, was on the grounds of the old sugar factory "Constance", on Adam Mickiewicz Street. The area was closed with barbed wire. On June 15, eight thousand Jews were brutally deported to the ghetto, in the old factory and its five buildings. Sanitation and accommodation in the ghetto were tragic. Food allowances being inadequate to meet vital needs, black market developed with small providers. During the winters 1940/1941 and 1941/1942, the ghetto was totally deprived of fuels. Typhus and tuberculosis epidemics broke out. Some died of hunger and cold, others committed suicide.

By order of the occupier, the ghetto authority was carried by a Jewish Council, named *Judenrat*. It was headed by: *Bernard Holcman*, *Sender Falc* and *Opoczynski*. The general opinion was that this council was extremely corrupt. The liquidation of the ghetto started on Mars 19, 1942. First, elder people were murdered on the grounds, and then the survivors of the ghetto were selected according to alphabetic order. For each group of 300 to 400 people, a truck convoy or a freight train left Kutno for Koło station. From Koło, all Jews were sent to Chelmno-over-Ner extermination camp, where they were murdered.

For that final journey, the Jews of Kutno were not allowed to take any luggage, but they had to pay between 12 and 20 marks. After the liquidation of the ghetto, 40 Jews from Łódź ghetto worked during six month, sorting out left properties and cleaning up the grounds.