Bełchatów

Categories: Locations

The ghetto in Bełchatów was established in March 1941 in the quarter bounded by Fabryczna, Pabianicka, Sienkiewicza Streets and Narutowicza Square. Despite strictly marked boundaries, it remained open and Jews were allowed to leave. Many Jews were employed in the Frajtag brothers' sewing workshop, established in the autumn of 1940. At its peak, it employed over 600 people. Residents were also allowed to run individual workshops in their homes. In the autumn of 1941, residents of Szczerców, Grocholic, Kleszczów, Przyrownica, Bełchatówek and Chabielice were resettled to the ghetto. This exacerbated the already excessive overcrowding, leading to an outbreak of typhus.
Initially, Abraham Ehrlich, cashier of the Jewish Bank, headed the Council of Elders. The interference of Josef Trahner, the German commissioner (Amtkommissar), led to frequent changes in this position. It was held successively by Szulim Feder, Józef Bogdański, and, after his deportation to a forced labour camp, Abraham Ehrlich again. He, in turn, was publicly hanged for attempting to intervene with the German authorities, and his place was taken by Tobolewicz.
In June 1942, 115 men were deported from Bełchatów to the Łódź ghetto, most of whom were then transported to camps in Greater Poland.

The liquidation of the ghetto took place between 11 and 15 August 1942. On the first day, 852 people employed in tailoring and shoemaking workshops were transported by trucks to the Łódź ghetto. At the same time, the remaining 4,000 or so residents were herded into the courtyard of the synagogue by the German authorities. Within three days, they were all transported to the extermination camp in Chełm nad Nerem (vide). At the same time, a selected group of about 200 men searched Jewish homes. Any items deemed useful were sent to Łódź.On the last day, 79 people from this group were also sent to Łódź. The rest were probably murdered.

It is estimated that about 400 Jews from Bełchatów survived the Holocaust, some of whom returned to the town in 1945, but most quickly emigrated.

Izabela Terela

Resources

AŻIH, 301/84, Relacja Chiela Maczaka; ibid., 301/1192, 1243, 1311, 1413, 1479, Relacje Mońka Kaufmana;
Kronika, t. 2, s. 304, 14.06.1942; t. 2, s. 308–309, 15.06.1942; t. 2, s. 443–444, 11.08.1942; t. 2, s. 446, 12.08.1942; t. 2, s. 443–467, 28.08.1942;
D. Dąbrowska, Zagłada skupisk żydowskich w „Kraju Warty” w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej, „Biuletyn ŻIH” 1955, nr 1/2 (13/14), s. 122–184; A. Selerowicz, Cud, że przeżyliśmy… Losy bełchatowskich Żydów ocalałych z Holokaustu, Łódź: Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy, 2021.

Tags

deportations extermination

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