

Demolition Bureau

Categories: Institutions

The site of demolition works carried out by the Public Works Office in areas excluded from or adjacent to the ghetto, as well as a popular term for a labor facility in such areas. In the ghetto, the name was commonly abbreviated Abbruch. Often a penal labor facility for individuals expelled from their previous places of employment for a variety of offenses, hence the expressions “to go to the Abbruch” and “to send to the Abbruch”.

In April 1941, the Public Works Office of the Labor Conscription Bureau received orders from municipal authorities to supply manpower and technical management in order to carry out demolition works adjacent to the ghetto – vacant after the resettlement of the Jewish population to the ghetto – between the streets Zachodnia, Ogrodowa, Północna, Nad Łódką, and the ghetto border. The area included a stretch of Nowomiejska St. from the corner of Północna St. and Ogrodowa St. to the ghetto border where large, brick residential buildings were located. The entire site of demolition included about thirty-five buildings, including a number of three- and four-story houses, market halls on Ogrodowa St., and some smaller brick residential houses.

Within a few days of receiving the order, demolition work began, which lasted until the entire site was leveled in August 1942. The latter date marked the completion of works in the affected area. In September 1941, the authorities ordered the dismantling of another fifty- five buildings, mostly one-story and wooden, located along the streets Jeneralska, Oficerska, Majowa, and Leśna with the adjacent section of Drewnowska St., and then the leveling of the area. Here works continued throughout the winter of 1941/42, after which the area was excluded from the ghetto. In October 1942, following the evacuation of residents from the block surrounded by streets Smugowa, Chłodna, Oblęgorska, Brzezińska, and Franciszkańska, dismantling of the affected buildings and land-leveling commenced. Included in this site were a total of 58 buildings, including more than 30 brick houses two-stories or higher.

Despite the demolition works, various offices still operated within the area and were gradually evacuated at a very slow pace. By the end of April 1944, 70% of the works envisioned for the district had been performed. In May 1944, at the order of authorities, demolition of buildings began in previously evacuated areas between Stodolniana and Drewnowska St. and the ghetto border at Podrzeczna St. Workers recruited to Abbruchstelle in the first stages of work were mostly volunteers, forced to earn their livelihood through hard, physical labor due to mass unemployment in the ghetto at the time. The wage was 2.5 Rm daily, which was a considerable sum for an inhabitant of the ghetto. Abbruch was regarded as a criminal institution. Later still (March 1943), officials laid off from various departments were assigned to demolition work provided they were young enough to be eligible for physical labor, including officers of "edible" facilities transferred to the Labor Office. A particularly large influx of workers to the Abbruch was noted during the operation carried out by the Arbeitsamt when young employees of various Departments were transferred to physical labor (March-April 1943) and during a similar operation of the Gettoverwaltung (February-March 1944). Otherwise, the Arbeitsamt assigned its own workforce to the Abbruch many times throughout 1943. Additionally, beginning in August 1942, all kitchens, bakeries, the Central Meat Office, facilities of the Provisioning Department, and other 'edible' establishments were obliged to meet a quota of staff available at the disposal of the Abbruch every two weeks.

For various specialized work and for transportation, Polish workers and German construction specialists were also hired. Rubble, bricks, and all kinds of installations were shipped out, with only timber and roofing left behind for use in the ghetto.

The general supervisor of the work was A. Uryson, and the technical engineer was Szper. The grounds of work were divided into independent institutions, including blocks of houses with independent technical management under the supervision of a structural engineer. The main office was at 13 Lutomierska St., later at 11 Lutomierska St. (the premises of the Arbeitsamt), while technical management and administration was located at 39 Brzezińska St., then later at 59 Brzezińska St.

Resources

AŻIH, 301/3468, relacja Izraela Tabaksblata.
Encyklopedia, s 6-7.

Tags

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