

Metalwork Department II

Categories: Institutions

The Metalwork Department was opened by the Eldest of the Jews on May 30, 1941, in the building and using the machines of the former "Prąd" motor and electrical equipment factory owned by Scheller and Gutzel, 12 Smugowa St. The opening was attended by Gutzel, the former owner, who, by the way, still collects lease payments for the premises and the machines. The newly opened division was recognized as a branch of the Metalwork Division at 56 Zgierska St. The factory consisted of the engine room (three milling machines, the only planer in the ghetto, two capstan lathes, and five turneries, operated by three prewar experts with a team of students recruited from former vocational schools) and ironworks employing three professionals with fifteen students. Engineer Freund [(vide)] was appointed head of the branch. The newly established branch did export work, mainly orders for shoemaking tools and minor machine components.

In November 1941, the Eldest of the Jews decided to make the Division independent of the Metalwork [Department] at 56 Zgierska St. and renamed it Metalwork Department II. Engineer Nussbaum (vide) was appointed head of the independent institution. Following the separation of the Division in February 1942, approximately 150 employees were reassigned from Metalwork Department I with one provision, specifically that from then on all metal work for the needs of the ghetto was to be done by Metalwork Department II, while export work was to be handled by Metalwork Department I. Around the same time, groups of deportees from Czechoslovakia were sent to the Old Materials Department for the so-called Ironwork. It was during this period that Engineer Freund was appointed deputy head, working along with Engineer Nussbaum.

Regarding the principal work done in this period, particularly worth mentioning is the construction of the engine room in the newly created carpentry at 9 Pucka St. Using old parts of machinery and

scrap iron found in the ghetto, modern machines for wood processing were assembled: band saws, planers, thickness planers, etc. The Metalwork Division largely contributed to the mechanization of the tailoring and shoemaking divisions, leading to a significant increase in production. Also, the division does all kinds of minor repairs for all divisions of the ghetto. Also noteworthy is the construction of machinery for the Feather and Down Division, for which experts of the division went to Dąbrówka on the orders of the German authorities. In June 1942, it became clear that as a result of multiple orders, the work schedule developed in November 1941 could not be maintained, and so the division had to cover export work as well. Around that time one of the heads of the division, Eng. Freund, fell ill and consequently Engineer Szatan was appointed third-in-charge of the Division. One of the most interesting tasks carried out in this period was the enormous order for the needle factory in Chemnitz, which involved straightening all kinds of textile needles. Before the war, such tasks were handled by experts – adult men; in the ghetto the work is done by children aged 10 [to] 17. The division expanded so much that in August 1943, it was transferred to the Low Current Department as an independent unit with its own administration and storehouse. This coincided with a new, large order for the so-called Reinigungsbohren¹, which, given the insufficient number of male employees, required a group of 300 women to join the workforce. Orders for Reinigungsbohren¹ are M getting larger. Also, initial attempts were made to introduce women to working with the machines, but no specific positive results have been achieved so far.

At the end of 1943, the Division received an order for machining aircraft components. This order is so important that a special German expert was assigned to oversee the works. In November of that year, new leadership was appointed: Engineer Pfeffer, Engineer Skipper, Engineer Freund, and Grynberg.

Throughout 1943, in connection with the demolition of part of the ghetto, the division was successively transferred from Smugowa St., which was being vacated², to a new location at 56 Zgierska St. At the same time, due to the expansion of the division, a new machine hall was built with special machinery brought from the Altreich³.

On January 1, 1944, the division employed 940 people. Part of the work was done on an assembly line and part by individual workers, depending on the type of contract. While in the year 1941 total payments amounted to about 600 Mk per month, in January 1944 the amount paid for labor was 20,000 Mk.

Footnotes

1 Reinigungsbohren - wire brushes for cleaning.

2 The decision to reduce the ghetto by a block of streets: Franciszkańska-Smugowa-Brzezińska-Oblęgorska was made in late September 1942. On September 22, residents and companies began moving out (Kronika, vol. 2, entry dated September 22, 1942, pp. 496-497).

3 Altreich refers to German territory in its pre-1939 borders.

Resources

Encyclopedia, s. 137-139.

References

In August 1944, the Germans decided to move munitions production, meant to have commenced at Metalwork Department I, to Obrzycko (Obersitz) near Szamotuły (Samter), northwest of Poznań. The machines were packed and transported while a group of 500 people, employees of the Metalwork Departments, the core of whom worked at Metalwork Department I, were deported to Auschwitz in late August and from there, without the selection process, to the camp in Stutthof, which administratively belonged to the camp in Obrzycko. It is worth noting that in this group there were entire families, even with small children, as well as those not associated with the Metalwork Department (e.g. Pinkus Gerszowski, Zygmunt Rajngold). Given the approaching front, production in

Obrzycko was never launched and the machines were transported to to Bernsdorf Co. in Dresden, operating in the former cigarette factory at 68 Schandenauer St. At the end of November, a group of workers from the camp in Stuthoff were sent there. They began work in the production of munitions. The civilian managers of the facility were Hans Biebow and his deputy from the ghetto, Erich Czarnulla. In practice, the heads of departments and foremen were the men who had served the same functions in the ghetto. The main role was played by the head of Metalwork Department I, Józef Chimowicz (vide). After the bombing of Dresden on February 13, 1945, the prisoners were evacuated to Theresienstadt. Many prisoners died during the “death march”; many others lived to see their liberation in Theresienstadt in May 1945 (A. Strzelecki, *Deportacja Żydów z getta łódzkiego do KL Auschwitz i ich zagłada w Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim*, 2004 pp. 82-84; Ch. Werebejczyk, *A jednak żyję! Wspomnienia ocalałego*, Warszawa, 2012, pp. 49-62; P. Cziborra, *KZ Dresden...*, passim).

Tags

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