



DEPORTATIONS, MURDER AND HIMMLER'S DISCLOSURE – WORLD WAR II AND THE HOLOCAUST

Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1st, 1939, was the beginning of the horrific ordeal the Jews of Poznań would have to go through, with only a few survivors. Sufferings and death also befell Polish inhabitants of the city.

On September 9th, Jews attended the last service at the New Synagogue; their days in Poznań were numbered as over the winter of 1939/1940 the Nazis deported all Jews from the city and Greater Poland, along with tens of thousands Poles. They were taken east, to the newly formed territory of the General Government, where Jews were forced to live in ghettos and worked to the limit, only to







be murdered in the subsequent years in unspeakable, inhuman conditions. The Holocaust meant the end of the centuries-long presence of Jews in Poznań.

On April 15th, 1940, after a symbolic ceremony and a parade of Nazi troops and adherents of the NSDAP, the Star of David which crowned the dome of the monumental New Synagogue, built in 1907, was taken down and the temple thus desecrated. Shortly afterwards, works began to convert it to a swimming pool facility for German soldiers. Soon, the Jewish cemetery was completely demolished as well.

Prior to the attack on Soviet Union, in May 1941, Nazi authorities began to bring Jews to Poznań and the area, chiefly from the Litzmannstadt ghetto, to do heavy forced labour on their various construction undertakings. For many months, they were kept in one large and several minor labour camps in Poznań, dying of starvation and diseases; hundreds of others were shot






or murdered. Jewish labourers, often originating from other countries than Poland, redeveloped the infrastructure in preparation for the arrival of Baltic and Bessarabian Germans, who were to settle in Poznań.

On October 4th and 6th, 1943, during secret meetings, Heinrich Himmler delivered speeches to selected groups of SS officers and high-ranking Nazi officials. For the first time, they were introduced in no uncertain terms to his plan of *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution of the Jewish Question), or the mass extermination of Jews, which was already in progress.

A mere handful of Jews from Poznań survived the war. Some of them returned to the city laid in ruins in January and February 1945, but a revival of the Jewish life in Poznań came only half a century later, after the downfall of the communist regime.



DESCRIPTIONS:

1. Column of prisoners on their way to work, Dolna Wilda street.
2. Female prisoners from the camp in Gnieźnieńska street building the cemetery in Miłostowo.
3. Jewish prisoners at the Municipal Stadium.
4. Barracks of the RAB (Reichsautobahnen Company) in Żabikowo.

LEGAL NOTES:

Photographs from the collection of the Archives of the Memorial Museum in Żabikowo.

