

Rudolf VRBA

BOBINE 260 (in Central Park)

NY Vrba 93

Q: Mr. Vrba, you...you escaped from Auschwitz the 7th of April 1944, and it was a successful attempt. I would like to know two things: first, how many attempts of escape from Auschwitz did exist, how many were successful, and last question, why did you do it?

A: Well, the statistics about the escapes from Auschwitz exist and I have read various. They say that there were eighty successful escapes and four hundred attempted escapes which ended with death, but I am not so sure if their statistics are true, because from those eighty people who escaped supposedly, we didn't hear very much. We don't know about them, so I don't know. What was your second question? How...

Q: My second question were how many successful attempts?

A: Successful attempts - before Wetzler and I escaped?

Q: Yes.

A: I am not aware of any to my knowledge. There might have been, but I don't know about them.

Q: You don't recall the escape of Lederer?

A: Oh yes. I do recall it now. This was shortly before I escaped. But if that escape was successful or not, at that time I did not have any possibility to check on it. Because if he didn't return within three days or within four days, there was no way of saying that an attempt was successful or not. But the Lederer escape I remember very well.

Q: Yes, but I think it was a successful one, as a matter of fact.

A: It was, yes. As...looking back on it I can say that it was a successful escape.

Q: Yes, we know it. OK. And my question is now: why did you escape? Why did you do it?

A: Well, naturally everybody...

Q: I don't say HOW, because I know that.

A: The reason for escaping?

A: Yes.

A: Well, it was my intention to escape from the first moment that I have seen where I am. But at that time, it was

particularly urgent because I knew that all was prepared for the murder of one million Jews from Hungary. And because it was close to Slovakia, I thought that it would be possible to give the warning. Naturally, I wanted to live too. I mean, I knew that if I escaped successfully that I might survive and naturally I was interested in surviving myself.

Q: Yes.

A: But not at any price.

Q: You could have been killed too.

A: Oh yes. The risk... There was some risk involved.

Q: Yes, but... as far as I know, you always, since the very beginning, even before being shipped to Auschwitz, you had always the idea to... es... to escape, not to let (unclear)

A: Well, when it was announced to me from the Jewish Community leaders, that I have come and let myself shipped into some waggon to an unknown place, naturally it didn't come into my mind to obey such a stupid instruction. And I tried to escape first to Hungary, and for certain reasons....

Q: But this... this was at the very beginning?

A: This was before they got me to Auschwitz. Then...

Q: Can you explain how it was announced to you by the Jewish Community leaders? Can you describe the... the situation as it was at the time?

A: It was....

Q: ...in Slovakia?

A: Looking backwards, looking back, it was done in a very... in a way which could be called rafiné, because they said first that only men from sixty to thirty will have to be 'resettled'. Because.... and if they go voluntarily, nothing will happen to their families.

Q: Yes.

A: But there was already talk about.... and only those who were not married were supposed to go. Now this was announced... The Jews were by that time organized in such a way by the authorities that there was no direct contact between the official authorities and individual Jews. All the contact was channeled through the so-called Centre for Jews. And that was the Jewish

Council.

Q: Yes, but....Ah, yes, Judenrat.

A: Judenrat.

Q: Yes, go on. You said that you didn't want to obey such a stupid order. You said.

A: Yes, well,...

Q: And...but the others obeyed?

A: Yes, I was surprised how...that they did obey.

Q: And what is your explanation for it?

A: My impression is that the Jewish communities were trained very much to obey always somebody with authority. And there was an enormous amount of conformity among them. They always tried not to be different. They were always afraid to be different.

Q: Yes?

A: And...everybody somehow knew too well his place. For instance if I would come and say 'don't go - this is stupid' or 'this is nonsense to go voluntarily', they would say 'who are you'. I mean, big people say you should go, important people. people.....and who were those important people? It was usually people who had some social substance, had some doctor degrees and property, and preferably both. And people with those qualifications or higher religious qualifications, a good position in the synagogue and so on, they had to be obeyed by the rest of the community, it was just for them unimaginable not to obey those characters.

Q: Yes? But OK, we will come back to...

A: Yeh,

Q: ...this later on. OK, you say that you escaped on April '44 because...mostly because you wanted to give a warning.

A: This is coming back now to Auschwitz.

Q: Yes.

A: Well, obviously that....to give it a meaning, to the two years which I spent in Auschwitz and to escape only for my own sake, would be ridiculous. And because I had the information in considerable detail that the Hungarian Jews are going to be murdered en masse in a very short time, this means that I expected that it should start in May, and it

did start in May, And I thought I would see the whole murder machinery could work only on one principle: that the people came to Auschwitz and didn't know where they are going and for what purpose. And I assumed that the natural instinct of self preservation, if nothing else, will create, if nothing else, if not resistance, then at least sufficient panic, that this organized transport of human beings into a centre like Auschwitz, where they are being slaughtered like pigs, only less humanely, and with the efficiency of a ^{big} slaughter house, say in Chicago, that this process could at least be slowed down if those people would have been warned in advance and panic. Because once there is a panic, you see, I thought that...of course I hoped that there might be resistance, armed resistance, or any sort of resistance, because the Germans were so sure that no resistance is possible, that they became cocky. I mean, it wasn't so difficult to hit back. And they would have been probably very surprised, if...if there would have been a resistance. But even if there wouldn't have been a resistance but only a panic, see, it is a big difference, to slaughter pigs or hunt deer. If you have to hunt each one separately, hunt him down, it never goes so fast like if you drive thousands, ten thousand or fifty thousand pigs in a well organized, fashioned manner into a slaughter-house. Once they are in the slaughter-house, obviously nothing can be done. Therefore I thought that a warning to those people.... Characteristic in the whole time in Auschwitz was whenever we asked people who came there and lost there their wives and children and fathers and mothers, we asked them 'we are here already a year or two, why did you come here?' and they always told us: 'well, we didn't know what's happening. If we knew what's happening, we wouldn't have volunteered for this journey.' So the secrecy of the operation was.....

Q: I don't think the word 'voluntary' is right. They didn't volunteer.

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Q: Yes, I...I agree completely with what you said, that in order

to have a smooth process of destruction, the Nazi needed to have people completely ignorant of their fate. But in another way you said that the people came voluntarily to their death. I discuss the word 'voluntarily', because as a matter of fact, they didn't know. If they would have known, maybe they would have done something against it.

A: Well, by 'voluntarily' I mean that when they given the information via the channels of the Judenrat, of the Jewish leaders, to come with 25 kilogram of their belongings for a collection place which is on such and such street, they went there. So I don't say that they went their with pleasure, but they went there without any particular resistance. This means, they went there basically in an orderly fashion, according to facts.

Q: Yes, this is absolutely true. But there is something that I don't understand very well, you say that you escaped because you wanted to warn the Hungarian Jewry of impending fate. But during the two years that you spent yourself in Auschwitz, you saw a lot of people already arriving and being immediately killed and gassed.

A: Yes. Those....

Q: And why did....it's not a polemic question - but if you wanted to warn, why did you wait for two years?

A: Well, when I saw what the Nazis are doing there, this means, when I could see that Nazis with bamboo sticks in their hands were driving children or old women or old men into the gas-chambers, it was my opinion that it is my duty to jump at the neck of the first one, no matter what the cost would be.

Q: You thought this really?

A: Yes, this whay I was convinced. I was convinced that nobody is supposed to stay, to tolerate the sight of anything of this sort. But of course, I know also that the moment I would have made the first move, that there...I would be killed and that many would be killed in reprisal - from the prisoners there. For this is one problem - the reprisal. And the reprisals were of such a nature, that final death

of those who were subjected to the reprisals, was only the end point, it was only the liberation. The reprisals.... Nazis were very inventive with that, they have got quite a bit of imagination. So there was another possibility how to cope with the situation, and that possibility was to die in a meaningful way, if it is necessary to die. And I thought that my life would have some meaning there, that my tolerance that the way that I kept quiet while seeing all this, would get a meaning, if I would manage to carry the message out. And of course it is easy to say post-factum, and....but of course the....it was clear to me that if I risk my life in order to bring out that message, that my survival was justified.

Q: ~~You~~ mean, to survive for two years?

A: Yes. That it was justified...it was justified to survive.

Q: Because as a matter of fact, the people who jumped at the neck of the...of the killers were very few. Nobody did it.

A: No, there was no resistance, there is no case recorded, until much later, and those cases are only very few. And I think that the main reason was, of course, the fearful reprisals against other prisoners, who were....hostages. If somebody moved, the Nazis would kill say the next hundred or something like that. And there was already in the camp a certain sort offeeling of responsibility to one another.

Q: Among the survivors, the people who...?

A: Among the prisoners, yes.

Q: Yes, who had not been immediately killed.

A: Yes, yes. There developed a certain of feeling, among the prisoners, that they are something different from those victims, who being constantly murdered, day and night, in the same camp. And it was something like....Those...the others were called 'the civilians'. This is a peculiarity of the camp.

Q: Who were the civilians?

A: Those who came into the camp and never became prisoners and were straight forward murdered. And they were considered....

Q: Ah, they were called the civilians.

A: Civilians. The same, the Poles...for instance there was an unrest among the Polish political prisoners. When there were very often execution, every Monday morning a hundred fifty or two hundred of them would be executed in the Block 11. And...

Q: In Auschwitz Eins?

A: In Auschwitz Eins. And an unrest developed among them, which could have lead to a revolt, and somehow the Nazis spread the rumour that nobody from the prisoners will be anymore be executed, there are only civilians. This means people who were coming from the Gestapo in Kattovitz or in Krakau and so on. They were brought to Block 11 and murdered. And once it was said that it's civilians, it had somehow a different ring. Because the Poles in the camps said: 'well, we are not responsible for the civilians, we are responsible.....

Q: It quietened? It quietened the....

A: Yes, yes..

Q: ...the prisoners?

A: Yes, it quietened the prisoners.

Q: Well, I would like very much now...because - for how long did you work at the ramp when the civilians, precisely, arrived?

2/ A: I worked there from August twenty....from August eighteen, 1942 until June seventh 1943.

Q: This means almost one year?

A: Well, it would.....

Q: Ten months.

A: Well, it would be about nine to ten month.

Q: Yes. And could you describe exactly what was the work at ramp. But in details, please.

A: In details?

Q: Yes.

7/ A: Basically, we were belonging to a command, to a working detachment, I was put in August 1942, which enabled me to have a close look on what was actually happening in auschwitz. There was a place called the ramp, where the trains with the Jews were coming in. And they were coming

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day or night. And sometimes one per day, and sometimes five per day, from all sorts of places in the world. And so our detachment was brought to...there...this Canada Command to deal with the property of those people.

Q: Yes?

A: So what happened was the following. [Say a transport of Jews was announced to come at two o'clock. So when the transport came to the close stations, say Mislowitz,....

Q: You got the announcements yourself?

A: Pardon?

Q: The inmates got the announcement too?

A: No, [the announcement came to the SS.

Q: Yes.

A: Now, once [the announcement came to the SS, One SS-man came and woke us up. We had to get up and move to the ramp. We immediately got an escort, in the night, and we were escorted to the ramp, say we were about two hundred men.

Q: In striped clothes?

A: Yes, in zebra clothes. [And the ramp was sort of a platform, which was about a mile long, one and a half kilometers I would think, more than a kilometer long. [Now before the train arrived, there came another detachment, of SS, who first surrounded the ramp, in a rather dense way. You see, there was one every ten yards with a gun in the hand.

Q: This means many people?

A: Oh, yes. There was a detachment of SS which could be...say the ramp was surrounded by a hundred, one hundred of them. [And lights went on.] So once they were brought in, into this circle of this ramp, then our own guards could go away, because we were inside a strictly guarded circle. [There was the ramp, around the ramp were lights and under those lights were the cordon of the SS. So we were in the middle, the prisoners. Then later....and we were waiting.

Q: Waiting for the train?

A: [Waiting for the train, waiting for the next order. I mean, for the train. So there were....the prisoners were lined up in...per five, you know. And we had to stay there. And then came the SS officers, sort of higher entourage. Those were not the guards, but that were the people who were

supposed to deal with the transport itself. You must understand that in Auschwitz there was a system by which the guards who had nothing to do but to watch that nobody escapes, were completely different detachments than those who were then acting in the middle of this guarded place. So now came the gangster elite, all dressed up as officers, in military uniforms. And there was usually...one of them was a doctor, who had actually a medical degree. And they came, say there were about ten or twelve of them, fifteen, twenty - depends how...what the weather was and how big the transport was supposed to be. When all this was done, and everybody was there, the transport was rolled in. This means in a very slow fashion, the locomotive, which was always in the front....

Q: At the front?

A: At the front. Was coming to that ramp, and that was the end of the railway line. That was the end of the line for everybody who was on the train.

Q: Who...who was driving the locomotive?

A: It was a civilian and I cannot....I never had an opportunity for a discussion with him, so I can't tell you anything about it.

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Q: All right, you go...you go on describing this arrival. I would like to know what were your feelings when you were waiting for these trains and knowing that most of the people who would be in, would be immediately sent to the gas. But describe.

A: It is very difficult to describe feelings. But I have seen it so many times, that it became a routine. I wouldn't think that I have been in any way particularly moved or....I mean, it was not time for feelings. It was more the thought which I had behind it. You see, I saw those transports rolling in one after the other, one after the other, and I am sure that I have seen at least two hundred of them, in this position.

Q: Two hundred?

A: At least. And each transport had sometimes thousand people and sometimes five thousand, you know, it varied and what was for me very difficult to....difficult to comprehend was that those people are disappearing from somewhere.

Q: From somewhere?

A: Yes. They are disappearing, and that people in this mass, and I know of course that within a couple of hours after they arrived there, 90% of them will be gassed, or something like that. And somehow in my thinking, it...I could...it was difficult for me to comprehend that people can disappear in this way. And nothing is going to happen, and then comes the next transport and they don't know anything about what happened to the previous transport. And that this is going on for months and months, on and on. And of course I developed a certain...certain attitude to all those people, who themselves never asked the questions: and where are those who were deported before us?

Q: Who never asked - when and to who?

A: Well, say....

Q: When they arrived or before.....

A: Before they arrived, before the departure. Constantly people were sent from the heart of Europe and disappeared somewhere into nowhere. And they were arriving to the same place, with the same ignorance of the fate of the previous transport, each time. So this was puzzling. I couldn't understand it. And ...well, it became clear to me that they simply....everybody was so interested about himself, and not interested in what was happening around him.

Q: Ah, yes, but you said that you developed a kind of routine, yourself.

A: Well, I would think so, yes.

Q: But not only you?

A: Oh, it was...who didn't develop a routine...I mean, the ...the first sign of surviving was accepting the different mentality, accepting the reality, which is so very different from the text book from which we were educated.

and still living. I mean, the number of survivors is a very small percentage, we don't know what were thinking those who didn't survive or who didn't choose to survive. Among those who...you see, from the prisoners, fifty per cent from new arrivals of prisoners, those who were not gassed but came into the camp, would live only very short time, two or three months. And I am not so sure if it was only a physical....physical reasons which caused the death. I suppose that....the difficulty to change the mentality completely, a loss of will to live, I don't know.

Q: All right. Can you go on describing now the....

A: But inertia against what you are seeing, this had to develop.

Q: Yes. I understand very well.

A: Well, what was happening when the transports arrived.

Q: Ok. There was the lights, everything was lighted.

A: Yes. Now that...again it was a routine, but this routine had variations. Now I will give you a typical example: once a train arrived naturally the SS who were standing around the platform, they wouldn't move, but this elite inside, all those German gangsters in officers' uniform they all were wearing walking sticks, not clubs, elegant walking sticks, white gloves. Now the train stopped. And the gangster elite marched on the ramp, and in front of every second or every third waggon, and sometimes in front of every waggon, one of those Unterscharführers was standing with a key and opened the locks, because the waggons were locked. Now, inside the people of course, and you could see the people looking through the windows, because they didn't know what's happening, they had many stops on the journey. Some of them were ten days on the journey, some of them were two days on the journey. And they didn't know what this particular stop means. Now the door was opened and the first order they were given was 'alle raus' - everybody out. And in order to make it quite clear, they usually started with those walking sticks to hit the first or second, the third, who were....they were....they were like sardines

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in those cars...in those...in those, those waggons. So the rest got the point. I mean there was never much explanation. My handbag? is there, OK. Sorry. There was never much explanation, and so the people got out from the waggons....

Q: They jumped?

A: Well, they were driven out with sticks, with bamboo sticks, with clubs, they were driven out. However, sometimes the SS if it was a good weather, they used to deal with it differently, and I was not surprised if they were in a different mood and....and exhibited a lot of humour. Like say, 'good morning, Madame, will you please walk out'.]

Q: It happened?

A: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And 'how nice that you arrived. We are so sorry that it wasn't too convenient, but now things will become different.' Things like that.

Q: Really?

A: Yeh. There....There was a variation. I mean, they were bored too. I mean, they...if they had time. I mean if you had a transport, a day on which five or six transports would come, then this wouldn't happen because whenever a new transport came, the ramp was cleaned absolutely to zero point. No trace of the previous transport was allowed to....

Q: to remain.

A: to remain.

Q: No one trace.

A: Not one trace. Therefore, if they expected on that day four or five or six transports, the pressure on getting out from the waggons was high. They they used sticks, clubs, cursing, etc, etc.

Q: They had to go very fast.

A: Very fast. On the other hand, when they had time, and when the weather was good too, well, it could go a bit slower and they exhibited a lot of good will and sort of a subtle irony (unclear). A typical Prussian humour.

Q: Prussian Humour?

A: a Prussian humour, yes. They would...They would...they would be extremely polite and...and....having a good time. I mean, things were sometimes different. Well, so the people came out, and were ordered to immediately.... to stand up in file, in columns. They were organized in a column, in rows of five. Now there was always an amount of people who could not get out from the waggons. Those were those to die on the road...

Q: you mean each waggon?

A: In...not in each waggon. There were no rules about that. You see, there was a great variation, because if the train came from a place in winter, and the train was ten days on the road, and there were eighty - ninety people per waggon then you could have as many as one third of the people dead on arrival. On the other hand, if the train came from a place like Prague or Vienna, where the Nazis had to sort of keep better appearances, or from Paris for instance, and the train wasn't too long on the journey, then it was possible that there was only in every second waggon a dead. So sometimes there were in a transport already hundred two hundred, three hundred dead people, and sometimes only three or four. So this was very difficult to say. Then, there were others, who...a number of people in the waggon, who in spite of the clubs could not be persuaded to get out because they were dying. They were not yet dead....

Q: They were dying?

A: Dying people. or people who were sick to such a degree, that even a persuasion with violent beating wouldn't get them moving fast enough. So those people stood....remained in the waggons. Also the people were driven out from the waggons and....everybody....it was told to them: 'Don't take anything with you. Alles liegenlassen'.

Q: They had their belongings in the same waggon?

A: In the same waggon. [You see, in the waggon was the belongings and the people, you know, somehow in some way, pressed. So when the people were already out of the waggons and separate from other prisoners, because it was very important for the Nazis, that we, the prisoners, should not be able to communicate with those new arrivals.

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A: So, great care was taken that we do not get, the prisoners into a direct contact with the arrivals. were organized in such a way, that they were in proper columns: women, children, men. The first thing was to up into a proper column, and this proper column was standing. Then, the command came to us, prisoners, to move towards the waggons. And we were, of course, lead on by all sorts of Kapos and Unterkapos with clubs in their hands, and behind them were again the SS, with walking sticks in their hands, and we were supposed now to....the first thing was to deal with bodies. Dead or dying. So our first job was to get into the waggons, to get out the dead bodies, or the dying, and transport them in Laufschrift, as the Germans liked to say, this means running.....

Q: Laufschrift?

A: Laufschrift, ja. Never, never, never walking or something. Everything had to be done in Laufschrift.

Q: Immer laufen.

A: Immer laufen. So, very sport....they are a sporty nation, you see. And we had to get out those bodies, and on the ramp, running, to get them on a truck which was at the head of the ramp. There were already trucks prepared... trucks were ready. Say, the trucks were five, six, sometimes standing there, sometimes more, there was no iron rule. But the first truck was for the dead and the dying. And as....

Q: You were...you were running?

A: Yes, we were running. Not more than two people were supposed to carry a body. This means that one got the hands, the other the legs. But sometimes....and of course it had to be done fast, and in order that we don't lose time, the Nazis were around with their....with their walking sticks in their hand, and giving us a bit of enthusiasm to this sort of job.

Q: To you?

A: Yes. I mean, they hit here and there. And...so we came to the...to the truck and the trucks were...they were very peculiar trucks. Those were trucks like for sand, which could be lifted, you know. But at that moment they were not lifted, only the rear part of the truck was open and there was a small platform, staircase, and we had to run up with the body to the...up the staircase and then already in the truck, were other prisoners, who would take over the body and somehow accommodate it in the truck. And we were immediately supposed to turn and as rule... sporty rule was, in Laufschrift back to the wagon.

Q: And you put the dying...dying people with the dead?

A: Dying and the dead. We had...the job was to get it to the truck, and the job of those on the truck was to place the in the truck. I mean, there was only usually one truck available for this purpose, and there...there was not much medical care taken to establish who is dead and who

to be dead. I mean, you know, who is only simulating. So they were put on the trucks and those trucks went then...once this was finished, this was the first truck which moved off and then straight to the crematorium which was about two kilometers to the left from the ramp...

Q: At that time it was two kilometers...

A: At that time....

Q: ...it was before the construction of the...

A: Before the construction of the new ramp. Yes. This was the old ramp. I mean, through that old ramp, the first one and three quarter of million people went, through that old ramp.

Q: One and three quarters?

A: One and three quarters.

Q: This means the majority.

A: The majority, through that old ramp. The new ramp was only built for the big business with the Hungarian Jews. That was the particular purpose and the whole thing had to be better stream-lined. However, we are keeping on the old ramp. When this was done, and the dead and dying were transported, we had to move into the wagons and take out

all the luggage, absolutely everything. And this was all out on the ramp, in sort of big heaps. Meanwhile, the Nazis...

Q: You said...this was...this could be at night and in day-time...?

A: This could be at four o'clock in the morning, at twelve o'clock lunch-time, at one o'clock night. I mean, there was, there was no rule to it. When the transport arrived to the...about distance of twenty kilometers from Auschwitz, the signal came, and we were...had...this particular detachment was always ready there for the transport, of prisoners. And obviously there was always ready for a...arrival of the transport the particular detachment of SS, for the cordon around, for escorting us, prisoners, to the ramp from the camp. And of course there was always a group of the...Nazi officers or whatever they were, for the inside work. Can you under...follow what I am saying to you?

Q: Oh yes.

A: So this was always prepared. And it was...there was no particular hour of arrival. Also, I must say that most of the arrivals, but not all, most, were when it became dark.

Q: When it became dark.

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. With the light?

A: Eh...

Q: I mean with the...electric

A: With the electric light. Yes. And...most of the work was done under electric light.

: But there is one thing which is very difficult to grasp: when these people arrived with corpses inside the...waggons, and when there were many corpses. I mean, how could they still have hope to come in a place where they would work, survive, live. I mean this should have been a sign for them, no?

A: It is very difficult for me to answer this question, because I never went voluntarily into such a wagon.

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Those trains were guarded minimally on the road to Auschwitz:

Q: Minimally?

A: Minimally. But when I was transported there, they special two guards standing by me, who explained to me what is going to happen to me if I move. Because I had already two escapes behind me.

Q: Because you were coming from Majdanek, from another camp?

A: Oh, this is a different story, I don't want to confuse it..

Q: No, no.

A:veřy much.

Q: Yes.

A: But as the people were....you see this depends from where they were coming. If the people were coming from a relatively civilized place, this mean civilized, this means from a place where the Germans were careful not to show their real face....

Q: From the West?

A: So-called west, say they came from Paris or if they came from Vienna, or if they came from Prague, or from Bratislava then those people were probably thinking that it is: thanks God we are already somewhere, all this is an error, somebody organized the transport wrongly, things must now become better, this is intolerable. And now obviously, things will become better. And of course when it was not...nice day and not too much to work, the Nazis, of course, had a good time in saying: 'Good God, in what state did those horrid Slovaks transport you. This is inhuman.' I mean, this sort of humour was there.....quite common.

Q: And this of course quietened the people?

A: All this of course immediately....Oh yes, that's very nice I...I....I remember how some people even said: 'Oh here are German officers, finally we are in....' I mean, people had a lot of naivi...naive imaginations about what an officer is, and what a Nazi officer is, and what the world was about at that time.

Q: But would you have the...the possibility, which is ast... very far-fetched question, to talk with these people, would you have talked?

A: Well, there were attempts to talk to them. You see, any attempt to talk directly with a new arrival - the new arrivals were supposed to be kept without panic and orderly marching into the gas-chambers. Especially the panic was dangerous from women with small children. Or for whole families. So, it was important for the Nazis, that none of us give some sort of a message, which could cause a panic in the last moment. And anybody who tried to get into touch with the prisoners, was either clubbed to death or...clubbed to death, or taken behind the waggons and shot.

Q: But this happened sometimes?

A: Not infrequently. not infrequently. But of course all the prisoners who were for sometimes...You see, in this command, in this Canada Command, which was working there there was a very high mortality.

Q: Yes?

A: Very high mortality, because many people of the prisoners liked to be there because there was a possibility to steal some food. This means we were not hungry. Because those people brought food with them, and we naturally tried to steal something for us too. So there was something to eat and that's what was the attraction of it for the...many prisoners to work there. But on the other hand, the slightest deviation from the routine by a prisoner, was punished by death.

Q: So you remember, do you recall cases....

A: Oh.

Q: ...when people tried....

A: There were so many cases, You see, there was a great mortality in this group among the new-comers, who were new, who didn't know yet. You see, one of the principles of Auschwitz was, like in many other places, that nobody explained to you, what the ^{rules} are. Either you got the rules, or you didn't get them. And if you didn't get them, that was a bad luck.

Q: Yes, very bad luck.

A: That was very bad luck. So people who thought that they

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could sort of flout the order and just walk there and *roll* say something to the new-arrivals or so, I mean they were....they were killed. People who couldn't keep on the tempo of the work, they were killed. And it was not necessary to kill him on the spot, sometimes they were just beaten to such a way, that the next day or two days, they couldn't walk anymore and couldn't move any more. They somehow got into the selection process in the camp and it was not necessary..... as the Nazis used to have a special expression. They didn't say: 'kill him - Schlag ihn tot' - never - they said 'mach ihn fertig'

Q: Mach ihn fertig?

A: Mach ihn fertig.

Q: Mach ihn fertig.

A: Or...or...or they said: 'Den habe ich schon fertig gemacht'. This means the guy was beaten until he couldn't move. He was finished.

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Q: You...do you recall precise cases where people tried to warn the...arriving.

A: It is...

Q: (unclear)

A: *AS* There were such cases which I can recall. There... there were many cases with various histories. *Now* one case I recall that a transport came from a...from Theresienstadt, from Czechoslovakia. And those transports usually came in reasonably good condition. And some of the people were even reasonably well dressed. And once a woman came out, with two children by the hand, and tried to...made some remarks to the SS that thanks God we are already here, and so on. And a prisoner who was running by, and who was Czech, tried to give her a warning, saying that....

Q: A man of the Canada Kommando?

A: Yes, yes. 'you will be dead soon', or something like that. You know, what can he say in fast, running. But

