

[INAUDIBLE] the 28th of January in '43. My parents left on Saturday, which was the 30th of January. And every night, I tried, with all other young men, friends of mine, to get out of the ghetto. And it was impossible.

On Saturday, my mother said to me, look. She says, wherever we go, that place you'll keep, so you don't have to rush. Try one-- we've still got one more night, stay in the ghetto and try. Maybe you'll manage to get out, sneak out. We were trying, of course, to get out of the ghetto into the partisans-- join the partisans in the forests.

Now, I can still see my mother waving goodbye to me from the porch of the house. I went. A friend of mine-- almost every house in the ghetto had a hiding place. In a friend of mine's house, we as boys, my group, had a hiding place. Four or five of us got into that hiding place. It was a hole in there, but we moved a few boards from the floor and we got underneath the floor.

And my friends got out the first night, but his mother and grandmother were still in the house. And they used to-- for heating, they used turf, peat. She says, you get in there, and I'll cover you with peat so the Germans won't find you. All we wanted to remain is just for a few hours so the Germans just could go by. It wouldn't last a total search.

Sure enough, as we were sitting underneath the bunker there, we could hear the Germans walking on the floor several times. They took the women, my friend's mother and grandmother. She was already a blind lady.

I said goodbye to my family, as I said-- my father, my mother, my sisters, three of them, and my brother. My grandparents on my father's side, and my mother's parents died before.

Together, at that day, six uncles and five aunts-- one uncle was married, and all their children-- 51 persons. They were all together on that day. My uncle, the second youngest, Herschel, started singing a song, [? "Ali, Ali." ?] And the song sings about God abandoned us.

And my grandmother, being an old lady already, says, we are going to die, and he is singing. She didn't realize that he wasn't singing, that he was--

Prayer.

Prayer, yeah. And that's the last I saw them.

Late in the afternoon, when we got out of the bunker, that part of the ghetto was quiet. Nobody was left there. But at the court, the fourth part of the ghetto, like the fourth quarter of the ghetto, was still intact.

So we joined the others, and we spent that night. And that night, it was not only impossible to get to the wires. It was even almost dangerous to cross the street, because the Germans already did not shoot in the air. They kept firing into the ghetto all night long at every shadow, knowing that there was a lot of us, that those that want to get out will try to get out that night.

There were three men. One of them was my hometown. We were close friends. He was a Polish soldier who was taken in prison-- as a prisoner, I suppose, in '39, but managed to get in '42 to the ghetto from Germany.

And he was-- he was the tallest man in my home town. Yankel [? Vinograd ?] was his name. And he in order to-- giants at the time-- managed to get out that night. And we saw him running out, and we had one shot.

But when daybreak came, we saw all three of them lying in the middle of the street, right out of the side of the fence. I suspect the Germans had caught up with them later, and they brought them back to the fence to show us that you don't get away.

In the morning, that was the last-- some did hide in bunkers, but somehow, I didn't have any more strength. I didn't sleep for three nights. I figured that's enough.

I was with a friend of mine, who was actually several years older than myself. His name was [? Sheldon ?] Bernstein from my home town. And they put us six persons on a sled. 600 sleds came into the ghetto every day to take 2,400, 2,500 people to the railway station 12 kilometers away.

It was a beautiful, sunny, wintry day. This was the 31st of January, the last transport. And as we drove out of the city, the last one, the last building was a mill-- a flour mill. His name was [? Kreuzer. ?] He was a Jewish owner, but, of course, he was already gone to the transport, too.

But the mill was still open, and people-- the people that worked there worked. The Germans had taken it over already. And the mill was surrounded with a fence, and there was a huge gate. And in front of the gate, there were about half a dozen gentiles staying there and looking at the Jews as we were being taken away.

And Bernstein talks to me, says, let's get off. Come here. Listen to me. I said, are you crazy? That's the Germans behind us. After every 10 sleds, there were two Germans in a sled with rifles at the ready.

I said, wait, maybe they'll turn around. I said, I'm getting off. And today, I cannot explain it. He got off the sled and walked right through the half a dozen men into the gate. They didn't point at him. They didn't blink an eye. He went right through, and the Germans didn't see it. I cannot-- don't know what happened. He walked in, and, of course, I felt sorry I didn't go with him at the moment.

And I went on farther. About halfway between the ghetto Pruzhany and the station where [PLACE NAME] used to be was the border, which I mentioned the Ukrainians--

Railroad.

Border. And there was a bunker, and Germans were in there. And to the left, as we drove to the railway station, there was a forest. But a pine forest in the winter is an open book. You can see for a mile, straight pine trees. And there were no small trees, only tall poles.

And about 20 or 30 men-- I don't know exactly how many-- jumped off the sleds and started running in the forest. And the Germans opened up fire, and then the Germans that guarded us just from the bunker opened up. And you could see one by one every one of them was cut down. Not one managed to get away more than 100 yards.

They brought us to the station-- and it was still daylight. It was about 4:00 in the afternoon, I would say. And they started packing us into the cattle cars.

And we tried to stick my-- there was a large proportion of young, able-bodied men in that group, because a lot of men like myself, who were young and able-bodied, were still hoping to the last day, the last night to get out of the ghetto.

So we tried to-- we tried to stick together. And they packed us in those cattle cars. I don't know how to describe the cattle cars. Everybody knows the story. I don't know how many, but it was, so to say, room to stand.

Well, there were still families, intact families. And they had children. So, of course, they stood, and if a child-- you get tired holding a child, you slid down. You had a job to lift it back again. There was no-- if somebody fainted or couldn't stand up, they fell.

And we left the station at 1:00 in the morning. And we slowly-- directing, of course. There were a lot of families who did not want-- a lot of people did not want to let it penetrate in their mind that they are going to die. And there were all kinds of assumptions.

Because not far from Pruzhany, towards the east, there was a place called [? Pruna Gora, ?] where there used to be huge lime mines, huge holes. And those holes were filled in with Jews from Kobryn, Pinsk, [PLACE NAME] and others.

And I'm sad to say that in all our, well, sad history, it's hardly ever mentioned that place, [? Pruna Gora. ?] But in my opinion, who knows, maybe 100,000 or more Jews had been buried.

We figured we were going due east. Instead, the train turned west. And, of course, we didn't-- we were hoping for the best, said, well, you see, the Germans are taking us into Germany to kill us. They will take us east. And people started to assume that we are going into Germany in camps or otherwise.

And the train made its way till we came to-- I believe it's Minsk Mazowiecki. I'm not sure. And for some reason, of course, we didn't. Who could have imagined the crematoria or gas chambers? What we understood is machine gunning.

But something-- somebody mentioned at the railway station Molkin. That was the railway station going to Treblinka-- something is down there. It found its story into the ghetto Pruzhany, but what, nobody knew. Something in Molkin is no good.

And with us, in my car, there was a man. Cabby was his name. He used to travel from Pruzhany to Warsaw. He used to be a traveler. And he knew exactly how the train was left a branch off in order to go to Molkin.

He said, wait. If you turn right to Molkin. Then it's not good. But if you go straight to Warsaw-- and sure enough, we did not turn to Molkin, and we stayed. Well, if you go to Warsaw, there is no question. We are going to Germany to work.

On the train, the conductor-- not conductors, but a few of the service people were Poles in the railway uniforms. And they kept trying to sell us water. They kept telling us we were going to Auschwitz. We never heard of Auschwitz-- Oswiecim, Auschwitz. He says, you don't need money, so give it to me. Here's a bottle of water or something like this.

So they tried to sell us food. You don't need food there, said, if we don't eat anything, so why do you sell us food? We couldn't somehow figure out.

Kept you off balance.

Off balance. Well, they wanted our money, whatever it is after all. They passed by Warsaw. Not for a moment I believe that we are going to live. I was sure we were going to die.

Now, remember, coming from a small town, I'd never seen a big city. The biggest city I've seen is Brest-Litovsk. We drove out to Warsaw, and I looked through the cracks in the window. And I see a big, brightly-lit city, five, six-story buildings. Every window was lit.

And I think, here is such a beautiful life, seems to be in its full swing. It was so bright. It was so beautiful. And here all of us go to die. It was such a-- it was so bitter. It was so sad.

And I said, ah, does it pay to look in the window? What good is it? It's my last hours anyway.

In the early morning, we came into a huge railway station, and we found out it was Czestochowa. And at that time, there were still 5,000 Jews in Czestochowa.

I want to get back for a moment or two. In the ghetto, about three days before the evacuation, I dreamed that we are getting off a railway station. And I saw a railway station, a square building with the roof, four sides coming together. I saw the station. I don't know why.

I wanted to remark, in case I forget. Because when I came to Auschwitz, not in the concentration, but first to the station, this is the station I saw in my dream. And people-- I don't know how to explain it, but this is exactly the picture of that station, before I forget it.

And another thing is we came to a railway station before Warsaw yet. It was late afternoon. It was the first day, the

second day-- sorry, first-- in Minsk Mazowiecki. And as we look through the cracks in the window, we saw Jews with yellow stars walking on the railway track.

They were not-- I could see they were not allowed to turn to towards us. They were all with the back, walking along the track. But nobody turned. But I saw a tall, young man. I could figure out by his stance. Near was an older, shorter man and I could see him, give him a poke, and waving his head.

Gave him a sign, look in the back. And the old man just shook his head sadly. One did not have to hear what he said. They said, look.

They communicated.

Yeah, look, there are some more Jews going to slaughter. And the old man sort of, like, shook his head sadly. Yeah, like I said.

And about 50 minutes later, a man who did not what one would describe a Jewish looking, came to the front of our car and says-- in Jewish, says, Jews, you are going to the slaughter. Save yourself. I am a Jew. There's only 200 of us left in Minsk Mazowiecki I'm one of this group of the 200 working here. He had no yellow star on him. He took it off.

And I could see him looking both ways to see if there are no Germans. He took his life, in a sense, to come and speak to us. Get out save yourself, run, because you're going to the slaughter.

And, of course, he's not a Jew. He's a Pole. He wants us to run so we'll be shot. All kinds of people. He [INAUDIBLE].

He spoke to you in Yiddish.

He spoke Yiddish.

Oh.

But we didn't do it. Anyway, so now let's proceed. We passed Warsaw, to Czestochowa. And by about 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, I saw we came to a station, Auschwitz. And I saw that railway station. And we continued a little bit farther.

And this is-- this I still remember to that day, that the dream or the shape of the railway station became farther. And really, of course, the train finally came to a halt. The cattle cars opened up, and people ran by. He says, [GERMAN]. That was Auschwitz.

Now, everybody-- people can describe it in much nicer colors than I can, make it much more eloquent to the arrival of Auschwitz. But it's enough to say that those who could get out got out, and the others were pulled out and dragged out. Some were dead.

I'm not going to go through the whole story again. They just separated us men, on one side able-bodied men, and women and children separate.

What I cannot understand is I remember seeing a huge German, big and fat with a whip-- must have been three or four yards long. And as he walked along the row of women and children, he kept whipping them mercilessly. These people were going to die, so let them. Why?

And the other thing I've seen is-- this will never leave. I think I'll remember it. They took a tarpaulin and spread it on the snow there. And the Germans walked by the mothers and tore the infants out of their arms, and dumped them in front of them. And they started putting a pile of screaming infants. And that I seen.

And they took the four ends of the tarpaulin, tied it up like a bundle of dirty laundry. And they didn't take young men.

They took old men from the same group-- and 10 men, and told the men to lift up the bundle of screaming infants and dump it on a truck. And this I have seen with my own eyes.

And they dumped it, and they told the other-- they told the old men to lift up-- it was like a little ramp that they put in the back of the truck for people to walk up. And all the women and children and old people started walking up on the truck. They each truck was to back-up pile of-- fill up a truck load, shut it.

The trucks are open. I mean, the women and children screaming and yelling. It was chaos-- and pulled away.

And we men were lined up in one side, of course, the famous selections of Auschwitz. I was then just exactly-- Tuesday, I turned 20. I always celebrate my Jewish birthday. That's the--

Secular.

Secular, right. So that was on a Tuesday, was 20 days in a month of Shevat. Was that a Tuesday? And that was already-- Sunday was Auschwitz. Monday-- it was the following Tuesday that I arrived, the 27th. Because my parents came the 26th, a day earlier. And 27th, the month of Shevat.

So I was already 20, and I came to the German, and two questions, how old are you, and what's your occupation? I said I am 20, and I am a blacksmith, a Schlosser.

I promise, fairly healthy-looking young man. They took me, amongst another 300 roughly men. And they lined us up, and the rest of us went with the others. They marched us into Birkenau.

I tried to be cool. I have realized that I'm going into a camp. I knew then that it's not-- they wouldn't bother otherwise picking. And I remember trying to figure out what is it like?

And the first thing that struck me is I saw two young men, Slavic-looking Russians. I could tell by their features-- healthy, well-fed, sitting on a horse with a team of horses-- well-fed horses and a buggy. [INAUDIBLE] And I think to myself, it couldn't be too bad. They look very well-fed, those two Russians.

And as I walked by again, I looked to the left, and I saw a skeleton of a man, which didn't look like a man anymore. He was thinner than thin. There was no description. The striped uniform was hanging on him.

Excuse me. And another well-fed man is standing over him and hitting him mercilessly. And the man tumbled and fell. And he kept hitting him.

And I think to myself, why doesn't he get up and run? And the man did make an effort to get up and run. And they beat him down again. And I could see them finishing.

And I couldn't understand. He hasn't got enough strength to get up. And there was such something happened at that paradox, that moment. Excuse me.

They took us into the bathhouse. Now, we were thirsty, three days of travel. And the first thing-- sorry, not the bathhouse, in the registration room. It was a wooden barrack, famous Birkenau barracks which-- that was the registration.

And there were inmates sitting, and they called us by letter alphabetically, the letter A, B, C. And we came to letter K, and we lined up and came-- you see, so it was address the inmates-- spoke Yiddish with a bit of a German accent.

And they were filling out the form-- name, parents' name, address, and so on. And the question is, why were you arrested? That question is still in my mind. I said, what do you mean why was I arrested? Were you apprehended at a place of crime? Those questions-- I said, look. So, I mean, he filled it in.

And this is where my name was changed from Kantorowicz, ending with that C-Z of the Polish spelling. It filled in, as I spelled it T-Z. And this is the-- I this is-- I kept it this way already. This was my original spelling, Kantorowitz. I filled in whatever.

But he asked me that question. And I didn't know what to answer. After we got the name, and then, of course, right away, we were branded, tattooed with that number, right there on the spot.

We were searched. And I did have a few dollars, American, and some marks, which received from the ghetto yet. It was divided before we left the ghetto, before everything was taken away from us, from me.

And all of us, like the whole transport, all 300 men were taken from there. Of course, by the time it was all finished, it was already late at night. They took us into the bathhouse. We were dressed. We were shaven completely from head to toe.

Our showers were very thirsty, and we wanted to drink the water. And of course, we were already supervised then by inmates. We were no more under SS supervision.

And those inmates turned out to be Jews. They said, don't drink the water. You'll get typhoid fever because the water is contaminated. Some of us drank, some of us did not. We were searched thoroughly.

And after the showers-- before, of course, we were disinfected with a-- one of us, we had a [INAUDIBLE]. It was smearing over, smearing with a kind of a disinfectant of some sort. And then we washed it off.

We were given, I mean, just thrown a shirt, a pair of undershirts-- a pair of shorts, I mean, a pair of pants, a jacket. We were permitted to keep our boots, which was good. It was good because I had the high, like the cavalry boots, the high leather boots.

By 3:00 in the morning we were finished, and we were led into a barracks and were told to go into the bunks and lie down. But before, they told us to line our shoes. The barrack had a heating system, which was like a long chimney, from one end ran right through the barracks to the other side. And we should line up the boots along that chimney.

Within half an hour, a few inmates, well-fed, big, husky fellows came in. They looked through the boots. Picked up whatever fit them or whatever they wanted. And the rest they took. And they dumped them in one huge pile and said, OK, everybody, get your shoes.

Anyway, I managed to get one boot, which was-- could have been mine because it fitted. And the other one was too small. So for the next six weeks, I walked on one foot without being able to put my heel down into the shoe, walk and then tiptoe.

In the morning, they took us out and counted us. And they said, well, you're going to go into the Zigeunerlager. Now that was-- we were-- our transports were the first of the Jews that were the inhabitants of that later well known Zigeuner, gypsy camp, Zigeunerlager. They let us in that camp in the afternoon already by then it was the afternoon. And we were joined up with a group of Jews from Holland. The Dutch Jews were big men compared with-- we are just Eastern European Jews. They're not big-big. The average height is 5' 6", 5' 8" This is the average. 5' 10" is already considered a Polish. Those Dutch Jews were 6' 2", or 6' 4"-- big men.

And I remember, we were brought in, they were brought in, two at the same time. And I'm not going to go through the trouble of explaining the whole camp set up with kapos and Blockalteste and the Blockalteste of the Lager. And there was an inmate too, a criminal, a German, that [NON-ENGLISH] Lager, [NON-ENGLISH]. Because of it, one of those big Dutch Jews say, what is your profession? He says, I'm a Kaufman. I'm a salesman.

Oh, he says, a Kaufman. And he was holding a huge stick in his head. And necessary, he lowered it right over his head.

And within two minutes, this man he kept us one blow after another. This man's head became pulp. He was bleeding

profusely. They did it as a demonstration. That was our welcoming present, to see what can be done to us.

It is-- it was, how should I say, depressing? I--

It's not adequate.

I just I got to watch this guy.

Anyway, deep into the barracks, for that night in the morning-- the morning that we came out, we were counted, which was over the following business. And they gave us this lined up in five, and they gave a red bowl, that standard red bowl of Auschwitz, a red bowl of tea, which was brewed out of blueberry leaves. And the first on it, you had to have a mouthful or two and pass it on to the last fifth.

Of course, by the time it came to the fifth, there was nothing left-- or to the fourth, or to the third, who knows?

The barracks were-- we were able to open up the little windows on top and get some snow. And I managed, the first two couple of nights, to take my life in my hands because whoever was caught was beaten, beaten anyway. I managed to get some snow. We slept from eight to eleven of us in a bunk covered with one blanket. There was nothing underneath, just boards.

We were supposed to get undressed. We're not allowed. We were not allowed to sleep in the sacks, above all, at the underwear. That's it. It was bitter cold. It was already February the 2, the 3, the 4.

This is-- in the mornings, we used to stay pressed one against the other against the wall of the barracks all day long. Afternoon we always used get a cup full of soup. And at night they get a quarter of a loaf of bread and a bit of tea. So [INAUDIBLE] into the barracks. And the blows again, spend the night there, yes.

No working?

No, no. We were in quarantine. Now, we were the-- we caught up there with the rest of our ghetto. All of us, the four transports, the four that came in when we were there. And that were, of course, the Dutch Jews that came in between.

And the following day, they brought the next few days Jews from Bialystok, which were neighboring-- not far away from us. And sort of-- we were the first inhabitants of the ghetto, the Zigeunerlager, the Gypsy camp.

The camp was built for some reason on clay ground. The clay was so deep and so sticky that once you put a foot-- not a shoe, but my boot-- if I wasn't careful enough or stood in one place too long--

Suck it right off.

So I pulled my foot up, but not my boot. I had to pull the boot out by myself and then stick my foot back in there. So they decided one day to clean it-- not to-- to dry it a bit.

So we had to reverse the jackets, buttoning it at the back, keep the front of the jacket like an apron, so to say, marched by one-- there was a pile of sand-- and get one or two shovels of sand, which wasn't heavy. And this, we were told, you have to do it by noon. You have to cover the whole space between the two barracks so there should be comfortable to stand when you are being counted, should be dry.

Nobody-- nobody chased us, so we took our time. And we walked very slowly because that was the procedure for us because we didn't-- we didn't work at all. Of course, it wasn't ready by noon.

So they told us to line up in five. And first of all, that sit on our knees, like crouching on our knees. I was fortunate. I was on the third row. I wasn't in the first two.

I see they brought a gang of about 100 or 150 kapos and Blockälteste and foremen, all just to say, trustees of all kind of rank in Birkenau. And there were a lot of shovels with long, long handles. And I see they are breaking up the shovels from the handle. And each of them suddenly became armed with a stick. The handle of a shovel makes a very good weapon.

And they lined those people up from that sandpit to that spot where we were standing. And they took the two front rows, which is 30% of our barracks, like 300 men. I don't know. And running under the blows to grab the two shovels full of sand and run back. It's not the running. Of course, when you're under the bit of food that we got and blows with the sticks continuously back and forth, I don't know if you could call it the job was finished.

But to make it short, by the following morning, I don't know how many were alive out of those two rows of people they picked out. I was only wondering, God help me if they take the third or fourth row. Fortunately, they settled for the first two rows.

I remember the dead bodies, they lined up in the following morning to be counted because they had to be counted to be. We remained in that Birkenau for six weeks. Before we left yet, the Gypsy transports began to arrive. And I remember, I walked to it.

They were allowed to come with all their possessions, whatever they brought with them into that camp. And I managed to sneak into a barrack where a Gypsy old lady was there. And she gave me that red bowl with a bit of soup left from yesterday. And I gulped it down.

I was thinking to myself, I don't want to sound prejudiced, but here is a bit of cold soup from an old lady. I don't know how clean it was. I don't know how well she was.

Where on earth would I have touched it? And here, God forgive me if I say it, and I'm putting yet on tape. But I gulped down a bit of cold soup from yesterday, what was left at the bottom of the bowl.

This is the state I have gotten within a month or six weeks, whatever. It was before the six weeks was up yet. And if we remained at that-- in that Birkenau, in Zigeunerlager for six weeks.

Finally one day, we did not get washed. In the six weeks, we did not get out clothes changed. But we became louse-y and the lice were giants.

[AUDIO OUT]

And eventually, to this I don't-- as a rule, I remember every day. But the last count, I don't know exactly what day it was. We were told we are going to be taken away from Birkenau. And they lined us up, something like 800 men. They told us to get washed.

And there was a barrack where you could get [? wurst. ?] It was a long, narrow, like pipe sort of like. You could-- not actually called-- like wooden containers, like long narrow ones. We washed in the same water, every one of us, the faces, whatever. And we were taken out, and we were marched to Auschwitz, the main camp of Auschwitz. And it was in the evening. We arrived in Auschwitz. It was dark.

We came into another world entirely. The buildings [INAUDIBLE] are permanent, not the wooden barracks of Birkenau. They were brick buildings, lit up with electricity inside. And they took us into the disinfection, like in the bathhouse. We were again told to undress. We were shaven again, disinfected again, and showered with clean water.

I must say that we have changed completely. We were given a new set of clothes, and we were given shoes. And by that time, we were all fed. By the time we finished with all the disinfection, it was early morning. And we were brought-- by morning, we were brought into the Appellplatz, the place where there used to be counted.

As soon as the people that the inmates went to work, we were brought in there. And the 800 of us, was, of course, they



were taken over by the inmates, by that [INAUDIBLE] of Auschwitz already, the main camp of Auschwitz. And we were trying to be divided in by trade.

Anyway, I was taken to the trade of lathe operators or blacksmiths, well, Schlosser, which is a locksmith, actually. And I was one of, I suppose, 20 or 25 young men. We were taken into a building, to the Block 18. And the room, Stube, which it's called in German, Stube number four, we were brought in there. I remember each-- the bunks were individual ones, not very narrow. And everything was so precise, so even.

It was such a different world. It was entirely-- it wasn't-- it was Birkenau at all. And of course, the first question was, they said, oh, where are you from. The man in charge of that room was-- his name-- first name, was [? Kazik. ?] I don't know his second name.

He was a short man, about five foot six, shorter than I am. He must have weighed close to 200 if not 200 pounds, certainly wasn't-- he wasn't hungry. He was very well fed.

Was he a German?

A Pole.

Pole?

Yeah. Well, he asked us where we are from. And suddenly, the Blockälteste, who was in charge of the whole building, brought us in about three or four or five loaves of bread.

He says, look, I know you're hungry. Divide it between you. And he said, this is not your ration. Your ration you'll get tonight. This is from me personally, a welcome from me.

It was--

Sounds like a human being.

Yeah. It was something-- you couldn't believe it. Anyway, the first thing he said, that Stuben, he says, have you got any lice? We says, no, we've just been disinfected. He says, yes, I know. Take off your undershirts and look, and you'll be surprised. We found we could not get the lice out of our skin.

The following day we were assigned to go to that group Kommando DAW, which is the initials of the words Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke-- German repair shops. It was a complex of buildings, which was consisted of two main functions. One was a carpenter shop, a huge carpenter shop. The other one was a blacksmith, a blacksmith mechanical works, where the ammunition boxes, wagons from the front that were damaged or destroyed were brought and reconditioned.

I, as a locksmith, was taken into that department where the locksmiths were working. It was a barrack. The barrack was number three. The kapo was a German, a criminal. Auschwitz did the famous triangles, the green triangles were the criminals. I was assigned as an assistant to a Czech worker in dismantling the broken wagons. Within, the hunger was so intense that instead of thinking about my family, which I've already by then found out precisely what happened and how, what, and when. All I could think of was food.

And the hunger has not left me for a moment. I began to plan. And in the mornings, when we used to get out of the barracks to be counted, I used to notice a huge pile of garbage in front of the kitchen. Our barrack was overlooking the kitchen.

And I've noticed there are some rotten potatoes, just every morning. We were not allowed to leave the barracks before the order came. We just had to get up in the morning. We had to get washed. We had to get our ration of bread, the quarter of a loaf of bread, and a bit of tea that everybody got, and then following outside to be counted.

I took the chance. I got up before everybody else. I used to sneak out to the kitchen and look in that pile of rubbish and find a few rotten potatoes and fill my pockets. And I used to come to work in this-- this factory used to be that-- used to be a huge drum that used to be filled up with sawdust from the carpenter shop nearby.

And the inmates used to string on a wire potatoes and hang it inside. So the wires used to [INAUDIBLE]. So the potatoes would hang. And you could reach for it and take it out.

The potatoes, they-- somehow some managed to get good potatoes. I was glad that I could find some rotten potatoes. It used to quench my hunger a little bit.

I got away a few days. I want to mention also that twice a week we used to get an extra half a loaf of bread that we used to come back from work. We used to after being counted. We used to line up in front of the kitchen. And everybody used to get an extra loaf of bread and a piece and a salami or a sausage, which was in addition to the quarter of loaf of bread daily.

It used to be a help. That was the ration. The saying in Auschwitz used to go that no matter how fat one is or how strong one is, by living from the ration alone, one cannot live longer than three months, cannot survive longer than three months. I would say, I wouldn't be able to come completely already starving from Birkenau.

I got away with it several days. I was the only Jew in the group that I worked for. There were a few Russians in there, some Czechs, some Poles. One day the kapo went by that oven. And he noticed these wires hanging. He picks it up, and found these potatoes.

He said, whose are they? Of course, all the fingers went pointing at the Jew. Of course, it was against the law, stealing potatoes, baking potatoes. Fine. Now in that other unit-- as I said before, there was the main unit, was the carpenter shop and the locksmith shop, the repair shop.

But there were different shops where they repaired machinery of all sorts. And there were a lumber yard. There was a lumber yard, which consisted of two groups of people, one that used to measure the lumber that just arrived, and one that used to deliver it into the factory.

Now that part that used to deliver it into the factory was a Strafkommando. The Strafkommando is the punishment Kommando. It had a famous foreman by the name of [? Pilarek, ?] who was a Volksdeutsche, who was a-- I don't know-- a Germanized Pole, a Polarized German-- I don't know, whichever-- who spoke both Polish and German. And they came from Silesia, which was on the Polish-German border.

This man, in my opinion, have killed more-- has killed more inmates than anybody I've ever heard of. He was the executioner, and I put it on tape. And those that have ever worked for a day or two on the old platz in Auschwitz will testify to the fact that, if you lasted with [? Pilarek ?] for three days, you were a lucky man. I have not found anybody who lasted more than this.

The law was that they had to supply 10% of this Kommando dead that very same day.

What is a Kommando? Is that a work group?

Kommando is a group of people. The Kommando was called a group. If he worked anywhere, if it was there, the Kommando. Even a bakery was the bakery Kommando.

I see. It was just a group.

It's a group.

We were a group of approximately between 50 and 60 workers. And they used to carry home between five and six dead every day. His favorite system was he used to hit a man until he fell. When he fell, he used to turn him over face up, put

a stick on his throat, and stand with both feet on the stick until he suffocated.

I'm sure that if anybody will yet listen to the tape while there's still some living witnesses alive, they'll take the trouble of asking those who worked in the area of Auschwitz if they've heard of the Holzplatz if they've heard of [? Pilarek. ?] And maybe somebody who was fortunate, unfortunate, to fall in there for a day or two and fortunate enough to get away will testify to what I've just said.

I worked at [? Pilarek ?] that day. And I had enough. I came from work in the evening. And in my-- in the room I slept, we were 100. I will refer to the room as Stube. That was the German term for the room. There were roughly 100 men.

Suddenly I hear somebody saying to me, hey, you, come here. There was a Jewish man with the numbers of the 42,000. That was a transport of Jews that came from France. They were originally Polish Jews, who came to France and they are still not French nationals. And they were the first ones to be deported to Auschwitz. He was one of those 42,000. We are referring to the 42,000 numbers.

He says, I saw you today at [? Pilarek. ?] I say, yes. It was my good fortune to, unfortunately, sarcastically, to be on the [? Pilarek. ?] He says, look, I work on the Holzplatz. But I've got the other job. I'm the one who measured the timber. So I'm fine. But I'll give you one advice. Tomorrow you get the [GERMAN], which is the additional half a loaf of bread and a piece of sausage.

The day after, it's going to be your worst day because it'll be after you were trying to save some bread or a piece of sausage, and you'll be after it. You should bribe him. You should let [? off. ?]

If you start giving him your bread, you'll have to give it a first time, you'll have to give it the second time too. Even if he's not going to hit, you're going to die of starvation. Don't give him, you stand a chance. If you bribe him, you don't stand a chance whatsoever.

Was this man a kapo? Or was he--

The [? Pilarek? ?]

Yeah.

His title a foreman. He had a kapo above him. A kapo didn't do the dirty work. He was the one who used to execute the filthy work of killing. The following day, sure enough-- two days later, after I came with that extra bit of bread to work, that was the worst day I ever had in Auschwitz. The man didn't let off of me and a few new ones that came in the last couple of-- two or three days. But I made up my mind not to give in.

Of course, the following day was almost as bad. And when the second [INAUDIBLE] Lager came, I made up my mind not to. What will be will be. It seems that this advice was one of the best advices I ever had in my life. I would say that within 8 or 10 days, that [? Pilarek ?] let off me. He did not-- he pretended he didn't see me as much as-- I didn't get in his way. And he sort of hit newer ones who fell for it.

And I must say that I was so fortunate. If he didn't see me, he didn't miss me. Whatever the reason was, there was such a turnover of new faces every day that he kept out of sight. Now, there was no place-- you couldn't hide. But you could use the washroom, the bathroom, which was very public.

In the building of this factory were a lot of buildings. One was the main building, which had a bathroom downstairs. It was under a roof. It was warm. And if you sat there it was fine. But each bathroom had a supervisor, a man in charge who was not allowed to keep anybody there more than five or seven minutes. After that, you had to get up and go out, back to work.

It just happened that that man, who was a Pole, I must say, was marching with me in the same row to work every morning. And we sort of got a bit friendly. And I found out about it. He told me where he is, the title, which is an

embarrassing name, for Scheissmeister.

And he was in that building, in the basement. And I used to come there. He used to let me sit there even for half an hour. And the Poles that used to come up and say, hey, this Jew been sitting there for so long.

He says, he works on the Holzplatz. Would you like to try his work? And so they kept quiet. Everybody worked in the Holzplatz was looked upon as a short visitor, as hasn't got much time left.

In the room I slept, the bunks-- these bunks we slept on were three story-- the bottom, the lower bunk, the middle one, and the top one. And the very low bunk slept a Jew from the-- his number was exactly 42-0-0-0, 42,000. His name was [? Fisch, ?] from France, came from Poland, the same story as the [INAUDIBLE].

I slept on the second bunk, in the middle. And above me slept a Pole by the name of Leon [? Kulowski. ?]

The numbers of Auschwitz began from the very first one. I, when we arrived, I got my number is 99,347. These numbers run up to 200,000 and then it started with letter A and then letter B. The name of the Polack, the number of that Polack, the Pole, Leon [? Kulowski ?] was 500-- sorry, beg your pardon. The number was 805.

The one that was in Auschwitz knew what that number meant. If one survived that number, the people used to almost just about tip their hats for him. It was one of the rare, rare numbers that you could see in there.

He found himself in Auschwitz because he was a Polish intellectual. He was a teacher in a high school. In Poland, a teacher in a high school, you refer to him as professor, not teacher.

He was an officer in the Polish army. And after the collapse of Poland in '39, he tried to make his way to France via Hungary, through Czechoslovakia into Hungary, where he was caught. And the Hungarian police handed him over to the Gestapo.

After Auschwitz was established in the late of '39, beginning of '40, he was one of the first 1,000 that arrived in Auschwitz. And he was given that number 805. He was nevertheless fortunate to have gotten a very good job. It was he worked for a short while in the supply department of the SS.

That gave him the chance, the access to many good things. If he was afraid even to take him to the camp, at least he didn't have to eat in camp. And his ration of food, he could leave to his friends in the camp, and he ate there. This, of course, made him a lot of friends.

When the camp has grown and a lot of those first inmates became permanent members, trustees, foremen, and kapos themselves, and working in good positions in the camp, they, in a way, reciprocated by making sure that these remains in Auschwitz because, for the Polish inmates, Auschwitz was the best place they could have asked for, even though they complained, they say that it was a bad spot, a bad place for them.

And if one got a job in there, which was a place where you could not-- you were not too often-- the chances of being sent away in another camp were very small. There was a productive industry. And if somebody worked there, they usually left him there to stay on. He was one of those that somebody as appreciation made sure that he works in there. And of course, being already too much of a big shot to do labor, they gave him the title foreman.

Now foreman have [? tokens. ?] Foreman had all kinds of-- there were all kinds of foremen. My foreman, [? Pilarek, ?] in the Holzplatz was a foreman too. But he became a foreman in order not to do anything. As far as we Jews are concerned, as far as I am concerned, he stood up for Jews wherever he had the chance to such an extent that the Poles in my room, in my Stube, named him [? Zidovski ?] [INAUDIBLE], a Jewish uncle.

One Sunday evening, that Pole, as he was climbing up the third bunk, looks at me and says, where do you work? What's happening to you? You are disappearing. You are shrinking.

I say, what do you expect? I work in the Holzplatz. He says, in Holzplatz? How long have you been there? I say, six weeks.

He says, my God, you survived six weeks? I say, yes. I survived six weeks. I said, but I won't last much longer. I knew that--

You're getting weak.

I couldn't. I couldn't last. So right across-- that was the end of the room where we slept. But a little bit farther to the end there was an empty space, where a table was placed. And on the other side there was one row of bunks for the big shots, kapos, foremen, the Stubendienst, which was in charge of the Stube, and his assistant.

And his superior, the kapo-- kapo was over the foreman. The kapos, his name was [? Gradek, ?] Yannic [? Gradek, ?] was also a friend, who actually in appreciation made him for a foreman, slept across. And he tells to Yannick, he says, Yannick, take him into the carpenter shop.

He says, you know I'm not allowed to. You are not allowed to change your place of employment, if I can use the expression. You not have a permission. So I sort of say of and say, my kapo couldn't care less. He says, if you can find yourself another job, go right ahead. Oh, he says. If that's the case, tomorrow morning, Monday morning, you come to work for me in the [INAUDIBLE]. The [INAUDIBLE] it was a long barracks, almost the same shape as the barracks in Birkenau. But it was a factory, part of the factory.

Monday morning, the order used to come out from Auschwitz proper, Kommandos [INAUDIBLE]. Every Kommando, every group-- as there there was 1,200 men-- we used to fall in and come in the factory there. Then again, we were fall in into the separate groups, each in his number of the [INAUDIBLE] or the floor he worked-- like I used to work in the Holzplatz, into the Holzplatz gruppen.

What does Holzplatz mean?

Holz is wood, place-- lumberyard.

Lumberyard.

Lumberyard. Right. In the lumberyard, so I had to fall into that group. But when the command came to fall in, I fell in with the [INAUDIBLE] number one, with the barrack number one. And sure enough, came that the secretary had to take down every number every day. So in order to-- they had to do bookkeeping too in order to know where everybody works.

He says, who are you? I say, ask the kapo. Turns to the kapo, he says, kapo? He says, it's OK. Mark him down. Fine. I came in. He took me over to a-- again, I must say there were a lot of Jewish-- French Jews from 42,000 number who was a real good craftsman. And he says, look, you be his assistant.

Well, you got to keep in mind, besides the beatings at the Holzplatz, I worked for 12 hours under the rain with my Auschwitz outfit, from 6:00 in the morning till 6:00 at night, soaked to the bone. I used to come from work, my legs used to be swollen in those wooden shoes.

Here I'm under a roof in the warmth. And my job-- at that time, that man was working. He was putting the hinges -- hinges and the metal-- the metal framings on windows. They were producing windows in that particular part of that barrack.

He says, look, whoever produces the most, biggest amount of windows gets a bowl of soup extra, a liter of soup extra. He says, I can do the work by myself. You just get me the windows.

So I run to get those windows. But of course, everybody else was working for that liter soup. So that kapo was smart.

He didn't have to use a stick. He used a carrot.

The big [? gut-- ?] all I had-- if everybody wanted that--

Soup?

--to produce the bowl of soup, to produce more windows. And I didn't like it initially. Of course, every craftsman had an assistant who stood in line to get those windows. And my job, the moment I got a window, I ran to him and stood in line again for half an hour to get to my next gig. It was beautiful.

As I stayed there, my former comrades from the lumberyard, the Holzplatz, come in to bring in the timber. Used to bring in the lumber, the planks for-- to produce it. And don't you think that that kapo-- that foreman rather, that [? Pilarek, ?] sees me there? Now, if I wouldn't-- if I didn't show up to work, was fine. So I'm dead. I mean, it was quite a natural phenomena, to die overnight. But to survive and run away from us, this is unforgivable.

So he walks, he says, what are you doing here? I was paralyzed with fear. But of course, there it was foreign territory. He had no authority. He turns around and walks out, goes to his kapo to report that his former subordinate is working there. Five minutes later, my former kapo walks into the factory.

Now, when a kapo walks into a factory, everybody sees a kapo. That [? Kulowski, ?] that Pole, Leon [? Kulowski, ?] noticed that former kapo of mine walking into the factory, into the office. And two minutes later, he noticed that I am being called in. So it didn't take him long to add two and two.

I come into my-- into the office. I was called in. My new kapo says to me, you lied to me. You told me you got this permission to work here. He wants you back. And before I had a chance to say a word, he give me a slap.

The kapo wasn't a very big or strong man. But I was very small and very, very, very weak. I fell right away. I said, now get up and get out of here. There are no protests. I got up. And I knew, the moment I walk out of that factory that this as far as I walk [INAUDIBLE].

That Pole, that [? Kulowski, ?] knew it too. As I walk out from the-- from out of the office into the factory to go out, he grabbed me by my shoulders and pushed me towards the wall, right by the door. He says, you stay here, and don't you move. He didn't ask he knew where I was going. And he walks into the office.

It lasted-- I don't know-- five minutes, eight minutes, maybe 10 minutes. Comes out, and he strikes me on the shoulder. He says, go back to your work at the workshop. I remained there. And never again did I ever hear from that foreman or that kapo.

In appreciation, they slept right near me. I polished their shoes. I washed their laundry. They, in return, didn't-- they had it so good that they didn't even need the soup that we ate. And an extra bowl or two of soup made the difference between life and death. And I began to feel better and look better.

And that went on until May the 4th, 1944. Early in the morning, before I had a chance to go out to work, my number was called out. And I was told to remain in the building, in the room, not to go out to work. I remained, and I wasn't the only one. There were a few more with me. And we were gathered up, about 40 or 50 from building 18 and 18A, which was the upper part of the building. And we were taken to the bathhouse, showered, given new clothes.

And we were told we are being taken in a transport, which means taken away from Auschwitz. And just before reaching the gate, we were joined up with a group of roughly 150 other inmates. They were new arrivals from Italy, Italian Jews who carried the number 180,000.

And there were a few Poles amongst us, about a dozen Russians, a few Germans, and there were 20 or 30 older inmates [INAUDIBLE] Jews. We got into our-- I don't remember-- three or four trucks. And we were taken away, driven away. We didn't drive too long, about an hour. And it was late in the afternoon. We arrived in a little camp with very primitive,

so to say very simple wire mesh around it, which certainly wouldn't qualify for a concentration camp.

We were told to go into those barracks. And the guards remained around us that night. And in the morning, we were told that we will build there a small concentration camp. The place was called Sosnowiec, the city of Sosnowiec. It was right out of the city.

And we brought there cement and sand and wires and everything, everything needed to build a camp. We are building those famous cement posts that were sort of curved-- curved inside. And made those posts, and we set them in cement all around the camp. We strung those wires, which were later electrified. And we built a fence around ourselves.

We fixed the barracks, made sure the roofs don't leak. Eventually, there was another group of close to 600 men were brought from, I believe the name of that camp was called Pionki.

It wasn't from Auschwitz. They went through Auschwitz, were given numbers, and they were brought into that camp, Sosnowiec. And together we went to the factory, which was no more than a half a mile away from us.

Part of the factory was-- in a part of the factory, they were making those well known 88 millimeter anti-aircraft guns. And the other part were making heavy artillery shots, howitzers 155. I was assigned to making the guns.

This is in Sosnowiec?

In Sosnowiec. Yeah. This already was Sosnowiec. It's a new camp. We worked with some 600 French civilians that came out about free people. They lived in with Poles in the city and some 2,000 civilian Poles.

We were starting to sell the-- to the Poles, we started to sell even our underwear. And we've been ordered to return in a pair of drawers, we used to tear them in half. The one that was in charge did not look. He threw a piece of rag, and he threw you a pair of underwear. This way you could maneuver to have to save a pair of drawers in two weeks. And used to sell to the Poles and get a loaf of bread or something like this.

And I must say, some sort of were showing some compassion, some not at all. And it wasn't-- we managed to get by. There was no starvation.