Mr. Zylberszac, reel three.

Select groups of people who came to Auschwitz in one group, they never even took the small children away. They never selected the women from the men. There was one of those transports, which was the metal resort, which I know of. Some of my friends who came to England who were in the transport. They took them because they were a very select group of people, very specialized people, in work of ammunition. And their skill was very much needed.

Although they gave them a little bit extra food and kept them alive, I don't believe that their situation was too good either. But at least the small children and the older people survived with that group. Some of them did anyway.

You mentioned the Gypsies. Did you see how they were treated?

Well, as it happens, I worked in the transport in the LÃ³dz ghetto. They brought in a group of Gypsies, which I transported from one place to the other, to one part of the ghetto, which was called Brzezin. They put a partition in that part, and they put all the Gypsies in that partition.

I would say that those Gypsies, by the time they-- there were several thousand of them. They treated them absolutely like rubbish. Their life was even-- our lives were nil. But I think their lives were less than nil. By the time they left there, from that part of the ghetto, by the time they cleared them out, about 90% of them they killed in the ghetto. And about 10%, they took to Auschwitz. And I would say they must have killed them there. I don't think any of them survived, beautiful people with children and women and men. I would say they also never done anything to anybody.

You mean beautiful to look at?

Beautiful to look at-- strong people when they came into the ghetto. I brought them in with my wagon. Oh, I brought some of them in.

How were they behaving?

Towards the-- towards the Germans or towards-- towards-- how do you mean how were they behaving?

Well, towards the Germans and generally.

Very humbly and very scared, the same as us. They must have had the same treatment of being terrified by the Germans, as we did. Now I myself saw the taking the children and throwing them through the windows to load up the lorries when we took them away for the transport to Auschwitz. They were absolutely treated diabolical.

You mean, the Germans threw children into the lorries.

That's right. They threw Jewish children also into the lorries, from the windows. From the ghetto, when we took the children homes out of the ghetto, which I transported myself, they were throwing the children from the window onto the lorries. But the time some of the children got to the trains, they were half dead. And this is what we call a civilized human race today.

So they had broken limbs?

Broken limbs, broken arms, all sorts of things.

Was the food in Auschwitz worse or better than in the ghetto?

I would say for me it was worse. I only got one bowl of soup the whole day in Auschwitz and a little, tiny piece of bread, which I don't think anybody could survive longer than a certain amount of time. In the ghetto I had a chance of having a potato or a beetroot or a bit of cabbage left on my truck, which I could bring home to help the rest of the

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family.

Before I started to tell you that my father and I and my mother and my brother were left in the ghetto. Now, every one of us had to work. My father was getting on a bit in age, but he was still a strong man. My mother was also getting on in age. Well, I honestly don't remember how old they were at the time. But they looked very old to me, being a child.

Well, my brother and I took the task upon us to work their shifts. I worked on the transport. My father was supposed to use his horse and cart, working for the transport. I was looking after horses for the transport commission, the German horses. So what I used to do, I used to work at night looking after the horses, grabbed as much sleep as I could, and work during the day on my father's shift. So my father shouldn't work so hard with the amount of food he got, trying to keep him alive.

My brother did the same thing for my mother. She worked in a feather place. So he worked in a laundry at night, doing his shift as a night shift doing the laundry. And during the day he worked for my mother's shift. They didn't care who worked as long as somebody did the work for the person who was there.

Every person had to work to qualify for his food, for the ration, for a certain amount of food. If you didn't work, you get less food than when you did work. So this is how it went. And the people who didn't work got nine marks a week.

I remember there was a song, which they used to sing. If you want a part, I can sing it for you.

Yes, please.

[NON-ENGLISH SINGING]

Meaning that the 9 mark, which you got, you should have really got it not only once a week but three times a week to be able to live. By the time you saw the postman, your eyes were already out of your head. And by the time you saw the money, you were half dead. There was a singer in the ghetto, he used to make up those songs. You know, all sorts of songs about the ghetto [NON-ENGLISH] and the lageralteste from the ghetto, Rumkowski. He wasn't really a lager. He was the eldest of the Juden in the ghetto. That was his title. That means that he was in charge of all the Jews in the ghetto.

I think you brought this up in connection with comparing the food in the ghetto with Auschwitz.

The food in the ghetto was that much better, I would say, than Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, they just gave you the minimum of food to survive. In fact, I believe that they worked it out that the average person could only survive three months because after three months, they had another selection. They undressed you in the nude again, and they made you go through another selection. And the people who didn't qualify that selection were taken back to Auschwitz, gassed, and burned in the crematoriums.

So I figured out that they only worked it out that the people could only last three months. And by some sort of miracle, people lasted longer.

So did you personally have that further inspection after three months?

I had several inspections, several inspections.

Every three months?

Every three months, near enough every three months. In one of the camps it was six months in the beginning, but then every three months. We went through those elections continuously. In fact, I would say, if the war would have lasted another three months, most of the people which I was with would have all been dead.

So how long did you say you were in Auschwitz?

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In Auschwitz, I was only about three months. I was working in a camp called Czechowice. And I was working for a factory called Vacuum and Oil Company. It was an English factory, ironically, which was taken over by the Germans. I believe they were producing oil in it. I wouldn't know.

So you were taken from Auschwitz to Czechowice?

That's right. And I worked-- it was a part, a camp which was part of Auschwitz. It belonged to IG Farben.

Did your brother go with you to Czechowice?

Yes, all the time. I was together with my brother right till near enough the end. My brother died in my arms on the trains, of dysentery. And it was only a matter of three or four weeks before the war ended. I myself, when they were collecting the dead bodies with the carts in Theresienstadt, I was so fed up in my life-- I felt it was finished and there was nothing to live for-- that I put myself on one of those carts with the dead bodies. And I went unconscious.

When they took off the dead bodies, when they arrived there, they must have found that I was still alive and put me in a hospital. And when I woke up, I found myself in a hospital called [NON-ENGLISH] in Theresienstadt.

So when you went to Czechowice, this was to do what kind of work, for you personally?

I was a laborer. That's all. I wasn't trained to do anything. I was all the time a laborer. I was clearing out factories. I was clearing-- I was digging ditches. I was cleaning out tanks, the residue from the oil. I was unloading trains, trucks, lorries. I was unloading coal, dust, cement, which went on your lungs.

And in order to survive, we pinched an empty bag from the cement. It was terribly cold at the time in Poland. And in order to shield yourself a little bit from the cold, we opened up the top of the bag from the cement, put our heads through and the rest of the hands through the sides in order to keep away some of the cold. Because we had no clothes. We were wearing, literally, a thin pajama. That's all we had in this most severe winter.

How people survived, you're asking me today. I don't know. That people didn't die of cold alone was a miracle. Everything was a miracle. We were standing out there on appell. One person went missing. He died in the factory for some reason or another, never returned. They would keep the rest of the group outside in that cold for hours, looking for that valuable bit of merchandise which disappeared, which they put in the ovens anyway.

They would keep us out there till some of the people dropped on the floor frozen to death, like lumps of ice. How we survived, nobody will ever know.

How was the work supervised?

By Jewish vorarbeiters and by Jewish foremen. One German would guard a whole group. Then they would have parties of six, seven, which they had their own vorarbeiter. Then they would have a group of about 20 groups, which would have their own kapo, which looked after all of them. They were very well organized, I would say, in different groups and in different-- like an army of workers, with captains and generals and soldiers and sergeants and everything, and corporals as well.

Was the work supervised in a brutal way or not?

In a very brutal way, very brutal way. They extracted as much energy in a day as they possibly could. And some of the camps where I went-- when I went back because everybody knew the final result, everybody wanted to live another day, people were carried back, literally, in the evening.

We usually had about two or three miles walk to work. And people were literally carried back, fell into a heap in the evening, and in the morning somehow they got back again in order not to stop in the hospital. If they stopped in the

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hospital too long, there was usually a selection. The Germans would come around with trucks, pick up everybody from the hospital, take them away, and that was the end. I mean, there were so many things all during the time you were in the camps, which you had to guard from.

I myself had to have a tooth extracted. I was a young boy. They took me in, held my arms, opened my mouth, pulled out my teeth. I nearly died of fright alone. I thought, God knows what they're going to do with two blokes holding me down, another one pulling at my mouth, just like savages, and pulled out my tooth.

Because you complained to somebody of toothache?

I had a toothache, yeah.

Who did you complain to?

To one of the people in the camps, to a vorarbeiter.

How long were you at this factory doing the work?

I was there, in this place-- this was part of Auschwitz. This is part of my three months which I spent in Auschwitz. I would say that the whole time I was there in Auschwitz and in Czechowice and in all those camps before I went on the death march, which they called a death march-- we marched from Auschwitz to Buchenwald. I was there about six months.

And then the Russians come near, and they started to march us on this death march. And you've never seen so many people get shot. My brother at the time, who I keep on repeating myself and telling you, was quite strong still. And he carried me, I would say, for about 10 miles of that of that march.

There was no way I could walk anymore. I begged him to leave me and let me lie there to-- everybody who lay down, they just shot him. And you could walk on that march, as we were walking, there was hundreds and hundreds of people lying there, corpses all over. You were walking like in a corpse factory. We never thought that any of us was going to survive. Then I arrived in Buchenwald.

Before we go on to Buchenwald, could I ask you about the march? Could you hear the approach of the front when they took you from--

We heard the guns, yes. We heard the shooting when I was still in Czechowice. In fact everybody was in-- the Germans were, then, really in a panic. And some of the German kapos and people who were sick, they left them in the camp. And I saw that my brother, that we would play sick and stop there. But my brother was very much against it.

He, I think, who was a bit older than me, had more sense than I had. Because after the war, I went back there. They told me that everybody who was left there got shot. They killed the lot of them.

In fact, after the war, my sister and myself and one of my brothers-- I don't know whether I should start again confusing you. In the beginning of the war, they said they were going to make LÃ³dz judenrein. They were meaning that they were going to clear all the Jews out of LÃ³dz, and they were going to-- they called it Litzmannstadt, which was going to-- LÃ³dz was going to become the Third Reich. The Third Reich, meaning part of Germany.

So they cleared the whole town out of the Jews. My father at the time was slaughtering a cattle the ritual way. They caught him, and they put him in prison. And because my father didn't want to divulge the person, the slaughterer who slaughtered the cow, because for this, for the slaughterer, it would have been certain deaths, they kept my father in prison.

But my brother and I took the cart, and one of my sisters, my youngest sister. We went to a place called Kielce. The actual place we went to was a little village called Mniow, where my family had a-- or my aunt had a very big farm. My

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brother went back with the cart, home, to look after my mother. My sister, and I stopped in this place.

I just want to explain to you how many miracles we went through. My sister stopped in this place. And I decided that it wasn't for me. I was only very young. I was 12 years old at the time. I missed my mother terribly. And I didn't care at the time what was going to happen to me. I wanted to be with my mother and my own family. Although the aunt and the uncle were very close to us because their children used to stay with us, but I, for one reason or another I will never explain, decided I wanted to be with my parents.

I took a little bag with me because we took all the parcels out of our home because we brought it to this village. My mother didn't have any more any under-gowns, nothing. I took the few under-gowns on my back, decided to walk to my town. Now that wasn't an easy task. From my town to the place where I was, I would say it must be 100 miles. I was 12 years old.

So I kept on walking and walking. And a cousin of mine decided to come with me. Eventually we caught lifts, and we went on carts and all sorts of-- we arrived in a place called Koluszki, which was the central station where the trains changed places. And we arrived there at night. And there was a sperre on. A sperre mean that it was forbidden. That closed up the-- 9 o'clock, nobody was supposed to leave the houses.

Curfew.

Curfew. Now we arrived in the middle of the night, and there were-- we were supposed to get across a bridge, which the trains were going underneath. When we got to the bridge, we saw the soldiers guarding the bridge. When the soldier walked to one side, away from the bridge, we ran onto the bridge, ran across the bridge. The other-- we didn't realize there was another one on the other side-- started to chase us, started to shooting-- shoot at us. We ran into the first door, which we could master to get to.

We opened the door. The woman let us in. She didn't realize we were Jews. She thought we were Poles. So she tried to help us. Of course, by the time we started to talk to her, she found out we were Jews. So she took away all our possessions. The few possessions which I had taken for my mother, she took them away from me.

Just stole them?

Well, I wouldn't say stole them. I was glad that she saved us from the Germans, I suppose. I was a child. It must have been bribery so that she shouldn't give us over to the Germans. I don't know. Anyway, maybe she stole them, as you say. I know I woke up in the morning-- I had them under my head, in the morning they were gone.

And we started making our way through Brzezin into LÃ³dz. When I arrived in LÃ³dz, the ghetto was virtually closed. I had to jump over the fence in Marysin, where there was the Jewish burial, where they buried the Jews. I went over the fence and made my way home.

When my mother saw me, she thought it was a miracle. She couldn't believe her own eyes, that I, as a child, should make my way for so many miles to arrive home. Now what was I getting at? I was getting at that my sister, who stopped in that village, after the war I wrote to the men of the village, to the man who was in charge of the village, which they called the [POLISH] in Polish. He was like a--

The mayor.

The mayor of the village. And he wrote back to me a letter saying that all the people, all the Jewish people from that village were taken out to the woods, and all of them were shot. And there wasn't a single survivor. So this is another miracle, which we survived-- or which I survived.

So we were talking about the approach of the Russians to Auschwitz and the starting up of this death march. How did the Germans kill the stragglers, the people who couldn't keep up?

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They just shot them. As soon as anybody laid down, they took their rifle and shot them, and shot them dead, shot them through the head. That was the whole-- you could walk for miles and miles and miles, and this is what happened on every step of the way. Every yard of the way, there was corpses lying, dead corpses. As soon as you sat down, you couldn't go any more, bang, finish. You could hear the shots going on and on and on.

And some people, quite honestly, even if they could walk, just sat down. They had enough. They didn't want to-- they didn't want to carry on anymore.

Were you provided with any food on the way and water?

There was no water, and there was no food. We stopped in one place, in a cattle barn, where the farmer provided a few potatoes and jackets for us.

Was he German or Polish?

German, a German farmer. I think he was made to do that by the German authorities. They probably paid him for it. I don't know.

I remember sleeping in that barn for a few hours. And then we were put onto trains on the German border. And again packed into the trains with such severity-- in fact, I had some pictures which were taken there by some partisans during the war. When they opened up the trains, the closed wagons which we traveled in, half of them were dead, suffocated, when we arrived in Buchenwald.

And then again we went through the selection, and the bathing, and the whole business all over again.

Were people fighting each other in the wagons?

Fighting? [LAUGHS] Nobody could lift their arms up. You can't even imagine. They were pressed in like sardines. Nobody could fight. Nobody could relieve himself. You had to relieve yourself as you were standing. You couldn't breathe, never mind fight.

It was-- as I say, you can't put those things down on tape. It's things you can't write into books. It's things if you don't experience yourself, you will never know them. It's no good us saying that we're going to hand our thoughts and our experiences onto the next generation. I can't see that possible because the things which we went through, like in the trains, the experience in the trains, you were standing there like a sardine. If you want to relieve yourself, you had to relieve yourself in your trousers.

When they opened up the wagons, you could just see people drop down. You were lying, actually, next to dead bodies. How can you put this down on tape, and how can you write about it? Who will believe you?

How long were you in this train?

We traveled for days in those trains. They were shinting us backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards. We must have been the most valuable possessions that the Germans had. They didn't let go of us. Every time they went back from the front, they took us with us. They counted us hundreds of times, like if you would count money, the most valuable possession.

They would keep us on those appell places for hours. If one of the boys or one of the persons died in a camp or disappeared, we would stay there until half of the people froze to death before they let us in again. And of course, if anybody ran away and they caught him, there was only one place they could-- they would take him. They would erect gallows in the middle of the camp and hang him. There was no court, no appeal, no nothing.

And this was the campaign of terror, which they continued with the hangings and the-- I myself think that periodically they did it on purpose to scare the people in the camp. For no reason they would select at random several people and

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hang them and show the rest of the people what they could do.

Mr. Zylberszac, reel four. Was Buchenwald the same as Auschwitz, or were there any differences?

Buchenwald was a working lager. It wasn't a vernichtungslager. I tried to explain to you in the beginning of the tape the difference between the three. Now, Buchenwald was a working lager. They selected people from Buchenwald to take to all sorts of different camps to work in.

Again, I must emphasize to you that they only took the able bodies to extract the energy from them. I was in Buchenwald for a very, very short time, my brother and I. Again, my brother being still physically quite strong and big, they selected him. In every camp, he was elected the first. In actual fact, when a kapo or a vorarbeiter would select two or three people to unload a train, they would take my brother, himself. He was an extremely strong man.

So when they selected my brother to go to Rehmsdorf again from Buchenwald-- I found Buchenwald quite a good camp for me anyway. I came worn out from the experiences of Auschwitz and the death march. And I would say, in Buchenwald I recuperated. Although the food wasn't marvelous, we did get enough food. We didn't have to work. The sleeping accommodation wasn't fantastic, but it was better than in other camps which I have been in. So it was really like a convalescent home for me.

What was the sleeping accommodation in Buchenwald?

We were sleeping in the same--

Hut?

In every place we had huts, where we were. But the actual accommodation was pritsches, which they're called pritsches, which the English word would be bunks. In Buchenwald we slept, for instance-- I'll give you the example so you know the difference. We slept eight to a bunk in Buchenwald. In Auschwitz, it was 16 to a bunk, to the same bunk. So there was no possibility in Auschwitz to turn.

The same bunks we slept in in Rehmsdorf, which was a workings lager, we slept there about five, six to a bunk. So this was the different things which happened in different camps.

In Buchenwald I found that I recuperated quite a lot and got some of my strength back. I was only there about four or five weeks, but in those five weeks, I believe I got quite a bit of my strength back. I would have never survived had I had to go straightaway to another camp without stopping the Buchenwald.

Buchenwald was called a durchgangslager.

What does it mean?

A durchgangslager means a transit camp.

Who seemed to be in charge at Buchenwald?

Again, the Buchenwald people were there, German Jews which were there, I think, since before the war. And they were the hardened inmates who were in charge and running the camp. And I think that those inmates, because they were Germans and because they were there through the whole of the war, since before the war, had more understanding and more compassion than the ones which were terrorized and were hardened to try to survive.

In fact, a lot of the inmates-- I think I should put it to you that people should understand what happened in those camps. A man who was in charge of one camp, a kapo, a lageralteste, vorarbeiter, it was a vicious circle. When he came to another camp, they were told that he was a bad guy in this camp so he got beaten to death in this camp by the inmates.

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Then the people who were in charge in the other camp go to another camp, and the inmates beat them to death because they were the bad guys. Really and truly, it was-- the work was done for the Germans without having to do it themselves. They put somebody in charge. They made him do all the terrible things. When he came to another camp, the inmates from the other camp killed him.

Now in Buchenwald, a lot of people got killed by the people who were in charge of the camp in Buchenwald from all the other little camps which they came in. If he was a vorarbeiter, if he was a kapo, if he'd done anybody any harm in the other camps, the German who were there from before the war, the old inmates, the old haftlings they called them-- we were also called haftlings, but they were all old campaigners, a lot of them. And they tried to explain to us the rules of the camps, how to behave to each other and not to do the Germans work for them because it didn't work because everybody wanted to live another day. And to be in a situation like this, you really have to be in it.

I say it is easy for a man to be brave when he has a full stomach. You show me the biggest heroes today, put them all in a cage, don't feed them for a week, throw a loaf of bread in from the top, and you'll see how they kill each other. You can do this experiment yourself.

Did you see any kapos beaten to death?

Oh, several times. People who came from the LÃ³dz ghetto to Auschwitz, the chief of police, the man, the criminal, the most notorious criminal, which was called Janek Szmadnik, took a belt around his neck. And he lifted him up by his head-- he was an extremely strong man-- and he hung him there and then.

And this is what went on. In one camp you were a criminal, in the other camp you were the most up to-- upstanding man. This was the unfortunate thing about the whole thing. Even after the war people got killed by other inmates because they were doing-- they thought that they were doing terrible things.

Myself, I think I wouldn't blame too much those people. I think they were put in an impossible position to do an impossible job.

You mean the kapos?

Yeah. And if they didn't do their job the way the Germans wanted it done, they would kill them themselves. It's like the Sonderkommando. They got a job to stand near the ovens and burn the bodies and chase the people into the crematoriums. Now, if they didn't do their job, they were chased into the crematoriums themselves. So I don't know what choice they had.

I don't know how many people would be brave enough to go into the crematoriums themselves or chasing their own relatives. I myself wouldn't like to be the judge of those things.

So you were taken from Buchenwald to Rehmsdorf?

A place called Rehmsdorf, yes-- the most terrible camp I have ever been to. That was definitely the worst camp you could ever go to. I was there with about 600 other inmates. And I believe at the end of the-- I think it is now been proved by people who have studied the camp and have written books about it, that I think about 70 or 80 people survived, maybe not even as many as that, from 600.

Why was it so much worse than Auschwitz?

The work was extremely hard. I worked in a place called [NON-ENGLISH]. [NON-ENGLISH] was a place which we were digging under the sand, making bunkers for the Germans to hide their equipment and hide their ammunition and disguise all these things which they possessed. It was working in a sand quarry.

In a what?

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Sand quarry. You had to work all the time. And with the amount of food you got, there was no way anybody was going to survive longer than a few months, no way. And actually, my brother, that's where his strength was sapped out from his body. I mean, there was nothing left anymore after that. And I myself was already near enough finished.

Of course, there was dysentery also going around in that camp. A lot of people died of dysentery. But even the people who didn't die-- when we arrived, 300 of us, they took 300 away. That was three months before, they arrived, the other people. They took them away, never been seen again.

Anybody who got taken away-- you were scared to get ill. You were terrified. I mean, it was the most terrible thing in a camp, when you got ill.

What happened when you got ill? They took you into the sick house, which was called the sick place. And you might stay there a week or two weeks, and nothing would happen. One day you could be taken in there, the same day a whole German group would come around with trucks around the sick house. Everybody in the sick house would go on the trucks, finish. You were dead.

So there were so many things you had to avoid and be scared of and dodge. I mean, I remember being in Czechowice, in that camp, going back to Czechowice. We were 300 Polish Jews there, old campaigners so to speak. We lived already three, four years with the Germans in the war. And about 300 German Jews arrived straight from Germany, strong men.

I mean, we already couldn't get out in the morning to wash. We did our little best. We knew how to scrounge and hide. And they got up in the morning before us, started to do exercise, washed themselves with the cold water of the troughs which used to be left where the horses used to be. We all had to go out and wash themselves. We stayed in a barn there, where they kept horses before the war. So the troughs were the water was for the horses were still there.

The German Jews used to get up in the morning, get out there, wash themselves, clean themselves, do the exercise. We already knew that every little bit of energy in our body we had to save to live another day. They didn't realize that. After a month, they disappeared like flies. I've never seen a group of people disappear quicker than those people disappeared.

When we marched out of that camp, I can't think of any who survived from it. In fact, from Czechowice, from the camp, there were 600 people. I know myself that about three survived. And one of them is the famous writer, who wrote the chronicles of the Jewish-- of the LÃ³dz ghetto, called Lucjan Dobroszycki. He was together, in fact, with me right through the war, in the ghetto.

And he was together with me in Czechowice. He was together with me in Buchenwald. He was together with me in Rehmsdorf. And he was together with me in Theresienstadt. We went right through the ghetto.

I, by accident, met him when he came here after the war to publicize his book or-- and by some unknown miracle, he recognized me. I didn't recognize him, I must say, you know. But he recognized me, and we spoke. We never got a chance to spoke very much because he went back to America. But one day I still have to talk to him because he-- I think that he was just a year or two older than me, and he might know just a little bit more than I know and probably several things which I missed. And he probably, with a memory like his, would remember.

You spoke about the dysentery at Rehmsdorf. But had you had dysentery before in the other camps? Or was this different?

Rehmsdorf was some sort of disease, some sort of dysentery where people fell like flies. There was no water. That was, I think, part of it. And the water which we got, because there was an oil factory, was soaked with oil. And the bombing which went on-- Rehmsdorf, I think is part of Dresden. And Dresden was severely bombed all the time. And every time we started to work in the factory, the planes came over and bombed it again. So there was no water.

And of course, the little drop of water which they had, the Germans kept for themselves. So the water, which we tried to drink was all soaked up with oil and with sewage and everything else. Everybody in the camp had dysentery. And unfortunately, my brother caught it. And this is the disease he died from. He faded away to nothing. A man who was a

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giant died like a skeleton.

I had him in my arms when he died. And there was nothing I could do. Thinking back of it, I sometimes have-- I sometimes blame myself that he had to do so much for me to help me that he didn't survive. I think if he would have saved some of the energy to use it for himself, maybe he would have had a better chance of surviving.

So when were you move from Rehmsdorf to Theresienstadt, right at the end of the war?

At the end of the war, when the Germans already felt that they lost the war. In fact, the war was already lost. There was terrible panic. And again, we went on the trains, which were taking us to Theresienstadt. But all the trains-- again, this thing you can't visualize because the Germans had to use the trains for moving troops and ammunition and all sorts of things.

And I can't understand for the life of me, the most important things to the Germans was to move us. Why they didn't leave us where we were and move their own soldiers? We had priority over everything. They took us, the skeletons, the dead bodies on the trains, trying to take us to Theresienstadt. I don't know at the time where they wanted to take us.

On the way there, either the Americans or the Russians came along, smashed the trains to smithereens. We run-- the people who could-- I would say about 60% of the people were killed in the trains.

By the bombs?

By the bombs. I know that for a fact because I ran away to the woods with several other people. And when I came back, some old man in the woods caught us. He was a man who guards the woods.

Forester.

A forester. He had his old gun. He was about 99 and 1/2. There was about 10, 12 of us. If we would have blown strong enough, we could have blown him over. And he said to us, if he doesn't find the rest of the group, he will just have to shoot us. This is the mentality and this is the way they were brainwashed, the Germans, that we were some sort of disease or some sort of rodent which they had to get rid of. He would shoot us if he can't find the rest of the transport which we ran away from.

Another miracle, he walked with us a mile or two, and we found the trains which we ran away from. And there were thousands of bodies sprayed all over the ground there because there weren't only people from our camp. They attached the trains to several people, from Buchenwald, from all sorts of different camps. And the left me there to load up the bits of the bodies onto the train.

I loaded up heads and arms and all sorts of limbs to the train. We loaded up wagon loads of bits from people to take away. And then I was marched on to the rest of the group. We caught up with them. And from there I was taken into Theresienstadt.

Was Theresienstadt any better?

Oh, yes. When we arrived in Theresienstadt, we could already see the people who lived there. Theresienstadt, again, was a model camp. It was a camp which the Germans kept especially for the Red Cross people, to bring them there. They kept a few old people, a few children, and a few of the dignitaries which were half Jewish, people who had some influence in Germany before the war. And they kept them there.

And if they had to take the Red Cross to a camp to show them how the inmates live, they took them to Theresienstadt. And the people there were that much better fed. And although they didn't have too much food, they had much more food than we did. And when we arrived there, it was straightaway we had medical attention and all sorts of things which we never had before.

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What kind of medical attention?

Doctors, nursing-- we seemed to be-- I, myself, I explained to you in the beginning, I was finished. I just lay down as dead. They took me off the cart, put me into the hospital, and treated us straightaway quite well, even before the end of the war.

It was only a matter of a few days. But if it wouldn't be for this medical attention, which we received straightaway, I think quite a few more people would have died, quite honestly. But the difference between the Czech people and the Polish people was so terrific and so enormous that it moved us all to tears.

When we arrived in Czechoslovakia, the Czech people were so overcome. They've never seen anything like it in their life. Although they didn't have too much food, the bit of food which they had, they threw at us bread. They threw at us food. Whatever they could, they threw it us to-- of course, if the Germans who marched us saw it, they shot them. But they didn't care, the Czech people. They tried to help at the time as much as they could.

I have got no words for them which will praise them enough. I thought it was-- after what we went through, the most horrific thing which you could ever see.

Did you see any of them shot for giving food to you?

Not personally, but I was told by my friends that they saw some of them being shot. They were shooting at them in our presence, but I didn't actually see anybody hit. And while I was-- I think this should also go down on record. While I was still in Rehmsdorf, which was part of Dresden, they shot down some airplanes there. And while the people were still sitting in the parachutes, the soldiers, the German soldiers were shooting at them and killing them.

So they were just beasts. That's all I can tell you. When I looked at a German soldier, I didn't look at him as a human being. I looked at him like a wild animal, like a man who looks at a beast who's going to eat you or kill you. Whenever they went near you, you wanted to become invisible so that they shouldn't be able to tread on you and do away with you like you do away with an insect or a bug or any creature which is repugnant to you.

It's unbelievable that a race who were that cultured should have stepped to such a low level. It proves to me one thing, nobody will convince me that any race in any people can't step down to the same level. I definitely believe that if you're given the conditions of certain conditions, that any human being can be made to do anything.

Whilst you're at Theresienstadt, did you realize that the war was finishing?

No. No. I must say, no. You know, it's difficult for people to understand that we become morons. I became a moron. I wouldn't say "we" because I can only speak for myself. I knew the war was coming to an end. But never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that they would let us live. In fact, they prepared everything, in Theresienstadt even, at the last minute, not to leave any evidence, I was told after the war.

It's only some sort of miracle that the camp commander of Theresienstadt wanted to save himself, that he went to the Russians, to the commander of the-- give some message over to the Russian commander what was happening, and they came and liberated the camp. Otherwise, there would have been no survivors in Theresienstadt either.

Can you remember the Russians coming into the camp?

Oh, yes. I personally can't remember, but I was in hospital at the time. But there was terrific joyous occasion for everybody. And they-- I think they behave towards us in a fantastic manner. I have got no words but praise for them.

Myself, I caught typhoid straight away afterwards. Somebody I knew during the war came in also sick to the camp, and there was no beds. So I let them sleep in my bed. And from him I caught the typhoid.

And we were both taken away to a Russian hospital. And the nurses and the medication and the treatment and

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everything they give us was the best they could, in my opinion. They never spared nothing. They showed us only kindness.

The only problem they had, I should imagine, they released a lot of the people too early because they had so many sick people, which they-- and very small accommodation for them. I went down too early from the hospital after typhoid and my mind collapsed.

And I remember telling my friends all sorts of things, that I wanted to go home. And then I imagined in my mind that my family is at home, and they're all waiting for me because my mind didn't want to accept, after the war, what happened. I was ready with the cases to go on the train to go back to Poland. Two of my friends, who are now here, Meyer Cohen and Charlie Lewkowicz, stopped me, took me off the train, and said, you know, don't-- you know, tomorrow. They humored me, that I'll go another day.

But then you very well that I wasn't well in mind. And thank God through them that I came to England.

How long was it before you got back to normal?

It was-- it must have been only a short time. And in fact, I remembered all the things I said. All my family has died except some cousins who survived. And when the Russians let me out, it was very difficult at the time, if you didn't have anybody you stuck together with. I found myself a room, and I locked myself in that room.

I was physically unable to get out of bed to go and get food. And by the time my friends, Chaim Lewkowicz, and Meyer Cohen found me, I must have already been, not unconscious, but out of my mind. And they found me again in the nick of time, and they brought some food for me. And slowly, slowly I recuperated and come back to my senses.

Did the experience in the camps leave any long-term effects with you?

Well, it's 40 years after the war. I don't know whether you call it long.

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