

Escape

Stanisław Czernicki

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This document is dedicated to my uncle Stanisław Czernicki.

Once, I stumbled upon a Polish book in someone's bookcase: '*Stories from teachers*'. The first chapter was written by Stanisław and tells the story of his escape from the concentration camp. This project is to translate the story from Polish to English, and to do a background research on the mentioned names.



Figure 1.1: Dyrektor Stanisław Czernicki.

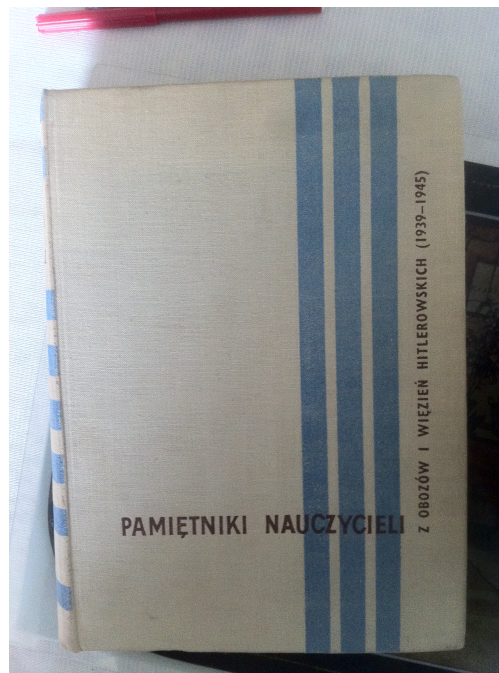


Figure 1.2: Teachers memories.

Chapter 2

Auschwitz

My memories have survived for seventeen years. Perhaps it will not be an accurate description. After so many years some events have been worn off already in my memory - others, though, are still fresh. I will try to present them as accurately as possible, as they have seen and experienced - first as a prisoner of the Nazi concentration camps in 1942-1944, then as a fugitive from the camp, hiding until the end of the war.

I did not write those memories so far as the vision of the camp have always been before my eyes. Also, I experienced everything again in my dreams. I tried to forget. As a result, I did not get mad. Currently, all these events are just a distant memory. And if he did not notice the advertisement in "Voice of a Teacher", I would not have described them at all.

Twelfth of March 1943, after a year's stay in Auschwitz, I was enlisted for transport to the concentration camp at Neuengamme. The Lagerführer (camp-leader) from that camp came for us: Lucie Mayer. He chose a few musicians and one-thousand healthiest prisoners, among whom I found myself. A similar group was sent to Buchenwald. March 13, after a thorough review, we already were on the way. By what cities we were driving - I can not say; we were transported on wired freight wagons. We sat on the floor in rows of five, and in the middle of the wagon were two armed SS men who guarded us. Escape was out of the question. We drove to the unknown - perhaps for better, perhaps for worse, who knows. For me, personally, a stone fell from my heart. I left a human slaughterhouse, from which it was a great fortune to get out alive. Many people there were killed. Counting them is impossible. I do not know if anyone would be able to read the names of the tortured. I doubt whether history will unearth the data.

Chapter 3

Neuengamme

Our journey was long. Our bones aching from sitting. Around noon on the third day we arrived at a small station near Hamburg called Neuengamme. We got surrounded by young punks from the SS of around seventeen - eighteen years old. Of course, with rifles, bayonets and dogs. After an hour's march we came to a concrete square. Around us, miserable barracks, and next to them even more miserable human skeletons. Between the barracks wire-fences, probably to prevent making contact with each other. After Auschwitz, the camp seemed to us at that time as a camp-site. The terrible state of the local prisoners savouring our horror, that in a few weeks, we'll look the same.

They separated us into blocks. We got the new numbers. I received a number 18 665. Instead of striped pyjamas, we were provided civilian clothes that belonged to those that were killed. On the clothes, a red cross painted with oil paint on the chest and backside. No jews were in the camp, except for those who lived under an faked name. The majority of the prisoners were German politicians (the Communists), otherwise it was a bit of criminals-burglars, and the rest were Poles. This camp already had several branches: Bremen, Varge, Dritte and others. Prisoners from the Neuengamme were often sent to these branches.

A thousand of healthy, reasonably well-looking prisoners, those who already had a unbelievable experience and only saved from death by chance, they revived the camp.

On the third day we were led to a long square, still covered with snow. On the other side of the square was kennel in which there were 50 dogs. On this square, a gun factory had to be built, called Fertigungstelle. Further 500 meters to the east there was a canal, on which boats and tugs were moving, importing sand for the construction of future factories and other construction materials. Next to the canal was a large brick



Figure 3.1: A sick Polish survivor in the Hannover-Ahlem subcamp receives medicine from the Red Cross, 11 April 1945

factory.

The construction manager was a tall SS man, Unterscharführer Rese, called by the prisoners Maciejewski. The name was given because, like the cat Maciejewski, he killed people. The function of oberkapa was filled by prisoner Walter Block, a decent German-communist. They divided us into groups. First, we moved earth, then we brought in the materials. I was assigned to a group of moving sand. We carried it by barrows, four persons per barrow. From the canal to the construction site. We were constantly on the move. It was terribly cold - coastal winds pierced the flesh to the bone. Everyone who could, collected some paper from cement bags and put it in the underwear. But pity to him who got caught. He got a beating until it was too painful to watch. However, we were forced to cross the ordinance, as the cold was unbearable, often aggravated by rainy-snow. The effects of the cold soon came to us. On our heads and necks we got ulcers, tormenting us incredibly.