HELL *WAS MY HOME*

The True Story of Arnold Shay
Survivor of the Holocaust



By

Donald Grey Brownlow

and

John Eleuthère du Pont

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HELL WAS MY HOME

Arnold Shay, Survivor of the Holocaust



Abraham Lejzor Szyjowicz
Arnold Shay

Dedicated to

BALA SHAY

10 September 1923 — 23 July 1977

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PREFACE

The human brain works like a filter. Were we continuously to be reminded of all the tragic events of our lives, it would break our hearts.

Nevertheless, we must not wholly repress and ignore the memories of our past, we have to face them, and especially help future generations to draw a lesson from our fate.

It was the Nazis' strength that their crimes were on such an incredible scale that till today many people simply will not believe their full extent. Neo-Nazis and other right-wing extremists find believers for their lies among those who cannot accept that men have done such things to fellow human beings.

The memoirs of Arnold Shay, and many more like them, are therefore needed to prevent the Nazi horrors from being forgotten. Only remembrance can prevent a recurrence.

SIMON WIESENTHAL

"The German revolution will not be any the gentler or milder for having been preceded by Kant's Critique and Fichte's transcendental idealism, let alone by the Naturphilosophie of our age. By means of these doctrines revolutionary forces have evolved which are only waiting for the day when they can break out and fill the world with horror and amazement. Kantians will come forward who will treat the phenomenal world without piety, and will rage with sword and claymore through the very foundations of our European life, extirpating its last roots in the past. Fichteans will appear on the scene, armed in their self-willed fanaticism, knowing neither fear nor self-interest; for they live in the spirit and defy the material world, like the first Christians who were similarly not to be overcome either by physical torture or physical temptation. *But more terrifying than any of these will be the 'Natur'-philosopher*. . . for he will be in league with the primaeval forces of Nature, conjuring up the daemonic powers of the old Germanic pantheism, and because in him that lust for battle will reawaken which is known to us from the Germans of ancient times, which does not fight to destroy, nor to conquer, but simply for the sake of fighting. It is the finest merit of Christianity that it has somewhat tamed that brutal German lust for battle, though without destroying it completely. And on the day when that potent talisman, the Cross, will break, the savagery of the old warriors will flare up again, and the mindless Berserkers' fury of which the Nordic bards have sung. That talisman is rotten, and the day will come when it will fall to pieces altogether. Then the old gods of stone will rise up from the ancient ruins and will rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes, and Thor with his giant hammer will leap up at last and shatter the Gothic cathedrals. . .

Don't laugh at these fantastical visionaries who are expecting that the realm of appearances will be shaken by the same revolution as that which shook the realm of the spirit. The idea comes before the deed, as lightning comes before thunder. Now, the German thunder, like the German himself, is not very subtle and a little slow in coming. But come it will. And when at last you hear such an explosion as you have never heard in all history, then you will know that the hour has struck. And when they hear this gigantic noise, the eagles will drop dead from the air, and the lions in the distant deserts of Africa will hide in their regal caves, their tails between their legs."

HEINRICH HEINE (1797–1856)

FOREWORD

When Arnold Shay asked me to write his story, I sincerely believed that I was unqualified to capture and relate fully the horror of this unholy crusade against humanity by Nazi Germany. His unflagging confidence gave me the fortitude to accept the challenge. Now, it is up to my readers to determine if I have succeeded in my goal.

I was highly honored, and pleased, when I learned that the world-famous Nazi hunter, Simon Wiesenthal, thought enough of this effort to write the Foreword. I know of no one more qualified in the subject of the Holocaust who could have given me a greater compliment.

The writing of the book entailed the cooperation of people far too numerous to mention by name. However, I must draw attention, in particular, to the assistance given to me by the governments of Austria, Israel, Poland and West Germany. I cannot escape pointing out the time and effort put into the correcting and pruning of the manuscript by Arnold Shay, Charles P. Dethier, Thomas D. Harrison, and my personal secretary Sandra B. Dobbs. Certainly, the religious advice about the Jews from Armand Cohen cannot be underestimated in any capacity.

My close colleague, John E. du Pont, was most helpful in researching the companies and personalities involved in the extermination process. Time consuming hours were spent discussing the format and publication of the book.

Let me assume that my contribution can be likened to the addition of one more brick in the wall of understanding, which will prevent the contamination of hatred and bigotry from engulfing mankind.

Haverford, 1983

Hell Was My Home

CHAPTER ONE

"Today I would find it difficult, if not impossible, to say when the word 'Jew' gave me cause for special thoughts for the first time."
A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

It was approaching midnight, and a bright summer moon shone over the most notorious extermination camp erected in Poland by Nazi Germany. A majority of the inmates of the Lager "D" were sleeping, when suddenly a piercing scream shattered the frayed nerves of those in bed. Soon, more screams and animal-like noises caused those in the hastily built wooden barracks to jump up to see what had happened. Auschwitz Number 135584, clad in his blue and gray zebra-striped prisoner's uniform with a yellow and red star sewn on the jacket, rushed to the window to see for himself why there should be trouble in the only quiet place in the entire camp.

In September, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, Arnold Leo Shay, born Abraham Lejzor Szyjowicz, was a seventeen-year-old student who, under different circumstances, probably would have served his life in obscurity and died unknown to the world. In May, 1945, he was one of the few survivors who personified the horror and degradation of the millions of people who died at the bloody hands of the Nazis. His only crime for being incarcerated was that he was a JEW!

As Arnold peered through the permanently sealed windows, he saw the shadowy figures of the Gypsies reflected by the moonlight and tower lights. There were cries for help as the truncheons made sickening thuds on the helpless bodies, but everyone knew that help was impossible. The Germans considered the Gypsies as inferior people, and used them for experiments. They were placed in the *Zigeunerlager,* next to Arnold's barracks, to be

exploited by the SS doctors. Now the poor unfortunate victims were crying in desperation as they were led off to the gas chambers for liquidation.

Actually, this was against the policy of SS Gruppenführer Richard Glücks, Inspector of Concentration Camps. Because of the wartime shortage of labor, he instructed the camp commandants on January 20, 1943, "to make every effort to reduce the mortality figure in the camp." Naturally, this had nothing to do with the Jews. By November 21, 1942, no relatives were informed of camp deaths; and all Jews were to be on collective lists. "Final reports on deaths of Jewish prisoners are therefore superfluous."

Arnold thought how lucky they really were to know their fate at last; on the other hand, mused Arnold, who wants to die? Someone had to survive the Holocaust to tell the truth of what really happened in Nazi Germany.

In order to escape from the horror of what was taking place in the hospital courtyard, Arnold closed his mind to the present and looked into the past. How wonderful, he thought, if he could return to Bedzin and once again be with his family!

Arnold, one of five children, was born on February 16, 1922, at home, Number 14 Plebanska Street, in the city of Bedzin, Poland. His father, Alexander Szyjowicz, was a skilled tailor, who passed on some of his talents to his son. This knowledge, more than Arnold's formal education, saved his life during the Nazi tyranny. Sara Szyjowicz (nee Druch) was the stereotype Jewish mother who doted over and worked hard for her family!

Life was difficult for the Szyjowicz family. Like most of the residents of Bedzin, they were very poor. Bargaining and trading kept food on the table, coal in the large tile stove, and clothes on their backs. Home was a two-room apartment in an old unpainted clapboard wooden home which housed about forty tenants. A large oaken door served as the only opening to the upper floors. Most of the surrounding land lacked green vegetation. The large, well-known Dombrowa coal mine was about two miles from Arnold's home.

In the Szyjowicz household, the rugs were embroidered sacks covering the well-worn softwood floors. The two rooms served

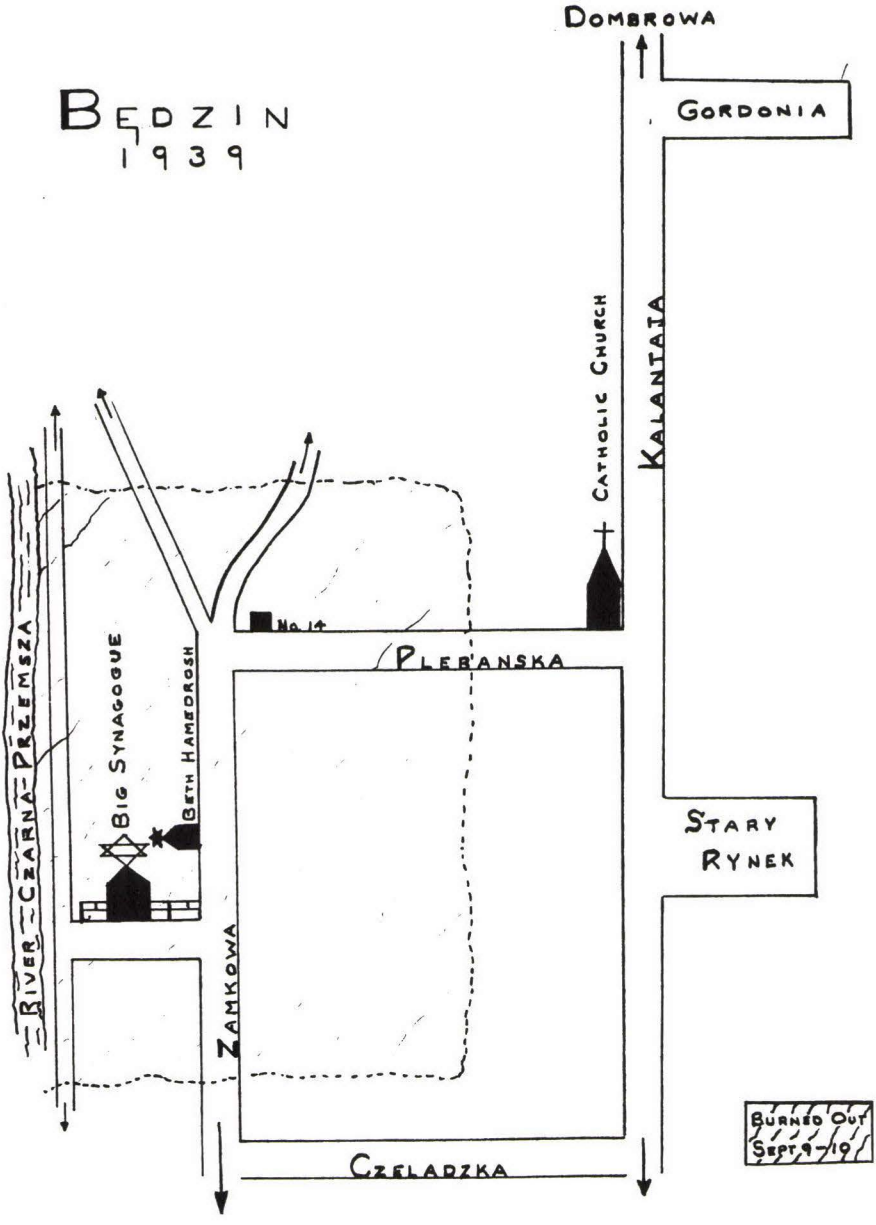
as a kitchen, dining room, living room and bedroom. During the day, the large crudely constructed wooden table served as a tailor's cutting board. At night, surrounded by cheaply created chairs, kerosene lamps, and the traditional lighting of the Sabbath candle with a daily prayer by Arnold's father, it became the dining room table. Iron pots and pans on the walls took the place of pictures.

Water for cooking and washing had to be brought by bucket from a single spigot in the courtyard, and twenty families shared the source of water. A small wooden building served as the toilet for everyone. There were five covered holes in the board seats, and the waste materials in the pit below were covered with quicklime. Once a month the city sanitation collectors would remove the excrement. There was no sewer — only a large open and putrid cesspool into which the neighborhood emptied their garbage and general refuse. The foul-smelling abyss was never cleaned; and it was a constant source of flies and rodents. Later, Arnold came to the ghastly conclusion that sanitation in Auschwitz was a vast improvement to what he had experienced at home.

The morning meal consisted of one piece of bread, occasionally flavored with butter or margarine. Since milk was scarce, and coffee too expensive, the meal was washed down with chicory. Luncheon usually meant a few slices of bread with white farmer's cheese, possibly some honey, and water from the faucet. At night, the family indulged in a huge pot of boiled potatoes.

When evening friends left, the table was pushed aside and the cots were pulled out from their hiding place. The two rooms looked like a hospital ward. The only window could not provide the cool air needed on the hot nights, nor could it prevent the icy winds from blowing into the apartment on the bitterly cold winter days. Sleeping was almost impossible under such extreme conditions.

Sara washed the homemade clothing in a large wooden tub; she scrubbed with brown hand-soap, which was similar to that Arnold later used in the kitchen at Auschwitz. The dry garments were placed either on the pegs on the back of the door or in the only closet. Though Arnold's family was poor — very poor — Sara believed in total cleanliness of home and family.


BEDZIN
1939
DOMBROWA
GORDONIA
KALANTAJA
CATHOLIC CHURCH
No 14
PLEBANSKA
STARY RYNEK
BIG SYNAGOGUE
BETH HAMEDRASH
RIVER CZARNA PRZEMSZA
ZAMKOWA
CZELADZKA
BURNED OUT SEPT 9-10

Bedzin, 1939

The homes were not only the social center of most Bedzin families, but they also served as refuges. Though eighty percent of the inhabitants of Bedzin were Jewish, of whom very few could be called wealthy or well-educated, the remaining twenty percent were troublesome Poles.

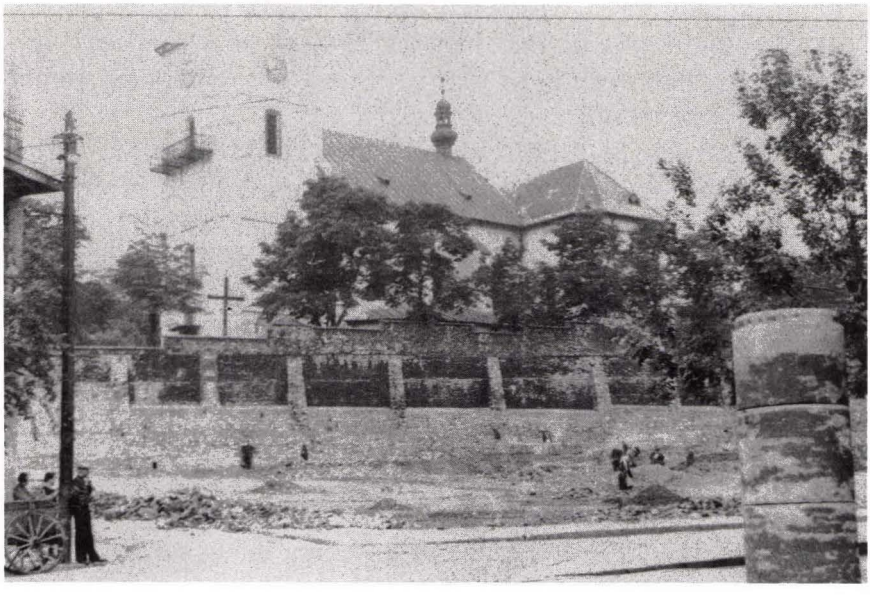
Most of the anti-Semitism in Poland could be attributed to the Roman Catholic Church. For eight hundred and fifty years, the church leaders had emphasized to their devout followers the concept that it was the Hebrews who were the "Christ Killers." Most Sunday mornings, the Jews would seek refuge in their homes as the greatly aroused Christians poured out of the churches in a mood to flog a Jew or burn down his home.

Polish laws clearly stated that one must stand trial if a Jew were killed, but few, if any, Christians ever went to jail. Certainly no one was ever prosecuted for breaking into or boycotting Jewish stores or burning down Jewish homes. Once a house was ignited there was little chance of anything being salvaged. The fire department consisted of an antiquated horse-drawn hand pump, and it often arrived very late if the firemen knew they were responding to a conflagration in a Jewish home.

Jews did not retaliate because the interpretations of the law overwhelmingly favored the Poles. If a Jew did get his case before a judge, the trial could last for years. As Arnold remarked to the author: "Poland's long history of discrimination and anti-Semitism could teach Hitler a lesson or two."

Only once in the long history of Jewry in Poland, did the Israelites enjoy what could be called a "Golden Age." This was during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when they were given special privileges by sympathetic kings. It did not last because of (a) pressures from the Catholic Church, (b) competing Christian merchants, and (c) the eventual destruction of Poland as a state.

When it was safe to go outdoors, families took walks or went to work. There were few Jewish theaters or places of entertainment for the poor Jew in Bedzin. Most just did not have the money for such things. A wedding would be a highlight; and often, for the poorer families, Arnold's father would provide the homemade wine, which was such a luxury that it never graced the dinner table at his home.



Catholic church near Jewish section in Bedzin



Destruction of Jewish homes by the Germans, near the Catholic church

Another exciting source of neighborhood entertainment was listening to Icek Gutman's radio. He would place it on his balcony for all to hear. What was not entertainment was the ravings and rantings of the brilliant beer-hall brawler who was made Chancellor of Germany in 1933. Eleven-year-old Arnold knew little nor comprehended what this man would do to his future. As he stood around in his wooden sandals, little cotton shorts and short-sleeved shirt, he would hear his elders discussing how the Germans would dispose of the "Bohemian Corporal" and good government would return. However, as Arnold grew older, and the German Chancellor's voice continued to blare from Gutman's radio, he sensed an ominous cloud of fear spreading over the neighborhood.

In 1933, there were five hundred thousand Jews in Germany, less than one percent of the population, and they were blamed for the signing of the hated Versailles Treaty, the government of the unpopular Weimar Republic, and the belief that the Jews invested their money outside a defeated and financially bankrupt nation. Once in power, the Nazis enacted a law which emphasized that the Jew was an alien and should "go home." Where was home to the eternally wandering Jew? If the Jews did not leave Germany, then it would be up to the *Sturmabteilungen* "bully boys" to encourage them to depart by boycotting Jewish-owned businesses. They also used brutal tactics of harassment and torment by forbidding Jews in public parks, buses, swimming pools and dismissing them from civil service. While this terrible calamity happened to about one percent of the German population, the majority of Germans basked in the euphoria of Adolf Hitler's charisma. They closed their eyes to what was happening to the Jews, sang "Deutschland Über Alles" and chanted "Sieg Heil" while their Führer spoke of peace and secretly plotted to conquer Europe.

As the "Sieg Heils" died away from Arnold's memory, he suddenly became aware of his gruesome surroundings. The pathetic screams of the unfortunate Gypsies could no longer be heard, and a shudder of fear swept over him. Arnold wondered when would it be his turn to go to the ovens, and what Jew could ever live through this hell on earth to tell the world what had happened?



Hitler and the Sturmabteilungen, Nuremberg, 1934

Number 135584 returned to his bed of wooden planks and filthy ticking to ponder how many tomorrows he would survive, and if there ever were a God why did He let this happen?

CHAPTER TWO

"An independent Polish state should be created which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant."

Woodrow Wilson, January 8, 1918

When Arnold stepped out of his barracks in the morning, the gates to *Zigeunerlager* were open. Not one person to be seen or heard. Silent. The whole Gypsy camp empty. The SS took the entire population last night. Throughout the night the trucks left the Lager for the crematorium — parents and children together. To the accompaniment of the inmate orchestra, the damned formed a single file and stumbled naked into the gas chambers.

Just yesterday, August 2, 1944, there had been life in the now empty Lager — mothers looking after their youngsters, and others writing letters to loved ones far away. Correspondence was important to the SS. The letters falsely reassured the folks at home that life went on as usual, and that the rumors of the death factories were just not true.

Arnold looked away from the emptiness of the camp on the other side of the barbed wire, and thought of home once more. Why not? Who wanted to be reminded that he was just another skeleton in the sea of emaciated persons wandering aimlessly about? Furthermore, the carefree Gypsy children had reminded Arnold of his early youth — days of happiness. How long had it been since he was in school? They were the days he loved the most. He would come home and tell his mother and father all that he had learned in school that day!

Arnold was six years old when he entered the Hebrew School,

Talmud Torah. It was about two miles from his home — a long walk for a sickly youth. Arnold was not a healthy youngster, though no one was ever able to find out what sickness he really had. The school building was an old dilapidated brick and wooden relic. The students were terrified of, yet respected, their stern teachers. One either learned the lesson for the day or felt the sting of the leather strap of authority. How easy it was for Arnold to remember this part of his education when being struck almost daily by the sadistic creatures in Auschwitz.

A year later, the time had come for Arnold to leave the *Talmud Torah* and enter the public-supported school. Since there were considerable numbers of Jewish students, the Jewish community also participated in the financial support of the school. What a change! Instead of the primitive conditions of the *Talmud Torah,* the public school was beautiful. The only drawback for Arnold was the four-mile walk to school, particularly in the bleakness of winter. His determination to walk to school and to make every attempt to keep up with his classmates won the respect of his gym teacher, Sir Mr. Teichner, who was a high-ranking officer in the Polish Army Reserve. Teichner was constantly amazed at Arnold's ability in the high jump, and ice skating in spite of Arnold's mismatched skates.

By the time Arnold was in sixth grade, he was invited to join a group that was similar to the boy scouts. In many ways, it was quite like the Hitler Youth Organization in Germany. The purpose of this unit was to inspire patriotism, and to learn to live, work and play together.

Arnold enjoyed another privilege: the Jewish Principal, Sir Rappaport, friend of the family, saw to it that Arnold could make money by tutoring some of the wealthy students. One student, Abram Szuster, a close friend, continued beyond his school days to look to Arnold for guidance. Abram was a good-looking, intelligent and physically fit young man. This association lasted to the very day both of them entered the gates of Auschwitz. Arnold's closest friend, Icek Preszow, later fled to the Soviet Union and perished on the Eastern Front fighting the German Wehrmacht. Preszow was the son of a wealthy Jewish family, and it was fun for Arnold to be invited to Icek's home for weekends. The two boys would put on religious shows for

the parents, and then plan to be together in later life in the Jewish state of Palestine.

On May 12, 1935, Arnold's last year in public school, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski died. Poland was plunged into mourning. His passing left Poland leaderless and vulnerable in the presence of a rearming and vengeful neighbor.

Pilsudski had been good to the Jews, particularly in the 1930s, and they missed his protection. The Marshal had had a fascinating life. He was very much involved in the Polish independence movement during World War I. At the beginning of the war, the Tsar's uncle Grand Duke Nicholas officially declared his promise to unite Poland as an autonomous state within Czarist Russia. This pledge had little credence since most of Poland was under German and Austro-Hungarian rule. In 1916, the Central Powers declared that it was their intention to make the Russian sector of Poland an independent kingdom. In 1917, Poland's right of sovereignty was further recognized by the Russian Provisional Government under Prince Georgi Lvov.

In 1917, the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, spoke of an independent Poland, and further elaborated his thoughts when announcing his famous Fourteen Points in 1918. Meanwhile, while the diplomats were making promises, Pilsudski's legions refused to swear allegiance to the Kaisers of the Central Powers. The Marshal was arrested, jailed, and his armed forces disbanded. When the Central Powers collapsed in 1918, Pilsudski was released and made supreme commander of all Polish armed forces by the newly formed Regency Council of Poland. On January 26, 1919, elections were held in Poland, and Marshal Pilsudski was named head of state. By 1920, the Marshal had over six hundred thousand troops under his command.

The Poles faced many problems with their newly won independence: no defined borders, no civil service and no money. Some internal progress was made by the adoption of a democratic constitution. It was particularly well received by the large Jewish community. The diplomatic problems were eventually solved by the terms of the Versailles Treaty, negotiations or warfare. Pilsudski had been particularly heroic in the minds of the Poles when he defeated the advancing Soviets on August 15, 1920, before the gates of Warsaw.



Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth)

The "Achilles heel" to Poland's security was the Versailles declaration awarding part of Pomerania to Poland, and which made Danzig, now called Gdansk, a free city where Poland had special rights. The Germans living in the corridor spoke of the day when they would be reunited with the *Fatherland.*

When Arnold was born in 1922, Poland was internally in chaos and had suffered four years of inexperienced politicians' rule: a series of unstable coalition governments, and the general upheaval caused by the national minorities which made up one third of Poland's population. By the time Arnold was four years old, Marshal Pilsudski, through a coup d'etat on May 12, 1926, became absolute ruler of Poland. He continued in this position until 1935. After his death, the political strife between the multitude of parties lasted until the invasion of Poland by the Wehrmacht in September 1939.

Poland's problems were of common concern to Jews and non-Jews. Arnold was too young to know his parents' innermost thoughts about the nation's weaknesses. Poland's condition was further agitated by the threats of the rabble-rousing anti-Semites

across the German border. Very few people listened to Adolf Hitler when he stated in 1919 that the Jews should be removed from German society. In 1923, this particular street brawler further alarmed the Jews in his attempt to take over the German government by a "putsch." It was not that Hitler failed in his attempt, but that his trial accusing him of treason made a martyr of him. When Arnold was four years old, Hitler wrote in his book, *Mein Kampf*, that the Germans might have won World War I if the "some twelve to fifteen thousand of the Hebrew corrupters of the people had been poisoned by gas before or during the war."

Arnold's father, Alexander, was a trim five-feet, four-inch, one hundred pound Jewish gentleman. He was born in Poland, left for England at the age of eight, and returned when he was thirteen years old. Alexander always wore the yarmulka, and dressed in pin-striped English-style suits accompanied by highly polished shoes. He took great pride in taking a small velvet patch of cloth from his pocket, and wiping his shoes until he could see his face in the gloss reflecting from his shoes. This quiet head of the household had emigrated from England because he didn't want to work on the Sabbath. He started out in the working world as a dancing instructor, but changed professions to please his very religious family. Alexander decided to enter the craft of tailoring both men's suits and women's clothes. The chain-smoking head of the household spent his spare time collecting stamps and raising canaries. One disdainful look from Alexander, and his children knew at once how to behave.

Alexander, like most Jews, was constantly aware of the anti-Semitism in and out of Poland. What he feared most at this time was the effect of Hitler's anti-Semitic remarks upon the Poles. How easy it would be for the generally anti-Semitic Poles to adopt segments of the NSDAP Manifesto, proclaimed in 1924, which encouraged Germany to adopt a policy of designating Jews as aliens and depriving them of citizenship. The Silesian area of Poland was particularly strong in German influence, since much of it had been part of the German Reich until given to Poland by the Versailles Treaty.

Copies of the cruelly anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*, though technically forbidden outside of Germany, could be

obtained in Silesia. Julius Streicher's brain-child began in 1923, and he emphasized that the Jew was not only subhuman, a parasite, a phenomenon of decay, but that the Jews were Germany's misfortune. He depicted Jews as hook-nosed bloated capitalists, gorging themselves on food and drink while lecherously looking at Christian girls. All the legal protection in Poland could not stop the flow of such inflammatory thoughts about Jews.

Germany was not the only source of anti-Semitism at this time. The USSR, under the leadership of the dictator Josef Stalin, was another source of vile attacks against the Jews. Stalin was particularly emphatic in his purges of the Hebrews during the later half of the 1920s and through the 1930s. Poland appeared to be the safest place for three million three hundred thousand Jewry.

If Arnold's father had had the money, he would have preferred to take his family away from Poland and Europe. Under the circumstances, Alexander had no choice in these ominous surroundings but to wait and hope that his fears of what might happen to his family would never materialize.

Arnold, in spite of his youth, had some inkling of his father's concern. It was this insecurity which made him a Zionist (one who believed in re-establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine) at the age of eight years. He liked to talk to his school friends in particular about the Promised Land. At his age, it was difficult to recognize the full significance of what they were talking about, but the youngsters daydreamed of a land where they would no longer suffer from discrimination.

The sting of discrimination was felt by Arnold when he entered high school in 1937, and he was the only Jew to be enrolled. If he had had the money for carfare, Arnold would have gladly accepted the scholarship offered to him in an art school located five miles from his home. What little money Arnold ever made doing odd jobs was designated for a fourth of his tuition of a Zionist camp in the Carpathian mountains. The rest of his earnings went to the family. The camp was to prepare him for the communal living in what he hoped would be the eventual Jewish state of Palestine.

The high school was a modern building with an up-to-date curriculum of history, mathematics, a study of the Polish lan-





Cartoons from Streicher's "Der Stürmer"

guage, and physical exercise. Arnold joined a reserve officer training course in school, and he not only learned the skills of defending his nation, but heard about Poland's military prowess. Such organizations gave the people, as well as those in them, a feeling that if either Germany or the USSR ever attacked Poland the Poles would be victorious.

Arnold was not at all certain that Poland would win if a war came to his country. When he went to the cinema with his Jewish girlfriends to see Hollywood films starring Shirley Temple, Tom Mix and other cinema celebrities of the time, he was upset by the newsreels depicting Germany's rise to power under the guidance of Adolf Hitler. Arnold had an idea of what Poland's military would do on the field of battle, and he became frightened as he noticed Germany's modernized equipment. Hitler's dominance in Europe's affairs didn't make the apprehension any less. The Führer's position, coupled with the stories by refugees about what was happening to the German Jews, gave Arnold and the Polish Jews a lot to be fearful about.

When Arnold went home from school at night, the discussion at the dinner table often concentrated on what was happening to the Jews in Germany. Ever since Hitler came to power in 1933, the Jews had been tormented and harassed. As far back as 1935, when Arnold was thirteen years old, his father had informed him of the infamous Nuremberg Laws which designated Jews in Germany as aliens and second-class citizens. The interesting fact about Nazi discrimination was that the word Jew was never defined.

After the 1936 summer Olympics, which was held in Berlin, when the Germans played down the Nuremberg Laws and other anti-Semitic orders to gain world respectability, the Jews suffered further degradation. In October 1938, fifteen thousand Polish-born Jews were ordered back to Poland. The greatest shock was felt on November 7, 1938, when Ernst vom Rath, the Third Secretary of the German Embassy in Paris, was assassinated by Herschel Grünspan, a seventeen-year-old Jew evicted from Germany with his family and sent to Poland. Because of what Grünspan had done, terrible government-sponsored riots against the Jews began in Germany. Over twenty thousand prominent and non-prominent well-to-do Jews were taken into "protective

custody''; according to Heydrich, 177 synagogues were pillaged and burned; 7,500 Jewish shops were looted; 171 Jewish apartment houses were destroyed by fire; 91 Jews killed; and the suicides unknown, in what was later called *Kristallnacht* (night of the broken glass). Jews were ordered to pay for the six million mark damage so that German insurance companies wouldn't suffer financially.

From this time on, Jews were dismissed from public schools and universities, and encouraged to emigrate from Germany as soon as possible. A number of people, such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud and others of note, had already left Europe for a safer haven. Of the incarcerated Jews, 9,845 were sent to the Buchenwald Concentration Camp to be ransomed for money; 10,911 were sent to Dachau; and 5 to 10,000 were sent to Sachsenhausen, for the same purpose.

Those who had left Germany after the ''night of broken glass'' reported to the world about the atrocities to the Jews. Unfortunately, many Poles appeared to agree with the treatment of the Jews by the German government and this, in turn, caused the Poles to intensify their anti-Semitic activities. Professors in Polish schools and universities began to preach against the Jews and Arnold, the only Jew in his high school, felt the impact of such inflammatory speeches. In fact, when Hitler took Czechoslovakia in 1938, and gave Poland a much desired section of the conquered nation, with tears running down his cheeks, Professor Ocoszynki gave a fiery speech stating that the long-sought territory was ''finally ours.'' When Arnold told his father about the speech, Alexander was stunned that the intellects of Poland couldn't grasp the fact that Hitler would eventually invade Poland as he had the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

In the period of 1938-1939, the dislike for the Jews intensified, and many of the Poles of German descent, particularly in the area of Silesia, looked for the day when Hitler would defeat Poland.

On the eastern frontier, there had been little thought of the USSR as an enemy. Not since the days of the founding of the Polish nation had there been any real problems. During the earlier border wars, many thousands of Jews, about ten percent of the population, were killed and about one hundred thousand

were robbed and made homeless, but that seemed to end any problems with the Soviets. However, the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of friendship frightened all of the Poles. Jews and non-Jews worried about possible invasion from both the east and the west, and the effect of such an invasion on the nation as an independent state.

Arnold's father wanted to move his family farther into Poland but he didn't have the financial means to do it. What made the decision difficult, even if he could find the money, was the question of what would happen to the Jews should Poland be invaded by the USSR as well as Germany. The German hostility to the Jews was well known, but not as well known were the Stalin purges of the intellectuals, including the Jews, during the 1930s. The Jewish lot under either power would be one of terror and insecurity.

Certainly another neighbor, Rumania, fared no better. The Iron Guard, an organization like the Nazis, stated their desire that Rumania be cleansed of Jews. Statements like these caused the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to initiate a conference at Evian, France, on July 6, 1938, to try to reach a solution about what to do with the unwanted Jews from Germany, Poland and Rumania. The conference found no solution and abandoned its efforts. From this point on, the Jews knew that they had no friends and would have to stand alone against their aggressive enemies.

In the midst of the international tension, Arnold graduated from high school with the thought of becoming a barber. However, one look at the dirty heads filled with lice soon brought him to the conclusion that such a profession was not for him. Why not follow his father in the business of being a tailor? Not wishing to work directly with his father, he accepted the invitation from Motek, Icek and Szymon Gutman to join their firm.

It was exciting for Arnold to be out of school and working. True, many of his courses had been at night so that he could earn money during the day, but now he was on his own and could do as he pleased. He had brought honors to the family while a student, and now he would do the same as a businessman. The ominous rumblings from the east and the west did not totally dampen his hopes for a bright future. There was always the

hope that if Poland went to war, all of the nations would be so involved in fighting that no one would pay any attention to the Jews.

CHAPTER THREE

"Each one hopes that if he feeds the crocodile enough, the crocodile will eat him last. All of them hope the storm will pass before their turn comes to be devoured."

Winston S. Churchill

Arnold's dream of the good life rapidly dimmed with the German Führer's demand that Danzig be returned to the Reich. To Arnold, and the rest of the Polish Jews, it was more than Danzig: it was survival.

What had happened to the German Jews since 1933 was a horror story. What had happened to the one hundred eighty-five thousand Austrian Jews and three hundred thousand Czechoslovakian Jews under German occupation was a nightmare. The reaction to this in Poland eliminated any hope of a bright future for Arnold. Polish Jews were considered by the Nazis to be the lowest form of Judaism.

The Führer's persecution of the Jews appeared to have either the approval or the disinterest of the world, especially since the collapse of the Evian conference. In Poland anti-Semitic groups stepped up their campaign to picket Jewish businesses, to terrorize the Jews in their homes and on the streets, and to threaten non-Jews who either associated or did business with them. Jewish students were limited in number as to attendance at private schools and universities. The malignancy of anti-Semitism spread to every corner of Polish life. However, Arnold, and other Jews living in Poland, had known about a thousand years' history of bigotry. To them, it was just another low point in the continuous cycle of affliction. And, after all, what if Poland did go to war against Germany? Could it be possible



Adolf Hitler, Führer of the Third Reich

that the highly civilized Germans were more anti-Semitic than the uneducated and financially distressed Poles? No Polish Jew thought it possible to associate the illustrious talents of Bach and Beethoven with the horrors of Buchenwald.

Poles and Jews alike knew that peace was no longer likely. Hitler's raving and ranting in the Reichstag about Germany's right to Danzig and the Polish corridor made a peaceful solution extremely difficult. Furthermore, it was no secret that Hitler wanted what he called the eastern territories cleansed of Slavs, Jews, and Gypsies so that German families could be settled there. The confidence of the Poles in their government's ability to stand up to the crisis was typified by the slogan "we won't give one button of our uniforms to Germany."

Hitler was frustrated by Poland's willingness to negotiate. Therefore he felt that the time was right to stage a border intrusion. Hitler ordered *Reichsführer* of the SS Heinrich Himmler and his deputy Reinhard Heydrich to fake a Polish attack upon the radio station near the Polish border at Gleiwitz. The complicated plan, with the code name *Canned Goods,* was put into the hands of a Nazi thug by the name of Alfred Helmut Naujocks. He had at his disposal one hundred fifty Polish uniforms and a number of Polish rifles plus inmates from a concentration camp who were to be the "guinea pigs" sacrificed in the staged incident. Both Admiral Canaris, chief of Abwehr, OKW, and Field Marshal Keitel, who were in on the initial planning stage of the operation, opposed the idea, but the dictator's command was obeyed.

At 8:00 p.m., on August 31, 1939, Naujocks received word that the "attack" upon the radio station was to take place. The condemned inmates attacked the radio station with blanks in their weapons, obviously unaware that their opponents would meet them with "real" bullets. The pathetic drama did not last very long, but it accomplished its purpose. Reporters were now invited to visit the scene and report to the world that the Poles had made the first move to settle this dispute by armed aggression.

On Friday, September 1, 1939, Hitler went before his lackeys in the Reichstag and bellowed that he was furious with the Poles because of their premeditated attack on the Fatherland. He said

that "from now on bombs will be met with bombs." The plan to attack Poland was given the code name *Fall Weiss.*

The Poles knew that their time had come to face the crocodile. Ever since August, the antiquated horse-drawn and outdated equipment had been placed along the Polish-German border, and holes drilled into the sides of homes in order to hide the gunners, like archers in some medieval castle. The Polish airforce resembled the relics of World War I. Supply lines were non-existent. To those who knew anything about the German army, it was ludicrous to think that the Poles had a chance of survival.

A number of Jewish families were moved inland from the border because the Poles considered them possible collaborators. How ridiculous! No one could possibly believe that any Jew would welcome the Nazis. The Jews who took it upon themselves to move away from the border were frightened, and did it for their own safety.

By August 31, the rumors of a German invasion were accepted as fact. The citizens of Bedzin gathered broomsticks, clubs and stones to defend their homes. How unreal! There was still the dream that justice would triumph — Poland would win! There was always the hope that the Polish allies of England and France would prevent a total collapse. It was only a hope. British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, told his people: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here, because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."

On Friday, September 1, 1939, at 5:11 a.m., Hitler issued a proclamation of war in which he told his armed forces that Poland refused his peaceful solution to the Danzig question and, instead, had used weapons to try and solve the problem. The Wehrmacht's reply was the sounds of artillery fire along the Polish border. The residents of Bedzin were among the first to know that Poland was at war with Germany.

The people ran out into the streets and were met by Polish troops retreating from the border. They told of the German onslaught and of the Polish soldiers who had either fled or simply surrendered. Their army was in complete disarray.

Stores in Bedzin closed and owners refused to sell anything



Invasion of Poland by the Wehrmacht

even if they did have food and other items on their shelves. The Polish army blew up bridges across the Czarna Przemsza River, wasting time and gunpowder. The river was ankle-deep; anyone could cross it by wading through it.

Thousands of Jews joined the military or fled the border areas. Within three weeks over thirty thousand Jews had lost their lives in the military. Others surrendered, only to be placed in "special detention" centers by their German masters. Some civilians who tried to flee were captured or killed together on the main bridge leading in to the city. The invading Germans found out about those on the bridge and ordered the artillery to destroy it. In a puff of smoke the bridge and the hundreds of unfortunates hiding on it became history.

The Polish soldiers stayed in Bedzin until the morning of September 3, then they were quickly replaced by the Germans. The Wehrmacht was impressive to the lowly Poles. They stared at the shiny and noisy motorcycles driven by handsomely well-dressed SS troops in black immaculate uniforms. They were followed by the modernized heavily armed Panzers (tanks), and







Destruction of the Polish military, 1939

the troops of the German army. Those who drew up the rear echelon were the soon to be hated *Einsatzgruppen* or liquidation troops.*

Arnold was puzzled. Why did the citizens of Bedzin wave to the invading German troops? He followed everyone to the City Hall to find the answer. There was no clear-cut answer unless people thought that the invaders would be kind to them if they appeared to be friendly rather than hostile. The things which did become shockingly clear were the barbarism of the Germans and what Arnold considered to be the traitor-like behavior on the part of the Poles. He saw those whom he had considered to be friends and good neighbors suddenly point their fingers shouting, "Here's a Jew" and "There's a Jew." The SS men grabbed the "accused" and told them that they had to clean up the mess made by bombs and artillery. In the meantime, the Germans broke into Jewish shops looking "for hidden weapons" and stole, or smashed, valuable merchandise.

The Jews, regardless of age and sex, were ordered to scrub thoroughly the streets and sidewalks. The Poles seemed to enjoy the plight of the Jews as much as the Germans. It was particularly funny to see the German troops grab the Orthodox Jews and pull them about by their beards. Funnier still was the game of lighting matches and setting the beards on fire. While this was going on, the Poles exchanged laughter and cigarettes with the Germans while thinking of what else they could do with the unfortunate Jews.

The greatest joy for the *Einsatzgruppen* was to discover some of the Jews who had fled to the synagogue for safety. The shivering and petrified Jews were found hiding under the benches. They were called cowardly by the Germans and dragged out to be beaten and cursed. So frightening was the experience that a number of the Jews defecated in their clothing. The Germans mocked and taunted them stating that not only was such behavior unsanitary, but that only swine did such things. The *Einsatzgruppen* felt that they should teach the Jewish pigs a good lesson in sanitation. Each Jew was ordered to disrobe, and smear the others' faces with the waste matter. The

*Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des S.D. or "special political police duties."

humiliation was furthered by sending the naked and feces-smeared Jews into the streets for all to ridicule and laugh at. The Poles joined in the chorus, shouting, "Look at the Jewish shitheads." Arnold stood, with scrub brush in hand, with tearful eyes as he watched and suffered in silence.

Arnold was no longer puzzled. He was seething, full of rage, but too scared to show it. How ironic to see the Germans tacking up posters outlining the rules of occupation and stating that they came to Poland as friends of the people. Evenings, after the 6:00 p.m. curfew for Jews, the Germans escorted them home, not to protect them but to see where they lived. This made the job of tracking down the Jews a much easier task than had been planned.

After Arnold was safely home, the Szyjowicz family tried to eat, but the horrible fear was too much to bear. What little conversation they had was almost in whispers. No one could sleep in a night that was uncannily quiet after such a day. The next day was no different. Breakfast and lunch were meager because the black-market prices for food were too high.

Arnold decided to take a chance and so he ventured out into the streets to see if there had been any changes in the attitude of Germans or the Poles about the Jews. When he arrived at the marketplace, in the center of the town, Arnold got the message. Not only had the first day's episodes continued, but matters were worse. Fifty Jews had been grabbed at random, lined up against the Stary Rynek (Old Market) wall and shot. The Germans said that they had uncovered a plot in which these Jews had planned to kill German troops. Not even the anti-Semitic Poles could believe that excuse. On the other hand, not one Pole made any attempt to defend the Jews; they seemed to approve what the Germans were doing.

The troops continued their fun by molesting the Jews. The elderly were marked for searches and forced to run until they dropped. Others were ordered to squat while a Star of David was branded on their foreheads. The older women were spat upon and threatened while the young girls were targets for sexual insults and manhandling. Rape was not that common because a good Aryan was taught that intercourse with a Jew was not only unhealthy but that he would be guilty of polluting the race.



Jewish homes near Catholic church



Germans arrive in Bedzin

The young boys were kicked and beaten particularly if they didn't shine the German boots or if they simply got in the way. Arnold was no different from any other young Jewish boy. He felt the full impact of the jackboot, knowing that he could do nothing about it. Retaliation to such treatment meant sudden death.

On the morning of the fifth of September, the citizens of Bedzin lined up for food. Bread was almost nonexistent, but one could get sardines, candy and chocolates. The German troops walked along the "bread" lines and shouted at the tormented Jews, "Heraus," "Juden Heraus": Jews get out! Knowing that the situation was critical, Arnold and his brother Bernard walked four miles to the railroad station to grab whatever food they could from the unloading platforms. The fact that Arnold could speak some German and Bernard was strong enough to carry it by himself, helped them get a fifty-pound sack of potatoes from the supplies guarded by the soldiers. That they were able to get the food home without being attacked by the Poles or the Germans was a miracle.

Arnold's mother could make a variety of meals from the lowly potato, since their financial status never gave them what could be considered a well-balanced meal. However, the daily skill now was to get the food rather than designing ways to make it edible.

Food was also acquired by way of duties assigned to the Jewish boys. They were ordered to go into the abandoned homes of the wealthy Jews and clean them for the German military-occupation authorities. This involved tossing out furniture, clothing, and other belongings. The Germans wanted nothing that belonged to a Jew, therefore when it came to food, Arnold tied his pant-legs with string so that he could fill them right up to his pockets. The Germans knew what was being taken, but decided that it would serve as an incentive to those who were stealing the food.

When Arnold arrived home by the six o'clock curfew, his family was relieved to see him and to know that he was alive. Naturally he would give them an account of what was going on outside of the home since very few in the family would dare venture into the streets. Arnold warned his parents not to go out of their home. He particularly warned his sisters not to do so. Up to that time they had not been molested, but no one knew when the tide would change.

The Jews asked each other how much more could they endure, and how much longer would they be harassed? The answer to these questions came on the night of the tenth of September. The Bedzin sky glowed a bright hue of red and orange. The *Einsatzgruppen* was ordered to fire the buildings belonging to the Jews and to shoot anyone who might get in the way.

The fire engines carried gasoline, not water. The gasoline was used to soak the buildings before the Germans put a torch to them. When the troops pulled up in front of the big synagogue, they lost no time in kicking in the door and pouring gasoline everywhere. They shouted and yelled "Death to the Jews" while they kicked over the benches and knocked over the candles. The silver candlesticks were eventually smelted for the German treasury. One soldier took his rifle butt and smashed the case holding the sacred Torah.* How hilarious to toss the Torah to one another, rip the sacred books and scriptures into shreds and throw them around like confetti. The Torah was guarded by the German soldiers for a special ceremony of desecration. In an act of heroism under the cover of darkness, youngsters from the most extreme left, or "Bundists," stole the scrolls from under the watchful eye of the Germans. Unfortunately, the scrolls were eventually lost when the ghetto was destroyed.

When the synagogue was blazing, it was the signal for the Jews to run and hide. Soon one house after another was torched. Those who couldn't get out because of the barred doors perished in the flames. Some jumped out of the windows to escape the fire and were promptly shot. The screams of the dying could be heard all over Bedzin, but no Pole would dare come to the aid of the unfortunates unless he wanted to be treated as a Jew. Under the circumstances, who wanted to be treated as a Jew? So what, if a few Jews died?

Arnold's father went into action first, before his neighbors, for he knew that staying around the home was not safe. Before his home was on fire, Alexander told his family to follow him at once so that they could get away before being discovered by

*A Torah bears the text of the five books of Moses — the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament. The Torah is the whole concept of the Jewish religion, and if it is ever destroyed it must be buried.

the *Einsatzgruppen.* It was fortunate that Alexander could speak the German language. As soon as they came out of the house they met a German soldier who was horrified by what his countrymen were doing. He allowed them to escape rather than shooting them as ordered.

As they made their way along the gruesomely lighted streets, detection was averted once by a woman who panicked at the sight of the German soldiers coming toward her. The torches made her an immediate target as she ran in front of the troops, screaming not to harm her. They responded by shooting her legs and, as she started to fall, the *Einsatzgruppen* snatched the baby she had cradled in her arms. They tossed it in the air and shot it. The mother let out a piercing yell, and held her dead baby while going into shock.

After the troops moved down the street, Arnold's family began their secret journey to the home of a man who owned a toy store. Izaak had worked for him and had keys which would allow the Szyjowicz family to enter and hide in safety for at least one night. The house was slightly out of the Jewish district, and it was empty because the owner had fled to Wolbrom. Unfortunately, as they neared it, they observed people being lined up in front of the house for execution. Fortunately, another German soldier, who disliked the horror he was enduring, came up to Alexander and begged them to run away as fast as possible. He said that if they came any closer to the scene of execution surely they would be caught by the *Einsatzgruppen* and suffer the same fate.

Panic struck the family when they realized that Lola and Bernard had gotten lost on the way. It was later learned that Bernard had fallen through a cellar window and Lola refused to leave him.

The family looked at one another, desperately seeking some answers as to where they should go now and what might have happened to Lola and Bernard. It was suggested that they go to the apartment of a friend, who lived not too far away from where they stood talking to the German sentry, with the hope that the missing pair would catch up. What made this place ideal was the fact that this particular Jewish family lived in a place occupied by Polish families. Again, the Szyjowicz family, minus Lola and Bernard, moved along the side streets without detection



Destruction of large synagogue, Bedzin



Destruction of small synagogue, Bedzin

until they arrived at what they were sure would be a safe place for the night. Just as they arrived, they were spotted by the Poles who tried everything possible to get them to leave at once. They didn't want Jews in the same apartment building, certain the Germans would come to the apartment house and fire it, as they had the others housing Jews.

Fortunately, Arnold's family was able to get past the Poles for the very reason that none of the Poles ran to tell the Germans they were there. If the Poles informed on them, the Germans would come to the apartment house and possibly set it on fire without any investigation. Furthermore, if any Pole went out into the street to find the Germans to report the presence of Jews in the apartment house, they might very well be shot as terrified Jews seeking help.

The Szyjowicz family was welcomed and they told their hosts of the horrors they had experienced. They felt that the whole world had gone mad. Sleep was impossible and the morning didn't come soon enough for everyone in the apartment. When dawn finally arrived, Arnold told his parents that he just had to go out into the street to see what had become of their home and friends. His mother begged him not to do it, but Arnold assured her that he would return.

Gone were the sounds of sirens, gun shots, crackling of the flames, and screams of the wounded, tortured and dying. A heavy pall of smoke surrounded the grisly scene. Arnold wandered toward his home to see what was left of the neighborhood. The Sakis' house was split into two sections caused by the heat of the flaming buildings. How painful to see what was left of his friend Menasche Russ: nothing but the decapitated head with a few charred fingers in the mouth indicating that he had died a most horrible death. Arnold found another friend, Icek Bratt, stuffed into a closet with bullet holes in his badly burned body. The Germans seemed to want nothing, and they salvaged nothing.

The dismal scene was too horrible for anyone to comprehend. It seemed to Arnold as if God had punished the Jews by setting loose the combined catastrophies of fire, earthquake, war and death upon the Jewish community in Bedzin. The biggest question in Arnold's mind was why the highly civilized Germans

would do such a thing. This was the twentieth century, not the barbarous days of Genghis Khan. Obviously Hitler was right when he told the Reichstag on September 1, 1939, that he had every intention of eliminating Jewry from Europe.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The first step towards the ultimate objective must be the concentration of the Jews from the countryside into the larger towns."
Heydrich to Chiefs of all Einsatzgruppen
Berlin 21 September 1939

The persecution of the Jews was much easier in Poland than it had been in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the Western nations. In Italy, until the fall of the Mussolini government and subsequent occupation by the Germans, the government refused to permit the tormenting and extermination of the Jews. Unlike the Jews in those nations, the Polish Jews were rarely considered part of the political and cultural heritage of the country. This, in fact, was the main reason for the Poles' behavior before and after the German invasion. Protest against the treatment of the Jews was almost nonexistent in Poland.

The Germans were now faced with a dilemma. The fall of Poland netted them over three million Jews, and, to date, the greatest number of "subhumans" to be dealt with in the Reich's territories. Robbery, beatings, rape, torture, and shootings could not continue without organization. The one characteristic of the Germans which would eliminate the chaotic conditions was organization. The Germans are not a disorderly people. They like well-unified and coherent relationships.

The atrocious behavior of the German troops in the early days of the invasion was not totally based upon instructions from the higher command. The *Einsatzgruppen* took it upon themselves to interpret what action should be carried out according to whatever conditions faced them. Since the Poles would not make any attempt to defend the Jews, it was up to the army com-

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manders of the Reich to raise objections as to what was going on in Poland. Most of the commanders like Field Marshal Blaskowitz were of the old Prussian school, and their training never included such treatment of civilians. They felt that it was their assignment to win battles, not the dehumanization of acquired territories. When their objections were presented to the Führer, he reminded them that he, and he alone, would make the political decisions. The handling of the Jews was not a military affair.

True to form, and because of the uneasy attitude of the field commanders, the Nazis instituted a civil administration to solve the awkward problem of what to do with the defeated Poles, and, in particular, the millions of unwanted Jews.

On September 21, 1939, Reinhard Heydrich, in charge of the Reich Security Main Office responsible for solving the "Jewish question," informed the SS leaders in Poland that the Jews were to be herded from the countryside into the larger towns and cities. This was particularly important in areas where less than five hundred people lived. Heydrich also made the Jews responsible for their own welfare. This meant that a lot of the pressure on the Jews would not come from their German masters, but from fellow Jews.

A Jewish Council of Elders was to be established in every Jewish community, and they were fully responsible for the administration of the Jews under their control. This body would work with the German Civil Administration and see that all orders were carried out. This meant keeping an accurate account of people, private property, and activities in their district. The Germans would inform them of the disciplinary measures against those caught in the acts of sabotage and other violation of the occupation. When the time finally arrived to deport the Jews, the Council would cooperate with the Germans in this heinous crime as planned.

In Bedzin the greatly disliked Jewish puppet of the Gestapo, Moniek Matroz, not only made it easy for the Germans to know the Bedzin Jews, but assisted them in collecting gold for the Reich. This meant sacrificing wedding rings, nose rings, family jewelry, and valuable sacred keepsakes. Matroz told the unhappy families that he was only following orders.

After Heydrich ordered the registration of all Jews, one of the most grotesque and humiliating orders given to the Jews in Wloclawek was the wearing of the distinct and visible yellow triangle at least 15 cm. in size. The District Commandant, SS Oberführer Cramer, took it upon himself to issue such an order for all Jews regardless of sex or age. The idea was quickly adopted by other German occupation authorities and enthusiastically received by the anti-Semitic Poles. The idea, of course, was not original since such measures had been instituted in the days of Caliph Omar (717-720) when he insisted that all non-Muslims wear a distinct badge of alienation to the faith. The Romans adopted the idea, and it was a custom accepted by the Christians up to about the time of the French Revolution.

There was no conformity as to how the identification would be worn or what shape it would take. No matter whether it was a yellow hat, a blue star of David, or any other design, it all added up to the simple fact that the Jew was a marked person. It had been adopted by the Nazis, in 1938, when they forced the German Jews to display the signs "Jewish Business" in their windows. Within a few years, all Jews over six years of age would be punished further by wearing a visible star of David outlined in black with the word "Jude" in the middle. The cloth star had to be worn on the left breast of clothing.

In Bedzin, the Jews were not required to wear such an insignia until December 1, 1939, but the shift from their homes to the ghetto went according to Heydrich's order. The idea of the ghetto was another old custom adopted by the Nazis. As far back as the sixteenth century, the Italians officially closed off the Jewish quarters from the rest of a town or city by a wall. This was the "ghetto" meaning GETO NUOVO ("the new foundry"). From that time on the word was applied to areas inhabited by Jews. The Nazis "borrowed" the program set forth in a Papal decree which pointed out that there was to be one gate leading into the ghetto, and it was to be guarded by a Christian gatekeeper. Instead of a Christian gatekeeper, the Nazis put one of their own in charge of the gate. Naturally, the Jews were to pay all expenses of the gatekeeper.

Though the Jews tended to congregate in various sections of towns and cities, in spite of Heydrich's order creating Jewish



Youth and aged required to wear the Star of David, Bedzin



Communities, it was not until October 1940, that the Gauleiter of Poland, Generalgouverneur Frank, officially established the ghetto in all Nazi-occupied Poland. Essentially what had happened in Poland since September 1, 1939, until Frank's order, was the gradual deterioration of Jewish communities until the few who were left were pushed into the ghettos of the big cities for eventual "resettlement." This meant not a new land in which to rebuild their lives as promised, but a fateful train ride to an extermination camp.

The attempt to rid Poland of the Jews was not really emphasized until the Jews from all over German-controlled territories began to swell the ranks of the Polish Jews. Individual *Einsatzgruppen* commanders continued their own programs of harassing the Jews, but nothing was done on a large scale until Frank begged Hitler to do something about the overcrowded mass of humanity under his direction.

Caught in this swirl of how to handle the Jews was the Szyjowicz family who, up to this point, had been lucky in comparison with other families. After the terrible ordeal in their neighborhood, they remained with Alexander's brother, Jovel, for two more days before moving to other quarters. Alexander realized that the overcrowded conditions would not work, so he asked the local club of the Zionist movement to seek shelter for his family. This they did and found a small cubicle six feet by ten feet in the locale of Gordonia. This was the Szyjowicz's first experience in living in a ghetto.

The new quarters, which looked like a meeting room, were both stifling and claustrophobic. There were one bed and two cots for the entire family, which meant that they had to sleep in shifts. There was a small coal stove to cook what little food the family got from the few Jewish stores. Bread, tea, rice and sugar could be secured in the stores, but the "black market" furnished the rest of the staples for a high price.

The Germans had a very convenient way to get the Szyjowicz family and other Jews to register. All Jews had to have ration cards or they would have no food. Actually, the card was of more help to the Germans to know where and who were Jews rather than to furnish food. The rations were cut in half in hopes that the Jews would eventually perish by starvation.



Jewish evacuation from Bedzin to the ghetto

At first they registered with the Jewish Congregation Council for bread cards, and the local police station was the place where all Jews had to register for the Gestapo. Regardless of the true name, all females would have the middle name "Sarah," and all males would have the middle name "Israel." The interrogation was usually designed to degrade the Jews. When Arnold went into the building he was immediately grabbed, beaten, kicked and tossed into a chair. Behind the interrogator's desk was a large picture of Adolf Hitler. The officer asked the usual questions which provoked humiliation and anger. Arnold answered the questions quietly and without emotion until he was asked, "Which Jew-whore shitted you out?" He jumped and shouted at the officer that his mother was no such person, but that was exactly the reaction the Germans wanted. They hit him with fists, whips and clubs until he was a bloody sight. He was completely defeated and finally answered the question. In almost a whisper he said: "My whore mother is Sarah Szyjowicz." How degrading! Any question after that was answered without any fight. Jewish women also faced the same brutal treatment from their masters. They, too, were roughly handled and assaulted until they also answered the provoking questions. The Germans not only wanted to know who their whore mother was, but they now asked "Who is your asshole father?" or "Who is your whore-fucking father?" Any cries and tears from the girls brought not pity but loud laughter and further abuse.

Arnold decided not to pick up his ration card because this meant more abuse and information about himself and the Bedzin Jews. This was a hardship to his family as the meager rations for five people would now have to be allotted to six. On the other hand, Arnold took the chance of leaving the ghetto with the idea of getting needed supplies for the family. One way that Arnold could make money to buy medical supplies and further supplies of food was to sell potato cakes. Once, when Arnold was trying to sell his cakes on the street corner, he was approached by an SS officer. He politely asked Arnold how business was coming along. Arnold rose from his little stand made from a wooden crate, suspiciously eyed the officer, and replied that things were not going too well for the moment. Suddenly, the soldier shouted at Arnold that all Jews wanted to do

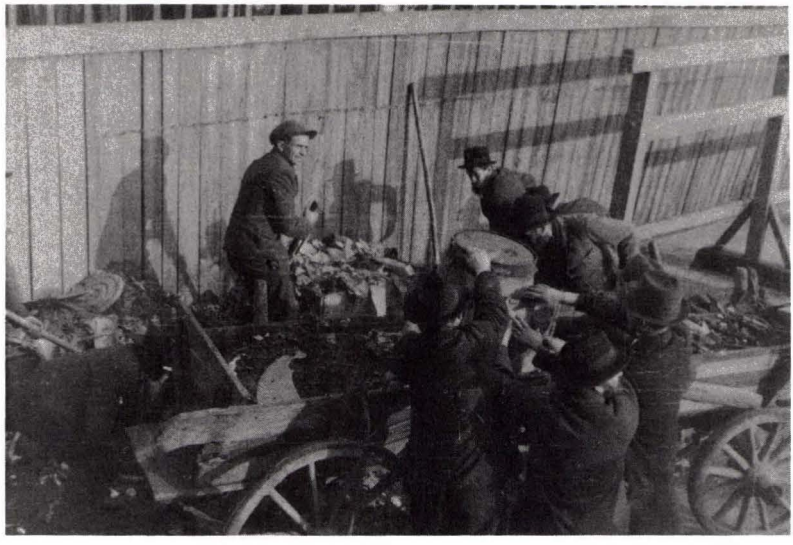
was to make money and cheat their clients. The usual Nazis slogans about Jews spewed forth until he satisfied himself that the message was clearly understood by Arnold. The cruel lecture ended with the order that Arnold was to eat every one of his cakes quickly or be shot. With a pistol at his head Arnold, choked with food and rage, thought to himself how nice it would be if he could take the pistol pointed at his head and shoot the SS officer. If Arnold had shot his tormentor, the retaliation by the Germans would be the death of six thousand Jews. No one is a hero with odds like that.

The SS officer walked away laughing at the humiliated and gasping Arnold. He stopped an old Orthodox Jew and ordered him to undress and tap dance while the SS officer hit him with his own umbrella. When the old man collapsed from the hazing and exhaustion, the German left the scene loudly whistling *Die Fahne Hoch,* the Nazi party anthem.

Was there any hope for help? Not likely. The Nazis, not wanting to do much of the dirty work, organized a Jewish police force. They gave orders to the police force and they had to be followed without question. What irritated Arnold was the willing attitude of the Jewish police force in his city. They voluntarily wished to satisfy the whims of their masters and made no attempt to be compassionate towards their fellow Jews. In some cases, they were more unbearable than their German bosses. Churchill's axiom about the crocodile appeared to be a reality.

The Jewish police took great delight in carrying out their orders. They saw to it that the ration cards were in order as well as making sure fellow Jews wore the yellow Star of David. They also had their hands in the corruption of the times. Arnold later found out that a policeman had "sold out" his mother by paying ten thousand marks for the use of a sonder card, worker's permit, which had been issued to Arnold's mother.

When the ration stamps appeared in the office of issue, and they did not seem to be cashed by the person to whom they were originally issued, the Gestapo blamed Arnold for cashing his mother's stamps. They arrested him and took him to Gestapo Headquarters and accused him of using the card illegally. Everyone, including the Jewish policeman, knew that this was a false arrest. After insults and threats and a period of apprehension,





Jewish elders put to work by the Germans, trash and garbage collectors

Arnold was released. Arnold was never asked for his identification card which was fortunate in view of the fact that he had not continued the registration process.

Arnold went to the Judenrat, or Jewish Council, and asked who was using his mother's card, but they not only denied knowing anything but refused to investigate the matter.

The Judenrat's attitude pointed to one of the most serious problems concerning the survival of the Jews. It helped the Germans simplify their task of finding out who was a Jew and where to find him. There was a schism between the Orthodox Jew and the Zionist, and, unfortunately for the Zionist, the members of the Bedzin Judenrat were Orthodox. This meant little if any protection and assistance to the Zionist. To the Orthodox Jew a Zionist was not considered a Jew.

The greatest irritation between the two factions was how to react to the Germans. The Orthodox were told by their leaders not to upset the Germans. They were to remain silent and hope that the storm would pass. The Zionists did not see it that way. Arnold was particularly adamant in finding ways to impede the



Jewish policeman in Bedzin ghetto

German attempt to destroy the Jews. To resist did not always mean armed conflict. Resistance meant conducting underground schools to continue the teachings of the Torah, or to slip out of the ghetto, as Arnold did many times, to get food for his family. To participate in such activities meant immediate execution. Certainly such activity puts to rest the legend that the Jews did nothing, thereby permitting the Germans to exterminate the Jews without a struggle. When it came to open warfare, the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto went down in history as anything but a quiet submission to the Nazi terror.

Arnold's self-imposed task of getting out of the ghetto was most difficult. The inhabitants of the ghetto were under constant watch by the Jewish policemen or the Germans. Arnold usually went out at night either by scaling the wall or slipping by a careless or corrupt guard at the gate. But once he got out, Arnold had things to sell to either the Poles or German occupation troops. Though the Germans had stolen and destroyed much of the Jewish property, there were still such items to sell as dresses, clothing of all sorts, and a little jewelry. Arnold was successful in getting some money but nowhere near the price the items were worth. Those on the outside of the ghetto knew that the Jews were desperate, and they would have to accept whatever they could get and be satisfied with that. Arnold was a businessman. With the meager money he received from his sales, he would buy more bread than the family needed. He would keep one loaf and then sell the remaining loaves for a price higher than what he actually got for his original products.

Business deals like the ones Arnold engaged in were not uncommon in ghetto life. The fact that the Jews were not willing to succumb to terrific pressures placed on them by their German masters prompted Heydrich eventually to complain to the Führer. He said that the Jews were stuffed into overcrowded ghettos without food and water and they still refused to die.

Shootings and hangings for stealing coal and food were common. It was not unusual to hear the screams and pleas of the pitiful victims who heard the infamous knock at the door in the middle of the night. The unfortunate ones were dragged kicking and biting from their homes by the brutal, cursing and club-wielding Germans. The big problem in the ghetto now was no

longer the agony of watching friends, neighbors and family being damned by the system, but the rise of contagious diseases like spotted fever and starvation. The slow and agonizing death by either malnutrition or the plague, and not being able to do anything about it, was almost too much for anyone to bear. Even if there were a doctor in the ghetto, what could he do without his instruments or medicine? Suicide was no longer uncommon for those who could no longer suffer under such conditions.

It was at this point that Arnold decided to get out of the ghetto and to join an underground movement against the Germans. The hills were teeming with partisans making life miserable for the Germans. Arnold came to the conclusion that if he were going to die, he was determined to die with honor. He refused to go to his death like a sheep walking numbly to the slaughterhouse.

Arnold went to his mother and father and informed them of his fateful decision. He argued that it would be one less to feed at the table especially since he did not have a ration card. Naturally his mother was upset and cried, but Arnold's father comforted her by putting his arms around her and assured her that Arnold was doing the right thing. Someone had to destroy the Nazi monster, and, someday, the activities which Arnold had planned with the underground would bring freedom, dignity, and honor to the Jews.

When night finally arrived, long after the 6:00 p.m. curfew, Arnold packed up his few belongings and prepared to leave. He tenderly kissed his mother and firmly shook his father's hand. Arnold assured them that he would return to the ghetto from time to time but could say no more. After one last look at his parents, and what he had called home in the ghetto, he turned and walked out of the door into the blackness of night. Arnold's parents heard his footsteps become faint and then heard no more.

The question in the minds of his parents was whether Arnold would ever come back or would he become just another obscure Jew consumed in the Nazi inferno?

CHAPTER FIVE

"It is purely incidental if we condemn 1.2 million Jews to starve to death. We naturally hope this can be avoided by speeding up the anti-Jewish measures."

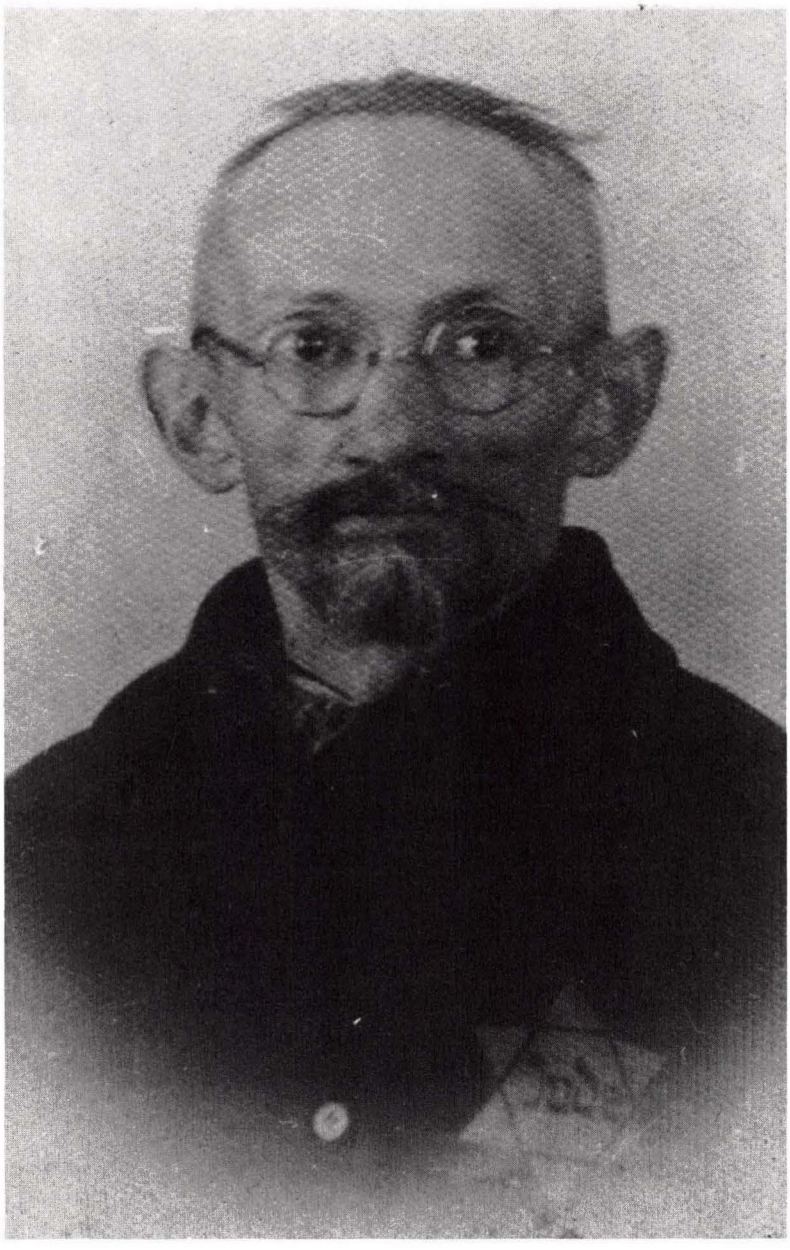
"I could not, of course, eliminate all lice nor all Jews in only a year, but in the course of time this end will be attained."

Generalgouverneur H. Frank

Arnold's plan to go out and defeat the German invaders was short-lived. He heard rumors that the ghetto was to be eliminated, and that all survivors were to be marched to the Szrodula ghetto. About half of the ghetto had been eliminated by the most repressive measures, and the survivors could now be better organized in the new and smaller ghetto.

The elimination of the ghetto meant the end of a confined society which had continued to function in spite of the times. Businesses and schools were closed as well as the SS-supported black-market restaurants, nightclubs and whorehouses. Large profits had been made in these enterprises by the corrupt occupation authorities. They regretted the closings more than the Jews, but there was always the hope that the survivors would begin again in the new ghetto.

When Arnold came home in the summer of 1941, he was greeted by tears of joy from his mother and father. Arnold was stunned by the looks of his father. His hair was white, his face lined and drawn, and he walked with some difficulty. According to Arnold's mother, Alexander had gone into shock when the Jewish policeman had come to get Arnold's twenty-one-year-old sister Lola. Her destination was a secret. Later it was learned that Lola had been shipped to the Parschnitz labor camp in



Alexander Szyjowicz

Czechoslovakia. Lola was put to work in the Kluge weaving firm in Gabersdorf, where she remained until her liberation in 1945. Although Lola was never paid for her work, in accordance with the directive dated October 26, 1939, which stated that all Polish Jews between the ages of fourteen and sixty would be forced to labor without pay, her status saved her life.

Sophie, twenty-three years of age, and Izaak, at age nineteen, left the ghetto in November 1939 with forged Aryan papers and took their chances, hoping never to be caught. They did not come back to the ghetto, and they did survive the war, although their parents never knew what happened to them.

Bernard was shipped to a labor camp in March 1942, but Arnold was able to keep in touch with him until 1943. The man who kept Arnold informed of his brother's activities, for a very large profit, was the SS man Josef Litzka. He was one of the biggest black-marketeers in Poland; and Arnold saw to it that Litzka was well furnished with counterfeit ration cards and stamps. Bernard also outlived the Holocaust because of his ability to cope with the forced labor thrust upon him.

Arnold was the only one left to help his parents move their meager belongings, as well as the tools needed to reestablish the tailor shop, to the next location. There was no sadness in leaving the ghetto, but there was apprehension as to what they might face in the Szrodula ghetto. Could it be worse?

Early in the morning, Arnold and his parents were awakened by the shrill whistles of the Jewish policemen ordering all ghetto people to assemble in the main square with their belongings. As Arnold later said, "They were walking around in their white hats and ghetto uniforms like big shots." Anyone who did not leave his home at once was shot by the *Einsatzgruppen*. Because the elderly could not move fast enough, or for SS entertainment, shots from the guns of the Germans could be heard all over the ghetto.

When all the Jews had been gathered in the main square they had to wait for hours until the Germans were satisfied that all Jews had been collected as well as any valuables they might have left in their haste to get out of the houses. Finally, the trek to Szrodula began. Carrying their belongings on their backs, Arnold and his parents trudged along with the column of refugees.



Lola Szyjowicz



Bernard Szyjowicz



Izaak Szyjowicz



Sophie Szyjowicz

The tailoring equipment was placed on an old farm wagon and protected by the Jewish Police. The Germans wanted to insure the skills of Arnold's father because of his outstanding work.

This time, when the pitiful column of Jewish refugees passed by, the Polish citizens didn't appear to be as happy with their plight as they had been during the invasion. The Poles did not realize their dependency upon Jewish skills in the early days, and now they realized that they needed those very things for their own survival. In contrast to the Polish plight, the Jews had astonished the Germans by their survival through the very skills now denied to the Poles.

Survival was not for all the Jews going from Gordonia to Szrodula. The feeble, sick, pregnant, and elderly who could not ride on the farm wagons, or be carried by someone, fell by the wayside either through exhaustion or being shot by their guards. The rest of the caravan felt the hardships of travelling under the most primitive conditions. Their cursing and impatient guards constantly struck them with fists, whips and clubs. Finally, after two days, the exhausted group arrived at Szrodula. It was now safe for the commanding officer to report to his superiors that Gordonia was cleansed of Jews and that the survivors had arrived safely at their new home.

Regardless of their repressive surroundings, the Jews went to work at once in order to give them the best conditions for survival. The SS assisted anywhere it was possible for them to share in the profits. Alexander's sewing machine was in operation immediately so that there would be no more delay in getting their beautifully tailored SS uniforms once more. Also, the ghetto tailor shop employed nine custom tailors and Arnold was involved in seeing that the SS goods were properly delivered. Hauptstandführers Ludwig and Knoll saw to it that Arnold had passes to go out of the ghetto, use public transportation — which was forbidden for Jews — and anything else needed for his services.

Sometimes, when he was out of the ghetto, Arnold would take a chance and pull his coat over the yellow star of David so that he could do a little business to help him and his parents survive the new ghetto.

The new living quarters were far worse than those in Gordonia.





Evacuation of Jews to Szrodula ghetto





The Szrodula ghetto

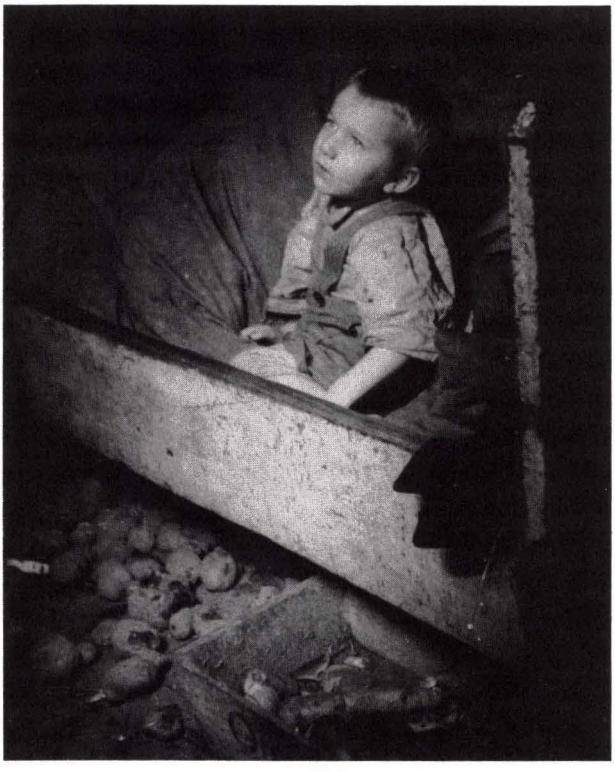
Eight people now shared a basement room measuring eight by twelve feet. It had one window and no water facilities. There were two beds for three families to share, which they did by working in three shifts. The room was bitterly cold in winter and very hot and humid in the summer. No one complained to the Judenrat, because they were looking after themselves and they wanted no problems with the Germans. Censorship by the Jewish policemen and the Judenrat was more severe than that practiced by the Germans.

Probably the only good that Arnold could point to, as an asset of the situation in the ghetto, was his small garden at the far end of the ghetto. For some reason, the Germans allowed the garden to exist in spite of the fact that they were trying to eliminate the Jews by starvation and disease. Suicide was encouraged. Anyone trying to stop a suicide was immediately shot.

Now that his parents seemed to be settled in their new surroundings, Arnold got restless and wanted to go out once more and join the underground. His mother was bitterly opposed to it, but Alexander knew that his son had a mission. This time Arnold slipped out of the ghetto without any problems from his mother and father. He went to the Carpathian mountains and tried to join a Polish unit, but was not wanted by them because he was a Jew.

Discouraged, Arnold decided to return to the ghetto after trying one more time to find a partisan unit that would take him. What actually frightened Arnold into coming back to the ghetto was the rumor that the Germans were shipping Jews to extermination camps. Such a rumor was hard to believe, but Arnold did not want to take any chances.

When Arnold joined his father and mother again, he said little about what he had heard. Unfortunately, it was not a rumor! To date, there is no documentary evidence pointing to who first ordered the extermination of the Jews, nor is there any evidence as to when and how it would be done. This has led the present-day revisionists to state that there never was such an order nor were there such extermination camps. It is known that in June, 1941, Reichsführer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, ordered the Commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss, to prepare for the





Living conditions in Szrodula ghetto

extermination of the Jews. Höss had complete instructions on how to install the extermination facilities.

The mass murders of Jews and other undesirables of the Reich took place without warning. If anyone suspected what was going on, he would discount such a story on the basis that the Germans would never do such a thing. Skepticism about extermination camps was a normal reaction both at home and abroad. To the Jews, who had already walked through hell, it was a distinct possibility. Furthermore, the Nazis were successful in cutting off any communication from the outside world, including money, food, medical supplies, and clothing. With this advantage over the Jews, why wouldn't it be possible to condemn the Jews to death without much notice from the outside world?

Death continued to stalk the ghetto, and so many Jews were dying from spotted fever and malnutrition that the order to bury the dead within fifteen minutes after death was no longer possible. No one bothered to look at those who lay down in the gutter to die. Once in a while someone would place some newspapers over corpses. Eventually the death carts arrived to pile them up like cordwood, then take them away for a mass grave burial. No one noticed or cared anymore. The only time anyone took notice of death was the compulsory gathering in the center of the ghetto to watch a hanging. The Germans wanted to teach the Jews that one doesn't steal a handful of coal to keep warm, or a little food to stay alive. The SS not only sought excuses to rid the ghetto of Jews, but also found it entertaining to toss a crust of bread or a few pieces of coal into the ghetto streets to watch the desperate Jews fight like jackals over the meager rations.

On the night of April 20, 1942, the *Einsatzgruppen* burst through the door to the Szyjowicz living quarters and ordered Alexander to get out of bed. They said that they wanted to talk with him at the police station and he had better bring his clothes with him. Alexander told the Germans he knew what they had in mind and would die in bed in his home. The Germans looked at each other, but the leader of the group laughed and said that they would be pleased to fulfill the old man's wishes. He turned to his men and ordered them to strike Alexander with their rifles



Reichsführer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler

until his wishes to die were carried out. They raised their rifles and beat Arnold's father about the head and body. Everyone in the room could hear the bones cracking under the onslaught; and it was just too much for Arnold to bear. He ran to help his stricken father but was struck from the rear by a rifle butt and lost consciousness. When Arnold awoke, the soldiers were gone and his mother was weeping loudly over his father.

Sara and Arnold couldn't get a doctor in the ghetto, so they tried to do what they could to help Alexander. They bathed his bloody body with salt water, but they couldn't stop the blood from pouring from his mouth. Alexander's chest was smashed and he knew that he was going to die. He told his son and wife not to fret, but to go about their duties as usual and look after the others in the ghetto. How could they? Sara and Arnold treated him like a baby and knew that it was just a matter of time before he would die.

Arnold went to the tailor shop as directed by his father. The German boss of the tailors, Alfred Rosner, was furious when he learned that his own kind had gone into the home of his best tailor and murdered his father.

On April 24, when Arnold was in the shop, word came that his father was dying. Arnold knew that he had to go home; to do so at this time of the day was forbidden. If he were caught, it meant immediate execution. Arnold decided to take the risk and went home regardless of the penalty. He arrived just in time, grasped his father's hand and clenched his teeth in bitterness. Alexander turned to his wife and asked her not to cry any more. He said that he couldn't die in peace knowing that his wife was in such sorrow. Friends held her and she stopped. Alexander squeezed Arnold's hand and closed his eyes for the last time. He became another statistic in the Nazi cauldron of hate.

Because of Alexander's skills as a tailor for the SS, the Germans allowed him to be buried in a plot four kilometers from the ghetto. It was up to Sara and Arnold to carry the body to the burial plot and walk back without any help from anyone. All along the route Arnold planned in his mind how he would seek vengeance on his father's killers. He also



First transport from Bedzin to Auschwitz

swore to protect his mother from such brutality, though he didn't know how.

One thing Arnold did have to do for his mother was to go out and find food. His small garden had been raided, and the Germans had continued to cut down on the rations for the ghetto. Arnold told his mother to wait for him, he would get the needed food for both of them. Sara told him that food was not important; she begged him not to leave her side. Arnold disagreed and said that as head of the household he would go out and get what he could. He promised that he would be back soon.

Actually, Arnold had a fortunate situation in getting in and out of the ghetto. In one of his trips outside of the ghetto he had met a young widow with a baby who lived just outside of the ghetto. She was a Christian and liked Arnold a great deal; she made every attempt to assist him in his trips back and forth. If there were a possibility of his being seen by the guards, she would let him know or hide him until they were gone. Once on August 10, 1942, Arnold got the signal that all was clear and arrived home with the promised food only to learn that something big was going to happen in the ghetto. He told his mother to follow him into a subbasement and remain very quiet. The heat and the lack of fresh air was almost too much to bear. They drank their own sweat so that they wouldn't have to go out and be seen.

Soon the Germans came into the ghetto and ordered all people to leave. As a soldier neared Arnold's place, a baby started to cry, and the baby's mother choked and killed the child so that the Germans would not discover the hiding place of a number of Jews. Eventually, after everything seemed to be quiet, Arnold went out to see if it were safe for everyone to come out of the hiding place. After a brief conversation among the Jews in the subbasement, it was decided that all was fine and that the Germans would not return for a while.

They were wrong. Two days later, August 12, the methodical Germans figured that any Jews in hiding would not be in the open and easy to catch. It had been raining and Arnold was trying to sleep by the only window. His mother sat quietly

watching the rain drip on Arnold's face when suddenly the infamous knock on the door signaled the presence of the *Einsatzgruppen.* They came through the door and dragged Arnold's mother out into the weather without a coat, umbrella or any other protection against the foul weather. Arnold tried everything he could to go with his mother, but a Jewish policeman knocked him out of the way and told him he was crazy. Others who were selected for extermination fought their captors. The Jewish police and *Einsatzgruppen* had to drag and beat the screaming, biting and struggling victims to the collection center, known as the Umschlagplatz. There the unfortunate creatures waited for hours in the rain until placed in the custody of the Jewish police. The victims were then put on cattle cars to be taken to Auschwitz. Meanwhile, a very distraught Arnold, remembering that he had sworn to protect his mother, circled around the enclosure trying to get in so that he could go with her. The guards drove him away until it was useless to try any longer. Arnold saw his mother beaten and pushed into the overcrowded car; the doors were slammed shut, and the train started slowly for its horrible destination with its human cargo. Arnold learned after the war that his forty-eight-year-old mother had been gassed two days later, being selected by Dr. Mengele as useless to his work details. He was now alone — both his father and mother were gone. He was half-crazed with bitterness and resentment.

Now, it was unnecessary for Arnold to come back to the ghetto, as he had done when his parents needed him. Why should he remain in the ghetto with the few Jews waiting for the Germans to send them to certain death? He was tired of eating hay soup and groveling for crumbs in the street. What good was it to remain in the tailor shop and make uniforms with mismatched sleeves for the Wehrmacht, and to put notes in the pockets telling the German soldiers what was going on in the ghettos? Arnold decided to join the partisans full-time. By 1942, the number of Jews in the underground or partisan groups was growing rapidly, and they were a considerable problem to the German occupation authorities.

Unlike the Polish partisans, the Jews wanted to save them-



Sara Szyjowicz (nee Druch)

selves from the extermination camps, to gain revenge and to save other Jews wherever possible. Arnold had all three reasons to join, but he was particularly involved in aiding the Jews in the ghetto. Like most Jews, Arnold was from the city. The countryside was alien and frightening to him. How could he survive a lengthy stay in the country? Partisan units needed help from the villagers and farmers, and the Jews couldn't count on such help. The Poles would turn them in to the German authorities or murder them for whatever property they might have on them.

Once, when a group of Polish partisans accepted Arnold, he felt happy that someone finally wanted him. When he fell asleep exhausted from his travels, his new companions quietly unzipped his pockets and stole money and a locket with his mother and father's photograph in it. They slipped away and left Arnold alone to contemplate what he should do next.

Generally, the right wing of the Polish partisans took the view that the Jews were bandits and must be robbed and murdered. The left-wing faction, though anti-Semitic, were more lenient in their approach to the Jewish partisan. Knowing this, Arnold decided not to join any group but to handle the problem alone.

The Jews formed tight little units and roamed around on their own. The girls were just as tough as the boys and handled the same assignments. In fact, once Arnold was travelling with a young girl by the name of Kerzenblat, and because she was able to camouflage her figure so well, he did not know for a long time that his comrade was a woman!

Arnold's true love and tough little companion was Fela Friedman. According to Arnold, she was about five feet, three inches tall, with dark hair, blue eyes, a beautiful complexion and a lovely body. Fela was smart, spoke several languages, was quite daring, and knew how to deal with all kinds of people. Arnold and Fela were in love and promised to be together forever.

Before Arnold and Fela left the ghetto, they met a corrupt German official who was willing to sell them false identity papers for twenty-five hundred marks. Arnold was listed as Arnold Wujcikewicz, a Polish Christian, and not to be bothered by the

German occupation authorities. There wasn't enough black-market money to buy papers for Fela, but she relied on Arnold to look after her in case of trouble.

From time to time, Arnold and Fela would pick up another companion or two, but usually travelled alone. They felt that they could do more damage and hide more easily than a large group, but this hindered the size of their operations. Sometimes they were helpless to assist the civilians when the Germans abused them. Once, when a group of Hitler Youth were approaching Arnold and Fela, they were able to jump behind a wall just in time. However, the group of sixteen- to seventeen-year-olds were being shown by their leader how to handle civilians in conquered lands. Arnold and Fela had only knives in their belts and couldn't attack their hated enemy because of their arms and equipment. They could just pray that the group would leave before they discovered them.

Unfortunately, the Hitler Youth didn't pass by as quickly as Arnold and Fela hoped they would. Their progress was interrupted by a twelve-year-old girl riding her bicycle into town. The youth leader ordered her to stop and get off the bicycle. The girl was greatly frightened and wanted to know what she had done to be ordered to stop. Without answering her, the youth leader went up to her, grabbed her blouse, ripped it open and exposed her small breasts. The leader expounded upon the virtues of the German breasts versus the Polish breasts and why the German women made better mothers. The frightened girl tried to run away, but one of the youths grabbed her by the waist. The youth leader pulled her underwear off and ordered the others to grab an arm and leg and pull her to the ground. The girl begged not to be harmed but her pleas were met with a roar of laughter.

The leader unfastened his belt, dropped his pants and told his youthful followers he would show them how to handle "Polish pussy." He lunged at the girl, and she let out a piercing scream as the Hitler Youth chanted their approval. After the leader finished raping the girl, he invited others to join in the girl's horrible ordeal. When it was over, the girl sat in the middle of the road completely dazed and mumbling to herself. She looked blankly at the leader when he came up to her,

pointed the Luger pistol at her head, then fired. The leader turned to his companions saying that the Germans were humane people and didn't like to see animals suffer. With that, the group went off talking about finding other Polish girls. Arnold told Fela that if he had a machine gun he would wipe them out without any remorse whatsoever! It was an experience that he would never forget, regardless of all the horror he was to see.

Arnold and Fela did everything they could to hinder the Germans. They helped the underground blow up a former button factory, now used for armaments, and an ammunition dump. Arnold threw a grenade into a bar frequented by German troops and local girls and wiped them out. After such attacks by Arnold and other partisans, the Germans intensified their atrocities, hoping that this would stop the partisan attacks. Arnold saw more atrocities than he thought possible outside of the ghetto. Once he saw a group of Poles taking a Sunday stroll up a mountain trail when a unit of German soldiers stopped their trucks and opened fire, killing the entire party. Nothing was more barbaric than seeing the German troops use their bayonets on pregnant women for the sheer fun of it. In the areas cleansed of Jews, the Germans turned on the Poles for their fun and barbarism. Was there much difference between a Pole and a Jew?

Arnold continued to steal and engage in black-market activities for those who were left in the ghetto. The Germans were more corrupt than ever before. Gold and silver from the inmates of the extermination camps were now to be found outside of the camps and in Arnold's hands. Everyone was looking out for himself! The hardest job was not finding money, but finding a place to hide. Generally, the best place to hide was in the farmhouses, but many of the Polish farmers resented the Jews and didn't want them around. If this were the case, Arnold and Fela simply killed the farmers and took what they needed. It was either that or have the farmers call the Germans and get caught. Killing the farmers also gave Arnold time to get away before the deed had been discovered by the Polish authorities. Sometimes it was convenient to bury the farmers so that the authorities wouldn't find them right away.

By the time the bodies were discovered, Arnold and Fela would be far away.

If Arnold couldn't hide in the farmhouse, he would sometimes go up in the mountains where he knew the Germans wouldn't dare to seek him. The mountains were honeycombed with partisans and thought to be too dangerous and a waste of time for the Germans. Food was always stolen at night to avoid detection by the German patrols and the Poles who would turn them in.

Arnold's luck ran out about a year after his mother was shipped to Auschwitz. What Arnold and Fela didn't realize was the order directing the "cleansing of Jews" in the Szrodula ghetto on the first of August. The Germans had used the excuse that the Jews had revolted and they had to be taught a lesson in discipline. Those who survived the attack upon the ghetto were promptly shipped to Auschwitz and other extermination camps.

When Arnold and Fela came back to the ghetto about 3:00 p.m. on August 9, 1943, they were promptly arrested by the Germans. Since Arnold was carrying a suitcase with one hundred-twenty thousand marks in it, the Germans assumed that Arnold and his associates were Poles robbing the ghetto. Soon they suspected whom they really had in their clutches and asked them if they were Jews. Arnold and Fela admitted that they were Jews, but their other two companions denied it. The Germans shot the two who lied and took Arnold and Fela to the police station. Escape was no longer possible.

The transport had left and would not return since there were no more Jews to collect. Arnold and Fela would have to be taken to Auschwitz by private car. Four guards were assigned to watch over the frightened two, and they were not permitted to talk to each other or the guards while en route to the extermination camp. Fela and Arnold held each other's hands and comforted each other by giving reassuring glances.

The car did not go through the main gate, but pulled up to a transport spewing forth its latest unfortunate victims. Dr. Mengele stood at the open doors of the cattle cars with his leather whip in hand, signalling to the left or right as to who would live and who would die. This was the first but not the last time Arnold would see Dr.Mengele!

Arnold and Fela were selected to live. Arnold was pushed along to the men's Lager, and Fela was dragged into the women's camp. Arnold turned to get one last look at Fela; he thought that they would never see each other again, and he was correct. Then Fela was out of sight, and now it was time for Arnold to think of himself. He was very frightened, but he gritted his teeth and told himself that he would live to tell the story of what the Germans tried to do to him. It was now a matter of time.

CHAPTER SIX

"Just imagine what would happen if such occurrences became known to the enemy and were exploited; but probably such propaganda would have no effect, since those who hear or read it would not believe it!"
Heinrich Lohse, Commissioner for Ostland

Suddenly, the column came to a halt. A snarling, cursing SS man, who looked like an evil giant in his black uniform and high-peaked hat, stood before his terrified audience and told them that it was too late at night to register. Therefore, it was fitting, he shouted, that the Jewish pigs lie down in the mud until morning. Actually, Arnold was standing on a brick walk, and that made any thought of sleep virtually impossible.

Arnold nervously looked at the frightened inmates huddled together for protection and comfort. Who could sleep? Arnold sat on the bricks and let his mind wander. He asked himself: "Why am I here? Who is responsible for this? How long will I remain in the camp? Are all the stories true about Auschwitz?" No answers came to Arnold's confused and terrified mind as he sank into a deep psychological depression and tried to blot out all that had recently happened to him.

The answers to the questions posed by Arnold were quite complex. The genesis of the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish Question" probably germinated in the long history of anti-Semitism in Germany, compounded by the Darwinian principle of natural selection. Darwin wrote at length about those who were fit to live versus those considered to be inferior and subject to disappear from society.

Chancellor Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* documents his strong anti-Semitism, and his plans for the possible extermination of



Perimeter of the Auschwitz extermination camp

those whom he called the vermin in German society. Throughout the 1930s, Hitler repeated his threat that if the world went to war, Germany would not only settle "our accounts with the Jews" but that "the Jews will be destroyed here."

Himmler told Otto Ohlendorf, a commander in the Sicherheitsdienst, "that an important part of our task consisted in the extermination of the Jews — men, women and children." The actual start of the "Final Solution" was Göring's order to Heydrich, on January 24, 1939, in which he referred to the "emigration" and "evacuation" of the Jews in Germany. In November 1939, a thirty-five-year-old alcoholic and corrupt Austrian Nazi, SS Lt. General Odilo Globocnik was appointed by Heydrich to liquidate Polish Jews. On July 31, 1941, Hermann Göring, founder of the Gestapo, further ordered Heydrich "to make preparations for the general solution to the Jewish problem within the German sphere of influence in Europe." Six months later, on January 20, 1942, Heydrich called a conference, "to be followed by breakfast," in the Berlin suburban town of Wannsee.* Those who attended were not ignorant or irresponsible men picked at random, but sixteen well-educated heads of ministries of the Third Reich who would be involved in coordinating the holocaust. Heydrich verbally informed his listeners that the "Final Solution" would involve eleven million Jews. This number obviously included the Jews in territories not yet conquered by Hitler's armies.**

The conference about the "Final Solution" was never to be put in writing, thus, it must be assumed that verbal orders were given to Heinrich Himmler by Hitler, and by Himmler to Heydrich and the SS. Any document pertaining to the Jews was given the priority "geheime Reichssache" or "top secret." All personnel involved in the "Final Solution" were ordered to take a special oath which promised total secrecy. Anything to deceive the world, including the "selected" victims, such as a special language, hiding the liquidation camps, etc., was to be employed by those in charge. The Nazis also felt that if anyone heard about

*The conference was originally scheduled for November 29, 1941, but Heydrich postponed it until January. It was held in the Headquarters of Interpol, Number 56/58 Grossen Wannsee.

**Adolf Eichmann took the minutes of the conference.



Hermann Wilhelm Göring

it, the magnitude of the crime would make the rumor difficult to believe. In spite of the precautions taken, by 1942, the world began to suspect the truth.

The logistics of exterminating millions of people were enormous. It was the equivalent of a major military campaign. The primary question was how and where would it be done. The second question was who could be called upon to do such a thing. It was decided to herd the Jews into ghettos and then on to the extermination camps.

Prior to the invasion of Poland in 1939, there were six concentration camps and two principles for internment. At that time it was estimated that no more than twenty-five thousand people were incarcerated in all of the KZ camps. The first principle was the "security arrest" of people who were considered enemies of the state. This generally meant dissident clergy, Jews who couldn't get out of Germany,* Communists, and other political foes of the regime as well as Jehovah's Witnesses. The second category was the "asocials," habitual criminals, Gypsies, prostitutes and homosexuals. There were no camps specifically designated for the extermination of human beings. However, by 1945, there were twenty-four main concentration camps, and hundreds of "feeder" camps, holding over seven million prisoners in all. The most infamous camps, particularly Auschwitz, were those established for the purpose of liquidating people. It has been recorded that over six thousand SS men and women worked at Auschwitz from 1940 to 1945 and very few of that number have been held accountable for their crimes.

Arnold wondered what kind of people were involved in the horrible crime of persecuting the Jews. He immediately came to the erroneous conclusion that they must be retarded people exploited by the Nazi masters. This was wrong. Most of them were intelligent, well-educated men and women. If it hadn't been for Hitler and the war, most of them would have probably led respectable middle-class lives in Germany. Hitler's arrival cast aside the mantle of decency, and he furthered the barbaric instincts of his subjects by indoctrinating them with Nazi

*Jews had the unusual posture of being "sentenced for life" while the others had the slight chance of eventually being released.

paganism. Vicious anti-Semitism coupled with the license to kill gave those in charge of the prisoners the privilege to practice the basest form of animal behavior.

One of the vilest creatures who had the "right" to kill, torture and maim was a former convict by the name of Rudolf Franz Ferdinand Höss. Early in life, Höss wanted to become a priest, but this idea faded when he heard the clarion call of the Nazi trumpet. In 1923, the NSDAP lost one of its early members when Höss murdered a schoolteacher and was sentenced to prison for life. The sentence did not diminish his enthusiasm for the Nazi Party, particularly when he became a close friend of Hitler's future secretary of the Kanzlei, Martin Bormann. In 1934, Höss was a trusted prisoner and was designated as a blockleader in the newly erected concentration camp near the town of Dachau, not far from Munich. Though still a prisoner, Höss was rewarded for his loyalty to the Party by being commissioned a second lieutenant in the Totenkopf Verbände, the "death-head" units specifically designated to guard the inmates of the concentration camps. In early 1940, he was a lieutenant colonel and commandant of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

The answer to Arnold's question as to the location of his new home was simple. The town of Oświeçim, or Auschwitz, in German, had a population of twelve thousand. It was located in southern Poland about one hundred sixty miles southwest of Warsaw along the main railroad line between Krakow and Vienna. The town, which had its beginnings in the twelfth century, was a fortress surrounded by stagnant ponds about forty-eight kilometers from Krakow at the junction of the Vistula and Sola Rivers. After a long and turbulent history, Oświeçim became a rail junction and commercial center. It was at this site that SS-Gruppenführer Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski and SS Oberführer Arpad Wigand decided to place an appropriate camp to house the arrested Silesian Poles. Höss, who was one of those who suggested the location of the camp, was relieved of his

*Report to Hitler, February 21, 1940, stated: "Auschwitz a former Polish artillery barracks (stone and wood structures) is suitable for use as a quarantine camp after some sanitary and structural defects have been dealt with." Earlier than this, the old barracks had been constructed in the old empire days when Auschwitz was part of Austrian Galicia.

Sachsenhausen command and appointed camp commandant. The order to establish the camp was actually given in April 1940,* and the first transport with seven hundred twenty-eight Poles arrived in the new camp on June 14, 1940.

The invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, brought more Jews, Bolsheviks, and other "undesirables" into the Nazi orbit. What to do with these "vermin" and "parasites" was a problem to the leaders of the Third Reich. The time had come not only to rid the Germans of their responsibility, but to see what could be acquired from these unfortunates to better Germany's economic conditions.

In late June 1941, the Auschwitz KZ Lager took on a new dimension. Heinrich Himmler, who had visited Auschwitz on March 1, 1941, sent orders to Höss that he was to drain the swamps to enlarge the camp "where mass exterminations could take place." Himmler, who preferred Auschwitz over all other such institutions, requested that the extermination facilities be camouflaged but easily accessible to transportation routes and supplies.

Höss did not want to have the extermination center within the main camp. The Germans had set aside and cleared over twenty thousand acres for the original camp and so it wouldn't be too difficult for Höss to find space for the new project. In October 1941, about three kilometers from the main camp, or Auschwitz I, Höss created his "death machines" in the woods known as the Birkenwald. From now on it would be known as Auschwitz-Birkenau or Auschwitz II. The original plan was to accommodate two hundred thousand prisoners in roughly six hundred huts. Actually, Höss had three camps in one. The third camp, or Auschwitz III, was Monowitz, about five miles from the others. It was a source of labor for the I.G. Farben plant engaged in the manufacturing of synthetic rubber and oil for the Luftwaffe.

Auschwitz was divided into areas in which the men and women were separated. The accommodations were built by the prisoners from Auschwitz I, and, for the most part, were not the brick buildings to be found in Auschwitz I. They were hastily constructed wooden barracks with very poor sanitary and living conditions. What bricks were used for the main buildings came from the demolished farm houses of the Polish peasants forced from

*See footnote on preceding page.

the area by the Germans. After all, who cared about those designated for liquidation? Certainly no one would be taken on a tour of these facilities as had been the Red Cross officials viewing the activities of Auschwitz I.

Arnold's home for many months was subdivided into sections, or Abschnitt, for nationality, race, duty, etc. . . . Section A was the Quarantine Barracks where all prisoners not sent immediately to the gas chambers were sent for a specified time. Section B was called the Families' Camp and it eventually contained former Jews from Theresienstadt. Section C was an area assigned to the Hungarian prisoners. Section D was known as the Men's Camp, and it contained the tailor shops, the Administration Building, the German barber shop, etc. The new arrivals were permitted to mail their letters in this area, to inform their families at home that they were well and happy. Section E was the Gypsy Camp, or Zigeunerlager, where the Gypsies from all occupied areas were held. It contained men, women, children, married and otherwise, until they were totally wiped out in 1944. Section F was the prisoner's hospital, a place that few if any wanted to go to on a volunteer basis because of the very real danger of being "selected" for the gas chambers. It was also an area where the Nazi medical teams experimented on the inmates although nothing of medical value ever came from such experiments. For example, Himmler ordered the brains of Jews to be stored to see if one could eventually find out why Jews liked to deal in finance. Just beyond these sections was the "Sauna" or bath house. Men and women were disinfected and searched for valuables, sometimes in the most personal places. The people were told not to try and hide anything of value; if they did and were caught, it would mean immediate execution. Inmates were ordered to unstitch the clothing to be sure that no one tried to hide gems, etc., in the linings of the clothing.

Beyond the various sections and the bath house were the gas chambers and four crematoria housing forty-six ovens built and designed by the German firm of Topf and Sons of Erfurt. The ovens could accommodate five hundred corpses per hour. Before the erection of the elaborate gas chambers, which could accommodate two thousand people at one time, the extermination took place in two converted airtight peasant farm houses

("white house" and "red house") in the Birkenwald. Höss decided that killing two hundred fifty people at one time was too slow, and so he decided to improve the situation.

In the spring of 1942, Höss visited Treblinka, where carbon monoxide* had been used, but he told Adolf Eichmann who took charge of the Jewish department, RAHA, in January, 1940, that such a method was "out of the question." In fact, it was one of Höss' subordinates, Captain Fritzsch, who came up with the idea of using Zyklon B crystals. This type of prussic acid was used for fumigation, but in a confined space it was an effective killer. It was manufactured by the firm of Degesch and supplied by Tesch und Stabenow in Dessau. Höss experimented with the Zyklon B product in the cellars of Block 11. About 800 inmates, most of whom were Russian prisoners of war, were the "guinea pigs," and though all of them didn't die, Höss knew that he had arrived at the solution of mass killings.

It is believed that Standartenführer Paul Blobel, an architect from Düsseldorf, was the chief designer of the large gas chambers, and one of his subordinates suggested that the interior be designed as a shower room to deceive the prisoners. Höss was now ready to carry out the orders of his superiors with such efficiency that it would make his Führer proud of him.

Arnold's job was to see to it that he was not part of the fulfillment of Höss' orders. Since he couldn't sleep, he spoke quietly to a man sitting beside him. Arnold wanted to know where he came from and how long it took him to get to Auschwitz. The man replied that he and the others had been tricked by the Germans. They had been told that they were going to be resettled somewhere in the East where they could find work and rebuild their lives. The Germans actually persuaded the travellers to buy their tickets for what was supposed to be comfortable accommodations on a passenger train. They had been ordered to pack one suitcase (which they would never see again), take food for two days, a bottle of water, bowl and spoon, warm clothing, two blankets and a pair of heavy work shoes. Collectively, none of these things could weigh over fifty-five pounds.

*The one in charge of the "Euthanasia Center", which used carbon monoxide to kill the victims, was Philip Bouhler. He had an office at Tiergartenstrasse 4, but issued most of his orders from the Führer's Kanzlei.

Instead of decent railway coaches, Arnold's informer went on to say, the Germans packed them into cattle cars. Not knowing where they were going, and on a trip which lasted longer than the two days they expected to be on the train, which meant they ran out of food and water, optimism was replaced by utter despair. Very little air could be found in the cars because of overcrowding and because the small window at the top, covered with barbed wire, was closed most of the time. The receptacle for human waste overflowed and slopped on the floor, and the dead bodies of those who were too weak to make it began to bloat and smell. When the transport finally arrived at Auschwitz, the prisoners stumbled, or were pushed, out of the cattle cars only to face Dr. Josef Mengele, or one of his subordinates; "selection" after such an ordeal was easy for Mengele. The weak, elderly, pregnant, infirm, small children, and those otherwise incapable of working were immediately sent to the chambers. Those who survived the horrible journey were assured the right to life as long as they could endure the hardships.

Suddenly, about 5:00 a.m., the conversation ceased. Guards shouted, blew their whistles, ordered everyone to stand up and to fall into ranks. They went through the lines of prisoners stinging the unfortunates with their leather whips while their dogs bit and scratched any inmate who tried to dodge or run from the blows.

The order to march was: "Move on, you filthy liced Jews." They were marched to Block 26, where they were met by the Blockführer. He held the teletype from the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office) 116, Kurfurstenstrasse, Berlin, stating who was on the list of arrivals and instructions for "special treatment." This would be the last time Arnold would hear his name until the day of liberation of 1945. From now on Arnold was a number!

All prisoners were ordered to disrobe and were warned not to hide anything or they would be shot. Next, they were all jammed into the showers, then, to the great glee of the laughing and shouting guards, the water was turned on. At first the water was ice cold and then it was immediately boiling hot. It was funny to see the prisoners jump around in pain and agony, but when the SS men had enough they ordered everyone out in the street.

The next thing Arnold saw was the approach of resident inmates with crude razors to shave the heads of the newly arrived inmates. In an agonizingly short time the hair was removed by the filthy, dull and unsanitary razors without the benefit of soap or lather. Many of the prisoners later suffered infections from the treatment, but made no attempt to seek medical help. Such aid usually meant a trip to the gas chambers.

As Arnold stood naked, shaved, bleeding and frightened, his shattered nerves were jolted by the Blockführer shouting for what he called the "engraver." The next thing Arnold knew he was in front of a very thin, unkempt German in a striped suit. The German, in Auschwitz because he was an enemy of the state, was given the job of tattooing the new arrivals. Though he was an inmate, his lot was a better one than the Jews and other prisoners in this horrid camp. He reached out for Arnold's left arm with filthy hands, which had very dirty fingernails. The arm was placed on a rough bench and Arnold was told not to move or he would be shot at once. Next he pointed a most unsanitary needle, about 1 cm. long, at Arnold's left arm. Without the benefit of a painkiller, or antiseptic, he hurriedly etched out the number 135584 on the arm. For several days the arm was swollen and infected, but Arnold would not seek medical help for the fear of being "selected" for the gas chambers. From now on Arnold was a number and nameless. Arnold thought that those who went directly to the gas chambers might be better off, since they did not have to suffer the abuse and degradation he had suffered in the last eight hours.

Arnold was issued a dirty and ragged oversized thin blue and white striped jacket, pants, cap and wooden shoes. He was allowed one used undershirt and shorts and no socks. The yellow triangle sewn on the pocket of the jacket pointed out to all who looked his way that he was a Jew. There was no question in Arnold's mind as to where the previous owners of his clothing happened to be — gassed!

As the new arrivals were led to Abschnitt A, or the Quarantine Camp, they noticed about a dozen men lined up with their faces to the wall of building "24". Why were they there? Across from these people was a low building with smoke stacks. Was this the crematorium they had heard about? Arnold later learned that the

men facing along the wall had been taken out of the line-up for morning roll call, and were required to stand all day long in their assigned location. They were scheduled to be shot after the evening roll call for no crime at all, except that it was "good discipline" casually to pick a few prisoners to be shot so that the others would quickly obey their masters. Arnold also learned that the building he thought was the crematorium was the kitchen. When Arnold worked in the kitchen, he saw the executions every night and became immune to the ritual. What he didn't like about it was the fact that it was a source of amusement and target practice for the bored SS personnel.

Once inside the Quarantine camp, Arnold refused to talk with anyone. He just wanted to die. It would be so easy for him to ignore the wooden boards with the words "Halt-Sto'j" hanging from the highly charged electric barbed wire. Who would stop him? After all, it was against the law to prevent a Jew from committing suicide.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"Gentlemen, if a generation should ever follow us that is so spineless and weak-kneed as not to understand our great task, then National Socialism shall indeed have been in vain. I am, on the contrary, of the opinion that bronze tablets should be laid recording that we had the courage to carry out this great and so necessary a work."

Odilo Globocnik, Chief of the SS and Police in Lublin

Arnold was hungry, very hungry! Hunger had finally conquered the horrors of his past hours in the camp. No longer did the stench of dead and burning bodies, the screams of the tortured and dying, and of those begging not to be taken to the ovens stifle Arnold's appetite. No food had been given to him or any of the prisoners since their arrival in Auschwitz. Worse than that, there did not seem to be any visible attempt to feed the unfortunates.

Instead of feeding the prisoners, the diabolical Germans planned to keep them occupied every minute of the day. Food was the remotest thing in the minds of their masters. After all, they were not starving, they were just hungry!

The Blockführer blew his whistle, cracked his leather whip, and shouted, "Fall in, whore sons, fall in line." The Blockführer was supported by the so-called prisoners' self-government. They were prisoners who had "bought" time in exchange for carrying out the sadistic work of the SS on their fellow inmates. On their left sleeves these hardened thugs wore armbands describing their duties. It was this group of "specialists" who went down the rows of inmates beating them with whips, clubs, iron bars and anything else they could get their hands on.

Arnold's first day began with a lecture on German superiority, followed by drilling and learning of German marching songs.

Arnold, a tortured Polish Jew, was forced to sing such songs as "Heil Hitler Dir," while he marched to the tempo of clubs striking the inmates. Every once in a while the tempo was interrupted by the loud scream of an unfortunate who just couldn't go on. Usually such people were pulled out of line only to be beaten to the ground, stamped, and kicked while the vicious dogs gnawed at their flesh.

When the marching was over, Arnold was exhausted but this didn't mean anything to his masters. "On your feet, Jew bastards, on your feet," shouted their tormentors. The next moment Arnold was conscious of running, rolling and spinning around on a very rough surface. He thought it would be wonderful to go back to marching. His fellow inmates began to collapse from exhaustion, and there were fatal heart attacks caused by the excessive strain. Others were cut and bruised by the sharp pebbles, glass, and broken bricks. This ordeal lasted for hours, and Arnold wanted to attack one of his club-wielding tormentors so that he could have revenge before being shot. Why prolong the agony?

The Germans were finally breaking Arnold's mental and physical resistance. That was the main purpose of the Quarantine Abschnitt. He and the others were just not prepared to know how to cope with the prison life in a concentration camp such as Auschwitz. It was rumored that if one could endure the shock of the first few days, it usually meant survival and possibly slave labor.

Arnold was certain he knew why he was temporarily allowed to live. He knew that it contradicted the Nazi policy of making Europe "Judenrein." In the long run it had the same effect since he was going to be worked to death. The average life span of an inmate selected to work was nine months. Himmler had sent an order to the camp commandants, dated December 2, 1942, in which he decreed that corporal punishment should be avoided. On May 15, 1943, SS Obergruppenführer Pohl further instructed all camp commandants to work out a system of rewards for the prisoners. Why?

The Nazis were practical people and looked after their own interests. The war had lasted longer than Hitler thought it would, and this called for an enlarged labor force. It was Josef Goebbels

who wrote in his diary on March 27, 1942, that forty percent of the Jews could be used for forced labor. Furthermore, the SS continually took over industries connected to the war effort. What better and cheaper labor could they ask for when considering the endless supply coming from the concentration camps? Labor was rented to industry at a rate of six to eight Reichmarks daily minus seventy pfennigs for food and clothing. Unfortunately for the Germans, when it was used it was a frightful waste of manpower efficiency because of the conditions under which these people were forced to work.

Arnold had been picked as a laborer, and it was up to him to live as long as possible under the horrible circumstances. The only problem so far was Arnold's reluctance to live. He just didn't think he could go through another day's torment. He sat on a crudely made bunk in his barracks, looked at the piece of hard bread and cup of blue-looking tea with a potato peel in it, and thought of the sign on the camp gates — "Arbeit Macht Frei" — work makes free. Who could believe that? Arnold sensed what others had already observed about how one would leave Auschwitz. The only way the inmates would ever leave would be as smoke from the tall chimney of the crematorium.

Suddenly he looked up and recognized a familiar face from home. Though neither man knew the other by name, both had attended sevices in the big synagogue, the Beth Hamidrash. Arnold quickly identified himself and asked if there were others in the camp. He also wanted to know what had happened in the ghetto that made it possible for him and Fela to be apprehended.

The answer to Arnold's first question was easy. Yes, there were others who made it to Auschwitz, but most of them had been taken from the transport and put on the trucks for a ride to the gas chambers. The reason for the immediate execution was the answer to Arnold's second question. Apparently, in August when the SS came to the ghetto in search of Jews for "resettlement," they were fired upon by the Jews. Himmler ordered an immediate retaliation. The ghetto was to be "Judenrein" immediately, and the survivors to be gassed for challenging the occupation authorities.

When the transport arrived at Auschwitz, a few were taken

before ex-police commissar, Wilhelm Boger. He was the camp specialist in the interrogation of prisoners. This time he was called upon to find out where the Jews in the ghetto had gotten their weapons and to report this information not only to Höss but to Globocnik. Boger thought nothing of extracting fingernails, pouring water through funnels down the throats of his victims, or inserting needles into sensitive parts of the body. His special instrument to get the needed information was called the "Boger Swing." The one to be questioned was told to sit on the floor and fold his hands before his knees. The wrists were handcuffed, or tied, and a heavy steel bar was placed between the elbows and knees. The end of the rods were placed on two tables, three feet apart. Boger would then ask for a confession, and if he didn't get it would lash the victim on his buttocks with a bull-whip. The prisoner was hit with such force that he usually spun around, and if he cried out, a gas mask was put over his face to stifle the screams. Arnold later learned that the torture was often too great, and the victim died without informing the Germans of the source of supply.

One of the tortures was to force one to tie the bottom of his pant legs to his shins, fill them with mice, pull the belt firmly around the waist, and stand motionless at attention. Any sign of weakness, while the hungry mice scampered about, scratched and bit the prisoners, was considered to be an infraction of the order. The prisoner was either shot at once or whipped so hard that he would be permanently crippled.

Arnold excused himself from his fellow prisoner and said that it was necessary to go to the latrine. He had been in the camp for almost twenty-four hours, and he had been so frightened that he just couldn't relieve himself. He left the barracks and went to the latrine, but when he arrived he couldn't believe what he saw. The toilet was a long cement block with thirty-six holes to accommodate between six hundred and seven hundred people. There was no paper nor a spigot to wash up. Long lines of inmates, most of them suffering from dysentery, were hoping to find a seat before soiling their pants. The stench of the people and the latrine was unbearable. The Germans had worked out a diabolical plan to speed the traffic on the holes. It probably started in the Treblinka KZ camp. They appointed a "Shit-

master," dressed in the robe of a Rabbi, and he was directed to time the prisoners. Each prisoner usually had one minute to perform and if he tried to stay longer, the "Shitmaster" would strike him with the whip until he got off the hole. Most of the unfortunate victims ran away with the feces still draining from them. There was no hope of washing either themselves or their clothes. This meant that the sufferer went back to his barracks to wallow in his filth. Arnold felt that he had experienced everything.

No sooner was Arnold back in the barracks than the whistle blew for another of the incessant roll calls. When Arnold first arrived at Auschwitz, the inmates were subjected to roll calls three times a day. By 1945, only the evening roll call remained. It was more than just a check on the number of prisoners, it was an agonizing ceremony which generally lasted two or three hours. All prisoners stood at attention with bared heads in ranks of ten. Not only was the roll call taken, but the time was utilized by the SS to take some prisoners for undeserved punishment. Generally, this meant torture and death for the unfortunate ones selected to satisfy the barbarism of their tormentors. It was also the time for public hangings for camp violations. A crime in this case, for example, was the failure to remove a cap in the presence of an SS man.

Any person who could not stand the ordeal of roll call was beaten, shot or taken to the gas chambers. Once in a while they were turned over to the vicious dogs trained to tear the body to shreds. Arnold knew that it was just a matter of luck as to how long he could survive under these grotesque conditions. He was just thankful that he was young, and that he had come from a poor family used to hardships.

After the arduous roll call, public hangings, and watching some of the prisoners destroyed for no reason, Arnold went back to his barracks. He found that he was becoming numb to his surroundings. He was certain that it was because he needed sleep. No one, he thought, could ever get used to such horrors. Arnold was wrong. He would become quite used to the terrible surroundings and rather quickly at that! Probably the only thing he never could forget or forgive were Jewish collaborators, and Jews who killed Jews by order of the SS.

Arnold had not had any sleep for over twenty-four hours, and he was certain he could sleep forever. Without undressing, which no one ever did anyhow, he climbed to the top of the three-tier bunk which he shared with five others. The space for sleeping was so narrow that Arnold had to lie between the feet of his bunkmates. Since he was the new prisoner, Arnold had to sleep in the middle, and there was no room to move about. Furthermore, if Arnold had to leave his bed for any reason, the chances of getting his place again were almost nil.

The groans and sobs of those in despair, and the shrieks of the tortured and dying in some other building, began to fade as exhaustion overpowered Arnold's ability to stay awake. Even the foul smells of the barracks, of those sleeping next to him, no longer had any effect. He was just too tired to care anymore. Suddenly, without any recognition of time, Arnold felt a slight sting on his foot. He tried to ignore it, but there was another followed by many more. He felt his whole body being engulfed by this peculiar sensation.

Arnold sat upright in his bed trying to see what was happening to him. At first he thought it was his body reacting to the horrible ordeal of the past twenty-four hours. He was sure of it until he put his hands up to wipe his eyes. To his horror he realized that he was infested with crawling bugs. What new and insidious torture had his tormentors invented now? The others in his bed didn't seem to move, and Arnold wondered why he was the only one to feel the crawling insects. Finally one of his companions rolled over and noted Arnold's predicament. He told Arnold not to worry. It was only the lice, he informed Arnold, and that it wouldn't be very long before he would learn to live with this inconvenience. Arnold wondered how he could ever get used to such a thing.

The next morning, after an almost sleepless night, Arnold was awakened by the shrill whistle of the Kapo. He stared at his lice-bitten body and wondered how he could avoid possible infection. Any thought of an antiseptic was dismissed as ridiculous. He would just have to hope that nothing would happen to the sores which would invite a trip to the hospital.

As he climbed down from his bunk to fall in line for roll call, Arnold passed the bodies of two inmates who had committed

suicide during the night. They had taken their belts, hooked them around one of the bedposts on the top tier, put their heads in the noose and died quietly without a struggle. Who would hear them anyhow or even care what happened? Arnold paused just long enough to wonder whether this might not be the easiest way out. However, he was pushed along by those not wishing to be bitten by the dogs or feel the lash of the master in charge. Arnold soon became used to seeing such nightly occurrences, and he no longer gave it any thought.

Roll call was the same agonizing experience as the night before. Only this time there were no hangings. That was always reserved for the night time ceremony. In the morning, Arnold saw the actual "selection" of those picked for no reason other than to provide sadistic entertainment for the guards. When Arnold had registered the day before, he recalled seeing prisoners lined up along the wall of building "24". This was the beginning of the day-long ordeal of those unfortunates who had to face the wall without food or water until the target practice began after the night roll call. It wouldn't have been so bad if the Germans hadn't been drunk before the game began. Some of the prisoners were told to put bottles on their heads, while others were ordered to run around. Because of the inebriation of the marksmen, death was not immediate but very slow and painful. Technically, this was against the commandant's orders. Since each bullet cost the Reich three pfennigs, no bullets were to be wasted, implying the inmate's lives were of less value.

Arnold realized that every day he lived in this horrible environment would be the same as the day before. So far he had been very lucky. He had avoided most of the death-dealing blows and the chance "selection" for either the gas chambers or entertainment by the guards. So far, in the Quarantine Camp, it appeared that those not really fit for work were the ones who suffered the most.

After the three-hour roll call, Arnold lined up for breakfast. He was famished and believed that the Germans would finally give him a decent meal. But he was wrong again. When he arrived in front of those distributing the food all he got was the usual odorless blue-looking tea, a very small piece of bread and a little margarine to put on it. Arnold amost cried but he didn't

complain. He knew that he would be beaten and anything given to him would be taken from him. One prisoner who was half crazed by starvation started to yell at the kitchen help. No sooner had he started to yell when one of the guards came over to see what the noise was all about. He looked at the prisoner and asked if he wanted some more food. Frightened and pale, the prisoner begged for just a little bit more to keep him going. The guard said that it would be arranged and to step aside while he spoke with his boss to see just how much could be spared. The guard came back with two assistants and told the starving prisoner they had decided that he could have all he wanted. Without waiting for the prisoner to react, two of the guards grabbed the victim and plunged his head into the boiling vat of tea. He died instantly and they left the prisoner on the ground while the inmates walked over him to get their meager rations for breakfast.

Arnold was sick about what he had witnessed. How could he go on? Was it really worth it? Arnold came to the conclusion that he was, indeed, going to follow the others in death. His spirits were lower now than they had been the day before.

Breakfast didn't take very much time, and it wasn't too long until all the prisoners were ordered to get in line for a lecture. They were told that from now on they were to remove their caps every time they came face to face with an SS man. They were never allowed to come closer than ten feet to an SS man unless definitely ordered to do so. Any violation of this would mean severe punishment. The inmates were informed that they had been chosen to labor for the glorious Third Reich, and it was assumed that they would live up to their duties. All knew what would happen to them if they didn't perform their duties.

The lecture continued with what the Germans called an understanding of the system under which they would live. They said that they believed in order and discipline, just like the military system, and such an arrangement was instituted in the concentration camps. The camp commandant had under his direction a political section, a camp manager, an employment section (the hiring of prisoners for outside the camp work), the administration, and the camp hospital. All of these functions would be carried out by the Germans with the assistance of certain prison personnel considered worthy of working with

them. From this point on, they were told, the prisoners would be in charge of the camp functions. Generally, those in charge of the prisoners in the immediate sense were either hardened thugs or from the hinterland of the Ukraine. The Ukrainians were far more degrading and cruel than the Germans mostly because they wanted to prove their abilities to satisfy the viciousness of the SS masters. In turn, the Germans saw to it that they got special privileges which included sex and additional food.

The prisoners who worked outside the camp were led by a Lageräl tester and his subordinates, all of whom were prisoners. Those like Arnold, who worked on the inside of the camp, were led by Kapos and their subordinates — again, all of whom were prisoners. If one did not get along with those in charge, they were subjected to cruel and vindictive punishment. There was no appeal to the Germans to stop the uncalled-for harassment. Most of the time, food designated for the prisoners was siphoned off by these miserable creatures. They also had their hand in the camp corruption. Much of what had been taken from the prisoners was supposed to go to ten or twelve places, such as watches to Oranienburg, furs to Ravensbrück, but a lot never got to the designated sites.

Some of the things were never wanted by the Germans. Beginning in 1943, the unburned bones were sold for the production of superphosphates. The clothing that did get to Germany was distributed to the poor by the N.S. welfare organization, and the poor were so grateful that they praised the Führer for his kindness.

Many of the SS camp personnel and their prisoner cronies set aside amounts for themselves so that when the war was over they could retire in luxury. Often the SS rewarded their subordinates by giving them gold watches taken from the Jews. The prisoners who aided them, of course, were designated for the gas chamber so that they would not be in a position to tell anyone about what happened. It is true that if anyone in the SS were caught, he was promptly brought to trial and usually executed for crimes against the state. Some SS garrison personnel actually filed formal requests for articles of the deceased such as layettes for their infants.

Like other newly-arrived inmates, it didn't take Arnold long

to learn the system and how to beat it. At first, he didn't bother since he was planning his own execution. Suddenly, his position changed from possible death to possible survival. There was, in every camp, an underground that looked after those they felt were of value to them. Apparently Arnold was selected to carry out certain underground assignments. He never knew why, unless his work in the ghetto warranted recognition by the camp underground.

No one in the camp ever came to him to talk with him about his assignments. It was just a matter of "feeling" the constant presence of the underground directing him. Rarely did they lose control over Arnold's destiny, but there were times when Arnold felt abandoned. Now that he felt the position of being "needed," Arnold no longer thought about committing suicide. The survival spirit, and the desire to help others, which he had had in the ghetto, returned. He wanted to live!

CHAPTER EIGHT

"I'll happily die with the certainty of having killed almost six million Jews."

Eichmann

"Let me tell you something, Jewish death lists are my favorite reading matter before I go to sleep."

SS Obersturmbahnführer Adolf Eichmann to the Jewish Council, Theresienstadt KZ camp, April 1945

Food for the new arrivals came from another Lager, so the Kapo ordered Arnold and some of the others to establish a new kitchen. He told them that he wanted nothing but hard labor from each one of them, and if he caught any of the "Jewish pimps" stealing food, it would mean the firing squad. Arnold nodded his head and reported for duty.

The hastily built kitchen had limited facilities and scant rations for the inmates. Though a considerable supply of food actually came into Auschwitz for the prisoners, much of it was taken by the SS for their personal use. The biggest thief was Commandant Höss' wife. Being very socially conscious, she felt that her duty was to entertain lavishly camp SS personnel and visiting dignitaries.

Since Höss' wife lived above her means, she stole camp rations as a solution to her mounting costs for food. At first she did it modestly, but as her home became the social center, she seized the opportunity to take all that she wanted. An ex-prisoner testified at Nürnberg that Frau Höss not only prepared sumptuous meals, but sent food to her relatives in Germany. It was not an unusual sight to see her husband's slaves pushing wheelbarrows loaded with flour, sausages, margarine, meats,

potatoes, and other foodstuffs from the prisoners' kitchens to the home of the Commandant. After all, she reasoned, what difference did it make? Why not be practical and take what was necessary to uphold the morale of the Third Reich? She rationalized that the prisoners were going to die sooner or later no matter what she did.

By the time the Höss family, other SS personnel, and the kitchen help took their cut of the rations, little was left for the starving inmates. Without the lowly potato to uphold the prisoner's meager meals, the entire corrupt structure would have collapsed.

Arnold's job as one of the chefs was relatively simple. All it took to feed the Jews was a few potato peels, or turnips, sprinkled into a vat of boiling water. Arnold could be thankful that he was a chef, and could swipe a little extra food now and then. He could have been assigned as a "peeler." This meant sitting in long rows on roughly carved benches peeling turnips or potatoes all day long. The Kapo in charge was always finding fault with "peeler's" work. This gave him the privilege to threaten or beat the prisoners at will. The Kapos were particularly anxious to spot a prisoner trying to steal a little food while he peeled the vegetables. If a prisoner were caught, it gave the Kapo great delight in using the poor soul as an example of what the enemies of the Third Reich could expect in the way of punishment. Often, instead of shooting the guilty one, the Kapo ordered the others to line up and watch the unfortunate prisoner be buried alive in garbage.

It was also degrading to see the starving prisoners fight to have the chance to lick the empty garbage barrels. After Arnold and the other chefs emptied the food containers, the SS knew that the barrels would be another source of fun for them. They demanded that the chefs place the barrels within reach of hungry prisoners. Once they were in place, the SS gave the word that any prisoner could help himself. The desire to live made the scramble for food a bloody catastrophe. The prisoners fought tooth and nail for just one lick of food, and the result was often death or a crippled body. Arnold was shocked at first but, like the others, he became used to his surroundings and went about his business preparing the meals and trying to stay alive.

After the first hectic week, Arnold became aware of his total surroundings. The initial shock of the confusion, fear and horror he had experienced had now given way to the realities of his new home. He became used to the odor of burning flesh, and the stumbling skeleton-like figures grasping for continued life. By the time a prisoner was reduced to such a pitiful physical condition, he was called a "Musselmann" (Moslem man); it was just a matter of time before he would die of exhaustion or malnutrition. The Germans figured that they weren't worth gassing unless they lingered too long and were of little service to the camp. The "Musselmann" who died a natural death were eventually thrown into piles to wait for the collection wagons.

Those who gathered the bodies for the crematoria were in a very unique position. They were Jews who volunteered for a job not really wanted by very many prisoners regardless of the advantages. These people were called "body snatchers" or "scavengers"; they were treated like lepers by the Germans and prisoners alike. It was an advantage not to be harassed by the Germans, and the detail was light work compared to the labors of their fellow inmates. The "scavengers" would search the clothing of the dead prisoners for food and trading items like spoons and forks, and then toss the bodies into the funeral cart for delivery to the crematoria. It was a very lonely and macabre existence, but they had the comfort of knowing that they were alive. Their job was a constant reminder of the futility of thinking that anyone other than the Germans would ever get out of Auschwitz.

Fortunately for Arnold, the SS man in charge of his kitchen liked him, and this brought hope to Arnold that he might have a chance to survive. Arnold not only prepared the Kapo's meals, when he wasn't home with his family, but assumed the duties of an orderly. This meant shining his boots, making the bed and cleaning his quarters and, in general, seeing that the SS man enjoyed the good life. How long Arnold would be in this favorable status was a matter of conjecture. At least his position was not based upon the sexual whims of his boss.

Many of the Kapos and Block Chiefs would eye the arrival of young boys, ordinarily selected for extermination, and save those who might satisfy their devious sexual tastes. The young

male objects would be called aside and from that time on were known as "Piepels." How long they were protected from the gas chambers depended upon how well they met the needs of their masters or the arrival of another young male who would appeal more to the Kapo. The loser would either be given to a lesser camp official or sent to the chambers for disposal. Sometimes, for sheer entertainment, the Piepel would be thrown to the floor, have a cane slapped across his throat, and then the Kapo would place one foot on each end of the cane and rock back and forth until the young man died of suffocation.

Knowing what faced him as a failure, the Piepel would make every attempt to satisfy his owner completely no matter what abuse was in store for him. The Piepel's temporary status with the Kapo gave him prestige with the prisoners in his block. The Piepel was very useful in gathering information and dispersing it to the underground. Without this useful source of information, Arnold and the others could not have carried out their clandestine activities.

The Piepel was a dealer of sorts. Because of his access to extra food and supplies, he would hide the necessary supplies on his person and travel to the latrine euphemistically called the "stock exchange." Most transactions were carried out in that location because it was the best place not to be seen by informers and the Germans. The crowded and harried conditions made it relatively easy to trade bread and tobacco without being detected. There was no salvation for the Piepel, or anyone else, if he were caught trading. Ironically, everyone, including the SS, knew what was going on, but each had a hand in it for his own profit.

One young man was caught smuggling perfume, which had been left behind by a woman taken to the gas chambers, to his sister. Since he refused to say anything to the authorities about his dealings, the Kapo put his head in the barrack's stove, the closed door acting like a vice and ordered him to be lashed twenty-five times. As the stinging lashes seared his bare buttocks, the boy refused to yell. In fact, after the twenty-five lashes were administered, the frustrated Kapo shouted: "The God-damned Jewish pig didn't cry, give him fifteen more lashes." The boy was beaten to death, but he never gave the Kapo the satisfaction of crying for mercy nor information about his deals.

Arnold's position in the kitchen, as well as his status with the Kapo, made dealings at the "stock exchange" profitable. Arnold knew that the underground wanted him to keep people alive as long as possible and, that it was up to him to get as much food in circulation as he was able. The job of snatching food from the kitchen was no easy task. First of all, the idea was to escape the ever-watchful eyes of those who would report him. Secondly, this meant taking the food that had not been accounted for. The best place from which to steal food was the large refuse bin filled with potato peels.

Arnold usually waited until all eyes were diverted from the bin. He grabbed what he could and stuffed the food into his pants. He had tied the pants at the bottom with string so that the food would not fall to the ground. This was an old trick he had learned in Bedzin when ordered by the German to search the houses formerly occupied by the Jews.

Life at Auschwitz for Arnold was going well. He was protected by his Kapo, and was constantly under the supervision of the camp underground. It was just a matter of doing his job well for both parties. Unfortunately, the good life came to an abrupt end because of a fluke in time and circumstances.

Sundays were usually designated by the Germans as a day of rest. This conception was a farce, but there were certain activities which took place that did not happen at any other time. However, no matter what the activity the SS always had the ulterior motive of making life unbearable for the Jews.

One Sunday the Germans pitted the Jews against the Poles in a soccer match. Because of the packages of food received from loved ones at home, the Poles were physically in a position to trounce the Jews. The Germans assumed that the "Maurer," or Polish builders, were much tougher than the "Schneiderei" or "Musselmann" Jews. This was to be a match where no holds were barred. The Poles were threatened by the SS to whip the Jews by fair or foul means. No matter what, the Jews were not to win. All prisoners were ordered to attend the athletic event or suffer the consequences.

It was a very cloudy day, and the sidelines were filled with a pathetic gathering of Jews and Poles. Unlike the contests in the Olympic stadium in Berlin, there were no bands, brightly

colored flags of the contestants, hawkers with souvenirs and food, and loud cheers for the teams. No, not that at all! Just two sides knowing that no matter who won, both sides would actually lose in the end.

The game did not turn out as planned by the Germans in spite of the cheating by the SS appointed officials. The Jews soundly defeated the Poles, and the last thing that Arnold saw as he left the field was the Germans ordering the Poles to line up. As a spectator, not a player, Arnold did not wait around to see what would happen, but the firing of machine guns confirmed his suspicion that the Germans lived up to their threat.

As Arnold stumbled down the dusty road to his barracks, he was suddenly grabbed from behind and dragged to the hospital. He was confused and frightened. He hadn't done anything wrong. It was unfortunate that his attackers did not know of Arnold's protected status in the kitchen. To his attackers he was just another Jew to be tormented and experimented on. Like so many others before him, Arnold was picked at random for a medical experiment.

In the shabby operating room, Arnold was ordered to strip and climb onto a very crude table serving as the operating table. As the leather belts were tightened to strap him securely to the table, Arnold thought surely the only thing they would do to him would be to castrate him. It was common knowledge among the Jews that SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler had long been fascinated with sexual experiments.

The crude accommodations for the operation furnished no place for his head nor any anesthesia to kill the pain. One of Dr. Josef Mengele's associates, Dr. Thilo, was in charge of Arnold's operation. Unlike the usual sadistic SS personnel gleefully torturing their victims, Arnold noted about seven people dressed in white surgical coats methodically preparing for their duties with little communication. Apparently the medical personnel didn't seem to find any humor in their duties, and they were quite immune to the apprehension of their patient. There was no pleasing bedside manner to calm Arnold's shattered nerves. There was one person in the room who seemed to enjoy the happenings: the SS guard assigned to sit on Arnold's face every time he tried to raise it. This ugly creature dressed in his

black SS uniform informed the medical team that if the "whore's son" tried to raise his head he would not only sit on it but defecate in the dirty Jew's mouth.

When Arnold saw Dr. Thilo walk toward the operating table with a sharp scalpel, he was petrified. He begged the doctor not to hurt him, and to let him go back to the kitchen. Arnold tried to persuade Thilo that the Kapo would disapprove of this, but his last pleas were smothered by the seat of the laughing SS guard. What fun, to rub his pants into the face of this loathsome Jew.

Arnold screamed with Dr. Thilo's first incision, but the scream was quickly muffled by the seat of the guard, who thoroughly enjoyed the torture, and told the doctor to make a very big cut so that he could see what a Jew really looked like inside. It was a long cut, indeed, and it went diagonally across the right side of Arnold's stomach. It took about one hour for the methodically trained medical personnel to complete their task. They sincerely hoped that Arnold would not die, or suffer from shock, since their efforts would be in vain. What good was an experiment if the patient died? On the other hand, they had plenty of time and an unlimited source of human materials.

Arnold's cries and sobs fell on the deaf ears of the medical personnel, but the SS guard continued to enjoy his job of stifling Arnold's yells and screams. After a while the patient eventually slipped into unconsciousness. When the operation was over, no one ever made any attempt to explain to him what had happened. It wasn't until 1953, when Arnold underwent an emergency operation in Philadelphia's Hahnemann Hospital, that he learned the truth of that awful Sunday in Auschwitz.

The distinguished American surgeon, Dr. Alex Ulin, was told by Arnold that he vaguely remembered being sewn up by Dr. Thilo, but he never saw what was done to his stomach nor did anyone inform him of the purpose of the experiment. He said that he was lifted from the crude table and dumped onto a filthy blood-soaked cot and kept there for about eight hours. Late at night, Arnold was pulled out of the bed and tossed into a two-wheeled cart made of crude weather-beaten boards covered with splinters. He further informed Dr. Ulin that it seemed like an eternity before he was finally brought back to the barracks.

He wasn't sure that he was going to the barracks since there was a good possibility that the operation was a failure and Arnold would be sent immediately to the gas chambers. In his hazy mind, Arnold felt that it might be possible that the Germans would skip the gas chambers and put him in the ovens of the crematoria. It wouldn't have been the first time that a Jew had been burned alive. Arnold did try to ask the "Musselmann" who pulled the cart where he was going, but the bike-riding SS guards told him to shut up or be clubbed into silence. The only noise to be heard after that was the creaking wheels of the cart.

Luckily for Arnold, the operation was considered a success. He was not taken to the crematorium, but to his barracks. He was yanked out of the cart, and dragged into the overcrowded room and pushed into his lice-infested bed. There was no dinner for him nor did anyone really care. Certainly Arnold was in no position to eat the tasteless meals served to the prisoners in his barracks. He could go to sleep knowing that he was just one more of the endless victims to suffer in the medical experiments which gave nothing to the betterment of mankind.

Arnold further related to Dr. Ulin that he was promptly awakened with everyone else at 4:00 a.m. to put in a day's work. He stumbled about in great pain without any assistance, and made his way to the kitchen. It was too early for his Kapo to see him and give him protection, so the SS guard on duty insisted that Arnold join everyone else in lifting the heavy ration crates. All of a sudden Arnold felt very wet near his stomach and he thought the contents of one of the crates had leaked on his clothes. He looked down at his blue and white zebra-striped jacket and saw the blood pouring from within. Arnold pulled his jacket aside and noted that Dr. Thilo's stitches had come apart and he was about to lose his intestines. A trip to the hospital would mean an immediate order to exterminate him. Arnold looked about and found an electric wire that could be used to close the gaping wound. The pain of the operation was already so great that the wire stitching didn't really phase him. He saved his own life not only by taking care of the wound but doing it quickly enough that an SS guard wouldn't notice it and order him to the hospital.

Dr. Ulin told Arnold that the unexplained brown spots near

the frightful scars were the indelible rust marks made by the wire that Arnold had used for stitching. He also informed Arnold that Dr. Thilo had put gauze and cotton into the wound probably to see if and how the body would reject foreign matter. In Arnold's case, by 1953, the foreign matter was surrounded by malignant growths and a tumor which was slowly destroying the functions of his vital organs. Probably the only significant result of Dr. Thilo's operation was a determination on Arnold's part to live in this most barbaric camp.

Arnold's Kapo arrived to find out what had happened to his faithful servant, and he was furious to think that something like this had happened without his permission. He told Arnold that he wasn't happy about this arbitrary decision on the part of Dr. Thilo, but he couldn't do anything about it. He went on to say, because of Arnold's physical condition, that he couldn't use him in the kitchen anymore, but that he would find a job for him in the tailor shops. Though Arnold had served the Kapo well, he could have been sent to the gas chambers because of his physical condition. The Kapo decided not to classify Arnold as a useless individual, but repay him for services rendered.

No longer would Arnold have the privileges of stealing food for himself and the others in his block, but he could be thankful that he had his life and a new avenue of assistance to the underground. As an ardent Zionist, Arnold knew that it was necessary to put forth every effort to save as many Jews as possible to help found a new state of Israel after this terrible holocaust was over.

CHAPTER NINE

"Anti-Semitism is just the same as delousing."
Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, 1943

"We have made up our minds, hard though it may be, that this race must be wiped off the face of the earth."
Himmler

Arnold's job in the tailor shop was not like the one he had experienced in the Bedzin ghetto. Now his principal occupation was to gather the clothing of those who had been exterminated, and to prepare the well-worn articles for the new arrivals. His skills in making SS clothing was not desired by the Germans.

As in all of the jobs in Auschwitz, those who worked in the tailor shops were expected to slave without a break for a minimum of twelve or fourteen hours a day. The no-talking order was emphasized by a club-wielding German Kapo. Anytime a German came into the tailor shop, all of the inmates were expected to rise immediately, take off their hats, and stand silently at attention.

Work in the shop gave Arnold's crudely stitched wound time to heal, but the pangs of hunger began to gnaw at his empty stomach. Gone were the days when he could steal a little food from the kitchen, so it was up to him to find new ways to gain a little nourishment.

When Arnold was detailed to leave his lager to fetch used clothing in the women's compound, there were always messages to be delivered among the inmates. In exchange for a bread ration Arnold would accept written notes or verbal communications from prisoners to be given to someone dear in the other lager.

The path to the women's lager was near the unloading plat-

form for the new arrivals, and Arnold could actually see the "selection." Mengele, or someone in his place, would wave the whip from right to left designating who would die and who would work for the Reich. He could feel the full impact of the beatings, the growls of the vicious dogs, the crying of the victims and the cursing of guards. He heard the big blaring loudspeakers tell those who were being led to the gas chambers that they were going to the delousing chambers, and then they would be reassigned to shops, factories, or field depending upon their occupational skills. How stupid, thought Arnold for them to believe such nonsense. All they had to do was to look about them, smell the foul odor, and they would know what was going to happen to them. He had long forgotten the frightened and confused state of mind he had been in when he had first arrived in Auschwitz so many months ago.

Arnold did not have much time to observe the new arrivals, nor did he really give them a great deal of thought. His guards always took the opportunity to shout such phrases as: "Move on Jew bastards" or "Up your mother's holes" in order to provoke their charges. The guards looked for any excuse to club the prisoners. The hatred of the guards, the cruelty of the Jewish policemen, the German bullies, and sordid camp life as a whole, burned deep in Arnold's mind. He constantly wondered how long he could put up with the misery of this unholy experience.

One glimmer of hope for Arnold and others in Auschwitz was the underground radio, which informed the prisoners that the Allies had turned the tide of war, and that the Russians were pushing the Wehrmacht out of the USSR and into Poland. The agony of the prisoners waiting for possible liberation was heightened by the apprehensive reaction of those in charge of camps. Once, when Arnold was sorting and gathering clothing in the female compound, he heard and saw two guards talking about the fact that the fortunes of war were now decidedly in favor of the Allies. From his coat one guard withdrew a small bottle which was filled with gold teeth. He informed the other guard that he should be prepared for the worst. He said that he was sure that the "higher-ups" were looking after themselves, and it would pay everyone in his position to do the same. Arnold was convinced that if this guard were not caught by the advancing Russians, he would



Photo courtesy of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies
9760 West Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90035, USA

Typical abuse of prisoners
in Auschwitz extermination camp

surely disappear into the confused masses and eventually find a new and profitable life with the aid of the valuable artifacts taken from those who had perished in the gas chambers.

The first time Arnold went into the women's compound, he felt that he was in another world. Though the emaciated creatures were no longer physically attractive, they were still women. Camp ordinances made it perfectly clear that no inmate was to have any relations with the opposite sex at any time. On the other hand, there was no law that prevented the guards from making deals so that they could enjoy looking over the new arrivals for their physical satisfaction. Some of the young women had already been selected for the SS as inmates of their special brothel, and others literally branded above the breasts as "feld-hure" (field whore) for the Wehrmacht. Any woman not willing to submit to such duty was generally punished by being beaten, tortured or sent immediately to the gas chambers. A particular delight of the guards was the order to turn over the obstinate, or shy, female to the barbaric Ukrainian guards. These vile creatures practiced every conceivable sexual torture and mutilation on the women given to them as rewards for services rendered. Arnold could often hear the horrible screams and pathetic cries of these unfortunate victims, but was powerless.

While Arnold and the others picked through the clothing for possible mending, he observed the guards leaving for their pleasures with the new arrivals. The detail was put in the charge of a Kapo who appeared to be more obnoxious than the hated Germans. Occasionally, for food, cigarettes and other highly desired items, the guards would let Arnold slip a note to the women's underground.

After the clothing selection was over, and the guards had had their fill of the new female arrivals, the carts were loaded beyond capacity and with great effort and sweat pulled back to the tailor shop. Many times the guards were drunk on wine or beer and became quite sadistic. They would laugh and joke about their activities, and then look at the struggling and emaciated prisoners and say: "Too bad you whore sons couldn't have some of that nice Jewish ass." Or they continued with words such as: "I might have had your girlfriend or sister, Jew bastard, how do you like that?" The hatred of these evil guards was almost too much to

bear. The Germans just never let the prisoners alone.

Arnold was not to be denied the opportunity to have sex, regardless of the camp restrictions. Because of his tailoring skills, his work caught the attention of the camp hangman, a Silesian SS volunteer by the name of Kurbanick, who wanted Arnold to make him a pair of suede gloves with a promise of a fine reward. Thinking that the reward would be more food, Arnold could not have made a finer pair of gloves.

Arnold was fortunate that this brutal and vicious creature liked him. Once, Arnold watched Kurbanick destroy an entire theatrical group known as the Vilne Truppe. When the star performer knew he was going to be shot, he begged Kurbanick to shoot him in the heart. The actor was forced to stand up facing the wall, and Kurbanick took a machine gun and shot the actor from head to toe. He smiled as he ordered the others to line up the same way, and he didn't stop smiling until all were dead.

That night Kurbanick took Arnold to a small home located just inside the camp near the women's lager. Arnold was presented to "Lisa," a very beautiful and nicely shaped SS warden about twenty-two years of age. Under the lovely golden braids was a cruel mind that fed an unsatiable appetite for food, drink and sex.

Arnold was studied by Lisa with eyes that seemed to penetrate his thin body. She appeared to be a bit unhappy with the physical quality of the prisoner, but indicated that Arnold would do for the time being. He was ordered to take an immediate shower and be sure that he was clean from head to toe. After Arnold had stepped out of the bath, a luxury that he had not had for quite sometime, Lisa inspected him to see if he had any lice on his body. She implied that she needed good strong clean men to keep her drinking and sexual pace. It had been a very long time since Arnold had sat down to a dinner table with an embroidered table cloth, napkins and good silverware. He had forgotten what it was like to eat a decent meal accompanied by wine and champagne. He wasn't sure his stomach could take it.

After a sumptuous meal of a type never experienced by the inmates or the Wehrmacht on the front lines, Arnold's time had come to satisfy Lisa's sexual desires. When he got into the bed with clean and perfumed sheets, and ruffled pillow cases covering

a very soft pillow, Arnold wanted to fall into a deep sleep and forget the horrors of Auschwitz. Lisa was a nymphomaniac, and she soon let Arnold know what was expected of him. The rest of the night was spent in drinking and fornicating. By dawn, Arnold was totally exhausted and Lisa was drunk. Being forced into sexual relations of this nature was not Arnold's idea of a good time. He had been told by the hangman that if he couldn't keep up with Lisa, she would call the guards and have him exterminated.

In the morning Arnold was picked up in an SS motorcycle and taken to his barracks. He was assigned no work just in case Lisa wanted a return engagement. The guards feared Lisa and wanted to make sure Arnold would be in good shape, or they would suffer Lisa's wrath and possible demotion in rank and assignment. This routine was standard operating procedure for all of those who were sent to Lisa, and it was the same for Arnold the other four or five times he was ordered to perform such services for her.

Suede gloves and trinkets of jewelry were Arnold's pass for protection by the hangman. Kurbanick eventually allowed Arnold to have sex with the women inmates when assigned to gather garments in the women's compound. Because of the Russian advance, Kurbanick was sent to another camp, and Arnold lost his privileges.

In the meantime, Otto Locke, the Kapo of the tailor shop, was a known homosexual. One evening, after dinner, he asked Arnold to clean up his office. When Arnold obeyed, and began to attend to his duties, Locke made sexual advances. Arnold turned and slapped him and walked out. He was lucky that nothing happened to him, but it can be assumed that Locke was afraid to report it since he had been sent to Auschwitz by the SS because he was homosexual.

Camp life was more precarious as the Russians came closer to Auschwitz. The Germans in charge of the inmates were becoming agitated, and their frustration led to more executions, tortures, and exterminations. Some got drunk on duty and practiced shooting at prisoners while calling them "subhuman Commmies." The underground met nightly to plan how to survive until rescued by the Red Army. If they suspected anyone

as a spy or informer, the "guilty" one would be strong-armed with a hand over his mouth, and led to the highly charged electric fence for execution. A number of times, after the decision of the kangaroo court, the traitors would be buried under the floor boards of the barracks.

The underground constantly spoke to the new arrivals to learn what was happening to the outside world. Many of those who were shipped to Auschwitz this late in the war were Jews who had been left behind in the deserted ghettos to help the Germans find hidden loot. The Germans actually believed their own propaganda stories that the Jewish sense of money, and their big noses, would enable them to sniff out the valuables left behind by those who had been taken for labor or extermination.

Other arrivals came from camps about to be overrun by the Allies. They were to be exterminated as quickly as possible so that rescue was out of the question. One group of arrivals brought horrible stories about a woman in Buchenwald who had made lamp shades, overstuffed chairs, book covers, etc., from human skins. They were referring, of course, to Ilse Koch, the infamous twenty-eight-year-old wife of the Commandant of Buchenwald. Arnold could believe everything of his cruel masters, but this rumor was, in his opinion, too far fetched. After the war Arnold would learn that he was very wrong. The rumors were indeed true.

On one of Arnold's trips to the women's compound, he was ordered to walk a new route. He never knew why, but the temporary detour took him near the crematorium. The detail was told to wait near the wire fence separating them from the activities near and around the gas chambers. For the first time since his arrival in Auschwitz, Arnold heard the inmate orchestra for the procession leading to the large gate of the gas chambers. The tune was a lively Strauss waltz accompanied by the prayers, sobs, and pleas of the unfortunates being led to their death. The standard tune of the orchestra was "All The Birds Are Here," and, often, those being led to the chambers were ordered to sing cheery melodies. The SS guards reassured the people, some comforting their children, that it was just a matter of delousing, and that it would not take very long. Sometimes the guards

would give each of them a towel and a bar of soap.* They said that once inside the "showers" the people should take deep breaths to clean their lungs as well as their bodies.

It was standard practice to teach what the SS considered to be stubborn mothers a lesson if they tried to hide their babies from the gas chambers. The SS would grab the babies by the feet, and smash their heads against a wall.

After Arnold saw a long line of people entering the building, the gates were slammed shut and an eerie silence permeated the area. Suddenly, an SS man wearing a gas mask scrambled up a ladder to the top of the building and appeared to be wrestling with a small opening and a tin can at the same time. He opened the can, and pulled back a metal cap on the pipe that led out of the top of the building and poured the contents of the can into the pipe. After quickly slamming the small cap back onto the pipe, he stood up with his hands on his hips and gave a smile of satisfaction for a job he considered well done. Within a matter of seconds loud cries, screams and coughing could be heard from within the building. One guard looked at the other and said something to the effect that when you get a bunch of Jews together you get a lot of noise. After a short time, silence once more came to the unholy location. An SS man looked through the "spy-hole" to see if anyone was still alive. The small window was made leak-proof by double 8 mm. glass with rubber gaskets and metal fittings. The death inside contrasted sharply with the beautiful lawn and richly colored flowers surrounding the chambers. The SS had the indecency to fertilize the gardens with the ashes from the crematoria.

Just as Arnold and the others in his detail were about to leave the area, the huge doors of the gas chambers were opened by the prisoners assigned to the dirty work of cleaning the large room. They carried large crowbars to pry apart the bodies fused together by sweat, urine, feces and other body wastes. Once separated, the bodies would be searched for gold and silver teeth, and other valuables that might be hidden in vaginal and anal areas. The glasses, clothing, shoes and other valuables had been

*The soap was made from human fat, and had the letters "RIF" (Ruhe im Frieden — Rest in Peace) on it along with the number indicating when it was made.



Crematorium at Auschwitz-Birkenau

stripped from the people before their march to the gas chambers. Hair, used for caulking in the building of U-boats, was sometimes cut from the prisoners before death. If the gas chambers were worked overtime, and there was no more room in the crematorium, the bodies were tossed onto a pile of railroad ties and other oil soaked materials, to be burned in the open. Germans burned the women separately. They claimed the women had enough fat to burn without adding oil or wood. Eventually the charred remains would be buried in a pit and lost to any hope of identification by relatives who survived the holocaust.

Arnold never saw the second part of the operation, but he knew all about it from his prison contacts. The SS man in charge had the gall to order the detail not to say anything about what they had just seen or be severely punished. That usually meant that they would meet death in the gas chambers. The Germans thought nothing of turning on their own. The high-ranking SS technicians, who knew too much about the extermination process, were eventually ordered to the Yugoslavian front where no prisoners were taken alive. Since this was no secret to anyone at Auschwitz, Arnold saw no sense in jeopardizing his position by openly talking about it to anyone.

When Arnold got back to the barracks that night, he was greatly disturbed by the events of the day. He had actually seen with his own eyes what he had heard about for so many months from many of the other prisoners. He had never doubted it, but seeing this horrible scene eliminated any questions he might have had about the German program of eliminating innocent and helpless victims.

The next day, Arnold thought that he might revive his depressed spirits by attending the small religious gathering by the Rabbi in his compound. Arnold was almost convinced that God had forsaken the Jews, but he assumed that his faith might be restored by the Rabbi's reassuring words.

Arnold approached the meeting with apprehension and skepticism. He knew that the German guards would make it difficult if he were caught in such an illegal meeting. However, Arnold felt that it was worth a try. The Rabbi was no better clad than anyone else, and he, too, looked like a "Musselmann," but he radiated a confidence that a new Moses would soon

appear and lead the Jews in Auschwitz to a promised land.

Just as Arnold was getting involved in the spirit of the service, the entire group was startled by a snarling, cursing SS man whose face displayed great pleasure in finding the small group engaged in the forbidden service. He had not been bribed and felt particularly vengeful to the Jews for not playing the "game" of camp corruption.

The red-faced, half drunken SS man cracked his whip made of human bones and human tissue and roared, "Enough of this Yiddish shit!" He told the Rabbi to lead his group in singing the ditty about the "sweet little kid-o, with two gorgeous tits-o." When the group sang the chorus, the SS man pounded his whip and joined in the singing of:

> "Yessir, I've got me a baby-Hop-hop-hop-hop-hop.
> A baby who's all mine-Hop-hop-hop-hop-hop.
> And every time I hump her-Hop-hop-hop-hop-hop.
> The juice flows like wine-Hop-hop-hop-hop-hop."*

When it came to the verses, the Rabbi was forced to yell the words by the club-pounding guard shouting: "Louder, whore son, louder." Finally the guard crumpled in a drunken stupor and the group fled for their lives. They were afraid of being accused of attacking the guard, and this would mean immediate execution. Arnold felt sorry for the Rabbi. He was a holy man who had tried to bring comfort to the prisoners, and found himself totally degraded by a scoundrel of the lowest order. Now Arnold was positive that God was deliberately punishing the Jews.

Deep in thought and not aware of his surroundings, Arnold stumbled past an SS guard without taking off his hat as required by the camp rules. He was jolted into reality by the authoritative sound of the guard asking him why he did not receive the customary salute. Arnold told him that he was very tired and hungry and, frankly, just didn't notice him. The SS man smiled and let him go warning him not to do it again. How strange,

*Ka-Tzetnik 135633 *Atrocity* p. 163 Arnold forgot the exact wording of the song, but the author Ka-Tzetnik refreshed his memory.

thought Arnold, this existence where one moment he was attacked by a drunken guard and in another moment he was set free from possible death by a sympathetic SS man who could have destroyed him with a flick of his hand.

CHAPTER TEN

"There is one group to which the method of annihilation was applied on a scale so immense that it is my duty to refer separately to the evidence. I mean the extermination of the Jews. If there were no other crime against these men, this one alone, in which all of them were implicated, would suffice."

Sir Hartley Shawcross, British Chief Prosecutor at Nürnberg

The winter of 1944-45 was one of the coldest in modern history. Arnold was lucky to be working in the warm tailor shop, but the daily roll calls were particularly hazardous to the health of the fragile "Musselmann." Once a month Arnold and the others had to undress after the evening roll call, carry their clothing to the delousing station, and spend the rest of the night stark naked. During the winter months, those who had not frozen to death or been beaten to death, would go the next morning to the delousing station and get their clothes. Often they were not the same clothes, and the suits handed to them were either too small or too large. Naturally, this brought taunting abuse from the warmly dressed guards with words such as "Hey, Jew bastard, if your whore mother could only see you now."

One cold December morning when it was below zero, it was discovered that a young boy had escaped from the camp by hiding in the used clothing shipped in transport. Arnold and the rest of the tailors who handled such clothing were called out for a special roll call that lasted for twenty-four hours. The cold blast of the north wind penetrated the very thin blue and white striped suits of the inmates, and no one was allowed to protect himself by adding paper, cloth or anything else suitable for keeping warm. If anyone was caught doing so, it was an automatic penalty of ten lashes on the bare back. When this

ordeal was over, ninety percent of the prisoners had frozen to death. When Arnold went back into the barracks, he was sure that he had frostbite and pneumonia, but he escaped any ill effects from this special roll call.

Just when Arnold appeared to be thawed from his latest torture, the Kapo came in to the barracks to announce that the transports had been delayed because of Allied bombing raids. Therefore the Kapo said that he didn't want "to see any Jews sitting on their asses," so he would give them special assignments until the transports arrived. He pointed to Arnold and said: "You, Jew bastard, to the hospital." Arnold's heart stopped beating for a moment. Not again, he thought. The Kapo said that he was needed to clean the surgical instruments and sweep the floors. Arnold was a bit relieved, but he knew that he couldn't trust the Kapo. This could be a trap just like the reassurances given by the Germans to the unfortunates designated for the gas chambers.

When Arnold arrived at the door of the hospital, he was confronted by a very tall, youthful SS man who sneeringly addressed Arnold as the "son of a Jewish pimp." He ordered Arnold to grab the broom and sweep the bloody organs off the floor. He said that if the floor was not spotless within ten minutes, Arnold would have to eat what was left.

Without a word Arnold hurriedly made the room as clean as possible and ready for the next experiment. Within minutes after Arnold had received the approval of the antagonistic SS man, a whimpering and pleading victim was dragged in and quickly strapped to the operating table. It brought back horrible memories to Arnold, and it seemed as if his wound hurt once more in sympathy with the unfortuante man lying on the table.

The expressionless doctors arrived in their usual silent manner. One of the surgeons casually picked up what looked like a chisel and hammer and without saying a word hit the patient on the back of the head. Screams shook the walls of the room, but everyone including Arnold was oblivious to it. Screams at Auschwitz were to be heard all of the time, and this was no different from the others.

As in Arnold's operation, no anethesia was administered, and the doctors performed their duties with a very casual attitude.

In spite of the agonizing cries from the prisoner, a large part of the skull was removed from the top of his head. The jagged hole was large enough for the doctor to grab the brain, twist it around, and leave it in place with the idea of seeing how long the prisoner would live under the circumstances. No sooner was the patient unstrapped and carted away, than another screaming, kicking and very frightened prisoner was brought in and placed on the table. This time the unfortunate one was strapped face down on the table so that his spine could be removed to see not only how long he would live, but just what kind of mobility he might have in the future. Arnold later learned that though the patient was totally helpless, he did live longer than anyone expected he could in that condition.

While Arnold cleaned the instruments, table, and floor after each operation, the doctors continued their cruel and worthless experiments. Near the end of the day, three SS men interrupted the doctors by informing them that they had a "Jewish pig" who had to be taught a lesson. The sullen and very quiet prisoner stood by the SS men while they explained that he had tried to sneak into the women's lager.

The doctors, for the first time since Arnold had observed them, expressed hatred toward their new patient. They asked the SS men to strap the victim to the table for an immediate operation. Fright had now replaced the contempt that the victim had had when he was first brought to the hospital. One of the doctors grabbed the man's testicles and reached for a scalpel. The patient began to squirm and begged not to be made less than a man. Paying no attention to the pleas of the victim, the doctors quickly castrated him without administering any anesthesia. The prisoner yelled: "Oh no, oh my God" and went into shock as the surgeon put the testicles in the palm of his hand and showed them to the victim. He told the man, "No sense trying to get a woman now, Jew boy, she wouldn't want you."

Arnold cleaned up the operating room, thankful that nothing like the experiments he had witnessed had happened to him. He went back to the barracks wondering how the Germans could afford to waste doctors in a war they were losing. Of what use were the experiments when the German army and the population urgently needed medical personnel?

His thoughts were interrupted by the drone of Allied planes making another run over the camp in order to bomb the I.G. Farben plant about five miles away. In 1979, it was revealed that photographs were taken on these bombing runs, and it was stated that the intelligence techniques of the time could not interpret the photos properly. Hence, it was assumed by Allied fliers that Auschwitz was just another prisoner-of-war compound. Maybe the photos were not that clear, but intelligence knew of Auschwitz. The underground exchanged gold and platinum, which they had stolen from the bins used by the Sonderkommandoes to store the valuables taken from those who had gone to the gas chambers, for film smuggled into them by the Polish underground. The photos were smuggled out in such clever hiding places as cigarettes, inside fountain pens, pipe stems, etc. Within a short period of time these photos showed up in London along with accounts by escapees from the various extermination camps.

As far back as December 17, 1942, the British Foreign Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, informed the House of Commons that he had information that Hitler was actually carrying out his promise to exterminate the Jews. In 1943, British intelligence reported that ninety percent of the Polish Jews had been wiped out. In 1944, the British government established the Office of Jewish Affairs to look into the reported atrocities. With such information, the Allies could have bombed the rail lines leading into concentration camps. Why they did not has led to an acrimonious debate between those who claim that Allied leaders were really anti-Semitic and those who state that the Allies had more important targets to bomb in order to bring the war to an immediate end.

Arnold, not being swept up in such high level decisions, just looked into the sky at the Allied bombers and hoped for a swift end to his nightmare.

The following morning was no different from any other. It was the same arduous roll call, the miserable breakfast, the usual gathering of lice to be scooped off one's body with a spoon, and, in general, the faint hope of living for another day. At this meeting the Kapo announced that all personnel would return to their previous assignments and that all special details,

previously assigned, were cancelled. Since it was bitter cold, Arnold was glad to return to the warm tailor shop.

Just prior to dismissal, a large black limousine pulled beside the column of prisoners and it was accompanied by two shiny motorcycles driven by SS men. For the first time Arnold had the chance to see Dr. Josef Mengele at a very close range. According to Arnold, Mengele looked quite handsome in his SS uniform, but he showed the emotions of a cold-blooded animal.

Josef Mengele was born on March 16, 1911. He was a dark-haired man who stood five feet six inches tall, and was quite intelligent. He earned a Ph.D. degree at the Universität München, and an M.D. degree at the Universität Frankfurt. Mengele was appointed chief doctor at Auschwitz in 1943. He hated Gypsies, and wanted to breed blond, blue-eyed "Nordic" people.

Mengele got out of his car and asked the Kapo about the health of his prisoners. He said that he was afraid of an outbreak of typhus, and he thought possibly the signs of such a disease could be detected among those who handled the lice-infested clothing. The Kapo assured Mengele that all was in order and that no disease was evident.

One of the inmates could no longer bear the hardship of standing at attention and he fell to his knees. Mengele walked over to the Kapo and asked why such a miserable creature was allowed to live. The Kapo apologized for his laxness in allowing such a "Jewish mongrel" to live. He picked up the prisoner, took him to a nearby pole, and tied his hands behind his back. He went into the tailor shop and got a long rope to throw over a limb of the tree so that he could hang the prisoner. Instead of putting the rope around his neck, he placed it around the prisoner's hands and pulled him up. All who witnessed the hanging could hear the arms ripping from their sockets while the prisoner screamed for mercy. Mengele told the Kapo never to permit him to view such sickly prisoners again; with that he emphasized his orders by taking his white leather gloves and smacking the Kapo across the face. Mengele got into his car and sped away, not to be seen again by Arnold.

For no apparent reason, Arnold was "selected" to be a "Pförtner der Schneiderei." This meant that he had a uniform

consisting of a blue business suit with "BL" on one lapel and "19" on the other. He wore an inmate's cap and polished boots. His assignment was to be at the door to announce all official arrivals at the tailor shop. Other than acting as a marionette, he found that it was a good place to learn important information for the underground. When any significant material came his way, Arnold gave it to his underground contact Rubin Middelberg, a French Jew and a watchmaker by trade.

Roll calls were less frequent in December 1944 and in January 1945, and the rush to the gas chambers ceased.* Some prisoners were taken from the camp, and they just disappeared. Auschwitz was rapidly becoming deserted. In spite of the approaching Russian troops, a few transports continued to arrive in the chaos. German railroad workers were openly criticizing the high command for continuing such operations, insisting that they be permitted to transport the retreating German troops. Their demands were ignored, and they were told to leave such decisions to the high command. Most unusual was Hitler's order of May 11, 1944, to transfer ten thousand reserve Waffen SS troops to the KZ camps to guard the Jews, rather than put them into front-line duty.

By January 17, 1945, Arnold could hear the sound of the guns of the advancing Russians who were located about 50 kilometers from Auschwitz. On this morning the roll call was brief. Those who could still walk were ordered to leave Auschwitz at once. Arnold was handed a loaf of bread and told by Abe Saks, a friend from Bedzin, not to make any attempt to re-enter his barracks. Inside the bread were gems and gold which helped Arnold to survive. Arnold was stunned. He couldn't believe that he was actually going to leave Auschwitz alive.

In spite of the bitter weather, no one was allowed to carry an extra blanket or clothing other than what he had on his back. Arnold stumbled along with everyone else until they arrived at the railroad platform. Arnold heard that those who were left behind were to be liquidated before the Russians liberated the camp. Where Arnold was going he didn't know, but the gates of the infamous cattle cars were open for the pitiful human cargo.

*Himmler ordered the destruction of the gas chambers and crematoria on November 26, 1944.

As the steam engine whistled and slowly pulled out of the Auschwitz station, the prisoners asked each other where were they going and why hadn't they been liquidated at Auschwitz. The answers were the fact that the gas chambers couldn't accommodate everyone before the Russians arrived,* and these prisoners being transported were healthy enough to be taken to some other camp for liquidation. The trip to the Oranienburg Concentration Camp, with their destination unknown to the prisoners until after several days of dodging bombs and waiting on sidings without food and water, was cold and frightening. The prisoners felt trapped in their cubicles and were positive they would die either from starvation or from Allied bombs. However, on a bitter cold night, the train pulled into the station and, as at Auschwitz, the SS guards pulled open the doors and shouted at the prisoners to get out and start walking. The snow was quite deep and the scantily clad prisoners trying to make their way through the drifts was a contrast to warmly clothed SS guards on snowshoes.

Since the camp was already overcrowded, the survivors of the trip were herded in the nearby Heinkel Aircraft hangars. For three weeks they huddled around small fires trying to keep warm. The actual camp was filled to capacity, and the SS had no other place to keep their prisoners but in the factory hangars. Little, if any, food was given to the prisoners during the day, and there seemed to be no punishment or roll calls. Some of the prisoners who felt that they just couldn't go on any longer committed suicide. Arnold might have done the same, but he found a Frenchman who had some food and was willing to share it with him. Starvation and malnutrition were taking a heavy toll of the Auschwitz survivors, but Arnold felt that if he could get a little food and dodge the Allied bombs he might have a chance for freedom.

Three weeks after arriving in Oranienburg, the small group of starving survivors was ordered to march out of the camp. They were led along the snow and ice-covered streets, and Arnold felt that he had never been so cold in his life. The German guards

*The troops of the USSR liberated those who were left in the camp on January 26, 1945.

shouted at their charges, "Move along Jewish pigs or freeze your asses off in the snow."

Torture and shootings were not really necessary on the march to Sachsenhausen. The very bitter weather and the lack of food caused great numbers to fall by the wayside. Another hazard was the civilian population. This was particularly so when the column passed by gasthauses where the Germans inside were in different stages of inebriation. The guests of the inns would run out of the bars and shout that the Führer was right. The Jews had caused the war and, now, they were responsible for Germany's present military plight. They hit the prisoners with sticks and stones, and the SS guards made little attempt to stop them.

It was most difficult to find a place to house the prisoners at night. The best places to sleep were usually abandoned barns and farm houses, but no food was to be found for anyone. Since most communications broke down between the column and those responsible for the welfare of the prisoners, the SS saw to it that those in charge were fed first; what was left would go to the prisoners. Most of this was given to the SS by the civilians with the idea that none of it was to be shared with the Jews. Escapes were not attempted because of the poor physical condition of the prisoners and the freezing weather. What was interesting to Arnold was the disappearance of a guard or two during each night. It was obvious that they did not want to be captured in SS uniforms and thought it best to change into civilian clothes and blend into the crowds of refugees.

After arriving at Sachsenhausen, the prisoners found that the attitude and conditions of the camp personnel were no better than they had been at Oranienburg. For two weeks Arnold's main goal was to keep warm, find food and stay alive. The SS guards apparently had little interest in the prisoners, and they permitted them to walk about in the compounds without much supervision. The tortures, hangings, and shootings were no longer common. Death now came in the form of freezing, lack of food, and suicide. The stealing of cigarettes, food, and other camp necessities was expected and accepted by all concerned. There were no showers for anyone to keep clean, and the outbreak of diseases was of serious concern to the Germans. In some cases, they closed the compounds, refused to let anyone in or out,

and permitted the inmates to die without food, water or medicine. Details assigned to some prisoners were carried out with little enthusiasm by both the guards and the inmates.

Arnold thought that surely this was the place where he would meet the Allied armies. He was wrong. In early March, at five o'clock one morning, he and his Auschwitz comrades were lined up for another trek to another camp. This time the prisoners would ride and walk to Dachau.* Conditions were becoming worse, and Arnold began to lose hope that he would be freed by the Allies. He was sure that liberation would never come and he would die of exhaustion. Life at Dachau would be the same, he was sure of that, but could he last without some food, warm clothing, and decent shelter?

Life at Dachau was not what Arnold expected. In spite of the approaching American Army, the SS were in total control. The horrors of Auschwitz reappeared at Dachau; once more Arnold was challenged. It was probably this new tormented existence that forced Arnold to live rather than succumb to death because of the lack of food, decent clothing, and shelter.

Though Arnold was in Dachau for just a few days, the roll calls, beatings and tortures were horrible reminders of his days in Auschwitz. Food was quite scarce and could be gotten only if the SS man wanted to show favoritism to someone under his control. The loose organization and lax discipline at Oranienburg and Sachsenhausen were not evident at Dachau.

Arnold was assigned as a counter in Lager 11. This meant that it was his duty to count all arrivals and departures in the camp. With him was an Hungarian watchmaker who was not a Jew. He was a big man with a nasty temper and obviously one who had not been maltreated, as had the Jews. The SS used the two men to make sure that both would have the same count at the end of the day. If not, the Jew would be beaten for his errors. Once, when Arnold and the Hungarian were counting arrivals a "stumbler," or physically weak prisoner, came into view. For no apparent reason the watchmaker hit the prisoner and he

*Dachau, the former site of a gunpowder factory, was the first KZ camp. It was established on March 23, 1933, by Heinrich Himmler, the provisional police president of Munich.

crumpled to the ground with a bloody face. Arnold rushed to help him on his feet, and then turned on the Hungarian. The SS man broke up the fracas and blamed the Jew for the trouble. He told the gathering that he was going to give "this Jewish pig twenty-five lashes on his ass." As he looked at the others, slapping his long leather whip into his glove, he wanted to know if any prisoner disapproved of his decision and, if so, was he willing to take the punishment for Arnold. Almost thirty prisoners stepped forward, which startled the SS man. Twenty-five lashes meant at least a crippling injury if not certain death. The guard seemed to admire the prisoners' courage, and decided not to administer the punishment. The counting began again.

Before Arnold left Dachau, he was fortunate enough to meet a non-Jew from his home town of Bedzin. He had been in Dachau for four years and had no contact with anyone from home. He so much enjoyed talking with Arnold about Bedzin that he shared his meager rations with him. This was most unusual when one examines the long history of antagonism between the Poles and the Jews. This man not only shared food with Arnold, but he gave him significant tips on what to avoid in the way of what the SS considered trouble. Though this relationship was very brief, because of the time Arnold was in the camp, it was one more important episode in Arnold's life that permitted him to exist until liberation.

Within seventy-two hours after arrival in Dachau, the Auschwitz Jews were marched to a subdivision of Dachau called Kaufering, near Lansberg. Even though the Americans were closing in on Dachau, the SS continued to work with the prisoners as if there were no war. At this new location, Arnold and his fellow inmates were to slave in a cement factory. Conditions were still the same as if they were at Dachau proper. Just as soon as Arnold arrived at Kaufering, he was selected with two others to go out into the forest and cut wood for the SS barracks. Arnold and the other two were given the title "Holztrager" and were to chop the trees and cart the wood as if he and the others were in good health.

When Arnold actually began to chop the wood, he was approached by the Waldpolizei, or forest rangers, and they asked what he was doing. Arnold tried to explain but they wouldn't

listen to his story. They arrested him for destroying the forest and started to take him away. The SS guard appeared and a violent argument broke out between the guard and the rangers. The fear of the SS soon settled the argument, and Arnold was released to continue his job. It is still a mystery to Arnold why the rangers wanted to arrest an obvious inmate from Dachau, unless they wanted to save him, as some Germans who opposed Hitler tried to do for those in Arnold's position.

Not long after Arnold arrived in Kaufering, it became obvious that the SS men had no intention of being caught by the Americans. As they deserted, or were reassigned, the Luftwaffe personnel replaced them. Since the German Air Force no longer had fuel or planes, Göring's favorite branch of the service was finished. The new guards were not inclined to carry out the cruel practices of the SS, so there was hope for Arnold that freedom would come at last. Just a few more days, he thought, and the whole nightmare would be over.

Arnold's dream of liberation of Kaufering was not to be. The few remaining SS men lined up the Auschwitz survivors and marched them out of Kaufering. They were told by the guards that they were to go to Buchberg in the Tyrol for extermination. They frankly told the prisoners that no Jews in German hands were going to survive the war so that they could go free to breed and pollute the Fatherland as they had in the past.

The prisoners were to be hidden from the approaching Americans until executed. The trip to Buchberg was frightening and arduous not only because of the deteriorating health of the prisoners, but because the various advance troops of the Allies caused detours and delays. A number of times the SS would hold a small gathering and discuss the merits of shooting the prisoners immediately instead of waiting for the final orders at Buchberg. Nothing came of the conferences and the stumbling column continued its journey. A number of times they would walk past the retreating Wehrmacht forces, but nothing happened except stares of hatred between the two groups. Both were too tired and ragged to say a word.

When they arrived at Buchberg, the SS guards suddenly disappeared. The prisoners looked at each other and wondered what would happen next. Arnold thought that the SS was probably setting up machine guns to complete their assignment of making Germany "Judenrein." Arnold asked himself, after four years of hell: "Is this how it would end, with a shot in the back?"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Times such as ours have always bred defeatism and despair. But there remain, nonetheless, some few among us who believe man had within him the capacity to meet and overcome even the greatest challenges of this time. If we want to avoid defeat, we must wish to know the truth and be courageous enough to act upon it. If we get to know the truth and have the courage, we need not despair."

Albert Einstein

No shots were fired. Just an eerie silence. No guards to be seen anywhere. Arnold and the others looked at each other in disbelief. The stillness was broken by the approach of an American soldier. Not knowing what an inmate from a concentration camp looked like, the American was puzzled by the peculiarly dressed skeleton-like figures who stared at him with large eyes that seem to project from their skulls.

On May 10, 1945, a liberated Arnold was twenty-three-years old, and he weighed fifty-nine pounds. Since he was one of the healthiest of the group, he stumbled over to the infantryman. Arnold tried to explain in Polish and German why they were there, but the suspicious and linguistically uninformed American soldier kept his rifle pointed at Arnold. Finally, an American WAAC*, who spoke Czech, arrived on the scene and tried to help. The soldier was still not able to conceive of what an inmate of a concentration camp meant, but he left the group in the hands of the WAAC while he pushed on looking for fleeing German soldiers.

After speaking with Arnold in the Czech language, the horrified WAAC ordered food to be brought at once to the starving and sickly group of former inmates of Auschwitz. Two trucks

*Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.

rolled up with more food than Arnold and the others had seen in a very long time. They tried to eat but it wasn't possible. Most of them became ill because of the rich food and their shriveled stomachs. The shock was too great.

The group was picked up by the American Army and delivered to a nearby town that had been badly bombed by the Allies. The only building left standing was the sturdy bank. No sooner had the former inmates settled into the building, and the Americans were out of sight, than the older Jews grabbed empty typewriter cases and loaded them with the gold and silver lying about the floor and counters. After filling the cases, they just walked out and disappeared. When the Americans found out what was happening, they emptied the bank vault and recovered the gold secretly buried by Germans in the backyard.

Arnold was now classified by the Allies as a "DP", or Displaced Person. He was one of the millions of uprooted Europeans who had to try to bring themselves back into the mainstream of a normal life. For Arnold and the Polish Jews, the Germans had succeeded in destroying the old ways of the faith. It was impossible to begin another life which resembled the one in Bedzin. Arnold figured no life was possible unless he found out what had happened to his brothers and sisters.

The first clue about a member of the Szyjowicz family was at a small meeting of Zionists in the Tyrol. During one of the speeches, a man by the name of Piotrikowski, who had had a shoe store in Bedzin, handed Arnold a note which said: "Son of Alex Szyjowicz see me after the meeting." Arnold did not know the informer, but he told Arnold that he had seen his younger brother, Bernard, in the Russian sector. He was alive!

Arnold set out at once to seek his brother. He knew that the former Bergen-Belsen KZ camp was now a very large home for "DP's", and a nerve center of information for missing persons. Arnold not only went to seek some word as to just where his brother might be, but food and lodging. He met a friend, Adam Potok, who operated one of the kitchens. Arnold told Adam what he was attempting to do, and asked how he could get into the Russian sector without being caught at the border. Adam told Arnold that his brother was not in the Russian sector, but that he had done some investigating and found out that Bernard

was in Braunschweig. This made Arnold extremely happy, and he left after lunch to seek his brother. Having no money, Arnold was forced to travel on the filthy roof of a cattle train, which was highly dangerous. When he arrived at the railroad station, he was met by two young women who called out "Chai" which was the Hebrew word for life, and that they were ready to help him. Arnold asked them if they knew anything about his brother, and they said they did. He was told that Bernard was not in Braunschweig but in a "DP" camp in Goslar.

Since there was no train for Goslar until the following morning, Arnold was advised to hide from the British authorities in control of the area or he would be sent back immediately to the American sector. He was invited to spend the night in the women's camp and he readily accepted their invitation. They got Arnold through the back of the camp and into their barracks. There he spent the night joking with about four or five women and asking them to help him get to Goslar in the morning without being detected.

When morning arrived, the women brought Arnold something to eat. When he was finished eating, they mentioned that a male acquaintance of theirs had a car and would drive Arnold to Goslar. Arnold couldn't believe it, and was greatly appreciative of what they had done for him since he had arrived, very dirty and tired. Arnold left through the hole in the fence in the back of the camp, and was met by the driver. He wasn't so sure that he could trust the driver, who had just lost a leg in one of the last bombing runs by the Allies, but Goslar was too far to walk and he was willing to take a chance on this very kind and willing chauffeur.

When Arnold arrived at Goslar, he did, indeed find Bernard. Tears ran down their cheeks as they embraced for what seemed to be a very long time. Little was said in utter disbelief that each had survived the Nazi persecution. All of a sudden a torrent of words poured forth as each one tried to tell the other what had happened since they had parted in Bedzin. Eventually they said nothing and started to think of home, father, mother, and their older brother and two sisters.

It was at this point that Arnold told Bernard that he had to learn the fate of the other members of the family. Bernard suggested to Arnold that he go back to Bergen-Belsen, which

was a good source of Jewish Displaced Person information. There he could learn where they were if they had survived the holocaust. Bernard gave Arnold a large supply of American cigarettes since this was one of the best currencies in war-torn Europe.

This time, thanks to Bernard, Arnold was able to pay for a ride in the train and not on top as he had before. When he got to Bergen-Belsen, he began to inquire about his brother and two sisters through American Counter Intelligence Corps sources, as well as the Geneva Red Cross, but it was a waste of time. No one in official circles knew where everyone was located at this time, but they did try to help the impatient Arnold. However, his first clue as to where Lola might be came from an old friend who lived in the camp, Aaron Warszawski.

Aaron said that he had had word from his sister that when she was in Poland she had actually stayed with Lola Szyjowicz for a short time. This was all Arnold needed to start searching for Lola at once. He thanked Aaron many times and left for Sosnowitz, hoping that Lola would be there when he arrived. In the shifting DP population, it was quite possible that Lola might very well move to another location and disappear for good. This was, in fact, just what Lola had in mind. She was planning to come to Germany about the same time Arnold was leaving for Poland.

The trip to Poland was made by foot, train, cattle cars, trucks, and any other way Arnold could find to get to Sosnowitz as quickly as possible. And when Arnold arrived in Sosnowitz he found the city in shambles from the ravages of war, and a nation which lost six million inhabitants. Russian troops were to be seen everywhere, and the law and order of the city were in the form of edicts from the new masters of Poland. Arnold was discouraged. He felt that the chaotic state of the city, as well as Poland in general, would make it impossible to find Lola. Fortunately, Arnold met someone who could tell Arnold that she had seen his sister and showed him where to find her.

Lola's home was actually a sparely furnished room for girls and partly damaged by the bombs, but how exciting it was for Arnold to find his sister, regardless of her poor surroundings! Her awful experiences lined her face and her youthful body was thinned by the years of starvation diets. When Arnold met his sister, he broke down and cried. She comforted him and said

that she was alive and that was what counted. The past was to be forgotten and a new life to be found. Arnold said that he had found Bernard alive and well in Goslar, but he wanted to continue his search for Izaak and Sophie. He desired to have the family together so that all of them could go united to the promised land.

Arnold suggested to Lola that they leave Poland as quickly as possible. Their future in the strife-torn country could be just as difficult under the Russians as it had been under the Nazis. Lola agreed, and they left her apartment with no belongings except the clothes on their backs and the remaining cigarettes given to Arnold by Bernard. As they travelled westward by train, Arnold soon discovered that the Russians were already beginning to tighten their grip on the Poles.

Instead of going directly from Poland to Germany, it was better for Arnold and Lola to go by the way of Czechoslovakia. The Russian grip was not as tight in the area. However, when Arnold and Lola arrived at the Czech border they were arrested by a Russian guard. It was rumored that a border guard had been killed, and all suspects were to be rounded up for interrogation.

After two weeks of languishing in a small jail, Arnold found a corrupt guard willing to trade cigarettes for an escape and safe passage out of Czechoslovakia. Arnold and Lola got a train at Bratislava for a ride to Germany through Austria. The ride was not long but overcrowded with "DP's" with the same hopes as those of Arnold and Lola. Once there, Arnold used the last of the cigarettes to be smuggled into Germany. From there it was a short trip to Goslar to be united with Bernard.

Lola was particularly tired when she was hugged and kissed by Bernard but she didn't care. Three out of five children were together, and now Arnold felt that it was time to move on and see if he could locate Izaak and Sophie. Needless to say, in spite of Arnold's thoroughness in visiting all of the "DP" camps he could locate, he was unaware that his brother was shifting from one camp to another, just missing Arnold at every turn. Arnold even worked for the American Intelligence in tracking down and interpreting ex-Nazis, hoping to find clues to his brother and sister but to no avail. At least the job gave him certain transportation and ration privileges which he would not have had otherwise.

Izaak was not located until 1946, in a "DP" camp outside of Munich. Arnold was tired from his mission — very tired — but pleased that he was now reunited with Bernard, Izaak and Lola. Only Sophie was missing. No matter how diligent Arnold was in his search for Sophie, she was not to be found. The beginning of the "Cold War" closed the borders for any further searches in Poland, and Arnold finally and reluctantly came to the conclusion that Sophie had perished in Hitler's dream of a "Jew-free" Europe.

An exhausted and discouraged Arnold went back to Goslar and reported to Bernard, Izaak, and Lola that he had failed in his mission. He said that he was sure that Sophie was gone, and they were looking at the remains of the Szyjowicz family from Bedzin. What Arnold didn't know was that Sophie thought all of her immediate family had been wiped out, and she decided to remain with her new husband in Warsaw. Sophie immigrated to Israel in 1957, and it was there that she learned of the fate of her three brothers and sister. They were alive! She told her family that she was in Israel, but said that she would come to America as soon as possible so that all of Alexander and Sara's children could be together.

In the meantime, Arnold's brothers and sister were proud of what he had done to see that the family was once more united. Bernard encouraged Arnold to join the festivities, usually held every Saturday night, so that he might ease or maybe blot out the horrors of the past. Reluctantly, Arnold went along one Saturday night with the idea of placating his family but knowing that he wouldn't enjoy himself. After his walk in Hell, Arnold wondered if he would ever know what it meant to be really happy.

When he arrived at the barracks everyone present was dancing, drinking, clapping and, in general, enjoying the festivities. All, apparently, but one little lonely young lady sitting by herself. Arnold was not in the mood to be entertained as the others in the room, so he decided to share her loneliness. He walked over to the girl and announced that he was Arnold Szyjowicz, a tailor from the city of Bedzin, Poland, and would like the pleasure of her company.

When Bala Saionz looked up at Arnold, he was struck by the

way she looked at him. Suddenly Arnold forgot his misery and self-pity and decided to join in the merry-making. He asked Bala to dance but she put her head down and said that she didn't know how to dance. Arnold grabbed her and said that he wasn't so good at it either, and suggested that they might as well learn together. What an evening Arnold had, and he momentarily forgot the holocaust. In fact, he just couldn't get the vibrant and exciting Bala out of his mind, and spent many months trying to persuade her that he was the right man for her. Finally, Bala agreed to marry Arnold.

On August 12, 1947, the bleak and dreary setting of the "DP" camp was forgotten by those who attended the wedding of Arnold Szyjowicz and Bala Saionz. The happy bride wore the traditional white gown for the double-ring ceremony, and Arnold, a tailor, made sure that he had the finest cutaway suit he could afford. Rabbi Hendel Fiszel, formerly from Bedzin, performed the wedding. At first he offered the "Kaddish," a prayer for the dead, and then the festivities began. Food, wine and entertainment were plentiful and the dancing went on into the night. Bala exchanged her white gown for a black one at twelve o'clock midnight according to custom, and the celebration continued until the early morning hours.

Arnold and his new wife looked forward to a happy life together. Once more Arnold spoke of the promised land, and how he and Bala should immigrate to Israel. Poland and Germany were filled with horrible memories, and any life in either nation would prolong the agony of trying to forget what the Nazis had done to them. Israel, after all, was the fulfillment of all his boyhood dreams and the hope he had in the bleakest hours of Auschwitz.

But life being what it is, Arnold's dreams were not to be as he had planned. He was Jew! Sadness, bigotry, anti-Semitism and hardships would continue to dog his footsteps. Arnold took comfort in the fact that Bala would be by his side to share his triumphs and disappointments.

Arnold continued to work as tailor in the "DP" camp with the hope that his application for a visa to enter the United States would be accepted by the United States government. On June 23, 1948, a son, Wolfgang, was born to Arnold and Bala. Though



The wedding of Bala and Arnold Shay

Arnold was very happy with the new addition to his family, he felt that his chances to take his family to the United States would be more difficult. His apprehension disappeared in September, 1949, when word arrived that he would be permitted to take his family to Dallas, Texas.

Nothing was more beautiful to Arnold than to sail into Boston harbor, on board the U.S.S. *Hershey.* Poland, and the horrors of the Nazis were behind him. In America he could do for his family what Alexander wanted to do for his children — provide them with opportunities and freedom from Europe's constant turmoils. Arnold, Bala and Wolfgang left Boston immediately for Dallas, where he was given the job as a tailor. Though Arnold was pleased to be in Dallas, and employed, he really wanted to be in Philadelphia near his older brother.

On January 1, 1950, Arnold left Dallas to live in Philadelphia. He worked for a number of stores, as a custom tailor, before opening his own tailor shop. On October 11, 1951, Shirley's birth brought the family number to four, and a source of great happiness to Arnold and Bala.

Life in Philadelphia appeared to be good to Arnold. However, he could not escape tragedy in his life. On the night of July 25, 1977, Bala was killed by a drunken driver going the wrong way on a one-way street without his lights on. Once more Arnold felt that God was punishing him. Why? Is this what it meant to be a Jew? Though there were no answers to his question, Arnold closed his tailor shop and decided to dedicate his remaining years lecturing to worldwide audiences about the Holocaust. Arnold thought that maybe this is what God wanted him to do after sparing his life, giving him a lovely family and the good life in America.

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"The memoirs of Arnold Shay, and many more like them, are therefore needed to prevent the Nazi horrors from being forgotten. Only remembrance can prevent a recurrence."

Simon Wiesenthal

Although much has been written about the Holocaust and those who survived, Arnold Shay's story is unique. His ordeal documents the horror of the ghetto and, ultimately, his arrest and confinement in Auschwitz, Oranienburg and Dachau, until 1945. The authors describe the tragic events during these years quite graphically, and it can only serve to remind us of the things that happened on such an incredible scale must never recur.

Surviving all those years in such subhuman conditions is miraculous. Even more miraculous, perhaps, is that not only Arnold, but both of his brothers and both of his sisters survived. Although, one sister did not know until 1957, that the rest of her family was alive.

"It is a publisher's lot to receive many manuscripts covering the Holocaust and most of these actual accounts report atrocities that should have destroyed the human spirit. However, the miracle is that the spirit of the people shines through in these reports and seems to be strengthed and renewed."

Thomas A. Christopher, Publisher

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