

Krinik in Khurbn

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Drawing courtesy of Zdzisław Nitka

Steinberg (1) -Dautmergen

tsvishn tsvey gedikhte velder, nisht vayt fun der groyser shtot Balingen, iz gelegn a kleyn shtetl mitn nomen Shteynberg. tsvey kilometer in vald iz gelegn a kleyn derfl Doytmergn. dortn, in vald hot zikh oyfgeboyt a lager fun 7 barakn mit a kikh. di merhayt aynvoyner in lager zaynen geven polyakn. der lager-eltster iz geven a polyak mitn nomen *Manek*. a sadist un a merder iz er geven.

yedn tog flegt er mit zayne eygene hent dermordn tsvey-drey yidn. di merhayt yidn in dem lager zaynen geven litvishe. dem 18tn yanuar 1945 hot men undzer „bombn-komande“ gebrakht in ot dem lager arayn, glaykh vi mir zaynen gekumen hobn mir geleyent oyf di blase oysgemogerte gezikhter fun di yidn vos far an anovim zey shteyen do oys.

di arbet in dem lager iz bashtanen in boyen groyse eylfabrikn(2). dem eyl hot men getsoygn durkh groyse rern fun di shteynerne berg. di arbet iz geven a katorzhne. nisht mer vi drey vokhn flegn oyshaltn di shtarkste arestantn. do flegn shoyn kumen zeyer oft frische transportn mit mentshn fun andere lagern, vi tsum bayshpil Rusn, Frantsoysn un fun nokh fil andere natsyonalitetn. keyn krematoryum iz nisht geven. di toyte flegt men baerdikn nisht vayt fun lager oyf a bergl. dortn zaynen geven oysgegrob'n groyse griber. di toyte flegt men avekfirm mit a vogn. s'hobn derbay gearbet spetsyele mentshn, velkhe hobn zikh gerufn „di toytn-komande“.

di kranke flegt men yede vokh avekfirm in an umbakanter rikhtung. yedn tog flegt men araynbrengen fun di komandes toyte un halb-toyte.

Between two dense forests, not far from the large city of Balingen, there is a small town, called Steinberg (*Schömberg 1*). Two kilometers through the forest, you would come to the small village Dautmergen. There, in the forest, a camp with 7 barracks and a kitchen had been erected. The majority of its inhabitants were Poles. The camp elder, *Manek*, was also a Pole; he was a sadist and murderer.

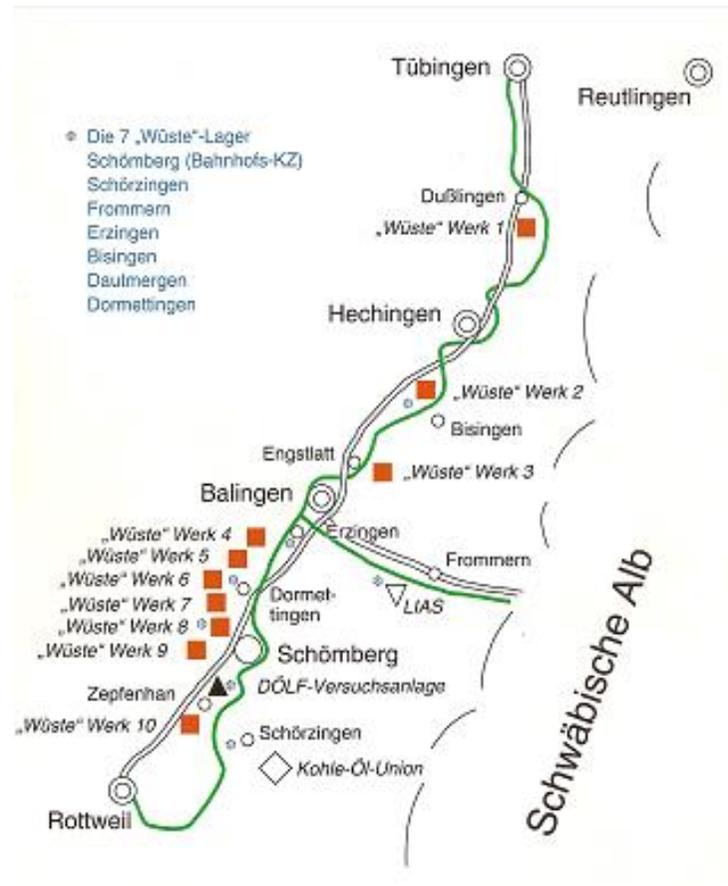
Every day, he would murder two or three Jews with his own hands. Most of the Jews in the camp were from Lithuania. On January 18, our "bomb squad" was transferred to this camp. As soon as we arrived, we read in the pale, emaciated faces of the Jews what miserable conditions they had to endure.

The work in the camp consisted of building large "oil factories" (2). The oil was extracted from the rocks of the mountains by means of large pipes. This was hard forced labor. Even the strongest prisoners did not last more than 3 weeks. Very often new transports arrived with people of many nationalities from other camps, including Russians and French. There was no crematorium. The dead were buried not far from the camp on a hill where large pits had already been dug. The dead were taken away on a cart; this work was done by certain people of the so-called "corpse crew".

Once a week, the sick were taken away to unknown places. From the work sites, every day dead and half-dead were brought in.

(1) The Author uses different spellings for this city, which today's name is Schömberg, see https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/KZ_Dautmergen

(2) The Dautmergen concentration camp was one of a total of seven concentration camps that served the murderous Nazi project with the code name "Wüste" ("Desert"): Oil was to be extracted from oil shale for the armaments production of the National Socialist regime, more information here https://www.alemannia-judaica.de/schoemberg_kz_friedhof.htm or <http://www.eckerwald.de/dok/Flyer-EN.pdf>



The 7 "Wüste (desert)" camps, among them in Balingen and Schömberg, courtesy of Volker Mall, source: Immo Opfermann

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ikh hob nor gehat eyn plan-antloefn fun lager. ober dos hot nisht gekent oysgefirt vern eyn tog, vayl di vakh iz do zeyer a shtarke un ven eyner an antlofener vert gekhapt, dan vert er gepeynikt bizn toyt. gearbet hob ikh nisht bay di shteyner nor bay a komande velkhe hot getrogn dem nomen „Lilyenfeyn“. di arbet iz bashtanen in maskirn di fabrikn fun flier-ongrifn.

I had only one plan: Escaping from the camp. But there was no day for implementing it, because the guard was very vigilant; and if a fugitive was caught, he was tortured to death. I did not work at the rock (quarry), but in the squad "Lilienfein". Our work consisted of camouflaging the factories as protection against air raids.

<p>di arbet iz geven nisht keyn shvere. mir flegn flekhtn shtroy un grine bleter. ikh hob gearbet mit maynem a fraynt, <i>Her (1) Zlotogurski</i>, velkher hot undz gegeben mut oystsuhaltn biz tsu der bafrayung. Zlotogurski, a frantsoyzisher yid, flegt yedn tog redn mit frantsoyzishe gefangene, velkhe flegn visn di letste naves fun front. itst hobn mir gevust, az di teg fun undzer lager-leben zaynen getseylt „oder oder“...</p>	<p>It was not hard work; we had to weave straw and green leaves. I worked together with my friend, Mr. (1) Zlotogurski, who encouraged us to hold out until liberation. Zlotogurski, a French Jew, was talking every day with French prisoners who were informed about the latest news from the front. Now we knew that the days of our camp life were numbered, "one way or another"...</p>
<p>a freyd iz dan geven far undz ven mir flegn zen di makhnes avyonen, velkhe flegn fardekn dem himl. oykh hobn mir gevust, az di aliirte armeyen zaynen ibergegangen dem Reyn un marshirn mit a shneln tempo foroys, oyf daytshisher erd. dos alts hot undz gegeben mut un kraft tsu kemfn farn leben. yedn tog vos mir hobn gelozt hinter zikh iz gevorn a tog nenter tsu der bafrayung.</p>	<p>Each time we saw the flocks of planes covering the sky, it was pure joy for us. We also knew that the Allied armies had already marched across the Rhine and were advancing at a rapid pace on German ground. All this gave us courage and strength to fight for our survival. Each day we left behind, brought us one day closer to liberation.</p>
<p>mir hobn oykh gevust, az in letstn moment ken der tiger undz aynshlingen. nor itst hobn mir shoyn gevust eyns: az undzere merder zaynen farloyrn, az zeyere teg zaynen shoyn getseylt! dem 12tn April, hot men gebrakht tsu firt in lager tsvey un tsvantsik gebundene mentshn. yeder fun zey hot getrogn hor un iz geven tsivil gekleydet. in etlekhe sho arum hobn mir zikh dervust, vos far a mentshn dos zaynen.</p>	<p>We were all too aware that the tiger could still devour us at the last moment. But after all, we knew one thing for sure now: our killers were already lost, and their days were numbered! On April 12, twenty-two people were led into the camp in shackles. They all wore full hair and were in civilian clothes. After a few hours, we learned what kind of people they were:</p>
<p>elf frantsoyzishe partizanen, akht Rusn un drey Polyakn (2). nokhn ophaltn zey tsvey teg in lager, hot men zey farurteytl tsum toyt durkh shisn. der urteyl iz oysgefirt gevorn, ven ibern himl zaynen gefloygn amerikaner avyonen. dos iz geven nokh der arbet, 7 azeyger in ovnt. an oyto hot baloykhtn di lager-shtrase. der gantser lager hot gemuzt shteyn bay zayt un alts tsukukn.</p>	<p>Eleven French partisans, eight Russians and three Poles (2). After being held in the camp for wo days, they were sentenced to death by shooting. The verdict was carried out just as American planes were flying overhead. It happened after work, at 7 o'clock in the evening. A truck was lighting up the camp street. The whole camp had to stand on the side and watch everything.</p>

(1) possibly letters are missing, maybe Her(sh) Zlotogurski

(2) As we learn on page 265, they were also partisans.

<p>elf SS mit biksn oyf di akslen zaynen geshtanen in der mitn fun gas. bald hobn mir gezen vi men firt tsu elf gebundene eyner tsum andern in tsvey rayen. di farmishpete zaynen gegangen mit aropgelozte kep, in bloyzn hemd, on shikh.</p>	<p>Eleven SS men with rifles on their shoulders were standing in the middle of the street. Soon we saw two rows, each with eleven men tied together, being brought in. The condemned walked with their heads bowed, wearing only their</p>
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<p>inmitn der gas fun lager zaynen zey shteyn geblibn. tsvey merderishe ofitsirn hobn batrakht zeyere korbones.</p> <p>arum iz toyt shtil. di luft iz ongefilt mit a geroysh fun avyonen. plutslung vert ibergerisn di arumike shtilkeyt mit a geshray fun eynem fun di farurteylte oyf rusish:</p> <p>„khaveyrim, mir shtarbn far der frayhayt! a toyt di merder! ir zolt nekome nehmen!“</p> <p>bald hot zikh gehert a bafel: geve forbereytn! di elf SS hobn zikh geshtelt hinter di rukns fun di gebundene. vider a bafel; geve tsum genik. eyns, tsvey, fayer! an elf-biksiker shos hot zikh gehert oysgemisht mit a letstn geshray:</p> <p>mir shtarbn far frayhayt! nekome, nekome!</p> <p>di andere elf zaynen geshtanen in der zayt un tsugezen vi zeyere khaveyrim lign in a taykh blut. vider a bafel: geve tsum genik! fayer! di andere elf lign shoyn oykh in a taykh blut oyf der erd. di merders raybn zikh di hent un zaynen tsufridn mitn „zig“. bald vert ober alts ibergerisn fun a shtarkn royshn fun a makhne avyonen.</p> <p>„Aynleygn, aynleygn!“ shrayen di „heldn“, velkhe hobn mit eyn minut frier geshosn tsvey un tsvantsik yunge mentshn. arum vert likhtik fun a rakete. yeder fun undz bet aleyn tsu zikh: Got, shik arop a por bombes un mish oys di erd tsuzamen mit undz un mit di merder!</p> <p>drey mol hobn zikh di avyonen arumgedreyt un zaynen avekgefloygn iberlozndik a vaysn flek oyfn himl. di tsvey un tsvantsik dershosene hot men glaykh ibergegebn tsu der „toytn-komande“ (1). di erd iz geven aynggezapt mit royt blut fun yunge lebns, velkhe hobn gekemft far frayhayt.</p>	<p>shirts and no shoes. In the middle of the street they stopped. Two murderous officers looked at their victims.</p> <p>There is a dead silence. In the air, the sound of airplanes is arising. Suddenly, the surrounding silence is shattered with the Russian exclamation of one of the condemned:</p> <p>"Comrades, we die for freedom! Death to the murderers! You shall take revenge!"</p> <p>Soon an order is given, "Prepare the gun!" The eleven SS men are taking position behind the backs of the bound men. Another command: "Gun to the neck! One, two, fire!" Shots rang out from 11 guns, intermixed with a final scream:</p> <p>"We die for freedom! Revenge, revenge!"</p> <p>The other eleven stood to the side, watching their comrades lying in a pool of blood. Another command: "Gun to the neck! Fire!" And so the others are lying on the ground, in a pool of blood. The murderers, rubbing their hands, are satisfied with their "victory". But shortly after, everything is disrupted by a loud noise from a squadron of airplanes. "Lie down, lie down!" are yelling the "heroes" who just a minute ago have shot 22 young people. The surroundings are lighting up from a rocket. Each of us is praying silently: "God, may you send down some bombs, mixing up the earth with us and with the murderers!"</p> <p>The planes turned around three more times, before they flew away, leaving a white spot in the sky. The 22 shot were immediately handed over to the "corpse command" (1). The earth was soaked with the blood of young lives who had fought for freedom.</p>
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(1) List of those prisoners killed in the Dautmergen and Schömberg concentration camps 1944/145 see <http://www.eckerwald.de/dok/liste-1.pdf>

dem 15tn April iz ongekumen a bafel optsushikn ale kranke un shvakhe heftlinge. dem tog iz shoyn keyner nit aroys tsu der arbet. der lager hot getseylt tsvelf toyznt mentshn. fun di tsvelf toyznt hot men oysgeklibn neyn toyznt kranke un shvakhe. der motiv tsum oyskloybn di mentshn iz geven, az di velkhe veln itst avekforfn fun lager, veln nokh kenen forfn mit der ban biz Dachau di andere veln darfn geyn tsufus un ver es vet oyfn veg blaybn hintershtelik, vet glaykh dershoshn vern.

ikh hob glaykh bashlosn az ikh vel nisht forfn mit der ban, zol zayn vos es vil zikh! ikh vel geyn tsufus un fun veg vel ikh efsher kenen antloyfn.

tsu morgns, dem 16tn April, hot men gefirt di mentshn, velkhe men hot farshribn tsum transport. der lager iz leydik gevorn. mir zaynen aroys tsu der arbet. itst hobn mir gevust az di teg biz tsu an antsheydung zaynen getseylt. oykh iz undz dergangen a yedie vegn toyt fun nord-amerikaner prezident Ruzvelt. itst iz yeder sho vos geyt ariber-firt undz nenter tsu der antsheydung.

ikh tsuzamen mit nokh etlekhe khaveyrim-*Avrohem Fenigshteyn, Izak Vasertsug (1)* un nokh-hobn bashlosn bay der klenster gelegnhayt, baym aroysmarshirn, tsu antloyfn in vald arayn un vartn biz mir veln bafrayt vern. nishto itst vos tsu farlirn.

di merders veln undz say vi keyn lebendike nisht lozn araynfaln in di hent fun di bafrayer.

nor dervayl arbetn mir vi frier. fil arbet-komandes zaynen zikh tsefaln tsulibn mangl in mentshn.

di arbet iz shoyn itst gegangen mitn kop arop. di tsivil-inzhenyern hobn oyf alts gemakht mit der hant, az s'iz shoyn alts farloyrn. dem 17tn April hobn mir derhert dem ersht(n) ophilkh fun harmatn-shosn.

On April 15, an order was given to send away all sick and weak prisoners. No one went to work that day. The camp numbered 12,000 people, from which 9,000 sick and weak were selected. The reason for the selection was that people could just in time be taken by train from the camp to Dachau. The others would have to walk, and those who could not keep up on the way would be shot immediately.

Promptly, I decided not to take the train, come what may! I wanted to walk, and maybe would be able to escape on the way.

The next morning, April 16, the people on the list were led to the transport. The camp became empty. We went to work, being aware now, that the days until the decision were numbered. Moreover, we were informed about the American President Roosevelt's death. Every hour that passed now, brought us closer to the decision.

Together with some comrades, among them *Abraham Fenigstein and Izak Vaserzug (1)*, I decided to escape at the slightest opportunity during the march out into the forest and wait there for our liberation.

There is nothing to lose now.

Anyway, the murderers would not let us fall alive into the hands of our liberators.

But meanwhile, we are working as before. Many squads have disbanded due to lack of workers. Already, work was being carried out "with heads bowed ": The civilian engineers waved their hands in resignation, since after all, everything was lost.

On April 17 we heard the first echo of cannon shots.

(1) Both friends survived and emigrated to the USA (information by Volker Mall), see photos below.



Izak Vaserzug aka Izak Wassermann in 1945 and 1995, photo courtesy of Volker Mall, source: USC-Video



Memorial stone for the Jewish victims at the Schömburg cemetery, photo courtesy of Harald Roth, USAF-Plan, source: USAF Historical Research-Center

די באַפֿרײַאונג

The Liberation



Drawing courtesy of Zdzisław Nitka

der lager Sh(t)eynber(g)-Doytmergn hot zikh gerekht farn ergstn lager fun dorem-daytshland. fuftszen toyznt toyte zaynen gelegn oyf a bergl. di SS hobn gehat a bazundern lager, velkher hot zikh ongeschlosn in undzer lager. di merste teyl fun SS zaynen avekgeforn mit di kranke. geblibn zaynen arum hundert SS. yedn tog hobn mir zikh gekent rikhtn oyfn bafel tsu farlozn dem lager.

di harmatn-shiseray iz mit yedn tog gevorn alts nenter. genoy vu der front iz-hobn mir nisht gevust. yedn flegn farbayflien tsvey-drey avyonen ibern kop. zey flegn zikh aroplozn iber di barakn un vayter avekflien, nisht gebndik keyn eyn shos.

di SS zaynen arumgegangen mit aropgelozte kep. mir flegn opshteyn shoen baym tseyl-apel un keyn blok-firer flegt nisht kumen undz ibertseyln. ven er flegt shoy n yo kumen, flegt er shnel ibertseyln un glyakh farshvindn. ikh mit mayne khaveyrim hobn mir oysgearbet a plan, vi azoy mir zoln antloyfn. dos noytikste tsu dem tsvek zaynen geven tsivile kleyder. yeder fun undz hot dokh getrogn geshtreyfte lager-kleyder.

bay der arbet flegt men undz shoy n mer nisht shlogn un nisht traybn, az mir zoln arbetn shneler. yeder eyner fun di SS iz geven farzorgt vegn zikh aley n. di tsivil-maysters hobn undz getreyst mit di verter, az mir veln shoy n lang nisht zay n in lager, men vet undz bafrayen. di aliirte armeyen geyen foroys un farnemen yedn tog frische shtet. nor mir hobn gevust undzers, az di merder veln undz nisht derlozn, az mir zoln derlebn di minut fun bafrayung. itst darfn mir di frayhayt nehmen mit undzere eygene hent.

dem 18tn April, vi ale teg fun lager-leben, zaynen mir oyfgeshtanen fir azeyger fartog. biz zeks hot zikh getsoygn der tseyl-apel. dan hobn mir zikh formirt tsu der arbet:

a sheyner friling-tog iz dan geven.

di zun varemt undzere mide glider. mir marshirn aroys fun lager, yeder tsu zay n arbet. kumendik oyfn arbets-feld hot zikh yeder genumen zayne makshirim. ver tsum ridl un ver tsum hamer. mir arbetn gemitlekh vi ale letste teg. der tsivil-

The Schömburg-Dautmergen camp was considered one of the worst camps in southern Germany. On a hill, in a mass grave, were lying 15,000 dead. The SS had another special camp, which adjoined our camp. Most of the SS had left with the sick; only about a hundred SS men remained. Every day, we could expect an order to leave the camp.

The cannon fire was getting closer every day. But we did not know exactly where the front was. Every day, two or three planes flew over our heads, but even during their descent over the barracks, they would not fire a shot, but moved away.

The SS walked around with their heads down. We used to stand for hours at the roll call, without a block leader coming to count us. If he finally did come, he used to count only quickly, just to disappear again. Together with my comrades, I worked out a plan to escape. We absolutely needed civilian clothes for this purpose. All of us wore striped camp clothes after all.

During work we were no longer beaten and driven to work faster. Each individual from the SS was only concerned about himself. The civilian masters comforted us with the words that we would not stay in the camp much longer and would soon be liberated. The Allied armies would make good progress and capture new cities every day. We, however, knew all too well that the murderers would never allow us to experience the moment of liberation. We had to take freedom with our own hands.

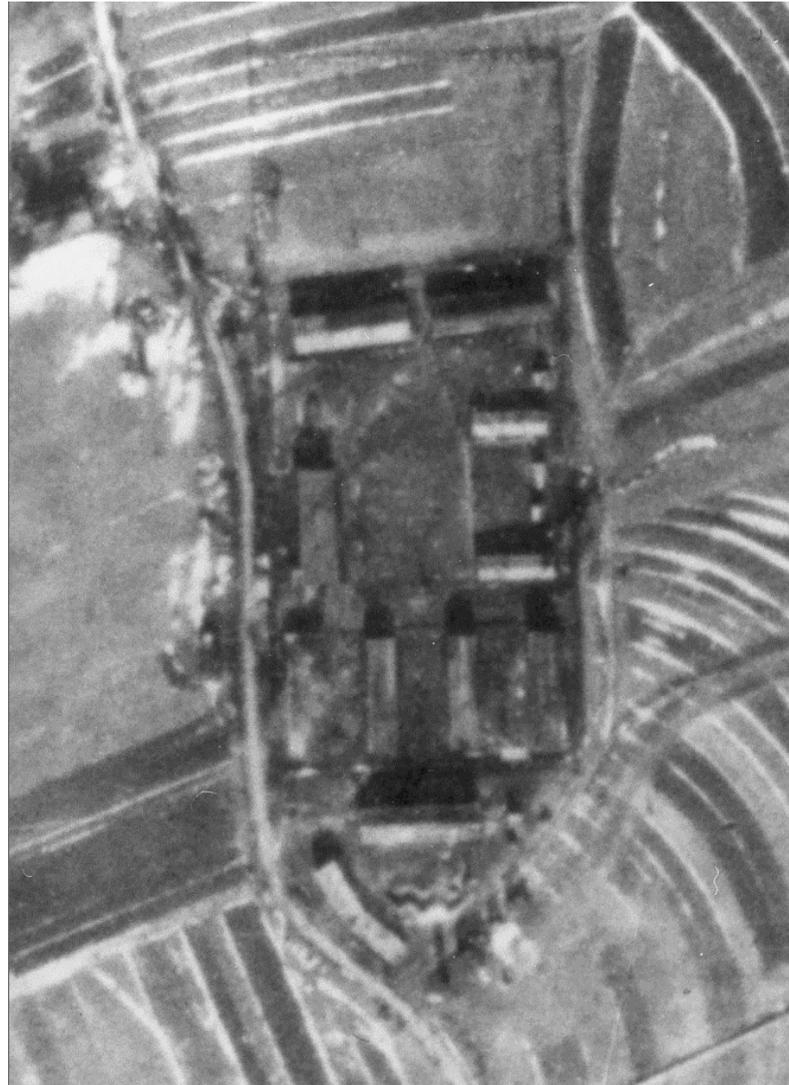
On April 18, just like every day during our camp life, we got up at 4 am. The roll call lasted until 6. Then we formed up to go to work.

It is a beautiful spring day.

The sun is warming our limbs. We are marching out of the camp, everyone to his work. Arriving at the work site, each takes his tools, one a shovel, the other a hammer. Like the other last days, we are working comfortably. The civilian

mayster dreyt zikh arum vi a shikerer, nisht keyn oysgeshlofener, mit a farkhmuret ponim.
tsen azeyger bavayzt zikh der lager-firer oyf a mototsiklet.

master is walking around as if he were drunk, he is unrested and has a scowl on his face.
At 10 o'clock the camp leader appears on his motorcycle.



Aerial view of the Dautmergen Camp, photo courtesy of Volker Mall, source: USAF/ Immo Opfermann

er ruft dem kapo mitn tsivil-mayster un bald hern mir a bafel:
ayntretn, finf in a ray!

mir veysn nisht vos do hot plutsung pasirt. der lager-komendant, a hoykher, mitlyoriker mit a langn gezikht, tsvey groye, merderish-shtekhike oygn, zet itst oys, vi a soldat fun front. er hot royte, farshlofene oygn. zayne kleyder zaynen farshpritst mit blote.

-shnel, shnel, ir lumpn, drekige-shrayt er un git dervayl a shtoyts mitn shtivl eynem fun undz. mir shteyen in der ray, ibergetseylt un glaykh a bafel: marsh! mir marshirn tsum lager tsu. der lager-firer fort foroys. di zaytn zaynen farshtelt mit SS-postns. ot kumen mir tsum lager. der lager iz ful mit mentshn. yeder iz oyf der gas. mir marshirn arayn. der lager-eltster meldet undz, az mir zoln zikh greytn in veg. bald marshirn mir aroys fun lager.

yeder gezt a torbe. ver es greyt tsu di shikh, zey zoln nisht raybn. bald derzeen mir tsvey oytos mit kleyder. naye sveders, naye shtivl fun SS. mit getshvekevet zoyln. der lager eltster meldet undz: ver es vil zol nehmen a por naye shtivl un naye vesh. yederer iz shnel gelofn dertsu. s'iz gevorn a geloyf. eyner rayst fun tsveytn. bald kumt a bafel oystsuleydikn di shpayz-magazinen. do gezt shoyn tsu mit an ordenung.

yeder bakumt a liter marmelad un a kilo khazer-shmalts un dertsu a broyt. yeder hot shoyn greyt zayn torbe. ver es nemt mit a koldre un ver-tsvey. di merhayt geyen in naye SS-shtivl, nor ikh gey in mayne alte, tserisene leder-shikh. Kh'farshtey gants gut vi gut es zaynen naye, shvere shtivl in veg...

plutsung derhert zikh a fayfn fun der sirene: flier-alarm!
yeder loyft. di SS shrayen: aynleygn, aynleygn!
iber di kep bavayzn zikh tsvey frantseyzishe avyonen. zey flien niderik iber di barakn. yeder ligt mitn kop arayngeton tsu der erd.
di SS loyfn shnel in luft-bunker, ober di tsvey avyonen hobn zey glaykh bamerkt un eyner iz shoyn untn. es hert zikh a shiseray un a shtarke klap. a bombe iz

He calls the Kapo and the civilian master to him, and soon an order is given:
"Fall in, five in line!"

We don't know what suddenly has happened. The camp commander, a tall, middle-aged man with a long face and two gray, murderously piercing eyes, is now looking like a front-line soldier. His eyes are red and sleepy, his clothes are splattered with mud.

"Quick, quick, you filthy rags", he yells, giving one of us a shove with his boot. Standing in line, we are counted. Then the command: "March!" We march to the camp, the camp leader driving in front. The sides are obstructed by SS guards. We arrive at the camp, which is full of people; everyone is on the street. Coming in, the camp leader commands us, to prepare for the set off. We will leave the camp soon.

Everyone is carrying a sack. Shoes are prepared so that they do not rub. Soon, we see two trucks with clothes: New sweaters, new boots from the SS, with nailed soles. The camp elder announces: Whoever wants to, should take a pair of new boots and new underwear. Everyone is running there quickly, it's a stampede, everyone snatches the things out of each other's hands. Soon the order comes to empty the food stores. Indeed, this is already done in an orderly manner.

Each is receiving a liter of jam and a kilo of lard, plus a loaf of bread. All of us have filled our sacks now. One takes a blanket, the other two at once. The majority is walking in new SS boots, but I - still in my old, torn leather shoes. I know all too well how obstructive new, heavy boots can be...

Suddenly, we hear the siren whistle: air raid warning!
Everyone is running. The SS men are yelling, "Lie down, lie down!"
Above our heads, two French planes appear, flying low over the barracks. Everyone lies there with their heads sunk into the ground.
The SS men quickly run into the air bunker, but the two pilots have noticed them immediately, and one has already dived down. A shooting and a crashing

aropgefaln in SS-lager. undzer lager iz nisht gerirt gevorn. shpeter hobn mir...	blow can be heard: A bomb has hit the SS camp. Our camp remains untouched. Later we have seen
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<p>gezen vi men shlept toyte un farvundete SS-mener. sakhakl -neyn toyte un fir farvundete SS.</p> <p>shnel kumt der bafel: aytretsn tsu finf. men tseylt undz. di SS shteyen greyt mit shvere ruk-zek balodn. mit hantgranatn un koyln fun kop biz di fis. men tseylt etlekhe mol yeder hundert bazunder. bay yede tsen mentshn shteyen fun bayde zaytn tsvey SS.</p> <p>der lager-toyer vert shnel geeft. -in glaytshikht (1) marsh!- shrayt der lager-firer. mir marshirn aroys fun toyer. hinter undz roykhert zikh der SS-lager. di toyte SS zaynen geblibn fun oybn nit baerdikt. yeder fun undz iz tsufridn mitn gesheenem. der lager blaybt a leydiker. drey toyte Rusn lign oyfn mitn gas. der lager-firer hot zey dershoshn oys nekome, farvos zey hobn gelakht ven di avyonen hobn bonbardirt dem SS-lager.</p> <p>di tsvey avyonen zaynen vayt nisht avekgefloygn. zey dreyen zikh arum kegniber dem tsveytn veldl. vu s'shteyt der hoykher koymen fun der tsement-fabrik. mir hern tsvey shtarke klep: der koymen iz ayngefaln. a shvartser roykh rayst zikh tsum himl aroyf. di SS shrayen: aynleygn, aynleygn. mir lign oyf bayde zaytn shosey, di kep ayngotunkn in groz.</p> <p>di avyonen dreyen zikh niderik iber undzere kep. di SS lign blase. hent un fis tsitern zey. ot lozn zey zikh arop un heybn zikh vider oyf. azoy etlikhe mol. vi zey voltn zikh geshpilt mit undz.</p> <p>mir lign nit vayt fun lager. di avyonen flien in der rikhtung tsum lager. ot hern mir vider a shtarkn klap un shvartse knoyln roykh badekn di barakn. der gantser</p>	<p>dead and wounded SS men being carried away; a total of nine dead and four wounded SS people.</p> <p>Shortly after, an order, "Line up five!" We are counted. The SS stands ready, loaded with heavy backpacks. Equipped with hand grenades from head to toe. Several times we are counted through, again and again to groups of a hundred men. For every 10 people, two SS men stand at the side.</p> <p>Quickly the camp gate is opened: "In step, march!" the camp leader shouts. We march out through the gate. Behind us, the SS camp is smoking. The dead SS men are left unburied. Each of us is satisfied with the incident. The camp remains empty. Two dead Russians lie in the middle of the street. The camp leader shot them in revenge for laughing when the planes bombed the SS camp.</p> <p>The two planes have not flown far; they are turning around opposite the second wood, where the tall chimney from the cement factory is standing. We hear two loud impacts: The chimney has collapsed! A black smoke rises up to the sky. The SS men are shouting: "Lie down, lie down!" We're lying on either side of the road with our heads sunk in the grass. The planes are making their laps right above our heads. The SS men are pale, lying there with trembling hands and feet. The planes are descending to us a couple times, just to rise again, as if they were playing with us.</p> <p>We are not far from the camp. The planes return to our camp; now we hear another loud crash, and clouds of black smoke are covering the barracks. The</p>
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<p>lager shteyt in flamen. mit finf minut-frier zaynen mir nokh gelegn in lager. itst shteyt shoy n der lager in flamen.</p> <p>di avyonen flien avek in a tsveyter rikhtung. mir tret n ayn in der ray. di SS shrayen un shlogn. mir marshirn shnel, mit loyfdike trit. far undz fort der lager-komandant. mir muzn im nokhgeyn.</p> <p>di nakht iz tsugefaln. di SS vern mid fun trogn di shvere ruk-zek. zey gibn dos iber tsu undz. mit aropgelozte kep marshirn mir in der nakht-fintsternish foroys. hinter undz hern zikh...</p>	<p>whole camp is on fire. Just 5 minutes ago, we were still staying in the camp. Now, It's on fire!</p> <p>The planes are moving away in a different direction. We step back in line. The SS men are screaming and beating us. We march quickly, at a running pace. The camp commander is driving ahead of us. We have to follow him on foot.</p> <p>Night has fallen. The SS are getting tired from carrying their heavy backpacks; they hand them over to us. With bowed heads, we are marching through the night darkness. Behind us,...</p>
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(1) I think it must be "glaykhshrit" or "glaykhtrit".

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<p>fun tsayt tsu tsayt shosn. dos shish di SS oyf di velkhe geyen aroys fun der ray, antloyfn itst iz umeglekh. mir bashlisen tsu vartn oyf a ginstikn moment. azoy hobn mir opgemarshirt biz tog. keyner veyst nisht in velkher rikhtung mir marshirn. yeder iz shoy n mid. di merhayt hobn shoy n ongeribene fis. di naye shtivl zaynen derin shuldik. di frimorgn-kelt nemt yedn adurkh di beyner.</p> <p>di merhayt leydt fun a loyzn mogn. fun marmelad un khazer-shmalts iz dos gekumen. di lage vert fun sho tsu sho erger. di shtarkere vern shvakh. di shvakhe kenen shoy n vayter nisht geyn. di vegn un shoseyen zaynen farnumen fun loyfdike daytshishe soldatn, ver mit a biks un ver on. di merste fun zey zaynen shvarts vi di erd. di sumatokhe vert mit yeder minut greser. mir veysn nisht vu der front gefint zikh un tsi s'iz iberhoypt nokh faran a front.</p> <p>di minutn fun antsheydung dernentern zikh. undzere alemens lebns hengen in der luftn oyf a vogshal. vegn antloyfn kenen mir itst nit trakhtn. di zaytike vegn un di velder zaynen bazetst mit soldatn. mir dervisen zikh, az mir marshirn tsu Minkhen tsu. vider bavayzn zikh di zelbe tsvey avyonen vos nekhtn. zey flien hoykh in himl, iber undz.</p> <p>es kumt a bafel: aynleygn, zikh farmaskirn! mir faln in tign groz un yeder fun undz bet Got, az di avyonen zoln nisht avekflien. zoln zey zayn di bashitser fun undzere lebns. vos mer mir veln lign un</p>	<p>shots can be heard from time to time. These are shots of the SS on those who step out of line; it is now impossible to escape. We decide to wait for an opportune moment. Thus we march until daylight; no one knows in which direction. All of us are already tired, most of us have chafed feet, for which the new boots are to blame. The morning cold is getting into everyone's bones.</p> <p>Most of us suffer from diarrhea, which is caused by the jam and lard. Our situation is getting worse with every passing moment. The strong become weak, the weak can't go any further. The roads and highways are taken by running German soldiers, some with and some without rifles. Most of them are black as the earth. With every minute, the confusion is growing. We don't know where the front is and if there is one at all.</p> <p>The minutes of the decision are approaching. All our lives hang in the air, balancing on a scale. Now, we can't think about escaping any more: The side roads and forests are occupied by soldiers. We learn that we are running towards Munich. And again, as in the night, the same two planes appear, flying over us, high in the sky.</p> <p>There comes an order, "Lie down, hide!" We fall into the deep grass, and each of us prays to God that the planes may not fly away. May they be the protectors of our lives!</p>
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<p>oysruen di geshvolene fis, alts mer hobn mir shantsn tsu derlebn di azoy oysgebenkte, umgloyblekhe frayhayt. itst iz es nokh bloyz a fantazye, a puster kholem. di avyonen farhaltn zikh. vi zey voltn farshtanen un gehert undzer gebet.</p> <p>zey kumen nideriker tsu undz un flien iber alemens kep. di SS zaynen blas vi kalkh. zey haltn di kep tif farzunken in groz. di avyonen zeen undz daytlekh. vayl di geshtreyfte lager-kleyder zeen zikh gut on un men ken gikh bamerkn ver mir zaynen.</p> <p>bay yedn fun undz vert dos harts ongegosh mit frayd un glik, ven mir zeen vi di avyonen farhitn undzer leben, vi zey shpiln...</p>	<p>The longer we can lie and rest our swollen feet, the more chances we have to experience the incredible freedom we have been longing for so much! Still, it is only fantasy, an empty dream. The planes slow down their speed, as if they had heard and understood our prayer.</p> <p>They are descending to us, flying over everyone's heads. The SS men are pale as lime. They have lowered their heads deep into the grass. The pilots can see us clearly because our striped camp clothes are easy to recognize, and they know right away who we are.</p> <p>All our hearts are filled with joy and happiness, as we realize how the planes are protecting our lives, and how they are playing</p>
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<p>zikh mit undzere merder. yeder fun undz krigt itst mer kraft oyf oystsuhaltn di letste shoen. di avyonen zaynen frantsoyzishe. mir zeen daytlekh di frantsoyzishe fon mit a vaysn laykhtndikn shtern.</p> <p>azoy zaynen mir opgelegn tsvey sho oyf eyn plats.</p> <p>ven di avyonen zaynen farshvundn iz vider gekumen a vilder bafel: marshirn vayter!</p> <p>vi mir geyen op eyn kilometer, bavayzn zikh vider di avyonen. mir leygn zikh vider tsufridene in grinem shmekndikn groz.</p> <p>azoy hobn di avyonen zikh geshpilt mit undz biz zun-untergang. di nakht iz zugefaln. mir marshirn in khoyshekh, nit-visndik vuhin.</p> <p>plutsung kumt undz antkegn a mototsikl, oyf velkhn es zitst an SS-ofitsir. er meldet az mir torn vayter nisht marshirn. der veg iz opgeshnitn durkh di frantsoyzn. di frantsoyzn gefinen zikh nit vayt fun undz.</p> <p>der merderisher lager-firer shtudirt di mape vi azoy undz aroystsufirn fun dem klem. bald kumt a bafel mir zoln marshirn in a tsveyter rikhtung. di SS vern nokh vilder vi frier. mir marshirn farbay derfer un kleyne shtetelekh. der gantser arum</p>	<p>with our killers. As a result, each of us is getting more strength now to endure the last hours. These are French planes; we can clearly see the French flag and the white shining star.</p> <p>So we have been lying on the spot for two hours.</p> <p>As soon as the planes have disappeared, another wild command is given: "March on!"</p> <p>But after we have gone two kilometers, the planes reappear. We lie down again in the green, fragrant grass.</p> <p>So the planes were playing with us until the sunset. The night has fallen. We are marching in the darkness, not knowing where to go. Suddenly a motorcycle approaches us, with an SS officer on it. He reports that we are not allowed to march any further because the road is cut off by the French.</p> <p>The French are not far from us!</p> <p>The murderous camp leader is studying the map to find a way out of our fix. Soon, his order comes that we should march in a different direction. The SS men are getting even wilder than before. We are marching past small villages and</p>
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<p>iz ayngehilt in khoyshekh. es falt a shlaks-regn mir vern nas bizn hemd.</p> <p>es kumt a bafel mir zoln arayngeyn in a sheyer. keyner farshteyt nit vos iz di sibe vos plutsung zaynen di merder gevorn azoy mild. mir lign in fintstern sheyer, eyner leben tsveytn. di merhayt vert glaykh antshlofn.</p> <p>nokhn oplign a tsvey sho, kumt vider a bafel mir zoln vayter marshirn. der regn vert nokh shtarker vi frier. di SS shteyen baym aroysgang fun sheyer un traybn undz mit shtekns vi shepsn.</p> <p>yeder treyslt zikh far kelt. mir bamerkn, az di SS zaynen nokh beyzer vi frier. azoy hobn mir marshirt bizn tog arayn. vider hobn zikh bavizn undzere bashitser, di tsvey avyonen!</p> <p>der tog iz geven nokh a beserer vi der nekhtiker. di flier</p>	<p>towns. Everything is shrouded in darkness. A rain shower falls, soaking us to the shirt.</p> <p>An order is given that we should go into a barn. No one understands the reason for the sudden kindness of our murderers. We lie down in the dark barn, one next to the other; most of us fall asleep right away.</p> <p>After two hours of lying there, we get another order to march on. The rain is getting heavier. The SS men are standing at the exit of the barn, herding us with sticks like sheep.</p> <p>Everyone is shivering from the cold. We notice that the SS men are even more evil than before. So we are marching into the next day, when again our protectors, the two planes, are appearing!</p> <p>The day turned out even better than yesterday. The pilots</p>
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<p>hobn farshtanen, az mir zaynen mider vi nekhtn. undzere rayen zaynen shiterer gevorn.</p> <p>haynt iz shabes, der 21te April. di nakht hobn mir nisht gehat vuhin tsu geyn. shoyn tsvey mol hot men undz gemoldn, az der veg iz opgeshnitn.</p> <p>zuntik dem 22tn April, gants fri, hobn zikh bavizn andere bashitser. di vegn zaynen baleygt mit loyfindike soldatn. ver mit shikh oyfn aksl un ver on shikh. 12 azeyger batog, bamerkn mir barikadn oyfn shosey. es vert undz freylekher oyfn hartsn. yeder fun undz veyst, az ot dernentert zikh shoyn di antsheydung.</p> <p>di loyfindike soldatn varfn tsu undz broyt. yeder iz gevorn gut. nor di SS-merder vern nisht beser, nor farkert. nokh mer bestyalisher vi nekhtn. zey veysn gut vos zey dervart. mir kenen nokh itst gornisht ton. yeder fun undz iz krank un mid.</p> <p>finf farnakht git der lager-firer a bafel mir zoln aropgeyn fun shosey un zikh</p>	<p>understood that we were more tired than yesterday, realizing our emptier rows.</p> <p>Today is Sabbath, April 21. During the night, we haven't been able to go any further, because we were told for the second time that the road was cut off. Sunday, April 22, very early in the morning, our protectors have been appearing. The paths were full of running soldiers, some with shoes on their shoulders, some without shoes. At 12 noon, we notice barricades on the street. Our mood is getting happier with each of us knowing that now the decision is very close.</p> <p>The running soldiers are throwing bread to us. Everyone has become a good person now, only the SS are not getting better - but just the opposite - even more beastly than yesterday. They know only too well what is waiting for them. But we can't do anything yet, because each of us is sick and tired.</p> <p>At five o'clock in the evening, the camp leader gives the order to leave the</p>
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leygn oyfn groz. mir firn shnel oys dem bafel. der transport-firer meldet undz, az er vet nehmen a grupe SS un geyn in dorf shafn broyt un kartofl far undz. a grupe fun dreysik SS zaynen avek in dorf. di andere shteyen arum undz.

plutsung bamerkn mir, vi yeder fun di SS tshepen op di toytn-kep fun zeyere uniformen. arum undz vert fun minut tsu minut shiterer. di SS rukn zikh fanander un mishn zikh oys mit di loyfdike soldatn.

in a halber sho arum zeen mir shoyn nit keyn shpur fun SS arum undz. mir zaynen mer nisht bavakht! yeder varft a blik eyner oyfn tsveytn. di oygn laykhtn far frayd. es hern zikh geshrayen in ale shprakhn:
yatn mir zaynen fray! mir zaynen fray!
a frayd gist zikh oys oyf undzere halb-geshtorbene gezikhter. yeder falt eyner dem tsveytn in di orem. di merhayt veynt far frayd, andere lign oyfn groz un kenen zikh fun ort nisht rirn.

Fray! Fray! mir zaynen fray!

mir lign biz es falt tsu di nakht. mir derhern a nontn shos fun a tank. es kumt tsuloyfn an ofitsir fun der Vermakht un meldet...

highway and lie down in the grass, which we quickly carry out. The transport leader is informing us that he, together with an SS group, is going to a village to get bread and potatoes for us. A group of 30 SS men have left for the village. The others are standing around us.

Suddenly we notice all the SS men removing their "skulls" from their uniforms. Around us, it is getting more deserted every minute. The SS men are moving apart and mingling with the running soldiers.

After half an hour, we no longer see any trace of SS around us. We are no longer guarded! We look at each other, our eyes shining with joy. Cries of joy in all languages are to be heard:
"Guys, we are free! We are free!"
Pure joy is written in our half-dead faces! We fall into each other's arms; most of us are crying with joy, others are lying in the grass, unable to move from the spot.

"Free! Free! We are free!"

We are lying there until night falls. Nearby, we hear the shot of a tank. An officer of the Wehrmacht approaches, telling us ...



Drawing courtesy of Zdzisław Nitka

undz, az mir zoln arayngeyn in di arumike derfer, nor keyner fun undz zol nisht rabirn un nisht onrirn keyn tsiviln. mir lozn zikh avek tsu di derfer. di shiseray vert nenter fun minut tsu minut.

ikh mit tsvey khaveyrim gefinen zikh shoyn in a kleyn shtetele, Altshoyzen. mir lign in a keler. dos shtetele shteyt in flamen.

azoy zaynen mir opgelegn bizn frimorgn. dan hobn mir bashlosn aroystsugeyn oyf der gas.

di gasn zaynen ayngेतunkn in flamen fun di brenendike heyzer. oyf di gasn zet men nokh mentshn fun undzer lager. a yeder iz gliklekh. bald dervisn mir zikh, az dos shtetl gefint zikh in frantsoyzishe hent. mir loyfn tsum mitlpunkt fun shtetl, vu es shteyt a frantsoyzisher tank mit drey shvartse tankistn. mir faln aroyf oyf di heldzer fun undzere bafrayer. a yeder veynt far frayd.

di bafreyer teyln undz tsigaretn. shokolad. in etlekhe minut arum bavayzn zikh nokh tanken. shtralndike gezikhter fun di bafrayer fun gliklekh nitsokhn.

zey faln tsu undz oyfn haldz un shrayen:
fraynd, ir zent fray!

di frayd velkhe nemt undz itst arum iz shver tsu bashraybn. di frantsoyzishe soldatn gibn undz meditsinishe hilf. di kranke un opheshvakhte nemt men arayn in a shpital. ikh fil zikh zeyer opgeshvakht. ikh veg fertsik kilo. di fis zaynen mir geshvoln. mir tsien zikh arayn in daytshishe voynungen. mir bakumen shtitse fun der armey. nokhn zibn teg lign in bet bin ikh aroys gezunt. kh'hob gekent shoyn shteln fester a trot. eyns hot undz alemen geshtarkt: dos gefil az mir zaynen fraye mentshn!

mir hobn zikh nisht gekent tsugevoynen tsum gedank, az der natsizm iz bazigt. az mir hobn derlebt di umgloyblekhe frayhayt!

that we should go to the surrounding villages, but not to steal anything or touch any civilians. We are making our way to the villages. The shootings are getting closer every minute.

Together with two comrades, I am already in a small town, Altshausen. We are lying in a cellar; the town is on fire.

So we have been lying there until the early morning. Then we decided to go out on the road.

The streets are immersed in flames from the burning houses. On the streets, we recognize people from our camp. Everyone is happy. Soon, we learn that the town is in French hands. We walk to the center of the town, where a French tank and three black tank leaders are standing.

We fall around the necks of our liberators. Everyone cries with joy.

Our liberators are sharing cigarettes and chocolate with us. After several minutes, more tanks are appearing. Our liberators' faces are beaming with joy at the successful victory.

They fall around our necks screaming:
"Friends, you are free!"

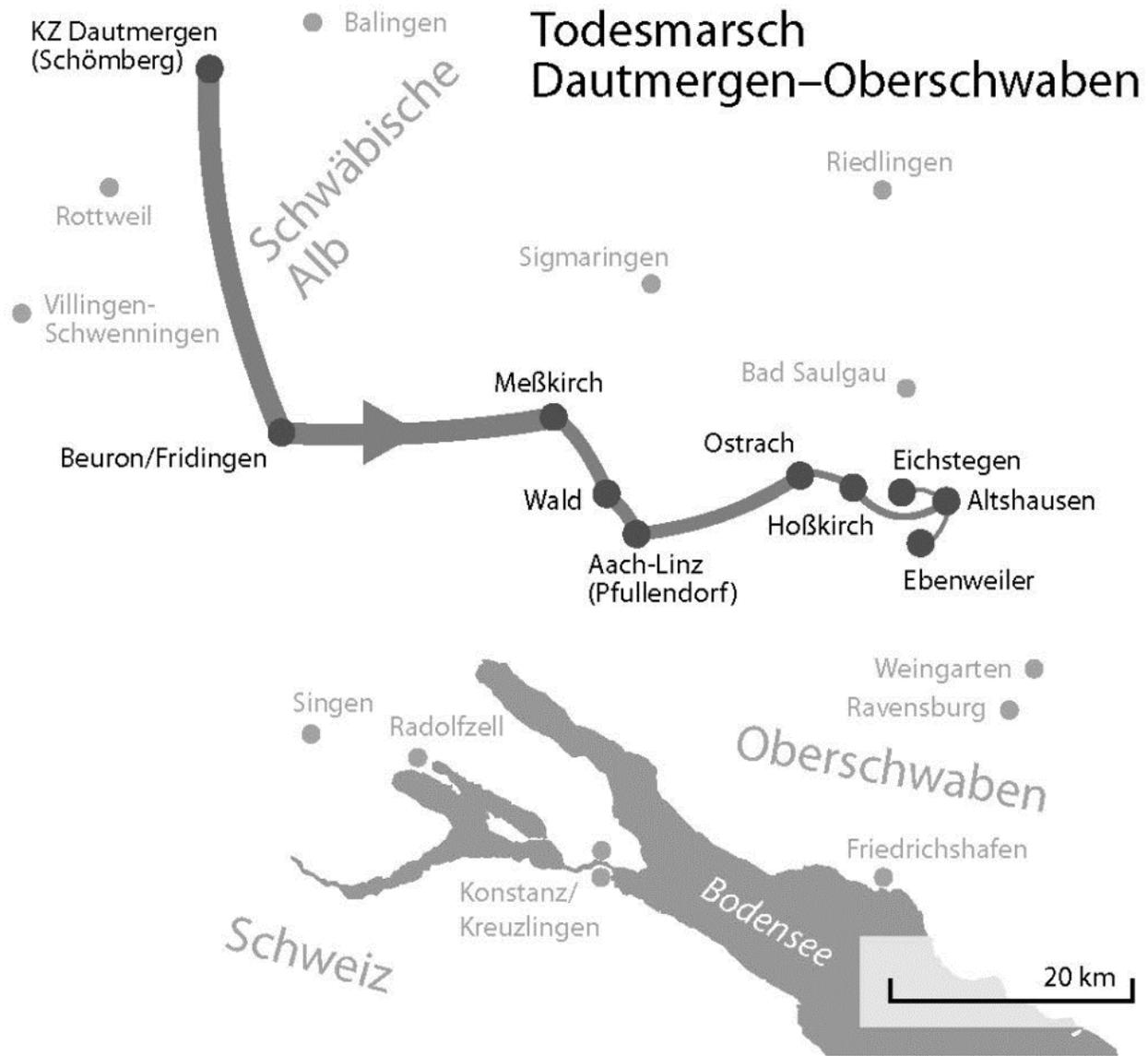
It is difficult to describe the extent of joy which is now embracing us. The French soldiers are providing us medical assistance. The sick and weak people are taken to a hospital. I feel very weak, weighing only 40 kilos. My feet are swollen. We move into German apartments and receive support by the army. After seven days of bed rest, I get up, feeling healthy. I am already able to walk with firmer steps. One aspect has given us all strength:

The feeling to be free men!

We have not yet been able to get used to the idea that Nazi socialism was defeated. And that we, actually, have experienced the incredible **freedom!**



Drawing courtesy of Zdzisław Nitka



The route of the death march, source: Johannes Kuhn, picture courtesy of Volker Mall