



*Photo courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski*

ikh bin avek arbetn in a nayer komande. do hob ikh derfildt dem untershid fun kapo un fun arbet. do iz oykh geven SS. un oykh mit shtekns in di hent, nor mir flegn shoy n azoy arbetn, az men flegt undz nit khapn shteyendik leydik.

der kapo hot oysgeboyt a budke oyfn feld vu er tsuzamen mit di SS flegn opzitsn shoen un mir flegn shteyen tsvishn di breter oder oyfn dakh fun di barakn. ven der alter kapo iz geven gut oyfgeleygt flegt er tsuzamen mit etlekhe arestirte avekgeyn in froyen-lager un brengen a kesl zup.

oyf der komande hobn gearbet zeyer veynik yidn. di merhayt-polyakn. alte numern- fun 41tn yor gekumen. zey hobn shoy n gehat gepokt un gemozlt un fun di polyakn fleg ikh bakumen lektsyes vi tsu firn dem tog-teglekhn shvern kamf farn leben.

mayn arbet iz bashtanen in aroyfshlepn breter tsum dekn dem dakh.

in dem tog ven ikh bin tsurikgekumen in lager fun blok num.1, vu s'iz oykh geven der merderisher kapo fun komande krematoryum numer 1, hot er mikh opgemoztn fun kop biz di fis un gemakht mit der hant, farkritsndik di gele aroysshtartsndike tsey n.

der alter kapo hot mir ongezogt, az ven ikh vel bakumen a klap fun tsveytn kapo, zol ikh im kumen dertseyln. nor der merderisher kapo hot mikh mer nisht geshlogn. un fun yenem tog on hob ikh ongehoyn arbetn in komande „barakn boy“.

yedn tog zaynen in undzer transport gevorn shiterer di rayen. ven ikh fleg kumen fun der arbet fleg ikh mayne khaveyrim nisht derkenen. yeder hot zikh geendert in oyszen mit yedn tog. di berg toyte bay der vant zaynen gevaksn. tsvishn zey zaynen gelegn bakante fun mayn shtetl. fun mayn „buchs“ hobn shoy n gefelt finf perzon. itst shlof ikh in a miteler buks, vu men ken zikh nisht oyfzetsn, vu s'iz baytog un baynakht fintster, vi in a keyver.

I went to work in a new squad. That's when I realized what a difference the Kapo made in terms of the work situation. Here too, the SS was present, also with sticks in their hands, but we were already working in such a way that we were not immediately seized, if we stood there just for a moment without working. Our Kapo had built a hut in the field, where he sat for hours with the SS men, and we used to stay between the boards, or on the roof of the barracks. When the old Kapo was in a good mood, he, together with some of the arrested, used to go to the women's camp and bring a kettle of soup.

Very few Jews worked in our squad, the majority were Poles with old numbers; they had come in 1942. They had already been through measles and chicken pox and gave me lessons on how to fight the difficult daily battle for survival.

My job was to haul up boards to cover the roof.

One day, when I returned to the camp from block number 1, where also the murderous Kapo from the work crew "Crematorium Number 1" was staying, he examined me from head to toe and made a gesture with his hand, gnashing his yellow, protruding teeth.

The old Kapo had told me to report to him if the other kapo would hit me. But the murderous Kapo did not beat me anymore, and from that day on, I worked in the squad "Barracks Construction".

Every day, the ranks of our transport group became emptier. When I used to come back from work, I did not recognize my comrades, because everyone changed in appearance from day to day. The mounds with the dead on the wall grew, among them lay acquaintances from my shtetl. Five people were already missing from my "buchs" (box, the sleeping place made of cement). Now I slept in the middle box, where you could not sit up and it was dark during day and night like in a tomb.

es shlofn tsuzamen mit mir Yudl Kaplan, Yeshayahu Glezer, Motl Kirzner, Pinye Klas, Shiye Shapiro un tsvey Grodner. ale fun mayn buks hobn zikh nokh "gehaltn". yeder hot gekemft farn tog-teglekhn lebn. eyn mol kumendik fun der arbet hob ikh mayn khaver Yudl Kaplan nisht derkent. zayn gants gezikht iz gevorn geshvoln un farlofn mit ale kolirn: bloy, gel un royt. baym apel iz er geshtanen lebn mir un er hot mir dertseylt s'ara tog er hot haynt durkhgelebt.

nokhn apel hot er nisht gegesn. baym bakumen di portsye broyt, hot er bakumen a shtekn iber der hant un iz gefaln in blote. ikh hob im arayngetrogn in blok un geleygt in "buchs". in tsvey sho arum iz er oyfgeshtanen mit groyse oysgeglotste oygn un gebetn bay mir abisl vaser. ikh bin arop fun "buchs" zukhn bay emetsn a tropn vaser. ven ikh bin tsurik gekumen tsum bet hob ikh getrofn mayn khaver Yudl Kaplan a toytn.

di gantse nakht bin ikh tsuzamen mit im gelegn oyfn buks in drey teg arum iz dos zelbe geshen mit Shiye Glezer.

zuntik hot undzer komande nisht gearbet. nokh dem flegn mir zikh ale umkern tsu undzere bloks un zikh zetsn bay der vant. antkegn undz hobn shoyn arumgeshtift di ershte friling-shtaln. di iberike komandes flegn arbetn biz 12 batog. dan flegn ale, oyser der krematoryium-komande, araynmarshirn in lager un zikh razirn-shern.

dos razirn zikh flegt forkumen oyfn apel-plats. tsu ersht flegt men a tsendlik mentshn onzeyfn un dan razirn alemen mit eyn meser. di razirer flegn derfar bakumen a tsugob-zup. dos shern flegt oykh forkumen oyfn zelbn oyfn. shpeter flegt forkumen a kontrol fun blok-eltstn un ver s'iz nisht geven opgeshoyrn- flegt bakumen zayn portsye shtekns.

Sleeping together with me were Yudl Kaplan, Isaiah (**Shiye**) Glezer, Motl Kirzner, Pinye Klas, Shiye (**Shia**) Shapiro and two people from Grodno. So far, all of them had „held up“ well. Everyone was fighting for their lives every day. Once, when I came home from work, I did not recognize my friend Yudl. His whole face was swollen and tinged with all colors: blue, yellow and red. At roll call, standing next to me, he told me, what he had been through during the day.

After the roll call, he ate nothing, because when he received his portion of bread, he received cane blows over his hand and fell into the mud. I carried him to the block and put him in our "box". After two hours, he rose with wide, staring eyes and asked me for some water. I jumped down from the "box" to ask for a drop of water from someone. But when I returned to the "bed", I found my comrade Yudl Kaplan dead.

All night, I lay in the box with him, and after three days, the same happened with Shiye Glezer.

On Sundays, our squad did not work. Therefore, all of us used to retire back to our blocks and sit down against the wall. Opposite us, the first rays of spring were already roaming around. All the other work crews used to work until 12 o'clock in the day. After that, all except the "crematorium commando" used to march into the camp and get shaved and have their hair cut.

The shaving was done on the roll call square. First, 10 men were soaped up before they were all shaved with one single knife. The shavers received a soup refill for this. The haircutting was done in the same way. Later, the block elder made a check, and those who had not yet been shaven, received a portion of caning.

<p>zuntik flegt men oykh shmirn naye shtreyfn oyf di kleyder, onneyen kneplekh mit drot. ver s'iz nokh geven abisl bay di koykhes flegt oykh opreynikn di blote fun der gantser vokh. in blok flegt men nisht araynlozn un dos opshteyn a halbn tog in der blote iz geven erger vi oyf der komande. dos hot aroysgetsoygn dem markh fun di beyner.</p> <p>der zuntik nokh mitik iz oykh farvandlt gevorn in selektsyes.</p>	<p>Sundays, moreover, new stripes were applied to the clothes, and buttons were sewn on with wire. Those who still had a little strength also washed out the mud from the whole week. We were not allowed into the blocks, and standing in the mud for half a day was worse than being on the work detail. It pulled the marrow out of our bones.</p> <p>The Sunday afternoon was also used for selections.</p>
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<p>dos hot mit zikh gebrakht dem toyt far hunderter mentshn. ver es flegt zikh derhern a klung un geshrayen: „blok-shpere!“ (1) dan hot men shoyng gevust, az bald kumt der tlied-mengelyer (2) un vet durkhfirn a selekstyed.</p> <p>yeder hot zikh gedarft oyston in blok un aroysgeyn gants naket oyfn apel-plats, vu men flegt shteyn in a ray tsuzen un vartn biz der talyen vet kumen. ven Mengelyer flegt zikh bavayzn mit di iberike ofitsirn, flegt a tsiter durkhgeyn ibern gantsn leyb. yeder hot genoy gevust, az do geyt der toyt fun velkhn men ken zikh nisht oyskoyfn.</p> <p>Mengelyer, an elterer, hoykher, shlanke mentsh mit a langn gezikht, groyse glantsike oygn vi bay a tiger, flegt shteln gelasn lange trit, haltdik eyn hant farukt in mantel; a tsigaret in moyl. mit der zelber poze flegt er shteyn oyf der ban-stantsye, vu es flegn onkumen transportn mentshn un ale flegn durkhgeyn durkh zayn merderishn blik. mit eyn bavegung fun linkn vayz-finger oyf rekhts oder links flegt er opshikn tsendliker toyznter mentshn in gaz-kamer, un mit der zelber gelasnkeyt durkhgefirt selektsyes bay di mener un bay di froyen.</p>	<p>This brought death to hundreds of people. When we heard a signal and the shouting: "Blocksperr!" (1), then we already knew that the "Galgen-Mengelyer" (2) was about to come to carry out a selection.</p> <p>Everyone had to strip naked in the block and then to go completely naked to the roll call area, where we had to stand in line, looking and waiting, until the executioner would come. When Mengele appeared with the other officers, we all trembled all over. Everyone knew exactly that death was going there, from which one could not buy oneself free.</p> <p>Mengele, an elderly, tall, slim person with a long face and large, shining eyes like those of a tiger, used to walk serenely with long strides, one hand buried in his coat, a cigarette in his mouth. In the same pose, he stood at the railroad station, where the human transports arrived, and all had to pass under his murderous gaze: With a single movement of his left index finger, either to the right or to the left, he sent tens of thousands of people to the gas chambers, and with the same composure, he carried out the selections on the men and women.</p>
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<p>zayn nomen flegt onvarfn a shrek oyfn gantsn lager. itst iz geven a tsveyter talyen, a sadist, der raport-firer, velkher flegt opnemen dem raport tsi alts shtimt un er flegt dos yedn tog opshikn keyn Berlin in yudnfarnikhtungs-amt, tsu Himlern un Kaltenbrunern .</p> <p>Shilinger (3), a nideriker, fest-geboyter, shtendik haltndik dem kop abisl oyf der zayt, mit tunkl-broyne, shtekhike oygn. er flegt zayn ful in ale barakn. ven emetser flegt araynfaln tsu im in di hent, iz er shoyt keyn lebediker nisht aroys. zayn metode tsum shlogn iz bashtanen in onkhapn dem korbn farn lats, im a festn treysl ton, farkritsn di tseyt azsh di kinbakn hobn zikh bavegt aroyf un arop; dan gebn a festn zets mitn elnboyn in shleyf un der shtarkster flegt glaykh aniderfaln in a bavustlozn tsushtand. dermit flegt er zikh nit bagnugenen er flegt nehmen a shtekn un aroyfleygn oyfn umgliklekhn haldz, tsudrikn, biz der toyt flegt bafrayen dem korbn fun vildn sadistn.</p>	<p>His name alone spread terror throughout the camp. But now, there was a second executioner, a sadist, the "Rapport-Führer" (<b>report leader</b>), who received the report, whether everything was properly in order, and forwarded it every day to Berlin, to the "Judenvernichtungs-Amt" (<b>Jewish Extermination Office</b>), to (<b>Heinrich</b>) Himmler and (<b>Ernst</b>) Kaltenbrunner.</p> <p><b>In addition, there was (Josef) Schillinger (3)</b>, a small, powerfully built man who constantly kept his head tilted a little to one side, with dark brown, piercing eyes. He was frequently present in all the barracks. If someone fell into his hands, he did not survive. His method of beating consisted of grabbing his victim by the lapels, shaking him violently, then gnashing his teeth so that his jaws would go up and down. Finally, he would push his elbow hard against his victim's temple so that even the strongest would immediately fall over unconscious. But he never was satisfied with that but would take a stick, put it to the unfortunate's neck and squeezed, until death freed the victim from the savage sadist.</p>
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- (1) German "Blocksperrre!" = Block lock!
- (2) "Galgen-Mengelyer" = "Gallows-Mengele", Josef Mengele, also called the "Angel of Death".
- (3) Josef Schillinger: A survivor of Auschwitz, Tadeusz Borowski, wrote about him (*I translated the original German quote into English*): "The blow of his hand was as powerful as a cudgel, he playfully smashed a jaw, and where he struck, blood flowed." His name was often mentioned in the same breath as those Auschwitz murderers, "who boasted of having personally killed tens of thousands of people with their fist, club, or gun." Schillinger was shot in the concentration camp by a Jewish inmate, Franziska Mann, who was incredibly brave. She had previously refused to strip naked because she knew that she and the other women would be gassed afterwards. (Source of quote and informations: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josef\\_Schillinger](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josef_Schillinger))



*KZ Auschwitz-Birkenau, photo courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski*

zayne peynikungen flegn gedoyern a minut. a spetsyel groysn has hot er gerogn tsu rusishe gefangene un tsu daytshishe politishe arestirte.

lang hot di bestye nisht gelebt. sof 1943 iz er dershosn gevorn in krematoryum fun a yidisher artistke. zi iz gekumen fun an internirungs-lager fun Berlin, vu es zaynen geven 1600 amerikaner birger.

in der komande „barakn-boy“ hob ikh gearbet tsvey vokhn. in a zuntik-frimorgn iz undzer blok gezesn „oyf kni-boygn“ far a shtrof leben vant. dort iz gelegn a barg mit meysim, velkhe zaynen haynt aroysgeshlept gevorn far di fis fun di „buksn“.

di merste fun undz hobn shoyn nit gekent shteyn oyf di fis un baym „kni-boygn“ zaynen a sakh gelegn oysgetsoygn in der blote un shoyn nisht geshpirt iber zikh di shtekns fun shrayber Adek.

plutslung hot zikh bavizn der arbets-dinst firer mit etlekhe shrayber fun di arestirte.

der arbets-dinstfirer iz tsu tsum blok-eltstn un mit im geredt. zayn blik iz gefaln oyf di zitsndike mentshn, velkhe hobn itst oysgezen vi zhabes in der blote, mit di keplekh-forisn

der arbets-(dinst)firer hot ongevizn oyf di zitsndike un der blok-eltster hot yenem gerufn oyfshteyn. der ferter tsu ongevizn vern bin ikh geven. un ikh hob zikh geshtelt in der ray. azoy hot er oysgezukht fuftsik arestirte. di merhayt fun zey hot nokh gut oysgezen. di gutskeyt iz bashtanen in dem vos yeder hot getrogn mer-veyniker reyne kleyder.

men hot undz avekgefirt in bod un dort hobn mir aropgevorfn di farleyzikte bgodim un zikh geshtelt unter a kaltn tush. keyner hot nisht gevust tsu vos far a tsvek men hot undz genumen. yeder hot epes

His chastisements usually lasted a minute. He had a particularly large hatred on Russian and German political prisoners.

This beast did not live long. At the end of 1943, he was shot in the crematorium by a Jewish artist. She had come from an internment camp from Berlin, where 1600 Jewish American citizens were staying.

I worked for two weeks in the "Barracks Construction" crew. One Sunday, early in the morning, our block had to perform squats next to the wall as a punishment. There, at our feet, lay a mountain of corpses that had been dragged out of the "boxes" today.

Most of us were already unable to stay on our feet, and many were left stretched out in the mud after doing the squats. They no longer felt the cane blows of the clerk, Adek.

Suddenly, the "Arbeitsdienst-Führer" (**fatigue duty leader**) appeared, together with several detainees in the function of clerks.

He ran to the block elder and talked to him, while his gaze fell on the seated people, who now looked like frogs in the mud, with their heads held high.

The "Arbeits(dienst)-Führer" pointed to us, the sitting ones, and the block leader called one to stand up. The fourth one he pointed to was me, and I had to get in line. In this way, he called up 50 detainees, the majority of whom still looked "good", although this "goodness" consisted only in the fact that they were wearing more or less clean clothes.

We were led to the bathroom, where we threw off our lice-ridden clothes and got under the cold shower. No one knew for what purpose

andersh getrakht. di merhayt hot gezogt, az men vet undz shikn in a tsveytn lager, d.h. oyf transport.  
nokhn opvashn zikh hot men a yedn gegeben reyne hemder un nay(e)

we had been chosen, everyone believed something different. The majority thought that we would be sent or transported to another camp.

After washing, we all got clean shirts and new...

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geshtreyfte kleyder: hoyzn, a marinarke un a mantl. itst hot men undz gemoldn, az mir veln arbetn in oyframungs-komande, velkhe heyst „kanada“ (1). der nomen „kanada“ iz gegeben gevorn derfar vayl oyf der komande hot yeder gehat genug tsum es nun hot gelebt vi in kanada.

far der tsayt vos ikh bin geven in lager hob ikh gehert fun der komande un gezen di velkhe hobn dort gearbet. di merhayt iz bashtanen fun alte arestirte, velkhe zaynen gekumen onheyb 1942 un zayen geven in lager Oyshvits. itst hot men zey ibergefirt in nebn-lager Birkenau, velkher iz mit yedn tog gevorn oysgebreytert mit naye barakn un naye plener far naye groyse lagern.

der shetekh arum iz geven a zumpiker. di erd iz keseyder geven blotik, nor toyznter arestirte hobn shver gearbet baym grobn kanaln, vu men flegt araynvarfn shteyner un trikenen di erd. ale arumike derfer zaynen tseshtert gevorn, di heyzer-aropgenumen; der leydik-gevorener shetekh, vu men hot gearbet, iz geven farshpreyt mit klenere lagern vi Bana, Yanozhne un nokh klenere lagern mit tsu tsvey drey toyznt arestirte.

der lager hot farnumen fertsik kilometer kvadrat, bavakht fun finf postn-keytn. fun eyn zayt-di Veysl, fun der tsveyter zayt di Beskidn-Berg, velkhe men hot gut gezen fun lager.  
men hot undz fun bod gefirt in a hiltsernem barak, numer 17, vu s'iz oykh geven di komande barakn-boy un in barak numer 16 iz geven di „kanada“.

striped clothes: Pants, a jacket and a coat. After that, we were told that we would be working in the "Aufräumungs-Kommando" (clean-up squad), which was called "Canada"(1). It was known as Canada, because in this squad, everyone had enough to eat and could live "like in Canada".

Before I came to this warehouse, I had heard already about this squad and seen people who worked there. Most of them were old detainees, who had come at the beginning of 1942 and first stayed in the Auschwitz camp. After that, they were transferred to the subcamp, Birkenau, which continued to grow every day with new barracks and additionally, with new plans for new large camps.

The environment was swampy, the earth was one big mud, but thousands of detainees worked hard, digging channels into which stones were thrown, to dry out the earth. All the surrounding villages had been destroyed and their houses expropriated; the empty area, where people used to work, was littered with small camps like Bana, Yanozhne, and even smaller camps with up to two to three thousand detainees.

The camp was 40 square kilometers in size and was guarded by five chains of posts. To its one side flowed the Vistula, to the other were the Beskid Mountains, which were well visible from the camp. From the bathroom we were led to a wooden barrack, number 17, where also the work crew "Barracks construction" was located; and next to it, in barrack number 16, was "Canada".

<p>der blok-eltster, a daytsh mit a grinem vinkl, velkher hot lib distsiplin un reynkeyt oyf vifl s'iz meglekh tsu haltn. in barak iz a gants ander leben vi in di shteynerne blokn. do zaynen di betn dreyike, vu es shlofn nisht mer vi 6 perzon, dos heyst tsu tsvey in a betl, mit a shtroy-zak unter der zayt. do muz men yedn tog gut farbetn dos bet vi in a kazarme. antkegn frierdikn gehenem iz do a gan-edn.</p> <p>S'iz likhtiker (!) un luftiker. di parashke shteyt leben der tir un vert gut opgehit, az zi zol nisht iberrinen. dos aroystrogn di parashke kumt loyt a ray. s'iz nishto keyn untershid tsvishn an altn un a nayem arestirtn.</p>	<p>The block elder, a German with a "green angle", valued discipline and cleanliness as much as circumstances allowed. Life was very different in the barracks than in the stone block. Now, there were three bedsteads, where no more than 6 people slept, that is, two in a bed, with a straw sack on the side. Like in a casern, the bed had to be well made every day. Compared to the previous hell, this was paradise.</p> <p>It is more light and airy here. The toilet device is next to the door, and good care is taken that it does not overflow. The toilet is brought out (and emptied) according to a certain order. In this respect, there is no difference between old and new detainees.</p>
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- (1) "Canada" was the name given to the "Effektenlager" (effects warehouse), where valuables and personal effects of the admitted prisoners were stored. The looted goods symbolized abundance and wealth, (also) hence the name "Canada". At the latest when a prisoner died, his personal effects were transferred to the "German Reich" for further use. For the workers in the „Aufräumungskommando“ (clean-up squad), there were not only better rations, but some of the prisoners also "organized" and smuggled secretly and under enormous risks things not yet registered, partly also under coercion by the Kapo. (source [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanada\\_\(KZ\\_Auschwitz\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanada_(KZ_Auschwitz)))

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<p>ale zaynen do unter dem zelbn gezets. der antizemitizm iz do badayndik shvakher vayl di polyakn fun dem barak kumen on tsu di yidn velkhe arbetn in „kanada“. der shrayber iz a slovakisher yid, oykh mit a heyzeriker shtim. aleyn- an umruik mentshl, zhalevet er nisht keyn shtekns. er shlogt bloyz yidn. far di polyakn hot er abisl moyre vayl zey zaynen ale alte arestantn un zaynen shoyn geven untern ferd un oyfn ferd (1). di shtekns flegn mir shoyn bakumen oykh far zey un... di zup -zey far undz...</p> <p>fun undzer transport zaynen arayn tsvishn di fuftsik-tsvey perzon: ikh un <i>Ayzik Tsigel</i>. ikh bin tsuzamen mit Ayzikn geshlofn in eyn betl. di iberike zaynen geven opgeschlosn fun undz. tsu undz in barak hot keyner fun</p>	<p>The same law applies to all of them. Anti-Semitism is significantly less pronounced here, because the Poles of the barracks like to approach the Jews who work in "Canada". The clerk is a Slovak Jew, he too has a hoarse voice. He is a restless person and does not spare with sticks. However, he only beats Jews. He is a little afraid of the Poles, since they are old detainees who "have already been under the horse and on the horse" (1). The strokes of the cane intended for them are usually given to us - but with soup it is the other way around.</p> <p>Among us fifty people, two of our transport were included: Me and Ayzik Tzigel. I slept together with Ayzik in one bed, the others were locked away from us. No one from the camp dared to enter our barracks. The</p>
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<p>lager nisht getort arayngeyn. tsu morgns hot men undz gefirt tsu der arbet- drey kilometer fun Birkenau- vu es zaynen geshtanen finf barakn, leben velkhe es zaynen gelegn berg mit valizkes un pek betgevant, ibergedekt mit koldres.</p> <p>di komande „kanada“ hot getseylt 300 perzon mit tsvey kapos, eyner a daytsh un der tsveyter-a daytshisher yid. ven mir zaynen gekumen oyfn arbets-plats hot der kapo far undz gehaltn a rede in velkher er hot gezogt, az do darfn ale arbetn vi mashinen un s'iz farbotn tsu esn in der tsayt fun der arbet. in lager iz farbotn mittsunemen esnvarg.</p> <p>do zaynen geven etlekhe SS. eyner an obersharfirer, hot geheysn „der zeyde“, der tsveyter „obersharfirer“ hot geheysn „der tate“. bayde hoykhe, dike, mit royte, merderishe gezikhter. shtendik mit grobe shtekns oder lederne nageykes in di hent. baym shpits fun di nageykes- a shtikl bley fun 200 gram.</p> <p>undz hot men farteylt tsu farshidene arbet, mikh-tsum lodeven shvere zek mit shmates oyf vagones. dos alts in loyf-shrit, getribn durkh etlekhe yunge SS un ven eyner blaybt on otem- vert er geshlogn mitn shtekn oder muz makhn dem azoy-gerufenem sport: „Hinleygn! Oyf! Hinleygn! Oyf!“ un azoy on a shier mol...</p>	<p>next morning, we were led to work, three kilometers from Birkenau, where there were five barracks, next to which lay piles of suitcases, packs and bedding, covered with blankets.</p> <p>The work crew "Canada" numbered 300 people with two Kapos, one a German, and the other a German Jew. When we got to the workplace, the Kapo gave a speech in front of us, in which he said that we all had to work like machines and were not allowed to eat while working. Moreover, it was forbidden to take food into the camp.</p> <p>There were also quite a few SS present. One, a "Oberscharführer", was called "The Grandpa", the other "Oberscharführer" was called "The Dad". Both were tall and fat, with red, murderous faces. They constantly had rough sticks or leather whips in their hands. At the tip of the whip was a piece of lead, weighing 200 grams.</p> <p>We were assigned to different jobs, I was to load heavy sacks of rags onto the wagons. All at a run, driven by young SS men. And if someone got out of breath, he was beaten with sticks or had to do the so-called "sport": "Lie down! Get up! Lie down! Get up!", and so it went, countless times....</p>
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(1) a phrase which, in my opinion, expresses the fact that the old prisoners in question were already well acquainted with the customs in the camp, and possibly also had certain connections.

<p>gearbet hot men fun 12 biz 14 sho teglekhn mit eyn sho mitik-poyze. di transport-grupn zaynen ale geven tsheshlogn biz blut. der kapo Serele hot zikh oysgetseykhnt mit shlogn un bay di SS iz er geven mer vi a got.</p>	<p>We worked 12 to 14 hours a day with one hour rest for lunch. The transport groups were already all beaten bloody. The Kapo, Serele, boasted of his beatings, and was virtually idolized by the SS.</p>
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dort hobn oykh gearbet etlekhe hundert yidishe froyen mit an oyzeerin- a SS-froy velkhe hot leben zikh gehat a volf-hunt, velkher flegt ir mithelfn peynikn di oysgematerte froyen. a bazunder kapitl shtelt mit zikh far der eyntsiker klozet, vu s'iz geven farbotn mer vi eyn perzon zol dort arayngeyn. kimat ale hobn gelitn fun durkhfal un hobn zikh nisht gekent bahershn.

ven drey-fir froyen flegn zikh farzamlen leben klozet, hot glaykh di SS-froy dos bamerkt un hot geshikt dem getrayen khaver irn, dem hunt, tsu zey. un er flegt shoy n zeyer gut farshteyn tsu vos men darf im hobn...der hunt flegt aroysshlepn a froy farn kleyd un zi shlepn ibern hoyf.

ven dos kleyd flegt shoy n zayn tserisn un s'iz shoy n nit geven bay vos tsu shlepn, flegt er shoy n onkhapn dos leyb un blut flegt rinen ibern hoyf. di SS flegn dan shepn nakhes, kayklendik zikh oyfn boykh far gelekhter un shrayen tsum hunt: fester, fester! greyf tsu, greyf tsu!

azelkhe stsenes flegn forkumen tog-teglekh say bay di froyen say bay di mener. yedn tog flegt men firn in lager oyf a vegele tsvey-drey azelkhe korbones. oykh dershisungen flegn oft forkumen. s'iz geven shtreng farbotn ibertsugebn a shtikl broyt vos hot zikh afile gevalgert in der blote.

in shkheyne fun undzer arbet-plats hot gearbet a komande fun stolyers, velkhe flegt betn a shtikl broyt durkh drot. di SS flegn gut akhtung gebn oyf dem drot durkh a shpolt fun barak un ven eyner a dreyster flegt ibervarfn a broyt flegt glaykh in zelbn oygnblik faln a revolver-shos in kop un der arestirte flegt faln in a kaluzhe blut.

azelkhe faln flegn trefn zeyer oft. trots der gefar tsu faln toyt, flegt men aribervarfn broyt un konservn far di hungerike khaveyrim.

Several hundred Jewish women also worked here with an overseer, an SS woman, who carried a wolfhound that helped her torment the debilitated women. In this regard, a special chapter consisted of a single lavatory, where no more than one person was allowed to go. Almost all of them, however, suffered from diarrhea and could no longer control themselves.

When three or four women gathered next to the toilet, the SS woman noticed this immediately and rushed her loyal companion, the dog, to them. And he understood quite well what he was needed for ... The dog used to grab one of the women by her dress and drag her across the yard.

And when the dress was torn so that the dog could no longer pull it, he bit the body until the blood ran over the yard. The SS used to delight in it and toss and roll on the floor, laughing, while encouraging the dog: "Tighter, tighter, grab, grab!"

Such scenes occurred every day for both women and men. Every day, two or three such victims were usually brought into the camp on a cart. Shootings were also common. It was strictly forbidden to deliver (to others) a piece of bread, even if it had been lying in the mud already.

There was a carpentry squad working in the vicinity of our workplace, and they usually asked us to pass a piece of bread through the wire fence. But the SS used to be careful watching the wire fence through a crack in the barracks, and just in the moment, when someone would bravely throw bread across it, a revolver shot would be fired and hit his head, so that the offender (lit. captive) fell into a pool of blood.

Such incidents were very common. Despite the danger of death, bread and canned food were still thrown over for the hungry comrades.

marshirndik tsu un fun der arbet, iz men geven getsvungen tsu zingen daytshishe lider un ver es hot nisht mitgezungen hot derfar bakumen a shtekn fun Kapo oder fun postn-firer.

di arbet in „kanada“ iz bashtanen in ibernemen di zakhn fun a gekumenem transport. ven es iz gekumen a transport oyf der banstatsye, hobn ale gelozt di peklekh in di vagones. da flegn kumen a fuftsik „kanader“ un flegn di ale peklekh onlodn oyf oytos un dos brengen in azoy gerufenem, efektn-lager“, vu es hobn gearbet 300 mener un 400 froyen, alts flegt vern sortirt un gut durkhgezukht.

ven men flegt epes gefinen farneyt, flegt men tseraysn dos kleyd un dos flegt shoyn geyn oyf shmates. di gor gute un naye kleyder flegn gezamlt vern in a magazin un yede vokh opgeshikt vern keyn daytshland. dort zaynen gelegn ongevorfn di berg mit pek un valizkes, velkhe men hot yedn tog un nakht gebrakht fun di transportn.

di shikh flegt men oykh optransportirn keyn daytshland. di froyen hobn gearbet baym sortirn dos vesh un dos shtemplen. es pahn in tsendliker peklekh, tsuzamenbindn mit shtrik un dos flegt men opshikn keyn daytshland.

dos zelbe flegt men makhn mit betgevant. dos alte flegt men tseraysn un varfn in di shmates, dos naye- opshikn keyn daytshland. yedn tog flegn gelodn vern 10-15 vagones un di vert-zakhn: gold, gelt, zeygers, zilber, goldene briln-dos alts vos hot zikh farekht far vert-zakhn, hot men gezamlt in groyse farshlosene kastns, vu s'iz geven a runder lokh tsum araynvarfn di khfeytsim. yedn tog flegt aza kastn opgeshikt vern keyn Berlin.

oykh di kleyder fun di fargazte mentshn flegt men brengen tsum sortirn oyf aza shteyger. ale papirn-peser, fotografyes-flegt men farbrenen, az keyn tsaykhn zol nisht blaybn derfun.

While marching to and from work, we were forced to sing German songs, and if someone did not sing, the Kapo or the "Postenführer" (guard of the camp) would hit them with a stick.

The work in "Canada" consisted in taking over the things of an arrived transport. When a transport arrived at the station, everyone left their luggage in the wagons. Then about 50 "Canadians" came to load all their luggage onto trucks and take everything to the so-called "Effektenlager" (stock store), where 300 men and 400 women were working; everything was sorted and well searched here.

When something sewn in was found, they usually tore the concerned garment and throw it to the rags. The very good and new items of clothing used to be collected in a magazine (military storehouse) and sent to Germany on a weekly basis. There (also) lay piles of luggage and suitcases thrown on top of each other, which one brought from the transports day and night.

Shoes were also transported to Germany. The women worked sorting the laundry and sealing it: Everything was packed in dozens of parcels and tied with ropes before being sent to Germany.

The same was done with bed linen. The old ones were torn up and thrown to the rags, the new ones were sent to Germany. Every day 10-15 wagons were fully loaded. Valuables, such as gold, money, watches, silver and gold glasses, as well as everything that was counted as valuables, were collected in large, locked boxes with a hole into which the objects could be thrown. Such a box was usually transported to Berlin every day.

The clothes of the gassed people were also sorted in this way. All paper passports and photos were burned so that no traces of them would remain.

nokh der arbet flegt forkumen a shtarke revizye. yeder flegt zikh darfn oyston naket un di kleyder zaynen gevorn grintlekh durkhgezukht. vey flegt zayn tsu dem bay velkhn men hot epes gefunen.

After work, a strict check was carried out. Everyone was forced to strip naked and their clothes were thoroughly searched. Woe to him with whom they found something!



*Remaining witnesses from the "Effektenlager", KZ Auschwitz-Birkenau, photo courtesy of Tomek Wisniewski*

di shtrof iz geven a farshidene, loyt dem vos men hot baym arestant getrofn. far a shakhtl konservn hot men bakumen 25 shmits fun velkhe men flegt faln umbavusloz. der „zeyde“ flegt shlogn mit zayn ledernem rimen biz blut. baym shlogn hot der umglikliker gemuzt aleyn tseyln un ven er hot fartseylt un anshtot 5, lemoshl, gezogt 6, hot men gemuzt tseyln fun onhoyb. tsum shlogn iz geven a spetsyel benkl, vu es flegn ayngklamert vern di fis un hent.

t Eyl mol ven es zaynen geven etlekhe tsum shlogn un der „zeyde“ hot zikkh shoyn gehat farmatert, hot men gerufn tsu hilf dem „tatn“ un dan flegn bayde shlogn un shtark hano e hobn derfun.

ikh hob glaykh dem ershtn tog bakumen finf shmits farn ufheybn a tsingele tsuker fun der erd un dos arayneleygn in moyl arayn.

dos hot bamerkt der „tate“ un hot mir glaykh batsolt mayn skhar. dos zaynen geven mayne ershte getseylte shmits fun mayn lagerlebn. itst bin ikh shoyn geven registriert als lager-aynvoyner un glaykhtsaytik als „kanader“ arbeter. in „kanada“ hot zeyer oft getrofn az ale hobn bakumen klep far eynem.

ven eyner hot zikh farzindikt mit der klenster zakh arbetndik mit a grupe fun 20 mentshn, hobn ale 20 bakumen di shtrof. di shtrofn zaynen in der merhayt geven kolektive. vifl mayles di komande hot azoyfil zaynen in ir oykh geven khesroynes

s'iz nisht adurkh der tog, az men zol nisht firn oyfn vegele etlekhe tseshlogene. di velkhe hobn bakumen 25 shmits hobn shoyn tsumorgns nisht gekent geyn arbetn. di merhayt flegt shoyn avekgeyn in blok 7, vu zey hobn dort gefunen dem toyt.

The punishments were different, depending on what was found in the detainee. For a box of canned food, you got 25 lashes, from which you used to fall down unconscious. The "Grandpa" beat with his leather strap until blood flowed. While he was beating, the unfortunate victim had to count himself, and if he miscounted and said, for example, "5" instead of "6," he had to start again from the beginning. For beating, there was a special bench on which the victim's feet and hands were clamped in holders.

Sometimes, when many were to be beaten and the "Grandpa" was already tired, the "Dad" was called to help; then both were beating and having a lot of pleasure.

I got five lashes on the very first day for picking up a piece of sugar from the ground and putting it in my mouth.

This was noticed by the "Dad" and he, immediately, paid me my "wages" for it. These were my first "counted" lashes of my camp life. In the meantime, I was already registered as a "camp resident" and at the same time, as a "Canadian". In "Canada" it often happened that all for one took blows.

If one of a group of 20 people committed even the smallest "sin," all 20 would get the punishment. Most of the time, we were given collective punishments. However many advantages this crew had, there were also many disadvantages.

No day went by without a cart, carrying a number of beaten people. Those who had received 25 lashes, could not go to work the next morning, so the majority of them had to transfer to Block 7, where they met their death.

<p>der mentsh iz in der komande farvandlt gevorn in a loyndiker mashin. alts hot gedarft gemakht vern in loyf-shrit, bagleyt fun shtekns in hent. di SS zaynen shtendik geven shiker un zeyere khayishe instinktn flegn zey bafridn mitn peynikn undz.</p> <p>a ray farshidene andere shtrofn zaynen dortn ongevendet gevorn. zeyer shtreng iz geven oystsureydn a vort mit a froy,</p>	<p>A human being was transformed into a running machine in this squad. Everything had to be done at a run, accompanied by caning. The SS were constantly drunk, and they satisfied their animal instincts by tormenting us.</p> <p>A number of other punitive measures were also implemented. It was very strictly forbidden to speak a word with a woman, who worked on the same yard.</p>
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<p>velkhe hot gearbet oyf dem zelbn hoyf. men flegt derfar bakumen 25 shmits oder a meldung. a meldung hot geheysn-3 khadoshim S.K.</p> <p>es hobn do gearbet farshidene froyen. di merhayt yidishe. ale di vos hobn do gearbet zaynen shoyn geven froyen velkhe zaynen geblibn leben eyne fun toyznt. di merhayt fun Slovakye. di zelbe distsiplin vi far undz iz geven ongevendet oykh far di froyen. di zelbe shtekns flegn oykh zey bakumen. shtark bavust iz geven di oyfzeerke mitn hunt, velkhe iz geven a sadistke in ale hinzikhtn, say oyserlekh un say inerlekh.</p> <p>afile ven es hot zikh oyf ir ponim bavizn a shmeykhl iz dos geven onegosn mit akhzorYES un tsinizm. di SS flegn zikh flaysn far ir un zi far zey. der mentsh iz dort farvandlt gevorn in a shpiltseyg. di mener hobn oykh gedarft aropemen dos hitl far der SS-froy, velkhe flegt fun dem hobn nakhes.</p> <p>inspektsyes fun hoykhe ofitsirn un genereler flegn zeyer oft forkumen. di hoykhe layt flegn alemol kumen batrakhtn di ongeroybte skhoyre.</p>	<p>For this, you got 25 lashes or a "report"; and that meant: 3 months "S.K." ("Strafkommando").</p> <p>Various women worked here, most of them Jewish. They represented only one percent of former thousands of living women. Most were from Slovakia. The same discipline applied to the women as to us. They also used to get the same caning. All too well known was the warden with her dog, who was a sadist in every way, both outwardly and inwardly.</p> <p>Even when a smile appeared on her face, it seemed cruel and cynical. The SS boasted (of special cruelties) in front of her, and she in front of them. Man has been turned into a toy here. The men also had to take off their caps in front of the SS woman, which gave her pleasure.</p> <p>Very frequently, there were inspections of high officers and generals. The "high lords" always used to come to inspect the looted goods.</p>
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ven aza komisye flegt kumen, flegt men farshtarkn dos shlogn un peynikn. yeder SS-man hot gevolt in der hinzikht ibershtaygn di andere un derfar bakumen an oystsaykhenung. oft flegt kumen der lager-komendant Shvarts un Hes. dem tog hot men shoyn in lager gefirt nisht tsvey-drey tsum toyt farpeynikt, nor tsen un fuftsens.

ale esns vos men flegt gefinen in di peklekh, hot men opgegebn in der lager-kikh. di konservn flegn di SS nehmen far zikh. in etlekhe teg arum iz oykh far undz derloybt gevorn arayntsutrogn broyt in lager. nokh der arbet flegt yeder bakumen a broyt, vos flegt vern gut kontrolirt. ikh fleg oykh oysshitn abisl tabak in keshene, tsemisht mit breklekh broyt un dos brengen in lager. dem tabak un dos broyt hob ikh farteylet far di nokh lebndike Krinker, velkhe flegn mikh opvartn mit umgeduld, vayl tsu undz in barak iz geven zeyer shtreng arayntsugeyn.

di shtarke roykherer vi *Yashke Margolyes* un andere hobn zikh gefilt gliklekh ven ikh fleg zey gebn abisl tabak. oykh fleg ikh yedn tog opgebn a tsveytn khaver mayne hemder un sveder.

When such a commission arrived, they used to intensify the beating and tormenting. In this respect, every SS man wanted to surpass the others, to receive an award for it. Often, the camp commanders "Schwartz" and "Hess" used to come. On such days, not two or three, but 10 or 15 people tortured to death were brought to the camp.

All food found in the luggage had to be delivered to the camp kitchen. The SS people kept the canned food for themselves. After a few days, we were allowed to carry bread into the camp. After work, each of us got a loaf of bread, which was strictly controlled. Usually, I also poured a little tobacco into my pocket, mixed it with bread crumbs, and brought that to the camp. I distributed the tobacco and bread to the still living Krynkers, who kept already waiting for me with impatience, because it was very strictly forbidden (for them) to come to us in the barracks.

The strong smokers, like *Yashe Margolyes (Margolies)* and others, felt happy when I gave them some tobacco. Every day, I also provided another comrade with my shirts and sweaters.