



### **Arek's Story, Chapter 3**

Two weeks later, August 1942 they decided to liquidate the ghetto. There were 1400 people in the ghetto that time out of 5000 and they told us to assemble in the square and they marched us to the church [IMAGE: 012]. The church was, that particular church was run by nuns and it was a very small church and they pushed in 4000 people in that church without water, without any food, without any toilet facilities. Imagine 4000 people in a place with any toilet facilities. They told us to come out from the church and there were two SS officers and they looked you over and asked you your profession. I told them I was a tailor. I couldn't thread a needle but I thought you know if I can do something they'll take me. They told me to go with my mother and my whole family back into the church. They picked out about 150 people in the square outside and I was sure those people will get, will get a job they'll be working. What on earth are they going to do with the rest of us. Anyway it was a very hot day, I asked my mother to give me a utensil, I want to go for some water to the gate, and as I did the SS man shouted at me, the officer, "What's your profession?" I told him I was a tailor. Once again a tailor. He told me to run out, join the 150 people and we were taken to Lodz ghetto and all the 3000, how many, were taken to Chelmno and they were gassed and then buried into mass graves. And if you go to Chelmno today it's cut out in the forest. 320,000 people they murdered there and there are 3 mass graves, about a quarter of a mile each grave. And then they also brought children from Lidice, from Czechoslovakia, in the village. Those weren't Jewish people those were Christian people. They brought about 100 children and they gassed them there as well because they shot a high ranking SS officer in Czechoslovakia. The parents did so the whole village was eliminated. And we got to Lodz and I was with the people and then there was a situation, they demanded 10,000 children, the Germans, up to the age of 14. And I was in the category and I was in that house with the people from my town, the 150 people, and nobody was allowed to go out in the street, everybody had to be in the houses. The president of the ghetto asked the parents to hand over the 10,000 children and nobody did so the SS came in and went house by house, any children found hiding were shot and eventually the SS got the 10,000 children. I got across into the cemetery and I was hiding behind a tombstone praying to God "let them not find me". I came back afterwards and the people said "we thought you were taken as well" but I wasn't. The closing of the ghetto was finished because they had the 10,000

children, they took them to Chelmno and gassed them and buried them in mass graves. And plenty other more people as well. Then I came back to the building and I didn't know what to do, I was on my own, I had no, the older people didn't have time for me, you know, so I went out on the street, I sat on the corner and I started crying, I didn't know what to do. And a lady passed by and she says "Why are you crying?" and I told her my situation and she said "Come on, you live with me and my daughter, I've got a daughter" and I went and it wasn't the best thing for me. Eventually I met a boy who was in the orphanage and he said "I was taken in the orphanage and I've got a better life there, you work but you get better food" and so on, so I went and I was accepted. And I worked in the textile mill and for food we got a ration of soup lunchtime and she was working for the fire brigade, this lady, and she was doing cooking and so the fire brigade got better food than us so from time to time I used to go up to the thing and she used to give me a bit extra food so it was all OK, to a certain extent. And then when I left her I also went to the orphanage and then I soon managed to get in with other children and so on, and there was a girl I met, her name was Genia, and she was my first love. And then she was nice, and she had a brother as well. Her parents died in the ghetto.