



Arek's Story, Chapter 4

So I was there for 2 years working in the textile mill and so on and then the Germans in 1944 decided to liquidate the ghetto because the Russians were moving forward and they said "You're being taken to a camp". They even took machinery on the train. "You'll be working there and you'll be alright" and so on. And our day came in 1944 and we were put on a train, a goods train and we had to stand up, we were about 100 people in that train, it was just walls, wooden walls around and a very small window on the top, and after 2 days and a night we arrived in the camp and I looked through the crack in the train and there were loads of SS men with dogs, I didn't like that. It got me worried very quickly. They said "Leave your suitcases on the train, we will pick it up, when you have a shower you will get it all back" and so on, "Don't worry, you going to be alright here, you going to work", and they made a queue for men and boys and a queue for women and children. There were 185 children in the orphanage and we were told to move forward in the queue. It was Mengele who actually on that day was there, didn't know who he was, I knew he was an officer, there was a few officers, and men with guns standing by, and they told us to go all of us, 185 children to walk with other people to the left. So then they wanted a young woman, she had a baby in her hand and they tried to take it out from her hands and she started screaming. All the SS men run towards her, myself and another boy walked across because I've seen fitter people were selected to the right. And as we walked on they were digging a ditch, some people in striped suits, and they said "You're on the right side". I didn't know right side, wrong side. You went to a brick built building, they told us to undress, I had 6 photographs of my family, everything I had to leave. Just in the nude we had to walk through the next room and have our hair shaved off and then we went into the shower, we had a shower, and then we came to another room, we got our striped suit and then after I got my suit we are numbered. And I got the number B7608. Auschwitz was the only place where they gave you a number on the arm. And we also had the number on here, and on the trousers, the same number. And I lost my name from that day onwards. We lost our names. They just called us by the number. We were taken to the gypsy camp, we were a thousand men in the barrack, a wooden barrack made for horses, why use it for horses when you can use it for human beings, we were sleeping ten on a box, there were three boxes all the way down, and we had no

covers, we had no mattresses, we slept on the wood, for a cushion I twisted my clothing round and put it under my head because people snored, people died, people – well – terrible, terrible situation.