



## **Arek's Story, Chapter 6**

Life was very very hard. When I worked in the fishing commando food was a little bit better. When I worked in the agricultural place I could steal a carrot or a thing you know, we were among food lying around but they guarded us but from time to time you could do that. And then it was nearing, I've heard that the crematoriums were blown up because we could see bombers, American bombers about 500 passing by and British bombers, night time bombs and we knew the war was not going right for the Germans. And it was January the 18<sup>th</sup>, we were counted and outside was minus 25 degrees, snow, deep snow, wind blowing and they took us out on the death march. They cleared the whole Auschwitz out. They were going to shoot them all but they had no time so they had to leave. We marched out on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1945, the death march and we walked for about 3 days without any food in the striped pyjama, we were freezing, it was so cold. It was terrible. And we arrived at the station and we were loaded on the station and we were taken to a place called Buchenwald next to Weimar in Germany. The camp was about 8km from Weimar in a forest. And there we were more dead than alive when we arrived and they gave us a hot shower and also they changed our clothes and then they put us in, me with some other people, they put in with Russian prisoners of war. That was – because they didn't recognise the Russians, the Geneva Convention. And they put them in the concentration camps.

And I was there for about 3 weeks and then eventually they took us out and put us into a children's barrack, block 66, where children different age groups and there we were about 1000 children in that barrack. Also sleeping, the same situation as in Auschwitz. But one thing, we didn't work there. It was 1945 and the prisoners had a bit of a say with the SS, a little bit, and they made sure we don't work, the children. And on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 1945 a few barracks were called out on the loud speaker and ours was called as well and they gathered us together and 3000 were taken to Weimar to the city of Weimar and were loaded onto open wagons. That was April. Rain, wind, oh, terrible. And we started off on our journey for a whole month. Open wagons, no cover, nothing. Some people had blankets and some didn't. I didn't have a blanket. And so many people died on the train. 2400 died on the journey, 600 arrived alive in Czechoslovakia on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 and were taken to Theresienstadt and we were all there for 4 days and it was the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945, the end of the war

in Europe and the Germans were defeated and yeah, we were liberated by the Russian army. They brought us rice pudding and I stuck to rice pudding, others had meat and all sorts of other things I didn't want and some people died after the war from eating what they're not used to it. Then we were in Theresienstadt for 4, nearly 4 month and on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August we were taken to Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia and two days later we were taken to the airport, 40 girls and 260 boys, on ten bombers, they brought us to the Lake District to Windermere. Just outside Windermere we were, each one had a little cubicle and a bed and a wardrobe and a chest of drawers because people worked in the factory making aeroplanes there and after the war they didn't need them any more so everybody went home so we took over that situation and then we had a dining room there and we had about 8 hours lessons in English. That's all the lessons we had. That's how I – I just picked words up as I went along and 8 hours wasn't sufficient. And then after 6 months recuperation they took some boys to Liverpool I went to the Liverpool boys, 20 of us, Manchester took 30, London took 120, and so on. Glasgow – the distributed us all over the country and then after 18 month they said "Right, you've got to learn a trade now" and I've learned as an electrician and as [I did four years], mechanics, tailors, all sorts of different things and that was basically my life through the camps and my childhood and so on.