



Iby's Story, Chapter 5

We had been there for about six weeks. There was also a spell, I, one morning I woke up and I couldn't move my left hip, it's a thing that's stayed with me and we didn't quite know what to do, so the four of the thing put me into a blanket and asked the kapo and the kapo said, 'Take her to the hospital'. Well the hospital usually meant only one way out but I couldn't stand, there was no way I could have stood at appel and as they were carrying me, one of the guards pulled open the blanket and said, 'Right, just take her to the hospital' and they took me to the hospital. The doctor there was Czech and she said, 'Well, basically, we don't know what it is, but time will probably cure it, but the question is trying to get time for you', so they put me into the middle between patients who were suffering from meningitis and said 'You may catch it, but it's the only chance you have of having a couple of days of rest'. Well, while there they selected me for some X-ray experiments. They took me away to be X-rayed because I think they were testing the dosage people could take and they brought me back and the doctor said, 'Well you have been taken once, your life is now in danger because they will ask for you again, you have to, somehow or other, have to get back to your barracks'. So I could by now walk to a certain extent so the next occasion when they brought, somebody came from our particular hut, I just joined them and went back to be with my friends. So we five of us stayed together but we realised then that life, it was very risky, the chances of survival were getting less and less because as we were getting weaker, as we were getting more and more starved and more and more thirsty, suffering from dehydration, our chances of survival lessened and there was only one way out, apparently, and that was death.

On one occasion then Dr Mengele came in and he asked for some volunteers, he wanted doctors and nurses to go with a slave labour transport. Now I decided that this is it, and I stepped forward and my two doctors and two nurses with me, we stepped forward and we volunteered for, to go with the slave labour transport. Now you never knew when you volunteered whether this was really true or whether you volunteered to be taken to the gas chamber. There was just no way of knowing. As it was, on this occasion yes, we went with about five hundred women. We were marched out to another part of the camp where we were again showered but this time we were given some reasonable, not only reasonable clothes, but we were given underwear which

we hadn't had before and we got two pairs of knickers, two vests, a nightie, a dress and a greatcoat and they made certain that the shoes that wear, were good because I was actually in a pair of high heeled sandals until then, so we got a pair of shoes that fitted us and we also got something like gruel to eat which was quite, we thought well, we had made it. We were bedded down overnight when a girl, one of a pair of twins who I knew in Szekesfehervar came crawling to us, up to me, and said that they were being experimented on, that had had to put their own parents into the gas chamber and they were being experimented on and they didn't think they were going to survive because from what they saw there it wasn't likely to, and they made me promise that if I survived, because they said I had a good chance of surviving, I would tell the story of what was happening there. Well it took me a long time before I came around to do so.

The next day we were put on a train, again a goods train, a wagon train, but not quite as crowded and over a period of, it took about three days before we arrived in the Ruhr at the armaments factory where because my German is perfect, it's native German, and also I speak Althoch Deutsch which is the way the aristocracy speaks, I was put in charge of the hospital unit which in German headquarters revere. There were funny rules, like for instance you couldn't have more than five per cent of your people ill at one time, so, and they had to have a temperature of at least thirty eight before they were allowed to be admitted into the hospital, but people very soon found out that hot water is a very easy way of raising a temperature and we also found out that occasionally we had fewer people who were ill and it gave us a chance to get some of the people who were very tired, to have a day's rest because they were working twelve hour shifts, either days or night shift and alternating weeks, even week between day shifts and night shifts. They were making machine gun bullets, Panzerfaust which is anti-tank weapons and various other things and some of the women who had been watchmakers were put into the laboratories where they did fine work. This was the beginning of August 1944, in, at the end of September there were five hundred women with us, another transport came from Auschwitz of two hundred and fifty women. The original five hundred were all Hungarian, the two hundred and fifty were a mixture of, we had Dutch, Belgian, French, all sorts of different nationalities. What they also brought with them was typhoid. Now fortunately as a child I had had typhoid so I had immunity and one of our doctors was elderly so we volunteered to go into isolation with the people who had typhoid into a separate encampment which was cordoned off and wired off and where the Germans only dared to come to the gates to bring the food there lunchtime and then stepped well

back before we could put the empty ones. Their fear of illness and contagion was really quite something. We were actually very fortunate because during the time that I was there until the end of March, from end of July, beginning of August '44 to the end of March, we only had eight deaths which shows first of all that people must have been very fit to start with and that somehow or other, with the minimum amount of medication we had, because we only had very primitive medication, we had tannin, we had digitalis, we had paper bandages, it was really, but it wasn't only for us, the Germans didn't have it much better in this period either.

Towards the end of the stay there, they decided that I was sabotaging the war effort, I was keeping too many people in hospital so they decided that I had to go to work in the factory as well as I had to as a punishment go on night shifts. It was actually quite amusing in an odd way because by now the material we were given, the iron was so bad that to work to the tolerance that they wanted just wasn't possible so you shaved more off the inside of the machine gun bullet and the cap didn't fit so the whole thing got discarded. It actually gave you more opportunity for sabotage than by keeping extra people in hospital.