

## From the Testimony of Yehoshua Büchler about the Witness' Liberation By the U.S Army and his Return to Czechoslovakia

... I fell asleep, I wasn't aware of anything, I was tired and frail. I only know that in the morning I was awakened by loud shoutings, the inmates were shouting because they had seen American tanks from the village on the sides of the road. When I woke up, they said: tanks, tanks! Even though we were tired, battered, and broken we began to run the 1½ km to the road, where long convoys of trucks and jeeps were passing by. For the first time in my life I saw a jeep, command cars, tanks, American soldiers.

There was incredible rejoicing. But the Americans were not so happy. A Military Police jeep pulled up and asked who in the world we were – they wanted nothing to do with us. There was a Czech boy who knew English. He told them that we were inmates from Buchenwald, that we had escaped. They were afraid: They already knew and had heard that the camp inmates had all kinds of infectious diseases. So they kept their distance from us... they simply kept their distance and said: "Wait here".

They didn't give us anything, not a thing. Maybe a few inmates asked for cigarettes. I sat there in a ditch on the road, miserable, we had received nothing. They went on their way. Two hours later two big trucks arrived. They told us to climb in, so we did and they took us to Jenna, to the same city we had walked through...

We were taken to the famous Zeiss factory, which still exists. It is a factory for cameras and optical equipment. American troops were already there. American medical servicemen also arrived, Black soldiers, and they told us to take off all our clothes, everything we had on, everything, and throw them on to a pile. There were those who argued that they had pictures and personal effects – these were Aryan inmates who had corresponded with their families and had received packages from home. The Americans told them to burn everything. There was a great deal of lice. I threw off everything except my shoes. I had Canadian shoes I received from another inmate.

We burned everything. They gave us soap, everybody received a towel, we were taken to a shower – German showers. Everything was orderly, very German, nice, clean, shiny. Before we entered the shower, two Black men with sprayers covered us in DDT from top to bottom. We took a shower.

When we came out, the same Black men were there and they threw at us American army clothes. They took us to a workers' kitchen and gave us food. Fortunately it was evening, so they gave us tea. I drank tea, maybe also coffee, and there were biscuits, that was all they gave us to eat. Luckily for us, there was no pouncing on the food.

We were move to a U.S. Army camp, we were about a hundred prisoners living in very good conditions. A military physician arrived and examined the inmates. He was a Slovakian Jew named Winter. He spoke Slovakian of course, and he promised to look after me. He asked me when I had had typhus. I said: "What typhus? I never had typhus".

"What do you say", he replied, "I see that you had bacterial typhus".

I didn't know that I had had typhus. It turned out that I had the disease in Buchenwald, that I had a fever without realizing it. The doctor looked after me and the others, first of all with food, we were given dietetic food, very slowly, and that was very good.

...Dr. Winter tried to persuade me to go with the rest of the children to a convalescent home in Sweden. I also had consumption. But I wanted only to return home, I was positive that someone of my family was alive, that my father was alive, because he was a strong man.

...I took my things, I started to make my way home in packed trains, via unmarked roads. My house is about 600 km from Prague. I set out, somehow we kept going, it took days, we were given food at every train station.

... When I arrived in my town, I met a few relatives and there was a great excitement. I asked: "Where is father?" I was certain he was at home. "We do not know where your father is". "What, isn't father at home?"

They didn't know whether I was dreaming or maybe there was something wrong with me. I was in shock. "Father isn't at home?" They said: "No".

Then I learned that no one had come back, that I was alone, that I alone had returned.

**Source:** *The Anguish of Liberation- Testimonies from 1945*, edited by Y. Kleiman and N. Springer- Aharoni, (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1995) pp. 37- 38