

## LEIB LANGFUSS THE HORRORS OF MURDER\*

### Particulars

Among the transports arriving from Bedzin and Sosnowiec<sup>1</sup> was an old rabbi. As residents of the immediate vicinity, the deportees knew that they were being taken to their death. The rabbi entered the dressing room and the bunker<sup>2</sup> singing and dancing. He was privileged to die for the Sanctification of the Name of God.

① Two Hungarian Jews<sup>3</sup> asked the Sonderkommando: "Should we say the Confession?" He replied in the affirmative. They then pulled out bottles of brandy, and drank happily raising their bottles in a toast to life (Lechaim). They actively persuaded the Sonderkommando to drink with them. The man was ashamed and refused to drink. They persisted: "You have to avenge our blood. You have to live. So... to life!" They appealed to him: "We understand how you feel..." And he drank with them. While drinking, the man became very emotional and burst out weeping. He ran into the crematorium and sobbed bitterly for a long time: "Comrades! We have burned enough Jews. Let us destroy everything, and ourselves as well, for the Sanctification of the Name!"

In midsummer<sup>4</sup>, 100 young men from Hungary were brought to be shot to death. They undressed and stood naked in the courtyard of Crematorium #1.<sup>5</sup> Their heads were shaven, with only a stripe of hair running down the middle of their heads. Then Oberscharführer Moosfeld<sup>6</sup> came and commanded them to move to #2. From the gate of one crematorium to the other runs a road some 60 meters long, parallel to a public highway. He posed the commandos in two columns, to guard the naked Jews, lest they run to the public road. Thus, totally naked, they were rushed all the way with clubs waving above their heads. Driving them were the Kommandoführer and the German kapo. When they reached the other side, they were jammed into a small room and taken out one by one for execution. A group of thin, starved Jews were brought from one of the camps. In the courtyard they were stripped and each man went to his death. Terribly hungry, they asked to be given a piece of bread before they died. A lot of bread was brought. Their eyes, dull and faded from the torments of hunger, suddenly came alive with a wild light and with both hands they snatched up the bread. Thus, walking down the stairs toward the firing squad, they swallowed up the bread happily. So stunned were they by their pleasure over the bread that even their

\* The four documents were published in the original Yiddish, with an introduction by Esther Mark (see above: "Notes on the Identity of the 'Anonymous' Author") in *Gal-Ed* #1, 1973, a collection on the history of Polish Jewry, published by the Diaspora Research Institute at Tel Aviv University.

Leib Langfuss

death was made easier. Thus can be seen the Germans' power to torture people's souls and take over their minds. It should be noted that these people had left their homes only a few weeks before.

② End of summer 1943. A group of Poles from the immediate vicinity was brought to the camp; all its members, including 12 young women, were members of the underground organization.<sup>7</sup> A rank of SS men marched into the camp. At the same time, several hundred Dutch Jews<sup>8</sup> from among the camp inmates were brought to be killed by gas. In the gas bunker, totally naked, a young woman made an impassioned speech against the German murderers and the oppression, concluding with these words: "We will not die; our memory will be immortalized in the history of our people. Our initiative and our spirit live and bloom. The German people will pay an incalculable price for our blood. Down with barbarism in the image of Nazi Germany! Long live Poland!" She then turned to the Jewish Sonderkommandos and said: "Remember, your sacred purpose is to avenge our innocent blood! Tell the brothers of our people that we are going to our death with pride and profound consciousness." The Poles then knelt and, formally, in an impressive pose, whispered a prayer; still on their knees they sang the Polish national anthem in chorus. The Jews sang Hatikvah. Their common, cruel fate joined in that cursed and heartily, they expressed their last emotions and their consolation in the hope of their peoples' future. They then sang the Internationale. Meanwhile, the Red Cross vehicle<sup>9</sup> had arrived and the gas was thrown into the bunker. They passed away in the midst of their song, borne on the wings of a dream of brotherhood and a better world.

③ End of summer 1944. A transport arrived from Slovakia.<sup>10</sup> The arrivals knew without a doubt that they were being taken to their death. Nevertheless they were calm. They undressed and entered the bunker. As they were leaving the dressing room and entering the gas bunker, a woman said: "Maybe a miracle will still happen."

④ End of summer 1943. This was a transport of Jews from Tarnów.<sup>11</sup> They inquired where they were being taken. They were told they would be liquidated. They were already standing naked. A heavy, serious mood overtook them all. They became lost in thought and whispered the Confession for the sins of the past. All their emotions had become dulled and only one thought stunned and electrified them: the need to take account of their souls before extinction. Meanwhile, another group of Jews had arrived from Tarnów. One of the young people sat on a bench and asked for everyone's attention. A deathly silence prevailed. "My Jewish brothers," he called out, "do not believe that they are taking you to your death. It is unthinkable that this can happen to us, that tens of thousands of innocent men will be put to death. Such cruel and shocking slaughter could never happen in this world. Those who told you those things must have had their reasons." He continued to speak until he had calmed down. Only when the gas was thrown into the bunker did the preacher with the well-developed conscience awaken from his dream of innocence. The pretexts that he had used to calm his brothers were shown to be mere illusion and self-deception but this realization had come too late.)

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Passover 1944: A transport arrived from Vittel in France, including several Jewish notables. One of them was the Rabbi of Bayon, the late Rabbi Moshe Friedman. He had been one of the great Jewish scholars of Poland, a truly rare patriarchal figure. He addressed along with everyone else. He then addressed the Oberscharführer, holding on to the lapel of his coat, he spoke to him in German: "You, cruel murderers, human scum, do not think that you will succeed in destroying the Jewish people. The Jewish people will live forever and will not vanish from the stage of history. But you, despicable murderers, will reap your own rewards. For every Jew killed, ten Germans will fall. You will be wiped out and will disappear, not only as a people, but as a people. The day of revenge and reprisals at hand. The innocent blood you have spilled will be demanded of you; our blood will not rest until the blazing and extinguishing wrath is poured out upon you and destroys your animal blood." He spoke with great emotion and great strength. Then, when he had finished, he put on his hat and in great excitement called out "Shema Israel!" and all the Jews faithfully responded with him "Shema Israel!" out of a sense of profound faith which had surrounded them all in the last moments of their lives. It was a moment of supreme elevation, such as may be encountered but once in a lifetime, proving the eternal nature of Jewish spiritual resistance.

6

In the last days of May 1944, a transport arrived from Koszycze. The deportees included the old rebbeben of Strakowice, who was already 85 years old. She said: "Only now do I see the extinction of the Jews of Hungary." The government permitted significant portions of the Jewish communities to escape. But when the Jews asked the advice of their rabbis, they calmed them. The Rabbi of Belz said that the Jews of Hungary would know nothing worse than fear. Until the bitter day suddenly came when the Jews were thrown into hell. Oh yes, the heavenly ones concealed it from them but at the last minute they alone escaped to the Land of Israel; they saved their own souls, leaving their flocks to be slaughtered. Lord of the Universe! In the last moments of my life, I ask You to forgive them for the desecration of Your Name!

7

End of winter 1943: A transport arrived consisting entirely of children who had been picked up in growing cars from their mothers' houses while their fathers were working in Stutthof and Kaukas. The Kommandoführer sent one of his men to address the smaller children. A girl of about eight years old who was undressing her little brother said to the man: "Go away, you Jewish murderer! Don't put your hand covered in Jewish blood on my sweet brother. I am his good mother now, and he will die in my arms. A boy of seven or eight standing near them said: "You are a Jew! How will you be allowed to lead these pure Jews to the gas only to save yourself, is your life among the gangs of murderers dearer than the lives of so many Jewish victims?"

The beginning of 1943: The bunker was packed to the bursting point with Jews. One Jewish boy had remained outside. The Unterscharführer came up to him and swung his club intending to kill him at a blow. He inflicted mortal injuries upon him and the boy was bleeding from all parts of his body. Suddenly, the boy regained consciousness, stood up and in silence fixed his childish eyes on the cruel,

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bloody murderer. The German burst out in loud, cynical laughter, pulled out his gun and shot the boy. The custom of standing four of his victims in a row and killing them all with one shot. Whoever moved his head would be pushed by the murderer, still alive, into the burning pit of bodies. If anyone refused to go to the bunker, Moll would twist his arm, push him down and crush him to death by stamping on him. When a new transport arrived, Moll would stand on a bench, fold his arms and make a short speech to his victims stating that they were to be taken to the baths and then return for labor assignments. But whoever expressed doubt at his words received cruel blows from Moll's whip. While at the same time the Hauptscharführer created a riot designed to cause confusion.

Oberscharführer Forst had the custom of standing at the doorway of the dressing room and feeling the private parts of the young women entering the gas bunker. There were also instances of SS men of all ranks pushing their fingers into the sexual organs of pretty young women.

End of summer 1942: A transport arrived from Przemyśl. In the new arrivals' sleeves, as well as in the policemen's clothing, were concealed daggers with which they planned to fall on the SS. But their leader, a doctor, led them astray by assuming that if he prevented them from doing this deed he and his wife would be able to enter the labor camp. He therefore informed the Oberscharführer of what was to happen. The German promised him to do as he asked, and the man calmed down. They undressed, and he and his wife were forced into the bunker with everyone else.

Sadism<sup>20</sup>

8

In 1940-1941 there was a camp in Belzec, near the Russian border, where the horrors and cruelty were even greater than those of Auschwitz.

For example, each day they would take Jews to dig a deep and narrow pit into which one Jew would be pushed. They would then force the Jewish inmates to perform their bodily functions into the pit onto the victim's head. Anyone refusing would be flogged 25 times. So the inmates would perform their bodily functions on the poor victim's head throughout the day until he choked in the filth.

The Russian sentries across the border solicited the Jews to take advantage of every opportunity to cross over to them by jumping over the barbed wire. The SS were forbidden to shoot at the escapees, as the bullets could strike on the other side of the border. Therefore, the Germans would stand quite close to the wire and shoot from close range at the arms or legs of those who did not have enough time to jump themselves over the wire to the other side. When the Russian guards protested, the SS answered: "The leg on the arm was still in our territory."

Here people were assigned to dig a deep trench, long and straight, to mark the border. After the German invasion deep into Russia, eight large barracks were built in the forest and tables and chairs put into them. Here they would force to enter Jews brought from the Lublin, Lvov and other districts and electrocute them. One such place was in the Howieszowicz forest near Trawniki, not far from Plask; there deep pits were dug and trucks packed with Jews would drive up to the

pits and dump the still-living, still-dressed Jews into them, where they would be shot to death. Afterward they would be covered with earth.

Many Ukrainians were also killed in Betzec. I am convinced that today this is rather well known. I am writing these things down because they were told to me by some of my commando, who were eyewitnesses. They were also in Majdanek near Lublin. The entire village was liquidated, fenced in with barbed wire, and barracks were built. The barracks were built during the months of Ustipod-Grudzien 1941. Instead of washing themselves, the poor inmates were forced to roll naked in the snow each morning, then to dress in the cold barracks and to leave for work. Four men were forced to carry a huge wooden fence or very heavy building beams, at a quick pace, while the Dutch engineer hastened them with lashes of his whip at their feet. The barracks were crammed with Russian prisoners of war who were given nothing to eat but a few potatoes and a little soup. They were not given bread, and they worked all day at hard labor, supervised by the SS. There was a large pit covered by boards with holes in them, which served as a latrine for the inmates. Any prisoner who did not work properly was cast into the pit full of excrement. Each night the SS would come into the prisoners' barracks and take out those too exhausted to work and kill them with their clubs. Not even one was left alive. They were so weak and powerless that they had no will left to resist. In the morning, a group of 100 Jews would come and drag the bodies away for burial. As soon as the block was empty, new prisoners were brought to fill it. Anyone committing a crime was hanged by his feet, with his head down. Some of the hanged men remained there for eight hours before they died.

During the roll call, when the ranks were too dense, they were thinned out by machine gun fire.

On 14 October, the dismantling of the walls of Crematorium #3 began. The laborers are from the Sonderkommando.

On 20 October, two small cars and a prison wagon full of prisoners' documents, personal files, death certificates, indictments, etc., were taken to be burned. Today, 25 November, Crematorium #1 has begun to be dismantled, following which Crematorium #2 will also be dismantled. It should be noted that the first thing to be removed is the ventilator motor and the pipes; these are sent to camps, the former to Mauthausen, and the latter to Grossrosen. As this equipment is only used for large-scale poisoning by gas, there was no such equipment in Crematoria #3 and #4; the suspicion arises that these camps include elimination centers for Jews. I would request that my various writings of the past, signed with the initials A.J.R.A. #2, and buried in jars and boxes in the courtyard of Crematorium #2, be collected, as well as two larger writings: one titled "The Deportation", hidden in the bone pit of Crematorium #1, and another writing titled "Auschwitz". The latter was hidden in a heap of bones on the southwest side of

that courtyard. I later recopied them and completed them and they were separately buried in the ashes of Crematorium #2. I would request that they be edited and published together under the title "The Horrors of Murder."

We are now going to the "sauna", the 170 remaining men. We are convinced that they are taking us to our death. They have selected 30 men to remain in Crematorium #4.

Today is 26 November 1944.

The 600 Boys

At noon, 600 Jewish boys of 12 to 18 years old were brought in, dressed in long striped camp clothing, light and torn. They wore shoes or wooden clogs on their feet. The children were so beautiful, well-formed and seeming to shine in their rags. This was during the second half of October 1944. They were led by 22 armed SS men. As they came into the courtyard, the Kommandoführer ordered them to undress in the courtyard. When the children saw the clouds of thick smoke, they realized at once that they were being taken to their death. They began to run in all directions within the courtyard, mad with fear, pulling out their hair and not knowing how to save themselves. Many of them began crying in terror, and they all started to howl. The Kommandoführer and his assistants beat the children savagely in order to force them to undress. They beat them until the club broke, whereupon it was replaced with another, and the man continued to beat the helpless children on the head. The strong men won. The children, undressed, instinctively frightened to death. Naked and barefoot, they clung to each other to protect each other from the blows. And yet they still did not go in. One brave boy approached us — [and asked] the Kommandoführer to let him live. He said he could do any task, even the hardest labor. The answer was a blow from a club on the boy's head. Many children ran wildly up to the Jews — of the Sonderkommando, clung to their necks and pleaded: "Save us." Others scattered, naked, throughout the large courtyard in order to flee from death. The Kommandoführer called the Unterscharführer with his rubber truncheon to help him.

The soft and pure voices of the children became bitter and heavy from moment to moment. The loud crying began to echo into the distance; everyone was stunned and carried away by this desperate mourning. With a satisfied smile, with no trace of mercy, and with victorious pride, the SS rushed the children into the bunker with cruel blows. The Unterscharführer stood on the stairs and — did not run to their deaths as ordered, beating each one savagely with the rubber truncheon. Nevertheless a few confused children were still running back and forth looking for rescue. The SS men chased them, rushing and whipping, until they had taken control of the situation, and finally shoved them inside. They were unimaginably happy. Were none of them ever fathers of children?

*The 3000 Naked Women*

It was at the beginning of 1944. A cold, snowy wind was blowing and the ground was frozen. The first car which reached Crematorium #2 is packed with naked women and girls. They are not standing close to each other as they usually do; no, they are no longer capable of standing on their feet for they are totally exhausted; they lie helplessly, one on top of another, moaning and sighing. The car stops, the cover is taken off and the human freight is spilled out on the ground, like gravel on the road. Those lying near the car door are first to fall on the hard ground, injuring their heads and bodies so that they no longer have strength to move. The rest of the women fall on top of them and they are crushed and choked by the weight of the burden lying on them. Moans are heard. Some — — — crawl out from under the heap, stand on their feet — — — start to climb.

On the ground, they are shaking and trembling in the great and terrible cold. Slowly they crawl to the bunker, known as the dressing room, with steps leading down into it like a cellar. The rest are brought by the commando, summoned quickly to pick up the helpless victims, carefully, they pull the crushed women, breathing weakly, out from under the heap, and hastily bring them inside. Many of them are now unable to stand on their feet and must be carried in. They have been in the camp for a long time and are well aware that the bunker is the last stage of death; nevertheless, they are grateful and nod their heads thankfully to express their gratitude, gesticulating with their hands that it is hard for them to speak. They are grateful and consoled to see in the eyes of the men guiding them a tear of sympathy of sorrow in the face of the man guiding them down. They are seized with chills; they tremble. Those already inside are permitted to sit down, and the rest of the women are brought in. Down — — — the room is cold. The great cold makes the whole body tremble. A coal stove is brought but only a few women approach it to feel its heat. The rest remain mourning, sunk in sadness. The cold is quite tormenting, but they are already so despairing of life and bitter that they recoil from bodily pleasures. — — — sit far away, silently. A few converse among themselves; others lie exhausted. — — — a young woman, Bedzin, arrived at the end of the summer. She was the last one left of a large family. She had worked hard all that time and suffered from undernourishment and cold, but her health was good and she had hoped to survive the difficult days. About a week ago, the Jews had one day been forbidden to go out to work. "Juden anrufen!" they had been ordered. Whole blocks of young Jewish women, without exception, were gathered and set aside without any examination to tell whether they were in good condition or not, well or ill. They were then brought to Block 25 where they were ordered to undress so that the state of their health might be examined. Having undressed, they were driven naked into three blocks, 1000 women to a block, packed in and locked inside for three days, without so much as a drop of water or a crust of bread. Three days of terrible hunger. On the third night they were given bread, a 1/4 kilogram loaf for every 16 women. — — — they had not us or gassed us, we would be much better off. Many fainted, many others became comatose, they all crowded onto their bunks, in absolute

exhaustion, unable to move and powerless. Death did not repel us. On the fourth day of our imprisonment, we are taken out of the block. Those who had fainted were taken to the infirmary; the others were given regular camp food and allowed to rest. Until — — — taken — — — to live."

On the eighth day, that is, five days later, we were again commanded to undress and imprisoned in the block. Our clothing was taken from us and after long hours of freezing in the cold we were loaded onto cars and thrown onto the ground. This is the sad end of our last deceiving illusion. How cursed we were in our mothers' womb, to have our lives flicker out in such a bitter end? She did not finish her last words, her voice was choked in the flow of her tears: — — — A young woman became hysterical. They examined our faces looking for an expression of sympathy. One stood in a corner and looked deep into the depths of these poor, helpless souls. He could no longer control himself and burst out crying. A young girl then said: "Ah! I have been privileged to see before I die an expression of sorrow, a tear of sympathy at our sad fate, in this camp of murderers, in which so many are tortured, beaten and killed, in which people see so many murders and interminable horrors, in the camp where our senses become dull and petrified at the sight of the worst horrors, where every human emotion dies to the extent that you can see your brother or sister fall and not even sigh. Yes, here, can there be a man who will feel our disaster who will weep for our fate? Oh! What a wonderful vision, how unnatural! The tear of a live Jew will go with me to my death, the sight of a sensitive man. There is still someone who will mourn us, and I had thought that we would leave this world like miserable orphans. I find a bit of comfort in this young man, among people who are all murderers and criminals. I have found before my death a man with feelings." She turned away from us leaning her head against the wall and from the depths of her heart came quiet bitter tears. Her heart dissolved within her; around her sat and stood many young women, their heads bowed, unspoken. Their expressions showed disgust at this lowly world and especially at us. One said: "I am still so young. I have not yet known the taste of life. Why has it been decreed for me to die this way? Why?" She spoke slowly, in a broken voice, sighed deeply and continued: "And I still want to live so much!" She finished speaking dreamily and tenderly, her eyes fixed on empty space, and like wild fire — — — the fear of impending death split the air. Her friend looked at her with a sarcastic smile and said: "The happy moment I have dreamed of has finally arrived. When the heart is full of pain and suffering, imprisoned in a world of horrors and murder, in the crudest meanness, unlimited lowliness and evil, life becomes hard, difficult and unbearable, to the point where I look forward to death as a liberator, as freedom. The nightmare hovering over me and depressing me will disappear forever. — — —"

"My tortured thoughts will find their eternal rest. How good, how pleasant is such a death for which I have yearned for long and sleepless nights." She spoke with excitement, pathos and great dignity. "I am sorry to be sitting like this — — — but for death to be more pleasant, one must bear this shame as well."

A thin young woman, lying to one side, is quietly moaning helplessly. Her voice is too weak to be heard. She is holding her daughter's head close to her heart. "We are dying together. What a tragedy! You, my dearest ——— my last hope ——— fading ———" ——— remained sitting ——— bemused and ——— with dulled eyes wide open and staring from side to side. After a long moment, she regained consciousness and continued: "I grieve so deeply for you; the very thought kills me." Her petrified hands fell and her daughter's head dropped into her bosom. The young woman shook all over and cried out in despair: "Mama!" Those were her last words.

The order was given to transfer them all; on the way to the crematorium I never present when the Jews were being rushed to their death; as it might have come to pass that the SS would force me to carry out their murderous purposes in the crematorium.

The trucks kept running for long hours, until they had dumped all the human burden on the ground. When all of them had been collected, they were loaded into the gas bunker. The victims' loud cries of despair and bitter weeping were even more than usual; a terrible shame of ——— compared to ——— the pain, various choked voices blended and poured out of the ground until the humanitarian Red Cross vehicles<sup>7</sup> arrived and put an end to their pain and suffering, throwing four cans of gas through the narrow upper openings which were then hermetically sealed. Complete quiet prevailed at once. In mysterious silence they rendered up their souls.

LIST OF THE TRANSPORTS OF INMATES  
CREMATED IN THE BIRKENAU CREMATORIA  
BETWEEN 9-24 OCTOBER 1944

Ser. No.	Date	Number Cremated	Transport	Origin	Crematorium
1.	9/10	2000	M[en]	German camp	Cr/Ematorium/1
2.	9/19	2000	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
3.	9/10	2000	W[omen]	Camp "C" <sup>38</sup>	" "
4.	10/10	800	Children	Gypsies	" "
5.	11/10	2000	F[amilies]	Slovakia <sup>39</sup>	" "
6.	12/10	3000	W[omen]	Camp "C" <sup>40</sup>	" "
7.	13/10	3000	W[omen]	Camp "C"	" "
8.	13/10	2000	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
9.	14/10	3000	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
10.	15/10	3000	W[omen]	Camp "C"	" "
11.	16/10	800	M[en]	German camp <sup>41</sup>	" "
12.	16/10	600	M[en]	Infirmiry camp	" "
13.	17/10	2000	M[en]	Buna <sup>42</sup>	" "
14.	18/10	3000	F[amilies]	Slovakia	" "
15.	18/10	2000	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
16.	18/10	300	F[amilies]	Miscellaneous <sup>43</sup>	" "
17.	18/10	22	Political, m[en]	Bunker <sup>44</sup>	" "
18.	18/10	13	Political, w[omen]	Prison	" "
19.	19/10	2000	F[amilies]	Slovakia	" "
20.	20/10	2500	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
21.	20/10	2500	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
22.	20/10	1000	M[en], children	Dy <sup>45</sup> village	" "
23.	20/10	200	W[omen]	Camp "C" <sup>46</sup>	" "
24.	20/10	1000	F[amilies]	Terezin	" "
25.	21/10	1000	W[omen]	Camp "C"	" "
26.	23/10	400	M[en]	Gilvice <sup>47</sup>	" "
27.	24/10	2000	F[amilies]	Terezin <sup>48</sup>	" "
	7/10	460	M[en]	Sonderkommando	Shot to death

(Translated from the Polish original)