

Chaim Szymonowicz

On the Day of Liberation

As Russia pushed steadily westwards, the Germans took us further away from the front. After a couple of days in Buchenwald, we were sent in crowded railway carriages to Mauthausen. After five days of travel, we were allowed off the carriages. "People" walked on all fours and ate grass.

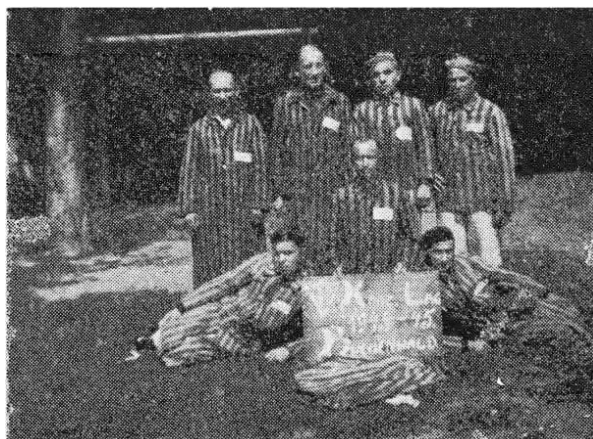
Following a journey of seventeen days, we arrived in Mauthausen and were conducted directly to the crematorium. I still had ten dollars left and I was able to buy bread. But, as soon as I took the bread in my hand, everyone attacked me and they snatched it away from me. I only managed to catch a chunk of the bread in my mouth, which I brought to my brother and placed directly into his mouth. I told him that they had torn up my loaf, to which he said that they too were hungry, poor fellows.

Until the morning, we sat by the crematorium which, luckily for us, was unable to "take us in," due to a breakdown.

The conditions there were so horrific that for us, *Częstochowers*, it was the worst concentration camp which we had been forced to endure.

And then, all of a sudden, just when we thought the end had already come - on the 5th of May, 1945, at eleven o'clock before noon - a prisoner ran in yelling that an American vehicle had entered the camp and we were liberated!

What a ruction ensued! We wept and screamed with joy! No one could laugh, as we had already not laughed for five years.



Częstochowa Jews in Buchenwald. Standing, from left to right: M. Goldberg, M. Gonszerowicz, Sz. Kaminski, Ch. Najman. Lying from left to right: Sz. Manżes, L. Ocheman [? אכימאן]. In centre: L. Blumenfeld.