

There came an order from the Germans to take out the barbers they could get—they need them for a certain job. The job they were needed for we didn't know at that time, but we gathered together as many barbers as we could.

*How long did it happen after your arrival in Treblinka?*

This was about four weeks after I was in Treblinka.

*When was it, in the morning?*

Yes, it was in the morning, around ten o'clock, when a transport came to Treblinka and the women went into the gas chambers. They chose some people from the working people over there, and they asked who was a barber, who was not a barber. I was a barber for quite a number of years, and some of them knew me—people from Czestochowa and other places. So naturally, they chose me and I selected some more barbers who I knew, and we got together.

*Professional barbers?*

Yes. We got together and were waiting for the order. And the order came to go with them, with the Germans. They took us in to the gas chamber, to the second part of the camp in Treblinka.

*Was it far from the first part?*

No, not too far, but it was all covered with gates, barbed wire and trees covering the gates so that nobody should see there is a gate, or a place going into the gas chamber.

*Is that what the Germans call the Schlauch—the "funnel"?*

No, the Germans called this the "Road to Heaven."

*Himmelweg?*

Yes, *Himmelweg*: the "Road to Heaven." And we knew about it because we worked for quite a time before going to work in the gas chamber. Going in over there, they put in some benches where the women could sit and not get the idea that this is their last way or the last time they are going to live or breathe or know what is going on.

*How long did the barbers cut the hair inside the gas chamber, as that was not always the case?*

We worked inside the gas chamber for about a week or ten days. After that they decided that we will cut their hair in the undressing barrack.

*How did it look, the gas chamber?*

It was not a big room, around twelve feet by twelve feet. But in that room they pushed in a lot of women, almost one on top of another. But like I mentioned before, when we came in, we didn't know what we were going to do. And then one of the kapos came in and said: "Barbers, you have to do a job to make all those women coming in believe that they are just taking a haircut and going in to take a shower, and from there they go out from this place." We know already that there is no way of going out from this room, because this room was the last place they went in alive, and they will never go out alive again.

*Can you describe precisely?*

Describe precisely . . . We were waiting there until the transport came in. Women with children pushed in to that place. We the barbers started to cut their hair, and some of them—I

would say all of them—some of them knew already what was going to happen to them. We tried to do the best we could—

*No, no, no . . .*

—the most human we could.

*Excuse me. How did it happen when the women came into the gas chamber? Were you yourself already in the gas chamber, or did you come afterwards?*

I said we were already in the gas chamber, waiting over there for the transport to come in.

*You were inside?*

Yes, inside the gas chamber—we were already in.

*And suddenly you saw the women coming?*

Yes, they came in.

*How were they?*

They were undressed, naked, without clothes, without anything else.

*Completely naked?*

Completely naked. All the women and all the children.

*The children too?*

The children too. Because they came from the undressing barrack—the barrack before going into the gas chamber—where they had undressed themselves.

*What did you feel the first time you saw all these naked women coming?*

I felt that accordingly I got to do what they told me, to cut their hair in a way that it looked like the barber was doing his job for a woman, and I set out to give them both, to take off as much hair as I could, because they needed women's hair to be transported to Germany.

*That means that you didn't shave them?*

No, we didn't. We just cut their hair and made them believe they were getting a nice haircut.

*You cut with what—with scissors?*

Yes, with scissors and comb, without any clippers. Just like a man's haircut, I would say. Not a boy, to take off all their hair, but just to have the imagination that they're getting a nice haircut.

*There were no mirrors?*

No, there were no mirrors. There were just benches—not chairs, just benches—where we worked, about sixteen or seventeen barbers, and we had a lot of women in. Every haircut took about two minutes, no more than that because there were a lot of women to come in and get rid of their hair.

*Can you imitate how you did it?*

How we did it—cut as fast as we could. We were quite a number of us professional barbers, and the way we did it, we just did this and this and we cut this like this here and this side and this side and the hair was all finished. With big movements, naturally, because we did not waste any time.

*With big movements?*

With big movements, naturally, because we could not waste any time. The other party was waiting already outside to do the same thing, the same job.

*You said there were about sixteen barbers?*

Yes.

*You cut the hair of how many women in one batch?*

In one batch there was about, I would say, going into that place between sixty and seventy women in the same room at one time.

*And afterwards the doors of the gas chamber were closed?*

No. After we were finished with this party, another party came in, and there were about 140, 150 women. They were all already taken care of, and they told us to leave the gas chamber for a few minutes, about five minutes, when they put in the gas and choked them to death.

*Where did you wait?*

Outside the gas chamber and on the other side. Well, on this side the women went in and on the other side was a group of working people who took out the dead bodies—some of them were not exactly dead. They took them out, and in two minutes—in one minute—everything was clear. It was clean to take in the other party of women and do the same thing they did to the first one.

*Tell me, these women, they had long hair?*

Most of them had long hair—some had short hair. What we had to do was chop off the hair; like I mentioned, the Germans needed the hair for their purposes.

*But I asked you and you didn't answer: What was your impression the first time you saw these naked women arriving with children? What did you feel?*

I tell you something. To have a feeling about that . . . it was very hard to feel anything, because working there day and night between dead people, between bodies, your feeling disappeared, you were dead. You had no feeling at all. As a matter of fact, I want to tell you something that happened. At the gas chamber, when I was chosen to work there as a barber, some of the women that came in on a transport from my town of Czestochowa, I knew a lot of them. I knew them; I lived with them in my town. I lived with them in my street, and some of them were my close friends. And when they saw me, they started asking me, Abe this and Abe that—"What's going to happen to us?" What could you tell them? What could you tell?

A friend of mine worked as a barber—he was a good barber in my hometown—when his wife and his sister came into the gas chamber. . . .

*Go on, Abe. You must go on. You have to.*

I can't. It's too horrible. Please.

*We have to do it. You know it.*

I won't be able to do it.

*You have to do it. I know it's very hard. I know and I apologize.*

Don't make me go on please.

*Please. We must go on.*

I told you today it's going to be very hard. They were taking that in bags and transporting it to Germany.

Okay, go ahead.

*Yes. What was his answer when his wife and sister came?*

They tried to talk to him and the husband of his sister. They could not tell them this was the last time they stay alive, because behind them was the German Nazis, SS men, and they knew that if they said a word, not only the wife and the woman, who were dead already, but also they would share the same thing with them. But in a way, they tried to do the best for them, with a second longer, a minute longer, just to hug them and kiss them, because they knew they would never see them again.

**Franz Suchomel**

In the "funnel," the women had to wait. They heard the motors of the gas chambers. Maybe they also heard people screaming and imploring. As they waited, "death panic" overwhelmed them. "Death panic" makes people let go. They empty themselves, from the front or the rear. So often, where the women stood, there were five or six rows of excrement.

*They stood?*

They could squat or do it standing. I didn't see them do it, I only saw the feces.

*Only women?*

Not the men, only the women. The men were chased through the "funnel." The women had to wait until a gas chamber was empty.

*And the men?*

No, they were whipped in first. You understand?

*The men were always first?*

They were always first.

*They didn't have to wait?*

They weren't given time to wait, no.

*And this "death panic"?*

When this "death panic" sets in, one lets go. It's well known when someone's terrified, and knows he's about to die; it can happen in bed. My mother was kneeling by her bed . . .

*Your mother?*

Yes. Then there was a big pile. That's a fact. It's been medically proved.

Since you wanted to know: as soon as they were unloaded, if they'd been loaded in Warsaw, or elsewhere, they'd already been beaten. Beaten hard, worse than in Treblinka, I can as-