

# After The Escape

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Subject: After the escape

I promised you to write you about the events after my escape from the train to Ravensbruck.

As you know I just seized Franka and told her to follow me under the wheels of the train. We reached safely at my school-friend's house. There we were accepted and taken care off while keeping secretly in her parents' bedroom or occasionally in a small hiding place in the yard.(In another room the chief commando of A.K.<sup>1</sup> should not be aware of our presence).

In the next few days the Germans were searching and chasing the underground group who caused an explosion of a bridge, so we all had to be very careful. Only later we started planning our next steps. The plan was to get us to Krakow, where Rozka Guterman was supposed to find us a place to stay. I was promised a position in a German laboratory and Franka's future arrangement was not yet discussed. (Her joining me was unexpected).

Finely all the preparation for the trip to Krakow were made: I was accompanied by another friend of mine ( Mrs. Zadke) and Franka, who had no documents at all went with my friend Przemek Ochalski who was a brother -in-law of Wiesia Krolikiewich, my hostess. He was an experienced guerrilla member and knew how to smuggle people on trains. My companion was not so smart, so when the Germans checked the passengers and their papers they quite easily found out that my documents were false and arrested me. I was brought to a military camp in Czestochowa with some other Poles suspected of illegal functions.

I realized immediately, that the danger of being recognized as a Jewess was here much higher than outside. But there was nothing I could do at the moment. I tried to discuss my obligation to get to my work for a German firm as an excuse for letting me free.

In the mean time I had to dig trenches together with the others and listen to the quite often expressed doubts about my "Polishness". Only after several days I got a message that my friends and Rozka know about my misfortune and try to help me out. There was a lot of small and greater incidents between me and my fellow-prisoners or the watchmen, but somehow, I was lucky and escaped a serious disaster.

Until the day came when Rozka arrived in person to get me out by an official invitation from her German SS boss. The Polish watchman confronted me with her and went to the German head of the camp denouncing us - two Jewesses. This time

my fortune was in a most dangerous point and if not for Rozka's courage and wit and the extraordinary sympathetic approach of my German officers, this would be my end. Two days later I was officially released from the camp, not even knowing how this happened, because I didn't meet Rozka till 8 weeks later, after the Russian came and liberated the town, Czestochowa, and camps.

The release was realized a day before New Year (January first 1945) with a new problem: no trains for the Polish population. Here my luck appeared in its strongest form. The administrator of the camp - the friendliest sub-officer - an old soldier who in WWI was a war prisoner in Russia, tried all the time to help me. Now he offered me a temporary job: finding and arranging a civil dwelling for two military men (the army requested leaving their military housing as too dangerous: I didn't even imagine that the Russians are so close.) He also gave me a letter of recommendation for my own housing facilities. Till then I could use the room destined for him and his colleague. He even offered me an extra salary for doing the 10-day payments for the workers and to take my meals in the camp canteen, which I didn't accept fearing to meet the Poles who were still in the camp. With a smile he added: you will be better off here than in Krakow at the SS troops.

I couldn't dream of a better solution, especially after the last experience, which showed me the danger of putting Rozka in a risky situation.

Almost two weeks passed since I started the job, when my new boss appeared excited: "you have to see our Oberleutenant. He wants you to come with us: we are leaving town. He is drunk and do not listen to him. Stay here in the room which you got for us. I shall provide you with some goodies from the main army-supply office" and so he did. The same night the Germans started moving out. My boss came loaded with bottles of vodka, sugar, honey etc and asked me to get him some civilian clothes because he decided to defect.

He left me his two guns (one - his private beautiful tool) the last payment for the camp, his name and address at home and said: "I knew all the time that you are Jewish, but I didn't want to scare you away. Please tell my wife and my two daughters that I behaved like a human being and am so sorry for all Germany did to YOU".

I got him a funny evening-suit from my room owners and went with him to the civilian German colony in the other part of town.

This was our last farewell. I never saw him again, but later succeeded to contact his wife in Stolpz (Slupsk) and through friends in the Russian army, who occupied Prussia, even managed to help them out. Then I found out that he was killed on his way home by bombardiers - together with other civilians.

His name was S. Wietzky and he was 54 years old.

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<sup>i</sup> Polish: *Armia Krajowa*; The Home army, it was the dominant Polish resistance movement in Poland occupied by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II