

The holocaust – why was this happening to me?

War



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I could hardly breathe or move in the cramped animal wagon. The stench of filth and disease surrounded me and I longed for fresh air. My name is David Cohen and I cannot believe how my life was torn apart in such a short space of time, nor do I understand why it happened even after all these years later. I will never forget that warm April afternoon when I rushed home from helping in my Father's jeweler's store. I was surprised that the front door was open, but nevertheless ran in shouting for my Mother. I heard thuds and screeching as if the heavy furniture from upstairs was being moved. What's the matter, Mother? " I yelled. Two burly soldiers dragged her out of the living room.

" GO! " she screamed, through heavy sobbing. I just stood there, in the doorway, speechless with shock. I hesitated, but I turned and started to run in the direction of the door, but a third lofty soldier appeared as if from nowhere dived after me and just lifted me up as if I weighed nothing. We were rigorously marched down to the depressingly grey train station, which was in total and utter chaos. There was a massively indistinct mixture of hundreds of people sobbing, crying and arguing.

" Where are we going? " What's happening? " " I've lost my Mummy! " a child snivelled. " Where is she? " but nobody answered. The thickset soldiers shoved us brutally into a waiting cattle truck. There must have been fifty or more people already in this 'carriage'. Daniel Leigh

11SaulHolocaustCoursework On the way to this man-made hell, I could smell the fear from all the people around me. In addition, there was the stench of remains of old bodies which had most likely died on the most treacherous

journey from one place to another (I didn't want to think about it then, but I figured that out after the war).

As well as this, there was the reek of infection as the train was juddering past the sunny countryside. When we got out of the 'train', my eyes throbbed as I had to strain, a product of the very little amount of light in the 'carriage'. It seemed to be a pleasant day. We were shoved into several 'sorting fields' where the men were separated from the women, the thin from the broad, and the weak from the strong. Also, there was a sorting field where people were made to say if they had an occupation. I said that I was a jeweler (I only had the experience from my Father's shop, but I did not tell them).

After the painful separation, the SS men ordered the teen-aged to the middle-aged and strong men and women into what they called 'drill' and instructed us into 'rank'. Everybody was then divided into groups of two or three and told to proceed to a wooden hut. We were marched there. It must have been over a mile long. In the wooden hut there were the same machines that my Father used in his shop. I was deployed with a boy named Eric Drench, who was my age, which was then fifteen. The first night I was there was a terrible howling wind. I did not sleep at all, as I sensed that the future is not a particularly bright one.

I asked Eric where he was from and where his family came about. He started to tell me his story: " Well my family lived in Poland, but the Nazi SS men came to take us away. My mother hid my brother, sister and me into our wine cellar and locked us up for a few days and told us not to worry. On the

third day that we were in there, we heard thuds and screeching as if the heavy furniture from upstairs was being moved we stay put but Daniel Leigh
11Saul Holocaust Coursework we had the impulse to shout out: " What's the matter, mother? " but we couldn't. My eighteen year old rother David tried to open the hatch for the door of the wine cellar but it wouldn't come open so somebody must have been standing on it.

David tried again after about half an hour. He managed to open it. I said to be careful and open it slowly. He opened it very slowly and cautiously and he saw our parents being taken away as if they had committed a crime. David fell backwards in shock, he fainted. As my sister tried to comfort him, I looked outside the hatch, and to my utter astonishment, three burly soldiers were dragging my mother and shoving my father out of the door. I then had the most uncontrollable rge just to try and rescue my parents but I knew in my heart I couldn't. Then, we waited and waited for the houses and the street to go quiet. After a while, we came out of the wine-cellar and I don't know how I knew but I had knew that I would never see my parents again.

We managed to collect as much food and water as possible and we went. We traveled the country for a couple of months, but inevitably we knew that we could not go on living like this so we found refuge in a church. They knew that we were Jews, but they didn't hesitate to help. They employed, fed and clothed us for about a onth and then sent us on our way. This way, we had money, food, water and we did not look so Jewish- which I thought was a bad thing to give in to, but we had no choice.

Eventually, in the freezing winter of last year, 1940, my sister Eva had died due to pneumonia, but my brother and I were still alive. We had stopped at an empty farm- only to discover that when we rested we found it incredibly hard to go on. Having sat down to rest, I suddenly realized how hungry we were. We carried on after a couple hours or so and then we were captured by four lofty Nazi soldiers and were sent here.

By the Eric time had finished telling me about his experience, it was morning. I felt it first. I felt the cold air float over me, around me, and through me, like a spirit filling the room with nothing but the knowledge of its presence. We were dragged out of the cabin and were expected to sprint to another field. Daniel Leigh 11Saul Holocaust Coursework At the time when we had to queue to receive our lunch, it was completely out of control. When Eric finally got to the front of the 'line' there were two soldiers, one holding a whip. Eric said " Please may I have food, Sir? ".

They did not give him any food. The soldier holding the whip shouted for everyone to go back, but no-one did. He repeated it again, but this time he said: " GO BACK OR ELSE THE BOY ACQUIRES 30 LASHES!!! " Still, everyone kept pushing forward. As a result of this, the SS men canceled lunch and Eric got the 30 lashes. After this, he found it hard to breathe, let alone move or even work These sort of events continued for two more terrible years. After this period of time, Eric and I had formed a secret legion of the Jews which had survived through the loss of their families, the loss of some of the Jews which had tried to escape, but either died on the way (mines) or they were shot by the SS men.

In this legion, we could practice our Jewish laws including praying and lighting the holy Shabbat candles (if we could scavenge them). One Friday night, we could not get hold of any candles so we prayed and sang through the night. The next day, Eric, whom I had become very friendly with gathered a few men together and we discussed our immediate future, and how that if we do not receive any help from people who have knowledge about the SS men, how they operate and what were their weaknesses.

The next day, Shabbat, there was a battalion of Russian soldiers brought in to the concentration camp for 'war crimes', some of them were Jewish others were not but supported the Jewish way of life. One week after they arrived, the squadron leader approached our small but cosy gathering and started to mix with us. We hesitated at first but we adapted. After a while, they trained us as soldiers and we eventually escaped from the ultimate hell (for us) and Eric and myself lived on to fight in the American army and to the end of the war. Of the events of which I witnessed and live through, a nightmare invaded reality.