

A Call for Revenge From the Will of Some of the Last Prisoners at the Chelmno Death Camp

These wills are two of several written by the last Jewish prisoners at the Chelmno death camp in Poland, before they were murdered. The wills were found at the camp after it was liberated by the Red Army.

"This is written by Zurawski Mordke from Wloclawek, Lodzka Street, House No. 63. My entire family was removed from Wloclawek. I, my father and brother were sent to a camp in the city of Poznan. After two years there they moved me to the Lodz ghetto, whereas my father and brother, who were very weak as a result of work in the camp, were sent to "ruckzug", i.e. extermination camp. I was left alone to work in the ghetto. In July 1944, I was sent to work in "Leipzig and Munich", together with 7,000 other people. I was picked out by the camp commandant, and I have been working here to this day. All the people in the transports who left together with me were exterminated; the ghetto residents thought they were actually leaving for work, where they would be well off. Now I am alone, and I wait for the day when I'll go to paradise. I have one favor to ask of you, dear people: inform my sisters, brother and two brothers-in-law, who live in Russia, about my fate. The name of my sisters and brother are: Zurawski from Wloclawek, 63 Lodzka St. My brothers-in-law are called Neuman Szaja and Weintraub Jacob, from Wloclawek.

"I wish to finish this tragic story, because my nerves are frayed completely. Today is January 9, 1945, and I simply cannot believe we've stayed alive for so long. This camp is being liquidated, and we have remained all alone. I met Polish women working at digging ditches. They told me that in such freezing weather they sleep in a granary, and that no day passes without some of them freezing to death. So, all of us will be exterminated before long. If you happen to come across even a trace of Germans, erase them from the face of the earth, just as they do to us. In the name of 47 comrades I ask you, who

remain alive, to avenge our and your wives and children, and all the innocent people murdered in the most beastly fashion. Kill and burn their wives and children, just as they killed and burnt ours. I beseech and ask you one last time, fulfill our request, because this is our last request before we die.

"Israel Zydelman, who lived in Lodz, at 159 Wolczanska Street
Fulfill our request and God will help you, amen."

"On August 31, in the middle of the day, a car full of people arrived. We didn't know who they were. After a short break, all of them were driven off to the forest, and only when the car returned with their belongings did we realize that these were our wives and children. Imagine this tragedy! The date of September 1, when we burned our families, we shall remember all our lives. The same fate awaits us, but when this terrible moment will come, we don't know. We live with the hope that God will let us survive till the moment when we will be able to avenge all our dear ones torn out from our hearts. We ask everyone to avenge us, because meanwhile there is nothing we can do, and we wait for liberation."

Source: Krakowski, Shmuel and Altman, Ilya, *The Testimonies of the Last Prisoners at the Chelmno Death Camp*, Yad Vashem, Research Anthology 21, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 113, 119-120.