

Edi Weinstein on Escaping Murder at the Death Pits of Treblinka

One day, five SS officers who were not part of the regular camp detachment paid Treblinka a visit. They were accompanied by an officer from Treblinka whom we had nicknamed “Lalka,” Polish for doll. He evidently gave them a tour of the death factory. Several minutes later, as we busied ourselves sorting clothes, two guards came up and selected me and other members of the group, forty in all. One of the guards ordered us to stand on the side and form a column. As the men complied, I slipped away and rejoined those who had not been selected. I still do not know what prompted me to do that. The forty selectees were led toward the pits. About fifty yards from the last pit, the guards told them to undress. Six of them were ordered to go over to the pit, where the SS men were waiting, and stand facing it. At Lalka’s order, they were shot in the back of the neck. Then each gunman kicked his victim into the pit. The next group of six were led to the same fate. The slaughter continued until the last victim had been murdered. None of them asked for mercy.

The young German whom we called Lalka was an especially handsome and elegant man—always nattily dressed, clean-shaven, boots gleaming. No one would ever have guessed what kind of beast lurked behind the handsome facade. To this day I cannot understand how people who must have had normal parents, homes, wives, and children, who went to school and who believed in God, could carry out such atrocities and return home after their day’s “work” to eat dinner, go to sleep, and perform all their other daily activities. Nor can I understand why we still wanted to live. My thoughts, like those of an animal, focused on one thing only: finding a way out of this trap.

Source: Edi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel- The Story of an Escape From Treblinka*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 52- 53.

