

Edi Weinstein on Escaping from Treblinka

That afternoon, we were ordered for the first time to load bundles of victims' belongings onto the empty trains. We knew that the goods were going to be shipped to the central warehouse in Warsaw, or perhaps to Germany. Several times I tried to enter a car and hide under the suitcases, but the loaders working in the train did not let me in. Before they locked each car, the Germans checked to make sure no one was hiding inside. Had they caught a stowaway, they would have held the loaders responsible. But when the second group of cars came, I found two husky teenagers from Łosice working in it. I remember only one of them; his name was Leizer Mordski. Everyone else was hauling bundles. The suspense was so great that I forgot the pain in my right arm. Michael Fischmann passed me a belt filled with gold coins, which he had previously concealed in the sand near the platform. When the car was partially filled, I carried a bundle inside. But instead of going back out, I hid in a corner near the window. When the car filled up halfway, Michael Fischmann and Gedalia Rosenberg climbed in and joined me under the bundles. Michael was the oldest of us, about twenty-four. Evidently anticipating our future needs, he had concealed several belts filled with gold coins that he had taken from corpses.

We lay there, anxious and tense, sweating from the heat and the lack of air but mainly from fear. In the meantime, our comrades added more bundles to the car until there was no room left. When they finished, Leizer Mordski called the SS men to come over and inspect it. We held our breath as the German soldier rummaged through the bundles, until he said *in ordnung*—"Everything's okay"—and jumped onto the platform. Some time later, we heard the heavy door being slammed shut and locked. We lay in total darkness for about half an hour more until the locomotive lurched into action and the cars began to move. I climbed up a bit and peered through the slats of the grate. The platform began to fade into the distance. Several shots were fired, but they were far away. Suddenly I realized that I was outside. I had escaped from Treblinka. At that moment I could think of nothing else, not even

the unknown destination of the transport, not even whether we would manage to get out of the car before the Germans opened it.

I think we left the death factory on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 9. I had been there for seventeen days, each of which was more like a century. It would be more appropriate to reckon the time I spent in this inferno in seconds, not days.

Source: Edi Weinstein, *Quenched Steel. The Story of an Escape From Treblinka*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 61- 62.