

YAAKOV SZWARC

"We moved all the trainees of the house – about a hundred children – to the regrouping point in Biały Kamień¹. Near the city, the first summer session of "*HaShomer HaZair*" was held, with the participation of an emissary from Israel. From there, we were taken to the preparation point of the 'Escape' before setting off and from there the walk began. Some parents who did not want to separate from their children were allowed to escort the transport. The children got along in pairs. With a hand holding a hand and in a long line, we set out into the dark night, an 8-10 km walk. The hired guide left us in the middle of the woods, after explaining which direction we should go, we walked until 3am. Keeping each child from falling behind and getting lost on the way, as the heart



Yaakov Swarc at work in
"Escape", Kraków

breaks to the sight of eight-year-old, who walked in silence and fell asleep tired, while walking, we finally reached, after this tedious walk, the road we estimate is already on the other side of the border and let – by precaution – the children in the ditch, so that they rest a little. Two hours later, we continued on our way and for a long time we did not know where we were. We, escorts, would occasionally go out in different directions, to tour and search for members of the 'Escape' from the Czech passage, who were waiting for us at the meeting point that we were having such a hard time finding. A short time later we came across a Czech Border Guard, who cooperated with our friends and his men received us appropriately and called the 'Escape' stations in Nachod². Cars were now

¹ TN: Galician village, near the Czechoslovakian border.

² TN: written "Navod" in the original Hebrew, but no town of that name. Nachod is close to the frontier crossing point from Biały Kamień.

brought in, with members of the Czech 'Escape' squad who drove us to the train station.

Our friends from the Czech Repatriation Department brought us hot food:

After the children were satiated, they were put back in train carriages – which arrived after a journey of about twenty hours, to the border town of Bratislava on the other side of the Czechoslovak state. Everywhere the children and their companions were cordially received and treated as parents would treat their own children, an attitude which greatly affected the psyche of the children, who expressed their joy at it on many occasions. After a few days of vacation, the 'Escape' took them with fervor to a children's home in Germany for a long stay, until their turn to immigrate to Israel arrived."

(From Efraim Dekel's book "Survivors of the Sword" p. 71, Published by the Ministry of Defense, Tel Aviv)

"When the train returned for the third time, a catastrophic incident occurred. The day before the departure,

all the documents mysteriously disappeared and, to this day, it is not known if they were lost or stolen. We could not postpone the departure date anymore, as each train's travel times are predetermined by The Railway Authority and is also known to the border authorities. The paper department of the 'Escape' Center was tasked with preparing new documents, and Yaakov Szwarc, who headed the department, later recounted the legend of the long 'Seder' night, in which the certificates and documents were prepared for the three thousand passengers. All that night they wrote, printed and multiplied and 'signed' – without rest and without a break and whoever snatched a nap was awakened with a bucket of water. The train left, of course, at the known time and the day of peaceful farewell from the caravan was a holiday, indeed, we passed the test – the whole system and each man on duty who was entrusted with it. The joint effort was not in vain."

(From "The Book of HaShomer HaZair", p. 419)