

FREEDOM

-Friday, 13th August 1943

Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, human rights. What are those things? Do they really exist? I think no...

My name is Meretz Shurukhin. I am 17 years old, and I'm a Jew.

A few months ago, I was a happy boy, despite I didn't have so many sources. But I was equally happy. I lived with my mother, Gaby; my father, Admiel; and my three siblings: Bosem, my little sister, who was only 3 years old; Anan, my medium brother, who was 9 years old; and my elder brother Barak, who was 23 years old. Yes, I perfectly now there was a great age difference between us. But it didn't matter. We lived in peace and harmony, and we didn't have any problems.

Apart from my family, I had other relationships, such as my friends. I loved my friends. David Herzog was by difference my best friend. We did all kinds of things together. He was energetic and as a happy as he could be. We always went to the cinema, to fish, to play football... Ah... I loved David... Another person that I adored was Mary Benson. She was ...different. Mary was pale, blonde and blue-eyed, and she also was from a country called Germany, but she had to leave because "they" would kill her. Who were "they"? Why would "they" kill her? I had tried to ask her these questions a lot of times. But she didn't want to answer. I didn't know why. But it didn't really matter. Mary was such a good girl. She was a bit shy, but when she was with her friends, all her happiness was released.

One day, I was having lunch with my family and my friends, David and Mary. We were eating chicken soup with bread, while we were listening to the radio. Suddenly, our program changed mysteriously. -What happened, darling?-asked my mother, worried. -I don't know, honey, I'll check...-answered my father. Immediately, he exited the kitchen and went upstairs, probably to check if there was any problem with the general aerial. All of a sudden, the signal came back. -Dad, it's fine! -shouted my brother Barak -come here and have lunch with us!

But my dad was still upstairs. There was no response.

-Is everything fine up there, dad?-I asked, worried. There was no answer yet.

-I'll go upstairs.-said my friend David with determination. - Me too- said Mary bashfully. We went upstairs together. When we opened the door, my father was in the floor. -DAD!- I screamed thinking he was dead. But, luckily, that wasn't

true. Instead of that, he was in the floor, crying. –Why are you crying, Mr. Shurukhin? –asked my friend Mary. My father didn't answer, but he raised his hand and pointed to the window. We went to the window, and we immediately understood why he was crying. The general aerial was completely destroyed. But that wasn't the most serious thing. EVERYTHING around that was razed.

What the... –said David poorly. I was speechless. What the hell was happening? Suddenly, I looked at Mary. She had a new expression that I had never seen before. She was as pale as snow, and her eyes went contort, with bags under them. –Mary... Are you fine...? –a few seconds later, I realised that was the most stupid questions I've ever done. How would her be fine? Her town, OUR town was being destroyed! –Meretz...-answered Mary with a gasp-they... THEY...-immediately, I realised what was happening. "They". I remembered the times I've done that question: "Mary, who are they?" Now I knew the answer. "They" were the destroyers of our town.

I looked through the window. Suddenly, a group of indistinguishable shadow appeared in the skies. I couldn't see them clearly. A few seconds later, I knew what were that shadows. Planes. War planes.

Scared, we went the four downstairs to tell the family what was happening. But there was a little surprise for us. In the kitchen there were 8 men with green soldier costumes, and there was also a green van through the wall because they broke it to enter into the house. They were holding all my family. Mom, Bosem, Anan, Barack... All of them were between the men's arms. Suddenly, they raised their weapons and pointed to my family's heads. -GET ON THE VAN OR WE WILL KILL THEM!!! -shouted one of the men, hysterically, as a threat. I didn't know what to do. Should I obey the man, should I flee, should I fight against them and save my family? Arrrgh! I was so confused... –COME ON, YOU, STUPID JEWS!!! -shouted the man again to make me react. I had no choice. They were a lot of people, so if I fought against them, they would piss me off, but if I ran away, they would get out their shotguns and they would execute me... The only chance I had was to obey them. –Come on, guys, we are going...- I said sarcastically, perfectly knowing nothing good would happen. My friends and my dad followed me like they had read my thoughts, and we entered the van.

By my surprise, the van was too much different than I thought. It was full of people of my town, and there were also a lot of people that I'd never seen before. That was very strange... Suddenly, a man with a lot of medallions entered the van. All the people immediately stood up straight, extended their right arm and hit their heels simultaneously when they saw him, so I did the same as them. At the end, they shouted in unison: *Heil!*. I didn't know what did this word mean, but I said that because I thought they would kill me.

The medallion man passed through the perfect corridor that the prisoners made between them, and he was sending mean looks to everyone, like he was killing all the people with his glance. Suddenly, one of the prisoners started whispering to his companion:-Hey, look at his moustache, only a German asshole like him would have it!- his companion started laughing, but, suddenly, the medallion man took his shotgun, pointed to the prisoners and said: -Hey, look at the balls you had to insult me, only Jew assholes like you would have them! Then, he pulled the trigger and shot them. They were dead... I was going to puke, but I didn't want to have the same luck as them... -You better don't have a lack of respect for us, Germany! -right after, he went to the main cabin.

About 30 minutes later, we left the van for a while. I think we were at a train station. Then, the medallion man appeared again, but he was with another person. He was a short man; he was 40 years old more or less. He also had a dark fringe and a moustache. All the people did the same sign as in the van and shouted: *Heil!* Five minutes later, a train passed, and the medallion man ordered us to enter the train. The fringe and moustache man also passed with us.

We were two hours in the train, and the medallion man and the fringe man were keeping an eye in each prisoner in the train. When I was in the train, I realised that there where people from all places and countries. France, Poland, Norway...even Germany! When the train stopped, we were in a place called Auschwitz.

All the people left the train forming in a single file, and the medallion man and the fringe man were at the beginning of the file. In front of us, there was a huge group of buildings. It was like a gigantic school or something like that. It was surrounded by a long gate, in which door was a sign that said: *Arbeit macht frei*, in capital letters. We passed through the main gate. The camp was full of soldiers, prisoners and tanks. Anything good was coming.

The soldiers obligated us to form a lot of perfect and symmetric files to let the *Kommandant* pass. But what is a *Kommandant*? What were the soldiers going to do with us? Why did the train stop at this camp? I didn't know anything!!! -I want to die...- I thought, miserably. But I was the only person who was confused. In fact, most of the people there was crying, shouting, lamenting her entire lifes. But, suddenly, the medallion man and the fringe man appeared. The medallion man, who I think people call "*Kommandant*", extended his right arm and hit his heels at the same time, and shouted: *Heil Hitler!* We all did the same as him, and also the fringe man did the sign, but he did not shout. Hitler...Heil Hitler... What did it mean? Why did all the people shout excepting the fringe man? Suddenly, all the ideas ordered perfectly in my mind. Gotcha! That fringe man was that supposed Hitler, and *Heil!* was something like a german word to worship him... or something like that. When the people stopped worshipping

him, the medallion man started walking between the prisoners, sending mean looks, just exactly like in the train. Suddenly, he pointed at a random man, and four soldiers went to chase him. The man was frightened, shocked, so he could not move and he finally was captured by the soldiers. The medallion man did the same with 4 more people, but, the fifth was different. She was a woman with two kids, and started running away from the soldiers. But it didn't work. The *Kommandant* held his shotgun and shot the woman. The four soldiers took the corpse away. Suddenly, Hitler started to laugh loudly, as his life depended on it. There was no doubt. Those soldiers were definitively mad. They were just killing innocent people for fun. After the homicide, they took four more random people, and then he came near me. Suddenly, I remembered when the soldiers entered my house. Should I stay, should I fight or should I go? In my house there were only four soldiers, but here there were hundreds. Thousands. Maybe millions. I couldn't fight against them, and I couldn't run away. I had to accept my destiny. I was going to die, it was a reality. The *Kommandant* was in front of me, but, just when he was going to point me, a person pushed the *Kommandant*. It was David. David Herzog. My best friend of all times. –RUN, MERETZ, RUN!!! - Shouted David, with firmness. I obeyed him, and I started to run away. I turned my head, and I saw how all the soldiers were hitting David. But he was smiling. Smiling for saving a friend. He raised his left hand and raised his thumb, in signal of victory. I ran directly to the main gate. The alarms started to sound, and some of the soldiers that were with David were chasing me. They were going to trap me, but, something unexpected happened. All the prisoners suddenly went against the German soldiers. Hitler started to shout in German, and hundreds of soldiers started to shoot against the prisoners. I was nearly reaching the main gate. Just a bit more...

Done. I finally passed the gate. As quick as I could, I tried to hide from the soldiers. I spent an entire night hiding from them. I could hear people suffering and being killed. Hours later, I could hear a smooth sound. It was something like... steam coming from a pot... but so much louder. Minutes later, the soldiers were carrying some corpses. I think I had lost my family...

When all the soldiers lost me of sight, I ran away from Auschwitz. On the way, I found a group of Jews that were trying to rebel against the German people. Our little army raised with the years and, finally, in 1945, we ended with the Auschwitz's camp.

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And that, my dear grandson, is the history of my life. –Grandpa... I think you have lived in very bad times for the human race... –said my grandson, sadly-

Yes, I know perfectly... But, when we stroke down Auschwitz, the European Union made this world better. Say thanks, grandson, because you live in very good times...

Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, human rights. What are those things? Do they exist? Now, now I think yes.

THE END

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