

**Vzpomínky Pavla Wenera – překlad vzdělávacího
materiálu Židovského muzea v Praze z českého do
anglického jazyka**

**Lauderova MŠ, ZŠ a gymnázium při Židovské obci
v Praze**

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Cyril Janeček 2014/2015, 5.O

Abstrakt/Abstract

Tato seminární práce je překlad vzpomínek židovského pamětníka Pavla Wernera, který přežil holokaust. Skládá se ze dvou přeložených textů – Rodina Pavla Wernera a Vzpomínky Pavla Wernera.

V první části svého textu Werner popisuje členy své rodiny. Druhá část se zabývá jeho vzpomínkami na holokaust a válku. V ní autor vysvětluje, jak se postupem času zvětšovala nenávist vůči Židům, a popisuje své zážitky z Terezína, Osvětimi a z pochodu smrti, který se mu málem stal osudným.

Tento překlad bude použit ke vzdělávacím účelům v oddělení pro vzdělávání a kulturu Židovského muzea v Praze, z něhož pochází originál.

My seminar paper is a translation of memories of a holocaust survivor, Pavel Werner. It contains two files – The Family of Pavel Werner and Memories of Pavel Werner.

In the first part Werner describes the members of his family. The second part concerns his memories of the holocaust and the war. It explains how the hatred towards Jews increased in time. It also describes his experiences from Terezín and Auschwitz. His worst experience he speaks of was the death march, which was almost fatal to him.

This translation will be used for educational purposes in the department for education and culture of the Jewish Museum in Prague, which provided the original Czech text.

Klíčová slova/Keywords

Holocaust, testimony, transport, selection, prisoner, Jews, Auschwitz, concentration camp

Holokaust, svědectví, transport, selekce, vězeň, Židé, Osvětim, koncentrační tábor

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1 Úvod/Introduction

Tuto seminární práci jsem si vybral především proto, že je v angličtině, k níž mám velmi dobrý vztah a chtěl bych se jí věnovat v budoucnu. Je to pro mě první delší překlad a myslím, že mi velmi obohatí slovní zásobu.

Myslím si, že překládání bude nelehké, protože se v textu budou bezpochyby objevovat výrazy a fráze, které neznám. Hodně se mi práce ulehčí, přečtu-li si nějaké články o holocaustu v angličtině, abych se seznámil lépe s jazykem, který bych měl použít.

I chose this seminar paper mainly because it is in English, a language to which I feel very close and which I would like to focus on also in the future. It is my first long translation and I think it will enrich my vocabulary a lot.

I think that the process of translation will be quite difficult because there will be many expressions and phrases I do not know. If I read a couple of articles in English, concerning the holocaust, it should help me with the translation a lot. It will probably get me to know the appropriate kind of language, better.

2 The family of Pavel Werner

Pavel Werner was born in Pardubice on 3 January 1932 to Ella and Karel Werner. Pavel's mother Ella (born 2 May 1906) came from Náchod. His father Karel (born 9 February 1890) came from Poland and worked as a salesman for a company named Kudrnáč Náchod. He sold products made of rubber to shoemakers.



Picture 1 Parents Ella and Karl Werner

Pavel had a younger sister Lenka (born 28 May 1935). The whole family was deported from Pardubice to Terezín in the transport of 9 December 1942. Lenka died in Terezín on 1 April 1944. Pavel and his parents were then deported to Auschwitz II – Birkenau in May 1944. There they were accommodated in the so-called family camp¹. Both parents died in Auschwitz.

¹ The Family camp in Auschwitz II-Birkenau: In September 1943 five thousand prisoners deported to Auschwitz, who were not subjected to selection, were accommodated in the special department of Birkenau called BIIB. In their files was written: „6 months of special treatment“, this meant they would be gassed after this period of time. Other similar transports arrived from Terezín in December 1943 and May 1944. Three thousand-seven hundred-and ninety-two prisoners from the first transport were gassed after the six months' period. A small part of prisoners from the following transports passed the selection and avoided the gas chamber. However the rest died there.

3 Pavel Werner's Memories

I was born in January 1932 to the family of a traveling salesman. My father came from Poland and was quite religious. My mother was a typical Czech Jew, religion in her family played no part. I visited the synagogue with my father several times, but besides that it meant nothing to me. We were neither poor nor rich. We had a nicely furnished flat in a block of flats in Pardubice. I went to the first and the second grade of elementary school in Pardubice. I was a good pupil.



**Picture 2 Pavel with his sister
Lenka**

I remember the arrival of German soldiers very well. The German heavy equipment rumbled down the main road which was near our flat. At the end of my second grade I discovered some anti-semitic drawings in a shop window near a park. – It was before entrance to some streets was banned – It was a shop, which had been occupied by Czech Fascists (members of the political movement Vljajka – The Flag). There were drawings of faces with big curved noses and some disgusting story. I already realized that Germans represented a danger. Because of that whenever I saw boys from *Hitlerjugend*,² I hid immediately – even though I didn't wear the Star

² **The Hitler Youth** (Hitler-Jugend, abbreviation HJ): A semi-military organization for boys aged 14 to 18 years. It prepared them to be members of NSDAP. From 1939 the membership was mandatory. At the end of war HJ forces were known for their brutality and determination in the fights against Allies. There was a similar organization for girls called League of German Girls (Bund Deutscher Mädel)

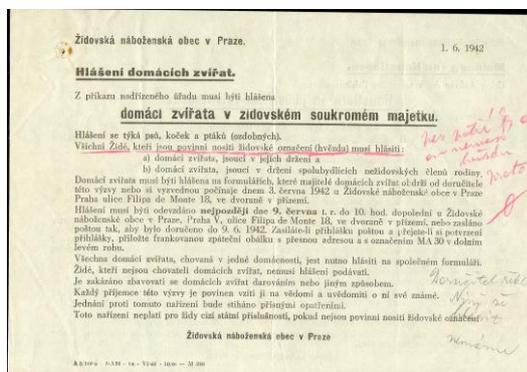
of David sewed on my clothes. And neither me, nor anybody else from my family looked like a typical Jew.



Picture 3

And then the situation started to change radically. I finished the second year of elementary school and then we moved to Pardubice suburbs. I had to wear the Star and I wasn't allowed to go to a regular school anymore. My fellow Jews and I secretly attended classes at a flat of a Rabbi near the synagogue in the city centre. They weren't regular classes though. There were kids of all ages and our teacher was a young girl, probably a secondary school graduate. The route to the school was really complicated. I couldn't use the shortest way to get there, because Jews weren't allowed to. I had to travel a very long distance to get there.

We had to move to a new house. And although it had only two rooms – a kitchen and a bedroom without fitting – I still liked it. We had a garden and despite the fact that Jews weren't allowed to breed any animals we had rabbits and a cat.



Picture 4 A mandatory report of domestic animals in Jewish property

Suddenly cookies started to be baked in our house. My parents wrapped them into waxed paper. At first I didn't know why they did this but soon I understood. In autumn 1942 we were moved to Terezín in a transport. The gathering place was in the building of a secondary business school in Pardubice, which was near the railway station. The route from our street to the gathering place was long, but fortunately the housekeeper lent us a cart. He walked in a respectful distance behind us and when we got near the school we left the cart and carried our things in hand. After that the housekeeper took his cart home.

The journey was alright. We travelled by a passenger train. It got worse when we disembarked the train. The railway hadn't been finished all the way to Terezín. We had to travel on foot from Bohušovice to Terezín (3km). It was actually my first suffering. Even though it wasn't winter yet, I was wearing winter clothes. I carried a heavy backpack and I cried that I couldn't go any further. My father told me off and pointed out that my sister Lenka kept going patiently.



Picture 5 A transport walking through Bohušovice

The way I see my stay in Terezín is affected by my stays in other camps – Auschwitz II Birkenau, Mauthausen, Melk and Gunskirchen.³ You could survive in Terezín, unless you were old or got seriously ill. That was fatal to my sister Lenka

³ **Mauthausen, Melk and Gunskirchen:** German and Austrian concentration camps.

who caught meningitis and died of it. Later I told myself it was surely a “better death” than to suffocate in a gas chamber.

At first I lived with my mother, sister and other women, but then I was moved to a boys’ section - *heim*⁴ L 417. I helped my mother to keep the toilets clean. Her task was to check after everybody if everything was clean. I liked doing it because I felt important and I could be bossy to the older kids. I wandered a lot around the Hannover barracks, where my father lived. Precisely speaking around the washroom, where I looked for razor packages for my collection. Also I secretly (my mother didn’t know about it) helped one man who in a small space in the street separated trash from paper, which he then compressed. I searched there for the envelopes from razors as well. My father worked in a carpenter workshop. After work he made shelves from “saved” material. He then got food in exchange for the shelves. The best delicacy was the bread cake. Under normal circumstances nobody would like it, but there it was something heavenly.



Picture 6 A gate to Auschwitz I – basic camp

On the 15th of May 1944 my parents and I were transferred to Auschwitz in a transport. And that was a terrible journey. We were loaded into a truck for cattle. It

⁴ **Heim** is short for the German word Kinderheim, which means “children’s home.” Individual houses and quarters, in which kids were accommodated, were called this in Terezín. Each Heim had its own number.

was totally crowded and we had only one bucket of water for all of us and a bucket which served as a toilet. We arrived in Auschwitz II – Birkenau during the night. I remember the night very well. A lot of light everywhere and terrifying people who shouted while unloading us from the train. Right after we'd arrived at the family camp BIIB⁵ a prisoner from the Kommando that escorted us wanted to trade shoes with my father. The prisoner told him that they would be taken away from him anyway. My father refused.

The accommodation in the block was terrible in comparison with Terezín. “Blocks” were buildings without windows, originally used as stables for horses. Every block accommodated up to six hundred prisoners, who slept on plank beds in four levels. Up to seven people on each plank bed next to each other. I lived in a block with my father. There was a Polish Kapo⁶ running around and shouting at us that we were no longer in Terezín and that we were going to end up in a chimney. I didn't know what he meant by that chimney but I understood later.

I didn't spend much time at the family camp. It was abolished in July 1944.



**Picture 7 A selection on a ramp in
Auschwitz II – Birkenau**

⁵From September 1943 to July 1944 a part of the Auschwitz complex was the so-called **family camp**. Five thousand prisoners were transferred from Terezín to Auschwitz (274 children under age of 15). After arrival they didn't have to undergo the selection. Families weren't separated and the prisoners' hair was not shaved. “Sonderbehandlung” (“special treatment”), however was written in their personal papers, which meant they would be gassed after six months. In the following transports in a period between December 1943 and May 1944 another 12 500 prisoners arrived. They were all gassed after six months.

⁶ **Kapo**: A guard chosen from prisoners

A selection⁷ preceded the devastation. We stood naked in a line in front of doctor Josef Mengele⁸. My father walked in the same line as me. Mengele sent me to one side and had my tattooed number written down. My father was sent to the other side, which meant the gas chamber and death. I was sent to the male camp with about 90 other boys aged from 14 to 17 soon after the selection. There were only three of us who were not 14 years old yet. I was only twelve back then. From the rest of the prisoners from the family camp they chose a few hundred to work in Germany (they were sent to different concentration camps). And all the others, men, women and children were sent to gas chambers and then burnt in crematoriums during the next three days. The male camp was located near the gas chambers and crematoriums. We saw the flames coming out of the chimneys and smelled the smoke of burnt human bodies.



Picture 8 Auschwitz II – Birkenau

In the male camp the so-called concentration camp D other boys and I were hitched to farm carts also known as Rollwagen. They were farm carts with wooden wheels covered with metal tyres. Normally farm carts like that are dragged by horses, now we replaced them. We moved, loaded, stacked and transported all sort of

⁷ **A selection:** Separation of prisoners into two groups after their arrival at the concentration camp. One group was intended for work and the other one for immediate elimination in gas chambers. Doctors of SS performed the selections.

⁸⁸ **Josef Mengele:** (16th of March 1911, Günzburg – 7th of February 1979, Embu): A war criminal, a Nazi doctor who performed experiments on twins, Jewish women and others. He was also present during most of the selections, where it was his function to decide who would live and who would die. After the end of the Second World War he kept hiding under different identities in South America and was never captured.

different things. My cart fortunately had a kind Kapo. Despite the fact that he was a German wearing a green triangle (a criminal) he behaved humanely to us. He never beat us despite the fact that like all kapos he also had a stick.



Picture 9 Children prisoners in Auschwitz

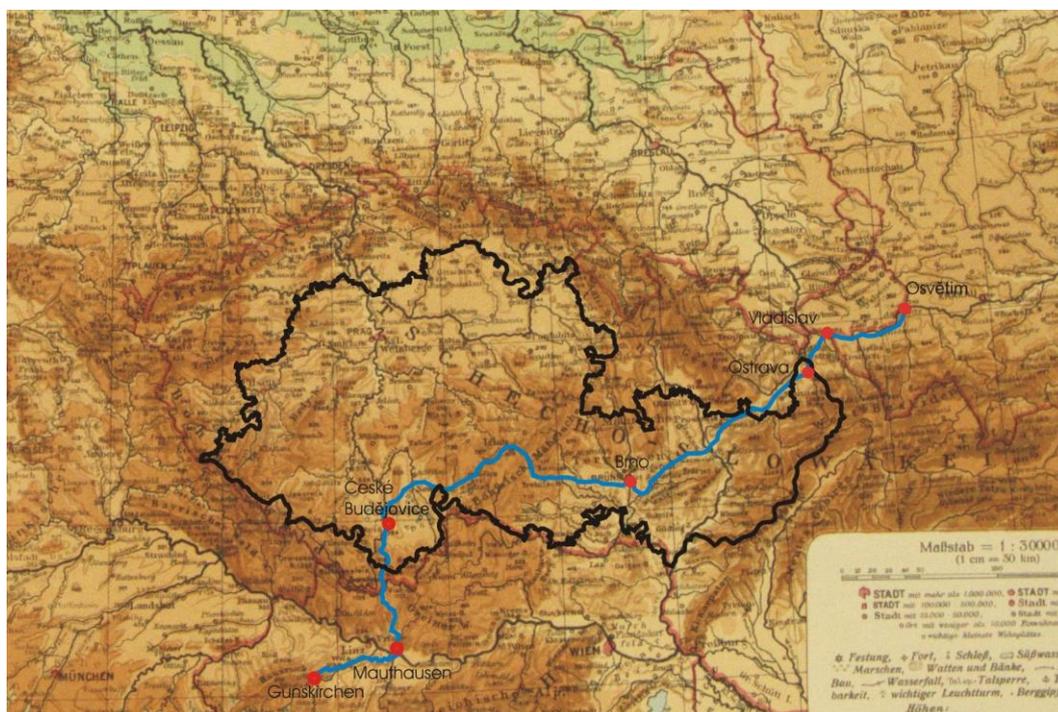
The worst thing was that we all suffered from horrible hunger. The hunger was so agonizing that one could not think about anything but food – not about any speciality but about an ordinary thin slice of plain bread and a cup of hot tea (especially in winter). At nights I didn't dream about home but about bread. There was also the fear that I would not pass a selection and would be gassed. I underwent two more selections. I remember crying once that I would not pass.

What was the day routine in Auschwitz? In the morning there was a line-up for “breakfast” which was basically a bowl of lukewarm coffee substitute. Then work, in the afternoon return to the camp and lunch (a bowl of turnip soup). Then free time and dinner (a small piece of dark solid Komissar brot) sometimes with half a slice of salami, sometimes a teaspoon of jam, sometimes a bit of margarine,



Picture 10 Female block in Auschwitz II - Birkenau

everything over and over again). In the evening there was a line-up for a roll call. There the SS-Blockführer checked if no one was missing. Sometimes we stood there for hours. Also we occasionally had to march and sing.



Picture 11 The route of the death march with which Pavel walked

In January 1945 the liquidation of Auschwitz started. They wanted to leave the children in the camp, but we were too scared to stay there and made our way to the march. If we had stayed in the camp we would have been freed 10 days later by the Red Army. We would have been spared all the terrible suffering during the three days of the death march to the train, a journey in open and crowded trucks to Mauthausen, from there to Melk and back to Mauthausen. The camp was so crowded that we had to sleep under a circus tent. And then in April 1945 the last death march to Günskirchen not far from Wels. That was the worst. The camp in the forest was overcrowded. In the houses, we could sit only on the ground with our legs stretched out one in another. It was raining outside and it was very cold. We drank water from puddles, children had no access to food – prisoners fought for the food and we didn't have enough strength to participate in the fight. Another seven to ten days and I and other boys would have been dead. Fortunately on the 4th of May 1945 the camp was

freed by Americans and I survived. I came back to the Czech Republic at the end of June. I was all alone. For one year I lived with the Červinka family, they had known my parents and were very kind. I was put into the fourth grade, where I belonged by age. I had to work really hard, but I managed. Our class teacher Mr. Salivar liked me and held a protective hand over me. I was apprenticed as a shoemaker in Zlín. Later I graduated from the University of Economics in the field of foreign trade. I worked in Mexico and Bolivia where I was responsible for selling Czech cars. Now I am retired and I am the vice-chairman of the Terezín initiative, an organization which unites former Jewish prisoners of concentration camps. I have a daughter and three grandchildren. Sometimes I give lectures to young people and I tell them what I had to go through as a Jewish child during the Second World War.

4 Conclusion – A reflection about the process of translation

I had quite a hard time translating this text. There were many words I was unfamiliar with. In order to use proper phrases I had to read several articles concerning the holocaust. Some small parts were so complicated I had to spend a lot of time on them. For example I had to find out which article (the/a) I was supposed to use. It depended if there was only one specific transport or there were many. I read through several texts about the transports going to Auschwitz. I spent a lot of time on that one article but in the end I didn't find what I was looking for and had to guess.

It was also very difficult to create a translation which would flow naturally, mainly because the original Czech text was quite clumsy. Some sentences in the original don't sound right and some of them aren't very clear. It's very hard to translate a sentence, which doesn't make sense, or has a double meaning.

This was my first longer translation, but I'd translated a few shorter texts. From my experience with translations I came to the conclusion that translating a text from a foreign language into your native one is much easier than the opposite just because you use your native language in a more natural way. Although it was very difficult, this translation was undoubtedly a valuable experience.

5 Zdroje/Sources

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