

Celeste Brzezinski

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A “Very Big” Invasion

It was cold out, the chilling winds of autumn rolling in. They sat around the table, the skies outside filled with dark grey clouds. No one saw the planes overhead before it was too late.

On November 2nd, 1942, the Nazis rounded up the Jews from about 200 small towns. They beat those who tried to fight back, killed those that couldn't keep up, and dragged whoever was left to Bialystock to be stored. Szymon would never see his home again. Thousands of men, women, children, and the elderly were all taken to Bialystock. All of them were on the road to Auschwitz to be worked to death or exterminated. Bialystock, unfortunately for the Germans, was not a well-fortified, borderline impregnable fortress with no ways out. There was a spec of hope.

Beyond hope, through the dark and the still of the city, crawling through hundreds of yards of shit and coming out the other end, my grandfather, his father, his sister, his brother, and a family friend were the only ones to escape. His mother, aunts, uncles, cousins, classmates, friends all died.

Through forests, grasslands, and hills they hid from nazi patrols, traveling at night. They hiked 595 kilometers, 370 miles through the harsh Polish winter, dodging and hiding from nazi patrols. The friend wasn't so lucky, however. He went to join the Partisans and fight for Polish

independence and died soon after. But they made it, arriving at the farming town of Chrabole, where Dyonizy lived.

They stayed for what felt like an eternity, hiding in the attic when the Nazis came. Dyonizy and his brothers went to a neighboring farm to ask for help hiding them. They dug a 1.5 meter by 1.5-meter hole, in which Szymon and his brother Mayer would hide. Unfortunately, their grandfather and great aunt would have to stay behind, living in the dark, dank, cramped attic for an untold amount of time. Eventually, however, misfortune found them.

While Szymon and Mayer hid in the hole, the Nazis came to the farms looking for Jews. While they were safe, hidden under a barn, the rest of the family wasn't. They couldn't stop the Nazis when they came. They went into the house, turned it upside down, and when the man who searched the house came back they knew they were in trouble. Thinking on their feet, they offered a bribe. Some money, several family heirlooms, some gold coins. It was enough to suffice for them, but they would never be safe thereafter being found once. They hid outside the farm with Mayor and Szymon. Cold, damp, starving, but at least alive.

Szymon and Mayor heard about the close call with their parents. They knew they weren't safe staying in the area. Once they know there are Jews in the area they'll tear apart the whole region to find them. Together, they went to another farm and found some willing to hide them. They dug a 2 meter by 2-meter hole. It took 2 days to get to the new farm. Sleepless nights, hours spent terrified, looking over their shoulders. They made it and hid there for 22 months. They were all starving, but the aunt was suffering the most. What little food they'd get was given to her.

On August 10th, 1944, the Russian Army liberated that region of Poland. They left immediately, going to Mexico City. America wasn't accepting any survivors and as such there

was no other option. That's where they remained until he passed in 2011, and Mayor passed in 2020. They were lucky. 250000 to 300000 survived the Holocaust (REMAINING JEWISH POPULATION OF EUROPE IN 1945).

Work Cited

“REMAINING JEWISH POPULATION OF EUROPE IN 1945.” *United States Holocaust*

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