

András and Károly Brichta

András and Károly Brichta were born in 1935 in Ujpest (today a part of Budapest), Hungary, to Margit and Laszlo Brichta.



Laszlo with his twin sons, 1935 (courtesy of Yad Vashem)



Margit with András and Károly, 1938 (courtesy of Yad Vashem)

In 1943 Laszlo was sent to the Hungarian Army Labor Battalion along with many of the Jewish men in the area. After Germany occupied Hungary in 1944, Margit and the twins were among the large deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Upon their arrival at Birkenau, András and Károly were separated from their mother and sent to Block 15(?), where Dr. Josef Mengele would carry out his medical experiments on twins. Because they were twins, they were spared the certain death awaiting other child their age. András and Károly were relatively fortunate; the experiments performed on them were not as severe as those performed on other twins. Thus their lives became a protected routine of games and discussions that were sometimes interrupted by blood tests and measurements. The twins used in Dr. Mengele's experiments were fed better in order to maintain their physical well-being, so András and Károly did not suffer from hunger.

The twins' mother, Margit, remained in Birkenau, and occasionally the boys managed to see her going off to forced labor with a group of prisoners. After a few months in Birkenau, their mother fell ill and continued to grow weaker.

In his testimony, András described the chaos permeating Auschwitz-Birkenau after the Nazi officers fled the camp at the end of January 1945. Electricity and water were cut off, and every so often, German soldiers who had escaped from the front would arrive at the camp and continue to threaten the lives of the prisoners.

"I already knew then that the front was approaching... the Germans were escaping, and already for a few days the ovens were not active... it was a retreat, they jumped onto jeeps, motorcycles, trucks..."

"Between the time the Germans left and the arrival of the Red Army, a group of (German) soldiers came as well; they took us to work in the Kanada camp... it was terribly cold... I had clothing that was full of holes with short sleeves...when the German soldier looked the other way, I saw a sweater, I took it, and I was not shot..."



The sweater András took from Kanada (courtesy of Yad Vashem)

The twins found their mother, who was mortally ill in the women's block, and they cared for her until the arrival of the Red Army soldiers:

"The door of the barracks opened and a soldier came in... dressed in completely different attire.... He entered, and there was [in the barracks] a kind of wave of women who were really skeletons, then they said: 'Russky'... They went to him and he stood there, and he did not know what to say... it was clear even to me that we had been liberated."

In early May 1945, Margit and her twin sons returned to Budapest where they were reunited with Laszlo, who had managed to escape from the Labor Battalions and hide until the end of the war.

The sweater that András took from the clothing storehouse after the flight of the Germans remained in his possession as a symbol of the end of the war. Today, it is part of Yad Vashem's artifact collection. András Brichta's (now Motti Alon) tattoo number is 17456. Károly Brichta's number is 17457.

Margit with her twins sons in Eretz, Israel, date unknown (courtesy of Yad Vashem)

