

From the Testimony of Zvi Katz 'We Got Up and Saw that the Guards Had Gone'

Zvi Katz was born in 1921 in Kovno, Lithuania; from 1941 onwards he lived in the Kovno ghetto, whence he was deported to the Landsberg labor camp. He remained there until he was liberated by the Americans. Katz returned to Poland to look for relatives, and then went to the DP camps in Germany. From there he immigrated to Israel with the help of the *Bericha* movement.

"When we got up in the morning, the guards had disappeared.... A Red Cross car arrived from the nearby town and took us into the town. There were about 150-200 of us. We went quietly, frightened that things might still not be over... We reached the town and they put us in a large barn. I didn't want to be shut up and I went outside. I reached the town center. Suddenly a convoy of tanks and armored vehicles drove up. There was a huge black soldier on an armored vehicle! They threw us packets of cigarettes. American soldiers surrounded me and pointed to the death's head symbol of the SS on their chests, and asked me if I'd seen any SS men...

I ran as fast as I could back to the barn. I burst in and shouted: "The Americans are here!" Nobody moved - they all stared at me with an apathetic and unbelieving gaze. I shouted out my news again, and then some young men approached me and asked me not to start a panic. They began to interrogate me: What did they look like? Was I sure? And then I remembered and I took out the packet of Camel cigarettes from my pocket, and asked "What's this?" Wild jubilation broke out, and everyone ran outside...."

Source: Yad Vashem Archives 03-4433, p. 27 (Hebrew)