

Camp Songs

Poetry by Aleksander Kulisiewicz; English translation
from the Polish by Katarzyna Jerzak
Permission to use the translation was granted by the author.

[1] Black Boehm

Both by day and by night,
I smoke corpses with all my might!
I let out a black black smoke,
For I am the black black Boehm!

And young ladies and old biddies,
Little kiddies, too, why not!
A hundred chimneys would be nice,
So genau like Birkenau.

Happy souls! Anything goes!
Aber Juden sind nicht da!
Else in nineteen forty-three
SS-men will come to me.

Then all healthy, filled with joy,
I'll smoke by day and by night.
I'll send up a greasy smoke,
I'll send up the black black Boehm.

[2] The Corpse Carrier's Tango

Oh, that bloody pest, the damned Germania,
Tortures men now four years in a row.
In the crematorium she roasts corpses:
They are warm and so cozy there...
Because there one person bakes another,
Neither baker nor butcher is he;
So my boy, hurry into the oven!
Immer langsam und sicher und froh!

After the first poke you're feeling better,
They punch you in the snout but you laugh...
The third kick's the one that really sticks,
And the fourth one makes you wet your pants...
Five dark scoundrels kick you in the kidneys,
Brother now spit out six bloody teeth!
Number seven's heel goes in your belly!
Only then are things just truly great!

Delightful Lady Death! Okay!
Poor old thing, she's lonely.
She's got her eye on you, yippee!
She eats you up so eagerly...
Her to the cellar you invite,
And kick the bucket there;
Soon, too, my dear,
You'll give off a stench
In a deadly tête-à-tête!

In a minute, brother, you're in heaven,
And you swallow two warm doughnuts there.
Three nice angels sweetly scrub your bottom,
They cry out: So ein huebscher Arsch!...
The fourth angel is the darling Ania
She's pouring five shots down her stupid throat.
With ten angels sleep, my little baby...
Sleep in heaven, sleep now: c'est la vie!

[3] Heil, Sachsenhausen!

I am a wild man, a half savage Pole,
Scheissen Polack, clod; scheissen Polack, clod.
Und warum denn, warum denn to Africa?
Here's my colony!

They bought you like a slave,
Bought you lock, stock and barrel.
Blood drips from your mouth and
Alles Scheiss ist egal.

Ay, Sachsenhausen,
Exotic colony, sweltering
Germania richtig wild,
Heil Sachsenhausen.

Our legs as thin as bamboo shoots,
Death's heads look like blackened cactuses.
Heil, heil es lebe Kulturkampf.

Mädchen I will find for myself,
Polack that I am.
Gibt's denn so was? Oh, you beasts!
She's got pretty eyes, she's got pretty eyes.

From this *Mädchen* mommy
And the stupid daddy
Will come checkered kiddies,
will come checkered kiddies,
Schwartz und weiss und rot...

Ay, Sachsenhausen!
Heavenly paradise you are
All humanity adores you.
Heil Sachsenhausen!

And if tomorrow I should croak,
I will save a high kick for you.
Heil, Heil! Es lebe Kulturkampf!

[4] Mister C.

It's the second year, my dear God,
And the stubborn *Hakenkreuz*.
Can't be shaken off our backs,
Otherwise it's on your knees.

Such a great terrible *Führer*,
Such a mighty *Räubergoy*,
With his head chock full of garbage,
While his bloody *Volk* roars Heil!

But Mister C. puffs his big cigar,
Mister C. puffs out some smoke;
While Europe falls and crumbles
But he is cool, he's as cool, as cool can be.

Mister C. snuffs out his cigar,
And he spits on Adolf's *Sieg*,
He'll treat him to a funeral,
Maybe even in nineteen forty-three.

Maybe, oh maybe, oh maybe—
But who can really know, who can really know,
truly know for sure?
Well maybe, poor devil, we'll see,
Especially the English sea...

Yoom pom tiu dee dee dee yoom pah.
Yoom pom tiu dee dee dee yoo—
Maybe, maybe—who can really know,
Maybe with some help from the Eastern wind?
Maybe with some help from the Eastern wind?

[5] Adolf's Farewell to the World

By Volga's waters, chasing the Russkies,
The noble troops are fleeing.
Und immer forward and *immer weiter*,
The Russkies chasing the Fritzes.
Und immer forward and *immer weiter*,
The Russkies chasing the Fritzes.

Farewell to Moscow, farewell Samara,
My Leningrad in the distance.
The party's over when in Crimea
They'll beat the crap out of my pants.
The party's over when in Crimea
They'll beat the crap out of my pants.

Farewell my mountains, my Ural Mountains,
And you, too, Ruddy Armada.
You're manly Stalin, Stalin of steel,
Oh, I am the impotent Adolf!
You're manly Stalin, Stalin of steel,
And I am the impotent Adolf.
Und immer forward und immer weiter...

Prashtchay dear Europe, my gracious Europe,
Forgive my Arbeit und Freude.
Some other time, some other place,
I might yet marry you, darling!
Some other time, some other place,
I might yet marry you, darling!

Adieu, my virgins, lovely Kraut virgins,
Who will now tell me my fortune?
When I was a boy, so proud and saintly,
I never stuck it in the wrong place!

Sieg Heil, sieg Heil my Generalgouvernecrement!
You great and magnificent province,
Your pension shall be ever so handsome,
For Goebbels and for my Bromberg.

A guitar plunked, Germania sighed,
Victoria froze on the tundra.
And Adolf's axis broke like Bardia,
And once again he's an outcast.
And once again he's an outcast.

Ghetto Songs

Poetry by Mordecai Gebirtig;
English translation from the Yiddish by Bret Werb

[6] Shifrele's Portrait (*Shifreles Portret*)

On the wall, to the left of my bed,
Hangs my daughter Shifrele's portrait.
Often, in the middle of the night,
When I think of her, and miss her so,
I see how she looks at me,
I hear what she says:

"Daddy dear! I know that you're sad,
But the war won't last too very long;
Soon I shall return to you—
Peace will soon knock at the door."
Smiling lovingly, so speaks
Shifrele's portrait.

[7] Moments of Despair (*Minutn Fun Yiesh*)

A year now of wartime,
How ghastly, how vast!
How can people live through this?
How can they endure?

A year of persecution,
Of hardship, of pain,
What will become of us?
What will be our fate?

Futile our prayers,
We've slipped past God's reach,
The heavens are locked tight
As the core of the earth.

The heavens are locked tight,
And fearfully dark;
Without question or doubt,
This tortures our hearts.

Without question or doubt
The secret's disclosed:
There is no more justice,
There is no more God.

No peace or solace,
Just hardship and pain.
What will be become of us?
What will be our fate?

[8] Tolling Bells (*Glokn Klang*)

The bells are tolling—
Gling Glong!
Gling Glong!
Like someone were asking:
How long, now? How long?
How long, now? How long?
Will man be a beast?
Will man be so shameless?
Will man be a mere tool
In the hands of the Devil?
How long, now? How long?
How long shall he reign?

The bells are tolling—
Gling Glong!
Gling Glong!
Like someone were answering:
Not long, now! Not long!
Not long, now! Not long!
Will the Devil make merry—

To him we owe thanks
That the world is on fire—
Gling Glong! Gling Glong!
Not long, now! Not long!
His downfall will come!

[9] Our Springtime (*Undzer Frilinge*)

Springtime in the trees, in the fields, in the forest,
But here, in the ghetto, it's autumnal and cold,
But here, in the ghetto, it's cheerless and bleak,
Like the house of a mourner—in grief.

Springtime! Outside, the fields have been planted,
Here, around us, they've sowed only despair,
Here, around us, guarded walls rise,
Watched like a prison, through the darkest night.

Springtime, already! It will soon be May,
But here, the air's filled with gunpowder and lead.
The hangman has plowed with his bloody sword
One giant graveyard—the earth.

[10] A Ray of Sunshine (*A Zuniker Shtral*)

A ray of sunshine has appeared on my bed,
Of cherished springtime, the very first herald—
And gently it calls me awake:
“Get up, man! The day breaks,
the rooster is crowing!
Springtime, the regent of love and delight,
Approaches from earth's every corner.”

“Get up, man! The day breaks!”
the beam of light tells me,
And warms me with love, with a tender caress;
“Arise now, and spread the good news!
Make the word known over forest and field,
Let every bird know, every man in the world—
News of salvation long waited!”

“Get up, man! The day breaks!”
the beam of light tells me,
“We'll soon walk with joy, in a bouquet of light—
The promise of springtime is peace!
Its bright glance will soon bring the flowers to field,
And joyous and free, soon, will be the whole world—
For everyone! Even you Jews.”

[11] Moments of Confidence (*Minutn Fun Bitokhn*)

Jews, let us be cheerful!
It won't be long, I hope—
The war will soon be over,
And soon their end will come.
Be cheerful and don't worry!
Don't carry on in grief;
Have patience and have confidence—
Take hard times in your stride.

Remember: patience, confidence—
Don't let slip away
Those ancient weapons that unite
Our people to this day!

Revel, dance, you hangmen!
It won't be long, I hope.
Once there was a Haman,
His fate awaits you, too.

Revel, dance, you hangmen,
Jews know what suffering means;
The most demanding labor
Won't tire us in the least.
“Sweep!” you tell us? So we'll sweep!
But as long as you remain,
There is no point to sweeping—
This place will not come clean!

“Wash!” you tell us? So we'll wash!
But Cain's red mark,
And the blood from Abel's heart,
Cannot be washed away.
Drive us from our homes!
Cut away our beards!
Jews, let us be cheerful—
We'll see them go to hell!