

Following a death march, Haim Kuznitsky was liberated near Neustadt-Glewe, a subcamp of the Ravensbrück concentration camp complex in Germany. Here he reflects on suffering from illness shortly after liberation:

“On the third day after liberation a Red Cross car pulled up and a British officer got out. He told me in fluent German that he would take me to a shower and give me clean clothes. Until then I had still been wearing the striped clothes of a Katzetnik [concentration camp prisoner]... I was given white bread with butter and jam and sweet cocoa. I ate as though I had never before tasted these things. It had been years since I had consumed such delicacies. Afterward I washed in a real shower with hot water and soap. After the shower they sprinkled DDT powder over me and gave me a German army uniform to wear (the eagle and the swastika were still sewn onto the chest)...I suddenly threw up all the marvelous food I had eaten earlier. The next morning I could not even lift my head.... I had a fever of more than 40 degrees [104 degrees Fahrenheit]...An ambulance arrived...In the hospital they stripped me in order to wash me down, but I couldn't stand or even sit. A nurse sat with her back against mine as a prop while another nurse washed my front. Then they switched and washed my back. They then put me on a scale, and the nurse who weighed me called out to her colleague: ‘Can you believe it, only 28½ kilos [62 pounds]?’”

Source: Kleiman, Y. and Springer-Aharoni, N, eds. The Anguish of Liberation – Testimonies from 1945. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1995.

Upon liberation, survivors had to deal with the effects of severe illness before they could face questions about how to build a new life. For example, at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany:

- 75% of the 60,000 people liberated required hospitalization.
- 20,000 suffered from dysentery and other intestinal diseases.
- 10,000 developed tuberculosis (a disease of the lungs).
- 3,500 came down with typhus (a life-threatening bacterial infection).
- 500 people per day died in the first weeks after liberation.



April 1945, Two survivors after liberation, Bergen-Belsen, Germany

Source: Yad Vashem, <https://bit.ly/3cbGqgn>