Hitler and his master butcher, Adolf Eichmann, had three sound reasons for making Auschwitz the most closely guarded concentration camp in the world.

They wanted to keep their victims hidden from the rest of the world. And — infinitely more important — they wanted to keep their atrocities secret. These monstrous acts would be remembered for ever in the history books.

Thirdly, the Jews would resist if they suspected their fate. And that would hamper efficient murder and robbery.

I was aware of this when I decided to risk everything in an attempt to escape. I was aware, too, that if I succeeded I could warn 1,000,000 Hungarian Jews that Eichmann had planned to exterminate them.

And I knew well the obstacles facing me. I had spent them for two years.

EYE-WITNESS...

of the Eichmann horror

by Dr. Rudolf Vrba

Adolf Eichmann had ordered the murder rate in Auschwitz to be stepped up to 10,000 a day.

Rudolph Vrba, a Czech Jew, had been thrown into Auschwitz when he was 18 and had seen 1,200,000 of his people gassed and cremated.

Early in 1944 he learned that the Nazis were planning to exterminate the million Jews living in Hungary. He determined to escape to warn Hungarian Zionist leaders.

Auschwitz-Birkenau — to give it its full title — was divided into an outer camp and an inner camp, in which we slept. I worked in the Birkenau section, where the exterminations took place.

The inner camp was guarded by a trench six yards wide and five yards deep. It was filled with water. Then came two barbed wire high-voltage fences, five yards high.

Arc lamps played on the inner camp constantly at night and 88 men with machine-guns surveyed it from watch towers.

In the morning these guards stood down after we had been herded to work, and fresh guards manned the perimeter of the outer camp, which was about eight miles long.

The approaches to the outer perimeter were absolutely barren. No prisoner could cross them in daylight without being caught in cross-fire from the towers.

If a prisoner were reported missing from the inner camp, night, the outer towers were manned and reinforcements — 3,000 men and 260 dogs — were called in to seal off the entire area.

This massive guard stayed on duty for three days and nights while dogs and troops outside contained the camp. If the prisoner had not been recaptured by that time, it was presumed that he had escaped beyond the camp.

The guard was dismantled and the matter was handed over to the Gestapo outside.

A Jewish French officer, Charles Unglick, had stolen several thousand gold dollars from gas chamber victims — dollars which otherwise the 88 man would have stolen. An 88 man told us he would smuggle us out of the camp in a lorry in exchange for the dollars.

I turned up at the appointed time, but there was no sign of the lorry. Another prisoner - Dr. Andrej Milin, now practising in Bratislava — offered me a bowl of soup in his hut and the temptation was too much for me.

I ate the soup, and when I came out again, the lorry had gone and gone — with Unglick, without me.

FURY

At first I was furious with myself for being greedy. But that night I realised I had been lucky — when Unglick’s bullet-ridden body was brought back.

The 88 man had driven him straight to his own garage, had shot him dead and had taken the dollars.

I decided I could escape only if I could hide in the outer camp for three days and nights, and make a break when the extermination
at last...

WITH THE WARNING
THAT COULD SAVE
ONE MILLION LIVES

o'clock on the afternoon of Monday, April 3, 1944. Most of the time we were watched by the SS or camp informers. But we finally managed it on Friday, April 7, after four unsuccessful attempts.

We slid into the cavity. The planks thudded into position over our heads. Our three-day nightmare had begun.

We had prepared for it well. We had stolen enough food and water to carry us through. And we had stuffed our pockets with a mixture of Russian tobacco and petrol.

ALARM

It gave off a smell which a man could not detect. But dogs hated it so much that they drove them away.

And then at last we heard the alarms going off. It sounded almost beautiful. Though, it meant the greatest danger.

The camp erupted. We heard the clatter of jackboots and the urgent yelping of the dogs. The shouts, the barking, the panic swelled all around us.

The dogs bounded over the planks, snuffling. The SS men sneaked after them. They went away, but 10 times they came back again.

The hours passed by in the darkness. We were much too nervous to eat or drink. For these days and nights we stood stock still, for the slightest noise could cost us our lives.

FREED

In the darkness we almost lost count of time. And then, after what seemed like a year, we heard the extra guards being withdrawn.

The Germans were convinced now that we were miles away.

On Monday night all was quiet, except for the rattle of gizels. In the crematorium slowly we eased aside the planks. There was nobody in sight.

We crawled on our bellies to escape well. The patrols were searching for us—but we were behind them.

For 10 days we marched towards the Slovak border 80 miles from Auschwitz. We travelled only by night and we robbed food from the fields.

Every step, indeed, was dangerous, for this was Slovakia which had been thoroughly Germanized. If any Poles were caught, helping us, they and their families would be shot.

And the German peasants were all armed, with instructions to shoot any stranger on sight.

Yet, as the days went by without incident, we began to relax. In fact we grew careless and it took the rattle of rifle fire to jerk us to our senses.

TRAPPED

We were resting on a hillside outside Pressburg, half way to the border. Suddenly a German patrol appeared over the brow of another hill, 70 yards away.

We flung off our overcoats and ran. Bullets ricocheted around us. Fred scrambled behind a pile of rocks. But I tripped and fell.

I could hear the barking of dogs. Bullets chipped the rock around me, showering me with tiny shrapnel. The rock, my only hope, was two yards away—but it might as well have been a million miles.

Tomorrow: Fox the patrol and reach Slovakia—in car pet slippers, my secret meeting with the Zionist leaders.