Survival In Auschwitz As A Memoir Written By Italian Jewish Writer Primo Levi

Survival in Auschwitz is a memoir written by Italian Jewish writer Primo Levi in 1947 in which he shares the time in his life when he was arrested for being part of the anti-fascist resistance movements in Italy and his subsequent incarceration in the Auschwitz concentration camp. In this book report, I will describe what this story is about, give detailed information about the author’s experience, and conclude by giving my opinion about it.

The story begins with Primo Levi being arrested and sent to the Fossoli internment camp in Modena. From here, the prisoners are transported by train to Poland to get to the German concentration camp of Auschwitz. The conditions that prisoners are forced to endure in cars are illustrated as inhuman and many die before arriving. Once in the camp, they are registered and tattooed with a number on the arm, which from that moment and on will be each individual's identity while they´re in the camp. Levi is sent to Monowitz on February 21, 1944, is assigned to Block 30 and is prisoner number 174517.

After suffering an accident while working, he is sent to an infirmary called Ka-Be In Ka-Be he finds some peace, at the same time he also finds time to think about pain and remember the situation he is stuck in. He also witnessed the SS conducting selection of Jews, which then were sent to the gas chambers. After being cured, he leaves Ka-Be and is assigned to Block 45. Levi talks about the system of exchange of goods the prisoners held within themselves. They exchanged old clothes for food or just about anything else. This exchanging activity is the commercial center of the camp, although it is prohibited Everything is exchanged in it, and for one to be able to win with it, one must have contact with civilians to then trade with them, which is strictly prohibited by the Nazis.

The Kommando set out to find personnel qualified in chemistry for working in a laboratory in the camp, and Levi is picked to be part of it thanks to his expertise in chemistry. First, he is assigned to carry magnesium chloride, then he is announced that he must pass a chemistry exam. Levi realizes that his salvation lies in passing this exam because if he does he can become a helper and therefore have a better quality of life in the camp.

Life goes on in the camp with its inhumane daily labour and crude lifestyle, till one day the camp received news of the landing of the Allies in Normandy, the Russian offensive and Hitler's failed assassination attempt. This news gives rise to great but ephemeral hopes. The bombings began in Upper Silesia, then getting closer, until the camp was bombed. Winter also was coming in by this time which implied the rough bitter low temperatures that many prisoners did not survive to. Levi has the news that he was chosen to work in the chemistry laboratory and is very happy because this means privileges and a much less hard life, far from the cold. Being inside of the laboratory was of great help for him to overcome the winter. Hunger also would be no longer be a problem, since he could find many things inside to steal and negotiate with on the exchanging with the rest of the prisoners.

On January 11, 1945, Levi fell ill with scarlet fever and was admitted to Ka-Be. A few days later he learns that the camp will be evacuated due to the arrival of the Russians. That same day,

January 18, 1945, the doctor announces that the next day the sick able to walk would leave with the healthy, for an evacuation march of twenty kilometers, while the others unable to do so remained in Ka-Be. Levi is too weak, feverish and remains in the field. Everyone leaves, while he and some other sick people are abandoned to their fate in the infirmary. The healthy have disappeared almost completely during the evacuation march, which was also known as a death march. For the sick that remained, they were left there ten days in what seemed like hopelessness. The bombing soon began, and they could feel the Red Army coming closer and closer. Levi realizes that all Germans have left the camp. The situation is a dire straits. It is cold and there is nothing left in the camp to work. There is no water, no electricity, nothing to warm themselves up with or anything to eat. They only managed to find a stove, some wood and some potatoes which brought them heat and boiled potatoes for food. The prisoners try to organize themselves to survive rummaging everywhere in search of something useful. The number of deaths increases day by day and the land hardened by frost does not allow them to be buried. The fatigue of daily survival makes them live throughout a great pain. It all finally ends on January 27, 1945 when the Russians with their Red Army arrive at the camp and Levi and all of them are finally liberated.

I believe this is an absolutely important book to read as it illustrates from a first hand view the horrors the Third Reich had on its victims and the horrible effects evil and hate can have on people when it takes power. It is the story of a man in a book that brings much to reflect on and how, despite this happening many years ago, it is still necessary to guarantee its reading to the younger generations as it is essential to never forget what happened and the work of Primo Levi is a testimony of vital importance as a raw insight to to one of the biggest horrors done by humanity. On a different note, this testimony also serves as an example of keeping the head up with hope and perseverance during times of difficulties. When life seemed impossible, he managed to make it possible by working his way up within the camp and by cleverly trading for food despite its peril. The recommendation I can give after having read this story is to always remember the mistakes from the past to procure not repeating them in the future, To always keep ourselves in the right track of reason and education in order to live in harmony with others while appreciating the diversity and differences of other individuals. Because, the actions we do in the present, are what helps build the future. And if those aren't of good, our future, consequently, will not be hopeful and will end up in a self-destructing civilization which is just like what Germany did to itself during the Third Reich.