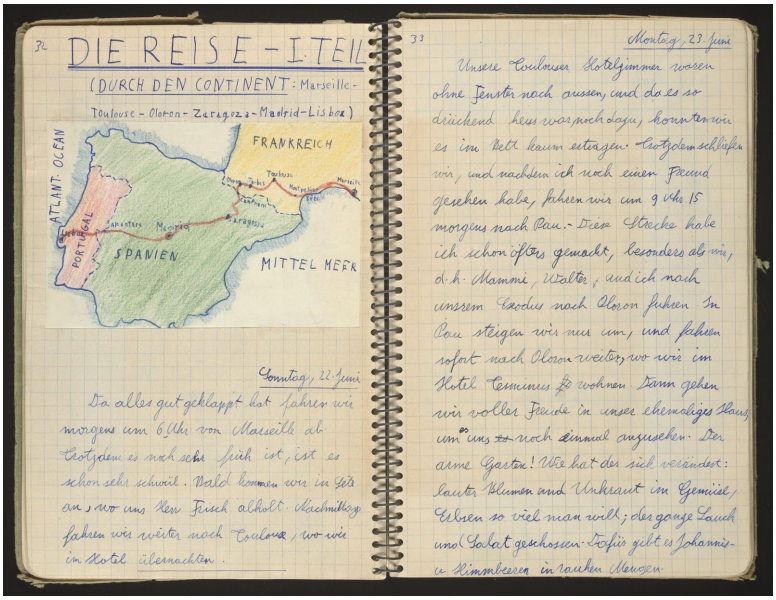


Holocaust-era Diaries

Student Packet

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

WILLIAM LEVINE FAMILY INSTITUTE FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TIMELINE……1
HOW TO READ A DIARY……..3
INTRODUCTION…….....4
ROBERT H. HARLAN……6
HANS VOGEL……..…….....10
MAX AND FRIEDA REINACH……....19
SUSI HILSENRATH……...27
LUCIEN DREYFUS……...32
DR. AHARON PICK……...….41
SZYFRA MAJRANC……...…..53
SELMA WIJNBERG ENGEL……....65
MORRIS BREITBART…….....75
DR. MARIA MADI……....82
CLARA LEFKOWITZ KEMPLER……..….95
CHARLES PHILLIP SHARP……...102
WACŁAW GŁOUSZEK……...107

TIMELINE

January 30, 1933: Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi Party, is appointed chancellor of Germany. He soon became a dictator.

April 1, 1933: The Nazi Party organized a nationwide boycott of businesses owned by Gerrmran Jews.

April 7, 1933: The German government issued a law removing Jews and political opponents of the Nazi Party from teaching positions at schools and universities, and from government jobs. The German government soon issued a law forcing most Jewish students to leave public schools.

September 15, 1935: The German government issued the Nuremberg Race Laws. The laws defined who was considered Jewish (defining Jews as a separate race from non-Jews), stated that Jewish people were no longer German citizens, and made romantic relationships between Jews and non-Jews illegal.

March 12, 1938: Germany invaded and annexed Austria, incorporating the country into Germany. Jewish Austrians were immediately subjected to German antisemitic laws. A refugee crisis began as hundreds of thousands of Jews tried to find countries that would accept them as immigrants.

August 17, 1938: The German government forced Jews to add new middle names to further identify them as Jewish. Men had to add the middle name "Israel" and women had to add the name "Sara."

November 9-10, 1938: Nazi supporters launched violent attacks on Jews and Jewish-owned businesses, burning synagogues and arresting 30,000 Jewish men and boys, imprisoning them in concentration camps. The Nazis called these attacks *Kristallnacht*. They released prisoners who promised to leave Germany as soon as possible.

September 1, 1939: Germany invaded Poland. Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, and World War II began. Jews in Poland were immediately in danger, and within months, German authorities began to round them up and imprison them in ghettos.

May 10, 1940: Germany invaded western Europe. Within six weeks, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France surrendered. Jews in those countries were immediately in danger.

June 22, 1941: Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. So-called "mobile killing squads" followed the German army, murdering Jews and other victims by mass shooting and gassing in mobile gas vans with the help of local collaborators. Approximately two million Jews died this way.

July 1941: Nazi Germany forces US consulates in Axis territory to close, cutting off most immigration to the United States.

September 1, 1941: German authorities forced Jews in Germany to begin wearing a yellow star on their clothing.

December 7, 1941: The Japanese military bombed the United States Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The United States declared war on Japan. Nazi Germany, which was allied with Japan, declared war on the United States. The United States officially entered World War II.

January 20, 1942: German government officials and Nazi Party officials held a conference at the Wannsee Villa in a suburb of Berlin to discuss logistics of the "Final Solution" (the mass murder of European Jews).

March 17, 1942: *Operation Reinhard*, the code name for the plan to murder Jews in German-occupied Poland, began. Nazis and their collaborators murdered at least 1.5 million Jews at three killing centers: Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor.

December 17, 1942: The governments of the Allied nations, including the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, issued a joint statement condemning the Nazis' policy of "cold-blooded extermination."

April 19, 1943: In summer 1942, German authorities deported approximately 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto and murdered them in the Treblinka killing center. When German troops and police entered the ghetto to deport the remaining Jews, armed Jewish resistance fighters attacked. The resistance fighters used makeshift weapons to battle the Nazis for nearly a month before finally being defeated.

March 19, 1944: Germany invaded and occupied Hungary, which had the largest Jewish population still in Europe. Within four months, German authorities and the Hungarian police deported approximately 440,000 Hungarian Jews to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp and killing center where most were murdered in gas chambers.

June 6, 1944: Allied forces invaded France, putting tremendous military pressure on Nazi Germany. By late August, the Allies had liberated Paris.

January 27, 1945: Soviet troops liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, where the Nazi-SS had murdered more than one million Jews.

April 11, 1945: American troops liberate the Buchenwald concentration camp, one of many concentration camps liberated by the Allied troops in spring 1945.

May 7, 1945: German forces surrendered to the Allies, officially ending World War II in Europe.

HOW TO READ A DIARY

It was very common for people to keep diaries and journals in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum holds hundreds of personal diaries written by people who were persecuted by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II or who were witnesses to the persecution of others. This packet includes excerpts from some of these diaries. Students interested in viewing the original diaries or in reading full translations can find them via the Museum's catalog. Spelling and punctuation has been largely kept as the diarist intended.

People of all ages and from many different countries and backgrounds wrote diaries. Some diarists wrote on lined notebooks; others wrote on scraps of paper, on the backs of photographs, or even in the margins of printed books. They used their diaries to record daily life, to capture a specific time of their lives, compose poetry and songs, or remember favorite recipes. Some diarists picked up a pen once they realized they wanted to describe the terrible events happening around them, while others had kept diaries for years. Some diaries were very personal, intended just for the author, while others were meant for friends, children, or grandchildren.

Diarists wrote in many different contexts. While some diarists were living openly in their homes, others wrote while in hiding places, in ghettos, or in concentration camps. Where a diarist lived, when they were writing, and what was happening in the world around them at the time are all important pieces of context to consider when reading a diary.

Diaries are important historical sources because they are "immediate" documents: the diarist does not know what will happen to them next. Some diaries were written by people who survived the Holocaust; others were written by those who were murdered. They all provide a unique and intimate look into one person's experiences during the Holocaust.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Who wrote this diary? How old were they, and where did they live?
- What was the diarist's family situation? Did they live with other family members?
- When was this diary written? What was happening at that time?
- Who is the audience for this diary? Was the diarist writing for themselves, or for others?
- What kind of language does the diarist use? Do they use any literary devices?
- What topics does the diarist write about?
- Is the diarist experiencing persecution, or are they a witness to the persecution of others? Or both?
- What can we learn about the Holocaust by reading this diary?

INTRODUCTION

Read these entries and answer the questions below.

Berlin, Thursday, July 21, 1932
Today is a very important day in my life because it is my eighteenth birthday, and I am starting to keep a diary, which I hope to continue. At the moment, I am sitting at my desk. It is in the evening. We hear the tumult and noise of a great city … my father and my sister Sonia (born May 30, 1928) are presently in Nordenei in Germany, which is a resort near the North Sea. My mother gave me thirty marks for my birthday, which I used to buy this diary and a photo album. With the rest of the money, I intend to buy a few small practical items.

Berlin, Monday 10:00 p.m., December 19, 1932
Last night after closing the business and eating dinner, at around 9:00 p.m, I went out to the zoo. There I made a mistake in changing trains and I arrived at the Cafe Berlin at the zoo by 10:00 p.m., It was very crowded. I danced with different ladies but they were nothing special. Then I met Sonia Klein and I expect to meet her again on Friday, the first night of Hanukkah...Today my mother warned me to stop running around so much. She wants me to be home by midnight if I go out again. Now I am going to bed. Good night.

Berlin, January 30, 1933
In politics, yesterday there were many troubles and pogroms in the streets. Today was the day that Adolf Hitler officially became the Reich Chancellor of Germany. All I can say is that I hope that the end shall be good for the people of the world, but I don't think it will be that way, it looks very bad.

Berlin, Wednesday 10:45 p.m., February 1, 1933
Tonight after locking up the store, I went to English class at the club. I paid my dues of five marks. At 10 p.m. I heard on the radio the new Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. He was calling the people together, urging them to riot and kill more Jews for him. This speech was transmitted to New York, I listened to it in my room in Berlin.

Berlin, Sunday 11:10 p.m., April 2, 1933
Early yesterday we opened the business. During the night before all Jewish businesses, stores, department stores, doctor and lawyer's homes, pharmacies were painted up and marked as Jewish. It said Yuden emblazoned with swastikas. By the morning the paint still [hadn't] dried. Nazis were observing the transactions of each store. At 10 a.m. we locked up our business. Many other businesses and even Teitz Department Stores locked up also.

What can we learn about the diary's author from these entries? List five things about his life.

How would you describe the author's writing style?

Using the timeline, what events does he describe? How does he feel about these events?

This diary was written by Hermann Pressman, and the photo shows Hermann with his parents and sister around this time. Soon after writing these entries, Hermann escaped Germany and went to stay with a cousin in Belgium. He and his parents and sister Sonia immigrated to the United States in 1934. Hermann became a real estate agent in New York, married, and had two children.

ROBERT H. HARLAN

Robert H. Harlan was a student at the University of Chicago who studied abroad at Philipps-Universitat in Marburg, Germany, for the 1938-1939 school year. At the University of Chicago, Harlan--who was not Jewish--had become friends with a German student from Würzburg, William Stern, who was Jewish. When Harlan arrived in Germany in August 1938, he visited William's parents, Dr. Bruno and Frida Stern, and kept in touch with them from Marburg.

October 26, 1938

Trip to Oberammergau today. The following I've preserved pictorially, I trust, but just in case: At the entrance to this old town famous in the main for its deeply religious Passion Play[1] is its name, of course, and just under this sign another one--a nice new one--the inevitable, nowadays "Juden unerwünscht."[2] Sorta ironical, I calls it.

October 28, 1938

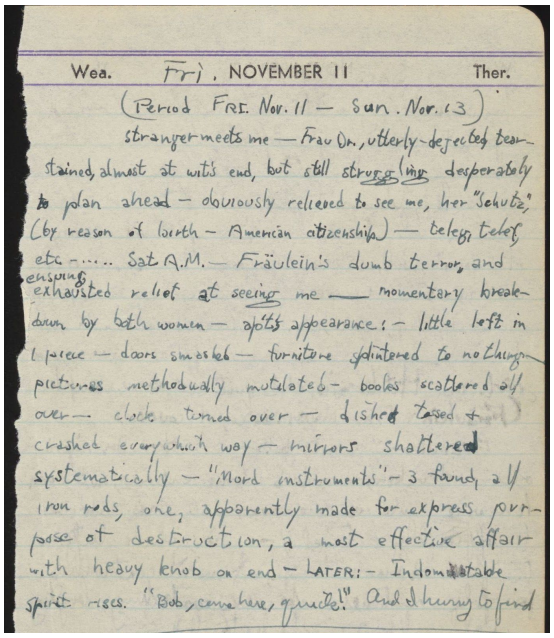
When the Sterns got home last Monday night they discovered they had to sell their house. On Tuesday they sold it, the price [and] buyer being settled not by them but by the authorities. Just like that! Dr. Stern has to stop working either the 1st of Dec. or Jan., I'm not sure which. I guess I've mentioned already the "tax" Jews have to pay on purchases they make. Just double whatever the regular price is.

Thurs. November 10

Van Rath, or whatever the German ambassador in Paris was called, is dead, and the Jewish synagogue in Marburg burned down today. A coincidence? A Jewish trick for newspaper and world sympathy? (as Dr. Weidemann so strongly contends) An actual act of persecution? I don't know, but as today's (yesterday's) "Times" forebodes, another Jewish "purge" is fast approaching and unrest is on the up-rise again. This country's militant leader was more blatantly and antagonizingly so than ever in his Munich address yesterday, it seems to me. Why, when things have simmered down somewhat, he must start then seething

[1] a Christian performance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
[2] "Jews not Wanted"

again, I can't understand. Because Deutschland[3] hasn't all that's hers? Without answering I ask, does that justify these bloodthirsty yelps of "We want peace even if we have to crush you all to get it?"



Wea. Fri. NOVEMBER 11 Ther.

(Period FRI. Nov. 11 — Sun. Nov. 13)

stranger meets me — Frau Dr., utterly dejected, tear-stained, almost at wits end, but still struggling desperately to plan ahead — obviously relieved to see me, her "Schutz," (by reason of birth — American citizenship) — telegr, telef, etc — .... Sat A.M. — Fräulein's dumb terror, and ensuing exhausted relief at seeing me — momentary breakdown by both women — apts appearance: — little left in 1 piece — doors smashed — furniture splintered to nothing — pictures methodically mutilated — books scattered all over — clock turned over — dishes tossed + crashed every which way — mirrors shattered systematically — "Mord instrumente" — 3 found, all iron rods, one, apparently made for express purpose of destruction, a most effective affair with heavy knob on end — LATER: — Indomitable spirit rises. "Bob, come here, quick!" And a hurry to find

Robert Harlan's diary, November 11, 1938

Robert Harlan, pictured in his US Army uniform, with the Sterns, 1946

[3] Germany

Fri. November 11
So, here I am on the outskirts of Frankfurt, sitting in a train and bound for Würzburg where I know not what awaits me. From Marburg to now I've been deliberately perusing a Sat. Eve Post[4] in an effort to alienate my mind for the once from the matter at hand. The effort has not been particularly successful, naturally enough, and has served only to make even starker the grim situation here. For I've no doubts that grim it will be. This might be classified under "adventure" but an adventure arising from such despicable, horrible, and unhuman sources! America, the land of freedom, still has much meaning, I'm thinking.

Minutes later

Now I've managed to locate my Würzburg train--for a while there I thought I'd miss it--and at this very moment we're getting underway. Close connections! For the next 2 hours or so my chief occupation will be brooding and wondering desperately what action I can possible take faced with various uncomfortable but real problems that may have arise, to help solve them.

(Period Fri Nov. 11-Sun Nov. 13)
Stranger meets me--Frau Dr.,[5] utterly dejected, tear-stained, almost at wit's end, but still struggling desperately to plan ahead--obviously relieved to see me, her "Schutz"[6] (by reason of birth--American citizenship)--telegraph, telephone, etc. Sat. AM--Fraulein's dumb terror, and ensuing exhausted relief at seeing me--momentary breakdown by both women--apartment's appearance: little left in 1 piece--doors smashed--furniture splintered to nothing--pictures methodically mutilated--books scattered all over--clock turned over--dishes tossed and crashed every which way--mirrors shattered systematically--"Mord[7] instruments"--3 found, all iron rods, one, apparently made for express purpose of destruction, a most effective affair with heavy knob on end.

Later: Indomitable spirit rises. "Bob, come here quick!" And I hurry to find her wrestling with a table she'd bumped against and remarking with dry humor (but damp eyes--I didn't see a dry one all weekend) "I'm not yet accustomed to tables with only three legs."--splendid recover of spirit, wit, starts whipping things in order at once.

FRIENDS--volunteer helpers (Aryan[8]) to clean-up, ship, repair, etc. Stores, forbidden to sell to Jews who come in, send supplies around, the girl in the Hitlerjugend[9] quit, other examples…

---

[4] *The Saturday Evening Post*, a popular American magazine
[5] Mrs. Stern
[6] "Safety"
[7] "Death"
[8] non-Jewish
[9] Hitler youth group

ENEMIES: the nite before, Herr Dr.[10] imprisoned, drunken marauders twice-entering, not even knowing who was the owner at this address (unofficially obtained?) --S.S. whose duty was to forbid such things, at most controlling people on streets who were watching...

Sat. noon--the practical, resigned, and sensible aunt--early breakdown at phone call understood to be to effect that "some were freed"--recovery and subsequent deep, deep dejection at hearing it was "some were sent away" (concentration camps)...coming in with gloomy rumors all day and evening Fr. Joseph's with glad tidings (comparatively), from guy released, "their only sorrow is for their wives at home"--overnite in ransacked rooms--jittery but I slept, despite threats of further depredations….

Dr. Stern was imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp between November 12-23, 1938. After his release, the Sterns were able to immigrate, joining their three children already living in the United States. Robert Harlan later served in the United States Army during World War II and became a State Department diplomat.

[10] Dr. Stern

HANS VOGEL

Hans Vogel was born in 1929 in Cologne, Germany. Hans, his parents Simon and Hannah, and his younger brother, Walter were Jewish. They left Germany in 1936 and settled in Paris. When World War II began in 1939, Simon was interned by the French in the Lisieux and Gurs internment camps as a German "enemy alien." In May 1940, Germany invaded France and Hannah, Walter, and Hans fled south along with the boys' governess, Ruth Heymann. They reunited with Simon, who was released from imprisonment. The family, along with Ruth, settled in Oloron-Sainte-Marie, near the Spanish border, from June 1940 while planning to immigrate to the United States. Hans wrote his diary in German.

THE FAMILY PRESENTS:
OUR DIARY[11]

THE DEPARTURE FROM OLORON
(May 1-10, [19]41)
As you know, we always tried by every available means "to get out," and this was very difficult. Poor Pappi had to travel to Marseille several times for almost nothing: Once an affidavit was lacking, then the tax release, but finally the consul was satisfied after all, and on April 29 Pappi got the summons for all of us. You can imagine our joy when the telegram arrived, and then when Pappi himself returned; that was on May 5, the summons was for the 14th, and we then had to leave Oloron on the 12th…. (Thus far I have just told about things periodically, now the diary begins day by day.)

Saturday, May 10
"Today's the last day" is what I'd most like to sing, and I can hardly wait for the 11:30 bell to ring. On the way home, I run into Pappi, and we go back once more to say goodbye to the principal. The principal expressed regret at our leaving because we had been such good students, etc., etc. In the afternoon I bid my classmates adieu, and after school I pay my bread bill (because school children get 50 grams of bread in the afternoons). I sleep very fitfully and am glad when it's morning.

[11] In place of his last name, Hans drew a small bird. "Vogel" means "bird" in German.

Monday, May 12
Until 4 a.m., poor Mammi and Ruth worked on packing, while we warmed up the bed. We drink plenty of coffee, because there won't be time for lunch... I run a few errands in addition, and by now it's time to go to the train station, because the train leaves at 12:10. On the Av. de Lasseube we have to say goodbye at every door, that's how many people we know. Finally we're at the train station; the train is very late; even the Spanish teacher is there to say goodbye to us. Then the engine starts moving, and we roll, perhaps for the last time, through this really beautiful countryside.... PAU! Everybody off the train. Our train to Toulouse does not leave until around 2 p.m...

After a nice trip, we arrive in Toulouse around 9 p.m. A very good Scout friend lives here; he and his whole family are at the train station; they too would like to emigrate. We have a good time and plan to have a look at Toulouse by night, but we come across the amusement park, and that's where we stay. Around midnight, the train, which is terribly crowded, departs. I can't get much sleep, and besides I'm hungry.

IN MARSEILLE
(May 13 – June 21, [19]41)

Tuesday, May 13
While I try to sleep, we have traveled through Carcassonne, Narbonne, and Sète and almost reached Marseille, and we arrive around 8 a.m. The sight of Marseille, just wakened, in the early morning is very lovely: in front of us is the grand staircase to the train station, then the whole city, and off in the distance one sees the church "notre-Dame de la Garde." We go to the Hotel Splendide. It is a very fancy and large hotel, where Pappi reserved a room with bath. By Oloron standards, that is a very great luxury. On the floor above us is housed the German Commission!

As stated previously, Marseille is a beautiful city, only very noisy. Surely, you are also familiar with the Vieux-Port with the Pont Transbordeur, and the blue Mediterranean. We immediately went to see Doctor Rodoganagschi about the certificates for the American Consulate. In the afternoon we went to the Consulate, which is by no means as attractive as the one in Paris. We waited all afternoon for nothing, and went back to the hotel.

Wednesday, May 14
I slept wonderfully well, and at 8 a.m. we are up. Then we go at once to the American Consulate, where we spend the whole morning for nothing. Our turn doesn't come until late afternoon. We do the fingerprints and are told to come back the next day. Exactly one year ago today we registered.

Thursday, May 15

We report again at 9 a.m. and wait all morning. Terrible, the endless waiting; and my novel, which I'm reading in the course of this, is so boring. Also, today is the departure of the ship "Wyoming," and Uncle Hirsch is sailing on it to Cuba. At midday we say goodbye to him and head back to the Consulate. Today is Lag BaOmer,[12] and at the end of the afternoon we are called in order to make our application; the woman assures us that we can have the visa the following day...

Friday, May 16
Today is Pappi's birthday according to the Jewish calendar, and indeed, at 2 p.m. all of us get our visas. In the evening we go to the synagogue and pray on our own behalf, because the service is already over.

Saturday, May 17
Now that the Consulate business is finished with for us, I can tell about something other than waiting. We eat lunch in the restaurant here every day and in the evening in our room. In the hotel, the food is very good, too. There was one restaurant, half kosher, where one also doesn't eat badly. But after the first time, we always had to eat Bäine-Flesch (that is, beef shin); we didn't like the taste of it at all, and since then we have eaten often at the Armenian's; he has a small restaurant but very good food. Anyway, this morning we go to the synagogue, and see Mr. Langer. In the afternoon, I go to the Oneg Shabbat, which is for the Scouts, and then this day too is over.

Wednesday, May 28
For more than two weeks now, we've been here in Marseille, and there is still no possibility of leaving. The idea of Martinique seems to have fallen through completely: 1. no space on a ship as far as Martinique, 2. no possibility of traveling on from Martinique to America. Every now and then, telegrams come from Spain or the U.S.A., saying that there are possibilities via Spain (Bilbao or Barcelona) and Portugal. Pappi races from the American Export Lines to the French Line, then to American Lloyd, from there to the Cook Company.[13] You can't have any idea how hard it is. But the best is yet to come: today we read in the newspaper that the *Winnipeg* has been stopped by the British and escorted to the Island of Barbados. I just can't make head or tail of it.

Thursday, May 29
This morning I went with Pappi to make a sweep of the various offices that have already been listed above. There's no news from the Winnipeg, but going via Martinique is out of the question at the moment.
The war is really terrible, and the poor British are being badly trounced in Crete; I hope that will end well.

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[12] A Jewish holiday
[13] These are companies that operated passenger ships between Europe and North America.

Tuesday, June 10
Our emigration story is still far from over. At first we didn't have one single passage on a ship, and suddenly we have ... 15 (via Bilbao, Barcelona, and Lisbon). We don't know yet what we should do; but finally Pappi decides on Lisboa—for the moment, at least. The passengers on the "Winnipeg" have all been transported to the U.S.A. by the British, what a break; but the events in Syria are very much on our minds. Nevertheless, Walter and I go to the movies in the afternoon, namely to "Le Retour de Zorro."

Friday, June 20
Yesterday afternoon we went swimming again. But today is the wedding anniversary of our young parents. We're up early, by 6:30 a.m., because, since we received the Portuguese visa yesterday, we have to go to the Spanish Consulate today. Therefore we go in the early hours to Pappi and Mammi to wish them a happy anniversary. We do a little skit that provides an overview of the past 18 years, then handed out little gifts, and at 7:30 a.m. we are the first ones in front of the Spanish Consulate. If everything goes smoothly, on Sunday we'll travel to Oloron via Seite, and through Spain to Lisbon.

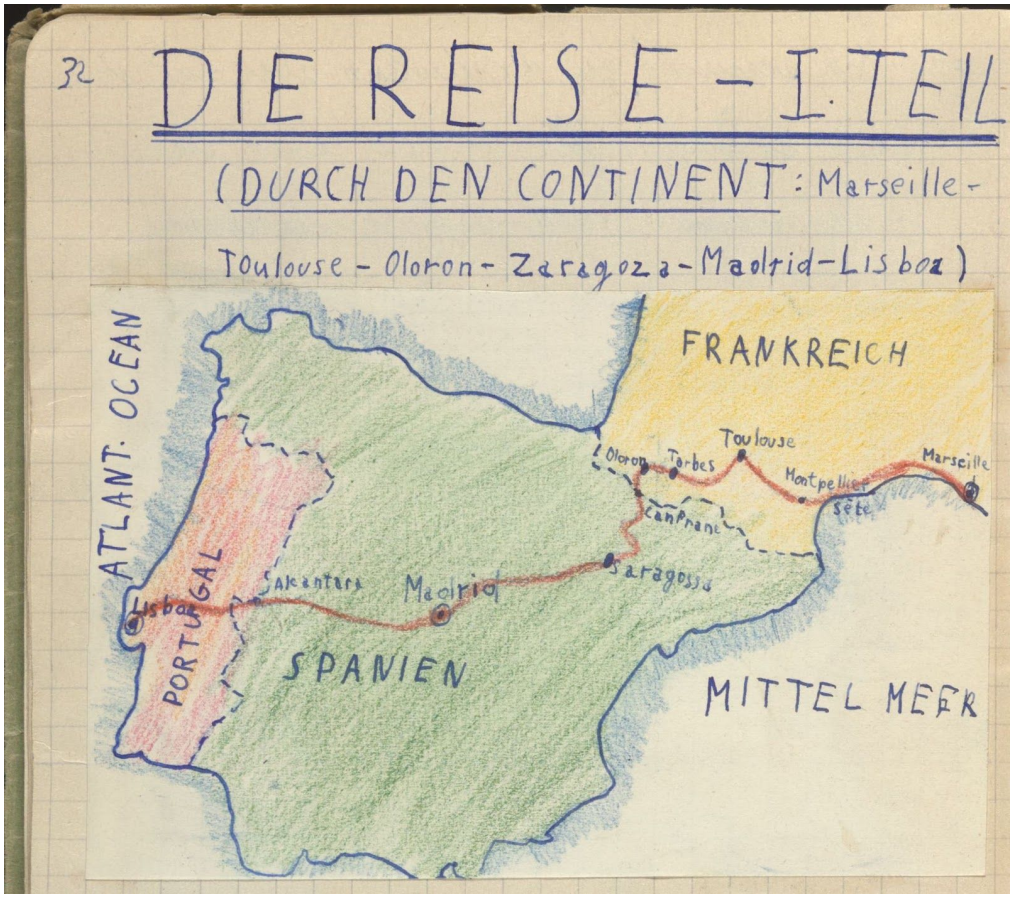
THE JOURNEY PART I
(THROUGH THE CONTINENT: Marseille-Toulouse-Oloron-Zaragoza-Madrid-Lisbon)

Sunday, June 22
Since everything worked out well, we leave Marseille at 6 a.m. Even though it's still very early, it is already very humid. Soon we arrive in Seite, where Mr. Frisch meets us. In the afternoon we travel on to Toulouse, where we spend the night in a hotel.

Tuesday, June 24
After a good night, we learn that, unfortunately, the American Consulate in Marseille is closed; the poor People! We go back into the house once more, pick whatever can be picked (for other people), and in the afternoon Walter and I go to the school. There is a happy reunion; I tell everyone "Bonjour" and goodbye again simultaneously and go home with my friends. I also say goodbye to the teachers. However, we still want to travel as far as Canfranc, the border, today. The train departs at 6:18 p.m., and as soon as the last piece of luggage flies into the compartment (we were very late), we leave, leave France, where we spent good years. In Canfranc is the customs clearance. The officials are nice and in a good mood, and things go smoothly. I think it's very enjoyable to communicate in Spanish like this, but we constantly need the dictionary.

Friday, June 27
The new Madrid, in contrast to the old part of town, is very clean and built along generous lines. The main streets are all very wide and the buildings large and airy. There are lots of beautiful hotels (for example, the

Palace Hotel) and structures (the post office, which looks almost like a church inside, and the library). There is also the famous museum, the Prado, where there are so many paintings by the most renowned painters. We visit this museum and are really quite impressed by it. We see paintings by Murillo, Brueghel, Rubens, Velazquez, El Greco, and all the Spanish and Flemish painters. In the afternoon we go to a Spanish café (which, by the way, is very good), and in the evening we have dinner in the home of good friends.



Hans Vogel drew this map of the family's travels in his diary

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Saturday, June 28

Today we travel on to Lisbon. As you see on the map, it's still a good distance away. We even have the good fortune to be able to travel in the sleeping car. Our train leaves Madrid at 10:48 p.m. In the meantime, Walter and I are already in bed. This is the second time that we've traveled in such an enjoyable way.

Sunday, June 29

Around 8:30 a.m. we reach the Spanish border, Valencia Alcantara. The inspection, fairly strict, is completed around 10:30 a.m., and at 11 a.m. we are at the Portuguese border, Marvao. We are very much behind schedule, and at 12 p.m. we are rolling through the Portuguese countryside: cliffs, little groves of trees, then big and nicely laid-out gardens again, olive trees, and all sorts of things. We are very hungry, but we don't get lunch in the dining car until around 4 p.m. It's coffee time, of course, but it tastes good nevertheless. The food is like you would have in the mythical land of plenty: hors d'oeuvre, two meat courses, etc., and completely white bread. We're definitely not accustomed to that anymore. At 6:30 p.m. we arrive in Lisbon, 4 hours late. We stay at the Hotel Suisso-Atlantico, and although the natives say it's cool, we are sweating terribly.

Friday, July 4

Yesterday afternoon we went for the medical check. We still don't know when we will leave, because, given the fine events, the departure of the *Nyassa*, our ship, keeps being postponed. That can continue until

July 24. Since it is so hot in Lisbon, we go to the ocean, to Estoril. Estoril, 22 km. from Lisbon, is a beautiful coastal resort with a big beach. Our hotel, the Miramar, is very nice, and we have a wonderful view of the ocean.

Wednesday, July 9
Today we all go to Lisbon, because we're being vaccinated. By lunchtime we're already back again. But our departure is still uncertain. They said the Nyassa would sail on July 5, then on the 15th, then on the 25th, and now, they say, it won't sail in July at all, because it first has to go to the Azores for troop transports. I hope it will sail eventually. That is the main thing.

Friday, July 18
The days were very hot, and we can often go swimming twice. Yesterday evening I was even allowed to go along to the movies; Gulliver's travels, an American color film, was playing. The film was very nice but quite different from the novel by Swift. Today we learn that the *Nyassa* leaves on the 25th, that is, a week from now. I hope we'll be going then too.

Tuesday, July 22
In the afternoon, I paddle for the first time. In addition, we learn that the *Nyassa* is leaving soon, the day after tomorrow, and that we have a 2nd class cabin, an outside room. The ship first goes to Casablanca, and around August 10 we will surely be in New York.

Thursday, July 24
Today we're going to Lisbon to embark there. We say goodbye to Mrs. Lorant, who leaves tomorrow on an American ship, and around 10 a.m. we take a taxi to Lisbon, straight to the port. We see the *Nyassa*, a beautiful ship, approximately 175 m. long. We see our baggage being loaded. In the afternoon I go, before departure, to the Artillery Museum, where there are really old cannons and weapons and also more modern "means of war." At 4:30 we go to the port but have to wait another hour before we can board the ship. We immediately inspect our cabin with four beds, view of the ocean, and fan (very important). At 6 o'clock we really do sail, and are towed out of the harbor by two tugboats. We see Lisbon spread out on the 7 hills and definitively bid farewell to Europe.

THE JOURNEY--PART II
(ACROSS THE OCEAN: Lisbon-Casablanca-Bermuda-New York)

Friday, July 25
First day of our voyage. First I look around the ship. Astern, where we are, is 2nd class, in the center up above the 1st class, below the 3rd class, and up front the 3rd class again. There are beautiful saloons

and decks. The best is the 1st-class deck, where we spend most of our time. At the very top are luxury cabins, which are like beautiful rooms. The ocean is calm, and there's no pitching and tossing at all. The food is good, only cold, because it is brought from the kitchen located toward the bow of the ship. All morning, we still see the Spanish coast, and in the afternoon we see the British warships off Gibraltar, which guard the sea. Tomorrow we arrive in Casablanca to pick up people from the *Mont-Viso* and *Wyoming*, because they are still waiting for a means of making the crossing.

Saturday, July 26
At 7 a.m. we come into port in Casablanca, where a large part of the French navy is based. This sight is very impressive, but the ships are inactive, naturally, and in some cases surrounded with mines. There's a lot of traffic there, as a number of merchant ships are being loaded and unloaded. In the afternoon, the passengers come on board, and the baggage is loaded. At 8 p.m. we leave the port again and head toward Bermuda.

Tuesday, July 29
Reportedly sailed past the Azores – There's a little pitching and tossing (hence the wobbly handwriting).

Thursday, July 31
In the course of the morning we see a plume of smoke on the horizon; soon we also see the ship, which gets bigger and bigger and gives signals to us. It's a British cargo ship, converted into a Croiseur auxiliaire. We stop, and soon a ship's boat with British soldiers approaches. A few officers climb aboard, and everybody claps, some even cry, so great is their joy. During the inspection the soldiers in the boat are bombarded with cigarettes and chocolate; unfortunately a few bars fall into the water. The inspection is over quickly, and as the British boat moves away, we also continue our journey. One week ago this afternoon we embarked.

Friday, August 1
Today is Walter's birthday, and bright and early we get a telegram sent by radio from New York, which gives us great pleasure. Walter's table with presents is not very big, but I recite a poem I wrote myself, and in New York we will have a real celebration.

Wednesday, August 6
Early in the morning we sail past Bermuda, which consists of many small islands. The houses are very clean, and the sight is very beautiful. We come into the bay, and the British come on board for the inspection.

Thursday, August 7

Today the inspection continues all day, and the British empty out a part of the baggage. In the afternoon around 5 o‘clock, we sail.

Friday, August 8
The sea is calm. Tomorrow we arrive in New York!

SATURDAY, August 9
In the morning, at 5 a.m., we are already up. Great excitement. We see the first American islands, and soon the inspectors come on board. The inspection is over quickly, and we sail past the Statue of Liberty, come into the East River, and around 12 noon we berth at Pier 28. We are the first to disembark and are greeted by all our friends and acquaintances. The children go to Grandma’s, where they are treated to coffee and cake. And the poor adults have to wait on the quay for the baggage.

Hans Vogel ended his diary with a postcard showing the skyline of New York City

The Vogel family arrived in the United States in August 1941 and settled in New York City. Sadly, Hans Vogel passed away from illness in February 1943 when he was 16 years old.

MAX AND FRIEDA REINACH

Max and Frieda Reinach, who lived in Berlin, Germany, wrote their diary together, beginning on September 1, 1939. They wrote in German.

September 1, 1939 (Friday, father)
At 10am was the meeting of the German Parliament and the proclamation of the "Fuehrer." Occupation of Danzig. Since the early morning hours there have been warlike actions.

September 2, 1939 (father)
Meeting of the French and British War ministry. The terrible tensions of the last days are over, now the cannons talk, war is a fait accompli.

When I attempt in this small booklet to keep track of the days and weeks to follow, I do this for you, beloved children, so you shall one day understand and come to know the time in which we live, what we suffer.

Your parents trust in God who was our protector in difficult times before and who will remain so….More fighting at the front. Danzig has been incorporated as a German town. The German troops march on.

September 3, 1939 (mother)
England declares war at 11am, France at 6pm. Dora and Aunt Terese came for a visit, very nervous, all of us. I do not like to leave our home, only at home do I feel more or less safe. Due to the calm of father I am able to go on, but it is exceedingly difficult; the thought of our children who will worry terribly for us, does not leave me for a moment. We continue to write to them in the hope letters will reach them.

September 17, 1939
Further fighting, the troops stand before Warsaw (Poland). The city is supposed to be evacuated today….We hear from the western front of the war that there is fighting near Saarbruecken (border of western Germany)

September 21, 1941 (father)
A long interval, I did not write from September 17, 1939 till today. The interim has made history. To date Germany has conquered Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Holland, Norway, France. Since 3 months horrible fighting with Russia, and the German soldiers are near Leningrad. For us, as Jews, the situation did not ease up. From September 19, 1941 on we have to wear, according to law, the star of David. This is a yellow star (Magen David) and underneath the star it says: Jude.[14] I would never have thought something like this could happen, it will be difficult to get used to this "distinction." Well, it is the law and we have to submit. This law, to designate a Jew in this way, is something that depressed me and mother very much. For 60 years we have lived always with the idea not to appear or be different from others and now, the kids in the street mirthfully count Jews. Our equality as citizens is gone, however I continue to believe in God. I believe that all this is only a test, and I believe that my grandchildren will have again beautiful times. There have been other times when Jews were persecuted, and when they had to suffer from anti-semitism...What makes these times a bit more easy is the social work I am doing at the Jewish Community Center. I see every day the terrible amount of poverty and misery and it is a blessing to be able to help those who need help.

Beginning of May 1942 (father)
It is almost six months that I did not take this booklet in my hands. It almost astonishes me. You can see from this fact, that my time has been fully occupied with work and fortunately still is. Nevertheless I wish to write down my thoughts, thoughts which come and go in these upsetting times. This horrible war goes on and on and the whole world is shaken in every way. How can we know when the people all over the world will make peace, nobody knows, all we can do is hope. Besides the immense pain, sorrow, and unhappiness, we carry our own tragic special destiny. All our sisters and brothers, except for Bertha and Ben, are evacuated.

Uncle Max and his wife Julie were taken October 19, 1941
Moritz and his wife Martha April 21, 1942
Liane May 7, 1942
Adele and Bernhard April 1, 1942

As well as all the family from Worms. Most of our friends here have also been taken away and life has become very lonesome. Suffering and sorrow, such as cannot be put into words, has overwhelmed all of us and we need a rocklike belief and faith into God in order to survive these trials of the present time. Those who are weak are defeated and stop to struggle and fight; abysmal misery and often sickness carries them

[14] "Jew"

off. Your parents have the firm willpower to survive this time full of horror and to find in a different future, perhaps some years of peace. If we should have the luck to survive and are allowed to spend our future years with you, beloved children, then our daily prayers have been listened to and accepted. If we have merited this grace, God shall decide, and I shall not stop to hope. I firmly believe in predestination and your beloved mother has faith in my hope. However, should this happiness to be united again with you remain a dream, do not mourn for us. You will remain our sunshine til our evening comes and until dark night surrounds us.

May 10 (mother)

It is Sunday, 7pm. How often do I ask myself: shall we ever be able to tell our children how our life is now, what we have passed through? I do not believe this will be possible, even if til right now--thank heaven--we have been lucky. How many thousand Jews, since October 1941 have been "evacuated." "Evacuated" as they call it, from Germany, evacuated as they call it euphemistically, how many have died right here due to the enormous privations. We cannot write to Max and Jule, we can only send them money and also some food, weeks afterward we receive a receipt from them through the ghetto in Litzmannstadt.[15] As long as we see their handwriting, we know they are alive. Moritz and Martha are where? Liane where? Adele, Ida, and friends are in Piaski near Lublin, Dora Fuchs since January 11, 1942 in Riga. However, we cannot get any news from her, since Riga is war area. In better times we were able to help her and send her money. We have little food, nevertheless, so far we have not gone hungry. Father and me lost a lot of weight, father's weight is down to 115 pounds, myself 125 pounds. The weight loss is due to sorrow and worries. Up to date Jews get the same rations as Aryans,[16] but all special foods, 30 different kinds, such as fish, semolina, eggs, chocolates, tobacco, milk, better vegetables, all fruit, we do NOT get. Sometimes good friends are able to give us something, these friends deprive themselves to help us. The most wonderful friend is ----- [she blacked out the name in case the Nazi police found the diary, so the friend would not risk getting in trouble for helping]. She is an angel for us, not only does she help with food, but helps us psychologically with her wonderful friendship...

Since April 1942 we have next to our name on the apartment door a black and white star of David, and since May we are not permitted to use public transportation. Can you imagine what this means in a city as large as Berlin? There are many streets in which we are forbidden to walk; also we are not permitted to walk in a park, and we are not permitted to sit down anywhere. Last summer there have been so-called benches for Jews, they were painted yellow, we refused to use them….

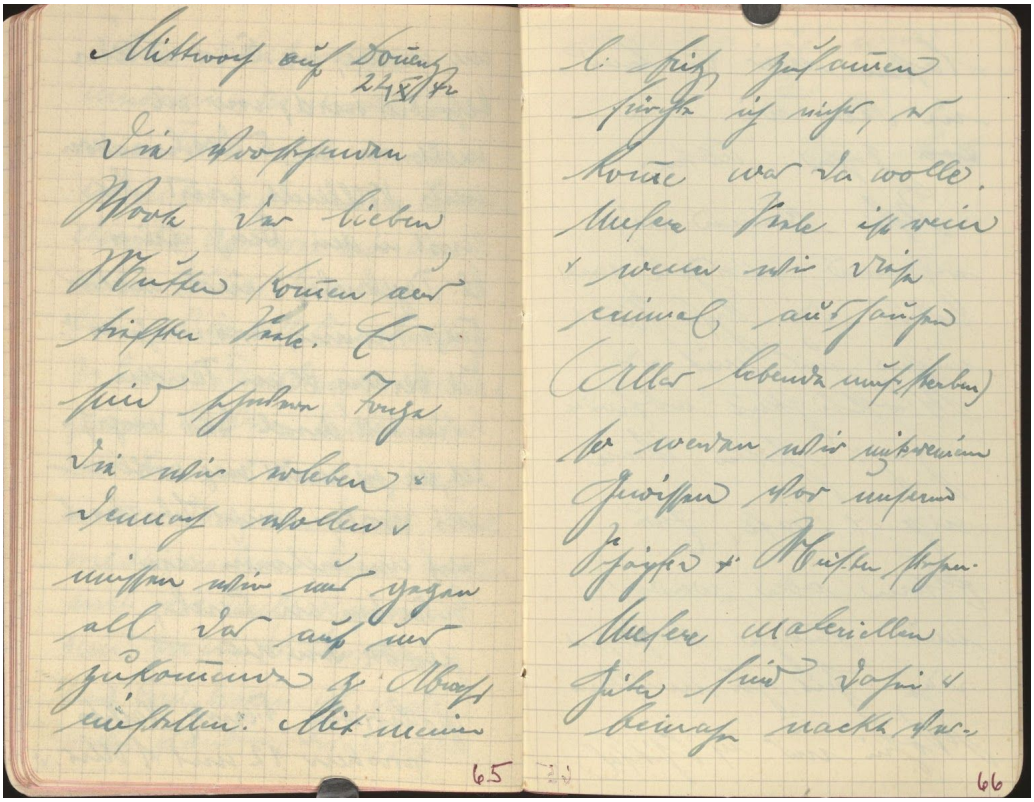
[15] Litzmannstadt was the German name for Łódź, a city in Nazi-occupied Poland with a large ghetto imprisoning Jews.
[16] non-Jews

As you can see our life is not easy, however it is bearable, especially in comparison to that of others. However I am terrified at the thought of "evacuation" and this horrible possibility hangs over our heads every moment, with a good reason. Whenever I think of it, I am utterly in a panic and I know: if we have to go this road, I shall never again see you, beloved children. I wonder all the time: how are you? With how many worries and anguish are you thinking of us...if only you are not in need of money, this is our daily prayer. How often do I remember the days of your childhood, they were beautiful and we certainly did not anticipate such a destiny. Now both of you are happily married, you, my Trude, are a mother, but father and I cannot share in your happiness and meet our grandchild. Not even through letters.

May 24, 1942 (father)
On this same day a new law came out: Jews are no longer permitted to have pets. Dogs, cats, birds must be turned into a special place. Yesterday was the first day of Shavuot [a Jewish holiday]. I went to synagogue, service was very moving and solemn. A rabbi, who actually was not a rabbi but a private personality, gave a most moving talk and he appealed to the Jewish consciousness, since, in his words, the consciousness of the world has failed.

This morning we received a letter from Bertha telling us that Ben, together with six friends, were taken away and now share the destiny of the other sister, Liane. Now all our sisters and brothers, except for Berta, have been taken away.

June 20, 1942 (mother)
Since 3 weeks, father got permission to use public transportation in Berlin. He lost again 10 pounds, now his weight is down to 106 pounds, mine to 120 (I lost 45)...We think and discuss if father should now go back to work, because if Jews work they are more protected of being "evacuated." This applies to social workers on an honor basis, others are no longer protected. The decision to make is so difficult and complicated because whatever one may decide on, it might turn out just to be the wrong thing. Right now, they take old people away mainly, it is rumored that they are taken to Theresienstadt. There is not a second, where one can be calm, as conditions, especially new laws come out fast and again change into other laws….



Max Reinach's final diary entry, October 22, 1942

Max Reinach with daughter Gertrude, 1913

Frieda Reinach with daughter Gertrude, 1913

Since June first, Jews are no longer permitted to go to a barber. Lovely, no? Well, we can cut our hair ourselves. Starting July first, we have to turn in all electric appliances such as vacuum cleaner, iron, heating pad, stoves, everything that we always considered essential. So one thing follows the other. This also, however, is not really bad. What happens daily are: arrests, shootings of people, executions. Is it astonishing that I am scared?

So, now you are again a bit informed about our life, but I wonder if you will ever get this diary. This horrifying war goes on since three years now, how much longer? Only a miracle could save us and that miracle has to come soon. Otherwise we are all lost. And who shall win this war? This question is often discussed, but we ought not to indulge in wishful thinking, this is not the time to dream.

Sunday, July 12, 1942 (father)
I was just re-reading what mother wrote, and especially about our decision if I ought to register for work or not. We have been advised that either mother or I should register for work, therefore I decided to do so and went to the official place to register June 29th. One registers and then receives a work book. The employee took down my personal history, data, etc, and then he said: now go home, you shall hear from us. The answer arrived July fifth, and the note said: "On behalf of the authorities your apartment has to be evacuated."...I still hope, maybe, the matter gets postponed. My going to register for work, as you see, was the wrong thing to do.

October 20, 1942 (mother)
We have been silent for three months, but we thought of you all the time...And since today we know that we have to leave in a few days. We have become victims of our work for the community, all those who worked for the community had to go to Oranienburg street at 7am and among 1,500 people who had to go there, 500 were counted out for deportation. The hours there were frightful. We returned home at 3pm. Now a few more days in our beloved home and then--nothingness…

Father is a hero, he is my only support. We are victims of our Jewish destiny and we lose our country, our home, our possessions. Everything. Our friend Rose Friede as well as some other friends are in the same group as we are. No consolation. We shall write to you some lines via the Red Cross in order to inform you when we have to go…

So now we wish for all of you, most beloved children, a good and happy future. Do remain happy, healthy, and strong human beings the way we have educated you, may you find protection and love with your good husbands, the way your father is for me, the best and most noble man, the best and most lovable and dearest

husband and father. I know that you will never forget us but here is a wish: Do not let your life be overshadowed by our destiny. You are still so young, and we do not wish you to mourn.

Wednesday/Thursday night, October 22, 1942 (father)
The aforementioned words, written by mother, come from the bottom of our heart. These are most difficult days, nevertheless we wish to and have to try to resist and not to give in, whatever new will come. Together with my beloved Fritz[17] I fear nothing, whatever will happen. Our heart and soul is pure, and if we shall die (after all, everything alive has also to die) we shall stand with a pure conscience in front of our creator. Our material possessions have gone, and almost naked do we leave the country in which we have lived far more than 400 years. We cannot grasp, why we have become the victims and we have to grasp the reality….Both of us, your mother and I, shall try to help each other and start anew, once these days of terror are over. We do not know as yet, where to we have to go, but God is everywhere and wherever we call for him, we shall find him.

I wish to give you, beloved children, as our farewell, my blessing:

May the Eternal God protect you.
May the Eternal reveal to you his face--
And may he enlighten you.
May thee Eternal reveal to you his face
And give you peace.

Your father and grandfather

Max and Frieda Reinach were deported to an unknown concentration camp on October 29, 1942, and were murdered in the Holocaust because they were Jewish. Their diary survived thanks to a neighbor who saved it and gave it to an American soldier after the war. The soldier sent it to Max and Frieda's daughter, Lilli, who lived in Boston, Massachusetts.

[17] Max's nickname for his wife, Frieda

SUSI HILSENRATH

Susi Hilsenrath (now Susan Warsinger) was born in Bad Krueznach, Germany, in 1929, and had two younger brothers, Josef and Ernest. Her parents, Israel and Anni Hilsenrath, owned a linen shop in the town. In 1936, Susi was forced to leave public school and attend a school specifically for Jewish children. After the *Kristallnacht* attacks, Israel and Anni sent Susi and Josef to live with relatives in France. When Germany invaded France in 1940, Susi and Joseph were taken by nuns to Versailles, and from there to a home for Jewish children in southern France, Chateau les Morelles. Israel and Anni immigrated to the United States in 1940 with their youngest son, Ernest. With assistance from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Israel and Anni Hilsenrath located Susi and Josef at the Chateau les Morelles and tried to bring them to the United States. Susi wrote her diary mostly in German with some French.

Tuesday May 27, l941

Today was my 12th birthday and I am starting my diary on my 12th birthday and I do not believe that I will continue for long. I Set up my birthday table very nicely. I received a jewelry box from Susi Weichselbaum, a photo album, a small basket and a pin from Bobi, a handkerchief box from Sabine, a notebook and candies from Miss Cohn. Some more sweets from Bobi, Sabine and Friedel. I found that Sabine's table was also nice. Mine was totally covered with yellow flowers so it should look like more. I was not that happy. Oh, the teacher Daniel is such a crazy fellow. He was so boring stupid and lazy, and he kept his hands in his pocket all day. Just now I am in school where he is working out geographic maps with his certificate. Then, in the morning he says "je m'en maque." Hopefully , school will be over soon.

I was just reading a nice book (Eugennie Grandit), when Lea Katz, the insincere creature, wanted it. I cannot stand her together with her total crowd. I started a new notebook in class today and I wrote in there in very big letters, Susi Hilsenrath, born on May 27, so that he can blush again. I made seven mistakes and he gave me O, he is crazy. When one does everything good and nice he will give you six, and when you do not do so well he will give you a nine. He just came and asked me what kind of book is this. I think I blushed. This evening I again ate gruel rice, I still have terrible stomachaches. How happy I was when I came upstairs, to find a card and a few pictures on my tray. The card was from Ilse Schotten, she wrote "ma

cher Suzi, je souhaite une bon anniversaire, et je l'envoie mes mellieus avec ta petit ami, que je taime, Ilse."[18] Later when I came in I shared my cake, and everyone was very happy. Riva also came very soon and brought me pictures. The little ones are sweet, and Simon and Bella also congratulated me.

Wednesday, May 28, 1941

This morning Helga again drove me crazy. I believe I got up with the wrong foot today. Today we had to write a composition. The title was "Are you happy with your age, or do you want to be smaller or bigger". Then we had dictation in which I had nine errors. Helga Kalbmansohn and I wrote a poem about a trip to America. It was pretty good. The title of the poem is "When I think of my departure". Everything is running through my head, oh, if I could only be in America . – It is really a pleasure, to see the whole mess lying in school, but those who have to change it, do not long for this pleasure. Oh would the day already have arrived, one would sing hallelujah, all children travelling alone on the big ship. With a fully packed back pack on my back, fully packed with clothes, shirts, pants, socks and shoes, not being able to close.

Tuesday, June 10, 1941

The day of the Certificate is in two days.[19] All that get to go are crazy. They study all day and that makes me crazy. All talk is only about this. Just now M. Merreau is giving the children what they need. In this home I am getting worse from day to day. Today the director waited on us. She distributed asparagus, but when I think of the way she served it, I could vomit. Naturally the Germans did not eat it. I really wanted to eat it, but when I saw what she did, I lost my appetite. There is a tree full of good blossoms in front of the school. I, naturally always hungry, tore a bunch of off, and all of a sudden I screamed. I got stung by a bee. Helga, who was there, wanted to go to Mr. Merraue immediately, but I was so mad, because for everything there is a long story, so I just hit her. I was very sorry afterwards, because she meant well.

Monday, June 16, l941

We are now in the certificate class, which is correct if I would be here next year (thank G'd that this will not be so) and I would have to make the certificate. As I am back in school I have learned so much. I have no problems particularly orthography,[20] I know this quiet well. My dictation has to improve. Sabine received the good news today, that she will leave very soon. "Quelle chance." Hopefully, hopefully, I will go along. If I do not leave soon I will go crazy. I cannot stand it any more. I believe I am going with her because if I would be with the dear parents I would be overjoyed and happy. I am sorry that I did not listen to dear Daddy because, he very often said that if I 'once would be away, I would always be sorry' and I have been thinking about his words. I have decided that I will never be angry, and that I will always obey them. Oh, how often do I cry in bed? I just hear that Martha will scold me as I am not yet undressed.

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[18] My dear Suzi, happy anniversary and enjoy many years with your friend, who loves you, Ilse.
[19] This is a reference to school examinations
[20] spelling

Tuesday, June 24, 1941

Today the weather is really not so nice. It is still warm, but it is raining. When I came home from school this morning, I had a letter from my dear parents. That Papa also wrote made me very happy. They wrote that they received our nice letter. Mainly about that Pesach[21] was over and that it was very nice. They also baked Matzoh[22] until deep into the night, it was so done so secretly. It would have been nice to have a Matzoh here and there. When we came home at 1 o'clock we went into the kitchen and really filled ourselves with lots of bread and cheese, and that tasted so good. The water is already collecting in my mouth when I think of it. (you can imagine how greedy for food children we were, and yet we still have enough when I think of other people that are in camps) Here (France) it will never be as in Germany. In all newspapers here there are new laws for Jews and articles. It is terrible, almost all of Europe is Germany. Now Russia is against Germany. Maybe there is more hope for England. What will I do if someone reads this.

Wednesday, July 2, 1941

Yesterday I did not write because I did not know anything. Since yesterday I am on a diet, I have to get thinner. I hardly eat anything and I give everything away. Susi W. takes from me. She has nothing to say about it, I did it on my own. Today I am sending a nice letter for Papa's birthday….It is again very hot today. I am not talking to Helga at this time because she is so crazy. I will also become crazy because of her, before I go to America. Martha has not yet left, but Mrs. Braun left in her place, I am very glad because I do not like her. She is so unjust. She only wants to give to her boys, but it is all the same to me now, as I do not eat any more. I will be very happy when I get thinner again. I have to hurry because school is just about over.

Thursday, July 3, 1941

I am very angry because we were punished and were not allowed to go swimming for 14 days. It is very hot now. Almost everyone went, but not us. I believe that I have lost a lot of weight in a few days. I eat almost nothing. Susi wants me to eat more, she tells the children not to take from me. She is not allowed to say anything, she did it herself. I am only afraid that Martha will find out about it, and she will then load me up again, and she will watch carefully, G'd knows for how long. She has something to say about each little thing. For a while she called me in daily, maybe because of this. One morning I saw a large "S" over my bed, which I had painted. She asked me who did this, and I said "I." I have learned so many good things here that I opened up. I learned this from Gertrude. When she started to scream she said I would not be allowed to come and eat until it was gone. I said that Papa often said to mother that if he also did this he

[21] "Pesach" is another word for Passover, a major Jewish holiday in the spring.
[22] "Matzoh" is a thin, crisp, bread made without yeast and eaten during Passover.

would soon come to America. I hardly had said this when Bobi came up and told me the good news that we would be leaving in a few days. You can not imagine my joy. But if someone tells me I am leaving, I will only believe it when I am on the boat or in an airplane.

Thursday, July 10, 1941

We did not go swimming today, and I am very mad about this. Naturally, we made too much noise again, Martha said. We know Hebrew and English. Today many children had haircuts. The barber came here as they did not want to go to him. I was almost sick. The boys screamed as if they were being murdered. Mr. Weil held them by feet and hands.I am very happy that Josef had his haircut earlier. He is bothering me the entire time to undo his red scarf and make him a cap. He does this on purpose because he saw that I was making one. It gets worse daily, and I worry that he will become like the children here, even though sometimes he is quite nice. He has his times, and then he is terrible. He says such words! He is coming into the years where he could kill everything. Then I cannot stand it any more and I have to cry. Sabine gave me terribly bad news, that the American Consulate will not give Visas any more. I believe I will never get out of this damned house.

Friday, July 18, 1941

I am thinking of the great trip to America all day. Beautiful when I think of it and seeing my parents again soon. I hope it will be very soon. If it only would be true. Yesterday was Isi Reicher's Bar Mitzvah,[23] it was all in Hebrew and I did not understand much. I had a terrible stomach ache, I could hardly bear it. I thought I would become sick. They had liver and cut up goose meat chocolate and I saved it. Josef and Helga also gave their share to it. I was glad when it was over and I lay down on my bed. Miss Weichselbaum brought me a warm water bottle and asked whether I wanted to eat something, but I said 'no.' (*Illegible*) I never had such pain, but today everything is good again, peculiar, I never had such pain.

Tuesday, July 22, 1941

Today I finished the Tefillin[24] cover, black with blue. I embroidered the monogram on top. Hopefully it is suitable, because the straps are small now. Helga also gave her three. Hopefully they will not spoil. Just now am sitting with three, Helga, Edith and I, and all of us are writing in our diary. We just spoke about the diaries and when we can show them. Maybe when we are grown up. Maybe. Maybe I will show it to my 15 year old daughter. Sometimes, when I have nothing to do, I am thinking of my future. I am getting taller and I am well liked by all, and I am also getting to be very pretty. When I am 20

[23] A religious celebration in which a Jewish boy becomes an adult and can fully participate in the worship service. A bar mitzvah usually takes place around the boy's 13th birthday.

[24] "Tefillin" is a religious item used by observant Jews during prayer.

years old I will get married. After one year I will have two boys, twins, of course, and when the twins are 5 years old, I will have a girl. The boys will be very dark and good looking, one will be named Rolf and the other one Gerd, and they will be well liked by all, also the little girl, Ursula.. She is a blond with long curls. She will not be able to sit still. Our life is like a dream, we are fairly rich. My husband and I will watch our children grow up and have much pleasure from them. Is this not rubbish! I wish only that it could be fulfilled.

Wednesday, July 30, 1941

Today we are going to have vacation and it is the last day that we go to school. I believe that after the vacation we will not go back to school as we will be in Marseille already. On one side I am very happy that we have vacation, on the other side not….Just before, I wrote a letter to the parents. I wrote that I very often longed for something good, but that is true. How long is it since I ate a piece of chocolate, or a piece of cake? I have a terrible longing, and my mouth waters when I think of it. Yes, Papa often said "when you are far away, you will notice how good the parents are." I always laughed at him, saying it would be much better, and now I really notice what I said then. I am learning today oh how bad that was. Oh how nice it was with the dear parents in Germany. I believe that was the best part of my life. And I was so stupid, not knowing how lucky we were.

Sunday, August 10, 1941

For a few days I have noticed that David Belk keeps looking at me all the time. I notice that he likes me, I can feel this, and I am sure about it when our eyes pass each other, and then he quickly looks away. I do not know how this comes about. I hated him, and now I do not know. I force myself not to make anything out of it, but nothing goes the way I want it all the time. On Shabat I had a letter from the dear parents. Mother writes that Papa had a very bad arm that had to be bandaged every hour. I know that if I were separated from my children, I would not write anything bad to them. I will not write this to my parents. Papa also wrote, I find that he writes more motherly than Mother. In every letter we read 'do not think that we forget you, I think of you every minute.' Hopefully he is well again. I am less worried now about the terrible thoughts I had about the parents as Papa goes to D. Jacobs almost every day. These are good and decent people.

Tuesday , September 2, 1941

This is a continuation of Sunday. It was terribly to go by car after a long time. While Josef was talking to Mr. Tagan I thought about the Lord that helped me to leave this house. At 10 o'clock at night we arrive at Ganat and went to a hotel for the night. Josef slept in one bed with Mr. Tagan and I slept alone in a room. I could not sleep at night I tossed from one side to the other. The train whistles also kept me awake as the

hotel was next to the train station. Finally it was morning. We had to hurry as it was late already. The train left at 6 o'clock. It was pretty full. The train arrived in Lyon at 10 o'clock. We looked for Miss Hirsch immediately and we found her in her hotel. We went to the dock with Miss Hirsch. Mr. Tagan left the things with the Consulate. We had to wait a long time at the dock until he came. He took us into a room and instructed us that was an examination. Then everything was ready.

PM, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 1941 NEW YORK 17

Hitler's Terror Behind Them, A New Horizon Lies Ahead

The Portuguese liner *Serpa Pinto* brought in 51 refugee children yesterday from Unoccupied France by way of Lisbon. Some were unsmiling, stamped with memories of hunger and privation in Nazi concentration camps. Others scampered about the deck, in worn faded clothes and shoddy sandals, like children on holiday. Each was tagged and numbered. Erich Thorn, a 12-year-old, had had the longest journey. He started two years ago from Vienna. His mother died in a truck. His father tried to commit suicide. In France he got diphtheria. Finally the U. S. Committee for Care of European Children found him and took him in. Like many of the children, all transported at the Committee's expense, his passport is marked *Heimatlos*—Stateless. The Committee will place each one in American homes. The *Serpa Pinto* was a clean ship. *Photo by Leo Lieb, PM Staff*

Susan Warsinger (third from the right at the top) with the other children on the Serpa Pinto, as they arrived in the United States

In September 1941, Susi and Joseph sailed on the *Serpa Pinto*, and reunited with their parents and brother in the United States. She married Irving Warsinger in 1948 and became a teacher. Susan Warsinger volunteers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum sharing her story.

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

LUCIEN DREYFUS

Lucien Dreyfus was a teacher born in 1882 on the western border of Germany, in a town called Westhausen. He and his wife, Marthe, had one daughter, Mariette, who was born in 1914. After World War I, Westhausen became part of France. After the outbreak of war in 1939, the Dreyfus family moved to southern France, and Lucien began teaching at schools in Poitiers and Nice. He was fired from his teaching job in October 1940 for being Jewish. Mariette and her husband Jacques Schumacher, who had gotten married in 1936, both worked for refugee aid organizations in southern France. They had one daughter--Lucien's granddaughter--named Monique. Lucien wrote in French and kept his diary between 1925 and 1943.

In this entry, Dreyfus imagines the letter he would write to the secretary general of public education in Vichy France, the area of southern France where Dreyfus lives and which is allied with Nazi Germany.

January 13, 1941

Gave the bursar's office paper with a revenue stamp, 6 francs, to make up my retirement file.

I was a teacher (without any interruption in service) at the Lycée Kléber in Strasbourg from April 28, 1908 to July 14, 1939. The evacuation of Strasbourg prevented me from returning, and I accepted a position at the lycée [school] in Poitiers, then at the lycée in Nice. On December 18, 1940, the director asked me to end my service as a teacher of German.

This measure struck me more forcefully than many others.

First, I had to give up everything that I owned in Alsace.[25]

Then, my securities, deposited in Nantes by the Strasbourg branch of the BNCI[26] were confiscated and disposed of.

Then, my postal checking account, transferred from Strasbourg to Limoges, was sent back to Strasbourg.

Finally, the BNCI in Nice, where I had bought armaments bonds with the rest of my savings, sent them *to Bordeaux, in order to save them, one week before the declaration of war by Italy. They are likewise lost to me. Thus, stripped in my 59th year of everything that I have inherited and acquired, the son of an Alsatian decorated with the commemorative medal of 1870, I see myself obliged, Mr. Secretary General, to send you, my former superior in Strasbourg, this plea to obtain work for me so that I can feed myself."*

[25] The area including Westhausen

[26] A bank

To Mr. Terracher, Secretary General

March 16, 1941
Why does this day, which makes me seem to the public to be a happy man, suggest to me precisely the idea of confining to this notebook my apprehensions, which are, rather, logical convictions coming from the bottom of my Jewish soul?

Since 1880, the beginning of the era of pogroms, the European middle classes have tolerated antisemitism. The Jews in Western countries believed themselves safe behind the shield of laws, which, however, did not express the will of the people but rather were measures of an ideological nature, taken by advanced governments. At first there was a wish to remedy the evils that the Jews of Eastern Europe had experienced, by providing material assistance in a vast charitable effort. Herzl[27] was keenly aware of the inadequacy of this action, and he proposed emigration to an independent state, which it was necessary to find. But he was misunderstood, and people scornfully refused to follow him. The inevitable had to happen. Nazi propaganda, profiting from the post-war troubles, introduced anti-Jewish hatred into milieus previously closed to it, and the success of the boss of Berchtesgaden[28] can be explained only by the complicity of all the European middle classes, which shared his antipathies or exploited them. The end of this movement will be the elimination of the Jews of this continent.

Sunday, May 11, 1941
At the temple, the facade sprayed with red and blue paint; the policeman writes it down; a woman passing by says: It's shameful. You may be from the Gestapo, but I tell you I really like the Jews. Jacques left at 2am. At 11:30am, with the refugees from Alsace-Lorraine in front of the statue of Joan of Arc to leave a wreath. With the Kahn-Baders until 7pm. It was the day after the publication of the anti-Jewish decisions taken by Vallet,[29] who excluded the Jews from business and from everything. *L'Eclaireuer* made a big issue of it, *Le Petit Nicois* did not mention it.

Friday, June 27, 1941
The scattered life I lead is not focused on anything, and occasionally this worries me or pleases me, because I would not be able to take up my former existence again. I live all the more intensely with the events. They absorb me completely. The readers of future historians who have gathered the most richly documented evidence will have only a pale image of what is unfolding before us who are witnessing the tragedy. One must be a contemporary to savor an event.

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[27] A Jewish writer who proposed the creation of a Jewish nation
[28] Hitler
[29] The French commissioner general for Jewish affairs

Lucien Dreyfus, approximately 1920

July 3, 1941
Events are becoming increasingly irrelevant to you. People barely read the announcements. Fate is meted out to the Jews, people are not upset anymore; the rumors about the census and the registration of assets are accepted with a serenity that lends them to an odious character.

July 9, 1941
Looked for food supplies without ration coupons at Mr. Larchez's. Ran into Mr. Grimaud, teacher, who stopped me to tell me that courteous honesty requires him to make his change of mind known to me. A year ago, he believed in German victory and tried to find the weaknesses in British character and policy in order to make the situation created by our defeat more acceptable to himself. Since the Germans are waging war on Russia, he sees that the closeness between the two dictators is not as strong as he thought, and if Germany has Russia and America against her, her defeat will be certain.

Wednesday, December 10, 1941
With Mr. Kahn and Paul Weill, climbed up to the Castle. On the way, we discuss the decision to put foreigners into camps. When will we be there?...Family discussion. I clarify: I expect an attempt by the

Germans and Japanese to link up in the Indies. I favor the departure of the children to America. Separation? It is a question of planning for the possibility of living. The times are hard. They will be more so. Let us save what we can.

Thursday May 14, 1942
At 7am the children, tired, are ready to take the last steps, we called taxis to take the suitcases. The separation. I play the optimist until the end. Marthe does nothing but cry. Mariette, good bearing. Jacques too. Monique is so carefree that we are filled with joy. She doesn't have to go to school anymore and is about to see something new. Robi helps; a good boy. At noon he comes back to say that boarding and going through customs went off without difficulty. The departure has not yet occurred. His mother comes twice, Aunt Andrée, certainly besought by Mariette, once, to keep us company. We go to sleep, worn out. What are our children doing on the ship?

May 20, 1942
A letter written by Mariette aboard the *Maréchal Lyautey* and mailed in Oran arrives and gives the first detailed news. The first evening... the children were seasick, which forced Mariette to stay in her cabin without going to the dining room. But the next day, superb weather, calm sea. A kindergarten teacher and a woman doctor help them to keep an eye on the children. A nephew of Kaplan and two sons "of Gunsbourg" do scouting activities with them. The food is good but not abundant. Life unfolds as if in a palace. We are beginning to get used to it, and, in view of the alarming political news that is circulating, we are happy to know that the children are far from this tainted atmosphere of Nice, where a brutal and senseless antisemitism reigns supreme.

Tuesday, June 23, 1942
A letter from the children comes, dated June 9 (just 15 days), written on board the *Serpa Pinto*, sent at the time of the stopover in the Azores. From there to Bermuda; they will not go to Jamaica. Arrival is expected on June 20; therefore they are already [in] New York. They are splendidly set up, extraordinary food, meat and fish at noon, Jacques is ashamed, he says, to give us these details, compared with our hardship. Monique is having a field day, she eats in a special room for the children in first class, where the walls are lined with scenes from *Snow White*. They eat to the sounds of an orchestra, with butter on the table, Mariette writes. "I'd like to stay on this ship forever, even though I'm a bit seasick." That last, Jacques says, has completely spared Monique, doesn't bother him, Mariette is more sensitive to it, but a few drops of a soothing medicine have put her back on her feet. I don't know why this letter pleased me so much, maybe because I know that they are safe now.

Friday, July 3, 1942

There is talk of 700,000 Jews killed in Poland and surrounding area. This number is not necessarily exaggerated. In proportion to the Jews scattered around the world, it's not as many as in the era of Chmelnicki's persecutions.[30] But we are not yet at the end. Before being welcomed again, we will go through many sufferings announced by the verses of the Torah. Moses is always right. He[31] will fall, but it is not said that we will witness his fall, which, moreover, will be slow to come and will bury with him many others who have committed unforgivable sins against us. Did he not say it all, predict it with cynicism and a sleepwalker's confidence in his book, *Mon Combat*?[32] People did not pay attention because they had too much liking for the man who initiated, so gracefully, an elegant anti-Jewish persecution. All are guilty. What do people reproach the Americans for? What they can still be reproached for today. They failed to send ships in order to settle some 5 to 600,000 Polish, German, and French Jews in the center of the United States, which would certainly have calmed the general situation without weighing down the development of agriculture and industry in a country of more than 120 million souls. The Jews are far from being righteous, the others less so. The latter either kill or fail to stop the killers; we at least respect human life. The Torah has not yet made much better those who have received it, the others are not even Christians yet. These are the reflections of a man who is not afraid of anything, who has seen much, and who forms a judgment all the more serene because his children are saved. The catastrophe was brought on by the perfection of technique, latest version, and enhanced by the undertaking nicknamed the construction of the Tower of Babel, but people have totally neglected the cultivation of the spirit and the soul. Without religion, the human race has no coherence and devotes itself to periodic loss in order to repeat its errors. It is only the Torah that remains.

Tuesday, July 14, 1942

Letter from Rabat. A favorable response to my request is not granted, as much because of housing and food-supply difficulties as because of restrictions imposed on the system of communications. Moreover, an effort is being made to limit the entry into Morocco of new elements whose usefulness is not indispensable to the economic life of the country. Failed. We must try America.

Thursday, July 16, 1942

Photographs for the American passport, 12 bis, avenue Félix Faure, shop *American photos*; without being handsome, mine turned out well, with the wrinkles carved by age and restrictions. At the bank, at another

[30] A reference to a pogrom in the 17th century.
[31] Hitler
[32] *Mein Kampf*, a autobiography and political manifesto written by Hitler

bank; one must sign to certify that one is a Jew and that one has no administrator. I have one, therefore I can't sign.

Saturday, August 15, 1942
A letter from New York via Clipper, sent on July 16, the first one from America, I give a tip of 5 francs to the mailman who delivers it. They are fine. Jacques has a prospect of employment by Mr. Alphonse Meiss, and they are going to learn about American ways, on the advice of the Quaker office in Philadelphia, at the Scattergood Hostel in West Branch (Iowa), by bus via Chicago. Departure, Tuesday, July 21. So they were in New York for one month in total. Good letter. By contrast, Pierre writes that, suspected of wanting to cross the demarcation line, he was arrested with all his family and confined first at La Rochefoucauld, then at Angoulême and in the camp at Poitiers, from which he sent his card to say that he would be transported with 500 to 600 persons to Drancy (Seine). He is not unhappy and tells us not to worry about it. We are waiting for his subsequent news. It's sad.

Saturday, August 29, 1942
The police roundups continue; they aren't very productive, because these refugees know how to hide.

Thursday, December 1, 1942

Jitteriness prevails, caused by the possibility of seeing the coast evacuated and by the fear of being exposed to the Germans in another department.[33] At the same time, we learn that massacres have taken place, in Poland, people speak of bloodbaths of hundreds of thousands, and of a million, who knows? I don't know what strength allows me to stay calm.

Friday, December 18, 1942
The radio repeats the Anglo-Saxons' protests, read by Eden before Parliament, against the killings of Jews in Poland, which are claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of women, men, and children. They want to do something. They don't say what. It should have been done before; that is, there was no shortage of protests, but there was a lack of action. There is also a great deal of hypocrisy on the part of the Anglo-Saxons.

Sunday, December 20, 1942

[33] An area of France

Played bridge with Mrs. and Mr. Kahn, who do not know anything. In the evening, the radio speaks of shameful massacres of Jews, of hundreds of thousands who are dying in Poland from asphyxiating gas, shootings, electric current, 8,500 in Yugoslavia and so on and so forth. One no longer has the right to breathe in the presence of these monstrosities. The *israelites*[34] who abandon their faith don't know what they are doing. They surrender to them their children, who perhaps will be happy Aryans for a while but a generation later will already be dreadful persecutors. These are the Aryans who produce mass murderers, killers, monsters…

Wednesday, January 27, 1943
Summoned to the police...I learn that my Vichy visa was denied. The clerk consoles me: you'll go back soon, the war won't last much longer. On the way, ran into Pierre, who informs me about the Casablanca conference, where unconditional surrender was decided upon.

Tuesday, March 16, 1943
People spread the news of a telegram arrived in Nice, according to which all French *israelites* will be arrested and sent to Germany. It's possible. Let's go. We are not worth more than our correligionists who are Poles or Germans; probably less, because we have already treated them with an air of superiority. For the rest, to the grace of God! In the evening, we find out that it was a false rumor.

Thursday, May 13, 1943
This Thursday, May 13, makes 52 weeks since our children left us. I would like to be able to tell them in person that they did the right thing. Their faces are before me so vividly that I believe I am talking to them. I would be happy to kiss Mariette's forehead.

Thursday, June 24, 1943
The bailiff Raphael Brun, 3 place Masséna, successor of our neighbor Maître Tanzi, gives us notice for September 29. The deputy Peter tells me that he cannot do anything at all, all I have to do is reply that I am a refugee. These gentlemen, including the vulture Jean Jouve, 44 rue de la Buffa, are trying to find suckers who will pay. –Not only are we eating better than last year,we are not eating badly at all, after getting well organized and given the prices; but I am losing weight all the same. The doctor says I'm well, I feel well, and it must be a law of nature that is changing my disposition. No matter, things aren't going badly, and I would like the children to know in Danville that we are doing fairly well here a year after their departure.

[34] Jews

But the young people are being hunted down, and every day we thank heaven, which gave Jacques the energy to leave. Today at the "Alsatians" – GERAL, the Jewish recipients of benefits were informed that they should look for a livelihood. After three months, the allocation will no longer be paid to them. Who knows what one will be doing in three months?

Thursday, September 16, 1943
Alarming rumors are circulating. In Nice, there are arrests in quantity, in the streets, in the hotels, in the villas on the Promenade des Anglais. These are the Germans, helped by the militia people, who operate without pity. One does not know what to do. There is one thing to do: trust that God will help.

Monday, September 20, 1943
The days have remained calm. People tell about numerous arrests in Nice, where trucks full of Jews go by in an unknown direction; here we are busy finding a shelter to hid in, in case of an alarm and envisaging the extension of our stay beyond October 1. Mrs. Amédéo would certainly keep us. Getting food supplies does not present an obstacle, the local citizens are very nice and believe that the endgame is near.

A message from Mariette arrives, sent from Danville on May 21, arrived in France on August 20; I get it one month later. "Are happy, in good health. Monique loves school, Jack and I are busy at the store. Have a nice apartment. Pray that you are in good health."

Tuesday, September 21, 1943
Reply to Mariette, % the office of the French Red Cross, 2 rue de la Grande Grille, in Vichy: Happy about your message. Are spending the summer in Clans, Alpes-Maritimes, near Nice. All is well. With love.

Friday, September 24, 1943
At 10 a.m., Mrs. Amédéo comes upstairs to notify us of the arrival of Germans, a tall gentleman just told her that. We later learn that Miss Lévy, fiancée of Mr. Henri B., had learned it at the post office. We leave at once to hide first at Fantin's, then with the uncle of Mrs. Roux, and finally Mrs. Roux drives us to her barn higher up, after a walk of 30 minutes, where we find almost all the *israélites* gathered together. At 1 p.m. Mrs. Roux comes to get us, false alarm, the trucks of the Germans headed to Saint-Étienne-de-Tinée had first taken the road from Pont de Clans to Clans, and shortly afterward realized their mistake. What do I know about it? What must one believe? Marthe was very worked up until we had lunch at 1:30 with Mrs. Roux at our place. All is well.

The entry on September 24, 1943 is the final surviving entry in Lucien Dreyfus's diary. On October 25, 1943, he, his wife Marthe, and twenty-five other Jews residing in Clans were arrested. They were deported to the Drancy transit camp near Paris on October 27, 1943, and then to Auschwitz-Birkenau on November 20, 1943. Lucien Dreyfus was almost certainly murdered immediately after arriving at the camp. Although there are gaps in his entries, most of his diaries survived, likely thanks to Dreyfus's non-Jewish housekeeper. At some point after World War II, Mariette Schumacher received them on a trip back to France.

DR. AHARON PICK

Dr. Aharon Pick was born in Kėdaniai, Lithuania, in 1872. He and his wife, Devorah, participated actively in Jewish life in their community of Šiauliai, a Lithuanian city where Pick worked as a medical doctor. They had one son, Tedik. In June 1940, the Soviet Union--which at that time was an ally of Nazi Germany--invaded and occupied Lithuania. One year later, in June 1941, Germany launched a surprise attack on the Soviet Union, betraying their prewar pact. Germany occupied Lithuania, and Pick and his family were forced into the Šiauliai ghetto in 1941. There, Pick began his diary, writing in Hebrew. Although he did not put dates on many of his entries, the diary was written while he was living and working as a doctor in the ghetto.

In this early entry, Pick describes the increase in antisemitism in Lithuania during the 1930s, prior to the outbreak of war.

And the government started to bombard the Jews with rules and restrictions in the fields of commerce, arts and education. There were too many to recount here, so I will limit myself to those in education, medicine, and law, with which I am more familiar.

First, the school of medicine all but shut its doors to Jewish high-school graduates. Enrolling became as difficult as parting the Red Sea, with only a privileged few, who had recommendations from high-ranking, influential people....There at least there was a quota: Five to 10 percent of those admitted to high schools and universities were Jews. But in Lithuania no attention was paid to percentages, and Jews were rejected wholesale. Of course, they invoked their holy constitution as a pretense, and made all sorts of excuses.

Another ruse aimed to eliminate Jewish specialists from such fields as surgery, obstetrics, ophthalmology, etc. The government declared that any doctor who wanted to become a specialist had to work as an aide in in his chosen field, in a relevant hospital department, for a certain number of years –three years for eyes, four for surgery, etc. This demand was essentially proper and logical. But even as the requirement was announced, an order was issued quietly to hospital managers to stop hiring Jewish aides in the hospitals' specialty departments. Since work in these departments was a necessary precondition for becoming a specialist, the possibility of Jewish doctors becoming specialists was foreclosed, and the medical profession was destined to be rid of Jewish doctors.

For Jewish lawyers things were even worse. Here they did not deal with specialization but simply barred Jews from receiving the simple title of lawyer. Obtaining that title required working as a "candidate" in a court for a certain period, and, one bright morning, admissions of such candidates stopped all together.

Other restrictions were imposed on Jews at the same time. Artists, professionals, and those with government or city-hall jobs were pushed out, gradually, slowly, so as not to make too great a fuss. With new jobs impossible for Jews to obtain, restrictions on university admissions, the lack of medical specialization options, and the closing off of legal or official positions, the appeal of higher education faded for intelligent young Jews. Rather than aspiring to study in the halls of learning, as had been so common among Jewish adults, the young now wished to leave the land of Lithuania, which had been like a stepmother to them, and emigrate to our ancestors' land or sail across the oceans to those refuges where Jews could still do creative and productive work.

In the hospital as well, the atmosphere also turned difficult. While in the past there had been no distinction between me and the Christian doctors regarding such matters as salary, things now began to change for the worse...So my Christian friends saw a nice monthly salary for their work, while I was forced to be satisfied with my insultingly low compensation. Notably, my friends did not see anything abnormal in this discrimination, as over time they came to accept the notion that merely tolerating a Jewish doctor in the hospital was burden enough...

My Christian colleagues, not satisfied with the mere slogan "Lithuania for the Lithuanians;" not satisfied with a defensive war against the Jews, their unwanted competitors, increasingly took the offensive, barely hiding their hatred. Jews, they believed, dominated those branches of commerce and industry that were most needed to nurture Lithuania's culture, and were uninterested in aiding the country's development. Doctor T.K. was particularly fierce in his hatred. Since his facial features and his last name indicated that he was not ethnically Lithuanian, he made an effort to demonstrate his commitment and loyalty to the "pure" Lithuanian nation by trying to conceal his origins as best he could….Inside the hospital, despite our arguments, we were like loyal friends. Outside, when he found me in the company of Christians, such as at a party or a meeting, he ignored me and refrained from all conversation....He would only nod his head subtly, as though coerced by a demon, so as not to be suspected of befriending a Jew in this new era.

In this entry, Pick describes his memories of the German invasion of Lithuania in June 1941 and the days that followed:

War was declared on June 22 and, at dusk on the 26th, we suddenly saw Germans strolling on the sidewalk outside our window. We saw, and our eyes went dark! We knew their attitude to Jews, and what they did to our brothers in Germany and Poland; now our despair knew no bounds. The Germans' entry obliterated our hopes; our hearts stopped…

When Amalek[35] captured Lithuania, it found a partner unique among all the countries that had fallen under its feet. The Lithuanians behaved like liberated slaves, naturally crude and savage, removed from culture, primitive in commerce and industry. Their jealousy of the Jews was as fierce as death. Particularly after declaring independence, this dormant beast awoke, baring its teeth and fangs in full force. Encouraged by the occupiers who hated us in their hearts, the Lithuanians began slaying us, happy to rid themselves of "alien" competitors. Thus entire communities were wiped out, coldly and methodically, 50 or 60 persons at a time, all in one day or over several days, old and the young, women and babies, fathers in front of their children, children in front of their fathers. The murderers' hands did not tremble, and their eyes did not go blind. And we who have remained alive – for now – and are under the rule of Amalek and his minions, our fate is bitter! We are being roasted on a slow fire.

From the day we fell under the oppressive German boots and became targets for the Lithuanian guns and fists, our bodies, our property and our labor all became cheap commodities. But it is useless to pile on words to express our pain. My pen is unable to describe even one of the thousands of humiliations that rain down on us, nor the thousands of dangers we face, nor the torments they invent daily to embitter our lives.

In this diary entry, Pick described the antisemitic edicts put in place by the German occupying forces:

Before the transfer to the ghetto

1. Jews may not be outdoors after 8 p.m. Christians could stroll until 11 p.m., but that was later changed to 9 p.m. The one-hour difference was maintained to emphasize that Jews are not the equals of Lithuanians.
2. Jews may not display the Lithuanian flag on national holidays. This decree was designed to demonstrate that Jews are not full citizens, equal to Lithuanians. But it also served incidentally as a convenient way of identifying Jewish homes.
3. Selling food to Jews is barred. Even before the official order, and the introduction of [ration] "tickets," Christian shopkeepers began preventing Jews from buying certain food items, particularly butter and milk. It was said that Dr. R's wife was standing in a line to get milk when a Lithuanian ordered her to leave. Since she is hard of hearing, she did not respond, so he grabbed her neck and shook her violently, nearly causing her to fall. Later, two stores were designated where Jews could obtain small rations of certain items. But very soon there were serious shortages of foods essential for health: meat, milk, butter, cheese, bread, flour, and sugar.

These restrictions reached their climax in the ghetto, as I will discuss in detail later.

[35] Here, Pick uses "Amalek" to refer to Nazi Germany. In the Hebrew Bible, Amalek is a nation that is the enemy of Jews.

4. The “badge of shame”...First, they ordered us to wear a yellow “Star of David” on the left side of the chest. But then the district commissioner added an embellishment of his own: A second Star of David on the back, so that Jews could be recognized both from the front and behind. My wife and I experienced the effect of this for ourselves on September 13, the day we left for the ghetto, when my wife had an episode affecting her nervous system. It happened like this: After the inspection committee confiscated my office and equipment, my furniture and library, after most of what we had built and accumulated over 20 years was gone, we collected the remaining fraction of our furniture and goods into two carts. It was becoming evening as we left, our hearts heavy, for the ghetto. Suddenly my wife felt a terrible pain in her legs, a new sensation that nearly paralyzed her. It was impossible for her to continue walking. As she sat on the sidewalk to wait out the problem, I was desperate. Using a driver was forbidden, walking on the sidewalk was forbidden, and it was getting late. We had yet to enter the ghetto, find a place to sleep, and store our belongings. Our desperation was infinite! Finally, my wife’s pain eased a bit, and I started leading her on my arm, slowly. Near Dr. Ivansky’s house, I decided to use the sidewalk, because the pain in her legs had intensified. Suddenly it was as if we were both struck by lightning: We had each been punched in the head, leaving us stunned. A stem of my glasses broke, and when they fell off my nose I was unable to make out the face of the villain who had hit us. He seemed to be a common worker, who was apparently defending the sacred honor of the sidewalk from the filthy Jews. As I tried to fix my glasses, I protested, “You have no right to hit us!” Through clenched teeth, like a mad dog, he answered, “You want to see my permit?” He seemed about to attack me again, but perhaps he recognized my face, and at that moment a German approached, and I started to complain that this villain had struck a sick woman. The German did not respond, but the villain rushed into a neighboring courtyard and disappeared. The point is, was it not the “badge of shame” on our backs that had prompted this vile deed? The Germans are being extremely strict: They even dictated the size of the badge, its width and where it should be sewn.
5. Walking on the sidewalks is banned for Jews. This is a terribly offensive and insulting edict. The Jews walk like shadows at the edges of the streets, and honest Christians watch and are ashamed. The feet stumble often on loose or protruding stones, helping to ruin the soles of shoes that cannot be repaired due to leather shortages, and overshoes that are hard to replace. Naturally, the question arose of how to manage this in winter, when snow piles up on the edges of the streets. Moreover, it appears heaven is against us: This year winter came early. In November, the cold intensified, and with it came plenty of snow. We experienced the pleasure of stumbling into the snow piles as we struggled over ice and slippery roads; like the righteous, we fell and rose seven times. But no problem! If they leave us alive, we will endure this too.
6. Restrictions on science and culture. We are barred from enjoying the inventions that largely enable civilized life. It is forbidden to use radio, telephone, telegraph, mail or any modern mode of transportation, such as trains, automobiles, buses, or bicycles….

7. We are barred from public spaces. We were presented with a full bouquet of edicts to exclude us and shoo us away like lepers. We are forbidden to enter theatres or the cinema, visit city parks, sit on street benches, or stroll about the city. (This decree evolved and solidified when we were already in the ghetto; details to follow). Any petty official or any German soldier may begin an investigation into the activities of any Jew they meet on the street. Where is he coming from, and where is he going? If the answer is not satisfactory, it means at least a beating, if not arrest and imprisonment...

Yet all these restrictions were nothing compared with the ghetto decree, which reshaped our entire existence and marked our lives...

Dr. Aharon Pick, seated in the center of the photo (with a moustache), at a dinner party at his home in Šiauliai, Lithuania, in the 1930s.

In this entry, Pick describes moving into the Šiauliai ghetto.

Rumors of a ghetto began soon after the Germans entered Šiauliai, frightening us like a violent wind, like a deadly pestilence troubling us day and night....At the same time, rumors began to startle and haunt us, changing daily and contradicting each other, about the establishment of a ghetto. One day the rumor spread that all Šiauliai Jews were to be sent to Žagarė — a little place not far from Šiauliai. The following day

another rumor said this decision was cancelled, and instead we were to be sent to the village of Shimshe and kept in peasants' mud houses, which even in summer are surrounded by muck and swamp. On the third day a new rumor circulated that Šiauliai Jews would be divided into two camps: one for experts and professionals, and one for ordinary workers, tradesmen and artisans. The "specialists" would be settled on Trakų St. and the rest would be sent to a hilly, muddy area of the city known as "Kaukazas." Then on the fourth day, our anxiety was relieved by news that for now the ghetto idea had been set aside, and joy filled our homes. Thus did rumors shift from day to day. …We realized the ghetto idea was alive and well, and that our transfer from Šiauliai to a place of calamity was likely in coming days. Bizarre, contradictory rumors about a ghetto continued; their only common denominator was that they embittered our lives and left us in fear of the terrible future we faced. Finally, those in power decided the ghetto would be created here, and not in another town...

And so the creation of the ghetto began. In the Trakų area they allocated the following streets: Ežero, Žilvičių, Padirsių, and Ginkūnų which branch off of Trakų. And in the Kaukazas area they allocated Gelgudo, Šilų, Krymo, and Kaukauzas streets, and small portion of Venclausko, Vilniaus and Ežero streets. Around each of the areas they placed equally spaced fence posts, filled in the gaps between them with barbed wire, and installed two gates in the fence. So the Jews of Šiauliai were given two German-style compounds, to separate this underclass from the superior Aryans...

In the end, the Lithuanians, led by Stankus under German supervision, prepared a list of Jews they considered redundant: the old, the sick, the feeble, single women without skills or profession. (Except for those whose skills they need and cannot easily find among their own citizens — such as hatters, watchmakers, glove makers, furriers, etc. — all Jews are redundant.) To those listed they often added their relatives and their young, healthy children. Some believe they also added a few single women who had managed to hide valuable articles with influential Christians; and that the latter, hoping to inherit their valuables, pulled strings to have them eliminated. When the list was complete, they started transporting those on it, some from town and others from the ghetto, to an unknown location, under the pretense that they were going to Žagarė. After a while they stopped taking them out of town. Instead they were put at first in one of Šiauliai's synagogues, perhaps so the children of Israel could fulfill the commandment to "redeem the captive," for their captors' benefit. Those who were not "redeemed" were eventually also taken to that unknown place...Where? A terrifying and silent question mark hangs over the great deep of tears and blood.

Thirteen days (a "devil's dozen") into September, at dusk, after my wife's nerve attack and the two punches we received, we had the "good fortune" to arrive at the Trakų ghetto. There was no home made ready for us, no place to put our remaining furniture, books and other belongings. This is when our real trials began. We did more than our share of wandering; for nine days we drifted like vagabonds. In vain did we plead

with the Jewish council to find us a home, stressing that I was exhausted from my imprisonment and my wife was sick. The bureaucrats just kept putting us off, day after day, with promises that were never kept. Because doctors were still being blamed for the deportations from the ghetto to the synagogues, they were hesitant to take serious steps to find us a home.

Finally...we... got the apartment: a small room, a narrow kitchen, and a small corridor with more holes than wall. The place was filthy; cracks in the walls were full of fleas and yellow and black cockroaches, and the wallpaper was saturated with dirt. We cleaned up as best as we could, tried covering the walls with carpets to hide the bugs, and are now living in this apartment, which is confined, crowded, unclean, full of mice who raid our food...

The ghetto architecture is quite primitive. All the buildings, except for a few, are one-story, wooden structures, low and crowded. The apartments are mostly one room, or two small rooms, much smaller than rooms in ordinary farmhouses. The ceiling is typically very low. The walls are covered with low-quality decorative wallpaper, or simply newspaper. The stove is meant to serve both for cooking and heat, but in the winter it fails to properly warm the apartment, and in summer it is difficult to dissipate the heat from cooking....

Another serious problem plagues the ghetto: Mice, large and small, dominate, with all that that implies. Small rodents often steal the last crumbs from the ghetto-dwellers, at a time when finding food is harder than parting the Red Sea, so provisions must be guarded vigilantly. But guarding against these little pests is not easy at all. We once managed to buy an edible piece of meat, and smuggled it back into the ghetto in a basket beneath some potatoes. A guard at the gate caught us, however, and we had to pay another 50 rubles as a fine. A day after we hung up this meat, which cost us a fortune, in the corridor, we discovered that the pests had stolen most of it. They probably entered the corridor through holes in the ceiling. The bold vermin also gnaw through bags of food that we hang on the walls in our room.

In this entry, Pick lists some of the edicts that have been put in place inside the ghetto:

Miscellaneous decrees, and additions to earlier edicts that sting like needles:

1. Drivers may not sit atop their horse carts when carrying cargo. Decreed by Strenge, the head of the labor police. It appears that this "father of mercy" felt pity for the poor horses, who have to haul the loads of Jewish corpses. Not fair.
2. Stars of David must be stitched to clothing at all six corners. They used to be satisfied with fastening the stars with pins, but there were problems. Some Jews would remove these badges of shame when entering Christian homes to buy food, which offended the esteemed masters. Now

those conniving Jews can no longer do that, and so have to find another way to alleviate their hunger.

3. The edict regarding Jewish patients was extended and completed: Christian doctors are forbidden to treat Jews, period. So from now on, those who are seriously ill or urgently need an operation have no recourse. The Christian surgeon has come into the ghetto to operate several times. Now, should there be a case of appendicitis, clogged intestines, lung cancer requiring surgery, the outcome will be a painful death, because we do not have a Jewish surgeon….
4. Several workshops in town, where Jews made up the majority of workers, were closed. This of course left them unemployed. It was also decreed that in those workshops remaining open, at least half the employees must be Christians. After they learn their jobs from the Jews, it will be possible to get rid of those Jews altogether.
5. The strict prohibition on leaving the ghetto and returning alone, without a Christian "escort," is intended to prevent Jews from entering forbidden places, such as stores and private Christian homes. As always, food is the main issue. Now Jews wait every morning for Christian escorts to take them to offices and shops, and wait every evening for the same to walk them back home.
6. All city streets and public institutions must display a "beautiful" poster, featuring an ugly face looking out from a Star of David, winking deceptively with a long, wild beard. A disgusting, revolting face. Beneath this image is a list of questions, such as: "Who destroyed the land of Lithuania?" "Who violated the daughters of Lithuania?" "Who destroyed the factories in Lithuania?" "Who lives in the nicest apartments and put you in a hole in the wall?" "Who ate the choicest food and starved you?" "Who is to blame for the war?" and many more tasteless and baseless questions. And to all of them a single answer: "The Jew!" This poster has not been all that successful, and its exaggerations have drawn laughter from Christians.

This entry is in a part of the diary in which Pick lists "Afflictions," describing the methods of persecution he and his family have endured.

a. Looting and Robbery

How badly things changed for the Jews in our city with the Germans' arrival! The Lithuanian partisans went into a frenzy, and their first attacks were on Jewish property, the fruit of Jewish labor. They behaved not like thieves or burglars who attack in the dark of night, but robbed and looted openly, in broad daylight. They strolled the streets, often with German soldiers, broke into Jewish homes and acted like they owned them.

However, the Lithuanians' excesses were not all approved by the Germans. In one case, armed partisans and policemen arrested some Jews and forced them to carry belongings on their backs to the police

headquarters. When they arrived, the Germans beat the partisans and police and let the prisoners go home with their goods. They were probably upset because the Lithuanians had acted on their own, without asking permission first. Subsequently, the Germans issued an order forbidding looting, and requiring that any robberies be reported to their police. Only the belongings of those who fled were transferred to the partisans. But the Jews were already so deeply depressed that none of us dared resist, let alone complain to the Germans, when the thieves did not stop. Among the top reasons for that order was certainly the Germans' concern that the Lithuanians might not leave them any Jewish property, as well as the desire, mentioned above, to not give the Lithuanian leadership too much independence. It was evident that law and justice did not apply to Jews, and that sooner or later the Germans themselves would set upon us, making not only our property but also our lives free for all to despoil and ravage.

During one of these days of horror, several Germans entered our house and demanded mattresses. We gave them the mattress from our son's bed, which we had repaired for our former neighbor, the aviator Tzikin. We then suggested that they go to the address of my brother-in-law, Zilberman, who, as I mentioned had been deported to the USSR with his family, and whose house had been sealed up. These Germans behaved politely, and we thought that, if we went along with them, we could open the door and retrieve a few items. We found the door already opened, possibly by other Germans, or by the concierge, a singular thief and villain, who had speedily befriended the partisans. We gave the Germans a good mattress and several other things, and they, appearing to be upright people, allowed us to take whatever we wished. Sadly, my wife and I were able to take only a few things from all that my wife's sister had left behind, because of the following unfortunate incident.

My wife stayed behind in her sister's home, trying to put things together as best as she could, and I carried a suitcase full of dresses to our home. When I entered I found four robbers in our son's room, each wearing a partisan armband, apparently halfwits from nearby villages who did not recognize me. They showed me a so-called "document" giving them permission to seize from the Jews five complete suits, which they interpreted to include shirts, socks and shoes, to distribute to partisans who needed them. While we were absent, they had opened our closets and picked three of my newest suits, one of which I had just tried on at the tailor's, as well as my son's only new suit. In addition, they took seven shirts, ten pairs of socks and three pairs of shoes. When I entered the bedroom, everything was already piled up and tied in a bundle with a rope they had brought. The thieving idiots were acting like this was all legal, authorized by the license in their hand. The chief gangster even dared to leave behind an improvised receipt, stating that they had taken four complete suits…

b. Suffering and Forced Labor

This persecution, whose edge has subsided recently, was initially horrific and terrible. They would hunt Jews like dogs on the streets, break into homes and with shouts, threats and beatings, and drag people out to perform arduous, humiliating jobs without pay and even without food. "The parasitic Jews, who live off the

nation, sucking its marrow, now must pay with their sweat for the privilege of living in this country, breathing its air, even if they live like dogs and crows."...

The forced workers did not know at first whether they would be sent home or to prison. I remember that, while still living in town, two partisans entered and told me and my neighbor, whom they found in the corridor, to take up brooms and go clean the street etc. I told them I was a physician, with more important work to do, and they left me alone. In time things got a little better: The Germans recognized the value of Jewish professionals, and consequently their treatment of such workers became more humane. Jews were given more appropriate jobs and even wages, although less than half as much as Christian day laborers. Still, they were paid for their work and not exploited for free. Now, ghetto residents work in the city hall, in hospitals, and perform menial jobs in various institutions, at the aerodrome, in the peat mines and on the streets. Artisans such as watchmakers, hatmakers, leather smiths, tailors, glove makers, etc. work in shops they were allowed to set up in town, under the ostensible supervision of Christians. There are Jewish servants in purely German institutes, in the homes of their officials and their kitchens. These Jews work willingly, as their jobs give them some protection against transferal from Šiauliai, and because they have become settled in the ghetto and at the various work sites, avoiding potential calamities. By contrast, those who remained idle face constant danger from the Germans and Lithuanians, who reluctantly keep the remaining few alive, because they need our labor, particularly for skilled jobs that Lithuanians cannot do.

There is one other reason everybody seeks work outside the ghetto: The chance they may find food to smuggle back inside, where there is great hunger for bread and even more for meat, butter and so on. Due to the general protection that work provides, and because of the advantage mentioned above that will be discussed in detail later, many respectable women devised fictitious contracts with acquaintances among the Christians, to work for them as maids. Interestingly, some actually worked as maids, and their husbands treated it as normal: Given the privileges that these erstwhile positions brought, why shouldn't they become real maids in fact, even at no salary? After all, the Jews are now anybody's to claim or use, and many among the Lithuanian intelligentsia accept it as fair that their Jewish acquaintances should serve them. But these arrangements were ended in recent days, as the Germans discovered the ruse and began cracking down on Jews found wandering about the city, and decreed that from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. no Jew may be seen or found on city streets.

Continuing his list, Pick describes mass shootings of Jewish communities carried out by Germans with the help of Lithuanian collaborators.

e. "For these things do I weep:" The Annihilation of Israel[36] in Lithuania

[36] Pick is referring to Jewish communities in Lithuania, not in the present-day country of Israel

"*Pogrom*." How often in our history have we heard this sad term! The horrific acts for which it was invented: Rob and kill the Jews *en masse*, and not because of any immediate crisis. It happened as far back as Alexandria in Egypt, became more frequent during the Middle Ages and was revived in modern Russia and Poland. To such pogroms we must add the killing of Jews during wars and national uprisings, such as during the Black Plague, the Crusades, the Khmelnytsky uprising, the Cossacks, etc. The common denominator is that they all begin with heated emotions and an awakening of dormant, beast-like instincts to spill blood, and are forged by propaganda and other forces that arouse and incite the masses to insane acts, typified by the savage attacks of an inflamed crowd on its victims.

But alas, what horrors befell us in Lithuania! Would our grandchildren and great-grandchildren even believe that a peaceable, stolid nation, not given to anger or easy incitement, had put its heart into the cruel murder of tens of thousands — hundreds of thousands of Jews, coldly and deliberately? Hair will stand on the backs of their necks, blood will freeze in their veins, when they hear of the massacres of Jews in Lithuanian cities — of the old, the young, of women and toddlers, of pregnant mothers. Their skulls were crushed and their hearts pierced by the bullets of the Lithuanian partisans and gunmen, all in an orderly fashion! Methodically, one group after another was brought to the slaughter; each group waited its turn. The pits were ready; the victims were forced to undress, to save their clothes, and then fathers were murdered in front of their children, and children in front of their fathers. The murderers' hands did not tremble; their eyes did not flinch, and their hearts did not fear at the moans of the fallen as they breathed their last, or at the pulsating earth that covered those not yet dead. Indeed, our brothers' blood cries out to us from the ground of Lithuania, which has become our valley of slaughter, our gallows, its sons our executioners.

Kelmė (Kelm). The town of Kelmė was put to the torch on the third day of the war. Only outlying barns and granaries were left standing. And then came the Lithuanian partisans, who acted like conquerors. They selected 190 young and strong Jews to labor in the barns, while the remaining Jews were sent to work on farms outside the town. They remained there for about a month: Meanwhile the murderers conspired with their cronies from other Lithuanian towns and "on the third day before Tisha B'Av" the fate of Kelmė's Jews was decided. There were brick kilns about a half a kilometer outside the city, and nearby were quarries with large ditches. These became the graves of Kelmė's Jews. This is where Dr. Kagansky, his wife, and two daughters were butchered; it is where they ended the life of my wife's aunt, Mrs. Sheffer, a healthy and beautiful woman, with her two daughters, one of whom finished the Lithuanian gymnasium. One of her friends said her: "We are innocent, yet we are ordered to die. I die without fear!" Here they pulled my wife's young, sickly cousin, from his mother's arms and killed him. She survived, miraculously, as they were then still keeping many women alive...

The farmer told us that of all Kelmė's Jewish residents, only 50 still lived, scattered and isolated on various farms. On a day when the older Sheffer son happened to be in Tytuvėnai, partisans came with Germans,

collected the remaining [Kelmė] Jews as one gathers abandoned eggs, including the younger Sheffer son, and shot them. The farmer sent his son to meet the older Sheffer brother, to tell him what happened and give him a cross and a Catholic rosary. The boy may have escaped, because he speaks Lithuanian and is blond like an Aryan. That is how a mother city in Israel, famous throughout Lithuania for its God-fearing Jews, was eradicated.

Krakės (Krok, near Kėidan) The Jewish community within this small village was not large, but it was the hub of seven neighboring communities (Grinkiškis, Dotnuva, etc.). Here 1,500 Jews were collected in a detention camp and a ghetto. The camp held men 15 and older; the ghetto was for women, and for children younger than 15. On September 3, partisans accompanied by soldiers (one of whom spoke German) came, about 60 in all, and collected 355 men, lined them up in rows of four and led them out of town, under the ruse that they were being taken to work, even though some were elderly or sick. At some distance from the town, they were ordered to lie on the ground face down. (Apparently the murderers used these moments to prepare for their evil acts.) After a short while they were ordered to stand up and strip to their underwear. Old men and youths, weak and sickly, all fearing death, began, with trembling limbs, to follow the order. Suddenly, 60 guns opened up, splattering death in all directions. Many tried to run from this lethal mayhem, but the partisan bullets caught them as they fled. One young man of 15 managed to hide among the potato plants in a field and remained there until evening. Then he crawled like a worm to the house of a peasant, who took pity on him, and gave him some rags to wear and temporary shelter.

For several weeks the youth wandered from village to village. His fear was great, and he suffered much abuse from the farmers and the secret police, until finally he found rest (!) in the ghetto of Šiauliai, where he had been a student in the Yiddish gymnasium. Later they murdered the women and children, annihilating in all some 1,500 Jews from Krakės village and its surroundings. “Our spirit is crushed by oppression, misery, and sorrow.” Who will compose new lamentations for the destruction of these communities? An order from above was enough to turn the Lithuanians into unhesitant, methodical murderers, determined to squash us like flies.

Dr. Aharon Pick worked at the ghetto hospital until 1944, when he died of illness. His wife, Devorah, was deported from the ghetto and died in the Stutthof concentration camp. Their son, Tedik, escaped the ghetto shortly before it was liquidated and the remaining inhabitants deported. Shortly before his escape, he buried his father’s diaries and retrieved them after the war.

SZYFRA MAJRANC

Szyfra Horowitz Majranc was born into a religious Jewish family in Rzeszów, Poland, in 1921. In 1938, she married a rabbinical student named Nechamia (Henek) Majranc. The couple moved first to Łódź, Poland, where his family lived, and then to the town of Sanok. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Germany occupied the area in which the Majrancs lived. Szyfra gave birth to a daughter, Marylka, in 1941.

Szyfra began her diary around June 22, 1941, when Germany invaded eastern Poland (which was occupied by the Soviet Union) and the Soviet Union. She wrote in Polish and did not date her entries.

Around one o'clock at night I was awaken by a dull sound coming from outside. It kept coming closer, then distancing itself, but not stopping. Since I became concerned, I woke my husband.

- Do you hear what goes on outside? I am thinking what this can be, this noise…

Henek reluctantly lifted himself up on the bed and started to listen. But he was sleepy and soon became impatient.

- It's nothing. Probably planes flying over. It's not worth dwelling on it...He fell back on his pillows and covered himself fully with the quilt.

- But, Henek! – I cried – this is not possible for the planes to be passing over!

Henek slowly started to take his head from under the quilt and, in a sleepy voice, said:

- Actually, you are right. Sanok is a town on the border and planes are not allowed to fly over. Yet this low noise does come from above...You know, let me check it out.

He quickly crawled out of bed and jerked the window open.

The low noise turned into a loud whir.

He climbed onto the window ledge and began to look closely at the sky.

- Planes! Planes! A lot of planes – he called after a short while in a voice full of excitement.

- That must mean that something important happened – I called too. In two jumps I found myself next to him.

And thus, in our nightgowns, with our heads turned upward, we stood on the window, holding hands, our bodies shivering from the night cold. Although that June night was unusually bright, it was also unusually cold.

We could clearly distinguish tiny, black dots whirling around the pale sky. There were many. A lot of them. Some.... and now....[page ends with missing words]

...they disappeared behind the [*illegible*] and other ones appeared in their stead only to disappear to the East a minute later. And so it went on and on. The most fantastic shapes like zig-zags, kept forming themselves, filling the night's silence with their noise.

- What do you think about it, Henek?...

- There is only one thing this can mean. There is a war between Germany and Russia.

- Yesterday's newspaper mentioned nothing that would allow one to think that something was imminent – I said in disbelief.

- True – he replied. That is why I think that this is an unexpected attack on Russia by Germany. Same as they made on Poland in nineteen thirty-nine, a few hours before declaring war.

- All this seems quite unbelievable.

- Actually, to me too – answered Henek. But what else could it be?

- One can expect the strangest surprises during the war.

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Our situation before had been very bad. We were stigmatized people. We were forced to wear yellow bands on our right arms in order to be recognized in the crowd. (In the territories annexed to the Reich, instead of armbands the Jews wore yellow "patches" on the right breast and on the back) In some towns, we were confined to the "ghettos" and the Gentiles[37] were not allowed to have contact with us, as if we were lepers. We were deprived of our identities. We were pushed out of our apartments. We were deported from place to place and as a result could become homeless beggars. We were forced into humiliating and unsuitable jobs for us, and our reward was pitiless, cruel beatings. We were baited with dogs. We were treated worse than slaves. No, worse than animals. We were sent to various camps from which hardly anyone returned. We lived in constant fear for our lives. Every few days there were notices posted for Jews and we read them with trepidation and kept getting more depressed..

But as long as we were allowed to live, we lived somehow, we even conducted business, we had stores – for the time being that was not forbidden. What did they care if the Jews made money which eventually would be "inherited" by them anyway. This resembles the fairy tale about a certain witch who fattened the children with sweets so she could make a tastier roast out of them. But, of course, we did not realize it then. Our spirits were kept up by hope that some day this will come to an end after all. And the world must have wondered and must have kept asking: How can they withstand it? There were many reasons why we could. First of all, because man can withstand a lot. God forbid that he should be hit in the head with a load that he could lift. Of course, those who did not live through it cannot imagine it.

[37] non-Jews

Secondly, we, the Polish Jews, did not enter this phase of misfortunes totally unprepared. Everybody was aware of the anti-Semitism prevailing in Poland, especially just before the war….I am bringing up this subject only because I want to justify why I, a Jew and a Pole, cast such a shadow on my native country and dare to unmask it before the world. But, in fact, the country never concealed its anti-Semitism before the world – rather, it considered it an honor. And if this is so, then everything I will write about my compatriots will rather read like a hymn honoring them. Poland is my motherland and, even though she treated me as a stepchild, I wanted her and I was disposed to forgive her for having poisoned my childhood, my youth and almost every better moment of my life with her anti-Semitism. But neither I nor any Jew will ever forgive her for the crime she committed against us.

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It was only when the Germans were far from Lwow[38] that we began getting news from the "other side." (Part of Poland which belonged to Russia which, to this date, is still called "the other side"). That news was devastating for us, Jews.

The Germans, together with the Ukrainians, were perpetrating actual slaughters in every newly conquered town. They plundered and robbed apartments, while the blood of Jewish men, women and even children was running in the streets! In addition, hunger was prevalent. Terrible hunger. Without a possibility of satisfying it, not even with dry potatoes.

And it is precisely there that I had my parents and siblings, the persons closest to my heart.-

Knowing your father and his extreme fear of the Germans, I can vouch that he moved inside Russia together with the Russian army, taking the whole family along – Henek kept consoling me.

- What if they were not able to? What if they had no possibility? – I kept saying in despair.

-You always have to assume the worst, Sabina. In 1939 you were going crazy with concern and worry about them. And what happened? They were doing great under the Russian occupation…

- Well, while they were under the Russians, I was not worried. But now, now…

- Do you think that the news coming from that side is not greatly exaggerated? After all, we were with the Germans for quite some time and yet, we are still living, although in great misery.

-Yes, but today they acquired pretext to murder...The Germans, together with other anti-Semites—the Poles and the Ukrainians—were at that time spreading horrible rumors about how Jews, aided by Bolsheviks, murdered and abused the Aryan population. They spread such rumors in order to make their own crimes appear to be acts of revenge.

- A few weeks will pass and everything will straighten out, calm down and become clear—Henek was saying. – Till then you must try not to think about it and not worry yourself sick over it in advance.

Weeks went by. The streets of Sanok displayed huge maps of the East, heavily covered with little wooden flags with swastikas showing the number of sites in Russia already conquered by the Germans, and the great speed with which they were going ahead.

[38] The city of Lviv, in the part of Poland that had been occupied by the Soviet Union.

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In the meantime, my child kept growing and developing. Free of worries, she moved around the room on her unsteady little feet, laughing and chatting merrily. Is there a bigger joy for a mother? Yet I was unable to enjoy her. A sorrow, a huge sorrow, kept pressing on my heart. How could I protect her from the fate which was approaching inevitably? A fate which I clearly felt. Can't we expect the things that happened there to happen here as well? Isn't the "boss" the same here and there?

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Szyfra, Marylka, and Nechamia (Henek) Majranc, July 1942, in Sanok

Henek, Szyfra, and Marylka made the dangerous trip to Sanok to reunite with Szyfra's family. Jews were not permitted to travel between areas without special passes, which the Majrancs didn't have.

Apparently we were no longer destined to enjoy peace; soon another blow fell upon us.

The Gestapo began going from house to house, looking for people from "the other side" whom they called communists. One day they came to a little Jewish house near us and, having found there a crippled man who was from "the other side" and was hiding at our neighbor's house, they shot him while he was lying in bed. On leaving, they warned the neighbor that they would get even with him for hiding the refugee. We suddenly realized that if we don't find a way out our days are counted.

- I will go to see Werner and will tell him the truth about you being here, I said once in a surge of despair. – Maybe he will give us some advice…

- Maybe this is what we will do - said my father – but this evening is the first day of Passover, so let us put it off for two days….My father had a feeling that he was spending holidays together with his dearest and most beloved ones for the last time in his life. Of course, he never said that but it was obvious from his entire behavior. My mother-in-law and her boys spent the two days at our out-of-town residence.

During the whole time, the table was laden with the best food and all kinds of delicacies that one could afford at the time. At my father's request, we tried to act happy and merry and to forget the whole world.

- I wish to see once more in my life a smile of pleasure on your faces but, since I don't know if I will live that long, I want to pretend that you are satisfied.

After the Seder, we sat late into the night, talking.My father, in a humorous and playful way, recounted some events from his past, reminisced about some of his aspirations for the future and, with a smile, he joked:- Yes, yes, dear man, pitiful ball of fate. You believe sometimes that you are the master of your will but fate always conquers you....

He showed a lot of tenderness to my mother and praised each child, one by one. For the first time in life he told us that he was pleased with us, that we did well by him and, what's more, that he was proud of us. He expressed his happiness with the fact that I had a good husband in Henek and that if he could leave all his children in such good care as I was in he would be quite satisfied.

He pretended to be joyful and careless, trying to make us laugh and tell pleasant stories to which he listened with pleasure. We did not allow any bad news to reach us during those two days; we did not go to town and those who came to visit us were at once warned by my father not to talk about such news. His aim was to really let us forget and be happy in that short period, intake a deep breath in order to have strength to confront the events awaiting us. On the second, at the same time the last night of the holidays his behavior was quite unbelievable.

- You know, let us dance once more before tomorrow comes...let's dance once more in life! With youthful enthusiasm, he grabbed Henek and his brother in the middle of the room, and waving his arm invited the in-laws to join them. And there they started dancing, in a ring, holding hands and humming a Hebrew song.

My father danced as if he were in ecstasy. He banged his feet, shook his hands and sang while tears were streaming from his half-closed eyes. The harder he sang and danced, the more the tears were falling down to the floor, spraying it with little black drops.

His enthusiasm caught us all, including the women who were only watching. Our cheeks were burning, our eyes shining. We were moved by some kind of madness. After a while, only three of them remained in the middle of the room: my father, brother and Israel. I still wonder what forces joined those three in that mad dance, just those three who later perished, one after the other, in the same camp? I sense some secret power bringing on those events, but I am still unable to understand it. That was a picture which seemed to me as unreal then, when I looked at it, as it does now when I see it in my imagination. When

those three, joined in that unbelievable dance, appear to me out of the shadows of remembrances, I...well, no use my trying. I cannot describe what I feel.

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A few thousand people were brutally joined into one huge "Calamity". That mass of Calamity was driven along a two-kilometer road leading to the railroad station and on the way the people which were part of it were beaten, whipped, stepped on, to the extent that the road was spattered with blood. The days were hot but regardless of the heat the Calamity was pushed into a few train cars and left without a possibility of catching its breath and without a drop of water.

Everybody still had a clear picture before their eyes, everybody carried in his heart the sound of the Calamity's moaning, when the talk started in Sanok about deportation. On that day, all other feelings were put aside by the instinct of self-preservation which completely took hold of everyone telling them to think exclusively of themselves and of those with whom they're closely connected. Be it a poor man or a rich man, an uneducated person or a genius, they all thought of saving their lives. Everybody felt and thought alike. Everybody felt feverish, cried or laughed nervously. One tried to comfort another by explaining that death was inevitable, but at the same time knowing that nobody's spirits could be lifted because of the emotions one experienced. There were so many people but actually they were all one person. As a town, Sanok, where the deportation was just about to take place while almost everywhere in Poland it had taken place already, was ready for that blow. People knew that without a miracle Sanok cannot be an exception. Thus a miracle was the only hope…

Was there still a chance? People fasted and prayed for that miracle but in the meantime it was the "deportation" that was approaching. (People readily used that mild name which the Germans gave to their mass murder.)

The town was prepared. But one can never be prepared for death to the extent that when it becomes eminent one would not experience a panicky fear of it (with rare exceptions like my father who really did not fear death), such fear that causes one's eyes to pop out of the sockets, and the heart and hands to desperately look for support in the vacuum...! Thus, although people were prepared and knew that what was going to happen was inevitable because it did happen everywhere else and there was no reason why this town should be an exception, in spite of that knowledge they still shuddered with fear.

The barrier was completed. One knew already what its use would be; that in the next few days thirteen thousand people from Sanok and the whole province would be assembled there, of which only 2 thousand would remain while the rest would be deported to Belzec...If only two thousand out of thirteen were to remain, how many of them would be from Sanok and who would be the lucky ones.

Everybody deluded himself that he might be one of them, even though he was saying:- I already resigned myself to what may happen..But people who were deluding themselves were only those aged 16 to 40; those older did not, and children did not understand…

The Polish and Ukrainian population waited impatiently for that performance which was about to take place, and enjoyed in advance the pleasure they would have. In addition, they waited for the benefits

they reap from it. The Jewish store would pass into their hands, there will be an abundance and choice of apartments and, although the Germans were confiscating everything, something would surely go to them...And there would certainly be fortunes hidden in the cellars. One will only have to dig deep and find them…

Still, there was a certain, minimal (of course) percent of people among the Poles (not Ukrainians) such as Mrs. Kurka. They were touched by the tragedy of the Jews and extended a helping hand to save them while placing their own lives in jeopardy. A large part of those Polish benefactors did this for material gains only, but given that death penalty was in effect in many towns, some Poles paid with their lives for their compassion.

Mrs. Kurka's husband was arrested at that time and sent to a labor camp near Krakow. She was left alone with a 6-year old son, without any means of support. Since she was a stranger in Sanok (she came from a different part of Poland and had lived in Sanok for several years only), she would have felt quite lonely if she did not have us. She clung to us whole-heartedly, particularly to me, considering herself a friend of mine; since her husband was taken away, she became like a member of the family. - They took my husband and now they want to take you too – she lamented. – What will I do? But she immediately added: - what are my sufferings compared to death which threatens you?

We started putting our heads together to find some solutions. Actually, she was the one who urged us all the time: -I don't understand you. You must defend yourselves as much as you can. By staying alive you will be able to take revenge on those henchmen.

- But how can we defend ourselves?...

- You must hide somewhere. I will write to my relatives in the country and perhaps they will at least want to take your children, Marylka and Rywcia[39]...Oh, that Marylka, the beautiful sweetheart, the sunshine... I will not let her be harmed…

When she learned (we only told her about it at that time) that we had a hiding place in the room, she cried out enthusiastically: - This is the salvation! Stay here! In case of something, you can go to the hiding place and stay locked in the room. After all, there are no neighbors near by and my house is far from town. I will bring you food and will take things out... This will not last forever...

But a problem arose. What will happen with Marylka? She would not be able to stay quiet in the event that something happened.

- It will be necessary to send Marylka to the country... she said. But I would never agree to be separated from my child. Anyway, all that was not so simple yet. The thought that so many people would sit in one room for an unknown period of time was not a pleasant one. To become a burden to this friendly soul was also painful, and we were not even sure that it would not prove dangerous, especially to her; we did not have much to lose. Today she was enthusiastic about helping us, but perhaps later she would greatly regret it.

[39] Rywciz was Szyfra's youngest sister.

- We don't want to drag you into the quagmire of our misfortunes – said my father. We're already condemned and cannot help it. And even though the temptation to save my children is great, I must think of you first. Our first obligation in our friendship to you is to reject your proposition.

- What will you do then?

- Whatever everybody does…

- But everyone is making some arrangements...And there are Poles who help the Jews...What does one live for if not to help one another?

- Your thoughts and desire to make a sacrifice are beautiful. However, for now I cannot yet think about taking advantage of your offer – said my father. Still, we could see that eventually they will all stay with her. But what of me and my child?

I was already well aware of false Aryan identity papers. And, although at first the idea seemed to me to be a sheer fantasy -- how can one suddenly assume a new name, start a totally different, hypocritical life, a life where one is not one's real self, where it is all fictitious as are the documents – in time, when deportations became a reality, I began to think about it seriously. People were talking about it and thought it to be the only possible rescue and, since it was a costly undertaking, only people of means could dream of it. But that was not all. One had to have the right appearance and speak Polish without any trace of Yiddish accent.

Once the question of me and my child came up, I began thinking seriously about the Aryan papers. Was I to go with my child to the box cars where I would have to watch her suffering from heat exhaustion and thirst until we reach a cell? When there is no way out, then alas it must be so...

But I did have a way out. Admittedly, I felt remorseful about that solution. Still, my father abolished all my objections and the fact that he himself advised me to do it, finally convinced me. - In order to save one's life, one is entitled to resort to many things which would be unforgivable under different circumstances, except for three – he was saying: it is forbidden to kill someone in order to save oneself; it is forbidden to disgrace one's religion and that of one's ancestors' if that were a choice, and it is forbidden to act as a spy for the enemy. – Your and your child's life depends on a certain lie which will hurt no one. Thus you are allowed to lie, particularly since it is for a certain time only... You should leave for our sake as well because, since we don't know how things will turn out here, you may be able to help us later.

My worst concern was the separation from Henek. This was to be our first separation and for what reason? He was not sure that I and the child would be able to manage on the outside; it was quite an act to live such a life of lies without betraying oneself. Henek was not sure if I had it in me and I in turn was uncertain about him. Will he go into hiding? Will he take a chance and go in the hope that they will let the workers remain? All this was still doubtful. For him to come with me was out of the question. My appearance could provoke serious doubt about my being of pure Aryan blood, but his appearance left no doubt that he was a Semite. I alone, with a blue-eyed child, could perhaps pass because there are gentile girls who have a Jewish look, but a couple like myself and Henek together would be arrested by the first policeman who would come across us....

Szyfra obtained false papers that stated that she was not Jewish. The couple decided that Henek could not "pass" as non-Jewish, so he was forced to hide to avoid deportation. They were separated, with the plan to reunite if possible.

At home, Mrs. Kurka came in to see us.- So, what is happening?

- I already have my papers.

- Oh, I am so happy. Please show me.

She took the "Kennkarte" (identity card) in her hand and read aloud: "Stefania Kucharska, born 3 February 1920 (my actual date of birth) in Rakowice near Krakow, a seamstress, Roman-Catholic..."

- Everything looks the same like on my "Kennkarte." She added – even if they stand on their heads they will not be able to tell that it is fake. And what is this?

- This is the birth certificate and this is a certificate that I am no longer registered in Krakow and on that basis I can register anywhere.

- So then, everything is alright. Thank God.

- When I rent the apartment, I will take your mother-in-law, Malcia and Rywcia away from here right away, and if the conditions are right I will take Henek as well. But we cannot foresee anything. I may be caught...She continued: - one must be a little cunning, cold blooded and self-assured. I am telling you this as a warning...

******

The train huffed and puffed and all those sounds resonated in me with the sound of an empty barrel. It was only one part of me that was traveling. It was the empty barrel which thought of one thing only: "smile".."Beware, sadness may betray you"

So I smiled – to my child and to the other passengers, and to the conductor, and to the police who checked my papers.

-Because on Monday they will end there with the Jews. They are afraid that they may slip out…

- Exactly, I know – I replied with a smile…

- You were the first to be asked for identification because you look Jewish..

- Yes, I know – I replied smiling.

- I must admit that we also thought that you were Jewish, until we saw your identity document…

- I am often taken for a Jewess, I said smiling.

- But your child does not look Jewish…

- No, she does not…

The trained huffed and puffed and in me everything resonated with the sound of an empty barrel...

- Mama, where is daddy? the child asked.

- At home, darling... I answered with a smile.

- I want to go to daddy, to grandpa and grandma..

- Yes, yes – I interrupted her quickly, fearing that she might name others like Malcia and Rywcia... We are going there…

- The child is very attached to the father, isn't she? someone asked.

- Yes, quite…

- Where do you live?

Why do they want to know everything?

- In Krakow.

- Does your husband work?

- Yes, he is an office employee...

Time to change trains. My travel companions helped me to carry my suitcases and placed them on the other train. This was already a direct train to Tarnow. I was relieved to sit down in it. Finally. Finally. What matters if it's on the train or in Tarnow? Or, actually, where? On the street? In the hotel? Train, hotel, street, that's my home. Maybe home-train is best of all? Maybe home-train is the safest...The Poles seem to recognize me...All of them look at me intrusively. Why do they keep looking at me? Why should they care if I am a Jew or not? And if I am, why should it bother them? But I was not worried. After all, I was an empty barrel..

- Last week they caught two Jewish women with a child on a train , my new travel companions were telling...- It was quite funny when they took them off the train... Those rogues try sorts of things. They take off their armbands and travel...They think that they will succeed the way they did before. That's the end for them...

If I met Jews anyplace, I would denounce them to the police without hesitation...

- So would I, added someone else.

- That is what one should do, said another person.

I wanted to say: "of course", but could not utter those words. But I felt nothing. After all, I was an empty barrel…

******

- Marylus, come here...I took her on my knee and, taking advantage of the fact that there was no one near, I started to teach her.

- You know, your name is Marylka Kucharska.

- No, my name is…

- Your name is Kucharska! Repeat it! She did.

- And your mama's name is Stefcia. Repeat it. And your daddy's name is Tadek...Tadek. Will you remember it? And he is in Krakow. Your daddy is in Krakow.

- And where is Malcia and Rywcia and…

- Be quiet, be quiet. Don't talk about them, darling.

- I should not talk about Rywcia?

- No, my sweetheart. With surprising ease the child learned everything, even to cross herself. Mrs. Kurka had said that such a child did not need to know her prayers.

******

The days preceding Henek's arrival dragged interminably. We registered at the town hall and received our food ration cards. We were citizens on equal footing with everybody. Everything was in order. Nobody suspected us. Somehow, however, this did not make me happy.

When at first I thought that my mother-in-law was no longer alive the pain was not so sharp because, above all, my parents were closer to me and I thought that they too were no longer alive. Besides, at that time she was not that close to the family yet...But today, when everything was ready for her...No, I could not bear it...I thought of her Kennkarte in the drawer at Wladek's, of no use any longer. How terrible, how terrible...And besides, I began to worry about my parents. They are in as much danger as she... My God! They killed over 10,000 people from this area and yet it is not enough for them.

But as Sunday, the day of Henek's expected arrival, was approaching, the thoughts of him began to overwhelm me. I became impatient. I was worried. Will he make the trip alright given his appearance? Although he was to travel at night, the train arrives in Rzeszow after 7 a.m. and it is light already. Saturday came. The day preceding Henek's arrival. I felt sick with worries from early morning.- Impossible! Impossible! I cried in the hope that this trip will be successful. And the escape from camp?

- If he could be at Wladek's he can also manage to get on the train, Marysia was saying.

But I kept lamenting: - You know, maybe I should send him a telegram not to come. Think about it, if anything should happen I will be responsible. I am dragging him here because of my selfishness, while perhaps he feels safer in camp…

- How can a Jew feel safe in the care of the Germans, Marysia was saying.

By noon my concern became sick. I ran around the room crying and wringing my hands.

- What did I do? What did I do, I lamented.

At that point Marysia stated suddenly:- I am going to Sanok for him...I stopped floored in the middle of the room. I was unable to utter a word. I thought to myself: she wants to risk her life for me.- Nowadays the trip to Sanok is not so risky. Things with the Jews have quieted down. They no longer demand identification and I will get there at night and nobody will recognize me. Just think what a relief it would be for Henek to be able to travel in my company. I did not have the strength to object.

She went...All night long I lied all dressed on my bed, next to my child. I could never describe what I felt. Sometimes the taste I felt on my dry lips was even worse than that of death!

The hours passed slowly. One, two, three, four o'clock, while I kept wiping off cold sweat from my brow. At every sound, at every move the child made I shuddered. Will 7 o'clock ever come? No, not for

me. I will not live to see it...I felt cold and hot. I felt weakness in my heart. I was nauseated, or had stomach cramps...When will that suffering end?...I looked at the watch. It was after 5:30. How many more hours? I started to count when suddenly I heard a very low, almost inaudible knock on the door. My heart jumped to my throat.

Although the knocking sounded like the sign we had agreed on in Sanok...but what if it was only my imagination? The knocking was repeated. I remained motionless, half dead. Who could it be? After all, there is no train from Sanok at this time.

Once again I heard the knocking. – A ghost, I thought. It's a ghost knocking.

Once again the knocking. I got up all my courage, jumped out of bed and, without even asking who it was, I energetically opened the door. When I looked, I jumped to the side with a terrible scream...It was my mother-in-law. She came into the room slowly and locked the door behind her.

- You got frightened, child, she was saying kindly. -Your legs are shaking. I know, you thought that I was not alive. But come, touch me and you will convince yourself that I am alive. I survived by a miracle. I cautiously approached that shabbily dressed, ashen-faced woman, then suddenly threw myself into her arms...After we calmed down a bit I told her to undress and put her on the bed, next to the child. The child woke up. She was extremely happy to see her "Aha" (she never called her anything else by "Aha." She called my mother Grandma) next to her.

We began to talk. She told me things and I told her. I found out that my parents were still alive. Now the time was passing rapidly. It was already light when I began to light a fire under the stove. What time was it? I did not even look. Suddenly, energetic knocking with our sign. I opened. the door. There stood Marysia and behind her Henek...

Szyfra's diary ends here. She, Henek, Marylka, and her younger sister, Rywcia, were not discovered. They were liberated by the Soviet Red Army in Rzeszów in 1944. Henek's mother (Szyfra's mother-in-law) and two of his brothers also survived, and immigrated to Israel after the war. The Majrancs immigrated to the United States in 1947. Szyfra Majranc (who changed her name in the United States to Steffa Mairanz) passed away in 2013.

SELMA WIJNBERG ENGEL

Selma Wijnberg (born Saartje Wijnberg) was born in 1922 in Groningen, Netherlands. Her family moved to Zwolle in 1929 and ran a kosher hotel. After the German invasion of the Netherlands, Selma's mother, two other brothers, and sister-in-law were all deported and murdered at Auschwitz. Selma avoided deportation to Auschwitz by hiding, but she was eventually arrested, imprisoned, and deported to the Sobibór killing center in April 1943. At Sobibór, Selma was one of few prisoners selected for labor. There, she met Chaim Engel, who had been born in Brudzew, Poland, in 1916. Although Selma spoke Dutch and Chaim spoke Polish, they fell in love. Selma and Chaim participated in the Sobibór prisoner uprising on October 14, 1943, escaped, and hid on a farm in Plisków owned by Adam and Stefka Novak. Selma wrote her diary mainly in Dutch.

Poland October 24, 1943

All of a sudden I got this feeling to write down everything that has happened to us, to my man and me, in Poland.

First of all, I will describe where I live with my man, who I love so much.

We are living with a farmer in a hayloft above his horses and there is a small corner the both of us. [*illegible*] through which some sunlight comes in, just enough to see each other. In these difficult circumstances we are nevertheless intensely grateful that we are alive after having escaped that horrendous place.

First of all, what is still the most vivid in my memory, is the escape from Sobibor. For about a week there was in strict secrecy talk that something had to happen. There was no work in the camp and we thought (which later on appeared to be right) that we would otherwise not have lived another 14 days. My darling Chajim knew everything but was, of course, not allowed to tell me because I was a Dutch [*illegible*].

Escape

Tuesday

At 3 o'clock Chajim looks me up and tells me: "Make sure that you are at the warehouse at half past three". Which I did. 5 minutes later Pozekki arrives and had killed Wolf 10 minutes later. Get together at camp 3. Then 5 men went to Bekman, including my beloved man, and cut his throat (in retaliation for the 10,000 jews who they murdered). I quickly went to look for my Chajim, who came to me with 2 deep wounds (which still worries me a lot now, because I cannot take care of them very well).

Undated [a page is torn out[]...also no right to live and we have fought for it and we were successful, because we are out of that terrible place. Many girls had boyfriends in Sobibor. Not one of those men did bring his girlfriend along. Only Chajim since recently my so dearly beloved friend. Yes friend, because we were friends when we raced out of Sobibor for 3 to 4 kilometers while we were being shot at fortunately without being hit (I will only tell about how I got out of Sobibor). After having walked run for about half a kilometer I was exhausted but we had to go on. I threw away the winter coat which I was wearing, something I later really regretted.

October 28 [1943] Diary [*illegible*] I want to write how happy I am, my dearest friend and husband,[40] O he means everything to me, is sitting next to me and reads the newspaper. We are in a little hayloft and live together in a little corner. There is a sheet on top of the straw below us and we cover ourselves at night with hay. We, my Chajim and I, are now 16 days together day and night. And I could not have imagined what it means to be married.

In this entry, likely written in spring 1944, Selma describes her arrival at Sobibor a year earlier. She and Chaim, who arrived at Sobibor in late 1942, had not yet met. When Selma uses the word "we" in this entry, she is referring to the other people on her transport.

Sobibor
April 9, 1943

At 2:00 in the afternoon we arrive in this camp. There is lots of screaming by mean faced Ukranians with clubs in their hands. An old woman just ahead of me is being hit. Suddenly we hear: "throw down your luggage". So we throw down our backpacks and continue to walk. We see two krauts who ask us whether we are married. We say that we are not. "Then come and stand over here."

Now we stood with about 20 girls, taken out of a transport of 3000 people. We arrive in a small barracks where we had to stand and they asked for our names. In the afternoon we went to work; we had to sort through the backpacks of the people. We did not know what was happening in Sobibor. We thought there

[40] Although Selma refers to Chaim as her husband, they were not formally married.

was good food in the luggage and clothes, everything you desired was there. Chocolate, cigarettes, the nicest clothes. While working, you would go through 4 or 5 pairs of natural silk stockings each day. Until I spoke to Maurits Ziekendelaar as well as Mau Troostwijk from Zwolle, who told me that all the people I came with and everything that comes will be ~~murdered~~ gassed and burned. They showed me a big fire in camp 3 where all those 10,000 jews were burned. It is unbelievable, it does not seem so bad when I write it down this way.

It happens in a dirty, typical kraut manner. When you arrive the women go to the right and the men to the left. You are being told that you are going to take a bath. So, first the women who walked to take a bath undressed fully in a barracks for that purpose (there are 3 barracks and the last one is for bathing) then they go to the next barracks where there are some 30 young men, jews; those are boys from our camp. There are also 3 camps: we are sleeping in camp 1, we work in camp 2 and in camp 3 we are being murdered.

But nobody of the first 2 camps gets into camp 3. Yes, they do enter camp 3, but when they do they don't come out. Now those 30 men, who are standing there, they cut off the hair of all the women. My man, who I got to know in the camp, also had to be there. It is horrendous work; to see so many young people walk to their death. He says those Dutch women don't know what will happen to them and many cry because their hair was being cut.

Thank God that they did not know what was going to happen to them. With regard to the Polish transports there is a much larger enemy. Each and every one of those people knows that they are going to die. Children of 4 or 5 know it. It is horrendous to see how those women and children are being beaten by those [*illegible*] krauts.

They have leather whips and they use them, those gentlemen (I too have felt them more than once). I can still vividly remember one incident. Everything is happening really fast and the people who come in carrying luggage must throw it down. When they don't do it, they are being beaten. Many women carry children on their arm and also a lot of luggage. There is a woman who also quickly throws down her backpack but her child is also thrown. "O God, my child, my child", she cries and she wants to get her child. Then a kraut sees that and says "what child?" "Move on". And he hits that woman in her face causing blood to drip off her face. Again she cries "my child" and again she is hit and again she cries "my child". "What" he says "we will take care of that child". Later on we sort the luggage. How many times did I [*illegible*] retrieve a child from among the luggage. I can't write everything of what I have experienced and that's why I hope that there will be some people that have survived such a camp. Such a disgrace which is a disgrace for every kraut because they all have wanted their Hitler.

I will continue with the women. So they don't have their hair anymore and they arrive at a barracks which has lots of shower heads, which don't spray water but gas.

Thursday April 14, 1944

In the afternoon I suddenly noticed that water came from my breasts and that therefore I am pregnant. This is really awful, what should we do. This is going to cost us our lives. We can't have a baby while we are hidden with these people. O we are now crying for the last three days and don't know what to do other than making it go away. But who could do that.

We can't walk on the street because we would be shot. We can't go to a doctor because he does not help jews. O God why was I born and then as a jew. We have considered almost everything, but we don't know what to do other than just wait and see. Hopefully, the Russians will come eventually and we can live as human beings. I am now about three months along and feel good even though I feel like my man a lot of sadness….We love each other so much and dearly wanted to live just like every other human being. We have already lost all our family and they are murdered by the krauts. God save us from this misery. We have seen a 1000 people walk to their death and we are bringing a new human being into the world to walk also to its death. O why was I not gassed a year ago in Sobibor. Then we did not have to experience this misery.

Although I love my husband dearly and am totally happy with him.

April 27. I woke up and heard the birds sing so beautifully that for a moment I thought I was in Zwolle until I came back to reality and had to think that we were expecting a child and that we had hardly any money. Yesterday we had a really bad day. We were very depressed because of my situation when Stefka came and told that she wanted to have the ring, i.e. our last penny. She feared that we did not want to give it to her. She had already gotten 70.00 guilders worth of gold from us. She is so mean. Not that we are so stingy regarding money, but it could happen that we still [*illegible*]. God help us that it won't be necessary any more to search for a roof over our heads. So now we don't have any money and are in a country that is watching us full of hate and we are without money….

May 15 1944 I woke up Monday morning with a really good feeling. It is my 22nd birthday on the first year that I am so intimately together with my Chajim and that we are married. The day begun with a wonderful wish from my darling "that next year we will be together in Holland." My husband's face while making such a beautiful wish was already the most beautiful present that people could have given me.

A bit later Adam arrives and brings us a bouquet of flowers, something I absolutely did not expect. To receive something so beautiful as well as a bunch of flowers from Stefka with the most beautiful and best wishes that we will be free soon and that we will not forget Stefka and Adam. O that my family [*illegible*]

may find out that I am married and with such a good man. It is already the second anniversary of my staying in Poland and I was in Sobibor on the first one in Sobibor. At that time I did know my husband only for 14 days, so we were not yet as intimate as we are now and my birthday was not that great either, having to sort through the packages of a couple of jews who were murdered.... The potatoes this morning did taste 100 times better than the [*illegible*] in Sobibor. We live with one hope, namely that at some point the war will come to an end and that we too may yet experience to walk in freedom just like any other human being and animal. And that my husband's wish and the wish of Stefka and Adam will become reality. Amen!

O, we will always remember the two people who have hiding us.
O, that we may experience that and that we may pay them back.

O, God let us experience that.

May 18, 1944 Adam shows up very early this morning and tells us that we need to stay above the pigsty. Why? Yesterday Adam's sister-in-law was below our stable and we did not hear her and Chajim walked around and the floor boards went up and down. So, did we give ourselves away?

What to do now, that woman went outside and yelled it loudly while the whole family was present. Oh, it is maddening what is happening to us. Adam said that it is [*illegible*] who is staying with him. So the sister-in-law knows that (she herself has had us at her place for a month). So this morning we left what little [*illegible*] we had. We are now at a close to totally dark attic, where I can hardly see anything, including my writing. While I am writing this a cuckoo is circling around our stable, constantly calling out. As long as it brings good luck, because bad luck we have enough. We can absolutely not catch any break.

I could hardly stand on my legs, when I had to walk from one stable to the other. I have forgotten how to walk and almost did fall. Oh, what else will happen. Will this be the end ? Will we have to suffer more? I am exhausted. It is all too much for me.

Sabbath July 8, 1944 It is so warm today that you sweat even though you sit still, and then us here above the stable, the flies are eating us alive. Sometimes it is intolerable. But finally we heard a good thing today, i.e. that the krauts are retreating along all fronts. Ah, we should be joyful that things are going so well on all fronts. But we can't [*illegible*] what happened in this war and when one loses one's family then one can't be joyful. For us, jews, this war has already been lost. Because a jewish woman I will remain, always….

4 o'clock July 18. For nine months we have not been outside by day. It is the front, people say that we hear the front for the last fourteen days. Let's hope that they will be here soon. There is a big chance that Adam

will be drafted into the military, then I will accompany him even though I have absolutely no documentation. Everything has been burned in Sobibor.

Now we will have to see what the day will bring. There were bombardments very close by. I am going to knit a sweater for Adam. Thank God some work again. Chajim is busy knitting his socks, the yarn for which we gather bit by bit from leftovers of what I knit for Stefka. One sock is done [*illegible*].

July 19 Yesterday I wrote "You never know what the day will bring" and that is the way it is. We have been discovered. Yesterday evening Tatjoe the brother-in-law's little boy climbed upstairs to catch a young bird. But instead he caught us and how. He has seen us nine months ago and he certainly must have recognized us. He asked Stefka " Are they the same, where have they been?" That which we have feared every day has come to be. What should we do. Of course, he has told everything at home. And we must leave here, if they know that we are jews. O God why did this have to happen. Just yesterday we said that it would be a miracle if we were to survive this war. And will this now be our end? Is there never a time when nothing happens? We don't know anything yet, because it happened late last night. Will it happen today? Leave this place? Walking again by night and not knowing whether you will be alive by the end of the day let alone whether you will have shelter. Now we need to wait and see. One thing is certain, today will bring nothing good.

Four o'clock in the morning. We are far away, that is to say that we can hear the front so [*illegible*] and we should be allowed to have some hope, but that seems not to be the case. A person is not allowed to have hope in life. Eight o'clock. We still don't know anything and there is a stranger in the house. We don't know who it is. We are impatiently waiting. God help us, so many people have uttered that. It rains. To walk this way and not to have any clothes. It is ten o'clock and Stefka has brought us our breakfast and told us that Tatjoe has recognized us. He has told everything at home and wondered whether they did receive money from us. Now we have to wait and see. Much good [*illegible*], I don't. We could hear the front clearly today.

Three o'clock in the afternoon. Maybe it all turned out well this time. Adam told Tatjoe that we were evacuees who stayed with them for a few weeks and that we then will leave. If they now know how to keep their mouth shut all may be well. Only the mother and the grandmother know that we are here. The father does not and that is for the better because he is a drunk. Let's hope that our rescue is near and that the brother-in-law does not know.

July 20. No news today. We are feeling better that way; when nothing happens. Sweater for Adam is not happening. Is now a skirt for Stefka.

You can clearly hear the front. Adam comes in just as I put this notebook away and tells us that his brother has brought his horse and his belongings here, because the fighting is already at [*illegible*], so the front is about 40 kilometers away. and there are lots of wounded German soldiers where his brother lives. That is 12 kilometers from the front. A German has told them that it is such a big offensive that they can not hold. On Tuesday we heard for the first time shooting. Tatjoe came upstairs and spoke with Chajim; he is a nice boy. Stefka gave us so little to eat this afternoon that from four o'clock on I have had pain in my stomach from hunger.

Friday [July] 21. We could clearly hear the front last night. This morning we have not heard anything yet. But there are many Russian planes in the sky.

Otherwise, we are healthy, the flies are eating us alive and am once again in a bad mood. To try to be in such a bad place and I don't understand the people. My heart fills to be so far away from my Holland and I can['t] hold my tears.

Afternoon. A lot of military vehicles are coming in as I write this. At least fifty with soldiers. So here too there is movement. Adam's brother has also come away from the Boch. There were 20 homes on fire. The potatoes are all being taken from the field. At the moment there are bombardments around us. What will the day bring us. It is eight o'clock and the night is falling [*illegible*]. More people are coming in and it is impossible to be at the Boch. The whole day you could not hear the front. It is nine o'clock and there are still cars passing by.

July 22. People are saying that the war progresses well. The Germans are on the run. We see also a lot of cars leaving. People are saying that Golm has been liberated. I have to mention something interesting.

How people get to meet one another. When we ran away from Sobibor we arrived early in the morning at people from Posen and they gave us bread and milk without asking for any money. We asked them for directions but they told us that they were not familiar with the area and they send us to Adam's brother. So we went there and from there we were brought here by the brother. All people have now left the Boche and all those who have helped us are now here at Adam's. people meet one another, but [*illegible*]

Adam brought us a cigarette, that he got from a German who was here. He could not have thought that a jew would smoke it. In addition, this morning a kraut wanted to get one of Adam's horses and he ran away

and has yelled "halt", but he kept on running. The krauts are here in the village, so they must still be in Golm as well, so we must wait and see. We must have faith.

Four o'clock in the afternoon. Five minutes before twelve o'clock is not twelve o'clock and there have never been this many krauts here and we have to be more fearful than ever before.

Sunday, July 23. We did not hear the front for the last three days and it appears that the krauts are retreating without any shooting. The front has passed us by. In Krosnastaaf, 28 kilometers from here, we can hear artillery. There are still krauts here in the villages, even though they are on the run. We still have not seen any Russians, so we are still in hiding. It is not twelve o'clock yet. It is difficult to bring us food because the whole family is here as well as some strangers. But she did bring us a piece of bread last evening and we will have to do with that. Where there is a will there is a way, but the will is not there. Our goal is to survive this war, even if we only have bread and water. We don't know anything else and we will have to wait what the day will bring us, it is now eight o'clock in the morning.

It is now seven o'clock and I don't know much news. The krauts are moving and you can see them also go fast in cars. They don't know where to go , because they are surrounded by the Russians. But you do hear from all directions a lot of shooting and artillery.

Especially to the west of us, so the Russians have moved past us quite a bit. We are still hiding up here. It looks like my stomach is getting bigger, so I must be pregnant. Also spots are beginning to appear again all over my body, so the scabies is back. It is almost dark and there are still cars moving by. God give us that we may wake up tomorrow in good health and without krauts.

Five o'clock Monday, July 24. There was a lot of shooting last night. Cars were moving all night long, so they are on the run, could be military cars but could also be Ukranians. More shooting to the west of us. So a big chance that a front may as yet develop here. The Russians are already in [*illegible*]. Not yet in Krasnystaw. Also, Adam did tell his brother and sister-in-law that we have lived here for more than 9 months and continue to stay here, because we are not at the end yet. It is two o'clock and Chajim is at the moment downstairs to say that the Soviets are coming. We are seeing a lot soldiers. Will this be the moment, that we will be regarded as human beings?

It is unbelievable, I am sitting outside in the meadow with my Chajim. We are free. The Soviets are here and we can walk outside. Why don't I feel much joy? I don't know. The first Soviet patrols are driving by and you can see more and more coming. God give us that everything will go well. The front is at the moment four kilometers away from us and Chajim and I are laying down in a wheat field. Seven o'clock in the evening.

It is almost nine o'clock now and the front is still about four kilometers ahead of us. As long as they are not falling back; then we could still perish at the last moment. God continue to help us. We so dearly like to live, maybe it would have been better if we had moved further away from the front. We don't know. One has to have to be lucky.

July 25. I can't still believe that the Russians are about 20 kilometers away from here and people say that they are advancing. **Wednesday, July 26**. I did not write yesterday. Chajim did not like it that I was writing outside. Today I am allowed to, it is unbelievable are we really free? Am I really outside, writing? Is this real? Yes, we have to tell ourselves continuously, it is real. We are human beings again and can speak with other human beings. This morning Chajim spoke with two Russians and thanked them for having given us our freedom back.

Chaim and Selma Engel, in the center of the photograph holding their son, approximately May 1945

Selma and Chaim remained in Poland after being liberated, and Selma gave birth to a son, Emiltje. After the war, the couple moved to Selma's hometown of Zwolle, in the Netherlands, but sadly Emiltje died en route. The Engels lived in the Netherlands until 1951, when they moved to Israel, and finally settled in the United States in 1957. Chaim Engel passed away in 2003; Selma died in 2018.

MORRIS BREITBART

Morris Breitbart was born in 1919 in Szczakowa, Poland. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, forcing Morris, his parents, and his sisters Rose and Bronia to relocate to Zelów. Soon after, the family was forced into the Łódź ghetto. In 1943, Morris, along with an uncle and two cousins, managed to escape a moving rail car, which took the rest of his family to the Treblinka killing center. They made their way to the home of a farmer Morris's uncle knew and asked for help. While Morris kept watch, the farmer murdered Morris's uncle and cousins. Morris fled and found refuge with Genia Bejenkow, a Polish woman in the village of Nowa Wola. He lived first in her attic, then in a hole under the stables, while keeping a diary in Polish of his experiences.

Undated

This week Bejenkowa, Genia's sister, came to visit us in the attic. When we talked, she told us that the old people and children who had been transported were dead. I am having such a terrible week. One night here I saw grandfather and grandmother, and grandfather was crying so hard. All night I saw only the old people, I saw them being taken, I heard shots, I saw their pale faces. I also saw daddy who was standing in front of grandpa, and I heard him say that it was true that people were being burned, and grandpa was crying so hard. The whole night was so horrible for me. Dear God, I heard three times already what death the bloodthirsty Hitler's executioners invented for the Jewish People. How is it possible to live and survive these blows. I had a 7-year-old little sister. I loved her so dearly. She was so gentle...

Sunday October 10, 1943.

The day is sunny but I am cold…. I am trembling all over. There is no life for me anymore. The only thing left in the world …….. and a grave. Why has the life of my People been cut down? Why have we been tortured so? Why have they taken such revenge upon us? Why have we paid with our lives if we were innocent? And. Why these young, innocent little things who were not yet aware of anything. Poor unhappy babies, what did they want from you, what was your crime in this world? And why have those little sisters and brothers without sin, who did not understand anything and did not know that their young lives were demanded from them, lost their lives, why were sacrifices demanded of them as well? This is a dastardly and despicable world – haven't the tears of our mothers, the tears of our fathers, the tears of our sisters, the tears of our brothers, and the tears of those young fledglings softened your heart? Haven't you heard the rivers of our tears? Were your hearts, at that time, so hardened that you could not hear to those

groans which were so unsettling. Were your hearts so hardened that you did not hear the painful sighs. Were your ears so deaf that you could not hear the horrifying cries of our mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers? Despicable, dastardly representatives of this world – what have you done? What have you done for the defenseless and innocent People? Did you react in any way when the innocent Jewish People of Europe were led to such a heinous annihilation? How did you help the innocent People? What did you do when the Jewish People were dying, cruelly tormented by vicious, bestial Hitler's tyrants? What have you done for us? Where was the 20th-century civilization? Where was culture? Where was humanity? Where was justice? If justice is no longer alive in the world, if the only creatures are smooth monsters wearing silk gloves – then perish the civilization. Perish the culture...

But it is all for naught – everything is now dead, no-one hears me or helps. My life is hard. My destiny is cruel. I know that at this moment, thousands of my brothers and sisters suffer even more but their suffering does not soothe my pain. Will our suffering even end? Today, October 12, 1943 is the anniversary of our escaping from Kamińsk to Zelów. There were five of us then, I remember us lying in the forest in Strzyżów, nestled together, hungry but hoping in our hearts that we would survive Hitler's tyrants. We did not believe that our destiny would sentence us to such long and cruel suffering. It's been a year since the five of us lived together. It's been a year since the five of us walked together. A year ago the five of us mourned our fate. A year ago, on a dark night, we were coming from [*illegible*], wandering around. Today, it's been 12 horrible weeks since my cousins were put in the ground. They will never rise again. The end has come to
[*illegible*]

Pożdżenice, November 16, 1943
The ground is covered with white fluffy snow. A solitary unneeded creature of the world is standing in the attic, looking ~~through~~ a hole on this white, amazing world. The world does not welcome a miserable, lonely Jew. In the eyes of the people, he is a leper. He is the Wandering Jew who is surrounded everywhere by the mortal enemies lurking around, waiting to pounce on a defenseless victim. He is standing, petrified, unneeded, statue-like, with a crushed soul and is looking at the skies, trying to pierce the confines of the horizon, waiting for a Miracle. The Miracle of liberation for his People, abandoned by God and people.

He dreams a dream. A dream about being happy and young, about the ground covered in snow that is slowly falling in small flakes, while he is standing surrounded by male and female friends shouting orders for a race in the evening, with sleighs waiting nearby, waiting who will take the first place. They race, the first sleigh starts, then the next, the third and the fourth, everyone is laughing, it's noisy, everyone is trying to outrace everyone else, but suddenly the leading sleigh overturns, the second, third and fourth pile up and

everybody is lying flat in the white fluffy snow. The sleighs are lying nearby, everyone gets up, oblivious to pain and bruises and the race resumes. After the evening race, they all come happily home to their parents and sisters, with Mother standing in a small kitchen, casting a fond look at her red-faced, tired son and the little beloved sister jumping on me and hugging me, warbling with her sweet, barely audible voice, "Chob dich lib in chać," kissing me all over. Supper is on the table, he rushes to eat, hungry enough to eat a horse, the kitchen is bright and warm. Daddy is sitting by the stove, snoozing. A light green bed is on the other side of the stove, made with white, clean sheets. I go to bed, Mother comes close, takes the sheets and warms them by the stove and looks at her spoiled, smiling son. He is tired and falls asleep.

I wake up and look around, looking for my beloved Mom, Dad snoozing by the stove, my little sister who was just sitting on top of me, my older sister Różka who was doing the embroidery. There is nobody around. I look around and see that instead of my beloved Mom there is a large gray chimney, in Dad's place there is a gray thatched roof. Where did they go? Where is my Mom, Dad, my sisters, Where did they go? I strain my eyes and peek through a crack [in the wall] and see the ground covered in snow, but my friends are gone. I finally realize that it was all a dream. A dream of happiness and youth. Life was like a dream then. And that life vanished like a dream. Once upon a time I had mother, father, and sisters but it was once upon a time. Now, the reality is that I am a homeless orphan.

It was so long ago when on a summer, sunny day, murderers, merciless tyrants came and tore me away from my beloved parents and sisters. I remember I was sitting doing some work, Dad was standing by talking with me, Mom was busy in the house, my little sister Broncia was playing outside and Różka was doing something. They tore me away from my People and my brothers. Oh, what a woeful date for my People. And now, the alone and unwelcome Jew wanders among people who are strangers to him, hoping that maybe he will survive and meet again his beloved parents and sisters. He continues standing there and dreaming, this unneeded creature of the world, dreaming and having nightmares. He dreams of a Death Demon coming closer and closer, he sees himself being tortured, beaten up and murdered. He sees himself surrounded by the black prison walls, in a small prison cell number 4. He sees his paleness, his weakness, he is hungry, oh so hungry. He sees his white prison uniform, he sees their terrible faces, but he has not committed any crime, and I am not a murderer.

So, God. Why is this going to be my tomorrow? For what sins? If I am beaten and tortured, don't I feel pain? If my body is torn, don't I bleed? Didn't my mother suffer for me? Why do our People suffer so cruelly? Who is left to shed tears or even utter a sigh? Where have the murderers lost my People. Tell me – where are they, Where? Where are my beloved Mom and Dad, my sisters and brothers – do they at least have something to eat, are they not shivering with cold. And he keeps dreaming about the time when those tyrants torture to death the defenseless ~~innocent~~ Jew, when he will be liberated from their murderous talons and fall into eternal and uninterrupted sleep. He will then have one last thought before he dies, that

when his mother, father, sister or brother come and will want to put up a small headstone with a modest inscription, reading, "Here lies one of the victims of Hitler's regime – an unneeded creature of this world, a Jew, A leper to everyone, The Wandering Jew" Who will point out to them the grave where they can come one day and as family and cry out tears of their blood-soaked hearts.

May 14, 1944 – "The cry of the homeless"

A homeless orphan, despised and condemned creature of the world, a castaway Jew hurled by tyrants' onslaughts, is standing in a forest hiding from human shadow. He is standing there, gazing at those wonders of nature, green fields, meadows and thickets. He is looking at the blue skies and the golden rays of the sun. All things are alive and ready to live. Nature has put on her garments and put on her golden glory, appearing in full bloom of her majesty. I would drink everything with my eyes. It's such a wonderful, amazing world – but not for me. The golden rays of the sun do not shine for me, an Israelite. The world is not flowering for me. The bright light is not for me. For me, the world is cut in the flower of its existence.

What is for me, an Israelite, is that dark, airless grave, or this gray dark attic where no sun or daylight penetrates. Just like the rest of my people, I live in the dark. It is so dark, and such an unspeakable tragedy is taking place in my heart, there is a wound, pierced through, which will never heal. Why is that? Why is it that only I and my People were dealt such mortal blows? I lie awake, lonely as a solitary sparrow on the roof. My days are like lengthening shadows. My heart is withered as grass. My strength is dried up like a potsherd. Because of the voice of my groaning, my bones stick to my flesh. I have eaten bile like bread and mixed my drink with tears. My face has grown old. All night I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. Why, dear God, why? ...

The sun is setting, hiding its golden rays. And he stands there, dreaming and senses that although he was torn out of the arms of his loved ones, he is with them again. He feels his mother's blissful kisses and tears. He feels her embracing him, hugging him to her, filled with maternal love. He sees his father, pale, with tears streaming from his eyes. He sees his beloved sisters and hears the words of his dear mother. Daddy is standing nearby, silent because he is choked with tears. Dear Mother, although I was torn away from you, although our hearts bleed, your son, dear Mother, is still with you. His filial love has not changed and he hugs you. Mom, I still kiss you, hug you and call your name but only in my dreams. Once upon a time, it really happened, also in May. I remember it. It was May and I was in the forest with my sister, cousins and the whole family, lying on the grass. Then, I came back home to my dear parents. But today, on the second anniversary of that May, I am alone in the world. I have nowhere to go back to, the ground and forest are my home now and my roof the sky….My heart is scarred. I know I will never see you again. You sleep an interrupted and eternal sleep. The black and wet soil envelops your bodies. But is it true – after all, I still

hear your voices, I feel your presence, I sense the familial ties, I see your faces, I recognize your voices. But it's all only in my dreams and imagination. All that is left of my life is an illusion, imagination and bitter memories. It's getting dark, the first stars appear in the sky, and the orphan is still standing in the forest, thinking and dreaming of his past dream life and he remembers that today is the third month anniversary of a cold-blooded murderer tearing away from him the last companion of his fate and misery. His father, cruelly victimized by the bloodthirsty brutes. The fate was still not satisfied and wanted more and more blood and victims, so much so that the only person left after the cruel events, his miserable father, was mercilessly torn away from him. The tyrannical fate had not been satisfied yet, another victim was desired. The murderous act was completed, leaving the unhappy orphan alone between the sky and the earth with the forests.

Morris Breitbart (second from the left, on the ladder) with friends in Zelów, Poland, in 1940. Morris's friends are wearing a fabric star identifying them as Jewish.

The Village of Koch September 23, 1944
Complaint of the Night!

Dead silence envelops everything….The only sign of life is a homeless person rushing forward in the silence of the night. He is rushing forward making big steps, there are times he shudders and goes pale, but still he goes forward. He has no goal, and does not pay attention to obstacles in the dark. He sometimes looks around. Suddenly he stopped, casts his eyes around, his gaze is wild and confused, as if he were looking for or found someone. Now he stands still and shivers like a leaf. His heart is bursting out of his chest, it's driving him forward, farther forward, far, far away from murder and fire. But for the time being, he is standing stone-still and looking. This solitary man is looking at the house standing in the middle of the forest. He walks around it, quietly, like a thief, asking himself, if I will ever see my house again or if I will always stay homeless. He can see a little goat, asleep. He would like to go to it and hug it. He would like to pour out to it all his bitterness, his sadness and his worry. He would like to tell it why he cannot sleep at night and what brings him here on this dark and foggy night.

He would like to say, LittleGoat, listen to me on this dark Saturday night, listen to the terrible injustice done to me and my heart-breaking moan. Listen to an unhappy Israelite. Listen, little Goat, once upon a time I also had a house like yours. Once upon a time I had Mother and Father, sisters and brothers. There was a whole Nation, a People, who were attacked by bloodthirsty brown Wolves who took away my Mother, my Father, my sisters and brothers and all the People. I was left alone, an orphan, an exile, wandering at night weeping and moaning, longing for them, longing for my herd…

Little Goat, look here! Can you see this mound covered with boiling blood, the blood that cannot soak into the ground, crying to high heaven that it will not rest until it is avenged. Little Goat, can you see those lives cut short, flying in the skies, lost, unable to rest because of premature end. Little Goat, can you hear the dying moans of the fledglings killed, who are crying, God gave us life, we wanted to live but it was taken away from us, who were innocent. Little Goat, look, look up to the sky, can you see the souls that died prematurely, cry and twist in their death dance, restless, going from place to place, threatening that they will not rest until they avenge innocent lives taken away from their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. There were three and half million of us, they cry. Three and a half million just in Poland. All that is left is 70 thousand of our brethren. Out of the whole People, 70 thousand were left in the Łódź ghetto left to the brown tyrants, among whom not even one is left, just beasts, bloodthirsty beasts.

Little Goat, tell me where the murderers of my brothers and sisters lost them, where were my People misplaced, where were the little breast-sucking babies mislaid? I remember their caresses, often hear their baby talk, I kiss and hug them! Little Goat, I no longer know and no longer can understand it, tell me, little Goat, tell me. Is it possible? Is it possible to wipe away the whole People and not fear God? Not thinking of history, not caring about the stain. Not even considering the curse that will be upon them for ever and ever for spilling innocent blood, tell me, little Goat. Is it possible to take people in full bloom of their youth and

cruelly burn them alive or gas them – and it's true, and it could and did happen – and what was the world's reaction? And it was only because we are Israelites. And I, little Goat, I have become a vagrant, in strangers' houses, among strangers, and I am pursued by Wolves who want to capture me and make me their victim and grab me in their talons to tear me apart or burn me alive because I am also a Jew, a Hebrew man.

I feel yearning, my soul is breaking, I wander at night but they are not satisfied, they still thirst for our Israelite blood. And do you know, little Goat, what I learned tonight? I found out that… they… are…. no longer alive… All that is left are 500 of them. My brothers are gone. You will never see them again. Israelite, you are waiting and rejoicing in vain. They were torn away from you by merciless brown Wolves. They were taken not far away from here; they were going by the way of Rusiec and Karsznica. They travelled in locked freight railway cars and Hitler's soldiers were standing in front of them and behind them, leading your Israelite brothers to the "altar of death." People saw them, they were throwing letters telling that they were going to their death, to make the world aware of the horrific inhuman tragedy playing out right there. May the stain of their deeds and the curses of the innocent lives stay upon them for ever and ever. Amen. May you, God in Heaven, remember it, too, about them. Yes, o Israelite, they are gone.

See there, little Goat? Can you see the place where the sun always rises and sets? Can you see the trembling graves, with souls wandering around to find their mothers, fathers, wives and children, looking to join them in eternal rest in death. Can you hear the lament, the cries and moans? Can you hear those inhuman cries? We wanted to live but we were murdered. Hear this!!!

We wanted to live but we were burned. Hear this: they gassed us so who is left? Can you hear them cry? I know this voice. This is the voice of my brothers and sisters. Little Goat, can you also hear the Israelite crying that he has been left an orphan, that the branches of your life were cut. But you must get up, light a candle and say the holy words for the memory and peace of Jewish souls prematurely taken from us.

Morris Breitbart was liberated from his hiding place in 1944. He was the only survivor of his immediate family. After Germany was defeated in 1945, Morris traveled to Germany with the hope of immigrating to the United States. He attended dental school in Munich, Germany. In 1949, he married Lucy Gliklich, who had also survived the Holocaust in hiding. They immigrated to the United States in December 1949 and settled in New Jersey, where Morris worked as a dentist.

DR. MARIA MADI

Maria Madi was born into a Roman Catholic family in Budapest, Hungary, in 1898. She was divorced, and worked as a medical doctor in Budapest. Her daughter, Hilde Felsobuky, married an American, George Walton, and immigrated to the United States in April 1941. There, the couple had a daughter, Barbara. During World War II, Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany. After the United States entered the war in December 1941, Maria lost touch with her daughter. She wrote her diaries in English so that they could not be easily read if they were discovered.

Dec. 23, 1941

Since we are at war with the States, there is no hope for me to join you, my only ones. My first thought was: at least five years...May be much more and who knows whether we are going to live through all, what is going to happen. Geo, whom I have seen last as a youth with become in these years somebody whom I do not know, Hilde left me as a girl, almost child, exuberant with the joy of life--well, she will be a mature woman, let us hope, she will be spared the loss of them, whom she loves….Now Barbara will be perhaps in school, when I see you again. At best, there will be a tremendous gap between us, in our way of thinking. If we are going to meet ever.

Jan. 17, 1942

Our government (and all German controlled governments in Europe) are like your Dad was in our years spent together. He thought me a baby with regards [to] rights but took me for grown up when it was about responsibilities. Our government doesn't trust us to tell the facts but considers the public fit to face the most difficult, not to say, dreadful situations. We were told yesterday by our radio news that new European community has to be forged by blood and iron. Sic, our blood. Not for our ideals. And all the time people here don't want anything but peace. But I am sure, people round all the world are just the same, nobody wants anything but peace. How is it possible that all these masses could have been hypnotized or just swindled into such a general massacre?

Jan, 27, 1942

Now I begin to think of it: though involuntary, but my staying here these years will be a very exciting adventure. I am going to see, to hear, to witness everything and to tell you about it.

Feb. 23, 1942
Heard from Lacy[41] that Vienna jews don't get any food or fuel-rations. In spite the shortage of railway carriages every Friday the evacuation trains go to Poland full with Jews, not allowed anything to carry from their belongings.

Maria Madi, ca. 1966

April 24, 1942
I am free from yesterday noon until tonight so yesterday afternoon I went to see Lacy. She is nice as always and tries not to be bitter but it is not to describe the depression what they feel in view of their future. Some days ago the prime minister declared that eight hundred thousand Jews will be deported from the country, but where? She says they, she and his brother, are grateful for every day, they can still spend in their flat. The worst is we could not even help them if things turn to the worst.

August 21, 1942
Kati married a Jew, something like a suicide here, these days. Not here, but at Arad, Romania at present. Officially, she will be taken as a Jewess in the future.

[41] Lacy, one of Maria's friends, was Jewish.

September 8, 1942
I have to tell you that your Dad passed away quietly last Saturday, at 12:15 noon. He will be buried on Thursday at the churchyard of Nagykovacsi. The day before he was operated on and it turned out it was a tumor of the stomach.

Dec. 17, 1942, Thursday
A joint declaration was made by the States, Great Britain and Soviet Russia against slaughtering of jews in Poland by the Nazis. I entirely agree with the sense of it though do not know will the declaration help anything at present…

Friday, January 15, 1943
You would not believe how many things are missed here since you left this country. There is very little milk, no butter, churn, cheese, rind or cream. No soap, meat, liver, kidneys, ham, salami, oil, eggs on rations only, no liqueurs, no Eau de Cologne, no cakes, crackers, no tea or coffee, today no more cigarettes, no matches. I could tell you still a long list of missing things and not have done with it.

May 25, 1943, Tuesday
We had to go this afternoon to an instructive motion picture, so called anti-air raid picture. Not only myself but other people too found it scandalous, nothing instructive but all boasting on the German side: we did this all! Destruction, cruelty, lies, propaganda mixed together. Seeing the raided Warsaw, Belgrade, Rotterdam and Amsterdam one can say with regards of the present air raids on Germany: serves them right. They have got what they asked for.

August 9, 1943, Monday
More and more references can be heard in B.B.C. commentaries "anyhow, this is going to be the last winter of the European war." Sure, it seems very probable but how is it going to happen? One of the most probable things seems to be the inevitability of turning one country to battlefield. The only lucky event that could prevent it would be a rapid collapse of Germany (not only Nazism, the German army would fight may be better without Hitler's "inspirations").

January 12, 1944, Wednesday
President Roosevelt spoke yesterday about a general mobilization of all working forces. I do not understand this. If this mobilization is necessary (130,000.000 people!) to win the war, why not before? If not, so why do it now, when at least a year will be needed until the results can be felt. Generally the war's end, at least European war's end, is hoped for in this year. Is this mobilization meant just for the fall's electoral

campaign? I can't help to think of the postwar period, how difficult will be the demobilization of these masses and their return to normal working conditions….I am tired of being sick, with no money and without adequate footwear, when outside snow is high on the streets. The soles of my shoes have holes on them, what is not so bad in dry weather, but very disagreeable in snow or rain. Besides no coffee to cheer me up. All my complaints are ridiculous, I am perfectly aware of it. All this has no importance at all and no meaning whatever. It is but my dear own self, who feels uncomfortable. For the second time I have asked for rationed leather-soled footwear, but in vain. Authorities seem to believe, M.D.'s do not need shoes or if so, they can afford blackmarket prices.

February 26, 1944, Saturday
It is a sordid effect of German propaganda that one becomes alienated from people, like Gizi, the best of friends, with whom one has much more in common with regards taste, style, surroundings, as one has with Jewish friends, to whom one must be attracted because of common views on events. There are lots of other people with the same vision, but they are the highly intelligent ones.

March 2, 1944, Thursday
B.B.C. commentators often mention the satellite countries (among them Hungary) in these days. They saw we have joined Germany three years ago in the conviction Hitler will be master of Europe. This is all wrong. Sure, there had been some fatheads and especially bribed politicians, big industrialists, who hoped for this but the majority of the people did never share their illusions. The cause of this joining was much more our hopeless position, encircled totally by German troops...In the long years of unpreparedness (1939-42) the prestige of the Allies suffered a lot all over the world and this fact was used well by German propaganda.

On March 19, 1944, Germany invaded and occupied Hungary.

March 19, 1944, Sunday
This is about what we heard. The day before yesterday our regent was called to Hitler's headquarters with Ghyczy, the minister for foreign affairs. Yesterday Ghyczy sent two telegrams, agreed before upon, they meant that occupation is likely. Today they are here again, but the regent is guarded by German soldiers, who crossed the border at 3 a.m… Of course, we must not nurse any false illusions, there will be people who are willing to collaborate with the Nazis. By the way, not only the Transdanubian[42] parts but the whole country is-being occupied they are at the radio center, general Post office, Police headquarters, etc, etc.

March 21, 1944, Tuesday

[42] A region of Hungary

The evening we had a milk-rice party with Maria P. she had rice and I had the milkpowder, I gave sugar and she gave the jelly and we made it with common efforts. She heard from several of her colleagues that Jews are rounded up by the Germans. I have seen G. military trucks near the south railway station this noon, and a crowd gathered on the other side so from the streetcar I did not see more. Terrible what things may happen. I am worried for my friends. At 10 I heard the first news from abroad about the occupation….

March 22, 1944, Wednesday

Since Sunday only inhabitants of the Fortress hill may come and go there. Jews may not leave Bpest. All trains, boats, streetcars have to wait at city limits until Gestapo men with the help of our own police men look at identification cards. Jews are taken off all vehicles. Tonight's alert seems to have ended.

March 28, 1944, Tuesday

The pawnshops are full with work, it seems the Jews realized only now that their property is in danger, they are pawning silver, jewels and Persian rugs. Heaps of them. Safes are closed before everybody, Jew or Gentiles just the same. Some Jews are trying to get Hungarian officers to room in their apartments. It will be late, though, I think enforcement of G. laws will turn them out of their places.

March 30, 1944, Thursday

The G. propaganda in the Hungarian radio told us that Hungary has decided its fate, hundred percent! They did not ask me neither any of my friends or acquaintances. Pray, who was it, who made the decision?...New "legislation" began today by a new definition of being a Jew or not….No gentile servants can work for Jews any more. Others to follow.

April 7, 1944, Good Friday

The Nazis understand to twist on the Jews after every move of the allies. After the Monday daylight raid they summoned the Jewish Council and told them to release 500 apartments for the use of the bombed out Gs in 24 hours. Next day the Council could not report more then 380 flats, two members of the Council were taken as hostages. The Council was told to evacuate not 500 but 1000 apartments in 12 hours, if not, their hostages will be shot. The evacuation means only evacuating people and what they can carry away in two-three-four hours, sometimes only what they can carry in their two hands. Transport facilities are not available. Furniture is to be left behind, kitchen utensils too. In a Csáky utca house all the other inhabitants, gentiles, their servants, all helped to move and save what was possible. These people have to double up with other families in the house. (All the time I am writing, an alarm is going on). Besides these so called legal measures the looting of some Jewish houses at different parts of the town is an everyday affair now. Drunken G. soldiers go to different flats (Ujpest is their favourite now) and ask for money and

valuables. They go at night….A new order appeared in today's papers: Jews have to give up their radios, within three days. They are not permitted to sell or give it away.

May 2, 1944, Tuesday
In many towns Jews are forced into ghettos, sooner or later Budapest will follow and, I am afraid, there will be no more escape from there. Their opinions are divided, Emil and Erzsi's mother incline rather on staying in their flat and await, what is coming, Erzsike looks for means of escape. About these plans – just for oddities' sake – I shall have much to tell you, but at present I don't think it wise to write about it.

May 23, 1944, Tuesday
Just the same as Jews are persecuted today by all the hate, propaganda can awake, the same would be possible with any other group for example civil servants, or peasants, or big estate owners. Against all of these groups heavy arguments could be launched, strong feelings stirred up, out of which some would be true and most of them just lies. This Jewish question shows some similarity with the colored questions of some Southern states in U.S.A…

May 26, 1944, Friday
Jews situation is more and more precarious every day. With the exception of Bpest they are herded into ghettos all over the country, into unbelievable crowded conditions – 2 m floorspace/person -and many ghettos, especially those in the northeastern parts of the country, were emptied. These deportation trains go over the German border but no further, it is believed.

June 6, 1944, Tuesday
B.B.C. announces at 9:30 a.m. that allied invasion has begun on the Normandy peninsula, between Cherbourg and Le Havre. I almost gave up hope these days, am trembling all over from excitement. If only it would be a success!...The afternoon. Very few G. soldiers can be seen on the streets, they are shut up in their quarters, I suppose, in order not to hear the news. Here the noon papers brought the news, without any trace of G. measures taken against the invasion.

June 16, 1944, Friday
This morning a long air raid alarm, nothing happened here. I used the opportunity to go down to the shelter and show myself to all present. New orders regarding Jewish houses. In every district several houses are designed for Jews, big, half a meter diameter yellow stars have to be put beside the entrance. The inside will be overcrowded. All Jews are running to friends, looking for room. It is stated, they can take all their

furniture with them (In five days, until June 21) but how, when a family gets one room in the best case? Furniture left behind will be "disposed" later. Organized robbery.

June 17, 1944, Saturday

The situation of the Jews seems to be almost hopeless… In the country they have been rounded up weeks ago, separated entirely from the rest of the population, held under unbelievably filthy conditions and finally deported on trains loads to Germany. Several people have seen these trains, recently young Mrs. Székely, my right side neighbors too.

It is Bpest's turn now. To leave Bpest is almost impossible for them. Could somebody still escape from here, with gentile documents, authorities check back, where from did he come and ascertains recently. To hide on the countryside is much more difficult as everybody used to know everybody. Now here in Bpest in a few days, they will be separated from us in assigned houses. In a short time orders will come, as I understand, that they may leave their rooms for only certain, very short-hours. Doctors, lawyers, and engineers may have one room for their special work out of the ghetto houses but they may not sleep there, no matter, how crowded their living quarters may be. This is not for gaining more room, but to have them in hand in special hours, especially at night, when anything may happen to them, without other kind of people being present or in the neighbourhood, no witnesses, who could testify later, what happened. Ration cards are changed this month, meant for identification purposes too.

As things are, I do not see any possibility of escape, no hiding here or outside the city, no papers and documents will be good enough. The only way of escape could be still (for Jews, who do not look Jewish) to walk on the streets, for days and weeks and months, if necessary, sleeping every night on different places (out of the ghetto), and having no papers. Even this is risky, as there are rumours that after the closing of the ghetto there will be a general searching of all Bpest houses, like it was in Sofia and Zagreb. Sure, Bpest, with its one and a quarter millions of population will be hard to search technically, but who knows, may be they will lock us up for a week.

June 19, 1944, Monday

All signs seem to converge to the fact that in a few weeks all Jews will be put out of the way. Why have they to change their apartments until the 22nd June and report it only on the 25th July? On the 25th July there may be nobody left to report….Out of the 36,000 houses of Budapest allegedly 2681 houses were assigned to Jews for the about 250.000 Jewish inhabitants of Bpest.

July 31, 1944, Monday

Almost unbelievable how low our people has sunk since the occupation of the country. Until then they were stupid but still sober (the tone of its papers), since then they are happy to see the sufferings of the Jews and the sufferings of defenseless prisoners. This all is a consequence of propaganda. Few people can stay independent enough of these influences. Only one should never mention before me the "Hungarian chivalry", which used to be a favorite tirade of our papers.

August 23, 1944, Wednesday
The night Bpest sirens were sounded at 10:55 p.m., the alarm lasted until 12:45 a.m. I was rather unwell, so just lay on my bed at first full dressed, later, when it seemed probable, that no raid will follow here, undressed and in perfect peace. You may imagine, how tired people must be, day and night alarms and sitting for hours in the shelter seems to be a part of the daily routine. Serves them right… The rate, American troops are invading the territory East of Paris, is marvelous. The end of the war is in sight, really, if they can keep up this pace.

On October 15, 1944, a coup in Hungary brought the fascist, pro-Nazi Arrow Cross party into control. Jews in Budapest were immediately in danger once more. Two days later, Maria began hiding her friend Lacy and Lacy's seven-year-old nephew Fredi in her apartment. Lacy and Fredi were Jewish, and Maria could have been killed if they were discovered.

October 15, 1944, Sunday
I asked the janitor, what is it all about. He told me, the afternoon a gendarme captain with five men came round, ordered, that from 5 p.m. until 7 a.m. the housegates must be closed, no stranger may enter the houses, especially no Jews. These gendarmes, their barracks behind our house and next to the G. occupied school building are fraternizing with the G.s, put up machine guns on the roof, dug trenches, so we have every hope of close fighting.

I am very worried for my friends, Bö, Lacy, etc. This night may prove fatal for them. We are in a revolution. Much depends on how far or how near are Allied troops.

9 p.m. some explosion, I believe, not very far. Or is it shooting? 9:43 p.m. shooting at the next corner. Senseless. Hungarian radio giving some lengthy text, but with blinds down, I can not hear from outside and my radio is no good on medium waves.

October 17, 1944, Tuesday
Going to the Alkotmány u, I found out, Erzsi, her mother and husband, together with all other Jewish inhabitants of the house were already taken away, at about 10 a.m… No news from Bö either. I had to see Ilus and arranged things with her. On my way home I have seen several groups of Jews, herded by [Arrow

Cross] soldiers. Was late at home, only at 4 p.m, found guests waiting for me. About this day I have to tell you so much, some time later. [Lacy and Fredi arrived.]

October 22, 1944, Sunday

No Jewish houses can be entered since Monday morning, no Jewish house can be left by Jews since the same time. In some places, where the janitor is hostile, they are out of reserves and have to starve. I am told, the Kartals are back but Emil missing. Jewish men are taken for labour service from the age of 16 until 60. Women left at home for the while, but without protection. No news from Bö or Klári, I wrote them postcards, but do not know, whether post mail is delivered in these houses, probably not….This morning we gave the child over to the Laings, who are going to take him on an excursion. He is so keen for a walk, which we could not risk. Let us hope there will be no discovery this time, until now the business seems to go safely.

October 28, 1944, Saturday

The more I am attached to my Jewish friends, there is a certain Jewish type I hate, and the best joke is this seven year old child is just the worst type, whom I try hard to save. No bad quality, we used to know as Jewish qualities, is missing. Same night. Almost 1:30 am we were having a talk with Lacy. These times are weighing heavily on her. Her mother, her sister-in-law, now her brother's case is a bit too much even for her.

October 30, 1944, Monday

Tonight the janitor was here to register (!) the amount of hot water used this month. I had to show him therefore into the bathroom, but put my friends--before opening the door--behind the book mirror. It was a splendid joke, like hide and seek.

November 8, 1944, Wednesday

It is a day of surprises, I can tell you. The morning white posters everywhere, announcing, that all men (this time not the Jews) from the age of 16 until 50 have to report the following three days at 7 a.m. at Vác, from where they will be directed towards Tata and Vál. Families, who are capable of marching 16-20 kms daily, may go with them. No luggage but winter clothing is advisable, as the march may last two or three weeks. This means deportation to Germany.

Jewesses from the age of 14 until 40 and seamstresses have to go into designed Buda houses from the Pest side. This seems to be in accordance with my theory, the Jewish population left behind in the Pest Jewish

houses, will be annihilated by the nyilas and G.s. or herded before the Russian tanks. Men from the age of 16 until 60 are already out of these houses, now capable women are taken out.

In today's papers house commanders and janitors are obliged to search all flats for hiding Jews. The child with us here is difficult and his naughtiness may mean death for us all. I have to confess, I am a bit nervous.

November 9, 1944, Thursday
We had several visitors this afternoon: Elly, then Gigi, and Hanna. These two were not meant to meet my friends, so they were again hidden behind the big looking glass for half an hour. Later when they left, Gyurka Gyetway came to say goodbye and brought me a lighter, which has been out of sale for months: This was nice of him and he was taken into our confidence. He looked flabbergasted, when three persons marched out from behind the mirror.

November 16, 1944, Thursday
A yellow star-patient told me, Swiss and Swedish cared for Jews are packed tight into some houses, all other Jews and Jewesses are evacuated and sent to Germany. No more yellow starred homes will remain.

November 18, 1944, Saturday
I do not know, whether you will be able to believe me, but we got accustomed to this hazardous sort of life. I even could make this boy in my flat got used to all this shooting and bombing noises. He was terribly afraid at first but then I told him, it is nothing and that Russian guns are a lazy pack and do not work enough. When no noise was to be heard I complained bitterly, when shooting began, I expressed joy, so he does the same now. It is so much more easy this way.

November 28, 1944, Tuesday
The janitor was here tonight, to see about the water-meter, he came a day earlier, as we expected so I could not let him in. The child was just noisy and undisciplined, I hope, Janik did not notice anything and caught suspicion, it would cost our lives, all three of us.

November 29, 1944, Wednesday
Dédé called me up again and I could not refuse to let him come here. I had to hide Lacy and Frédi behind the big looking glass and was determined to let them stick it out there, when Dédé began his visit with the confession "you were perfectly right in everything, the G.s are the most detestable elements, I had several quarrels and even fights with them"....Of course I took Lacy out of her hiding place and we spent a very

pleasant evening. I am so happy, Déde has come over to my side! He has found out by himself all the G. lies, their primitiveness, brutality, all.

December 12, 1944
During the alarm we have seen police-patrol go house-searching into the opposite house. We are prepared for this. No sign in my flat that more people are living here. Elly's brother in law were here this morning to tell her, no streetcars are going. So this will be the first time, I have to give up my work and I suppose, I better go into obscurity for the present.

January 11, 1945, Friday
People have terrible dreams, Elly, Amelie, even our boy, Fredi. He has dreams about his father in the ghetto.

January 13, 1945, Saturday
Nineteenth day of the siege. The morning we heard a violent tank battle, not far off, at about 9am, air activity joins the noises. According to the news of Mrs. Neimisch, who was here last night (Elly and mother here, Lacy and Fredi hidden in the bathroom), Pest will be given up entirely in two or three days and fighting will be going on on our side, Buda.

January 23, 1945, Tuesday
We live in darkness. The night comparatively quiet the morning again the usual artillery fire, this time not us as target. For three consecutive days we had water in the daylight hours, since yesterday again no drop, but we have reserves. Of course we are neglected, our clothes overworn. I could have never imagined, that organized life could cease for a whole month, may be, even considerably longer. Since the 23. Dec. no shops were open, but for the spell when a plundered grocery opened for two or three hours.

February 5, 1945
At 9:30 am. The Russians in our house. I have to tell you the whole story. Yesterday at 5am Lacy woke me (we slept with our clothes on, because of the news, Gs in the house), she heard knocking on my door. It was the janitor to tell my young patient with the baby has to be carried down to the shelter and everybody is ordered down by the Gs. They came into the house in considerable numbers, broke a hole into the wall of Mikolay's room into the next house, it is said this is their method from house to house to get out unnoticed. I was sure they will check every apartment, so we went down to the cellar, with Lacy and Fredi, the first time since they are living with me.

Well, I have to finish, only tell, two other [Russian] soldiers came in later, did not take watches or jewels from us, as it is said, they took down the shelter. I gave to one of them a bottle of Eau de Cologne, he accepted with difficulty but took your photos in his hand and admired very much, for a long time. So we hope to be free and safe, I hope to be able to cable you soon. The darkest moment of my life was the dawn of the 4th Febr, when going down the stairs I have seen the absolutely unhuman G. faces, without any thought,whether it was right or not, they were doing, whether there was any purpose or reason in the unbelievable destruction they were causing, their only thought: orders. One of them told to Mrs Gorrieri "our orders are: to hold out until the last man and the last house." Well, the houses are finished.

February 17, 1945, Saturday

With the fact, the Germans are driven out of Budapest I could stop writing. The official announcement of the occupation happened Wednesday, on the 53rd day of the siege. Still, as long we can not communicate by mail, I am going to tell you the small events ~~in~~ of my everyday life.

Yesterday, about at 2 p.m. László Lakos, Frédi's father arrived. He started at 5 a.m., had to walk down to Csepel, cross on a ferry boat to Budafok and so to us. Exhausted by the exertion, he still was happy to find his sister and son safe. Things have not much developed on the other side of the Danube but water supply they have already. The city is deserted, a few people here and there, there is no house to live in. Lacy's Magyar utca flat is destroyed too, with exception of one room. Károly sleeps there in the shelter. They both escaped dangers and famine, many of their friends too, but of course there are quite some missing. Frédi's father brought us white bread, some canned food, a jar of apricot jelly and a piece of bacon. They – he and Frédi – are off this morning, early, they have to do a good day's walk and the child is untrained. They plan to go to Kecskemét soon, allegedly normal circumstances reign there.

Alfred Lakos reunited with his father, but his mother was deported and killed. Mr. Lakos now lives near Atlanta, Georgia.

Maria Madi immigrated to the United States in December 1946 and reunited with her daughter. She passed away in 1970. In 2015, Maria Madi was named one of the "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial, for saving the lives of Lacy and Fredi.

Alfred (Fredi) Lakos with his parents, 1944

CLARA LEFKOWITZ KEMPLER

Clara Lefkowitz was born in Užhorod, Czechoslovakia, in 1920. During World War II, her town was considered part of Hungary (it is now Uzhhorod, Ukraine). In spring 1944, Clara and her family, who were Jewish, were deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp and killing center. Clara survived the initial selection and was sent on to several forced labor camps, including Sömmerda, a camp in Germany. There, Clara and a group of Hungarian Jewish female prisoners secretly created books, where they recorded messages to each other, recipes, poems, and diary entries. Clara's book includes entries, mostly in Hungarian, from a seven-week forced march from Sömmerda in spring 1945.

We set out on foot from Sömmerda towards Altenburg on April 4, 1945. We arrived there on April 9, 1945. Noteworthy places we went through were: [*illegible*], where, to our great surprise, we met English prisoners, who threw cigarettes, biscuits to us at the quarters where we were lodged.

We spent our first night after the march in a barn. As I learned, I had positioned myself very badly. I was freezing the whole night. We had no blankets; I did not put on straw on myself either. I just realized later that if we lie tightly one next to the other and cover ourselves with straw, we will not be cold that much. We had a really decent farmer at our third lodging, he distributed carrots amongst us. It felt very good, as our whole daily ration was 4-5 thin slices of bread. In the evenings, we were also given a cup of hot soup. Those skilled enough managed to arrange potatoes and carrots, thus complementing the daily ration. Sometimes we had the pleasure of admiring such beautiful natural wonders that we could forget all our troubles, grievances, exhaustion. Bad Kösen is a beautiful spa in Naumburg. To our great surprise, men in striped clothes rushed near us so hastily that we could not ask them if they were Hungarian. Zeitz resembled Pest. Our transport, some 600 dropped behind.

We saw a big [*illegible*], similar to the Gelsenkirchen factory. We arrived in Altenburg shattered and exhausted. We were very much distressed because the camp was similar to the concentration camp in Birkenau, we were afraid that by four o'clock we would be separated again and our luggage we had hauled with so much effort taken away. Fortunately, this did not happen. Lodging was all the more uncomfortable, there were three-level bunkbeds in the hall where we all were put up. Everyone wanted the bottom level of course, at the cost of fierce quarrel, we managed to [*illegible*] a pleasant place inside the camp, there was a bathroom. It is however terrible to even remember the constant alarms, so we had to spend three-quarters of

the day in the shelters, I stayed there even for the nights for three days. The enemy was so close that we had to be transferred further. The transfer was so urgent that they did not even wait until the morning, we set out at 8 in the evening. The journey was frightful, we had to stop after every 10 steps because retreating troops could have easily run over us with their vehicles. At dawn, we took a rest, as always, in a barn. We had a beautiful view. In [*illegible*], beautiful villas and flower gardens came to our view. In [*illegible*] we had an experience so horrible, that we may not forget for the rest of our lives. Around [*illegible*] the alarm went off, we were marching to [*illegible*], heard the cannon fire, the airplanes whizzing, the machine guns [*illegible*].

We did not know what to do as we were right next to a big factory. We started running and racing, sweat was running through our forehead, from one [*illegible*] to the other. After so much agony, we finally arrived at the field, dragging behind, [*illegible*] were waiting for us in the mud, in the puddles. Our peers did not let us close the [*illegible*], they were in the bunkers and in the meantime, we were made move on in the gravest danger.

We had to drop our luggage we had so painfully carried, for we could not have been able to run carrying it. The planes were constantly cruising above our head. We envied the girls who stayed in the field, they must have been liberated by now and we do not know what awaits us.

Around evening we arrived, hungry and exhausted, in a village, where no one dared to take us; a barn did come out in the end and we spent the night there. We thanked G-d for sparing us and prayed we would be liberated by the morning. But unfortunately, it did not go as easily as we thought. The soldiers abandoned us, but the village magistrate was not willing to receive us, not even after lengthy begging, so we had to continue our journey to Lichtenstein. People were so decent, I could hardly believe, they distributed stockings and shoes for us, girls were given hot coffee as well. We were in the hands of the [*illegible*] and they had no idea what they would do with us. Suddenly, we discovered our whole leadership with a warehouse. Now we hope we do not have to starve anymore. G-d helped us and every one of us was given a whole loaf of bread and a cup of curd. We could go on and arrived in Stollberg by evening, where we were lodged in a prison-like building on a high hill we had to climb. In one huge hall, some 200 [*illegible*] where all of us could fit. We first thought we would be abandoned here, handed over to the police but unfortunately, we had to move on the next morning. Down in the courtyard, the girls did some pillaging too.

They raided the vehicles on which the luggage of the sick and the kitchen staff was kept and took whatever they could, the empty sacks were filled again, and we went on. We spent the night on the 15th in [*illegible*], here, everyone was given one potato.

At dinner, we were talking with Yugoslav prisoners, they were consoling us saying that the end of the war was a matter of days. We spent the night in a gymnasium on the 16th and we are waiting for liberation every minute because they could not take us to [*illegible*] place, to Karlsbad because it had already been occupied by the Russians, some 40 kms from us. We had a day of rest on the 17th and with renewed energy continued the journey at dawn on Wednesday the 18th. Now that we took some rest at the edge of a forest, I trust, I will never be able to forget this day. We climbed steep, tree covered hills, not a single house to be seen anywhere. We did some 30 kms and they also made us return, so by the time we finally managed to take some rest in a forest lodge after 30 kms of walking. The next day, we [*illegible*] and slept for a few days in a [*illegible*] big found straw and it was snowing heavily so we stayed a couple of days because many of the girls did not have shoes after these three days. We slept in a barn again for few days and were terribly cold. After five days we went to [*illegible*], where we could quite freely enter houses.

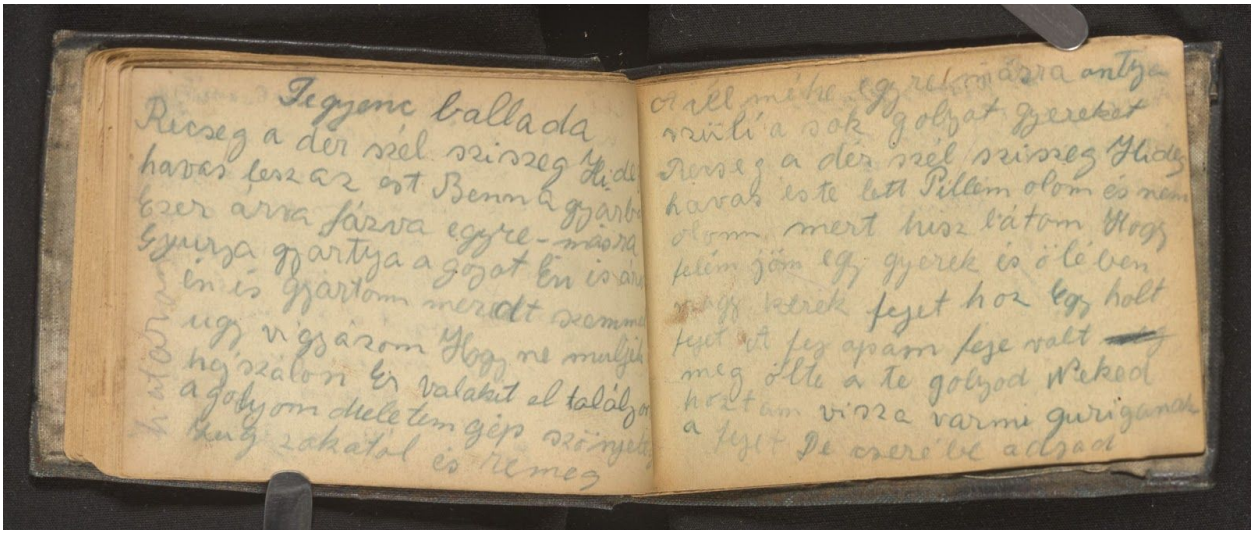
Friday
We were going to continue our journey after six days, one evening it occurred to the gentlemen to take us further. There was a schoolteacher there who said there was no point in going any further as peace has come and the gentlemen just fled during the night.

The bell of peace has tolled, and everyone can go home. On [*illegible*] May at midnight. The next day we hear the voices from all directions, peace, peace, but somehow for us this sound, peace, was so neutral to us because we went through so many things and it lasted so long. A few days later we are marching towards home and arrived in [*illegible*]. We enquired at the railway station as to when the next train would leave for the nearest station. There was no train so the following night….We moved on to [*illegible*] on Sunday, and then with train to Prague with three guys from [*illegible*]. We were instructed as to where to go, in many places we got money from the Red Cross, slept in nice beds, and every five days we received food and also clothes and many other things. These couple of days were spent nicely. On Sunday, 23rd we left Prague for home, we arrived in [*illegible*] and the train stood the whole night, so did I the whole night. It rained heavily and it came into the wagon as well. Finally, we managed to get going again in the morning to Katowice, where we waited a day and then we moved on and arrived in Cracow at 1 o'clock. We spent three nights at the railway station in the huge crowd, we slept on the ground. The following day, we were on a train transporting machinery to Russia. We thought that was better, as a closed car is terrible...

To Vali Veiszberger Bözsi
Through the veil of time
I do not see your face clearly
I do not know if you are still there
If your body is unscathed

If you are haunted by mares
Thinking I am no longer alive
Is there someone who loves you?
Do you get enough food?
Or a blanket for the night
or a friend nearby
And do mothers' black eyes
Laugh towards you in your dreams?
[*illegible*] in the sin country [*illegible*]
The cruelty of the stupid
And the contempt of the blind
Does your soul not burn [*illegible*]
Do all the uncertainties come to an end?
If I could be with you now
I would provide hope in your eyes
I would be heedful of your steps
And I would make up for everything you had
If I could be next to you
I would be your crutch, your right hand
My eyes [*illegible*] with you
I would stand before you
I would kill death for you
Not true, just a dream
I often feel
I do not live this
I dream this whole thing
It is not true, my short hair
is just a dream, the Lagerführer
kicking my ass whenever s/he wants
It is not true
The empty soup, it is just a dream
The one next to me, Magdi, she is just a dream
Cannot go to the loo whenever you want?
Just a dream, getting a slap in your face
from the bun haired chick, oh my God, oh my God
I do not want this
Let me wake up as soon as possible

One more night
One more night, for the coffee
for the coffee on the way
[*illegible*]



The beginning of the poem "Prisoner Ballad" within Clara Lefkowitz's diary

Prisoner Ballad
The frost cracks, wind hisses, Cold
the night will be in the factory
A thousand freezing orphans, kneading, making the bullets
one after the other, I am an orphan too,
I am making the bullets too with an empty stare
of caution not to be on the narrow escape and
hit somebody with my bullet. Besides me
the machine monster wuthering, pounding and shaking
Its steel womb spouting
the many bullets, the children
Frost cracking, wind hissing, Cold
night hit, my eyelids are made of lead and not
of lead, because I see a
child coming towards me carrying
a big rounded head in his lap, a dead
head. The head belonged to my father

he was killed by your bullet, I brought
it for you, to be a reel for sewing back
the head. In return, give me
this one here, yours. I am
not giving my head, I am
not letting it go, do not take it
My eyes quiver and besides me,
the machine monster is wheezing. Its steel
womb spouting, bearing to the world the many bullets, children.
Frost cracking, wind hissing, Cold
night. My eyelids are made of lead and
it is not dream, because I can see
the bleeding proud flesh on bleeding
right page
shoulder. I profess, you watched my hand
instead of the proud flesh! This
decent, nice hand, which
provide warm bread to the poor
Let this hand be yours
Give me yours in return. No
I am not giving my hand; I am not letting it go
do not take my eyes or
and the beside me, the machine is wheezing.
Its steel womb spouting,
bearing to the world the
many bullets, children
Frost cracking, wind hissing, Cold
night. My eyelids are made of lead and
it is not dream, because
[*illegible*] a little red heart
from blood, little girl. A hole in
right page
the middle of the little red heart, Alas, and
the heart can speak. See
you killed me. My
twenty-year-old little heart
the Blue-eyed love.

You killed it, take it,
take the murdered heart. But
give my heart in return
I am not letting it, no way
My eyes quiver and besides me,
the machine monster is wheezing. Its steel
womb spouting, bearing to the world the many bullets, children.
Frost cracking, wind hissing, Snowy
dawn. My eyelids are made of lead and
it is not dream because
I see all the three bodies
of mine are being kneaded,
butchered. They usurp,
my hand, my head, they tear
my heart. Do not hurt me,
none of it is my fault. I did not
want any of this. I was
a victim myself! I do not
let my head, my hand,
my heart go. My eyes quiver
and besides me, the machine
monster is wheezing. Its steel
womb spouting, bearing to the world
the many bullets, children.
Frost cracking, wind hissing,
it is a snowy, foggy morning. Inside
the factory – a thousand freezing orphans
making, kneading the bullets one after the other

After being liberated by Soviet forces, Clara Lefkowitz temporarily returned to Poland. She returned to Germany to live in the Landsberg am Lech and Leipheim displaced persons camps and married Jacob Koppler Kempler, who had survived numerous concentration camps. After several years in the displaced persons camps, they immigrated to the United States.

CHARLES PHILLIP SHARP

Major Charles Philip Sharp Charles Philip Sharp, known as Philip, was born on April 2, 1912, in Leicester, England. Great Britain declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, following the September 1 invasion of Poland. Sharp's regiment protected the London reservoir and ports in Norfolk and Kent. He participated in the Allied invasion of France on D-Day, June 6, 1944. In March 1945, while the unit prepared to cross into Germany, his commanding officer was wounded. Sharp was promoted to major and given the command. He was one of the first four British Army officers to enter Bergen Belsen after its liberation, and helped to command the post-liberation operation in Bergen-Belsen. His diary was written in English.

[approximately April 14, 1945]

Our job is confirmed –BELSEN Concentration Camp. Very peculiar position here—the area has not been cleared. The situation at the camp is so serious that Comd., Para army (German) and Comd 8 Corps have made a truce-- no battle to be fought here. SS and Wehrmacht guards to remain also 1400 Hungarian guards (with their families). The stories we hear are horrible. Typhus, Enteritis and other diseases raging, 9,000 of the 60,000 have infectious disease and half T.B.[43] If they got out it would be enough to cause a Typhus epidemic in all EUROPE.

All political prisoners (Jews and communists and anti Nazis presumably) and as they hear the British are approaching they are sure to attempt to break out. Anyway tomorrow we shall see—we take it over, a new job for artillery with a vengeance. Pockets of SS dressed as civilians with hidden arms are about. Locate 20 at village 6 kms away from RHQ.[44] The sight of the roads around CELLE never to be forgotten. Thousand upon thousand of freed slaves and prisoners of war all starting a great trek westward. Imagine the crowd from a big football match but unending (only looking different) dragging carts 10 or 12 men harnessed to them and taking turns, the carts piled with looted food, German uniforms and sacks and junk, small harrows, bicycles, horses and on foot. Ragged, wretched, lousy. Poles, Russians, French, French Senegalese (Black Troops), Dutch and British who get lifts, women, many not strong enough to travel lie

[43] tuberculosis
[44] Rear Headquarters

by the road, skeletons. Many overcome by freedom shout and salute and cry. What can we do with these freed civilians?

We arrive at BELSEN camp. It is not necessary for me to make notes to serve as a reminder of this experience. No one who saw it can ever forget as long as they live. No 1 camp is the concentration camp, estimated 50-60,000 still alive and 10,000 corpses (min). They are in separate lagers[45] of 2-5,000 where Poles, Russians and Germans were separated but now they have broken out and are all mixed up in the main camp. The truce was arranged because of the danger of infecting Germany (with the rest of Europe), if they broke out completely. I go and see for myself—first thing is every officer and man who goes to No. 1 Camp is dusted with AL 63[46] so I get dusted and tour the place in Jeep --quite impossible to describe. About 50% men and 50% women, mostly obviously Jews. The huts are packed with dead and great heaps of them lie out in the sun in the camps—some black, some green, some white according to the time they have been dead, all naked and mere skeletons with the skin stretched tight and shining over the bones like rubber, thousands of them. I tried to count one heap of children and estimated 300. The stench is unbelievable. Officers whom I take round afterwards vomit.

The living are if anything more horrible. They lie half dead about the place or crawl slowly around. Not a latrine in the whole camp—floors of huts are brown and packed inches deep in excreta—men and women stand and squat all over the place--they have enteric fever, dysentery, etc—have lost all self respect and are just existing and dying. Typhus is rampant. We have the job of controlling, feeding, moving the sick and burying the dead. Put up Typhus Danger notices at five miles radius round the whole place.

There are nearly 2000 Hungarian guards with their families which we will keep in; about 700 Wehrmacht[47] and 11 SS—the latter also have their wives and women. Also 2,000 wounded Wehrmacht, 150 wounded SS and 4-5,000 Russian POWs. Med units begin to arrive. Policy (1) bury dead, (2) move all personnel out of concentration camp thru the hospitals—No 2 Camp to other hospitals. Men in gas clothing and special protective clothing take the diseased living, strip them and take them to hospital. One lot of vehicles used for this journey only. Others move them away (if they don't die) in other vehicles. Estimated 9,000 have Typhus. Burying the dead. Get Bulldozers to dig pits, sand which is difficult, have to water sand first. Use SS exclusively to handle the corpses. Use huge German trailers as death wagons pull them with tractors. One party of SS fetch the dead out of huts and off dumps and load the trailers and another party offload into pits. Padre[48] says a service when the pit is full and Bulldozer levels it off...

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[45] camps
[46] A disinfectant
[47] German army soldiers
[48] A military chaplain

The Poles and Russians are fighting, the yes men and block leaders are being murdered, many are going insane. Whilst I was there this morning two murders were committed. As one drives around in the pens one daren't blow the hooter—they crawl out of the way. Already proved atrocities—Numerous confessions...

Major Charles Phillip Sharp, approximately 1945

The RAMC[49] are beginning to work at BELSON[50] and their first forecast is that 15,000 (minimum) of the living will not last 10 days. Must get more burying parties, ask for 1,000 SS, POWs and more British Troops to guard them. We start to feed the poor wretches but many are too far gone to eat. Do another tour of the camp. I cannot describe the horror of the place. The huts—five tier bunks with two people in each bunk and usually one or both dead, dead who have been lying there for weeks and others too feeble to move, lice crawling from the dead to the living, floors swimming with excreta, the women's quarter are the worst of anything. They sit around delousing each others heads and their own private parts quite regardless of everyone—their bodies were covered with spots, bites, scratches and filth—a few still try to wash. They sit about unconcerned amongst the heaps of dead..

[49] British medical corps
[50] Sharp means "Belsen" but misspells the camp's name here.

The immensity of this job when one pauses to think is frightening—this zone should be isolated, we may all be carriers soon. There is a heap of compressed footwear of all kinds taken from the dead which measures 90 ft. square by 20 ft. high—how many pairs of shoes? The poor devils use them as fires to toast the bread we give them! I wish every man and woman in Britain and America and the colonies could see this now—if they could just walk round, no atrocity stories to believe, just their own eyes, and if they were sick or fainted they could leave, but they should see it. Only the few S.S. we have are getting perfect justice meted out to them, for every one of them there are about a million German criminals who will not be so aptly punished....

The world will probably hear at least something about this place—we have had correspondents from British newspapers and from LIFE Magazine taking photographs, etc. Don't see how they can publish the most revolting scenes though—the only thing is to see it. Some Members of Parliament are due today...Progress is being made at last but the figures with which we have to deal are so astronomical. Our original estimate of about 10,000 bodies to bury appears to have been far under the actual numbers—another huge heap of about 2000 are in the Hospital block...Another pit will be done by noon today, Hungarians dig the sides straight as it is bulldozed. Army and Military Gov. now get into the paper and red tape war and want to know daily how many men and women and children we are burying, have buried and are still left to bury...

In the course of the next 3 days (if our transport demand is met by army) we shall move west all the French, Belgian, Dutch, Swiss and Luxembourgers, totaling over 3,000. The rest are Poles, Russians and Czechs and as we can't move Easterners west we shall have to hold them for the time being.….

In March 1945 (the month before we came) the Germans record that they cremated 17,5000. The heap of footwear in No 1 Camp is estimated to contain 500,000 pairs and this heap has been used as fuel by the internees since we arrived...The most awful thought is that each one of the 60,000 people here is a separate human case like this. There are many cultured people in this hell hole, though looking at the poor creatures it is hard to believe anyone ever looked refined or beautiful or manly or intellectual. The greatest specialist of Vienna is here and many men and women doctors. Our organization is now taking shape and at last the results of our hapless- appearing labours are bearing fruit. The new burial system has resulted in 1000 being moved to the pits today, and 500 cases have been moved from No. 1 to No. 2. The latter include 100 orphan children whose mothers had died. Discover today why they refused at first to use the showers—apparently whenever the Germans told them to undress for a bath they were taken away and never seen again—to be gassed….

Problem of feeding them—army food not suitable. Those who are fit to help in the Hospital are too apathetic; all they want is to stuff themselves with food which is bad for them. Also need clothes, blankets, etc. Plans: (1) Take over a large dairy farm nearby and shall run it as a Home Farm and impound most of

the cattle and chickens etc from all the local farmers (2) Take all the specialist labour we need from local towns and villages (3) Put up notices in CELLE and 92 other villages stating what we require (blankets, clothes, etc.) which are to be handed in to the Police Station by 2000 hours tomorrow (4) Take all hoarded food (fruit bottled etc.) from local homes.Problem of getting them interested in life again. Speaker vans broadcasting in all languages the news and what we are trying to do for them….The Parade State found in the SS Guard Room. Along the top all its categories of anti-nazi crimes— "anti-social" "homosexual" "Jew". It was sufficient crime unto itself to be born a Jew. Down the left all the nations of the world almost.

The Grey Mice (SS Women) who are now cleaning up the latrines and huts go into their cells, what frightful [*illegible*] faced harpies—Sgt Major gets them on their feet as I enter. The stories of their savagery with the women prisoners—the Hungarian interpreter girl (we use) was flogged by 3 of these women on her first day in the camp as a prisoner for laying out her shoes pointing out at ....instead of side by side. They used to flog 2 or 3 women in each hut each day as an example. The woman who said she never expected to see a British soldier—she was glad for the sake of the others but for herself it didn't matter as she was entirely alone, all her family had died in concentration camps. Her crime was being a Jew….

This frightful place has brutalised me and everyone else.Now revealed that the inmates had no food for 3 weeks preceding our arrival, and before that only heaps of raw turnips dumped into the compounds—just like feeding cattle.

April 23. Have not been able to make any notes for past 3 days, so busy. We are now getting somewhere but it would be a gross exaggeration to say we have things under control. Evacuation of Westerners among the internees in No. 2 has begun. Today we buried 1700 in the pits in No. 1 but as an average of 1500 are dying daily at present, we are only just holding our own…
Quarantine in No. 1 is bad and Russians are breaking out at will and not only that but PWs and DPs are breaking in. Hungarian guards are scared of them, now ordered to shoot along the wire. All last night shots were going off. Shall be glad when we can get rid of these useless Hungarians….The Russian DPs are pillaging the countryside—locking German children in cellars, raping women, destroying household furniture and farm bldgs etc. Their animal destruction does not help us—they are destroying stuff we need here but have no troops or time to control them.

Buried 1400 today (24 April). More reporters and newsreel men came to see us. I haven't seen any newspapers for a week, only hope this story gets printed in full. The reporters say it will. The most horrible sight any of them have ever seen….Not enough men to do a tenth the jobs we have to do. Can't trust Russians or Hungarians Guards. Jeep patrols round the perimeter wire. Army have taken away most of the Provost and CMP men for BREMEN—how we shall keep order I don't know.

WACŁAW GŁOUSZEK

Wacław Głouszek was born in 1909 in Kowel, Poland (now Kovel, Ukraine). In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. In 1942, Głouszek was arrested by the Gestapo in Krakow as a non-Jewish political prisoner. He was sent to Monowitz (Auschwitz III) concentration camp, where he played in the camp orchestra. In January 1945, Głouszek was transferred to Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp, and then to Bergen-Belsen where he was liberated in April 1945 by British forces. He wrote in Polish.

Liberation???
Today, April 3, at 3 PM, on the road to Bergen, we saw the first armored reconnaissance of the English army. We were overjoyed. Who was still alive and could still walk, was running to the fence to welcome the army that liberated us from the cruel hands of the Germans. Some were climbing on the roofs and were greeting our saviors from there. Our joy was indescribable. We couldn't speak for joy, but a handshake said it all and the eyes were brimming with tears. We couldn't stop talking that day.

Everyone was expecting and was fully convinced that our torment has come to end and the bright future has come. Alas, our joy was premature. We were hoping that our slavery, our worries about the future were gone, that the longed-for freedom was finally here and then soon we will come back to our country or join our army. These were our dreams, desired and cherished for a long time and they turned to dust. We were deceived thinking that the conditions we lived in would change any day but they still persist. How long will they persist is the question that is difficult to answer – will it last a while will it stay. This is how it looked when the English army came. Hearing that the English were coming, everyone rushed to the fence and saw… the Hungarians, the army that allied itself with the Germans, standing guard and refused to allow us to get to the fence. We were about 30 m from the road. We were cheering, our joy had no bounds, we were welcoming the English, some were crying, the others were thanking God for giving them the strength to survive and pray for further God's grace.

Suddenly we hear a shot, another shot – the Hungarians are chasing us away from the fence, by force, using rifles. The moment was beyond sad – on the day of liberation, on the day of immense joy for which we had been waiting so long, being tortured, abused, tormented for so many years, uncertain whether we would live and now… it turned out that some people were injured and dead by the Hungarian shots. Our hearts were bitter and full of pain. We didn't know what to think. How can it be? What right do these Hungarians have to still carry rifles and guard us? Is it not enough that the SS, our worst enemy, the murderers of

thousands of Poles and other political prisoners, were still armed with pistols and were lording over us. Only on the second or third day we heard on the loudspeakers that "today it is not up to the Germans to rule over anything here" which was greeted with cheers for England and America. Everyone hoped that our life in the camp would improve, everyone was saying that in the camp. Everyone was saying that the Commandant[51] was a decent chap and that we would get food and long-desired cigarettes for the road.

Alas, those were words and only words. From time to time, someone got a cigarette and that was the only help we got. Food was running out, hunger crept in, people were complaining that the food was worse than in the concentration camps, with coffee in the morning, soup worse than for the pigs, we got 25 g of bread and 5 dkg of canned meat and this was supposed to give us strength, make us rest after so many years in the concentration camps, to make us able to rebuild our beloved and long-awaited country. Our complaints were for naught, our lives did not improve. Food is scarce, the Russians break into the warehouses where rutabagas[52] are stored, the Hungarians are shooting at those who want to grab potatoes, blood is everywhere and these are the second post-liberation victims. The Muselmanns[53] lost what little strength they had and die of starvation after being liberated.

Wacław Głouszek's mugshot after his arrest and imprisonment in Auschwitz, 1942

[51] The new British head of the camp
[52] A "rutabaga" is a root vegetable
[53] "Muselmann" was a concentration camp term used by prisoners to refer to their fellow prisoners whom they believed had given up hope and were soon to die.

The burial of bodies at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Wacław Głouszek's daughter donated this photo to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, along with her father's diary.

Hygienic conditions are terrible – stench is everywhere, washrooms are dirty, there is no water, toilets are full and filthy. Diseases – typhoid and bloody flux – are starting to hit us. Finally, with the onset of flux, washrooms were opened and we had water, but it was only a drop in the ocean. We have no food, no vitamins and we were slowly starting to die. Every day a few dead bodies were taken out of the barracks. To make matters worse, the prisoners got their hands on grain alcohol, which unfortunately was poisonous. Many people died after drinking it and we also lost one of us. And whose fault was it? Why didn't [*illegible*] authorities, when they discovered medications for veterinary purposes, seal them or post guards to watch them? Only when tens of people died, the outcry and lament started saying that the alcohol was poisoned and was intended for horses. The rest of the supply was destroyed but too late. Nobody brought back to life those who died because of negligence. Those young ones, who survived concentration camps, died unnecessarily and I don't even want to write about the tortures they endured because so many words have been spoken and put to paper about it. Those victims were left lying in the square, covered with blankets and that was the only kindness their colleagues could bestow on them. The dead bodies were lying there for a few days, just like in the days of the Germans ruling the camps, outside the "Zone"...

One day was following the other and there were no changes, no improvements except for occasional gun shots or the boom of bomber planes rushing to the front. Everybody is waiting for a change but none is

coming. Living conditions are beyond deplorable. Prisoners are voicing their dissatisfaction with bad food louder and louder. Dinner is terrible – we didn't have such bad food even in the concentration camp. The authorities explain that it is due to the lack of communication. Help is on the way – but they were just words… only words. We were most irritated by the Hungarian guards who were still watching us and did not let us outside the camp.

Anyone who managed to confuse the guards and leave the camp, was lucky because he was in the country. The Hungarian guards were overly diligent and their zeal sent too many of our colleagues to the void beyond. Those were the colleagues who survived hell on earth and now, when they were free, perished by a bullet fired by a traitorous Hungarian who suffered no consequences for his actions. After all, the Hungarian was an enemy who was armed and was shooting at windows where he saw lights.

Hunger was escalating by the hour, people were breaking into the kitchen and cellars with potatoes and rutabagas and the Hungarians continued reaping the bloody harvest.

The food was so bad that the prisoners took their lunch to the Commandant; there was a response but the change did not last; we got more bread and canned meat. Prisoners used the extra rations to bribe the Hungarians and leave for the country.

In this way, over 1,020 people left the camp. Abandoned by all, they left to find a better chance in the hostile land, abandoned by all – because what we are getting now cannot be called care by any means. We are getting short-changed. Any other nationality has better conditions except us Poles. The occupant's care led to greater spread of typhus. Therefore, a decision was made to move the camp to Celle. We, the Poles, were packed into the camp again, guards were posted and we were forbidden to leave for the town.

So this is what freedom is like. No care – because what we received is laughable. The conditions that the Germans, those murderers, enjoy are far above what we can even imagine. Our women still wear rags and are pitiful-looking. Could it not have been helped?...

We arrived in Celle. When the French, the Dutch and the Belgians were taken, everything was fast and easy. However, they loaded 30 or 40 of us, Poles, to each car. In Celle, our quarters were below any acceptable standards. They were indescribably filthy. Our communications officer asked for two days' delay to bring the barracks to habitable conditions but the authorities refused. When we arrived, nobody knew where we were supposed to go and finally we were told to go to the cinema, which was already crowded. The Germans, seeing this, were supposed to clean the barracks, but instead they were lazing around, going to and fro. If any German – man or woman – was pushed to do some work, the commandant told us through our committee not to talk to the German workers. So – the German women were "working"

by sitting and gossiping. If any of the Poles behaved like that, the punishment would be swift by dispensing beatings and kicks.

Wacław Głouszek returned to Poland and settled in the town of Wałbrzych, where he became the director of a high school.