

Miriam Chaszczewacka's Diary

Introduction

We present the diary of a witness of the early years of the occupation of Poland by Hitler's Germany, never previously published in Poland. The witness is Miriam Chaszczewacka, a teenage resident of the town of Radomsko. She wrote her diary from August 1939 (on the eve of the Third Reich's invasion of Poland) to late December 1942, when she died during the ghetto's liquidation and the murder of its residents. In the last moments of her life she wrote: "I should be saying goodbye to the diary, though it sounds idiotic and school-girlish, but who knows if this is not the last time that I write [...] can there be a more horrible life than the certainty of imminent death."

Written in Polish, meant to be a letter to posterity, Miriam's diary shows, on the basis of Radomsko, everyday life in the ghetto and the extermination of its residents. The author devotes most of her attention to young people and their condition.

The Wehrmacht, and the accompanying police formations entered Radomsko on 3 September 1939. There was no garrison and the town was not defended. Yet the German Luftwaffe bombed it continually. Already at the end of September the German occupiers had set up a ghetto in one of the town's districts, and concentrated the town's entire Jewish population in it. It was one of the first ghettos in occupied Poland.¹

Miriam Chaszczewacka's World

Radomsko, where Miriam had lived since she was born, was a district industrial town, between Piotrków and Częstochowa, 60 km from the Polish-German border. Jews had lived in Radomsko for centuries. Their relations with Poles were not always idyllic. But predominantly they co-existed peacefully. When World War II broke out, Radomsko had around 28,000 inhabitants of which 35 per cent were Jews. Miriam's generation and her social circle spoke mostly in Polish in everyday life. She graduated from a state primary school and continued her

¹ The first ghetto was established in October 1939 in Piotrków Trybunalski, and then in Radomsko and Puławy. Nearly all the other ghettos in occupied Poland were established during 1940-1941.

education at the reputable Ludwika Weintraub private secondary school. She could not continue with her education because the German authorities closed the school in early September 1939. But Miriam and her companions decided to continue with their studies. They did so in clandestine classes organized in the ghetto, using pre-war Polish textbooks and selected books of Polish literature. The young people also became actively engaged in self-help and cultural activities in the ghetto.

Miriam's father, Dawid Chaszczewacki, a teacher and journalist by profession, and a Zionist, came to Radomsko from Volhynia in the early 1920s, soon after Poland regained independence. He settled in this town because he did not want to live under the Bolsheviks. In Radomsko he met his future wife Sara Zelter and after they married she ran a private kindergarten for Jewish children in the town. The Chaszczewackis had two children: Miriam and Nachum, their son six years younger than Miriam.²

As mentioned previously, Miriam began writing her diary on the eve of German invasion of Poland. She was 15. Her first entries reflect anxiety caused by the imminent war and the possible German military invasion. When the occupation actually began, Miriam concentrated on what would happen to her relatives and friends. She regularly recorded the deteriorating situation in the ghetto. Her diary entries are largely the spontaneous notes from the life of a young girl. The age between 15 and 18 is a beautiful period of adolescence, growing up to experience one's first love. In her diary Miriam writes about her attitude to people, conflicts and friendships with her peers, the budding difficult feeling towards an equally shy boy. At the same time she begins to sense the tragic fate hanging over the Jews. The author has become more mature and aware that the end of her life is imminent. These two threads are interwoven, which is particularly moving, because Miriam is conscious of this duality.

In her first two years in the ghetto she still had hope of survival. This is reflected in one of the entries: "Will life ever erase these two years from our memory? God knows how long the war [...] will we ever be rewarded for so much torment?" When she learns that her girlfriend died at the hands of Ukrainians near Lwów, she notes: "I look at her face in a school photograph and think – who knows how much happiness you would have experienced." Despite the deteriorating conditions of ghetto life she still concentrates on further education, hers and others. Clandestine self-education groups operated throughout the ghetto's

²The author was acquainted with the Chaszczewacki family, because as a child he lived in Radomsko and when the ghetto was established, was enclosed in it together with his parents and siblings. On the eve of the ghetto's destruction he escaped on his parents' initiative and went to Warsaw in the company of a courageous Pole. That is how he survived. At the time of his escape he was 13 years old. His survival was made possible by his mother's initiative and a network of Polish Righteous.

existence and substantial space is devoted to it in her diary. The author also incorporates her favorite Polish poems. Reading was her pleasure and offered a chance to escape everyday horrors. Her favorite poet was Adam Asnyk.³

On 15 August 1942, after thousands of Warsaw ghetto dwellers had already been deported to the gas chambers in Treblinka, Miriam notes: "O God, how stupid all that is [...] all our petty everyday matters vis-à-vis the horrific noose that keeps tightening around us. Deportations and killings all around [...]. Everyone is gripped with panic, fear – that we can't escape it, my God."

The next entry of 19 September 1942, ten days after the first group (5,000 people) had been deported from the Radomsko ghetto to Treblinka in cattle trucks, reads: "I don't know how to begin, how to express in words the cruel fear and panic rampant in the town. On 22 September 1942 she adds: "Our days are numbered. Częstochowa is surrounded and deportation has begun.⁴ 3–4 more days and they'll be here – and then – Oh, God! How cruel is the certainty of death [...]."

How stupid it is, but [being] one step from death I care about my diary, but I wouldn't want it to perish miserably or in some rubbish bin. I'd wish that somebody would find it – be it a German and read it. I'd wish that this writing that contains only 1/100 of the cruelty, [and that] it would be once a true and accurate document of our time."

In October 1942 and January 1943 most Jews from Radomsko and the surrounding area, a total of 23,000 people, had already been deported in cattle trucks to their death in the gas chambers of the SS-run mass, "industrial" extermination center in Treblinka. Several thousand Jews were killed by the police and gendarmerie in the town and the immediate vicinity. On 12 and 13 January, 1,200 remaining Jews found in the town and outside it were shot at the Jewish cemetery. Several hundred Jews, men and women, were sent to forced labor in the armaments plants of the German firm HASAG in Skarżysko-Kamienna and Częstochowa. Some of them survived.

How the Chaszczewacki Family Died

The father, Dawid Chaszczewacki, had been shot in Radomsko in Dolna St. by a German gendarme already in the early days of the liquidation operation. The unburied corpse of his son, Nachum, was not found until after the war at the Jewish cemetery in Radomsko. Apparently he was among those many ghetto dwellers, who had been shot there. When most of the ghetto inhabitants had

³ The author of the introduction took part in the poetry readings in Dorfman's flat, where two of their children and several other boys and girls, including Miriam Chaszczewacka recited Polish poems.

⁴ That is the deportation of Jews from the Częstochowa ghetto by the SS aided by auxiliary formations to their death in the gas chambers of Treblinka.

already been murdered, Miriam and her mother had nowhere to hide, nothing to eat and were cold. In an act of despair they reported to the police. They knew what would happen to them. They were marched to the Jewish cemetery. The circumstances of their death will be discussed below.

The author of this introduction had been aware for some time that Miriam Chaszczewacka's diary had survived and was familiar with its contents from a book edited by Stefania Heilbrunn of Radomsko and published in English in Australia.⁵ The complete text, however, in the form of a faithful copy had not reached Poland until 2 years ago. This is owed to Prof. Barbara Engelking, who found the authentic handwritten text in the Yad Vashem archives in Jerusalem, and obtained permission to publish it in the original.

How did the document survive? Most probable is the version provided by Natan Gross, a renowned Polish-Israeli filmmaker, poet and writer.⁶ In a Polish-language Tel-Aviv newspaper, *Nowiny Kurier*, which he publishes, in November 1991 he wrote an article "Na przykład Radomsko" [Radomsko, for example]. It begins with a quotation from Miriam's diary: "[Being] one step from death I care about my diary." He then goes on to describe the circumstances of the diary's finding. "Łodka Pańska,⁷ a teacher in a Radomsko school since 1925, after hard war-time experiences decided to leave the town and emigrate to Israel. She had gone with some surviving relatives to the cemetery in order to pay their last respects to her father in law of blessed memory – the only family member 'to have died in time' in 1939 and found eternal rest on the local cemetery." He then quotes her diary: "As we were leaving Radomsko, there was no living soul we could say goodbye to. On our way back from the cemetery to town something strange happened to us: suddenly an old woman barged out of a house by the road, caught up with us and put in my hand a small package, wrapped in brown paper: 'This is for you all', she said and quickly left. I shouted at her as she was moving away: 'What is it, Madam, who are you?' But she didn't stop or turn around. I ran after her, and when I caught up with her, I noticed that she was very frightened. She would not speak to me, and all I could hear her say was: 'I know

⁵ Stefania Heilbrunn, *Children of Dust and Heaven. A Collective Memoir*, Australia [self published], 1978; 2nd edition Cape Town [self published], 1991. The book is a collective recollection about Radomsko by its Jewish inhabitants; it also contains the full text of the diary.

⁶ Natan Gross was born in Kraków in 1919. During the German occupation he was hiding "on Aryan papers" in Kraków and Warsaw. After the war he returned to Kraków. He built bridges between the Polish and the Jewish cultures. In 1950 he emigrated to Israel for political reasons, but frequently visited Poland, where he participated in a number of cultural, mainly film, endeavors. He died in October 2005 in Tel-Aviv.

⁷ The author knew Loda Pańska, because during 1937–1939 she taught him the Mosaic religion at the State Primary School in Radomsko. She was very popular with the students, both boys and girls. She survived the Holocaust on "Aryan papers", due to her Polish friends. After the war she emigrated to Israel.

nothing. My son asked me to hand it to you. 'I know nothing about it.' At home I unpacked it and I found a small notebook. The moment I glanced at the pages, I immediately recognized the handwriting of a student I had taught 6 years before: Miriam Chaszczewacka. It was her diary she kept in the ghetto.

Loda Pańska gave the diary to the Yad Vashem archives, where it is available under 03/3382.

Under Miriam's text there is a note by an unknown hand, most likely already after the war: "On 24 October 1942, she reported, together with her mother to Limanowskiego St. to the then on duty P[olish] p[oliceman], [and said] that they wanted to go to the Jew[ish] Comm[unity], because they had been hiding in a lavatory and have enough, [and] for the last three days they ate only uncooked kasha. They were delivered to the [Police] Station, and the following day left in a transport to Częstochowa."

According to the author of this introduction, the information on Miriam's deportation to Częstochowa is unlikely. It had been put in the attached note probably because its author wanted to show that he was not guilty of Miriam's death. Perhaps he was involved in preserving Miriam's diary for posterity on her request. It is possible that the person who brought in Miriam's diary was his mother or acquaintance.

According to a Radomsko survivor, a Jewish partisan Herszke Sabatowski, whose testimony was published in Stefania Heilbrunn's book, it is possible that the person who wrote the mysterious note attached to Miriam's diary, and at the same time the man who made its survival possible, was a Polish policeman, Krawczyk. Heilbrunn was inclined to believe it: "Who added these words? Was it a Polish policeman? Son of an old woman?⁸ Did he, motivated by shreds of humanity, keep his promise given to a girl who died? We shall never find out?" Natan Gross wrote in a similar vein: "I have no doubts that it was he, perhaps this Krawczyk whom Ze[e]w Sabatowski recalls? A Polish policeman preserved under his navy blue uniform a shred of human heart, which merits a good word (be it only from me). He did not do it for money."

Feliks Tych

⁸ That is the one who handed Miriam's diary to Loda Pańska when she was on her way back from the Jewish cemetery in Radomsko.

„Alles Anfang ist ja schwer“ Kaciety
 pocięta, tak jest trudny. No i od czego tu
 raeraję? Kry odram od ~~tego~~ (trach, trach))
 huku bomb? Czy też cofnąc się dalej i roz-
 noeraję spisek piosenka, wosotyj grytki dźwięki
 które maweraję i tak spowoję

„Towiem wam w tajemnicy,
 że ryce nie jest ste”

Albo jeszcze wreszcie, gdy to wreszcie
 radia i ulice rozbrzmiewały akrykaniem, jak:

„Głaski Radziwiłski musi awanturę do
 daciwy”, „Pracownicy Radia”, i piosen-
 kami jak

„Płynięcie Obro po dacie,
 pty niesr jak przed laty.

A może napiszę od tych schwaerzkiej
 poglądów: w tym roku już napisać będzie
 wojna, roboty!

"Aller Anfang ist ja schwer". Every beginning is difficult. How does one begin this? Right away (bam, bam) with the crack of bombs? Or does one move back further and start with a merry song of a group of girls, who march in unison, singing.

I'll tell you in secret,
Life is not bad"⁹

Or even earlier, when all the radios and streets echoed such shouts as: "The Zaolzie Silesia must return the Fatherland!" "We want Zaolzie", and songs like

You flow, Oder, through a valley
Flow as years of old."

I agree, extremely few would understand the meaning.

Or perhaps with the rumors [spread] every year: war starts this year, you'll see!

Most often I heard it from Irka,¹⁰ usually in secret: "I'm telling you, this year, in May they're going to start fighting, for sure!" I would shake my head and ask, "Who, with whom, what about." – Poland with Germany about Pomerania, the offended Irka would reply, "don't you remember that Madam said in class how important Pomerania is for Poland and for Germany too."

This is how we talked more than once, but we might as well have talked about an earthquake, [because] both appeared improbable, or at least remote.

I often thought that we are living in a period when nothing happens, and that 100 years from now they will hardly mention us in history books, but soon enough, when Hitler came, when the Italians occupied Abyssinia, when the Spanish civil war broke out, when the Germans occupied Austria and Bohemia, when THIS war broke out, I concluded that we are living in very important and interesting times.

As to the dates, I must admit that I remember better in which year Caesar was killed than any more exact date of an event we experience or read about in the papers, even though they rather deserve to be remembered. That's why I won't be giving dates when I describe all kinds of events. After all, I could easily find out the exact dates, but because I don't like dates myself, I'd rather not use too many of them.

When I decided to write this story, I was thinking of how it would begin. I must write, plainly and simply. This will not be a made-up story, but a faithful reflec-

⁹ A song popular at that time, to the tune of "Gdzie strumyk płynie z wolna."

¹⁰ Irka Kleiner, Miriam's schoolmate and neighbor.

tion of (my) wartime experiences. The idea to describe everything crossed my mind already in the early days of the war, when fleeing from bombs and Germans; we wandered from village to village, on side paths, through fields and forests. But how would it begin? What kind of sentence should open it? Straight with the roar of airplanes and the crash of bombs? Or with those sunny, smiling vacation days?

Finally I concluded that it would be best to begin with even earlier days, from the March mobilization?

It's almost 8, so I rush into Irka's and shout that we should hurry or we'll be late. I squandered so much [time] today, all of this because of the news of war and mobilization. First thing in the morning, our laundry woman, Jan's wife, came crying that her son was mobilized. She is fearing the worst and assures us that the war is imminent. Daddy is laughing at her black thoughts and jokes about war. Generally, Daddy laughs at everyone who mentions war, and tries to persuade us, according to politics and logic, that there'll be no war. Such assurances we hear from all our fathers in this house, so we have to believe them.

I could listen to discussions about the war, if I hadn't remembered that schools have not yet been closed due to the mobilization, so must rush off to school as usual.

At Irka's her little brother Adecek runs towards me shouting "wedding's on, wedding's on." They explain that in his language this means war, we laugh, it's a wonderful comparison, war and wedding, just as the price of tea in China.

At school everyone's agitated, excited, utter their suppositions, we argue and agree on one thing: something important is going on.

We try to spend the lessons talking, and we succeed in part, so our mood is excellent. We only wish something happened to force the closure of the school; that would be fantastic, truly.

Then things became quiet, we would forget about the threat of war, and soon we were absorbed in work, because exams were coming. But we'd often run to listen to the radio when somebody important spoke, and we drew conclusions if there'll be a war or not. Oftentimes, when we failed or when we had a lot to cram, we would sigh, "May war come, better a war than such a life."

So doubts came whether during the war school would be closed, we asked one teacher, and he replied that probably not, [but] we shall be taught by spinsters. We were not really afraid, so we burst out laughing, which only pupils are capable of doing during a lesson.

When Germany broke the non-aggression pact with Poland, when it demanded Gdańsk and a motorway across Pomerania, I don't remember, but only know that we talked about it just before the end of the school year, and later during the holidays. People joked and quipped about it, for example,

Did you hear, Mr. President¹¹ offered the corridor to Hitler¹² - to repaint it. Hitler demands the return of what he had before the war, so Mr. President decided to give him back a ladder, a bucket and a brush.

This was an allusion to H.'s former occupation.

Mother and Jan's wife also joked about it when they were repainting the wainscot in the room. "We should ask him to repaint it, he'd do it better than we."

He did, oh he did.

Vacation days dragged on. We were complaining about boredom and that we have to spend the summer in town, and all this because of the stupid fear of the war. People are afraid to go somewhere, lest they be stopped by the whirlpool of war away from home.

But in August some girls went to summer resorts, and we, who stayed, were still bored.

This doesn't mean that there was no fun. We'd go to the woods, to the river, to the cinema, we did canoeing, and finally we'd read books or knit in the park commonly called "Sport."¹³

So it wasn't that bad, but we kept complaining and those holidays seemed to us the least pleasant.

We found comfort in Klara's birthday [party], which in fact wasn't to be held until 2 September, that is one day before the school year starts. But already a month before we discussed who would be invited, what we would buy her, and generally how it would be organized, and with each passing day we were happy that it's coming, closer and closer, only three weeks, only two, and then we stopped counting, because they were nearing the now imminent war.

In fact when it began, why after so many quiet weeks, talk about war started again. After all it seemed that it got quiet, people took care to paint fences, billboards, and all of a sudden, as if the sword of Damocles, the threat of war hung over our heads.

Mobilization began, it seems.

It was Thursday, I'm lying in bed, half asleep, and I hear someone shouting outside: "Ewa, Ewa!" Who is this Ewa, I wonder who it could be and so half asleep and half awake I try to remember the names of our neighbors, and somehow none of them is called Ewa, but, but that's the name of the young married woman from the second floor, hm, it must be Ewa I mutter to myself and fall asleep.

But I had no chance to sleep long, [as] a hum of conversation woke me up. I dressed quickly, and I now hear Irka's voice outside by the window - Miriam,

¹¹ The president of Poland Ignacy Mościcki.

¹² Nazi Germany demanded that Poland agree to the construction of a freeway from The German Reich to the Free City of Danzig. The freeway was commonly known as the "corridor."

¹³ The Sport - a large park in Radomsko, with a pond, boat rental service, and a sports field. A popular meeting place of young people.

mobilization, Mrs. R.'s husband was drafted, well, I think, that is why I heard someone calling her name. I tell this to Irka, and she says that indeed, brother called Mrs. R.'s name in the morning and adds quickly, you know, Ala's sister's fiancé was drafted too.

Agitated I ask Mother, I didn't make the beds today (it's my daily chore), Mummy, I'll run out onto the street to see what's going on, and today is a bit unusual, so Mother agrees and Irena and I rush out onto the street.

There is bustling traffic in the street, they took this one, that one, another is expecting to be drafted, etc. At first I was frightened that my uncles would be taken, but luckily there were no reasons to fear anything like that.

We met our girlfriends and agreed that, despite everything we could still go and do our knitting at the "Sport," because there is no war yet.

We did go, but we couldn't knit. We talked too much about the immediate future, and – what's understandable – Klara's birthday slowly disappeared from these conversations.¹⁴

Then something caught our interest. Some bright line across the sky. Oh, it's growing bigger, wider at the bottom, and there is a small ball at the end, as if a dot. The ball guides the line, what could it be?

After a while, those present at the "Sport" rose from their seats, approached the pond and lifted their heads up, showing one another the line, wondering what it was.

We began to horseplay and joke, for example Renia said that it was God walking in the sky, but the rest declared that it meant war, that the sky is sending signals, and as if ordered we began to quote the first page of *Ogniem i mieczem* ["With Fire and Sword" by Henryk Sienkiewicz], only changing the date.

"1939 was a strange year," etc.

We were too excited to stay at the "Sport." We were curious what kind of an impression the ever-longer line made in the town, so we quickly packed up our knitwear and hurried home.

But here we were disappointed; we found out that it was nothing unusual, no signs or signals, nothing at all; simply an airplane drew lines in the sky.

Our faces fell, and I was particularly dissatisfied because all that could have been explained so easily.

For the rest of the day we listened to radio news, that Germany had actually signed a pact with Russia, and that the western powers are mobilizing. (Poland not yet, because all that was not official mobilization), and other news. The Pact between Germany and Russia was understandably puzzling – how? Fascism joins communism? However we left the problem for the local politicians to discuss.

The whole time – i.e. week from Thursday to the following Friday will be remembered by all of us, each day carved in memory. All the war of nerves until the end, until another war begins will always stand before my eyes.

¹⁴ Klara, a close friend of Miriam Chaszczewacka. See Heilbrunn, *Children of Dust and Heaven*.

Those days were not always sad, rather cheerful, though tense in expectation of something horrific. As I recall the time, I always see a colorful group of girls in an animated discussion on politics, and once it became a sore topic (we burst) into a song, "I'll tell you in secret that life's not bad."

No, life wasn't bad, only as if a giant dark cloud in the distance, war was looming. It was bright, sunny, the world was smiling at us, beckoned us.

Now we would listen to the radio 4 times a day, first thing in the morning, at 4 and most important: the evening news at 8–9.

Often, although it was [discouraging] we also listened to German broadcasts in Polish, which threatened that after 10 days of war Poland would be nothing but rubble.

On Friday I was sitting at my grandma's, knitting my first sweater for myself. The sweater absorbed me for days on end. I knitted slowly, dreaming about how beautiful it would look when finished. But today the work was a drag. There could indeed be war, so what good is such a sweater?

There could be a war, a war with bombs, bullets, troops, and I shivered with delight, so much did I desire sensation. My aunt was also distraught with war, she didn't have the patience to sew, and every couple of minutes she would burst out laughing, with me helping her eagerly. We joked that they could evacuate us, but Auntie told Grandma what such an evacuation was like, as she recently saw one at the cinema.

We were only worried about Aunt F, who was in Szczyrk, that is close to the border, and was not returning.

On Sunday a "Hanoar"¹⁵ meeting was planned at the WIZO,¹⁶ where my girlfriends and friends, who had already returned from summer camps were to be present. So I ran to quickly borrow a tie, and I was in a tremendous hurry, but when the designated time came, I couldn't go to the meeting, because Mother, who was sitting outside with our neighbors, suddenly fainted. So I quickly ran to Grandma's to get some drops. Here it turned out that our aunt had arrived from Szczyrk. Auntie has gone through a lot in the last few days, but I was in no mood and didn't have the time to listen to her story.

The following day we watched the trench digging that had begun, and some of us thought that we should be helping, but we didn't feel like it.

Meanwhile in our town...

I heard from my aunt that we actually know nothing, that we are awaiting something. Although martial law has been proclaimed here and there, so we leave the lights off [because of the blackout] at night and so on. But there are no patrols every 5 meters, nor is there this terrible panic that reigns in towns immediately on the border.

The trains were not all right either. Bronka has come from Muszyna, she did come on time, but didn't pick up her luggage, and this happened to many people.

¹⁵ Hanoar Hatzioni, a Zionist youth organization.

¹⁶ WIZO – Women's International Zionist Organization.

Stefka also returned from her summer house, but immediately left with her mother and sister somewhere near Brześć on the Bug River, and only her father, the head teacher of the primary school stayed.

The head even told mother that we should go too, but we stayed.

I would go to the "Sport" with my aunt and listened to her story, how she and her girlfriend and a little boy managed to get out of Szczyrk. (I would always meet my girlfriends at the "Sport").

This conversation stuck in my memory. We were sitting with Klara and Auntie in the park, and Klara suddenly began to feel sorry about this beautiful park, that it would be destroyed by war, and then Auntie said: "No time to feel sorry for the roses, when forests are on fire."¹⁷

One day we heard that the beginning of the school [year] had been postponed indefinitely, what joy it was. All the neighbors were out in the yard and when Jerzyk said that, we cried a loud "hurrah," as pupils would.

On Tuesday there was another "Hanoar" meeting and this time I arrived without any problems. It was early yet, and there was a meeting of a junior group, and from the older group there was only Zachar,¹⁸ who chaired the meeting, Hela¹⁹ and I. Zachar was teaching the group a song from the summer camp, when suddenly we heard the siren wail.

At once we jumped up from our seats. After all, it was only then that martial law announcements had been put up, which clearly stated that siren means alarm. Shivers came down our spines, the younger group rushed in panic toward the door, many of them crying. Hela and I put on a brave face so as not to frighten the others even more.

Only Zachar remained calm. He stopped the girls rushing toward the door and shouted loudly: "hakshev."²⁰ Even today I find it hard to understand this, but this did happen. Zachar's cry stopped the frightened girls and all of them stood at attention. Then he had them form a file and said: "Since in today's situation such a siren could mean something. Disperse all, but quietly, well, and now, perhaps for the last time "khazak".²¹ "Khazak vematz"²² we replied in unison, and quickly ran downstairs.

There was an understandable commotion in the street, though the worst has already passed. Soon we found out that it was no alarm, but a factory was on fire, so ultimately we were only afraid.

We decided to go upstairs; girls from our group joined us too and all talking at once they told us where they heard the siren. Nearly all of them had been outside and nearly all fled to their homes.

¹⁷ A Polish proverb (translator's footnote).

¹⁸ Zachar (Sachar), in fact Izachar Minski.

¹⁹ Hela, probably Helena Kreidler.

²⁰ Hakshev (Hebr.) – command: Attention!

²¹ Khazak! (Hebr.) – a cry: [Be] strong!

²² Khazak vematz! (Hebr.) – a reply: Strong and brave!

Bam, bam, bam, bam, I stretch on the bed, I'm so sleepy, though my half closed eyes see that it is broad daylight. I'm so tired, and only this useless cart jumps on the stones outside and makes the noise, so this is the source of these, I think, 6 thuds – bam... baam. Damned cart, but what's that? I open my eyes wide, frightened, because now Mother runs out in her nightgown and shouts at Father, who had risen a long time ago: "Dawid, Dawid, what happened?"

What was supposed to have happened? I wonder, surprised, and hear my father's angry voice. "Nothing at all. Why are you scared. It must be thunder." Thunder? Apparently I was so fast asleep that I didn't hear anything, I think, but I already hear voices outside the window and discern [such] words: bombs, airplane, burnt down metal works. Quickly, as if an express train, I dress and go into the kitchen.

Father doesn't want to believe anything. All the time he persistently claimed that there would be no war, so how can one believe that Radomsko itself is being bombed. After all, deep down inside he might be sure that it's true, but only to play his part to the end, he pretends not to believe it.

Monday, 21 April 1941

I am reconciled with everybody, except with Irka – we fell out for good, although we live next door to each other, I forget completely, nothing.

And blows come one after another. And they didn't permit us to do a performance. II – we organized a Seder night, and even though we put in a lot of work, it failed. III – not so fast.

We decided to get to work. We released two issues of a paper, full of hope and slogans like: "keep your spirits up", "we'll survive". That was not enough, [so] we sought some material to learn; we split into two groups, and what's most important to myself and I.²³ We were to learn Hebrew. We were very happy. We didn't care that the ghetto size was reduced, and that we were cut off from the countryside, we didn't care about politics, that the Germans had conquered Yugoslavia – nothing. So to speak, despite the terrible conditions we were happy. And the 3[rd] worst blow fell on us. The meetings became too noisy and third parties began to warn us delicately. Today, when we were in the 1st Heb[rew] lesson. We totally disbanded the organization.

It is so hard for us, although we have sworn to keep thinking about it and learn as much as we can on our own, to work, and though we keep repeating to ourselves words of Hebrew songs that contain so much power, it is very bad.

I had promised to Różka,²⁴ Frania and Fela that I would carry on teaching them nonetheless.

²³ Irka Kleiner.

²⁴ Różia Blibaum or Różia Szpiro.

(74)

Poniedziałek 21-IV-1941.

Z wystąpieniem się pogodritam tylko ³
i tylko gniewam się nadobrze, choć mier-
kamy naprociwko to jednak रुपетnie ra-
pominam i nie drwimogo tyle meory nie
raabsorbowało.

Ze teri eisy następują po kolei.

I nie pozwiliłi nam wystawie scenki
II wrędrityśmy nos sekerowę i choe
tyle wtorzyliśmy pracy nie uolata się.

O III to nie tak prodko.

Postanowiliśmy sięabrać do
pracy. Wydaliliśmy dwa numery
gazetki petnej nodrici i haset w
rodrazju „głowa do góry” „Przetrawmy”.
To nam nie wystarowało, suchatysmy
materiatu do przerobienia, rozdrieli-
tysmy się na dwie grupki no i
najwarimiejsze ja i Y. umiatysmy

It is good that I shall be busy, that it will give me strength. These days we shall be learning at N.,²⁵ so I am knitting a sweater, and well the forgotten courses leapt to mind, because I am having an exam on May 10, so I have to learn.

At this sad meeting we no longer sang, only I translated the lyrics of "Yamim Bokhim." The days weep. I keep repeating to myself: "V af al pi khen, v lamrot khakol Eretz Israel." And despite everything and against this – Eretz Israel.

Tuesday, 29 April 1941

What horrible weather, although it is November, constant rain and mud.

One's soul turns grey.

We are studying now, Estusia, Marek²⁶ and I, at H.'s place. And as if to spite us she's ill and we have no lesson, and boredom is even greater.

With those girls, Bronka, Klara, Ala, and with Irka we are at odds again, because they organize dances all the time, and nothing for us, and what's more they pretend that nothing's happened. Klara was close to us as long as we had the meetings, but it seems she doesn't know us. Estusia, Frania, Różka and I – we have completely cut ties with them. I would rather we "had it out," but hardly anyone goes out in this weather. We are learning at courses, though they now bore me, and I do not know if it makes any sense.

And to cap it all, there is no bread or potatoes; there is commotion in town, and who knows if hunger is not on the horizon.

I begin to believe, and actually I have long known, that youth is a treasure, although it passes in such dire conditions. Is there anyone who has such faith in tomorrow and repeats staunchly that it will be better? Now we were learning the German "Hab Sonne im Herzen," which ends like this:

Hab ein Lied auf den Lippen
Verlier nie den Mut
Hab Sonne im Herzen
Und alles wird gut²⁷.

On Friday I made everyone at home laugh by declaring: "I am 16, 'He' is 50, even more, so I shall outlive him."

So they say, but in fact, the most important thing is to take it easy.

²⁵ Hala Neumark.

²⁶ Marek Rozenblum.

²⁷ Have a song on your lips/Don't lose courage/Have sunshine in your heart/And everything will be all right (Ger.).

Tuesday, 13 May 1941

Exams are now over. We passed with flying colors. Everyone had a very good overall mark, except three who got satisfactory, and only Estusia, who got good. On Saturday we are supposed to get our papers.

I shall be teaching Frania, Rózia and Hela Hebrew. They insist on paying me, so I agreed that they would give what I need for H.,²⁸ perhaps even more.

The bread situation is terrible again. Father hardly eats anything now. Potatoes are expensive and there are none. Generally, foodstuffs are terribly expensive, and furthermore more a lot of packages are sent to other towns. Letters that come from all places are terrible. In Warsaw, there are plenty of corpses every day. The abyss is ever deeper.

Only today the weather was better, a veritable May, only our hearts are not in a May mood.

Thursday, 22 May 1941

Yesterday Mummy ran a kindergarten in Mrs. B.'s new flat, and to make matters worse Mrs. B.'s son fell ill today; I do not know what would happen now.

We do not have our papers yet, but they do not mean a thing anyway.

Ala is to learn cutting from Wanda G.; she says that in fact she dreamt of something different, but will she manage? The elder sister will get married, her parents are old, and someone has to make a living.

I am so worried about this kindergarten that I cannot collect my thoughts.

I should be writing more often to throw in some politics.

So, Hess²⁹ fled to England, which according to a Polish paper was a result of his insanity, and a newer thing – in their communiqué they themselves stated that war with America is inevitable. America demands that France should not surrender its bases in Syria to the Germans.

There is plenty of foodstuffs, but the prices are terrifying.

Thursday, 12 June 1941

I always regret afterwards the fact that I had written so little, because I never feel like describing so many events at the same time. All these events are not so hugely important, since as far as political news is concerned, one could form an opinion only when the war is over.

So as far as I can remember, Germany won on Crete, England occupied Syria, a French colony. As for Russia, it is quiet but a lot of heavy vehicle traffic moves in this direction.

²⁸ Hala Neumark, mentioned above.

²⁹ Rudolf Hess, a close political associate of Hitler. Fled to England on 10 May 1941. After the war sentenced to life at the Nuremberg Trial.

High prices were terrible (I write terrible, as if it was all over now, because today some prices fell, but for how long). The flour was terribly expensive, and bread (black) was 30 zlotys. A kilo of potatoes – 3 zlotys, and today 2.80 or even less. Bread is rationed like best cake, and Father sometimes wouldn't eat at all. In the morning we cook millet or barley kasha (it also was 20–21 zlotys a kilo), [and] in the evening [illegible word] or the other way around. For lunch potatoes with kefir or white borsch, because we receive 1 ½ liter of milk a day.

Now I am now terribly busy, because in the afternoon I help my mother in the kindergarten (*freblówka*). So my lesson with Heniek³⁰ is put off till 5, after my class at Hala's.

Różka, Franja and I are now an inseparable trio. And although we have little time, we see each other for ½ hour a day. Together with Felek and Lolek we also read Jewish novellas from the anniversary edition of *Hajnt*.³¹ It is meant to be extra-organizational work.

Last week Father wrote to his sister in Russia, and I wish so much she had replied already.

Thursday, 10 July 1941

How do I begin to describe systematically last week's events, or rather the history of those several horrible days.

In the first place one should stress that on Sunday 22 June at dawn, war with Russia became official, because precisely this influenced the whole matter.

Sunday was a joyful day for us, after all we'd desired the war so much, and it seemed that they were living on the best possible terms.

But again there was talk about stateless people, Russian citizens or just those who come from Russia. Father did not sleep at home that night, and the next day about ½ 10 a taxi pulled up by our gate.

With uncombed hair I rushed out of the house, when gendarmes came, no one was in. The Gestapo men started a row, demanded father's residency cards. And would come every ½ hour, different ones each time. So we could not be at home, because when they did not find father, the gendarmes demanded [to see] us. Father went out of town, and several days later left for Częstochowa, and Nachum was at the Ir's, mother at R. And I was at Estusia's. I was there almost all day and I wished I had had my diary with me. I thought that we would never return home and would keep roaming like this. Finally on Monday father came back from Częstochowa and would not be persuaded, so he declared that he would report and so he did. He was detained until Thursday, and on Thursday they let him go, but he must report twice a week.

³⁰ Henryk Pański.

³¹ A leading Zionist daily.

What I have written is only a short list, Because all the details and generally the state of feelings, which is most important after all, I omitted due to laziness, and, second, because it is difficult for me to present them precisely and truthfully.

Sunday, 31 August 1941

How lazy I am, when I write something once a month, I think it's too much.

Not that I don't have many nice things to write about. At Miss H. we're still learning and to our (i.e. Estusia and mine) great dissatisfaction, Irka is there as well, with whom we don't speak of course.

Recently Mother was ill, now she had a cold, then she had such [a case of] diarrhea that she looks miserable, and on Tuesday kindergarten starts, and life must go on.

Lately we had pictures taken of the four of us, and I must admit that at that moment I had no other concern but that of two years before – to look well.

I correspond with Hela, who is now in Gorzkowice, because I like getting letters very much. Now the three of us write (Frانيا, Różia and Baśka too, who was Franka's troop leader at the summer camp and two of her mates from the camp, Natka and Dośka). All live in Częstochowa and Różka and I do not know them. In Częstochowa I now have someone else, namely an uncle, who married a woman from Częstochowa and lives there. I would like to meet this new aunt.

Thursday, 18 September 1941

So that's what our life looks like. The day before yesterday, there was a terrible "roundup" for labor, yesterday Różia's betrothal with Mr. G, and now in the evening comes Uncle from Radoszyce, who a moment earlier was returning home from our place. (I had to finish writing quickly in mid-sentence, because Miss Hala laughs at the miles long sentences in our story).

Uncle escaped from Radoszyce, because there are roundups for labor, and went through a gehenna on the way. They fired at people praying, and they beat him up frightfully, so when he talked about it I nearly wept.

And we are planning fun events, etc.; could any other nation live like this.

And we must believe that it is different somewhere, that there is Jewish youth, free and at ease and that it does not have to witness the constant shame, permanent humiliation.

Should this not be described, and after all – well one more link in a tremendous chain of suffering. Will life ever erase these two years of the war from our memory (God knows how long yet). Will we ever live so well that we shall be rewarded for so much torment?

23 November 1941

But for my cold and the fact that I am lying in bed, I would probably have stopped writing altogether. I became so stingy about time (for lack of money) that I do not want to waste the few minutes that writing must take. But I am also very busy, because my duties include: several hours in the kindergarten, lessons, and stenography, which we learn from a teach yourself – study manual we bought, Estusia, Frania and I. On top of this we learn English 3 times a week. Estusia's sister, Roma, studies with us too. Our English teacher is a German Jew, Mr. J. A terrible eccentric and an absent-minded man. Sometimes he forgets his spectacles, sometimes his gloves. He is also very irritable, so no wonder; how much he has already gone through during this war before he reached Radomsko with his wife.

Now I regret that I didn't write everything immediately, because now I can't write it like this. So now that I do not feel like writing, a few words will suffice for the whole story.

Over a month maybe two have passed since they did the roundup, ostensibly for political [activists]. The Gestapo came to nearly all homes with a list and took many men, women, mostly communists. They took not only those who were on the list, because if someone named was missing, another one was taken, and when they bumped into someone they didn't know they would take him too. There were no other considerations, young people and old people, who can hardly walk were also taken. Marek R.'s aunt, a communist, was taken, as well as his father and uncle, we don't know for what. Those people were deported from Radomsko and no one knew where to. People said they were in Częstochowa, but no one heard from them. And now after several weeks telegrams come one day after another about the death of this one or that one (all of them, one by one). Signed Oświęcim commandant (it is a place no one returns from). They were supposed to have released the women, but we have heard nothing about them either. A terrible tragedy. The whole town is in mourning, everyone has someone there – a brother, father, son, or sister, mother or daughter. A young married couple were taken, leaving a boy of a few years old.

There is only this faint hope that it is not true, that supposedly "they" deliberately send such telegrams, and that there were cases of those dead returning, but I do not really believe it.

And one more knot tied on the chain of misfortunes. In Russia the Germans have conquered all the occupied territories and penetrated deep and now there is fighting near Moscow. It is perfectly understandable that none of us rejoices when we hear that Lwów was taken, but there was one Jew who was very happy about it, but as it turned out he had no reasons for it. This Jew was Mr. Dorfman. His daughter,³² and our friend had gone on vacation to the Eastern Beskidy Mountains before the war and never came back, stayed in Lwów, which was part

³² Bronka Dorfman.

of Russia. And now it would be possible for her parents to see their daughter they have not seen for so long, so no wonder that egoistic joy dominated their hearts. But it is not so easy to bring their daughter back. It took months to obtain a pass to Lwów, and finally last week Mrs. D[orfman] went. But she returned without her daughter, who was murdered (what a terrible word to write). There were terrible massacres in Lwów. The Germans and Ukrainians ruthlessly murdered the Jews and in one clash Bronka was killed. Will something heal the wounded hearts of the parents?

Day and night I think about Bronka. I look at her face in a school photograph and think – who knows how much happiness you might have had in the future.

God works in mysterious ways. Bronka often had a lung disease and sometimes we thought that she would die young, but her death turned out to be more tragic.

Last month I turned 17. My third wartime birthday, how many of them ahead of me?

Wednesday, 24 December 1941

With Miss Hela we are analyzing Asnyk. I like his poems enormously and I know many of them by heart, but my favorite is “Baśń tęczowa” (Rainbow fairy-tale), which I copy here.

From the cradle runs with me
 A magical rainbow tale
 And constantly whispered in my ear
 Melodious word of charm.
 Born at dusk
 From the soft tales of my nannies,
 Slept with me on my lips
 Kissing me while asleep.
 And woke with me,
 And grew with me,
 And from the cradle on its wings
 In some strange world did carry me.
 Over purple seas
 Over silver mornings
 Over the rainbow's draw-bridge
 Into the distant world of wonder.
 With a spell it opened for me
 A brilliant ravine in the rocks
 And I entered once and for all
 Into the world of giants, phantoms and magic.
 And the gates slammed behind me
 Some fairies or goddesses,
 So for all the life ahead
 I went roaming in this land.

In this land where everything
Assumes an animated form
Where each rock has a soul
And wants to become a man.
I wandered through a gold leaf grove
Where everything glitters and shines with gold
Where, hidden in the shade, blossoms
The mysterious crock of gold.
I walked through the grove, where around me
Singing trees hum
Where from the fountain of eternal youth
Crystal waters flow.
And I was greeted on the way
By the dreamy eyes of flowers,
Which stared so tellingly
Into the endless distance of worlds.
And they greeted in human voice
The multicolored choirs of birds
Showing the way ahead
To the grim edge of the abyss.
I listened to the song-like omen
And from an invigorating wave did I drink
And into ever wilder primeval forest
Unshaken marched on.
In vain the menacing phantoms scare
In vain the reptilian tangles hiss!
I ran ahead with eyesight fixed
On some mysterious luminosity.
At its peak a castle shone
A crystal structure of a giant
Who with a spell that he commands
The most beautiful virgin holds.
Before the castle dragons wait
And from their red mouths
Breathe fire gold and pink
Up to the clouds above.
Their red-bronze scales bristling
In defense of treasure under spell,
The most beautiful virgin of all
They guard in the crystal castle.
But despite the watchful guard
I did see her on the mountain's top
And I knew now that I have come
To give my life up for her.
She had star on her forehead
Under her feet the moon's sickle

The blue of skies in her eyes,
 And a wondrous face of angels.
 And at once with her glance
 She implanted love within my soul:
 And I knew that I must
 Go up towards her.
 So on a naked, smooth wall,
 Eyes fixed on her,
 On frail knotted ivy
 I hung over the abyss.
 Struggling up higher and higher
 I already saw her by my side
 And in delight to the princess
 I stretched both hands.
 I was about to put my arms around her,
 When ivy's knot broke
 And I fell deep in the abyss
 Where I'm dying of wounds and longing.
 But though my heart bleeds dry,
 Though in the dark abyss I lie
 I still cry: "After her! After her!
 Go pursue, o knights!"
 "Go climb up, up, and up!
 Over the edges of dark rocks
 Maybe someone fortunate
 Will reach her and possess her."
 Though he won't get there, though he falls
 His life won't be wasted
 Because the best part of his life
 In such a struggle and pursuit.
 "It is worthwhile to see from a distance
 This crystal building under spell,
 It is worthwhile to pay with blood and pain
 To enter the ideal land.
 If I were too anew
 Start my life over again
 I would have run again
 To the beauty in the blue sky!"

This poem was recited in the theatre by K. Rychterówna,³³ when I was in the first grade of secondary school and I remember that I was enchanted.

It turns out that our "Englishman" is a poet. He read us his poem to women – beautiful, and he also promised to write a poem for us; I'm very curious what kind of poem it will be.

³³ Kazimiera Rychterówna, a poetry reader popular before the war.

This teacher is very strange and I shall write more about him some other time.

And now politics:

Since 8 December America is at war with Japan and as "their" newspapers say, Japan is winning.

In the East they suffer defeats, we hear that many cities have been recaptured by the Russians.

We are none the better for it, but Jewish optimism prevails as usual. The best illustration is the following joke:

All the Jews except two were thrown out from the General Government. One day they meet, and one of them asks the other: "was hejrtmyn?!" "Msugt a sygit"³⁴ replies the other.

Thursday, 25 December 1941

Our Englishman wrote a poem for us –about us and what's more in English. I am completely overwhelmed by today's lesson, I am on fire and have no idea what people are saying to me.

He came, checked our homework and, as it happened, the last sentence in Roma's (Estusia's sister) piece read: "How old is our teacher? I don't know." He read it, smiled, and said: "You'll know today, because it's my birthday." We began to regret or rather pretend to regret that we did not know about it before. Our teacher finished going through our homework and declared that today he would dictate us vocabulary but not from our textbook but his own, and that was a bit strange. We wrote down the words, surprised that they were not ordinary, but beautiful and lofty. When he finished dictating, he said that those words would be useful to us, and gave a speech – a speech about his birthday.

Understandably I cannot quote him but can repeat what it truly meant.

It is generally accepted that we give presents to the person celebrating his birthday to please him. But it is a greater pleasure to give than receive, and on one's birthday one should thank God and nature for being alive, so one should not take but give, which is also a pleasure. When one takes, at the same time one takes from someone, and when one gives, one pays back a debt to the world. And he should give what he can, [and] naturally on such a day one financially helps the poor, etc. But a material gift is not the most beautiful one, after all. He, a person deported from Vienna, bereft of everything he has, offers us his spiritual work, his poem.

Once he had read the title "four flowers," we cried and felt terribly ashamed. There are indeed four of us, so this poem is about us. And this poem is in fact about us. He mentions each of us one by one, naturally without names, but doesn't want to tell us which one he has in mind at a given moment. But we do guess.

³⁴ "What's up? – "They say, good" (Yiddish).

We copied this poem in our copybooks, and because we were quarrelling about the original, so he promised the original to each of us.

Literally this poem reads as follows.

Four flowers bloom in town
 Four girls always cheerful
 Indeed they are the crown of pupils all
 Any teacher ever had

II

The first is very diligent
 And reads and writes so well
 (we think it is about me)
 The second God sent me
 Has a story-telling talent (that is chattering)
 (this must be Estusia).

III

The third speaks and gazes so sweet
 With her large blue eyes
 (this is Roma, because she is the only one with blue eyes
 and he likes her very much)
 The fourth translates so clearly and naturally
 that it could not be better.
 (Only Franka remains, so it's about her).

IV

Four pretty flowers, four students of mine
 be cheerful (something like luck)
 Move on, swiftly
 Then the sun for ever will
 Shine in your future entire life.

We are enchanted by the poem and we did not know how to thank him.

When he finished reading, he told us: "perhaps someone will tell you that education alone, spiritual intelligence alone is not enough, that material prosperity is necessary for happiness – spit in his face (his literal words). Money is not important. Here I am, a deportee, but I am alive, I give lessons, and if I could not do this, I would be working somewhere in a camp and I would be alive. Now I can find enjoyment in reading poems and books, I do not have to sit in a dubious company, because when I do not have good company, I can read Shakespeare, where I feel best. Not material prosperity, but the spirit of man, what man has (in his head) is most important."

We liked it very much, but what an idealist he is.

Monday, 28 December 1941

I was so happy with the poem that I did not write about the more important thing not only for myself but also for the entire Jewish community. All Jews must surrender all furs, fur collars and generally all fur articles, and if any such object is found with a Jew, he will be shot, and if he gives it to an Aryan, both he and the Aryan will be shot.

The furs are to be surrendered to the [Jewish] community. They all look funny in collars stripped of fur, with only linen or wadding left on top. Many sew on plush or velvet, which imitate fur. Collars are nothing, but entire fur coats. I have a summer coat, and an old fur coat with lining, [so] it will be a problem when I hand them in, and to make matters worse the long forgotten frost is back again. Some warn that sweaters will have to be surrendered, and that would be terrible.

There is only one comfort that they are in so much trouble.

They have been almost completely pushed out of Africa.

New Year's Eve is coming, and that gang is partying, as they do all year round, but we wish to organize something here, already this Saturday, so the atmosphere is very sociable.

May we succeed this once, not just make plans.

Tuesday, 13 January 1942

I feel a bit "unvoll" again.³⁵ I was in bed yesterday, and although today I did get up, but I still do not go out, so I have a chance to write things. We did throw the party and it went very well, though there was one unwelcome guest and though Estusia is a bit cross. There was one boy too many, so we danced all the time, and the dancers were fantastic. It so happened that on this very Saturday Bronka threw her birthday party and she had invited Kacper,³⁶ our singer from Radomsko, but he came to us, which made us very happy. Berek (that's his real name) sang wonderfully, and what we liked the most was a Jewish war tango, whose refrain goes something like:

Where do I go
When the Ghetto is sealed
Where do I go, when everywhere
there are guards.
The world is big enough
but for me it is small and cramped.
Wherever I go, they tell me to stop
Shouting halt zurueck (turn back).

³⁵ Feeling off (German).

³⁶ Berek Hampel.

A few days after the party we went to pay our condolences to Bala F, whose father died of typhus. He was so young, fresh, and handsome. When I came back I was very depressed and couldn't think of anything to do with myself. Bala herself took it rather well, which is hardly surprising these days.

Thursday, 12 February 1942

I must try my utmost to find the time to write, as for example today. For several days now, we have heard warnings that on Thursday (Friday, it seems) Jews would not be allowed to go out between 8–12 at noon. Yesterday it was lifted, and today apparently that Kunel, on whose account we are not permitted to leave home, arrived. So we cannot go out between 11 and 3 in the afternoon. So I shall not going to my class and I have time.

Many a time I wanted to describe the bomb incident, that with Auntie's quilt, with Baška, and now I do not want to go into details. So the bomb incident went like this. It was Saturday night, and I was feeling poorly that day (which often happens recently) and I was lying in bed. Nachum and I were playing the draughts game, when Mother entered the patio in order to pour out water, returned strangely confused. "A parcel is lying by the patio door, so pretty, wrapped in blue paper and tied with rope." "Why did you not pick it up?" I ask surprised. "Because I was afraid, because I remembered that we should not pick up suspicious-looking bits of paper."

This made me laugh and I said that somebody wanted to play a hoax on us, perhaps one in a bad taste. Mother [...]

Saturday, April 18, [19]42

My writing was interrupted and it's been 2 months since I wrote anything, and I did not finish those stories. I would not be [here] writing but for this incident.

But I must finish briefly. The package was indeed filled with something combustible, and the next day the Gendarmerie came, asked questions about all this and that is it.

As for the quilt, Auntie recognized her quilt with one woman, she reported it, and as a result got it back plus her blanket and some sheets.

And Baška, that is our friend came from Częstochowa and visited us here in Radomsko. She is extremely nice and we correspond with her all the time.

And now to the point. Nachum turned 13 at Easter, and today, on Saturday, one week after the holiday, we organized his confirmation. His friends came and made a terrible racket. On the ground floor below us, there is a beer hall of the landlord's son, who is a decent fellow. It so happened that for a week now Mr. B. has been ill and the kindergarten is in our kitchen, so downstairs they are constantly complaining about the noise and once even called the police. The cup has overflowed today. The landlord, his son and the tailor's apprentice, a secret

113

Przeważnie 12-11-1942

To sobie muszę jakimsi cudem
wyznaczyć, co dopisawać i np. dnie,
Zur od kilku dni odpowiedział mi
dnie, że w sprawie (co ja go, co i w
przekaz) nie będzie wolno wycho-
dzić z domu od 8-12 wzd.

Wobec to odwołano, a dnie widocz-
nie oś Kunal praktycznie czasu
nie wolno wychodzić; przypuszczam
to nie wolno od 11-3 wzd. wy-
chodzić. Nie idę więc na lekcje
i inne stas.

Najbardziej niechciany
przebieg to wydarzenia w bombie,
w ciemnym kotle w Pańcu, a ten
to mi się już nie chce kawić w stronę
Półki w bombie, to było fatalne. Pyta
to sobie więcej, a ja tego

agent (drunk) came to our flat, furious. He gave us a good telling off, and the children were kicked out. My parents were not in, so they only talked with Grandpa in the room and with me in the kitchen. I was perfectly calm; although he threatened me that should this happen again, he will send me to a concentration camp. I remained composed, explained everything to him, and even – ostensibly – thanked him for this room because I could not manage any more. I may not be very courageous, but I have enough composure. When I hear shouts, noises, everyone here is shaking, but not I, perhaps because I like sensation (but not this kind). Generally, people say that I do not care too much, and that is why I look good... and they are right, but only in part.

Monday, 15 June 1942

I cannot remember the order of all the events that took place since I last wrote. I have always dreamt that there would be someone who would write down all the important events together with my impressions and my reactions. But as for the important things, what is more important to me: is whether the fact that I am reconciled with Irka or whether the fact that someone beat somebody, or that the turmoil is ever greater instead of dying down.

From the general point of view, it is rather the latter, but the former involves me directly and at the moment, very important (but actually not so much). I am practically no longer interested in politics, there is no end in sight and we are worse and worse off.

The worst came one Thursday when several men and women were killed in the cemetery. They had been detained for a long time for furs found in their flats, furs they were obliged to surrender. There were two married couples from one family, and both left small children behind. There was also one woman who was captured crossing the “ghetto” [boundary].

I do not feel like describing that day or my mood. May this be the end of it.

From Bełchatów and other towns in the Reich³⁷ many people were deported and many shot, so here – despite all the difficulties – there are many strangers.

One good thing, though, it is now pre-harvest, which made everyone tremble, but so far (touch wood) it is extraordinary. Not only are the prices not going up, but are rather falling, which is fantastic for us.

Among the deportees there is Mani J., Uncle’s brother. A young 21-year-old boy. His name isn’t nice, and he only finished 7 grades and does not write well in Polish. But this has nothing to do with the fact that I like him very much, and not only I. One has to take care to avoid pitfalls. Because for example Różka³⁸ and Lajbek, she does not have a crush on him, and he does very much, and I feel a bit sorry for him. And Franka is in a bind too. A young neighbor started following

³⁷ That is a part of Poland’ territory incorporated into the Reich.

³⁸ Różia Szpiro.

her around and spends all evenings at her place. Initially, she was very cross, but now she admits that she is "on the way". I don't know him, but although he is handsome and quite pleasant, I find him disagreeable, for Estusia too. These crushes are generally idiotic and the worst thing is that it cannot be helped. I do not have a crush yet, but I like him. I will not show it to him for the world, and I do not see that I am making any impression on him.

Saturday, 26 June 1942

It's 10.30, and because today was the longest Saturday, so no one is sleeping yet, and when I was lying in bed I suddenly felt like writing. I have been drawn to this writing for a few days now, but I am so short of time that I do not permit myself such a waste (though I do for senseless standing around).

How to describe this clearly and poignantly – naturally without any details.

On Tuesday evening at 8 (official time) I was standing on the balcony, as I often do. The street was rather empty, and my attention was drawn to two men in plain clothes, and I guessed that they were Germans, because they were very angry when they saw a Jewish woman.

Next to the balcony is a window where Mania's aunt was standing and she told me that one of them is W., and the other probably G. All the people standing on their balconies returned inside, apparently out of fear – it seems they know them well.

And now about the Wednesday, but first about Hela Fajner.

Hela was deported from Łódź and she is my friend. A few times we exchanged books and took a couple of walks together. She also was in Gorzkowice, from where she brought regards from Hela B. Of course Hela B. didn't like her very much and even asked me in a letter if she was my friend, and I replied that naturally no. My girlfriends were also cross because she visited me sometimes, and one friend warned me that it would be better for me if I did not go with her, because she doesn't have a good reputation.

Her situation was not good. One week her parents died of typhus, and she found out about it when she recovered from a serious disease. She had a sister, who was married and with whom she was staying, but she earned her own living by going to the country, because she looked very much like a Pole.

On Wednesday before 1 o'clock Estusia visited me and mentioned something she heard that a woman was shot outside the ghetto, but she does not know who. When I returned from Heniek's lesson, I already knew that it was true, and that furthermore Hela F. was arrested, I wasn't too concerned, certain that she would be released anyway.

At 3, Irka, Estusia, Marek and I were on way to a lesson at Miss Hela's. We talked about yesterday's cancelled lesson, and about the incidents in Toruń, that someone from their family was killed there and that they want to bring the others here. On the way we met Ala Kopel, who was returning from the community,

where she works as a clerk. No sooner had Estusia seen her than she shouted: why are you so upset? Ala replied that she does not know what to be happy about, definitely not because of driving the corpse of a woman, G. (he killed her) he also took Hela F. and killed her there. We were petrified with terror.

A young girl we knew so well. Only yesterday did she ask me about a letter from Gorzkowice, and Franka saw her only today – can this be comprehended? She left the ghetto and now she has gone.

Thursday was even worse. Miss H. was visited by her cousin and her child, I did not see them, but people say they look terrible. Over there in Tarnów there was a pogrom, and this woman with a two-year-old child lay for 4 days and nights in the attic under a tub turned upside down, and in fact she didn't eat anything. When she came back home, she found out that her mother and sister were already dead. Miss H. talks about all those atrocities, about piles of corpses, about slaughtering people – I would rather not write.

Frania told us about Hela F. When she was riding in the car she knew what would happen to her, and in the cemetery she shouted and cried terribly, kissed G.'s hands – to no avail. And this is to go unpunished.

We cannot be saved. In a locked cage, with to exit, each day exposed to cruelty and bestiality, but we are alive and will survive.

What is most important? On the Wednesday, on the Thursday I laughed talking to Sz. (I need to call him something) as if nothing was going on. To make matters worse, I think about him too much. Sometimes it seems to me that I do, and sometimes I think that I am only getting this idea into my head. We often talk about this with Estusia. We both say that we do not have a crush on him, but I am afraid that we will conclude that we do. And not only us, which is not his achievement, but because he is a new man. He is not a Don Juan type; to the contrary, he is modest and a bit provincial. This is truly idiotic, and I, who talk so much about independence and freedom, feel my heart stop beating when I see him, and when I go out into town, I only think about meeting and walking with him. I am angry with myself, because I see clearly his faults and everything – but it is all in vain and I am annoyed that apparently I am not making any impression on him.

I would so much wish I could get over it – (actually I just do not know if [I want it] so much).

Why should I have written this, I, who hate putting feelings on paper, which I feel ashamed of anyhow.

Thursday, August 1942

Recently I only write when an event prompts me to. This time it was a fantastic incident.

It is a fault of mine that I always write long introductions, and so I do now, although I am writing only for myself, I should describe some earlier incidents.

So, in the first place, how things went with Sz., about whom Estusia and I compete when in a playful mood. It is ridiculous that two friends have a crush on one [boy] and do not quarrel about it. Generally, what joins more us is talking about him. After all now Estusia says that she has realized clearly that she no longer has a crush on him, and neither do I too much.

As for him, it seemed to me that he is a bit inclined toward Estusia, sometimes toward Mania, and in any case not toward me, as apparently he does not care about me, and I wish that would be my greatest worry.

In June Rózia threw a birthday party, where our gang turned up, naturally except Bronka, Klara, Irka and some other boys. (But everyone was invited). Klara, they say, was angry, and her mother told mine, in an offended tone, that Frania and I did not want to invite her, which is a blatant lie.

Irka decided that revenge is satisfied, with no hard feelings did my hair for the party. She no longer belongs to our company, but to the company of older boys (I don't remember).

The party was fantastic, at least for the three of us: Estusia, Frania and me. We flirted intensively (without Frania) with Szaja, which the others did not like much, but we and especially I am not a composed person, though I keep telling myself I am one. Our mood was ruined a bit by Lajbek, who having given Rózka a gorgeous leather bag, took offense at some nonsense and returned only at the end.

The following day, Sunday, we held an after-party at Estusia's, but everyone came, and Szaja, who didn't dance on Saturday (his mother was killed), did dance then.

Roma, Estusia's sister is throwing her birthday party soon, and I do not know if she will invite Frania and me. From the party I brought a token – two carnations – one from him and one mine, which I dried. God forbid not for sentimental reasons, but so that it would be as in the song about the drawer.

"A small flower, withered
already. Lost its scent
and faded. Left a mark."

A mark precisely of what?

Enough about this triviality, but another introduction.

Namely, for a month now I've been attending a tailoring course and have already sewn, or rather destroyed a blouse (I'm brilliant at this). This is a cutting and tailoring course, but only those, who can do something will benefit, but no a layperson such as I, as gifted as I. In the beginning Rózka's sister taught us, but she left and now Miss Fr. I. Is our teacher, and she is an epitome of a spinster. (I am angry whenever people say bad things about spinsters, but Estusia laughs and says that although I say that I will be a spinster, I do not have defend myself against their opinions as I am still young).

Yesterday when I was bored to death, Mania came up with the idea to play a hoax on somebody. She called Rózka and me and said that we must do something, only something fun should be thought up.

(143)
ochtopów w których umi-
wiera się spotkać. Napisaliśmy
jednak owe listy do trzech
stronowców: Esteni, Freni R.
i c.lli, a do jednego c.lli-
ca Grecji. Do Esteni to
nawet mi się wielce obra-
chowało, ale tak samo mogło
złamać mi nogę się co do
Freni, która jej jej najbliżej
tak więc ja dyktowałam,
a Polska je pusła.

Freni do stronowców prosi-
bawa, brumata,

... c.lli!

Mam do Ciebie prośbę! Już
dawno chciałam się o coś
zapisać, ale na umyśle

Monday, 10 August [1942]

I was not able to finish writing on Thursday, so now that I have some time, I hasten to do so.

Having thought for a while, we decided to write notes to girls and boys, in which they fix dates with each other. We wrote three identical letters to three girls: Estusia, Frania R. and Ali, and to one boy, Szaja. I didn't feel much like writing to Estusia, but similarly Hania could not agree about Frania, who is closest to her. So I dictated and Różka wrote them.

The notes addressed to the girls were identical.

"...Ala!

I have one thing to ask of you! For some time I have wanted to ask you about something, but there was no opportunity, because there always was someone else with us. If you don't mind, please consider my request and come today at 8 to the Belvedere gate on the rural side.

Anxiously,"

Signature.

The note was more or less in his style, and it read like this.

Szaja!

Don't try to guess who's writing to you, but in any case it's your admirer. If you want to meet the sender of this note, please at half past seven to the Belvedere gate on the rural side.

Stranger.

The notes to the girls were written by Lajbek, so that they had male handwriting, and those to Szaja by Różka.

I cannot finish again, but I must run off to a lesson.

Although it is late in the evening, but as I have washed my hair and I am waiting for it to dry, I can finish the story.

Estusia received the note during a lesson with Miss Hala, where we now have classes. Naturally Irka (whom I have already told) and I knew what was going on and we found it hard to keep calm. Estusia quickly perused the note and automatically handed it to me. I perused the note, although the content that I had edited myself was not unfamiliar, I gave it back to Estusia. Throughout the lesson I was more embarrassed than Estusia, who from the start believed that it was true, which was unpleasant. Even though I had wanted so much that the hoax work out, I felt pangs of conscience when I saw that she does not question the notes authenticity, and that I, her friend, support her certainty. It hurt me even more because she hardly read and handed it over to me, although the letter stressed that it was a secret only for her eyes. But I did not want to withdraw, and the game once started had to be continued.

After the lesson Lajbek informed me that everyone except Szaja had already received letters. So I went with him to search for it, but we did not find it, so I was certain that ultimately our hoax shall end in a fiasco.

But even if he had not received the letter, the hoax worked wonderfully on the girls. Before 7.30 I went with Estusia and Mania to the Belvedere yard and walked there. Soon from the rural side Frania R. arrived, probably not very happy to see us. Naturally she said nothing about the note, so we talked about trivial things. Soon Ala came, who on seeing us said that she was looking for her sister and quickly headed for the gate overlooking the rural side. No wonder then that Mania and I could not remain serious and fooled around all right. The funniest thing was when asked the time Frania R. replied earnestly that it wasn't half past seven yet. Of course, because there is no sight of him yet.

I thought that it wouldn't work today, and Estusia even left with Kara and headed for home, when suddenly I spotted Szaja walking briskly past us, crossed the Belvedere yard and moved toward the rural side. I ran after Estusia [to tell her] to come quickly, and caught up with Lajbek myself in order to find out where he had found him.

I am tired now, enough for today.

Saturday, 15 August 1942

O God, how silly all that is, the hoax and all our petty everyday matters vis-à-vis this that horrific noose that keeps tightening around us. Deportations and killings all around, we constantly hear terrifying news, and everyone is gripped with panic, fear – that we cannot escape it, my God.

In Bełchatów everyone was deported. Beforehand, Szaja got a card from his friend, who wrote in it that they were only waiting for a car to take them away.

The oddest thing is that the note does not sound so desperate, and even sounds like a date by a factory, so he still has hope.

Here they are trying very hard to set up a workshop (*szop*),³⁹ which might save us. Probably for this reason all of us who attend courses are called for tomorrow at 11.

But I want to describe the hoax in full, who knows if I will live to such an age that I will be happy to read my remembrances from my youth, who knows what will happen to this diary, but despite this I want to finish.

So when I caught up with Lejbek he told me that he met Szaja only now, “when he read the letter,” he told me, “asked me if it is worth going,” and I replied that “the stuff is like gold.” –

I had a good laugh, but because it was eight, I could not see the end of it, since the police was already driving people to their homes.

Some 15 minutes after eight I got a short note sent by Mania via her cousin that everyone is at the Belvedere, they guessed it right and are laughing. I was very happy, because I had pangs of conscience, and I felt particularly guilty about Estusia.

³⁹ Popular name for ghetto factories manufacturing equipment for the occupier's army.

But there were more laughs the following day, because the suspicion fell on Różka (they identified the handwriting), Lajbek and Irka, and everybody was surprised that it was Mania and I who had played the hoax.

Tuesday, 1 September 1942

September 1st. Three long years have passed since the bang of the first bomb, and it does not seem that the end is closer now than then. Although actually our "end", the end of Jews is drawing nigh.

I cannot describe the horror, the tension, and the terrible heat of these days. Heat in two senses, because heat reigned until today, as if August wanted to make up for the rainy July, and on the other hand, the tension of those days caused this hot atmosphere.

I write again in the past tense, as if it had already passed, but in fact the tension eased off a little. Naturally it has nothing to do with deportation. They are deporting Jews from one side of Limanowskiego, Konarskiego and Wilsona streets. But then again, they are deporting Poles from Rolna, Głodolna and Wąwozowa.

The point is to separate the Poles from us, which is not a good omen at all. The Poles were furious, because in those streets they have gardens, barns, sheds, and have to leave it all, but they will be allowed to come here. They say that it's their own fault, because they had written a request to Radom to deport all Jews from Radomsko.

Recently terrible news, which drove people insane with fear, died down. There is a handful of rumors to the effect that America took a stand for the Jews and threatens Germany that their brothers in America would be having a bad time and they say that is why that horrible gang has been disbanded, but who knows if it's true.

Who are that gang? This is the so-called "Aussiedlung komisie"⁴⁰ headed by the SS in black uniforms.

This gang is made up of Latvians,⁴¹ who outdo the G[ermans] in their bestiality (if that is at all possible).

Last Friday and Sunday were horrible. Panic gripped the masses. All round one heard that the Latvians were in Kielce, Włoszczowa, there were news from Warsaw that made our hair stand on end and send shivers down our spine. They were indeed getting closer and closer. It seemed that some iron hoops are tightening around us, tighter and stronger. In the villages different labor camps were set up, where people signed up in crowds, although what awaited them was over a dozen of hours of hard farming work.

Our lessons with Hala and Dremms were stopped; who can concentrate on this and who knows if it would become calm enough for us to be able to carry on studying.

⁴⁰ Nazi commission charged with deportation of Jews.

⁴¹ Latvian police working for the SS.

Szaja received letters from the Łódź ghetto, where his friends are, and this shows that they are alive. He takes his walks mostly in female company, and our company is almost completely separated from the men (we are not on very good terms with the boys, and in fact they hardly ever notice us). No wonder then that one boy with such a group around makes a funny impression. We look even funnier ourselves. Especially Estusia and myself, because we are angry that some outsiders pick on us because we have a crush on him. Yesterday Estusia and I raised the issue of the walks and I wonder how it will end.

The strangest thing is the accident that both Szaja and Estusia were resettled and now they will be living in the same house (she's lucky).

Actually I should not be writing anything about him, one should wait a while until all that passes away and is not fresh.

Saturday, 19 September 1942

I do not know how to begin, how to express in words the cruel fear and panic in town.

Actually I should be saying goodbye to the diary, although it sounds idiotic and girlish, but who knows if it's not the last time that I am writing. There are deportations all over the [General] Government, or as they say on the radio ("humanitarische Uebersiedlung"). The deportations consist of killing thousands of people, thousands are packed into railway wagons and only a small handful is left. They say terrible things about those wagons. One young boy from Warsaw told us that into a wagon that could take 10, 200 people were packed. People were suffocating but the corpses were not disposed of.

Those few who were able to drag their feet all the way to the destination are placed in a camp, which is a murderous place, and within 3 days they are dead.

This has already been done in most towns, and Radomsko is among those where nothing like that has yet happened. We are perfectly aware that we cannot escape this and that in a matter of days, a few more, and this will start here.

Something is going on already, namely the entire area is resettled into Radomsko and as it turns out, Radomsko has almost the largest vicinity in the whole of Poland. A mass of Jews has arrived who need to be found shelter. Luckily these Jews have brought a lot of provisions, so meanwhile there is no hunger.

Was Bronka Dorfman not better off to have died earlier and not suffer for so long?

Can there be any more terrible life than the certainty of imminent death, which threatens us more than the sword of Damocles.

And even today my head was spinning with [the thoughts of] Szaja and Estusia. With Szaja we talked about a conspiracy and even decided to organize resistance. Not be driven to slaughter as in other places. We became so engaged in conversation that Szaja promised to drop in at 3 to finish the conversation.

I did not sleep all night, because I told Estusia nothing (who does not want to become involved in this, and what is more he said that it is better not say anything).

Today he dropped in as promised.

I must really be an idiot, but I jumped to my feet when he stood in the doorway in his black clothes. Generally I think that my recent moods made me over-sensitive and I'm losing a sense of balance.

I walked with him for a long time and we talked, and then I went to Estusia's, or rather he went home, and then to play cards. I did tell Estusia everything off the cuff (I told him I would). She was imagining all kinds of things, and noticed that I, who every Saturday come to her very early (and I even talked to her in the morning), and today I did not come for so long. I told her about my torments, that she knows nothing, because I fear terribly that such little things might destroy our friendship. We promised to be frank and loyal to each other, and so we will. Although Estusia says that she does not care about him too much, but does more about me. But I know how I would feel, but hard luck, I would have to resign. Also, nothing is going on, because I see clearly that he may like me as a friend, but does not feel more toward me than toward her.

And today to think about this, I would rather give up anything except life.

Tuesday, 22 September 1942

Our days are already numbered. Częstochowa is surrounded and deportation has begun. In 3-4 days they'll be here and then.

O God! How cruel is the certainty of death – death is the worst thing – of cruel torture in the stuffy, cramped railway cars.

Yesterday was doomsday. Most of my girlfriends and I we fasted, though I have no idea what for. If the prayers and the weeping of yesterday could not move the higher power, what could help us. And what kind of power is it, one that makes the earth go round the sun.

Today Marek came to say goodbye, he's going to a camp in Częstochowa, to work on railway construction – maybe it shall save him.

We wished him good luck and perseverance, but I don't believe that any Jew will survive.

Three young men came to Grandpa; they want to divorce their wives. This is perfectly correct, because who knows if they shall not become lost, if they should not be separated, and if the women should survive, Jewish law forbids a second marriage until witnesses of the husband's death are found, and they might never be found.

How stupid it is, but [being] one step from death I care about my diary, but I would not want it to perish miserably in some oven or in some rubbish bin. I wish that somebody would find it – be it a German and read it. I wish that this

writing that contains only 1/100 of the cruelty, [and that] it would also be a true and accurate document of our time

How I shall die – I do not really care.

Yesterday we joked in gallows humor that we would organize a demonstration and shout: “We want to live – We will not let ourselves be killed!”

Tuesday, 29 September 1942

Our agony is a weeklong now. There are no wagons and they are deporting every 3rd day from Częstochowa, so the operation⁴² is taking longer. 3 streets remain untouched by deportation, so probably this week will be quiet, and we can expect them on Saturday, Sunday.

The past week seems to us as long as entire months, and during them we have already become accustomed to the idea of death and we await it. But this is not true, one cannot become accustomed to death, no, especially when one is 18 and when one has not seen anything, has not experienced anything.

Last night we were sitting on a trunk in Mania’s yard, there were three of us: Mania, Ala and I. Lately the nights are beautiful, so are the days, which are hotter than in the summer.

We sat and looked at the stars, as if we wanted to read our fate, and then we began recalling all the wonders of the world, which we have not seen and shall not see.

Sunday, 4 October 1942

All this made me ill, and I am lying in bed (God forbid not because of imminent death), so I do not get to hear so much of the news, neither am I shaken up by any mood of the street. But I cannot be completely calm, because this damned “memento mori” is still with us. We are constantly expecting that any moment now we can expect them, but thank God these are only fears. But there is luck in leisure, we know that we will not escape this, we do not know if it is already over in Częstochowa. All the newspapers printed the Führer’s speech, where he stressed, among others that earlier on the Jews laughed at him, but now if anyone is laughing, then soon no Jew will be. (May he be the first to stop laughing).

Everyone is leaving town to work details to do digging, or rather to pick up potatoes. Our community offered a free-of-charge place in Kobiel, but we do not want to go, because as they say this does not help at all, because just before an operation people are withdrawn from all work details, and escape is impossible, because every landlord is responsible for all his people with his life.

Only Ala from our group went to Kobiel, she went alone, it is certainly no fun and games for her there, I wish her all the best there.

⁴² That is deportation of Jews to death centers.

Monday, 5 October 1942

I do not feel better and I am still lying in bed. I am afraid that I shall rise just in time for the lesson, and that would be terrible. My girlfriends spend quite some time here with me. There was Frania R., Mania, and Frania G, and for most of the time Estusia.

Estusia and I never run out of subjects for conversation, because we have no secrets from each other, and we tell one another everything.

Lately Sz. sleeps at home, and to at Mania's, because everyone has gone away, so he spends entire evenings at Estusia's, Estusia always tells me what they talk about and how he behaves, and today she told Frania and me about last night, when he kissed her at the end. She wasn't very angry, but she did not feel comfortable and a bit embarrassed. She does not blame him much, as she says that it is due the circumstances and, to an extent, her behavior. We remembered what Frania said, that all boys are like that without exception, and she should know something about that. After all, it is mostly due to the circumstances, due to the imminence of death, that one wants to experience something like this in one life's last moments.

I wasn't impressed at all. Or is it due to the fact that one's mind is preoccupied with the situation, or that the last remnants of feelings have disappeared, but I am amazed how indifferent I am to this.

They say that it is terrible in town – what we will do I do not know. Father could get a pass to leave the town, but what would we live on when we have no money.

I grab the diary again to describe this as well.

I am lying alone when suddenly Awner's mother and Miss W. Enter. I am a bit surprised, when uncle barges out of the room and opens the door to leave, and at the same time Estusia enters.

"You know" – I tell her – "I feel that it is something from my uncle in Częstochowa." Indeed Miss W. Comes in, asks me why I am lying in bed, and says that Różka Sz.'s brother, who works outside the ghetto, got from some worker an envelope addressed to Grandpa and a note: hand it over to my parents, I'll pay.

Uncle returned with the envelope in hand. It turned out that the envelope contained a letter from a stranger to the neighbor downstairs. The letter was written by some woman, who wrote that she is in a railway wagon with her children, her husband is in town, works in Rakower's factory, and asks that he be told about this.

We did not know where the proper letter was, when suddenly Uncle saw Jewish handwriting inside the envelope and read it. It was written by an uncle – wishes for "Simchat Torah,"⁴³ from a railway car, they caught us. This means that

⁴³ Simchat Torah (Hebr., the Joy of the Torah), a Jewish holiday.

(181) Niemca to niestety wielkiego
małceńca bo dziś, jutro mają
pawic się wrytka placówka, jest
to pierwszy znak, że nielubienie
two jest tu, więc nielubienie
je, są nielubienie na przykład, ale
katusi niemi, że dopiero po sobie
Delegacja tych nielubienie jest
codziennie w gminie, bróra, paerki,
nielubienie i podobno oni niemi
nielubienie, że nielubienie po sobie,
ale nielubienie ich na stawa.

until yesterday they were in town, apparently they had been hiding and were found out, because it is written, "they caught us."

This strips us of all illusions. The same thing awaits us, and we won't have anyone to throw a letter to, but it doesn't matter.

Wednesday, 7 October 1942

I feel a little better today, but I am still lying, I am using the time that is left to us. Yesterday everyone from Kami[e]ńsk came. One family we know is staying with us: Mr. W's wife, her sister and a woman we do not know. They are poor. Although the same shall happen to us, but until the last moment we are sitting at home and still sleep in our beds (I would offer them beds for free together with the bed bugs).

Soon we shall probably be sleeping in..., where we want to hide, but there is going to be about 70 people, among them old people and children, which is very bad.

I want to take my little personal items with me, but I don't know if they will let me, but I must take the notebook, though the question is if I should be able to write there. Ala's letter arrived yesterday. She is working very hard all day, and sleeps with other people on the same haystack in a barn, but she has enough food.

This doesn't really matter much, because today, tomorrow, all work details are to return. This is the first sign that the danger is imminent, so some expect the murderers on Friday, but Daddy says that not until after Saturday. The delegation of those henchmen comes to the community every day, they take parcels, money, and they were to have said that they would come after Saturday, but try to believe them.

On October 24, 1942, she reported, together with her mother to Limanowskiego St. to the then on duty P[olish] p[oliceman], [and said] that they wanted to go to the Jew[ish] Comm[unity], because they'd been hiding in a lavatory and had enough, [and] for the last three days they ate only uncooked kasha. They were delivered to the [Police] Station, and the following day left in a transport to Częstochowa.

[This text was written by an unknown Polish policeman from Radomsko during the deportation of Jews from Radomsko and the surrounding area to the extermination sites, carried out by the SS (cf. Introduction – F.T.).]

Translated by Jerzy Giebułtowski

Abstract

Diary of Miriam Chaszczewacka, a teenage resident of Radom. She wrote it since August 1939 – she started on the eve of the Third Reich's attack on Poland – until the end of October 1942, when she was killed during the liquidation of the

ghetto. Written in Polish, conceived as a letter to the future generations, Miriam's diary shows the daily life in the ghetto and the extermination of its population based on the example of Radom. Her diary entries are mostly spontaneous notes of a young girl writing about her life. But she also describes the deteriorating conditions of the life in the ghetto and the general political situation. This is a dramatic record of the increasing awareness of the inevitably approaching death.

Key words

Miriam Chaszczewacka, Radom, German occupation, life in the ghetto, liquidation operations, Holocaust