

## ZIGELBOIM

ZIGELBOIM 1

Z. This is a lengthy letter from Artur dated New York, 4th June 1941:

"Among others", he writes, "I am off the normal rails of life. What is most important to people seems to me worthless after all my experiences. I feel maybe I am not normal, or maybe the rest of the people are not normal. I have seen tragedies of lands and peoples and of thousands of individuals. I can't get into a normal way of thinking. I was offered posts in many institutions, but I accepted a job in a sweat shop, sinking into work, coming home dead tired, I sink into a deep sleep. This is the only time when I am myself, and I am not there. I write to you all this because you ask me to. What more can I write? What more can I say? I am about to go to London. This is the only place where people are fighting, and there I feel is the only place for me, a place where people can make great sacrifices to return to men - to be men again. It should be the natural place for each man." Then there are regards, very happy receiving news about mother, from whom he hasn't heard since 1938...

C.L. Don't look at me and don't talk any more.

C.L. You forgot something, the beginning of the...

ZIGELBOIM 2

Z. These are extracts from a letter I received from Anur from New York, dated 4th June 1941. In original Yiddish this letter appears in my book 'The Strength to Die'. Here are some extracts from it: "Despite all the turmoil in New York I feel torn apart by homesickness and restlessness about my dear ones who have remained there. They are in Hell. After all these Superman experiences I cannot find my place. I am derailed from normal life. Things which seem to all very important seem to me non-essential. The restfulness pains me, the complaints of people, the day-by-day being down-to-earth, at a time when the whole world goes down in blood. I cannot free myself of the thousands of images of terrifying fear and terror, from the destruction of countries, the tragedies of thousands of individuals which I have seen with my own eyes. I cannot fit into the normal work of life, so instead of accepting one of the positions in a social organisation that they have offered me, I went into a tailor's

workshop. The 'hurry up! Hurry up!' are above my powers, my physical strength. After a day of work my limbs ache, but in the physical tiredness and stony sleep into which I fall after work I forget myself like a drunkard who finds forgetfulness in a little whisky given to him. In a couple of days I will probably get a job as a regular operator.

ZIGELBOIM 3

- Z. "... so instead of accepting one of the positions in social organisations that they have offered me I went into a tailor's workshop. 'Hurry up! Hurry up!' are above my powers. After a day of work my limbs ache, but in the physical tiredness and stony sleep into which I fall after work I forget myself like a drunkard who finds forgetfulness in a little whisky given to him. In a couple of days I will probably get a job as a regular operator. I am making efforts to go to London. I want to be there, where the struggle goes on, where people are sacrificing themselves. At a time like ours when it takes all possible human sacrifices for men (to have?) the right to be men, the most natural thing to do is for real men to be where they can sacrifice. This would fit best my present condition."

ZIGELBOIM 4

2. These are extracts from his last letter dated April 7th 1943 from London, over a month before his suicide. Among other things he writes:
- "I am working already with my last strength, not because the work itself is hard but because of the unbearable fearing of powerlessness. The reports I receive from home are every day more terrible. From our family I have had no news for a long time. You can imagine what I went through when, in November, I received a detailed description of the slaughter in the Medem sanatorium, knowing that Manya and Artek were there. All 250 children of the personnel and teachers were killed. I gave it to the press and spoke of it on the radio here, but before my eyes I see them. I see Artek and Manya. Only some time later I received a telegram from Warsaw that Manya and Artek had escaped the slaughter. How? Where are they now? Did they escape all the slaughters? All of them in the ghetto? This I do not know. I do not dare ask about Rivkele. I know she and Golda were at Novalipka Street (their home). Golda was the first to be cleared at the time of the big slaughter and deportation of July '42. I do not dare ask about mother. Anyway, there is no-one to ask. I know that it is

the misery of many, many, but I feel it more..  
Those who have not been there can alleviate their  
conscience, but I am with it. I have been  
there together with all of them. What right did  
I have to save myself?..."

ZIGELBOIM 5

Z. "...but I feel it more. Those who have not been there  
can alleviate their conscience, but I am  
with it. I have been there together with all of them;  
what right did I have to save myself? Why did I  
not share everybody's fate? I did not even have  
the satisfaction of saving a single child."

C.L. ... he had an extraordinarily strong guilt feeling

Z. He had a strong feeling. He says it in many,  
many ways.

C.L. Yes?

Z. He says - I have it in my book - "Why don't I lie  
torn apart in pieces like the rest of them?" He  
says it here too.  
But we noticed, at Capa(?) and all the rest, that  
this was his main... Hence they decided the park  
should be a children's playground, not just a  
park. And children do play there. I have been there  
a few times. I am going there this year too ...  
This was his outcry: "Have I saved a single child"

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with all my efforts?"

C.L. And do you know how he killed himself?

Z. Yes.

C.L. How?

Z. It is nonsense to over-dramatise his death. People wrote in poems and in prose on the steps of Parliament or outside Churchill's office. He made his decision, after Karski in particular had weighed him down. Because he demanded - "they are dying in thousands" - he demanded. So he went home and wrote letters, as you know, to Churchill and the big Jewish bodies - the Bund, the leaders of the Allied nations, (and these letters were published). Then he took a bottle full of sleeping pills and went to sleep.

When I came there in '49, Ocek, who was a close friend of his (a Bundist, he died recently in London, he was a correspondent)...

C.L. (?)

Z. Not Czerkow, a Jewish Bundist...

C.L. Blied?

Z. Lucien Blied, yes, Itzig Manger, Ocek and a whole group of writers there went with me to Golders Green crematorium where his ashes were buried temporarily, and they told me precisely how it happened and when. I went to their place - he lived in an apartment where he had a room with an elderly

woman, a family. But I didn't find her. I wanted to speak to her but they told me that they spoke to her the next day. She came in to bring him a cup of tea, as every morning, and she found him dead. So then she notified it. He took sleeping pills. The night before, he wrote all the letters.

ZIGELBOIM 6

Z. This was one of the last messages Jan Karski brought to Artur in London from the Warsaw ghetto. His demands he fulfilled, and he says: "Tell them there, the Jews outside the Nazi invaded countries, that there are moments when we hate them all. We hate them because they are safe and do not rescue us because they don't do enough. We are only too well aware that in the free and civilised world outside, it is not possible to believe all that is happening to us. Let the Jewish people then know, let them do something that will force the world outside to believe us. We are all dying here. Let them die as well. Let them die too. Let them crowd the offices of Churchill and others. Let them proclaim a fast before the doors of the mightiest, and not retreat until they will believe us; until they will undertake some action of rescue for those of our people

who are still alive".

C.L. Do you know what your brother answered to Karski?

Z. My brother answered "I will do everything I can. Believe me, Mr Karski, believe me. I will do everything they demand." That was his answer.

C.L. Yes, but he answered too about this hunger strike in front of the offices...

Z. He said "They will take me to a lunatic asylum if I declare a hunger strike. The police will drag me away. They won't allow me to do that, but I will do everything in my power to fulfil their demands"

C.L. And what did he do?

Z. He struggled on, he knocked on closed doors and deaf ears. When he saw all was in vain and he could not arouse anybody to any action, he decided to bring himself as a sacrifice - to commit suicide. His last words were "I could not help them while alive maybe my death will help to arouse human conscience"

C.L. Yes, but it was an illusion; it didn't help.

Z. This is another thing; a man cannot sacrifice more than the most precious thing he has, and this is his life.

C.L. There is a speech he delivered on the BBC...

Z. There is a radio speech of his; it has no date, but it was delivered some time towards the end of '42. In the Zigelboim radio broadcast he says, he asks his listeners to ponder over the undiluted



horror of the planned extermination of a whole nation by means of shots(?), starvation and gas. It would really be a shame to live on, a shame to belong to the human race if means are not found once to put an end to the greatest crime in human history. The Governments of Great Britain and America must be compelled to put an end to this mass-murder, for if we do not we shall bear most of the moral responsibility for what is happening. This broadcast also remained without an echo. There is a very last cable from the Warsaw underground dated...

ZIGELBOIM 7

- Z. Here is a last cable; I doubt if he ever received it because it is dated 'Warsaw, May 11th 1943' and the same night he committed suicide. It is addressed to him. I will read it. The cable is entitled:
- "What have you accomplished? Another underground with a repeated appeal for help relating cable for Zigelboim and Schwarzbaum?"
- Here is the cable:
- "A few points of resistance still holding out in the heroic struggle of the Warsaw ghetto stop Admirable dedication of courage of the Jewish fighter organisations stop Klepfig member of the Bund one of the pillars of the armed resistance

died a hero's death stop Shocking atrocities .  
 practised by Germans stop Many Jews burned alive  
 stop Thousands executed or deported to camps stop  
 The Community presidium executed (here are the names)  
 Lichtenbaum, Delkowski, Stolkmann, Stanislaw (?)  
 stop A few thousand still in the cellars and  
 workshops of the ghetto stop Destruction of work  
 shops stop People putting up passive and active  
 resistance and above all destruction of shelters  
 stop Germans set fire to blocks of houses one by  
 one stop They blow up with mines bombs powerful  
 detonations and fires stop Ghetto still surrounded  
 by gendarmes sewer-holes as well stop Refugees  
 from the Helova ghetto are captured and shot on  
 the spot stop The Jewish fighter organisation still  
 in the ghetto stop Its heroic epic is drawing to  
 a close stop The remaining Jewish centres in  
 the provinces also undergoing total extermination  
 stop World of freedom and justice remains silent  
 and inactive stop Astonishing stop This is the  
 third cable in the last two weeks stop Wire immedi-  
 ately what have you done stop Expecting financial  
 help for the remnants of fighters for life"

This is the last cable, dated 'Warsaw May 11th 1943'.

C.L. And your brother committed suicide...

Z. The same night, 11th/12th May he put himself to  
 sleep. An unarmed leader of an unarmed people...)

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ZIGELBOIM 8

ZIGELBOIM 9 (deuxième clap)

Z. This is Zigelboim's farewell message to the world:

"I take the liberty of addressing to you my last words, and through you to the Polish Government and people, to the Governments and peoples of the Allied States, to the conscience of the world. From the latest information received from Poland it is evident that the Germans with full ruthless cruelty are now murdering the last few remaining Jews in Poland. Behind the walls of the ghettos the last act of tragedy unprecedented in history is being performed. The responsibility for the crime of murdering all the Jewish population in Poland falls in the first instance on the perpetrators, but indirectly also burdens the whole of humanity. The people of Governments of the Allied States which so far have made no effort towards a concrete action for the purpose of curtailing this crime, but by passive observation of the murder of the defenceless millions and maltreated children, women and men, these countries have become accomplices of the criminals. I have also to state that although the Polish Government has in a high degree contributed to affect opinion of the world.

yet it has done so insufficiently. I did not do anything that could correspond to the magnitude of the drama now being enacted in Poland. For nearly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million Jews in Poland are about now 700 000 Jews, and about 700 000 Jews deported to Poland from other countries, there live in April of this year (according to official information that the head of the underground Bund organisation sent to us through the delegate of the Government) only about 300 000. Murder is still going on. I cannot be silent and I cannot live while the remnants of Polish Jewry, of the Jewish people in Poland of whom I am a representative, are perishing. My comrades in the Warsaw ghetto perished with their weapons in their hands and their last heroic impulse. It was not my destiny to die as they did, together with them, but I belong to them, to their mass graves. By my death I wish to express my strongest protest against the inactivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people. I know how little human life is worth today, but I was unable to do anything during my life. Perhaps by my death I shall contribute to the breaking of the indifference of those who are able to save now. Maybe at the last moment...

ZIGELBOIM 10

Z. This is Zigelboim's farewell message to the world. "I pray the liberty of addressing to you my last words, and through you to the Polish Government and people, to the Governments and peoples of the Allied states, to the conscience of the world. From the latest information received from Poland it is evident that the Germans with full ruthless cruelty are now murdering the few remaining Jews in Poland behind the walls of the ghetto. The last act of a tragedy unprecedented in history is being performed. The responsibility for the crime of murdering all the Jewish population in Poland falls in the first instance on the perpetrators, but indirectly it also burdens the whole of humanity, the people of Governments of the Allied states which so far have made no effort towards the concrete action for the purpose of curtailing this crime. By passive observation of the murder of defenceless millions and maltreated children, women and men, these countries have become accomplices of the criminals. I have also to state that though the Polish Government has in a high degree contributed to affect the opinion of the world, yet it has done so insufficiently. I did not do anything that could correspond to the magnitude of the drama now being

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enacted in Poland. For nearly 3 and a half million Polish Jews and about 700 000 Jews deported to Poland from other countries, there lived in April of this year (according to official information of the head of the underground Bund organisation sent to us through the delegate of the Government) only about 300 000. Murder is still going on incessantly. I cannot be silent, and I cannot lie while the remnants of the Jewish people in Poland, of whom I am a representative, are perishing. My comrades in the Warsaw ghetto perished with their weapons in their hands, and their last heroic impulse. It was not my destiny to die as they did, together with them, but I belong to them and to their mass graves. By my death I wish to express my strongest protest against the inactivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people. I know how little a human life is worth today, but I was unable to do anything during my life; perhaps by my death I shall contribute to the breaking of the indifference of those who are able to save now, maybe at the last moment, the rest of the Polish Jews who are still alive from Certan and Hilesz(?). My life belongs to the Jewish people in Poland, and therefore I give it to them. I bid farewell to everybody and everything dear to me and loved by me. S.M. Zigelboim"

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ZIGELBOIM 11

Z. We had, in 1969, a family reunion here in Israel and my brother Abraham Zigelboim from Los Angeles looked into this book. Suddenly he yelled "Rivkele!". We went up and all recognised Rivkele, Artur's daughter. Exactly the date when she was murdered we don't know; it's mentioned Treblinka , it may not be Treblinka but there she is. In my opinion next to her with an open mouth is her mother. Of course, death has changed their appearance, but Rivkele is as if she was asleep.

(fin Zigelboim)