

**MAKSYMILIAN WOLFSTHAL COLLECTION, 1945-1952**  
**1992.129**

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Below is a translation of Maksymilian Wolfsthal's memoir:

Wolfsthal, Maksymilian  
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Several days ago I decided to write a memoir, beginning on June 6, 1941, one day before the outbreak of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union. I do this as a token of remembrance for the survivors of my family and for their children. Several years passed, as today is October 3, 1947, so although I will miss some details and dates I will try to be as accurate as possible. I write memory; today, after the 'war experience,' memory is not as 'orderly' as in the past.

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On June 21, 1941, at about 5:00 pm, our football team, "Dynamo," was ready to travel to Luck. During the time of Soviet rule I was working as a trainer for the sports club, the football team, and was the advertising director for the sports club. On this occasion I was chosen to lead our club for the game in Luck.

Traveling with our team was my personal friend, Dr. Herbert Goldyk, who worked as the official doctor of our club with me. He had worked as the official doctor of our club since the Soviet army arrived in Lvov (?) on September 22, 1939, and from the founding of our sports club three weeks later. We all gathered at the railroad station at 6:30 pm, planning to leave an hour later for Luck. We noticed that there was an unusual flow of traffic at the railroad station, and nobody could explain why there was such a rush. We entered the train and left for Luck. We slept comfortably in our rooms until about 3:30 am on June 22, when we were awoken by heavy bombardment. They first bombarded the Soviet military buildings occupied by the Soviet Army about four kilometers away from Luck, a place close to where we were staying for the night. We tried to go to Luck but the railroad station had been bombed and was heavily damaged. It was impossible to leave from the station. When we returned to the city we found out the news: War between Germany and the Soviet Union.

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We were all still together for an hour, but after a while the team divided and many members left on their own in different directions. Many reported to the military headquarters. Dr. Goldwyk, two eighteen-year-olds who were club members, and I decided to return to Lvov at any price because of family reasons. At 7:30 the four of us left for the road in the direction of Slojanowa, which was the shortest way, as it was only 150 kilometers to Lvov. Naturally we left the place in a hurry.

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Just about ten kilometers out of town we witnessed interesting scenes. We heard the sound of planes attacking the military air bases and saw Russian planes chasing the German bombardiers, which were shot down by the Germans.

The attacking German planes disappeared for a while but when they returned they set one of the two remaining Soviet planes on fire, from which one of the pilots parachuted to the ground. After walking another six kilometers we came across a mass of people walking, actually running, in the direction of the burning plane. We stopped for five or six minutes before continuing on our way.

The first day we didn't take any long rests, which was critically important, as we hoped to reach Stojanowa, 75 kilometers from Luck, before nightfall. This was the closest border-point between the Soviet and German positions. On our hurried march we

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reached the town of Schorok, about six kilometers from Stojanowa. We realized that we could not miss the opportunity to reach our destination or it would be too late.

We tried to stay informed all the time about how close we were to the frontier line and where the military units took up their positions. When we found out the German units already crossed the borders and were only 23 kilometers from Stojanowa, it was clear to us that we lacked enough time to take a rest. We passed by Schoroch (?), three kilometers from Chorechowa, and noticed disorganized Soviet army units dispersed on the fields. We did not know where we were or where to turn.

About two kilometers later we were stopped by a Soviet officer, who asked us who we were and where we were going. We told him we were going to Stojanowa. The officer said, "You are embarking into the devil's stamping ground."

We realized that it was too late to reach our goal and decided to return to Luck. There was no other safe road available. We rested in a small hotel in Chorodowic (?) for 4-5 hours. Again we rushed to the road. The doctor and I were very tired and exhausted. The two young lads with us decided to remain in Chorodowiec (?) and wait for the German units to enter the town. Then they would try to return to Lvov. We realized that since we were Jewish it would be impossible to follow the two young lads. We said goodbye to our young friends and continued on our way.

On our way back we noticed a mass of people, peasants, and farmers waiting for the arrival of the Germans. Their relations with us were cool and reserved, different from the greetings we received on our arrival in Luck several days ago. We realized that our return to Luck would not be pleasant. Our legs were swollen and it became very difficult and painful to continue walking. It was also very hot and the swelling on our legs was very distressing. We took off our shoes and the doctor gave me some bandages and medications. I was able to walk in pain another five kilometers, loaded with five pounds of medications and gifts we still carried with us to take for our friends and relatives in Luck. We did not see friends when we arrived in town Saturday night. It was a very hard return to Luck for both of us.

We found a peasant traveling in the direction of Luck who gave us a ride in the direction of Luck. We offered him some money for the ride but he refused to accept it so we gave him some sugar. He unloaded us five kilometers before reaching Luck. It was already dark, around 8:00 pm. I was exhausted and hardly able to move. We arrived in Luck in an hour and fifteen minutes, at around 10:00 pm. We were tired and needed a rest. When the doctor and I reached the town, we realized that it was not the same place we had left just two days ago. The town itself looked destroyed by bombings, and many of the buildings and I saw destroyed buildings in the center of town. It was hard to see the debt of the destruction because of the total darkness; there was no light to be seen. The bombs destroyed the houses and left big holes in the ground in the center of town. It was terribly dark and difficult to find the house of the people we wanted to reach. We walked in the direction of the home of the people we knew and remembered their address, as I had visited them on my earlier visits to Luck as a ballplayer before the war. It took us fifteen minutes to find the place, and we rested, however our minds were restless and preoccupied with one thought: How could we reach Lvov?

I left the doctor at the house and went out to an official government agency to find information on whether or not it was possible to return to Lvov and how we could do it. I was informed that Lvov is still in the hands of the Soviets and there was no way we could

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be offered transportation to the city. They could not offer me any help. I returned to the home. The people at the home treated us very nicely, prepared a shower for us, a cooked meal, and a bed to rest. At 5:00 am the next morning we left the friendly people at the home and left in the direction of Rowno, about sixty kilometers from Luck. After about thirty-one kilometers, an auto appeared on the road with Soviet passengers. I appealed them in Russian and they gave us a ride to Rowno. We arrived at about 4:00 pm and were able to find a place to rest and stay overnight. Leaving our baggage, we went out to find some information about the war situation: where to go, what to do, what is new on the front line? I knew the town very well but all the main sections were destroyed. All the roads and the main road to Russia were bombarded and military units and vehicles filled the streets. We weren't able to find any information or anyone to even speak to. All help on the road was only for the retreating military units. Everyone we asked a question to answered them with, "We don't know ourselves to do."

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Walking around for hours without results we returned to the apartment, without any decision as to what to do next. We spoke to the officer who gave us the ride to Rowno. He claimed that Lvov was still in the hands of the Soviets and that we could try to return to Lvov through the Dubna Road. He offered us a ride in the morning, in the direction of Kiev, if we so wished. He said that he would take us in the same automobile we had arrived in. At the first moment we did not know what to do and we could not decide. All we wanted was to return to our families. At 5:00 am we said goodbye to the Russian officer and went on the road. We marched for twenty minutes and having rested, it was not difficult to march. We reached the main, newly built, asphalt road.

The whole road was overtaken by Soviet army units, trucks, autos, and horse-and-wagons, all traveling in the direction of Rowno. We found a heavy truck going in the direction of Dubna. I raised my hand and asked them for a ride to Lvov. The commanding officer of the heavy loaded truck asked for my documents. I showed him the list of our sports team and that we traveled from Lvov to Luck for a sporting event. I told him, in Russian, that we had an official "Komandirovka" for the doctor and me. He said, "Enter! Sit down." We entered the truck. There were nineteen military personnel and one civilian on the truck. The doctor and I were happy that we found an opportunity to travel instead of walking. The auto was speeding and the officer in charge was urging the driver, "Faster! Faster!"

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We arrived in Dubna. The town was empty and there was not a living person to be seen. All we knew was that it was the fourth day of the war. We were stopped by a soldier on the outskirts of the town who told us, "You can't travel any further. One kilometer from here there is a forest road. Maybe you will be able to continue from there." He continued, saying, "The Germans are close-by, and they are confiscating all autos and transports on the road. The officers are being disarmed and arrested."

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The officer in charge of the auto decided to take the forest road. He personally wanted to make sure that the information about the Germans was true. He took several soldiers with him and took the forest road while we awaited his return. He came back and didn't say a word and just ordered the truck to return to Rowno in a hurry. Suddenly we heard screams: "Stop!" We all jumped off the auto. The Germans were shooting all the autos on the road. After a while the officer told us to return to the truck. The truck was speeding with all its power for the next six kilometers. At the seventh kilometer he heard shootings from machine rifles. We did not know what happened. It seemed that

our truck was hit and damaged. When I looked out the window I saw a terrible picture that's very hard to describe; two German soldiers, bloody faced with disheveled hair, lay close by the road. The officer in charge informed us that the Germans were already in the area.

There was no time to think before we heard a command in German: "Heraus von Wagen!" We all got out of the truck. The soldiers all looked so wild and excited, like after having been given injections. They did not wear uniforms, just short-sleeved shirts. They ordered us to stand in a line. Our officer did not realize what was happening. We heard they called their commander, "Herr Feldvebel (?)." We did not understand what was happening.

We understood that the "Herr Feldvebel" decided to shoot us all for killing the two soldiers we saw by the road. He started shooting, one by one. When he reached me I dropped to the ground, waiting for what would happen next. It seemed that his rifle did not have enough bullets to continue the shootings. After a minute or two I heard a command: "Fertig! Gehma weiter!"

I didn't have the guts to move. After five minutes I raised my head. There was no one to be seen. The truck we traveled in was parked on the road. I tried to get up but I could not move my leg, it was bleeding. I got scared but remembered that in the truck I had been carrying our doctor's bag which was full of medicaments. I dragged myself to the auto, took the bag of medical supplies, and threw it out from the truck onto the ground. I took cotton from the bag, I didn't know what else to do because I was still bleeding profoundly. After searching among the medicine tubes for a while I found bandages. I covered my left leg, which had been hit by bullets while I was lying on the ground as the Germans continued shooting. After I was able to stop the bleeding I dragged myself away from the auto and the corpses of the soldiers massacred by the "Feldvebel." One of the shot soldiers got up and told me that he was going to one of the nearby houses, but I did not follow him. I went to a nearby cornfield. When I started walking in the direction of the fields it was only then I realized what happened to me and what I had just witnessed a while ago.

I found a place on the ground between the lines of the corn field. I was still bleeding. I must have lain there two days and two nights without seeing a living soul. One evening I noticed a woman coming out from the field house about ninety or a hundred meters away. I was very thirsty and also very weak from the loss of blood. "I'm not hungry," I started screaming. "Water! Water!"

It was almost dark and I did not know if she heard my voice. But she did. She brought me some water and I drank it to the last drop. I gave her back the empty bottle and asked her for some more water. I kept thanking her for helping me. I followed her to the field house and rested, where she left me alone. Late that evening I finally fell asleep, exhausted and tired.

I woke up at 5 am and felt very cold from the cool morning air. I was lying on the ground all day. There was not a soul to be seen and no soldiers on the road. I didn't know what to think or what to do. In the evening the same woman came again. She brought me water and a piece of bread. I don't know why but I was not hungry at all. I was very disturbed by the total silence surrounding me. I asked the woman, "What is happening? What is new on the frontier? Where are the Germans?" She said that she

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did not know anything. Maybe she was too scared to say anything. I myself wasn't brave enough to ask any more questions.

The following night was very painful for me. I wasn't able to find a place to rest, everything was hurting me, and I was itching all over my body, moving from side to side, place to place. Nothing helped. Suddenly, past midnight (I wasn't able to read the time on my watch because of the total darkness), I heard noises on the road. I heard loud voices speaking German and realized that the German army units had arrived. An hour later I heard loud screaming coming from the road. I also heard the sound of motors, vehicles, and transport trucks. It seemed that there were Soviet prisoners, guarded by the Germans, marching on the road. At daylight I was able to see what was happening clearly. Lines of German military units marched on the road. I was still lying in the corn field, dirty, hungry, and exhausted. I remembered that in my travel bag I had some clean shirts. The shirt I was wearing was dirty and bloody. I changed into my football jersey and fell asleep.

After some time, a German soldier awakened me. I was very scared but I noticed he was wearing a Red Cross armband. He asked me, "Was machst du da? (What are you doing here?)" I showed him my wounded leg and told him that I was wounded on the road. He looked at my wound and said, "Sorry, I have no time to care for civilians." He turned around and left. I now realized that the Germans were here and they were marching to the East, in the direction of Rowno. ]

I came back home and thought about the whole event, the facts of the air and thought the worst. A few days later I heard from people in the ghetto that 31 people were taken for interrogation and there were those in the prison who knew Pelc. I thought that \_\_\_\_\_ witness, they did not come back and no one knows what happened with them. A few days later Henck was by us; that was the Saturday we were supposed to play piano at a party of one of the worst murderers. He was concerned about going there and started to complain that he was not feeling well. At first I did not pay attention but then he said he could not stand on his feet and was very weak.

We did not know what to do. It was an unpleasant story, and either way it was bad. By 7:30 when he said he had to leave at 7:30 he could not stand on his feet. Although we were not allowed, we decided to let him stay with us for the night. In the morning he was taken back to the ghetto. The next day we learned that it was a strong case of typhus. I visited him to see what condition he was in but I could not speak with him because the doctors did not let me into the room. I saw him after a few days because I did not like then to go to the ghetto. This explains the difficulties of entering and leaving the ghetto. I went into town only when I badly needed to because I was not allowed to go without an armband and with an armband one did not see Jews. This was the end of April 1943. I did not like to stay home because that did not give me \_\_\_\_\_. I was concerned that Schneider told me that if I am needed I will be called. If I am not called then a notice would be left for me to come.

So it happened. A Volksdeutsche in civilian clothing came and asked about me. My wife told him I was not home. He left a notice that when I got back I had to immediately report to Schneider at the prison. My wife contacted me to inform me to come home because someone came for me.

When I came back it was a terrible situation. If I did not report they would come for my wife and two sons, and if I report there was almost hope to find out anything from

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Schneider because cousin Zleniyk was in the hospital and he was my only possible contact.

I decided that I had to report because that was the only way out. I could not put three people in danger. I told my wife that if I did not come back until the evening she should go to Schneider's home and ask his wife to communicate with her husband and information of what happened with me.

My situation was terrible and the same I had gone through two weeks ago but in a worse condition because I did not have Henry by me and did not know what to think of Schneider.

When the gate opened I got goosebumps but had no way out, this is the way it has to be. Schneider welcomed me and passed me on to interrogation on the second floor, the same as before, all in civilian clothing, and started to ask me again about Pelc. Did I go somewhere with Pelc? Did he tell me about what was going on in prison? Did I know that he was in contact with some Jews? I realized that they knew everything... some questions about Mrs. Rauchenberg. It was common in prison that during interrogation people were beaten and in that way they got information. Since I knew that, I answered with only the truth because I realized what this could lead to. I also realized the truth would lead to my end. During interrogation one of the men went downstairs. I did not know why and only when he came back in did I hear the word "No," that Schneider did not get permission to beat me. He knew that if they could start after a few hours there would be no one to talk. These three men were three various types: one was nervous and only asked 80% of the questions and ran to Schneider, the other one completely calm and asked questions from time to time and behaved like an employee, and the third nothing seemed to interest at all; all he did was walk around the room, that's it.

I did not know what would come out of all this but as the evening approached I became nervous and was right. Around 8 pm I was taken downstairs, not to Schneider but to a cell. There were about eight to ten people in there, and I did not know anyone. There was no light, no place to lay down, and the conditions were terrible.

I sat the whole night with terrible thoughts: What will happen? How was everyone at home? Maybe they were taken from home? I did not believe I would ever get out knowing the conditions. When morning came people started to ask what I was brought in for.

In the cell I saw there were not only Jews, but I tried to answer as little as possible because I did not know what that meant and who these people were. In the morning they gave coffee but not to me because I did not know that one had to go to the window. My thoughts were elsewhere. People fought for water. At 8 am the door opened to take roll call. I was taken out and taken back to the same room as yesterday for some questioning. The interpreter asked if I knew what the golden dollars were and if I knew where one could get some. I realized what it was all about because I had given Pelc two golden twenty dollar coins that were given to me by Mrs. Rauchenberg's husband, who before the war was an engineer and now was a policeman in a ghetto. He was an honest man and wanted to thank Pelc for what he did for his wife. They found the money during the control of the apartment. I answered that once can get in Livouros as many as one gets on the black market.

So he asked me what the punishment was for keeping foreign currency. I answered that there was a notice that no foreign currency could be bought or sold. He ran

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to me and asked me if I had ever seen the coin or if I knew what it was. I answered no because I did not know what it was. He ran down a couple of times and did not get permission to hit me. So the whole day went by. He took me back to my cell only in the evening. Before I was taken back to my cell I went to Schneider's office, and he asked me only if I was telling the truth. He also asked if I had eaten. When I said no he sent out for some food for me. I ate and was taken back to the cell. Among the people who I left in the morning was a certain Janek Scherc, whom I knew from before the war and knew had some contacts with the police. I did not speak with him. I knew the situation and was scared of anyone having contact with the Germans.

About an hour later he came to me and told me he was arrested a day earlier and did not know why. From time to time he asked about my situation, why I am sitting, how long I was very careful. One could not trust anyone. There was some schedule; breakfast then [redacted] then further interrogation. There was some but this time they brought in another person that I never saw. He asked me if I knew him. I said of course not. Then all three started to laugh. One came close to me and asked, "What, do you not know him?" I said, "No I do not." The man was taken away. I was asked if I had left some money at home. I answered that I left my wife 2000 zlotys, 4?, 500 gold? "Do you have any other currency at home? You have to tell the truth. If not, you know what awaits you." "No, besides that I have nothing."

I was brought back to my cell. No one asked questions, only Scherc was interested but I told him only what I wanted. During the conversation he told me, "Do not worry, you will get out." I believed the contrary. Another night went by and I was again taken for further questioning. There was nothing new.

Around 12 they brought in Pelc. It was hard to describe the impression that made on me. He was not the same person: he looked terrible, exhausted, and broken. When one of the men said that maybe I also didn't know this person I responded that he was Pelc. They took him out. This time they did not keep me long. After a half hour they brought me back to my cell and I realized that Scherc was not there. After ten to fifteen minutes, one of the interrogators comes in, the one that was most nervous during interrogations, and he calls me out and tells me to take all my things because I am going back home.

For the first minute I did not believe it, but when he repeated it I got my coat and got ready to go. He took me to Schneider's office where I was given a pass to leave. Saying goodbye, Schneider mentioned that he kept his promise that if I did not lie even if it was not to my advantage I would be let go. That was why I was free.

The same Gestapo man that called me out of the cell took me out. When I was going out he shook my hand and wished me good luck. I immediately went home, which took about ten minutes. My wife was not at home, she was at a neighbor's. One cannot imagine the joy, one cannot describe on paper that joy and contentment mixed with tears. It's hard to describe.

For me it was understandable but for people who do not know of these conditions in which one lived one cannot comprehend these situations. I took a bath, all the clothing was marked with dead lice. All the cells were infested with lice. Not only did I have to wash the clothes but I trashed them because it was the best solution. Then I learned about what had happened after I left. My wife followed my directions exactly. She got dressed and with Mrs. Fedakovic (she was afraid to go alone) she went to Schneider's home. She



knocked and saw his wife who welcomed her nicely. When she told her that she was my wife, with tears she helped her to contact her husband and learn what had happened to me. I do not know what touched her, maybe because of Henck who was in the hospital. She connected with her husband who was in the jail and asked what had become of me. She told my wife that all would be well to go back home.

At home I learned that on the second day that three Gestapo men came, those who interrogated me. They turned the whole apartment upside down, probably looking for foreign currency. They did not find anything except the 2000 zlotys that I had mentioned. They asked for the keys to the apartment belonging to Soerge, a German who lived there. My wife answered that she does not have the key to his apt. In reality we did have the key but only opened it if necessary because we did not \_\_\_ and had no need to go there. But they heard from Rauchenberg that we had keys because she said that she had slept there. I was under the impressions that they were looking for the keys and it would have been a disaster if they had found them. The keys were in the kitchen where the wood was kept. They did not find them.

As they were leaving the wife asked if the husband would come home (she called him Mr. Hoffman). He was surprised that she knew his name. She said that her husband had mentioned it to her when he was arrested the first time.

After a few days when I went to town to get some information and see how Henck was doing I learned that Scherc worked for the Gestapo and that was his visit to the cell. Henck was in the hospital and was in terrible condition but I had no choice. I came to him often and brought him what was needed from outside the ghetto.

This went on for quite a long time. He was in the hospital for six weeks and during that time the Gestapo selected people because that was the system. They were sending the very sick people out. Henck was selected once, but nothing happened. He got better and after a while he left the hospital. During that time the situation in the ghetto changed. They were taking people that they needed to the camp, specialists, qualified people, including my brother. They also worked and lived in the prison.

The same thing happened to Henck when he was taken to the camp as a piano player. I'm not sure I mentioned that such an orchestra existed in the Janowski camp, composed of the best musicians from Lvov. At that time I lost all contact with our people, some people I saw and only seldom. That was at the end of April. One day around 11 AM someone rang the bell. My wife opened the door, and in came a man with civilian clothing who asked about me. When I heard that he spoke German I came into the hall and saw that it was Sperch. I got nervous but he calmed me down and said, "All is well. I have good news for you. I got documents from Berlin that say you are certified as a foreign citizen (Palestine) under English occupation. Come to the office tomorrow and I will give you new papers." And so it was. The next day I got my papers as a Palestinian citizen with all the rights of a Palestinian citizen. I could move freely in the city without an armband but I did not take advantage of that because I was afraid of people. I had too many non-Jewish acquaintances and that was a little unsafe.

In describing events with foreign citizens, I recall one about a woman who had something to do with a German. Spech picked her up and took her to extermination. He gave out the order that Louderling (?) and I had to move to Leon. Foreign citizens lived on Saprech St. Within two days we were in the house where we lived in one room. It was very tight and many, about 176, people lived there. Downstairs was a German

security (Schutzpolizei). One could leave the building but one had to report when they left to go to work. I did not like this change and was afraid of this concentration because it was dangerous but I had no choice in the matter.

We only had [redacted] news about the ghetto and the Jews, only that many were taken to camp Janowski. It was also certain that Tigra, also a Palestinian citizen, had a sister in the ghetto, and wanted to help her or provide foreign citizenship by having her marry and/or a husband to take her to the house where we lived. He spoke with me a few times because he knew that Sperch could help me if somebody could be found. He had a couple of people but not with valid passports. He always mentioned two names, one suitable with an original passport and one with an invalid one. He succeeded. The sister and that man were together in our building. Another man that Tigra mentioned was Müller who had a Polish passport with a permit to leave for Palestine. But this was in May 1943 and the permit was for 1939. There were conversations of how to help and what steps there were to take to bring anyone to the building where we were interned (Gina Hilferding).

The situation for us Jews was catastrophic and everyone tried to do something to help themselves although in reality no one knew what was good. Müller accepted my suggestion but he had little money and knew that the Germans would do nothing without payment.

I promised to speak with Sperch. I waited until he came to the block where we lived. When he came I spoke with him and lied to him. I told him that it was a married couple. He did not give me a concrete answer but said he would like to see the passport and at first opportunity I gave it to him and arranged a marriage certificate. After a few days he had Müller go to his office and certified the documents. It was a terrible time in the ghetto. One was not allowed on the street because it was dangerous but Müller had no choice; on that day he had to go. One tried to be far from any concentration of people. Some looked for places by acquaintances while others got Aryan papers and went out of town in order to hide in a new place. Müller thought that it might be better. The whole day he ran from place to place in order to have all the papers in order. He did it all and the next day took Gina Hilferding with him and they moved to that block to an available apartment. From that building we went out. Most people just went out to buy supplies or take care of something. We had freedom but under strict supervision.

One day I went out with the children to buy something [redacted] from the streetcar (Jews were not allowed to use the streetcar) but we were not wearing armbands. A Ukrainian policeman that I knew from before the war asked me what I was doing on the streetcar. He stopped the streetcar and ordered me to get out.

I held the youngest son Josie by the hand and the older one, Leon, acted as if he did not belong to us and only wanted to see what would happen. When the policeman asked me what right I had to use the streetcar. I told him I had foreign papers respected by German authorities and had the right to be in the Aryan area and use the streetcar. He laughed and said he knew who I was and asked for my documents. I refused. I knew that if I gave them to him he would tear them up and do what he wanted with me. He took me to the police and the eldest son saw all this. He went to our building. The German who was on duty at the building got on his motorcycle and went to the police station.

In the meantime we were already in the police station. The police requested documents and I presented them to him, showing that I was allowed to live on the Aryan

side. He did not question me and allowed me to leave the police station and return home. When I was ready to leave a German came in who was stationed in the station (police building) and asked who brought me in, for what reason, and how I had those papers issued by German authorities. When the men who brought them in came to the room the chief hit him strongly across the face and brought us back home. Those were the times and every moment was dangerous. If I had given the documents written in German and he could not read German, it would have been different after. [He continues describing the circumstances.]

A few days later I learned that all the workers from the ghetto prison were taken to camp Janowski. Some thing was coming, and so it was in May 1943. In the morning I learned that the ghetto was closed and surrounded and one could not leave and that the ghetto was burning. Fire was set all over and those who tried to escape in some way were shot on the spot. It was a terrible panic even in town. People went to see it with their own eyes and could not believe what they saw. Such was the end of the ghetto. Houses and people were leveled with ground. In camp Janowski were not Jews but workers (specialists) who were separated. The camp was getting smaller. Transports were regularly sent to Belzec where they were sent to the crematorium to be burned.

Among the specialists was my brother Salomon, with whom I lost contact. For six to eight days people spoke about it. People were told not to believe events and many people felt sorry for the Jews. We stayed at home and almost did not go out. Life became terrible, unsure, and monotonous. We were concerned that one day a truck would come and that something would happen to us. I regret not having taken up with Stanislaw \_\_\_\_\_, who offered me a hiding place.

Such were the conditions until July 5, 1943, when Sperch came to the building and told us all to go down to the court. He had something important to say and no one knew what it was it meant and why he did that. Then he announced that we all had to get ready to leave with our suitcases and that one could take whatever they could, that we were going on to a transit camp and from there we were going for exchange to Switzerland. No one knew whether or not it was the truth. Before he left I approached him and asking what all this was. He answered that according to him, it was the best option for us. The situation for the 178 people was terrible. There was a panic. We had two days to think. We could not endanger others. Various ideas, thoughts, and options crossed my mind. I did not believe the Germans thought all of this looked so good and I had no trust.

Those two days were horrible. We were parking and went from apartment to apartment to hear all the news but one could not figure out anything concrete. There was no solution. A German came at 6 AM Monday morning, July 7, 1943, and gave the order that we all had to go down to the courtyard. We had four suitcases. There was a conversation with Waldemar Soergl (?) who said that we were going on exchange to Palestine. When we were downstairs Schneider came, who I knew. I saw him and got scared (dark in my eyes). I knew who he was and realized that this was not good. Before he started reading a list he said that he was in charge of the group that was leaving and that all questions should be addressed to him.

He called our names and checked if we were all present. Those called had to go to one side and were separated from those who were not yet called. After the list was read we all had to go to the street and be pair by pair. We did not see trucks and could

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diary #2

not figure out what that meant. We were given the order to walk. I understood why. They did not want us to take too many things. Before we left a truck arrived to take a portion of the things. That looked terrible. In the group were old and young people and some left luggage on the street.

The neighbors (non-Jews) stood on the street and looked on. We were taken to the main railroad station some 200 meters from the main entrance where a passenger train waited for us. After they gave out orders they assigned seats to families, and so we were given a compartment and added two more people (Müller and his wife). It was comfortable because the compartment was for eight people.

We did not know where we were going and whether it was good or bad. One got exhausted with the uncertainty and that was the worst. After a few hours the train was connected to another one and moved towards Lvov (the east). I knew in which direction we were going because I know the area. I knew we were going towards Pzemysl. After an hour the Gestapo men distributed packages with food and gave out individually boxed packages for each person. At the time that was not important and had no significance. After two hours we were in Pzemysl where the train stopped for ten to fifteen minutes. I could not understand all of this. In complete freedom we could get off the train and even go by the station. No one guarded us, there were only two SS and Schneider. They only watched that no one should be left behind because one did not know how long the train would stay in the station. People were called back and then the train moved on Schneider's signal and also stopped on his orders.

On the Pzemysl-Krakow route Schneider went through the whole train and checked how people were \_\_\_\_\_. He asked how I felt when he opened the compartment door. He asked about everything and said that if I needed anything to ask him personally. This was a big surprise to be but I accepted everything as it went and did not want to think.

In the train one could walk freely, there was no control. One spoke about everything but no one knew anything concrete. After 24 hours we arrived in Krakow where the train was put on a side track by the main station where Schneider announced that we're stopping for a long time and not to go away from the train because if one goes too far they might not come back in time. The trip was relatively comfortable but hygienic conditions were not good and I started looking for a place to wash. I saw Schneider who was standing half-dressed by a faucet and was washing himself. When he noticed me he called to me to wash together with him so I did and on the way to the train I spoke with him about nothing special because I was scared. When we came to the train I asked if we would be there long and he answered probably the whole day because he is waiting for further orders.

In the train we got very poor food and we were thinking what could be done to provide some food to further travel with because we did not know how long we would be traveling. I had the idea that I would ask Schneider for permission to go to town. I knew Krakow and believed I could do something. I asked for permission and understood that I could not go alone because I had no documents which was dangerous. After a minute Schneider said to get ready because he would get someone to accompany me. I asked people on the train if they needed something because it was possible that I would go to town. They all asked to bring something good to eat, especially for the children. After about an hour came an SS who said he would go with me. I took Müller with me to help

me carry. We took a horse drawn carriage and asked where one could buy something to eat. We spoke freely with the driver. The German did not understand Polish. He said he would take us to where we could buy what we wanted. We went to the rynek (main square in Krakow) where there were many people and much to buy but at very high prices. This was a black market. When they saw the SS man stay they started dispersing because they were scared he would take everything from them so the driver was told to stay on the corner while Müller and I would buy products and bring them to the carriage. And so it was. I bought ham, cold butts, bread, cakes, some fruits. When I got back to the train station I thanked Schneider and the SS man. The food was distributed among the people and for us.

There were about 30 children in our group and they got first. So we sat the whole day and learned that we would probably leave at night because it was checked if all the people were on the train. At night we moved and went through Katowice, on the Polish-German border, and we were very surprised because we knew that usually from the west one did not go to German territories, only to camps in Poland. The train had no schedule. It stood outside stations. One could go out for ten to fifteen minutes for water or to buy something but one could no go away from the train. So we went through all of Germany for six days by Berlin and Hanover.

On July 13, 1943, we arrived at a destination on a side track and waited for orders. The train was detached. We could move and even go outside the train station but we were not very interested. There were only Germans around us and I believe they knew we were Jews but were very kind to us. We got coffee and Schneider got us food and six to seven hours went by,

Around two o'clock there was an order that the train was moving. I realized that Schneider was not there, only a Gestapo man. I did not know what that meant. After a half hour the train stopped and I got scared. People were rushed out from the train and loaded onto trucks. After checking their names the trucks were closed not knowing where they were going. When I saw this I understood that it wasn't good. I saw "Bergen-Belsen" on the train station. The truck started and stopped after about a half hour. The door opened and we all went out. We saw this was not good. The Gestapo was not nice to us. After a half hour they started calling out names and separating babies with women and children under ten together and men with boys above ten together. I was not happy with this situation because I realized what this meant. Patiently we waited for further orders. When the separation finished one man took the women and one the men and we were taken to the barracks where we were assigned beds. But that was not important.

I was with my son Lonek and we got beds not far from the window and did what we could to make sleeping comfortable. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire and we could see German guards. There were six to eight barracks with about 120 people in each but in ours there were no strangers, only people from the Lvov group. I went out to see what was all around me. Between our barracks was one empty one around empty space, then barracks guarded by barbed wire. When I went out I met other people from Poland who arrived two weeks earlier and told how that happened. Earlier in Warsaw there was an announcement that if anyone had family or friends in foreign countries to register and those could go to transit camps and then would be exchanged for German citizens who lived outside of Germany. In reality it was not like that. When they

registered they were immediately asked how much they could pay to be on the list. Most of the people had money and did know what to do. The people and conditions of registration in Warsaw and how the Germans did it was that they wrote down names and when the reservation was confirmed they were given out names that they had to use from then on. What kind of names depended on what kind of family they were and the papers were sent out. They also had a lesson to learn the first names of family members and how many there were because the number of registered families was very large (25-30 people) and in case they had to answer questions they would be able to answer properly. This is a little complicated.

About 85-90 people passports were issued for were killed and the German authorities wanted to show partial proof that these people existed because among these people were well-known personalities and organized in this hotel a group that was taking care of that and these were the people who were in the Bergen-Belsen camp two weeks before us as an exchanged group.

There were about 1700-1800 people and between them maybe 50-60 had documents on their real names. In that group I found a few people from Lvov who knew me and told me how it happened that they were in the camp. No one knew why they brought us here or for what purpose. There were various theories. I did not have much trust to it and it was never good.

When one was put in a group they knew that usually such a group was "finished" or killed after a certain time but we could not do anything, it was too late. There was always some hope that it would change for the better. In the evening they gave us a sign to send someone to the gate. Two or four people from each barrack would pick up containers for the whole barrack.

When we got the first soup we saw what it would be. There was no taste but the group had some food supplies and were not underwashed so they barely touched the soup. They were sent from the outside from where the kitchen workers were and they took them away.

I did not sleep the whole night and the fact that we were in such a terrible situation did not give me peace. The next morning four people went for the coffee again. It was black water with no taste. Some drank it and some did not. We discovered that on the other side of camp there was a door to another part of the camp where our families and the Warsaw group were. We communicated with them and spent the whole day with them because the men had to go back to the barracks for the night. The gate was closed and the Gestapo came at nine in the evening to close the gate with a key. There was also an order that one cannot be in the women's barracks and if found they would be punished.

Sanitary and hygienic conditions were terrible. There was no washroom in our barrack, only a spigot outside where we all washed. Toilets were located about 250 meters away on the other side of the courtyard, closer to the other barracks. We had nothing to do the whole day and were free to move around. So it was without changing for five or six days until another small group arrived from Krakow, Poland, under the same conditions. They were put in the newly built barrack next to us. In those first days people were not eating the food and buckets full of food stood that very few took because it was below criticism. We got 25 grams of bread a day and the children got dairy soup three times a week. Each barrack had to nominate a head and helper to get food rations

and for keeping order and cleaning. Ours were named Sanderling from Bielsk (he later lived in Lvov). Because he registered he found himself in the same situation with his wife and two children. After a few days he got acquainted with other people and learned about the people from Warsaw who were together and lived in another barrack. The Germans designated one from that group to be the head of about 1800 people. Much was talked about but I had no contact with them because I did not know anyone from Warsaw. But it is a fact that they had huge amounts of moneys and various foreign currencies and were saying that the commandant (named Pavel) had about \$100,000 with him and saw how they were playing (gambling) in the barrack with high amounts.

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diary 2

In the group registered in Warsaw were many young people who had taken part in the Warsaw uprising and then had nothing to do with themselves so they registered because they thought this was a way to get out of the situation that existed after the uprising, where a small group of Jews remained and did not know what to do with themselves because the conditions were terrible. Jews in Warsaw were almost not there because of the 500,000 Jews who lived in the ghetto very few remained. Those that remained were either given up by Poles or blackmailed in a terrible way.

An interesting group was the Palestinian group, young men and girls who took part in the uprising and disliked those that organized the trip to Bergen-Belsen because they knew who they were in Warsaw when they were in the ghetto. I met a man who was part of the Maccabi in Warsaw. Pavel did things in the ghetto. We spoke about everything and he told me much about the conditions in Warsaw and about some people.

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diary 2

About three and a half to four weeks later came the order that all of us had to be ready for a roll call and that names would be called out. Those that were called received special instructions. It took a whole day. One group was 700 people and another group had 1100.

My family and I together were among the group of 700 and were told to go back to our places and wait for further orders. There were rumors that the larger group was going to another camp for unknown reasons. No one knew what was better or worse. Orders came for them to be ready with their luggage and that trucks would come for them. No one knew what was happening and there were all kinds of rumors that the groups who went were in for something better and we had to remain in the same conditions. Some wanted to exchange but it did not come to that. I spoke with Pavel who admitted that he had \$16,000-20,000 with him and was alone and did not trust anyone. He said that since I was going with my family he trusted me and that I could have what I wanted. He did not believe that the other group was going for the better and thought that he would not need the money, that I might need it instead. I thanked him and although we had very little money I did not want to take advantage of the situation.

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diary 2

The trucks started to arrive at around two in the morning. People were loaded and it went on until five in the morning. No one knew the next destination, not even the Germans. I said goodbye to Pavel and returned to my barrack.

Maks Wolfsthal

62

Various ideas crossed my mind when I went to bed. Maybe I am going to a better place, but did not trust what we were told especially because in this group were all those who had organized the departure from Warsaw. The habit of the Germans was to get rid of those who had helped them in order not to leave any witness, nothing was concrete(?)

Next morning the camp was almost empty. From our group no one was taken. That calmed us some because we knew that those organized in Warsaw were on foreign papers.

Continues describing their situation, who had which name – all those were left. In the morning we tried to get over to the women's side – the only talk was about the terrible night – thinking about events, what will happen – about food.

63

About children eating what was available. So went by two weeks then came a Obersharfichen (?) and gave order that each person will be called to office in order to check all data for special purpose. No one knew what that meant – each change brought nervous reaction, what did it mean? Describes concerns and discussions. Some were on false names and were concerned that they could not know answers to questions. Those with their own names had no problems. About 176 people.

64, 65

Describes how "families" were formed; e.g., a bachelor was put together with a woman and she was considered his wife. This control lasted about two weeks, 1800 people were called as families to office, checked names, some questions nothing new or special.

My family went through this also without any changes. About two days later, we were told to form a line, 3 persons in a row, by the entrance gate and have to go to the bath (shower). I did not like this very much, did not trust the Germans and was concerned that this was something else, but no way out.

At 7 in the morning started the formation. Men and women separate to go among the first but all had to go. After an hour, the situation became clearer when we saw the first group coming back. This was a warm common bath where one could wash. When we went into the bath, saw through barbed wire Russian soldiers; could not understand what that meant. Tried to speak with them to get some information and when one came close to the fence, I learned that that was a huge camp of (?) prisoners, about 100,000 people; many died. Various camps in Bergen-Belsen, not only Jews, German, American, English and others. To this bath we went every week or two on Tuesdays, the day dedicated to our group.



From the 1800 people remained 700, many from them 250 Palestinian and about 450 of various nationalities from South and North America. After two weeks, order that we are moving to other barracks – fast need to pack, take mattresses and blankets. Hard to describe this move when Germans told us which barracks are ours – how to make sure which way to go, to choose the best place with some light. Two barracks were given to our group. I had a place with older son and younger son Juzek (Joseph) was with his mother in this group. I knew all and found people with whom I even got closer.

66

After two days at night could hear not for (?) some noises not from our barracks. Went out with Zvi Gatowiejczyk to see what was going on. Saw that clothing from people were being unloaded, but Gatowiejczyk who had survived the ghetto uprising explained that those were clothing of people who were exterminated.

In these barracks, we were about two months and conditions got progressively worse – got less food, much worse than at the beginning. Each morning was a roll call – had to go before the barrack came a Gestapo man to see if all were present. The head of camp was a certain Haas (?) We did not see him at the beginning but later saw him every day. He came through before noon and went through the main road that divided the camp in two parts.

67, 68

The worst was that winter was approaching, many rains, conditions hard and people started to get sick.

Camp had a hospital. Our group was in a little better condition because we had medicines that we got from the Germans before we left for the camp and we had some doctors among us so they took care of us not to make mistakes with medicines. Dr. Schineger (?) was in charge who was in our barrack. We had also a woman doctor dentist and since there were not many of those the Germans took her to the hospital where she received our people, but only when given permission. We were taken care of, but only for a time. Typhus started to show up and spread to our barracks. One of the first who got it was younger son Jorek. Took him to the hospital and since mother did not want to leave him alone, she slept with him the whole time of his sickness. I came every day if I could. He got better and came back to barrack. Theyer from Przemysl whom I knew from before got a heart attack and died, leaving his wife Thela Lowenthal together with daughter in a very hard condition because it was hard for a woman to fight for every little thing. Also there was the wife of Rebhan from Przemysl whose family I knew. I was friends with her brother Leon Rebhan. She was with her daughter, about 16 years old, who worked as a nurse in the hospital.

Again after two months came an order that we have to change barracks and we were moved quiet for almost by a forest to a large barrack. Hard to describe – two people per bed, all together men and women – conditions did not change but as long as we went to the bath, one could still function, but sanitary conditions got worse from day to day – almost impossible. In these barracks were two groups, one Hungarians, quite large, and the other Dutch that just arrived in Bergen-Belsen. Hungarians about 4000 who were also new in camp. One part was separated about 1200 people. Rumors that is an

exchange group and that they are going to Switzerland, very rich and bribed the Germans. Special people took care of them. According to them, they were scheduled to leave in 2-3 weeks.

69, 70, 71

In this group were various people, not only Hungarian, but from other countries – communicated in various fashion to get some information. In this group were many pious people from various rabbinical families, among them two rabbis, and made arrangements that if they were leaving, they would take with them lists of names from our (?) group to the committee in Switzerland to let them know that a group of people with foreign nationalities were in Bergen-Belsen and in what condition. I do not know exactly but Rabbi Spira put together that list – on separate pieces of paper glued to prayer book, about 120 people who still lived. That group left one day to be exchanged, so it was said, with special Gestapo people. At that time, our conditions were terrible. To go to kitchen, we had to go through Hungarian barrack.

The Dutch who arrived last were well dressed and did not realize where they were because before leaving, they were told by Germans that they were going to a camp where they will work in their professions and (?) with them what they have in their possession and so it was, they took huge amounts of diamonds and were wonderfully dressed were mostly people from the diamond industry and believed the Germans but soon saw that all that was promised is not true. One could not find out what was true and what was not. After a short time, started selling diamonds for bread – had large amounts.

I made an exchange with them because I needed pants for my sons and they had quantities of things with them, and for two pieces of bread, I bought for them pants. Hard to believe how fast this group of Dutch got smaller. They were not prepared and could not survive those conditions and shortly fell like flies and almost no one survived. Situation became hopeless, more people got sick, it looked terrible, bodies were being picked up and were taken away. At this point, we saw what was happening. We saw that this was a camp of extermination (of ending), that situation is hopeless, but is always hoping. It was also known that behind the forest were (?) ovens where are finished those who fell down. There was no other way for so many people to die. There was no need to use other means.

The worst was that we did not know what was going on in the world, when by miracle, we got a newspaper. It was 6-8 weeks old, so was not without value, but we knew that the Soviets are moving forward to the west. From time to time, we saw huge amounts of planes over flying the camp, going east. During that time arrived a group of about 10,000 people, young, healthy, mostly Polish, who were put on the other side of the main road. We had no contact with them; too far and dangerous to communicate. We only had information through people in the kitchen when we went to pick up the soup for the camp.

Describes the terrible food.

Each week another different person was appointed to distribute the food. Each person was given a cup and if something was left over, it was given out alphabetically and the next day some process with the next letter – out of hunger people were fighting.

72

Gives examples of people's behavior in order to get some food.

Writes again that in the Dutch group, people were dying like flies not to believe, they were relatively a short time in camp, a few short months while we were already 18 months. The worst part was the hygienic conditions from which I was the most scared. In these conditions sicknesses were catastrophic and by us more and more people were getting sick. All were losing strength and control over our self. We heard that in other barracks, typhus broke out and that was very contagious. We did not know what to do.

We had to go through the Hungarian barracks to go to the kitchen and there were already cases in their barrack. With us was a young boy from Warsaw, Szczupak (? Name). He held on to me and we spent the whole day together. I thought how to get from kitchen row vegetables that were brought there.

Describes what was used in the soup that they got.

73

This Szczupak, who in our barrack was called Florek, the whole time thought how at night one could go and get some supplies, but after a few days, we saw between the kitchen and the barracks, he lays dead.

?? The rest is about the Gestapo and the guard and the light. Hunger knows no borders

End.