

**BIERZONSKI FAMILY PAPERS, 1930-1945**  
**2004.605.2**

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Below is a translation of Gerda Bikales' diary:

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY GERDA BIKALES (nee BIERZONSKI)

My diary, kept in Switzerland, between 15 July 1944 and 7 December 1944

During part of my stay at the *Pensionnat Marta Marcus*, Oarens-sur-Montreux

Title Page

My Daily Memoirs

(Started in Clarens, at *Pensionnat Marcus*)

Notebook #1

Diary Entries

Saturday, 15 July 44, 10:20pm

It is to you, my little notebook, that from now on I want to confide all my hurts, my secrets. I want to consider you the best of friends, my confidant, it is from you that I will seek advice. You will advise me, and, I hope, encourage me when that is needed.

Today, school vacation started. I don't know if I should be happy about it or cry. Oh, no, one should not cry, it is better to be happy. Furthermore, I received a postcard from Mother. She writes that she has prepared jam and a kitten for me. Nevertheless, I am worried, Srulke didn't write to me. And I also broke a dish!

Sunday, 16 July 44, 7:55pm

I am full of anger... Bobbi, Gerti, Ruth Lande, Edith, Joan Lunzer, and I went on an excursion to Caux. When we returned, Mademoiselle (abbreviated Mlle) received us with a "saccharine" smile... she gave us croquettes (7) and told us: you can prepare yourself some cucumbers (1)! With this, take some of your bread, and cherry compote. For the excursion, she had given t;ts a can of

sardines, some small wedges of cheese, 300 grams of bread per person, and ...salt. For a full day! Oh, I was about to forget, 1 franc to buy some cherries. Fortunately, we got some, at a nice farmer's place who allowed us to climb up the tree for 0.00 francs. For the one franc, we went to drink some lemonade. Oh, Mademoiselle Marcus, if only you knew the unhappiness you are imposing on your young girls..

Dear little notebook, I believe that some day I will make fun of the things I am now confiding to you.

Monday, 17 July 44, 8pm

A sudden joy comes over me: I am happy that I am not Mlle. Marcus, director of the *pensionn.at Marta* Marcus for young girls. What an "old schachtel" (?) that one is!

Wednesday, 19 July 44, 12:20 (am?)

Today, we all went on an excursion to Geneva. We got up early and breakfasted quickly. But I think that the small details are unnecessary. Dear little friend, I went by boat, yes, a boat; certainly, it was not the "Normandie," or the "Queen Elizabeth", but a small boat, "Italy." I find that this is wonderful. Geneva has interesting things. Thus ,we visited: the wall of the Reformers, in the park of the university, the chapel of the duke of Braunschwig, the old and the new League of Nations, and I must tell you that I did not get to see the Centre Henri Dunant. [ GB: across the street from the former League of Nations, a luxury hotel transformed during the war into a Red Cross reception center where I spent several weeks before my placement at the *pensionnat*].

Oh Geneva, in my eyes you had a completely different look than when I left you, on 4 February 44. And then, it is your small boats that enchanted me especially. Your big department stores were for me a novelty. Who would believe that I am a citizen of Breslau?

Thursday, 20 July 44, 9:15pm

Since\_\_\_ [illegible], the nine days have started. I have been summoned by the Aid Committee to Lausanne. I find that there is nothing excessively interesting in that city.

Sunday, 23 July 44, 3pm

Ruth left this morning. She is lucky to be able to go back to her home., to her parents., to her place. Yet, I do not believe that she knows how much she should rejoice. When., but when, will I be able to go back to my parents. What a sad feeling to know that one is alone, far away from one's loved ones... For the past few hours, St. Gingolphe is burning. [A reference to the accidental bombing by American planes of a nearby Swiss town.]

Monday, 24 July 44, 9:15pm

This afternoon, Bobbi and I explored the Bay of Clarens. What a lovely moment it was. Ah, a short time away from the pensionnat feels good! And what magnificent flora there is in the small islands of the river.

Friday, 28 July 44, 10:30am

I am bored. You see, my little friend, Gerti, Bobby are leaving on vacation, to rejoin their parents. Perhaps the others will also leave, but me, I can't go to mine. I don't want to become discouraged. The war will soon be over. When you are young, when you are strong, when you believe in God, when you love your family, you have the good luck to believe in yourself. Maybe that happiness is closer than we think.

Sunday, 30 July 44, 10:15pm

Tishe B'Av. I fasted pretty well. I wish with all my heart that next year all my friends and I will be home with our parents, under better conditions than the

current ones.

Monday, 31 July 44, 10:45pm

We just came back from a literary meeting. Even though I did not understand very much, I am enraptured by the passages of the book "*Menschlichkeit und Kamaradschaft*" [Humanity and *Comradery*] and excerpts by Leonard Stokel. Gerti and Bobby are packing their valises.

Wednesday, 2 August 44, 11:55pm

Gerti and Bobby left yesterday. It was also the Swiss national holiday. In the evening, we received permission to roam about until 10pm. Of course, we went to admire the fireworks.

Saturday, 5 August 44, 10:45pm

I received by express delivery an invitation to spend ten days in a camp for girl scouts. I sense that I can not accept. They need me here.

Monday, 7 August 44, 1pm

Morgin has been bombarded. Is Switzerland facing danger?

Wednesday, 9 August 44, 11:50 am

Henni has just departed "definitively" from the *pensionnat*... Outside, it is ram.mg.

Sunday, 13 August 44, 9:15pm

These are calm and monotonous days that pass slowly. I thank God for every hour that passes and brings us closer to deliverance.

Sunday, 21 August 44, 2pm

Horrors! It has been 8 days since I last consulted you, my little friend. Excuse me, but I really have not had time, what with the marriage of Mlle. Furer, which took place yesterday. Besides, what should I tell you? In my life today, there is little that changes.

Wednesday, 23 August 44, 6:35pm

Grenoble is liberated!

Monday, 28 August 44, 6:35pm

Gerti's return, the Aguda Tagung (?), the political victories, all this is turning around in my head. And further, little friend, if there are no changes Lili, Lotti and I will be able to go tomorrow on a tour to see Aigle, Leysin...

Thursday, 31 August 44, 7:16am

How magnificent it was, our mountain tour! We left in stormy weather, on Tuesday, and were received marvelously by the director of the Aguda camp!

Wednesday: Excursion to Leysin. It is a magnificent, splendid place. On the way back, having lost our way, we had to follow the railroad tracks, and go through the tunnels!... And we had to listen if the train was coming. That's a memory that will always stay with me. Little friend, there is nothing as special as sleeping on straw, together with the other 35 pals from Aguda.

Thursday: Well, here we are back.

Saturday, 2 August 44, 9:50pm

What a lovely letter I received! It gives me back my courage.

Wednesday, 6 September 44, 8:30pm

Gee, I forgot to tell you about the start of school, on September 4. Imagine, Mr. Rey [classroom teacher] is still doing military service.

Sunday, 10 September 44, 2pm

I am in bed because of pain in my vertebral column. As I have nothing to do, I learn by heart 2 assignments. How bored I am!

Friday, 15 September 44, 6:30pm

*Monsieur* Rey came back, for three weeks. But he is more strict now. Well, what do you know, pal, I am cured!

Tuesday, 19 September 44, 11:15pm

Yorn Tov has ended. Next year, with God's help, the entire Jewish people will celebrate this holiday in their homes. Mother, Papa, did they also have a holiday as nice as mine? To start the year, I wish with all my heart (you know what) and also to remain faithful to you, or rather, that you remain faithful to me. And, above all, that I keep my courage up.

Thursday, 28 September 44, 12:30am

Really, I seem to neglect you a little. But, what do you want? I suppose that a prisoner or a forced laborer does not lead a more boring life than I do. Yes, of course, yesterday was Yorn Kippur, which brought some changes. Note, I

fasted rather badly. That's all.

Sunday, 1 October 44, 11am

My last day at Chouilly [location of public school] has passed. Soon, I'll be a *collegienne* [a student at an academic high school]. How sad it is to be leaving Mr. Rey. It is Erev Yorn Tov. Much work Mlle. Marcus in a bad mood.

Wednesday, 4 October 44, 10:10pm

Since this morning, I am a *collegienne*. It is horrible . Can you imagine that I have broken some item made of crystal. Fortunately, Mlle. was in a good mood. Finally, Yorn Tov is over. But it was different from the ones I had spent at home. More and more, I feel the emptiness of this house.

Saturday, 7 October 44, 10pm

One would think that the quarrel between Mlle. Marcus and us is a deep one, since she no longer eats with us at the table. All the better! We don't ask for anything better. A house full of women, that the most stupid thing there is!...?!

Sunday, 8 October 44, 11am

God! This place is stupid, really stupid.

Tuesday, 10 October 44, 9:10pm

Simchas Torah went by peacefully. Oh! Peacefully, in view of Mlle Marcus' mood. But, no joke, it was nice. There was brotherhood between all people, the holy Torah was sovereign, at least for a few hours...! Yes, it is exactly one year ago that I did my preparations for the trip [for illegal passage into

Switzerland]. I did not think that I would be here today, in Clarens. And next year? At home? Yes, probably, with God's help.

Tuesday, 10 October 44, 9:23pm

How lucky we are that Israel accepted the Holy Torah!

Wednesday, 11 October 44, 5:42pm

Is it possible? Yes, it is a year now that I am in Switzerland. A year ago, at this time, I was at Annecy. I didn't think, truly, that I would be here today. How much has happened between 11 October 42 and now. Cropettes, Charmilles, Champel, Carlton, [these were short-term refugee camps] Clarens (unfortunately, still ongoing) happy hours, hours of distress. I can't even believe that it was me, this young girl dressed in a raincoat, a young inexperienced girl, who passed the Franco-Swiss border at 10:20pm. OK, I have decided: if Mlle. Marcus gives me more trouble, I go back to France.

Wednesday, 18 October 44, 11:37pm

We just came back from the movies. The film was not bad. "Faithful to Yourself." Finally, an evening out, far from this barack! Gerti was so mocking, a "kid" who goes to the movies at age 13!

Sunday, 22 October 44, 8:50pm

"When the cat goes away, the mice dance" - that is what happened in the afternoon at the *pensionnat*, while Mlle. Marcus was gracious and good enough to go away; for once, we were able to danse, listen to music, well, to live.

Sunday, 22 October 44, 9pm

Little friend, the *pensionnat* is so boring. Tralalala.

Saturday, 4 November 44, 10:50pm

This afternoon, I went to a concert. Very good!

Sunday, 5 November 44, 2:55pm

I have nothing to do, that is to say, I have homework assignments that I don't want to do. That is why am roaming around in my dear memoir. But what should I write? If I write: "The sky is blue, everything is happy," that would be lying, because the weather is rather miserable. But then? Brrrrrr ! It is cold in the room, in this sort of kind of barack. Mlle. Marcus is in a funny mood. What can you expect? At her age. She annoys me with her pretentious French.

New verb conjugations!?

[ some highbrow but erroneous conjugations follow]

"Enchante" becomes "Anchante" [German accented pronunciation]

Tomorrow, school starts again. How silly!

Sunday, 12 November 44, noon

A letter from my beloved father. He is well, he has not forgotten me!

Thursday, 7 December 44, about 6pm

First of all, little friend, I want to apologize for my laziness. To think that I have not noted something as important as this! The 22 of November (Wednesday), I went, with Mlle. Marcus to see, my mother at the border. Oh, I did not speak with her long, maybe ten minutes. But still!

Now, I just want to tell you that Papa is 47 years old today. May he live to be 120![ in German, "Er soll leben biss 120 Jahre!"] But, here is something

fantastic, incredible, magnificent, splendid, sensational, marvelous, in one word, a "miracle," bless the Lord, I am leaving for France, on Wednesday, 20 December 44. I am going back home, that is, to our home.

I notice that I have reached the middle [page of the notebook] of my memoirs.