

STANISLAVA ROZTROPOWICZ PAPERS, 1943-1948
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Below is a translation of the Stanislava Roztropowicz diary, translated by Sabina Heller.

THE DIARY OF

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STANISLAVA

ROZTROPOWITCZ



Translated by Sabina Heller

7-11-43

Today around 10:00 our house was burned. Olek K. was passing by the house when it was burning, and the fire moved to other buildings. What to do now? Will it be possible to ride over to our piece of land for vegetables, fruit and wheat etc... ? And what will happen if we are not allowed to go there? I don't know.

Another change: our family consists not of 5 people but of 6. The sixth person is Sabina. We call her Inka. She is a two year old girl. She has blonde curly hair, and big blue eyes, and her eyes look even bigger because she is so skinny. At this moment, she was bathed and dressed up in a clean outfit; she is lying down in her crib. She does not want to sleep, she cries. Usually she is very quiet, she plays by herself, and does not whine. At the present her conditions are ideal compared to the past. She does not have a lot of clothes. She has a coat, a sweater, 3 dresses, 2 shirts, and shoes. In fact Kazik S. passed by today and saw our Inka. He started to ask where did we get her. Our mom told him but not the entire truth. Kazik left. Minutes later he returned with a blue dress and an undershirt. The dress is pretty.

7-14-43

Today the first time since Inka is with us she started to smile. We are like children, Inka starts laughing, and we start laughing. In other words wonderful Inka. She is also wonderful because she urinated all over me, not only that, she did something worse! My mom returned a minute ago and started to tell us news from the town. Oh Inka is taking a bath, we have to look.

7-20-43

In the last few days there was only one incident, they burned the land that belongs to the Ludzi family. Nothing else. Tonight our dad is planning to go to our piece of land. We are out of wood; there is a lot of wood out there. Ink.a is doing well. She is quiet usually; sometimes she cries. She likes my mom the best. She is not afraid of my dad.

7-23-43

Oh God, oh God. I hope the rumors that are circling, are false. They say that Olek K and Mietek P. were killed. It is very upsetting! The cart of Wacek came apparently empty, but I think it transported someone injured or dead. Jana and Jendryk saw the shoes of a man. Our mom went to inquire what happened. It is very unsettling. Our mom returned, she is sitting and crying. Richard Sinkiewicz is dead. He died in the hospital.

When we returned mom was upset, she screamed at us and at dad saying that dad should not have sent us. Now Ink.a is sitting in my lap. She is moving constantly. She is very lively. She has enough clothes.

8-5-43

This afternoon Jana, Lida, Ink.a and me, we all walked to the lake. Actually, we went to the river. It is crowded and hot. We found an empty space and sat down. On the way back, we visited the Kopciow family. The elderly Mrs. Kopciow offered us baked apples. She also wanted to give us some bread. We thanked her. I wish she gave us some honey!

8-12-43

Great news; Ink.a knows how to walk. Yesterday she tried for the first time. She walks very funny.

8-1643

Our mom received a card from Arbeitamt. It is a summons to work. During the war, people would receive notices in the mail ordering them to report to a certain location to be shipped to a labor camp.

Luckily Jana and I are not registered. Certainly if we were, they would not leave us alone, because of our age (16 and 17 years old). I don't know how mom will get out of it. In her favor is the fact that she is a housewife, and has two minors-Jendryk and Ink.a.

8-21-43

The murders do not stop. They beat up people, without discrimination. They threaten people that are close to us. Three days ago they took Batia Borocky and threatened the Tarnawski family. Four days ago they killed some people turns out they were -all Poles. Meanwhile God is watching over us. All the wheat was brought home. Today dad went twice to our piece of land. Old Kasia dug some potatoes. Mom does not let us ride with dad to our land. She feels it is too dangerous.

8-25-43

A terrible heat wave! No rain in sight. This afternoon got cloudy, but now it is clear. Inka does not let me write. Something happened to her today, she does not want to sleep.

We got a letter today from Zosia -our oldest sister, who was send to hard labor in Germany.. She writes she is not well. She has trouble with her toe. All that hard work, and for what? For the rations they are given? They can't buy anything anymore. There are many refugees from Hamburg there now. She gave her rationed food stamps to the refugees. Zosia writes that wives came without husbands, children without mothers, in short horrible! Now every morning, at 5:00 a.m. services are held, praying to God for peace in the world. Even the Germans had had it with the war, but no end is in sight.

8-26-43

I can't say I was comfortable writing. Inka is sitting on my knees. She wants to be held, she is very stubborn.

8-31-43

Hungarians caught three Bandera fighters and they confessed that last night or tonight an attack will take place. People are on alert and on guard. Some believe the rumors and some don't. Our mom does not believe the news, but she is nervous. Our dad- doesn't know what he is thinking. We did not talk about it. Me, I don't know- I don't eliminate any possibility. I try not to get

upset from all that talk. An atmosphere of nervousness exists everywhere. It is not a happy atmosphere, and life goes on.

Tonight there was a scandal with Inka. She didn't want to say "good night" to everyone. Twice our mom put her in a dark room. Inka is crying, comes to the door, and puts her fingers in the keyhole. Finally our mom asks her "will you be good" and she answers "yes". Our mom says "Do you want me to take you in my arms?" Inka is running and jumps in my mom's arms. Our mom says, "Say Goodnight". Inka says "no!" This scene is repeated several times, until finally, she sweetly said good night to all the family. In return she got kisses and hugs from everyone, especially from mom.

Our mom used this occasion to tell us that is a lesson for us that when we have our own kids to not to let them have the last word. It is not always easy to guide your child. It was an unnecessary warning, and way too early.

Today was a German funeral. There was a big procession. Apart from the German funerals, there were two Orthodox. One Ukrainian died a natural death; the second was crushed when a wall of a Jewish home in a ghetto fell on him.

9-8-43

Wednesday, the holy birth of Mary, the atmosphere is not festive. Zosia Stramska came over, and we played a game called: "1000". Later, Inka and I went to her house. A while later we returned, and now I am writing.

Sunday night the bandits of Bandera took with them a Polish family from Radziwillow. Not from the city itself, but from a suburb called Balek. They came at night. Fearing of causing alarm with gunshots, they did not kill them on the spot, but took them with them. Their corpses of the family were found close to Baran.

Again, there are rumors about an attack on Radziwillow. Today the rumors subsided. It's like an enormous blackbird spread his wings over the city, and a terrible fear took over everyone. It disappears only to reappear in a different form.

9-8-43

The uproar caused by the priest who left our town calmed down. Those who planned to leave town decided to wait. Our mom went to Brody. She returned the day before yesterday. She took care of our personal matters. She said that the decision to leave town is final. Tomorrow is Sunday; there won't be any sermon in church for the first time.

It is evening. Inka is sleeping. We had so much fun with her today. It happened before dinner. Jana put Inka on the potty. In her hand she was holding a pancake. I was at that time in the kitchen. All of a sudden, I hear Inka shrieking. I ran out to the garden and this is the picture I

saw: Inka is sitting on the potty with her hands in the air. She is holding the pancake and she screams at the top of her lungs. While Puchcia the chicken is trying to grab the pancake from Inka's hands.

9-8-43

A part of the army left Radziwillow. Another unit is supposed to take their place. The headquarters is already here. There is a plan to give our third room to a German soldier. It will make us safer. (Whenever the Germans occupied an area, many private homeowners were asked to house German soldiers. This would make that particular home safer for its inhabitants.)

9-24-43

Today moved in with us a German officer. He is tall and slim.

10-15-43

This is the second day that our officer is gone. We changed our negative opinion about him. He comes home seldom, only twice or three times. He is intelligent. His superior is from Austria- he came to our home several times. He frequently gives Inka some candies.

10-19-43

Yesterday Mr. D. went to Brody. There is a package for us from Zosia; Mr. D. is so absentminded that he forgot the package! He leaves tomorrow. We should have the package the day after tomorrow. Some workers arrived, all men, from the Ukraine. They are in terrible shape. They are filthy, unshaven, and with ragged clothes.

10-22-43

Zosia sent a shirt for Inka, a little sugar, tissue paper, cigarettes and two belts. It is still unknown who are the workers in the ghetto.

10-23-43

Stryj Kazio was murdered. May he rest in peace. There were two Stryjow and both were murdered - one by the Soviets and one by the Ukrainians.

11-3-43

Yesterday Jana, my friend Zosia Stramska, and I went to the cemetery to clean tombstones. These were the tombstones of Polish soldiers and of people murdered who did not have family. It was quiet and calm, you could only hear the movement of the trees. In the afternoon, we got some flowers and five candles. We put flowers on the stones of Polish soldiers from the years 1849 through 1863 when we noticed three Hungarian officers. They walked over to the stone from 1863, saluted and knelt down. Our mom and Inka were standing there. Our mom advised

us to light a candle on the stone of the Hungarian soldiers. After the ceremony, they put a wreath on the graves of the Hungarian soldiers. Everyone came over to the grave of our Polish soldiers and repeated the same ceremony. Our mom thanked them. They shook hands with us. We were very grateful to them for showing respect to our soldiers. We will remember them.

11-13-43

In the west the Germans are retreating. We hear horror stories about their retreat. Only the sky and the earth remain intact, they destroy everything on their way. The Germans are demanding more Polish homes for their pilots who will be arriving shortly. Ms. Alina had to give up one room, and Ms. Janina had to give two rooms and a hallway. That is the way it is everywhere.

11-30-43

We are sitting with Ms. Alina at our home. She is resting- lying down, while Herr Otto is playing his harmonica. Herr Otto is the German pilot assigned to Ms. Alina's house. At the dinner table were Ms. Anna Tereska and other out-of-towners that were staying here. After dinner Herr Otto played the harmonica. Before 7:00 everyone left because curfew is 7:00 o'clock.

Inka ate her dinner **early**, before us. Our mom put her to bed. She was so playful. She did not want to sleep, and ended up staying up with us to the end. When Herr Otto was playing, she was playing on her harmonica that does- not make any sound. She looked very funny. Her toy

harmonica did not produce a sound but she was convinced that she was playing. It was a delightful scene! A little Jewish girl entertaining a German!

11-18-43

You can feel the front in the air. The Soviets are now in Zytomir. Today the Germans seized

Some people. They are digging trenches. I don't feel any fear. Different rumors are circling, some of which can make you cry and some might make you laugh.

Our photos are ready. They took a picture of Inka with her dolls. She laughed and was fidgety all the time. Finally the photographer said": Look a birdie is flying" Inka's mouth opened and she looks like a real dope!

12-15-43 We just got a letter from our oldest sister Zosia, from Germany where she works for the Germans. She writes, that this year nobody will get vacation time. A great change occurred in her life, a change for the better. They transferred her to work in a household of a Catholic priest. She gets good food and her own warm room. He has only one cow, 10 rabbits and a dog. She cleans the kitchen and sometimes she also cleans the priest's room

12-24-43

Christmas Mass is over. The holidays went by so fast! Ms. Alina came for dinner. They left with Jana around 8:00 o'clock. Soon after that, 3 Germans arrived, two of familiar, the third unknown to us. Mom played a gracious hostess. My youngest brother Jendryk is sleeping already and so is Inka.

12-29-43

It is almost the end of the year. The Germans took over another part of the house moved out of the bedroom into the kitchen. It is very crowded. We moved two beds into the kitchen. Mom and Inka sleep on one and Jendryk on the other.

1-1-44

New Year is here! It is evening. Jendryk and Inka are sleeping. Mom is in the kitchen; dad is talking to Szkroba. Mom is trying to find him a living quarter. He can't stay here because many Germans frequent our place.

Szkroba was a Ukrainian who cooperated with the Soviet regime before the German occupation. He was hiding from the Ukrainian nationalists, who murdered his entire family.

1-7-44

11 people are going to sleep in our place!

1-9-44 Our company left yesterday at ten o'clock. They were folksdeutsche from Rovno. They have every reason to flee from the Soviets. Yesterday the Germans moved in to our house. They are expecting more German troops to arrive in Radziwillow. Szkroba will be leaving our place soon.

Today is Sunday. After breakfast I went with mom to help the Polish poor and needy. I passed the afternoon reading. Later on I went together with Jana and Inka to visit Ms. Anna. After dinner, dad is reading, Jendryk and Inka are sleeping, and Szkroba is dreaming, and I am translating German textbooks.

1-20-44

The atmosphere calmed down, we postponed our departure. The Front moved away from us. Jana did not recover completely from the flu. Inka is still sick. She seems to feel better this afternoon..

2-13-44

It is evening. It is the third day without electricity. Mom and Inka sleep. Dad is reading. I am writing. We don't have any candles. We use an oil lamp, but it does not last for too long

We end up going to bed early.

3-19-44

A historical date to remember; March 19, 1944-the Soviets reconquered our city. We watched German troops leaving our place. In the back of the houses, you could see the Soviet soldiers sneaking in.

3-30-44

We were sure that the front would pass us over in 2-3 days. As it turns out, we are in the first line of fighting for the last two weeks and there is no end in sight. Between Brody and Radziwillow there is a huge forest. This is the forest that the Soviets are not able to conquer. The shooting does not stop. Our apartment near the Asphalt is in ruins. It happened last week. Now we live in an apartment near Krzemieniecka Street. There are Soviet anti aircraft missiles near our old apartment. The first time they used them, I got really scared I thought they are bombarding us. Later we stood in front of the house and were watching the battle. It was an incredible sight, wonderful and horrible at the same time. We saw a fireball in the air and then clouds of black fumes. It was nothing in comparison to the time when we were bombarded. When the first bombs fell down we were in the apartment. There are no windows our house anymore, everything is covered with dust and black ashes, and what unbearable noise! We heard the flying planes, we were certain they were Soviet planes. Only when they were above us, the bombing began. The bullets started flying above our heads. After the first bomb, the anti aircraft went into action we ran into the trenches; the Soviets dug the other day near our house. The noise of the

flying planes, and the explosion of the bombs, caused the earth around us to tremble. The Sand from the trenches was falling on our heads. Inka was screaming. Soviet soldiers were jumping practically on our shoulders into the trenches. Mom was trying to calm down Inka. She said "the soviet soldiers were saying to my mom" let her scream!" "nobody can hear her anyway"!

When it was all over, we could not live in this house anymore, we had to move to a new place.

4-12-44

Evacuation! An officer just came in to notify us.

4-16-44

It is our third day in Bialokrynicy, about 5 km. From Radziwillow. We left on Wednesday, today is Sunday. We live in the run down place of Stefan Stramsky. Mom is very upset with the Ukrainian family named Majewsky who trashed up this place. Inka requires lots of care; we get up several times at night to take care of her. She is prone to colds.

The first night mom and Inka slept on the kitchen floor, next night the two decided to move in with us in the messy "living room" .We spread our belongings on top of smelly fertilizers. Mom, Inka and dad, we all slept there.

5-14-44

We are in Dubno 60 km. From Radziwillow. All our belongings are on two carts. Dad, Gustek, Jana and Marysia are on the first one and mom, dad Inka and I, and of course the cow are on the second one.

In Dubno, Jendryk and I started attending school. Jana began working in school as a secretary and Inka was growing healthy and safe.

8-27-44

I decided to look into my dairy again after quite a while. Out of boredom. I have nothing to read, I don't feel like drawing Dad is reading, Jendryk went to look for a tire for his bike. Mom took Inka to P.T.A. meeting, where she is presiding.

1-16-45

Warsaw liberated! The Germans are retreating; The Allies are on the offensive!

4-3-45

It's the third day of Easter. We'll be leaving on Great Saturday. Dad got all our belonging onto the railway ramp

4-20-45

I am sitting in the wagon. We'll be leaving soon. We are sitting in the wagon since noon.

4-27-45

A minute ago we arrived to Dzialdowa on the border with Prussia. We have been traveling for 8 days. I lost count of time, where are we going? It is unknown. For sure we'll end up in Prussia.

5-23-45

Nidzica I am in our new home alone with Inka. Mom went to pick up a letter from Zosia. Dad went with Jendryk to take some grains to the mill. Jana is working in the offices of Repatriation.

6-9-45

Today I am going to the office. Dad and Jendryk and Inka stay at the house.

7-2-45

Zosia returned from Germany! It's her second day at home. We are all together at last!