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HIRSCHFELD FAMILY COLLECTION, 1936-1960
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Below is a translation of the diary:

Diary:

Life is difficult—food consists of something very hard and tough. We either suffocate or chew it long enough to be able to swallow it. To digest it is another question. Some have actually suffocated. Wherever the hated German took over, death reigned. On a hot and beautiful summer. Sunday, June 22, 1941. During the night, the shooting and bombing became unbearable, no sleep possible. Without any premonition, people go to their places of work—then there is hell on earth.

They think that the sun will shine for them eternally, but as beautifully as it shines, there will be a sunset. They steal Jewish property and murder people. First came the men to be slaughtered. They have to dig their own graves. And they call themselves “Carriers of Culture.” On June 23, a bomb fell into Aunt Rosa’s basement. Victim after victim—uncle Abraham was blinded. Six days later, the German army moved in. The city is half destroyed and so our suffering started. Hateful denunciations against the Jews. The Germans start their macabre game.

The memory stands like a painting, only the large _____ of reality. It is the large view on a landscape, that we wandered through and over which there is a magical fog. We are seeing the valleys, the woods through which we marched, but not anymore the precipitous tracks that led to them or the thorns which injured us but the remembrance can make a misfortune of a life.

My life is through all the memories and the four years of imprisonment destroyed. The bleeding wounds don’t heal even if sometimes a medication is put on there.

One knows how to start and what to write. But it is the same. The main point is Uncle Julius can find out something if we survive, which is still very questionable. The war is so gruesome it boiled up in Europe and has devoured everything. And for us one day passes as the other—we are waiting—for what? Here in _____ life is still supportable if you don’t hear the voice of the mad _____.

14.9.44

Yesterday, I fell asleep because I was so tired. I wanted to write so much more, but it never came to pass. I am sitting here and look through the small barred windows of my “bude” [small room]. The fall is pretty this year. The sun, which makes no racial difference, gives us a lot of warmth. The Burgstrasse looks nice with its’ yellow leaves. All of nature gives you pleasure for a moment when you can forget about the gruesome reality. But one is always reminded of the reality, like he _____ today. Poor Mrs. Doctor. She got a bunker[?] because she was good and gave her girl a handful of peas.

Yes, we should be bad. Bad and hateful. We should betray our comrades and possibly get praised for it. The gruesome fear we have for the K-Z [note: Konzentrationslager=concentration camp]. May God protect us from that—then we are lost. We cannot survive a K-Z, I don’t want to. I will not survive it that one pulls Mammika away from us. I cannot watch her suffering anymore. Her emaciated body, her thin face. This sight breaks my heart. Too big is our suffering. Nothing, nothing, can alleviate the pain. We are sitting in the jaws of the lion and wait—for what? People say that I am a pessimist—they are right. What

shall I hope for? How often have I been wrong? Outside is the quiet harmony and within us the restlessness and noisiness. This terrible fear that one has for "HIM." One only has to hear his horrible voice. Yes, 3 ½ years we are suffering already. Doesn't this unmentionable suffering end one day?

A year ago we can to the K-Z Riga. The 800 _____ Jews are put into wagons and sent them into the unknown. Where to? One doesn't dare to look into the face of the other. One is afraid to ask. What good is the asking, no one can answer. Tightly pushed together we sit in a corner. It is now Yom Kippur. From the wagon one can see our old house, on the Muskasse,. Why, why does all this happen to us? In the opposite corner, a family with many children is sitting. The little ones are so quiet. Even they understand how serious and sad our situation is. The tram is moving, we are going in the direction Riga. So maybe it doesn't go into death. The night is horrible in a _____ pushed together like herrings, one barely has air to breathe and in spite of everything, the only wish is to live, like one is afraid of the gruesome end. The train is rocking back and forth. It must be 1am at night. Where are we? What's happening to us? Nobody says a word. Suddenly the train stops. Men in striped clothes pull open the doors and stream without a human-like voice, "Children of Israel, get going, see it to that you advance only three minutes to run." It is dark and sinister. A mixture of things and humans. Then one screams, one loses the next of kin. A mix-up! I search in the dark for Mammika and the others. We follow the people, who all run in the direction where a few barracks are standing. The SS and the striped men chase us with whips. Where are you from, cried a voice. It is place that is wired. This time we came to a K-Z camp. Throw away your packages, screams another voice. Everyone throws away the last bit of their things. Nothing makes any difference at that moment. One does not know what is happening. The barrack where they lead us in new one. On the floor straw, in the middle, a table. One has one desire: to sleep. I am trying to sleep on my "table" but it doesn't work. I first have to find out where we are. The striped men are not Jewish prisoners who watch us. It is the _____ in Germany that prisoners watch prisoners. _____ and smoked voices do they have, these guys, who for politic or crimes of different sorts have been for years in the K-Z and this life is familiar to them. In front of the window is a toilet. The men can watch. But humans have become animals. I am looking through the open door into the cold, wet, October night. In front of us are more barracks. There is an uncanny noise in the air. Watchers march up and down and the camp lanterns throw sinister shadows into the sand.

At four the bell rings: "Get up!" In the K-Z the day begins. In the other barracks are Jews from the Riga Ghetto. A mixture of Jews from all over Europe. Men are walking around with torn garments and look like butchers or beggars. I was frightened when I first saw it, but the eye gets accustomed. Like a foregone conclusion, it seems to me in the enxt week, where we were painted with rings on our back. Shameful are the appells [roll call]. For the appell, one pulls the last bit of _____ apart. Womeon over 50 and children were transported to the ghetto, from there, some months later into the gas chambers. The pain was too big. The crying and creaming remains unheard. The K-Z puts up its demands. If you want to participate you must pull yourself up, have to collect your last strength. It means: participate or vanish. To see the grey old face of Mammika, how she looks in her torn garments at the appell, the fear of being torn apart is close to madness. One has to pull oneself together to wash. One has to pull oneself together if one wants to have a little space on the floor to sleep. We received dirty, torn, things, one gets almost nothing to eat, but there is worse, one tells oneself for consolation. It is strange, one prisoner agitates the other. Until now we never knew that—but one gets use even to that. I don't know whether I took the strength at that time to live on.

Episodes from the life of the imprisonment:

A cold December day. Sharp words are coming from the sea. The trees rustle uncannily. It rains buckets. Slowly the convoy drags to work. Another workday begins, such as gray and hopeless as yesterday, such as tomorrow will be. The feet hurt from the stones one wants to stay put. One lifts the eyes to the grey, cloudy sky. Everything looks sad and hopeless. We reached the workplace. One looks forward to the warm 'bude' in which one can stay until work begins. Men brought a newspaper. There is something about Jews in it—again something new, new provocations, new agitations. This time there are more orders signed by the Obersturmbannführer Dr. Dietrich. The police chief signed an order that Jews may not leave their apartments from 13-15 December. Why? No one knows. There must be something going on. A long suspicion overcomes us. The frightened look in everyone's eyes. The mad look in everyone's eyes of _____ which looms like a monster. One doesn't know what goes on. Optimists think it is an accounting of the people, others think the state minister Dr. Rosenberg is coming and our presence in the street is not desired—all nonsense. The nervous brain produces all sorts of consolations. One doesn't want to think of the worst. One hopes but black thoughts enter my mind. I can imagine what that means. People murmur of mass graves, they murmur about shooting. One cannot believe it, one tries not to believe it, but the next day brings the gruesome truth. It froze during the night. Ice on the streets—a gray day like yesterday. Fog covers the city and the wind blows as before. We are not allowed to leave the house, so what is going to happen. I am afraid of every coming hour. People know already that in _____ people were already gathered and brought away. Where to? Now stupid people let them tell you that they took them to work. To work, yes, one tried to believe it because the nasty shooting of women and children cannot be comprehended by a human brain. But the courageous people. But the bleeding children, who are returned by the Gestapo pigs from the murder showplace scare away all secret hopes, the last good thoughts are dying because the witnesses of the gruesome reality of the horrible deeds of a "civilized nation" in the 20th century.

Whatever the worst persecution cannot tell is what the Hitler party accomplished. Small, innocent children were torn away from life, mothers young and old went to their death. In the most gruesome manner they were killed. They begged for that last bit of miserable life. They fell to the feet of the hangmen, but Jewish requests they don't hear. Cold and heartless they do their work, as if they were animals and not human beings made by God. First one collects the people in the prison. To the right with the face to the wall are standing the poor condemned ones. Hangmen go with blackjacks back and forth and start beating wherever it pleases them. A gruesome picture before our eyes when the prison door opened in front of us. Children cry and hang on to their mothers. These heroic mothers, who still have consolations for the little innocent beings.

We are being pushed around into an office where in orderly fashion the documents and the valuables are being taken. The whole room is engulfed in a cloud of smoke. Drunken SS men sit on the table and laugh with stupid girls. They laugh in these bloody days. Hand over the watches, the gold and the documents. That's all the shouting one hears. I get a blow over my head that I lose my hearing and seeing. We stand with the faces to the wall. They will shoot soon, I believed. I lifted the eyes to the sky. I don't know what I think at that moment. Only one thing goes through my head—to stay alive, not to die. Kr. is suddenly there, the eyes red from drinking. Get out, he screams. He is throwing us out of the prison. I will never forget the eyes of those who remained standing. They are standing there, sentenced to die. For what? Why do they have to stay, and I can go? What is he doing the Joke [German]? What is happening? Cars of coming, then one loads up the guilty. The children were only thrown on—and they are gone,

all, all of them went to their death with the ever accompanying hope. They were still hoping when they saw their pits. One wants to scream, one wants to defend oneself. We do not want to die, but remain silent. Only a quiet crying of the children that sounds like the weeping of lonely dogs. We return to the apartment. It is miserably cold. A horrible feeling. Saved from this action there is the suspicion that soon the next one will come. What is going to happen then?

The next day brings nothing new. One puts into our hearts an unhealing wound. It seems that the stones are crying, but we who remained have to put ourselves together, if we want to continue living. We have to work, we must continue. In the war harbors where we receive work as cleaning women, everything moves in the old way. Soldiers laugh and are happy with life. Officers celebrate feasts only we are walking around as living cadavers. We are reminded with every step of our dead relatives and friends. At the officer where I clean _____ . He stands lost and lonely as if he was waiting that _____ and I would sit down and talk to him as before. I have to dust every day the front of the couch. I can always look at him and I believe to see him full of life and laughing. She went on her knees in front of this dog, begging for her life. But one cannot soften a stone. She goes the way of thousands, she goes like all of them went. But we that are left live a pitiful life. When it is daytime one wishes it would be night. When the night comes on believes to her steps—they are coming, they are coming to get us. That is the way weeks pass until the next action.

The SS pigs (I do not have another name for them) have thought about another way they don't announce before, but they come as a surprise at night. So where should we stay? Some hide in barns, other stay put, others have documents, we have no idea what to do. The thoughts concentrate on one point: to live. Now that I am free and remember this, I cannot understand it. Why did we cling to life and fought death so strongly, where life and death were one, but the spirit lives on, even after death. The action of February 15, we hid with Russian prisoners in a war harbor. At night, Germans came and chased us away. We send _____. The morning was pleasant. People walking in their Sunday best in the streets. I ran like a pursued animal on the horse trail. I ran to find a place to stay. _____ stay in the war harbor. The woman in charge of the house took pity on us. She took us for a few hours. Then she also become afraid and gave us up. They didn't catch us even this time. The next morning we went in _____ to work. The snow as high over the roads. We had to walk 5km. Mammika, Frieda and I on the street that led to the war harbor. Snow all over. Suddenly a car. He honks. We go to the side. It is terrible. They screamed "Pol!" In the _____ were arrived men. The car is filled with miserable guiltless human beings of German murder greed. Never, never will I forget this morning. No forward and is backward. We are afraid to cross the bridge. There is no stepping aside. Only the thought of Mammika keeps me going. I don't know where I took the strength.