

EGON WEISS PAPERS, 1890-2009
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Below is a translation of Egon Weiss' diary:

Translation of a diary kept by Egon Weiss

1940

Like other Jews in the Protectorate (German-occupied Czechoslovakia), I had to look for an opportunity to emigrate, and I signed up (in December of 1939) for an illegal transport to Palestine.

There were prior notifications of an eminent departure, but the dates were subsequently postponed. A notification arrived on Sunday, September 1, 1940, announcing that the transport was scheduled to leave on the 3rd.

On Monday afternoon I received the surprising news that I had to be at the train station the same evening. After saying goodbye to my parents and sister, I gathered my shoulder bag and took the trolley to the train station.

This happened so suddenly, that it did not seem real. I could not visualize that this would mean parting for a long time; not until I embarked on the Milos did I realize what it meant to be separated from the ones that are dear to me.

Back to the railroad station. Many people with backpacks or luggage were waiting there, most of them exasperated by the delay. Finally, after depositing our belongings, we advanced to the platform. The luggage inspection was rather superficial. At 11 PM, after loaves of bread were distributed, the train.

We arrived in Vienna on the 3rd and were transferred to the Danube boat, "Melk". The Melk sailed the following day, past Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade and on the 6th we passed the "Iron Door", a natural narrowing of the river, which evoked admiration from our fellow-members. After navigating this region with particular care, we increased our speed, and arrived on the 7th in Russe; we docked for the next two days.

Another transport ship, the Penco, had been waiting there for some time, trying to obtain a sailing permit. The passengers called in chorus: "We are hungry. Help us!" Unfortunately, any help was out of the question. As we learned later, the ship got stuck in Crete and sunk.

We left Russe on the 9th and arrived the following day in Biala, a shipping and industrial city. On the left, we noticed gasoline tanks, modern buildings with flat roofs and curved windows (a form we saw frequently in the Balkans); on the right side were reed covered huts; an antiquated green tram with pink curtains moved along the shore and contrasted sharply with the modern cars that filled the streets. After a short stay we moved on and arrived in a region recently occupied by the USSR. Russian troops were everywhere, and a bombed bridge indicated that fighting took place. We continued our journey as planned, and arrived on the 11th in Tulcea; docked at the pier were three timeworn "boats" (I do not think they deserve to be called "ships"), which were to take us to Palestine: the "Atlantic", "Pacific" and "Cannisbay" (renamed "Milos"). We did not board immediately, but remained on the Melk.

On the 14th we boarded the Cannisbay. We found that our pessimistic expectations were well founded. The freighter had been reconstructed. In the hull were two levels of "shelves", which were meant to be our "beds". In these "catacombs", the air, because of a lack of ventilation, was sticky. Our sleeping quarters were only 50 cm high and hard to get to. Because they had to save on available space, the aisles were very narrow.

I was a member of the Betar (Zionist Revisionist movement), and had the luck to find a place on the captain's bridge, the best part of the ship. When the weather was fine, I slept on the open bridge; in

case of rain, I moved to the captain's navigation room, or to a large wooden crate, which I converted to a miniature hut.

The first night brought an unpleasant surprise. Our sleep was interrupted by a loud call to "immediately abandon the ship". All passengers proceeded to shore where the Romanian military squeezed us into a guarded hall. We learned that the ship developed a leak, water seeped in, and everybody had to disembark. Naturally, we were very concerned to continue our journey on such a vessel, and some passengers refused to re-embark.

The next morning found us waiting at the pier. The Cannisbay was under repair, some of the Tts (transport members) returned to the ship, while others were quartered in a warehouse. I returned to my crate on the commando bridge and life went on as usual. We observed intense activities on the land. Bunkers and barbed wires along the Danube were erected, and these defensive measures were taken either against a possible attack by Germany or Russia. Subsequent events confirmed this.

On the 20th our "sardine can" (named because of the lack of space) received a new name "Milos" and a Panamanian flag. Five days later the remaining TTs from the warehouse were, on order of the Romanian police, returned to the ship. We protested, and tried to prevent the TTs from boarding the ship, hoping to get an extension of our stay. The police arrested two ringleaders, and threatened not to release them until all Tts from the warehouse were on board.

The organization of our transport was as follows: Each section was under the authority of a section commander. The entire transport was under the jurisdiction of a Camp Directorate. The maintenance of order was the job of a police detail, armed with wooden clubs. In addition to the police there were individuals in charge of traffic and other technical matters. A toilet service, provided by each section, was responsible for the cleanliness of the washrooms.

On the 1st of October provisions were delivered to the Milos, and we assumed that our departure was imminent. It was possible to exchange with the Romanian Military fountain pens or lighters for food. Swimming in the Danube could be obtained by bribing the guard with cigarettes.

The Military seemed undisciplined; they did not seem to have respect for superiors, and the officers accomplished action only by shouting and cursing. We had occasion to witness the "Iron Guard", as a train with green uniformed guardsmen passed by; the train displayed the swastika. On the 7th of September the Milos left Tulcea. The "Atlantic" was stuck in a sand bar and had to be towed. While we slowed down, the "Pacific" passed us on its way to Sullina.

On the next day, our voyage continued and we passed a completely wild and uncivilized area. We saw small homes, homes with windswept roofs made of reed, and walls made of clay. Many villages had primitive windmills, churches and cemeteries. The more representative homes were in the center of town. We sailed through a very narrow straight with huts along the embankment; the huts had a roof that started from the ground up, and there was an open space instead of a door.

Around 3 PM we arrived in Sullina, a port city where we saw the first British commercial ships. We continued on to the Black Sea and anchored there, while waiting for a pilot to lead us through the mine infested waters. The pilot arrived in the evening and we continued our journey. The first night turned out fine, and on the next morning the Milos sailed the high sea. I observed the ocean, and it seems that the name (Black Sea) is justified; the water had a dark blue/gray coloration, and

when the sky darkened it had an ink-like quality. We saw many dolphins swimming along our ship. The morning also found many passengers seasick (I was not one of them), making the washroom and railing fought for places.

Our meals were quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient. Bread and crackers were moldy, and we had to cut out the bad parts. The crackers had the appearance of dog biscuits and the taste of glue. Sometimes we got sausage or jam, usually contaminated with insects. Tea was made from onion skin. On the 10th we arrived at the Bosphorus, the waterway dividing Europe and Asia. On the right side we saw the last European lighthouse and ancient Turkish fortifications. At noon we passed the beautiful city of Bujuktere with its villas and palaces looking down from the surrounding hills. This area is a tourist and vacation attraction for the well-to-do of Istanbul, and efficient waterway connections are provided for prospective guests.

After a few hours stay, the "Milos" continued to Istanbul, the city of Mosques and Minarets. We did not receive permission to dock, and had to anchor outside the harbor. Turkish police and military units arrived on board and processed the usual formalities.

On the right side stretches Galata with its famous tower and the bridge of the same name. Modern residential and commercial buildings indicate how much Turkey has been westernized. We were supposed to get provisions and mail from home, but, to our disappointment, permission to dock was denied; any mail will be forwarded to the next harbor.

We left in the evening and sailed the Marmara Sea, past the Princess Islands. Early next morning the Milos sailed the Dardanelles and passed Gallipoli, a historical site where the Jewish Brigade fought in WW I. We arrived in Chanak, where permission to dock was again denied. We were in short supply of coal, water and food, but were denied access at every harbor.

We continued to sail the Aegean Sea past barren islands to Sigriss on the island of Lesbos. The transport sent a telegram to Athens requesting urgently food and water. We waited two days for an answer, but none arrived. The ship left on the 13th trying to get as soon as possible to Athens, where we expected to get some help.

A ferocious storm developed prior to sailing. Everybody was ordered below deck (only we on the bridge could remain). What a storm! we could not talk, because the wind struck our voice. But it got even worse on the open sea; the waves threw our vessel back and forth and the water doused the bridge. The captain finally saw the impossibility to continue, and returned to the safe harbor of Sigriss. Although the attempt lasted only a short time, most passengers were seasick.

The storm did not abate on the next day. We were anxious to get to Athens because our provisions got critically short. We left in the morning and took our chances. On the open sea, wind and waves took hold of our ship, which swung from side to side. I rested on my straw mattress, which turned out to be the right thing to do. It prevented a trip to the railing.

On the 15th we arrived in Piraeus, Athen's port, and were again denied permission to dock; the officials also informed us that the expected provisions were not available. Our situation became critical; we did not have any water, very little food left, and not enough coal. We did not waste any more time and proceeded from harbor to harbor....begging.

On the morning of the 15th we left Piraeus and had, in addition to an empty stomach, the prospect of future food shortages. We did not have breakfast and mulled around the bridge fantasizing of roasted geese or a sandwich, which, unfortunately, did not fill our stomach. At noon we received two small potatoes, boiled in seawater; they were eagerly consumed, but did not relieve our hunger. About 3 PM we noticed a small port city with industrial and modern buildings. We received permission to dock, and learned to our delight that we will receive the needed provisions. Our hunger seems to have ended! Representatives from the Jewish community arrived in the evening, we got a hefty meal. Forgotten were the problems of the past.

On the 17th two trucks delivered additional supplies for our trip, and on the 21st we returned to Piraeus to pick up coal. Another storm surprised us at night, and this one exceeded the previous one in intensity. The storm made any contact with the shore impossible. We were in a precarious situation, since the anchor could break and drive the ship into the open sea. After a signal light was mounted on deck, and other attempts were made to contact shore, a pilot arrived to guide the ship to the protected bay of Salamis.

We stayed there for three days, trying to get coal. All our efforts were useless; we decided to leave Piraeus and proceed to Crete. It started out well, a police boat accompanied us for a while, and we parted with "Viva Greece" calls.

The night of the 25th brought another storm; this time it got me too, and I went to the railing to give tribute to the sea. This also came to pass, and the next morning the Milos sailed into Candia harbor. To our surprise, we saw the "Atlantic", which we thought was far behind us. We communicated with our sister ship and learned that they picked up our mail in Istanbul; we also found out that the "Pancho" run aground and some passengers lost their lives. Some of the Atlantikers tried to swim to the Milos, but were denied boarding, because of a typhus outbreak on their ship.

Candia is a city with strong southern characteristics; a fortress and a lighthouse borders the sea. On the 28th we sailed again, with "Shalom" calls from the Atlantic, and the hope to be soon at our final destination. But there was yet another sad event. Our member, Nisal, passed away, and all passengers observed a period of silence, interrupted only by the ship siren, as his body, clad in linen, was slowly lowered into the ocean.

After two days we arrived in Limassol, Cypress. The Milos had run out of coal again, and there were negotiations in regard to the form of payment. The accepted exchange was either Dollars, Pounds or Gold. A collection of valuables from our TTs got the amount needed to pay for the coal, and on the next day the tender arrived to deliver the important fuel. The immigration officials came on board, and with an understanding smile entered our destination: Port Said! Nevertheless, as they left the ship they wished us all a happy journey- and a good arrival in Tel Aviv!! With this send off we continued our journey.

Arrival in Palestine

November 3rd

About 11 AM a motorboat approached the Milos, and signaled the captain to stop. The British police ordered our captain to proceed to the Haifa harbor. We were at the same latitude, and it did not take much time to get there; we arrived in Haifa about 2 PM, and to our surprise saw the Pacific anchored there.

Haifa made a very favorable impression on us. On the right we saw Mt.Carmel with its modern homes and commercial buildings; on the left were gleaming oil tanks, some destroyed by Italian air attacks. Rumors have it that we will remain on the Milos two days, and then get transferred to a camp. Since we left Cyprus, fruits were plentiful; our daily rations are about three oranges or grape fruits. The oranges are not fully ripe, but tasted good. Two Arab policemen are stationed on the bridge; they speak Hebrew.

November 4th

Fedor Schoen and I were designated for night watch from 7- 12PM. We cleaned out a portion of the navigation room, got food and an oil lamp, and made ourselves comfortable for a long night. Unfortunately, it started to rain, and water seeped in. We had to move to a different shelter.

November 5th

One of the police is from Berlin, and we had a long conversation. To his surprise, he discovered old friends among our group, and a happy reunion followed. In the afternoon the sirens suddenly sounded and all proceeded below deck. It turned out to be just a practice air raid test.

November 7th

Rumors have it that we are not to be transported to a camp, but moved to a former French passenger ship, the "Patria". Women and children are already being transferred, and tomorrow will be our turn. The "Patria" looks very large and modern. I heard that it was, prior to WW I, the largest ship, named the "Vaterland"; after WW 1 the French got it, and, in WW II, it fell into British hands. The passengers of the Pacific arrived two days ago. On the Milos there is a festive mood; we have plenty of room and plenty to eat because any remaining provisions are being distributed and eaten.

November 10th

Early in the morning a motor boat picked us up and transferred us to the Patria. After our belongings were inspected, we proceeded to the disinfection room where we, and our clothes were sanitized. Then, off to the shower room to take (like in a dream) a bath in tap water. We received a blue gown, picked up our clothes and went to the dining room. Officials questioned us about our past, the condition in Czechoslovakia, etc. After fingerprinting, we were dismissed. My bunker was in the lower section of the ship and I took possession of my place. We waited 2 hours for lunch, but did not get anything because the kitchen failed to prepare enough for all of us.

We were hoping to get a substantial dinner. After an hour of commotion and shouting we got bread, coffee, a small tomato and half an orange. This was the first meager meal since 5:30 AM. Later in the afternoon, our bags arrived; many items were missing. I only lost a knife and a spoon. Now, let me describe the ship: As I previously mentioned, it is a very large and beautiful vessel. (Our

Milos, in comparison, looked more like a life raft.) There is hot and cold water, a bakery, a tremendous engine room, large decks and modern washrooms.

November 11th

We slept well and, except for the heat and lack of ventilation, had no complaints. We stood in a long line to get breakfast, consisting of black coffee, and Chalva. It is being rumored that we are going to move to a different room, and that the routine of the Milos will be re-established.

November 12th

Yesterday, we moved to a large hall on the rear deck of the ship, and I feel that this is an ideal location. In the evening, a concert was arranged for us, we sat in the dining hall on comfortable chairs, and had the feeling of living again under civilized conditions. The washrooms are also terrific; running hot and cold water and porcelain wash basins; compare this to the Milos where we had only seawater in metal buckets. The seawater we got from the ocean was sometimes contaminated. Everything here is very clean and orderly.

We learned that the Patria is a 18000 t vessel, compared to the 720 t of the Milos. The local police force is integrated and includes female officers, dressed in khaki skirts and straw hats. Most of them are Jewish Palestinians, and some speak German.

November 12th

We were inoculated against smallpox and typhus.

November 13th

All passengers received live vests. We are not sure what this means. Rumors have it that we are going to be deported to Australia. Hope this is not true.

November 16th

There were demonstrations in the evening, with Hebrew songs, a choir demanding our release, and protest against deportation.

November 17th

Everything seems to point to an imminent departure. Coal is being loaded, the crew arrived on board, emergency exits were built, etc.

The TTs sent a strong petition to the Palestinian authority, requesting our release, and protesting against a possible deportation.

This is the first official report that seems to confirm the rumors. At the same time we were warned not to spread such rumors.

November 18th

Coal is still being loaded. We are speculating what we could do to prevent the deportation.

November 20th

We decided to take some action; the Betar is going to go on a hunger strike, the Jishuv (Jewish population of Palestine) decided on a 24 hour demonstration, stopping all work. The strike was not strictly enforced, and whether it will have any success is questionable. To get more food I joined the labor team, and receive now double rations.

November 21st

We waited rather impatiently to get our breakfast. After yesterday's fast the TT served a sumptuous meal: extra quantities of bread, coffee and Chalva. At 9AM we got yesterday's soup which today tasted even better. I forgot to describe the strike: The meals were prepared as usual, then came the call to get it, but naturally, nobody showed up, and the kettles were returned to the kitchen. I do not believe our action will change the mind of the authorities. In the afternoon we were again vaccinated.

The reply to our strike came in the form of an official announcement:

The British administration seems to be forced to send our transport to a British colony, because our stay in Palestine would endanger the British influence in the Middle East. The administration will guarantee our safety, and we will be interned for the duration of the war. After the war we will have the option to stay in Palestine, or be repatriated to our country of origin.

We replied:

It is incorrect to state that our transport was caught by British Police boats. The truth is that we voluntarily sailed into the Haifa harbor;

We also questioned the danger to the British influence in the Middle East; and, appealed to the moral question of refugees not being allowed into their own country. This is not the exact wording, but it reflects the meaning of our reply. In the evening we were asked to provide the names of any relative residing in Palestine. I gave Gretl Gruenhut's name, but do not believe it will be of any help, since she is a newcomer herself.

November 22nd

I was busy all morning. The dining room had to be cleaned, and wood had to be unloaded. Our team is to be dissolved, because they want to economize on the double food rations

November 23rd

Last evening we witnessed an exciting event. It was already dark, when I heard shouts and commotion by the British police. Eight of our passengers tried to swim to shore, but were discovered. (They were hiding in one of the coal boats) It was interesting to observe the prompt action of the British. Motor boats started up and large reflectors scanned the sea; everybody had to go below deck and the entire ship was searched. I observed this through a porthole; the individuals (6 men and 2 women) were from the Pacific. They were questioned, and led to jail. The reflectors kept on scanning the ocean but did not find any more fugitives.

The voluntary labor team had been replaced by a compulsory force to be supplied by each room. I have my doubts whether this arrangement will succeed. It would be a better solution for the TT to provide some extra portion of food instead of requiring forced labor.

November 24th

Last night there was another escape attempt. This time, however, they were not caught. It is a puzzle how they could defy the security measures taken by the police. I forgot to mention that we were restricted to our rooms for fear of further escape attempts. Since all portholes have to be closed and darkened after sundown, the presence in this hot and sticky room is quite some ordeal.

This morning we were awakened by barking and we noticed a large black dog on the upper deck; it

belonged to the police, and probably will seek out and prevent any future escapes.

It was 9AM and a ship which looked familiar entered the harbor. It was the Atlantic which looked quite different- all upper deck wooden construction was missing. Some of the passengers were already transferred to the Patria, the rest will follow. We probably have to squeeze to accommodate another 1800 passengers. They are already building shelves in the dining room for 150 people, and this is very confining, considering the size and ventilation of the room.

The Atlantic passengers told us that they left Crete for Cyprus; because they was not enough coal, the ship had to stop every hour to build up sufficient steam to continue the trip. Sailing for quite some time (there was also a shortage of food) they spotted land, which the captain thought was Turkey (the Turkish flag was displayed). A motorboat arrived and British police boarded the Atlantic. The captain then learned that they were in Cyprus. The Turkish flag was removed and the British flag hoisted. The wooden structures on the Atlantic were used for firewood to run the engine (A joke went around that matches and toothpicks were also collected). There is no wood to be found on the ship. Shelves were dismantled, and two to three passengers had to sleep on a straw mattress on the floor, the sanitary conditions were awful; there were only four toilets for 1800 people and it was unavoidable when epidemics spread. Thirteen passengers died, including a 18year old who could not be operated for appendicitis.

November 25th

Dear Diary! Something horrible happened! It is impossible to realize the full impact of it; so much happened in the last few hours that I am unable to think clearly. I will, nevertheless, try to describe it in some kind of order.

About 8 AM we were supposed to leave our quarters, because they planned to build more shelves. I did not feel like leaving, and stayed in the quarter. About 9 AM I heard a detonation followed by strong vibrations throughout the ship. I did not know the cause and when I, out of curiosity, looked out of the porthole I noticed about 20 passengers swimming in the sea. I thought, they must have a nerve trying to escape in bright daylight. It did not take long before motorboats arrived and secured them. All of a sudden I felt off balance, and noticed that the ship turned sideways. A policeman rushed in and called: "Everybody to the other side!" (This happened frequently on the Milos) I proceeded to the other side on the upper deck. This did not seem to make any difference because the ship continued to pitch. Suddenly, the crew runs by, all with life vests and in great haste. Two women passengers shouted in panic: "The ship is sinking!!"

The situation gets worse by the minute; the pitch gets more pronounced, and it becomes impossible to stand upright. A mother with a baby in her arms cries for help. I grasp her and pull her to the end of the ship. I am unable to walk straight, we can only crawl on the wall, trying to hold on to the railing, which is now above us. Everything is upside down. A policeman slides down the deck into the sea, his rifle following behind him. People are screaming. The ship is tilted to such an extent that one can stand upright on the cabin walls. I am on the top of the deck, holding on to the railing; I have to let go and fly down the entire deck into the sea. Behind me are rafters and anything movable that follows the same path into the sea. Fortunately, I did not get hit by it. The shoes and clothes are getting water drenched, and with great effort do I swim to shore.

Arriving there I see a devastating picture: people fighting for their lives, children screaming, wives trying to find their husbands. Then I hear a loud crash and notice large deck covers tumble down into the ocean, smashing swimmers. On the shore are half-clad, desperate individuals trying to find relatives or

friends. I take some of my wet clothes off and spread them on the lawn for drying. I am shivering. After a few hours we are taken to a harbor warehouse. The Red Cross (or some other charitable organization) got some food and dry clothes. The only possession I saved were 1 short, 1 shirt, 1 sweater, a pair of socks and shoes, a shoulder bag containing 2 oranges, a calendar, and part of this dairy. In the warehouse I received 2 shirts, a pair of shorts and a tie. These are my only possessions arriving in Palestine.

In the evening, buses took us to a camp (probably Atlit). We arrived at 10PM, were lead to barracks and received a straw mattress, pillow, blankets and eating utensils. The barracks are rather large, have 19 windows (screened) and wooden racks for our mattresses. The washrooms are first-class. The camp is secured by three high barbed wire fences; in addition there are a number of watch towers. This morning we got for breakfast a quarter loaf of bread, Chalva and good coffee. We learned that the Patria was scheduled, yesterday noon, to take us to Mauritius. The act of sabotage prevented it; who planned it is unknown.

It is rumored that we will stay in this camp six months. An eternity! I am worried that the news of the sinking of the Patria will reach my parents and will cause worry; I will use the first chance to write them.

November 26th

21 victims of the Patria were buried today.

November 27th

More victims are being recovered. There are dreadful stories circulating, picturing awful scenes of the disaster. I was very lucky. The event has been broadcast by European radio stations. I am sure Prague will assume the worst. I wrote a letter, but could not mail it.

November 28th

For the last two days it had been raining. The water hits the corrugated roof so hard, that you cannot hear your own word. The downpour continued for the last days and is accompanied by lightning. The ground is muddy and our shoes carry the mud into the barrack. We got an outfit consisting of a plain coverall (devoid of pockets, belt or sleeves), socks, underwear and shirt. To make the coverall look more attractive, I sewed sleeves to the end of the leg part. To make my wardrobe complete, I would need a few more shirts, a suit, overcoat and a pair of shoes. Some of the TTs who were arrested and interrogated after the sinking of the Patria, returned to camp. They told us that the documents for our deportation to Mauritius had already been approved and signed on the day the Patria sank. The Jewish schoolchildren got a day off on Tuesday to collect clothes and other necessities for us.

November 29th

I got hold of a newspaper which reported the sinking of the Patria on page one. It described the "horrendous disaster" in Haifa as one of the greatest tragedies in naval history. So far, there are 22 TTs that lost their lives, and 200 are missing.

November 30th

A library opened, and books can be borrowed without charge. At least something to keep busy; it is very boring to have nothing to do.

December 1st

A day of mourning for the Patria victims has been declared in Palestine; Cinemas and any form of

entertainment has been shut down. The whole world has reacted to this disaster, and we are getting help from everywhere. I mailed a postcard to Dr Benisch in Tel Aviv (they are friends of my parents), and asked him to notify my parents that I am well. It is questionable whether he will get the card. Rations were distributed; we got soap and razor blades; each barrack got 3 razors and shaving cream (to be used collectively).

Life continues as usual; it is amazing how fast one can overcome such tragic events.

I am sitting outside, the sun is shining, and above me arches a deep blue, clear sky. It is cool and windy. Beyond the barbed wire I can see the guard on patrol, and further back a plain, bordered by Mt Carmel. On the left side is a small hill and beyond, supposedly, the ocean.

On the right side, new camp facilities are being build. The barbed wire fencing has already been finished, and Jewish and Arab workers are leveling the ground. The Arabs are not the noble breed described in European literature, and their behavior came to light on the Patria; they were the first to get to the shore.

December 3rg

Some of our belongings have been salvaged from the Patria, and there is some hope we may get some back. We do not know what condition they are in, since the seawater must have caused severe damage.

December 5th

We moved to another barrack (#52), because they had to make room for the people from the Atlantic. We have to double up for the same reason. I learned this afternoon, that we will be released in January; the news was supposedly published by a local newspaper.

While I was walking along the fence this morning, I noticed a familiar face on the other side; it was Hans Radnitz, a former school pal. We were surprised to meet again at this place. He left a year ago, was interned for 9 months in Slovakia, and sailed with the Atlantic from Bratislava to Haifa. He is quartered on the other side of the camp. The camp is divided by a road; we are situated on the left side, the Atlantic on the right. We are not allowed to leave our section, and can communicate with the other side only by shouting. In the evening we celebrated Oneg Shabbat. So far 41 TTs were buried.

December 7th

I became an aide to Mr. Glasser; since he is busy with the camp management (and perhaps a bit lazy), I help out by preparing his meals and taking care of minor chores. In turn he gets oranges, chocolate and other food items (which are easily available to him through his position).

The recovered baggage from the Patria arrived in awful condition. Most items are missing, and the remaining ones are damaged. Sometimes, only the skeleton of a luggage survived and the owner's face drops. My face dropped the most, because I did not even get the skeleton back.

December 9th

We learned yesterday that the TTs from the Atlantic will, in all probability, be deported to Mauritius. To prevent demonstrations the British ordered a lock-down; we could not leave our barracks, everything was locked and guards were posted everywhere.

We were awakened this morning by shouts and general commotion. Looking through the window we saw TTs forcibly removed by the British police. The men were hardly dressed and covered with blankets. The women were horrified seeing the men mistreated. During the night, the police was reinforced by the British military. There is nothing we can do to help the TTs from the Atlantic.

The curfew was lifted at noon, the TTs were gone, and only a few abandoned back bags remained. The military surrounded the entire camp, and it seemed like we were in a military installation. Machine guns were displayed all over, and armored vehicles parked outside the fence. It is being rumored that the TTs from the Atlantic were escorted by a military convoy to the Haifa harbor.

In the evening the British locked the barracks, but, as soon as they left, we jumped out of the window.

Our barrack representative went to an important meeting. He told us that there were bloody demonstrations in Haifa between Jews and British police to protest the deportation of the Atlantic TTs. We will, out of solidarity, go on a 24 hour hunger strike. All work will be stopped, unless absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, there were a few strike breakers. Some barracks sent out for coffee; but on their return, strikers spilled their coffee.

The afternoon started with a memorial and Kaddish for the Patria victims.

The hunger strike ended prematurely at 5:30PM. In the evening, the lights suddenly went out and sirens warned of a possible air attack. We also heard detonations in the distance and assumed a possible attack on Haifa.

December 11th

Yesterday's detonations were not an air attack, but a dummy air alarm to get demonstrators off the street. Unfortunately, the demonstrations did not do any good; the Atlantic members were already on high sea, on the way to a British colony.

In the afternoon we received another casualty list. There were unspeakable scenes; a young girl found out that her parents and brother were on the list. A child recognized the photo of her father and ran crying to her mother.

December 14th

The barracks emptied by the Atlantic TTs are now filled with our TTs, resulting in a "normal" occupancy of 36 per barrack. Supposedly, the German radio broadcast reported that the Patria resulted in 3000 victims, and that the British machine-gunned the people trying to swim to the shore. Propaganda!

I got a job in the kitchen, something I was trying to get for some time. I got this plush job with the help of another member in our barrack, with the understanding that we would split the sale proceeds of the extra rations I would receive. The previous two days I made 2 Mils (local currency), which is, for Athlit, a considerable sum. I expect this venture to continue.

Now, a description of my job: In the morning I get a sumptuous breakfast, consisting of Coffee, milk, margarine, jam, Chalva and cottage cheese – all in unlimited quantities. For me, this is Paradise! After breakfast, we mop the floor and unload the food delivery. For lunch we get meat (as much as we want), milk rice, oranges and vegetables. Since the quantities are unlimited, I overate a number of times. We are usually off in the afternoon, and I attend a Hebrew course. The saved money is used to buy postage for a letter to the USA.

It is not easy to save money for postage, considering that a orange sells for 1Mill, a banana for 2Mills, etc.

The Betarim from Bulgaria returned to our barrack. They are a swell bunch of guys. We get together in the evening and sing in chorus. One of the guys has an excellent voice and it is a pleasure to listen to him. Tomorrow is Oneg Shabat and we are learning new songs.

Toothbrushes were distributed, and my teeth can get a good cleaning.
AT 6am we are being awakened and participate in gymnastics.

December 24th
Chanukah!

In the evening we distributed presents, namely cigarettes, cookies, candy cake, etc. I received an additional gift: fever and a sore throat. I felt so bad that I went to the clinic, where they took my temperature and gave me some pills. In spite of my fever (39.4C), I had to walk back to the barrack.

December 25th

I am still sick, fever and sore throat. Besides me, there are two other sick people in our barrack, one with malaria, and the other one with typhus. There are quite a few typhus cases in the camp; the sick are kept in the hospital and many turn deadly.
The toll of Patria victims has risen to 125.

December 26th

Measures are being taken to prevent a typhus epidemic; toilets are frequently cleaned and there is a general emphasis on cleanliness.
The conditions in the clinic are shameful; they only have Iodine, Aspirin, Peroxide, Chinine and some ointments; important medications are missing.

December 27th

I developed fever again; I went to the clinic and was told that the fever was not caused by a strep throat. I was asked to return for a blood test. The nurse opined that I may have malaria, but I don't believe it. When I returned for the results the doctor took my temperature, looked at the result of the test and muttered: "1400 white blood cells!; that seems a bit high". He reflected for a while, and decided to admit me to the hospital. The decision did not please me, but I followed his advice and walked to the camp hospital.

There, a warm bath and inviting bed waited for me. For dinner, the nurse served soup and pudding; at 8PM the lights were turned off, and I fell asleep in this luxurious bed.

December 28th

At 5 Am we were awakened, washed, and the nurse took our temperature.
For breakfast I got tea with milk. I am not supposed to eat any solid food. I would like to know what is wrong with me. Nobody is telling me. It does not seem to be malaria and if I had typhus, I would feel worse. I don't have the slightest idea what it is.

December 29th

All of a sudden, fever-free! Tomorrow I will be able to get up and the day after I will be released from the hospital. On the one hand I am glad to get away from this boring environment, but on the other hand I will be missing the bed and good food. An example of the diet: mornings: excellent cocoa, buttermilk. Noon: potatoes, rice, red cabbage, bananas; afternoon: tea with milk, and evenings: soup, vanilla pudding. Everything very good, but not enough.

Something else to report. The staff at the hospital has male and female nurses; some of them are from Haifa, some from our transport. One of the patients questioned a nurse he knew from the Pacific, what

his name was; I hardly believed my ears when he mentioned Rolf Wittner, a person I tried to find since we left Prague. I relayed regards from Edith Katz, an acquaintance of both of us, and he was delighted to hear about Prague and Edith.

In the morning the doctor looked at me and announced: you are well; time to go back "home". He examined me again and asked whether I knew what ailed me. I answered in the negative, and he replied: neither do I.

Members from my barrack brought my clothes, I dressed and happily left the hospital.

December 31st

NEW YEAR!

So many memories of previous celebrations; it is difficult to be joyful on this evening.

Hopefully, the next year will be better. This is something we hope for every year, but hardly ever achieve.

GOOD LUCK IN THE COMING YEAR!

AND A HEAVY LINE TO LEAVE THE PAST BEHIND!

1941

JANUARY 1st

The Ivrit course is scheduled in the morning, and, because my present job in the kitchen conflicts with this time slot, I decided to quit the job in order to learn the language spoken in Palestine. The kitchen help netted me 80Mils.

January 8th

From noon till 4PM I was busy washing my laundry. It is clear magic to get a clean result with cold water and substandard soap.

I was glad that, after a lot of soaping and scrubbing, the last piece emerged CLEAN from the tub. They were hung on the barbed wire fence to dry, and I could admire my master work from the barrack window.

The last few days I failed to update entries in the diary, and will do so now.

Yesterday the NZO (New Zionist Organization) arranged a lecture by Dr. Blau on "history and geography". The lectures of Dr Blau are known for its interesting presentation, and a few hundred people who could not be accommodated in the barrack, had to listen to the program on the outside. A number of other lectures are planned: tropical diseases, Jewish history, etc.

In addition to the Ivrit course, I attend an English, and a poultry- raising course., and am planning to attend an Arabic course, which is scheduled to start in the near future.

Yesterday, the "inmates" organized a demonstration against the camp commander, with the result that we were put under curfew for one week, could not receive mail, were prevented from leaving

designated areas, etc. Lights were turned off at 7PM, and children and sick were deprived of their dietary and extra food rations. (Why children and sick people are held responsible and punished, is a mystery).

January 9th

Received a nice letter from Herbert Schenk (former school friend); he got my present address from Dr. Benesch (friend of my parents).
Otherwise no news.

January 15th

Not much to report. One day follows another, and I will be happy when this boring existence comes to an end. Let me describe the course of an average day: At 6AM the barrack commander awakens us with: Mishmar Haboker, Lakum! We peel ourselves, willingly or unwillingly, from our blankets, and are ready for breakfast, consisting of black coffee and jam. Afterward, the barracks are cleaned, and at 9.30AM the British and Palestinian police start their inspection. At 10AM I attend the Arabic course, and after that, the Ivrit course.

At noon we get soup and a small portion of meat. Then we are allowed (male and female) to promenade on the camp street.

At 4PM the signal is given that the gates will be closed, and all have to return to their barracks. The inmate count starts now: British and Palestinian police count and record the number of persons in each barrack. After the census is completed, I go to Zrif (barrack) 61 for the English course. Dinner starts at 5:30PM and consists of Coffee, margarine, Chalva or cottage cheese. Because of this monotonous fare many of us (supposedly) developed jaundice. After this "sumptuous" meal the dishes (consisting of cup, plate and utensils) have to be cleaned, and the rest of the time we spend socializing (talking, reading etc.) AT 9pm we prepare our "bed", and, after such an exciting day, fall asleep. The nights are sometimes unpleasantly cool, and we wake up shivering.

January 19th

It is rainy and windy outside; the storm blew off the roof of the washroom last night, toppled some telephone poles, and caused damage to the power lines. Conversely, we can report something pleasant: the Yishuv (the Israelis) donated oranges, and each of us got six delicious fruits. Also, received a card from Dr. Benesch stating that they have notified my parents.

January 20th

Last night we experienced an earthquake; I was asleep and did not notice it, but according to others, our cots were shaking badly. Fortunately, the barrack survived.

January 21st

The water supply has been cut off for a few days, apparently caused by a broken pipe.

January 27th

Today is Liesl's (former girlfriend in Prague) birthday. Although I can neither orally, nor by letter congratulate her, my thoughts are with her.

January 28th

Last night we experienced another earthquake, and being still awake, I noticed it. Rumors are that the Allies are advancing in N. Africa.

January 29th

Today is Edith's (sister) birthday. I wonder how conditions are at home. I did not hear from them for the last six months, and the prospects to get a letter are dim.

January 30th

For the last few days I felt miserable, nauseated, and experienced a lack of appetite. My eyes had a yellowish coloration, and I suspected that these were the symptoms of jaundice, a very common ailment in our camp. I went to the hospital to get a check up and diet instructions. A long line of people were already waiting. The nurse asked the "yellows" to return at 3:30 PM.

The line of patients returned, and the examination followed. It was a kind of assembly-line check-up; the nurse looked at the coloration of our eyes, and directed us to an instruction poster which detailed in three short lines, what to do, or not to do. Then, we got a voucher which prescribed a diet plan for the kitchen, consisting of milk rice, cauliflower, toast, orange and tea. It may be more economical for the kitchen to switch to the dietary plan, since most of the TTs are "yellow".

February 6th

Today's happy event: I received a package from Schenk containing: a can of sardines, two cans of fish, pate of liver, a second-hand pair of shoes, chocolate, raisins and candy. The only problem is, because of my jaundice, I am not allowed to eat any of this good stuff, except the sweets. The senders names on the parcel are Schenk and Kohn; I am not sure which Mrs Kohn was so generous to send these goodies. My jaundice is not getting any better; I look and resemble a canary. Sometimes I feel so nauseated that it reminds me of the "Milos". To get our daily diet, we have to wait in long lines at the kitchen.

February 7th

Wrote a comprehensive letter to the US, but did not mail it, because I want to enclose a letter to my dear parents. The letter takes about two months to get to the US, and another four to five months to get to my parents.

There are rumors that we will be interned for the duration of the war. The Bulgarians are cited as an indicator; they are interned now for over six months, and despite strikes have no prospect of being released.

The camp life is getting on my nerves; the boredom; everyday the same; in the morning we already know what to expect for dinner. I am so fed up with the daily meals, that I daydream of culinary highlights. I am not the only one. All TTs feel the same way. Yesterday morning I was fantasizing of receiving a food package, and lo and behold, the same afternoon a package arrived. Unpacking it, I felt like the king of England.

February 10th

Received notification that my luggage (sent separately) arrived in Istanbul. I need 1.5 British Pounds to redeem it. No chance to get that much money together.

February 14th

Today is my mother's birthday. Best wishes from afar.

FEB 18th

The N.Z.O. delivered bundles of clothing and necessities to be distributed to us. I got a pair of pants, jacket, underwear, shirt, soap, toothpaste, shoes and shoe polish, razor blades and cream.

Mailed letter to Gretl Gruenhut.

February 27th

Mailed letters to Dr. Benisch and my parents.

There is a general black-out in the camp.

March 3rd

The salvage operation of the Patria discovered more victims. The count is now 189.

March 9th

Received a nice letter from Herbert Schenk.

A few days ago I mailed a postcard to the local US Consulate requesting a transfer of the affidavit to Palestine.

Purim was the start of a nationwide collection of necessities for the Patria survivors. A truck of the W.I.Z.O delivered clothing, and further deliveries are expected.

March 13th

Purim! In the evening we got gifts from the Jishuv (Jewish community), consisting of cake, candy and cigarettes. The TTs organized masked groups, and the neighboring barrack had phonograph music. The kitchen outdid itself and cooked a festive dinner of meat, potatoes and gravy; the potatoes were boiled with the skin, but in such quantities that many of my neighbors had potatoes left over, which they gave to me; I prepared a salad with potatoes, oil and meat. Before bed time we were served tea with lemon. What a day!

The morning brought a visit from the Sephardic chief rabbi, accompanied by a honor guard in dark blue coats with red trimmings, and carrying a curved sword. The rabbi made a speech expressing hope that we would be liberated between Pesach and Shevuot. The afternoon curfew was extended to 8 PM. Almost every barrack had some kind of celebration. I visited # 55; only invited guests were admitted. The room was beautifully decorated, a stage had been erected and rows of seats provided. The British camp commandant attended in person. The program, lasting two hours, was first class. Returning in a joyful mood to my barrack, I found a package from Dr. Loewenstein, containing chocolate, cans of sardines, cigarettes, and a large fruit cake. The present made me very happy. At 4:30 PM I went to barrack 55. All seats had been removed, and an area set aside for dancing. It was a lot of fun, and I enjoyed myself. Afterward I went for a walk, enjoying the full moon, the music and singing coming from the barracks. I returned late to my barrack, and happily fell asleep on my straw mattress.

March 14th

Today is (like every Friday) clean up day. Everything has to be removed from the barrack, and thoroughly cleaned. This happens every Tuesday and Friday, and is disliked by all.

Misc.

The rainy season came to an end. The food seems to be improving; we are getting sometimes rice with chopped meat, and in the morning tea with lemon. The tea can be made tastier by adding a spoonful of marmalade. High quality cigarettes are inexpensive; the cheapest sell for ½ Mil; oranges cost 1 Mil (in Palestine they sell 5 for 1 Mil); figs and dates are 20 mils per kilo.

There is a birthday celebration almost daily, with music, dancing and entertainment. We have two excellent accordion players, accompanied by even better singers. Today was a repeat of yesterday's performance with many British and Palestinian official present.

March 19th

Gretl Gruenhut sent me 100 Mil which improved my financial situation considerably.

A sport facility has been build and the first soccer competition took place. The facility is located between the first and second barbed wire fence; there is also a large lawn and baseball area.

There are rumors, that individuals who have a spouse living in Palestine, will be released. I am not convinced that this is more than a rumor (there is so much hearsay going around)., but it could be a good beginning. I am well again, off the diet, and can now eat regular food; the canned sardines I got from Schenk were delicious.

March 25th

An important event! 200 LEGAL immigrants from Romania arrived, and were "temporarily" housed in our camp. They all looked in good shape, and, since there are no restrictions on what they could take along, nor did they experience a "Patria", they brought a sizable number of bags with them; the record goes to the individual with 17 large suitcases. It is kind of strange to see, suddenly, well-dressed individuals in our camp. After one day in camp they are already disgusted; they criticize everything, even though the kitchen prepares special meals for them. The Romanians traveled by train and ship, and it took them less than a week to get here. Horror stories are being told of the pogroms and treatment of Jews in Romania; killing in slaughter houses, cutting off of extremities, etc. Four barracks were emptied to house the newcomers, and we got five added to our barrack.

March 27th

More immigrants from Bulgaria arrived in camp. The British commandant already advised us that we will have to restrict ourselves even more.

PAGE MISSING

...we are preparing different food specialties: a fruit salad, combining oranges, dates, lemon, and a sauce of Chalva, butter, marmalade, and orange rind. The salad in our barrack became a big hit. We included Mr.Glasser in our endeavor; he provides us with the provisions we need. Now, we have such an excess of food that we can hardly handle it. I prepared a cake consisting of bread soaked in coffee, with Chalva glazing. I may have to go on a diet.

March 29th

This morning the air had a jasmine-like odor. As I subsequently learned, it was the smell of orange blossoms. It is hard to describe this overwhelming aroma that engulfs the entire country.

The weather changed and brought us the seasonal Chamsin (warm desert wind). We felt the effects,

headaches, days before the onset. The nights are warm, and I took the occasion for a long walk. Mailed letters to Dr. Loewenstein, Dr. Benisch, Walter Loewi and Schenk.

March 30th

We received 200 immigrants from Yugoslavia, Russia and the Baltics. They were allocated to different barracks. Our barrack has presently 48 "inmates", and we are almost as crowded as we were when the "Atlantiker" arrived. The Bulgarians, who were in camp for over six months are now slowly being released (twenty persons per day). The good news created a lot of optimism in camp, and we are hoping our turn will be next. The Russian immigrants relate the condition in the Soviet Union, which is everything but good. There is little difference between the methods employed in Russia and Germany.

April 3rd

For the last three days we are without water, and we were told that the problem will not be fixed for another three days. The weather is very hot, and the lack of water makes the situation even worse. The toilets are clogged up, and create an unpleasant smell in the entire camp. We are unable to shower or wash ourselves, and spent most of our time on the mattress, languishing for some refreshment. Almost every evening I go for a walk, either with Dr. Steiner, or Terry and we rarely return before midnight. The nights are, after the heat of the daytime, rather cool, and many people are sleeping outside, under the starry sky of Erez Israel.

April 5th

Today occurred a regrettable event. An art exhibit opened, displaying sketches created by camp inmates. Among the display was a display critical of the NZO (New Zionist Organization) and the Betar. We notified the camp commander that the pictures should be removed. The British commander inspected the ambiguous art and did not find anything offending. We had to take matters in our own hands. Five youngsters from the Betar tore the sketches down. There was a confrontation, a fight, and the Gafirim (Palestinian police) had to interfere and arrested the people involved. One of the Betarim had the removed sketch, copies were made and presented to the British commander. The commander had visited the exhibit, but the offending art was added at a later date. The arrested youngsters were released to the chagrin of the "leftists"

New legal immigrants arrive in the camp daily, and other "legals" are released, resulting in a constant turnover. Most of the immigrants are from Yugoslavia, which is at war with Germany. We learned that Ethiopia has been liberated by the British.

April 6th

Received some clothes and toiletries from the NZO.

Yesterday, our barrack, like others, celebrated Seder. We received Matzoth (which is rectangular), wine, eggs, and potatoes. All leavening food was discarded, and the cooking utensils were cleaned in accord with ritual requirements. The same was done in the kitchen. The Pesach meals are very good and plentiful. Curfew has been extended to 10PM,

April 13th

I am to present a political lecture this evening; I hope that the date is not a bad omen.

April 20th

The lecture has been luckily weathered. Pesach is over and we are back to our regular meals.

The charges against the captain of the "Milos" for illegal entry is in progress at the Haifa court. Some of our TTs were summoned as witnesses. The captain tries to defend himself by claiming that the ship was destined for Egypt. In response to the judges reply that this also would be an illegal entry, the captain claimed that the Palestinian court would have no jurisdiction.

May 4th

A children's sport area has been opened between the first and second barbed wired fence. There were rewards given for various sport activities. Politics: Greece and Yugoslavia have been occupied by the Germans. In Africa, German and Italian armies are advancing toward Egypt. Tobruk is held by the Allies. Iraq and the Palestinian Arabs are taking an anti-British position; there is the danger of riots. A Jewish settlement in Hederah has been attacked by Arabs. It is expected that the US will declare war on Germany.

A camp newspaper has been organized; I am the editor.

Yesterday I moved my "bed" outside, and slept, the first time, under the sky of this beautiful country. The moon shone so bright that it was possible to read a book. I lay awake for some time, thinking of the past. It was after midnight that I fell asleep, and I awoke when the sun and the noise of the riser brought me back to reality.

The weather is sticky today, the sky has a foggy appearance, and we are too lazy to move. Our apathy increases with the length of the internment. Unable to accomplish anything, we are getting dull, impatient, and irritated. We are over six months in camp, and wonder, how much longer we have to wait. There are no indications, or hope, for an early release from this monotonous existence.

May 8th

Two meter deep trenches are being built to protect against possible air-raids, indicating the seriousness of the political situation.

May 10th

Two unpleasant events to report. A dreadful Chamsin makes our lives miserable; I slept outside again, but difficulty breathing, and the heat, made sleeping impossible. At noon the temperature reached 42C. The corrugated roof emitted heat like a hot plate. The Gafirim tell us that this is the worst Chamsin in years. The other bad news is the announcement by the camp commander that it is questionable we will be released after six months. Should we try to take some "action", he would request the aid of the military.

May 15th

An underground airfield is being constructed in our neighborhood.

May 23rd

The Germans invaded Crete. In our camp it has been announced that the Bulgarians are to be released within days. Since the Bulgarian transport serves as a barometer for our release, this gives us some hope.

A draft commission is expected in the camp to register volunteers between the ages of 20 and 30. The draft is not compulsory, but it is expected that all will participate, and that the Schochnut (Jewish Agency) anticipates it; form of moral pressure.

May 25th

Today we are exactly six months in camp. Sent Red Cross letter.

June 1st

A school is being organized for all under the age of 19. There are many typhus cases, and measures are taken to prevent the spread of this disease.

June 8th

Political: Syria is supposedly occupied by the British.

Camp: 77 Bulgarians were released.

June 9th

It is interesting to observe the outside world. Here, an Arab shepherd moves with a flock of black goats, creating arab melodies with his flute, the bells of the goats accompanying him; but this peaceful atmosphere is interrupted by a dull thunder. Everybody is looking at the sky to search for small white clouds, which would signify anti-aircraft fire. But this does not seem to be true today.

June 10th

Last night we experienced large-scale air attacks. The anti-aircraft guns were busy all night, and enemy aircraft constantly passed over the camp.

June 11th

WE ARE FREE!

Bulgarian youngsters stormed the barracks to announce the news that the day of our release has come. First, nobody believed them, but after other confirmed the news, jubilation and great excitement followed; the Gafirim came running to see what caused this commotion. People danced, threw objects around, howled and carried on. It infected the entire camp, even the secluded hospital area, where a young Bulgarian with high fever heard the news. Glad to be released, he sunk back into his pillows. Unfortunately, the fever increased and before the morning came, the young man's life ended. One the same day, the Bulgarians leave camp, board a bus and are on the way to a new life. Just a few yards away a truck loads the remains of the young Bulgarian for his last journey. The truck follows the bus of singing, jubilant Bulgarians.

P.S. During the last two days three inmates died of typhus.

June 12th

During the last air raid, the "Patria" was hit. Last night saw heavy air attacks on Haifa. A bomb fell also in the vicinity of our camp and caused such a noise that people jumped. The flak was busy till 5AM.

June 13th

The remaining Bulgarians were freed. Jubilation. A machine gun has been installed in the watch tower as an air defense. Maapilim from the Akko camp were transferred and allocated to various barracks.

June 15th

Something unbelievable happened! About 10 AM came an announcement, that approx. 80 Patria inmates will be released. In our barrack there are 7 lucky ones who will leave the camp by 4PM. You can hardly image how this event affected the entire camp. People are joyful, embrace each other, in brief, this is the best day in our camp life. Among the lucky ones were: Ferry and Kurt Barnat, Feldbrand,

Brodavka, Benda and two Bulgarians of our transport. Supposedly, there are to be 80 inmates discharged daily. I started my laundry and prepared everything for my departure.

June 17th

Disappointment! Only individuals under 18 and over 45 years will be released. After hoping for an imminent departure this makes me feel depressed. My clean laundry and everything else has been packed and is staring at me sarcastically. Most of the people in our barrack have been released, and my "bed" is an isle in a sea of emptiness. Except for Pepi Kohn, who is 19, there are no youngsters left.

June 18th

In the evening I climbed on top of the Barrack roof; It is hard to describe the beautiful view: on the right, the view of the ocean and the setting sun; straight ahead I see palms and tropical plants, and on the left there are mountains and the Tel Aviv-Haifa highway, with its constant traffic. It got darker, the sky took on a blue-gray coloration, while the last rays of the sun created a display of colors on the ocean. When it got dark, I climbed down, went for a walk, and passed an empty barrack where music was being played. I entered, sat down on one of the "beds", looked through the window at the starry sky, and listened to the music. It was quite romantic. At about 10 PM I got back to my barrack, and went to sleep under the night sky.

June 22th

A lucky day! The morning brought a letter from the US, and when I opened it I found two letters from my parents. I was so happy I could hardly concentrate on what was written. Immediately I wrote a reply and sent it to Avi Wurf, to be forwarded.

The second good news is the war declaration of Germany on Russia. There is now some reason to be hopeful.

June 23rd

The economic situation in the country is, supposedly, grim, and I am worried about my employment prospects.

July 2nd

There were no entries made for some time; there is nothing to report. The release of TTs, which was done in a haphazard manner, has now stopped completely, and we are dispirited and without much hope. I spend most of the time in the company of friends and some Romanian girls – the only diversion we have. We got some immigrants in camp who traveled via Romania, Russia, Japan, India and Egypt. There are also veiled woman, and Jews from Ethiopia among them. They are all legal immigrants and will be released soon.

My latest job is to distribute marmalade for the workers. It is a change, makes time pass faster, and there is plenty left over for me.

July 3rd

Yesterday I attended a concert in the Bulgarian section. The "orchestra" consisted of a harmonica, a guitar player and a singer. Later on we heard airplanes passing overhead, and knew by the sound of their engines, that they were enemy aircraft. Shortly after, we heard the sound of anti aircraft guns and the explosion of shells in the sky. We also noticed multicolored tracers. One of the aircraft was hit, and fell burning to the ground. The light of the burning aircraft illuminated the camp. The flak stopped, and we could hear only the engine of a British fighter plane.

July 10th

There was a change in our fruit rations; we are getting daily now 15-20dkg (dekagram) of grapes or lemons; for breakfast fig marmalade, and for lunch, pumpkin soup, sometimes buttermilk.

Politics: We hear air attacks on Haifa almost nightly; The women crawl under their "bed", and some men in our barrack do likewise. I sleep so deep that I, unfortunately, miss the show. Syria is negotiating with the British an armistice, The Germans have a hard time to advance in Russia.

July 18th

There was a meeting of the Zrif (barrack) leaders. A representative of a "leftish" organization described our changes for release in pessimistic tones. There may be the possibility of our internment till the end of the war. This caused a lot of commotion, but we are in such a worn down mood, that we probably will not take any action.

July 19th

British tactics: Unrest in camp? Provide better meals till the population calms down, and revert, then, to the same bad menu.

ATHLIT DAILY NEWS.

Our correspondent reports that due to the opposition of the inhabitants to the present regime, new elections resulted in better representation. Mr. Collmann was elected to the position of camp leader, who will negotiate with the British camp commander.

I do not believe that Mr C. is the right person to get our demands accepted. The election proceeded as follows: each barrack voted for or against Mr. C since he was the only candidate, and people wanted a change, he was the only alternative.

Our meals are improving (see: British tactics). Last Saturday we got potatoes, oil, 5 dkg sausage. Sunday: pea soup & hot dog, and in the evening: excellent Chalva, margarine and coffee. Since the camp food is even worse than prison food, a commission has been appointed to look into this problem. The British like to appoint commissions, which produce lengthy reports but are slow in changing things.

July 21st

The number of sick people increased again. In addition to papatachi, are cases of scarlet fever. In many barracks the majority of TTs are down with high fever. A commission visited our camp and suggested measures to prevent the spreading of disease. Malaria cases are also on the rise. The chances for our release are rather slim; we may "enjoy" life in camp to the end of the war, which could be months or years away.

July 24th

Today is the anniversary of Jabotinsky's death, and we honored the event by erecting a symbolic memorial with honor guards. We also spent the night reflecting on his life and ideas. The memorial, which was placed in our barrack, had been decorated with flowers and candle light, and the honor guard was manned by members of the Betar. Although I did not get any sleep, I feel fresh and wide awake.

August 1st

The papatachi finally got me. Since last Sunday I had fever (40C), but today I am fever-free, and hope to overcome the weakness that accompanies the disease.

The health situation in camp is critical; there are so many sick people, that a single doctor is unable to

treat all. Each barrack has a sanitation team, which carries patients on stretchers to and from the hospital. The team has to work all day to accommodate the multitude of sick. Patients with temperature below 38.5 C have to walk to the hospital. There, after a wait of one to two hours in a drafty room, the patients temperature will increase to a point which will allow him to be carried back on a stretcher.

I tasted a fresh fig; the fruit is onion shaped, dark blueish-green and of a sweet taste, similar to a peach. The cost in camp is 1Mil.

August 5th

My birthday! -and how depressing. Nobody, to wish me a happy birthday, nothing that makes this day different from any other monotonous, purposeless day, and nothing to remind me that this is the start of my 21st birth year.

August 8th

The "Patria" is being wrecked, because the severe damage makes repairs uneconomical.

August 15th

Returning this afternoon from a walk, I was met with joyful faces and lively debates. I soon found out that the cause of this euphoria was a report by the High Commissioner that our file will be transferred to the Palestinian Police, who will initiate a release plan based on age; children and seniors are to receive preference. As you can image the news had the effect of a direct hit. People already started to forecast the day of their release; I am joyful, too, but not ready to start packing. It is rumored that the release will start on Sunday.

August 18th

I feel lucky; in the morning I distributed rations, and since the Gafirim do not follow our every step (theoretically we are free), I took a shortcut to the outermost point of the fencing. This point is a huge rock overlooking the ocean. I rested among blooming flowers, baked in the sun, and marveled at the beautiful coloration of the ocean. The surf washed against the yellowish beach, and in the distance, camels moved by. One could see Mt. Carmel, partly hidden by clouds. There I rested for an hour, undisturbed, feeling free and happy. Returning to my barrack, a car from the C.I.D. passed us, which delivered a list of 50 persons to be released tomorrow. A similar number is to be released every second day thereafter. I can hardly wait for my turn.

We got permission to take a swim in the ocean, naturally, under guard, but we got used to this.

August 21st

Swimming!. What a sensation to leave the camp and walk along the road to the ocean. We saw camels, donkeys and cars passing by. We approached a crusader ruin, and finally got to a bay with a sandy beach. The waves were rather strong, and we enjoyed being tossed around by the water. After swimming in the open sea, we rested in the sand, and let the sun brown us. We could not get enough of the beauty of the sea, the beach and the scenery. Later on, we went into the surf. A large wave pushed me underwater, and after I came up again, a giant wave, double my size, got me; I made two double takes and landed with my face on the ocean floor. After I finally came up, I saw my friends rushing to my rescue; they thought I drowned. I was bleeding from my nose and mouth, and had some abrasions. After recouping from this experience, we went swimming again to utilize the three hours we were allowed. At noon we were assembled and under the loose supervision of one British police, and four Gafirim, who did not restrict our movements, we marched back.

August 24th

I went to the beach again. Since I have connections in camp, it will be possible to take advantage of it, and go swimming more often. The following benefits arose from my job as food distributor: I am getting all the food I want (including food for our barrack); in addition, there are extra provisions like grapes, tomatoes, etc. Sometimes cigarettes are available. I am not restricted in my movements, and can go, more or less, wherever I want to go, including spots close to the ocean. There is a saying: "with the food distribution in hand, you can get anywhere in this land" In addition it provides connections that come in handy anywhere.

August 25th

A difficult problem in Israel will be the Arab workers in the Histadruth (Jewish Labor Union); they will form a separate cohesive coalition, and encourage the influx of labor from surrounding countries, which have lower wage scales. The result will conflict with the Zionist goal of a Jewish majority.

August 26th

Nobody has been released so far. I am glad I did not raise my hopes needlessly.

August 28th

All Czech citizens who enlisted in the army, were released.

A representative of the NZO visited the camp and registered us for the National Histadruth. For members of the Betar it is a requirement to serve two year in the Plugoth Gins (a collective which trains youngsters in agriculture and army life). I applied for temporary suspension, and will get a decision from the Tel Aviv Necivut (National office).

August 29th

There is a strong drive on to enlist us in the British army; the offer includes weekly pay of 50 Piaster, paid vacation, a 25% discount on bus fares, and a 1 month pre-enlistment vacation paid by the Sochnut (Jewish Agency). The NZO's position states that it tried to form a Jewish Legion, which the British opposed. They were willing to create a Jewish unit within the British army, but the NZO rejected the offer.

September 1st

A military commission visited the camp and enlisted about 60 youngsters, who were transported by bus to an army camp.

September 2nd

It is now one year that I left home, and it seems like an eternity.

A youngster in our barrack committed suicide by cutting his wrist. He is in the hospital and there is hope he will survive.

September 16th

I have not made an entry for some time, and will now catch up with the more important news. At our latest trip to the ocean, one of our Tts drowned. This is the only pleasure we have in Athlit (the swimming, not the drowning), and it will be discontinued.

A list of people to be released arrived, and 38 Tts have already been released.

My income:

to substitute somebody's barrack duty 10Mil

Get diet food from kitchen	1 "
Sold eggs and sausage	16 "
" tomatoes	5 "
" cigarettes	2"
My kitchen	30"

(I converted a tin can into an oven, and prepare various foods; I got the charcoal from the burned wood remnants in the kitchen oven.) Business is brisk, and I am only limited by the capacity of my "oven", which is not made for mass production.

September 12th

The release of Tts proceeds slowly.

I took over the meal distribution in our barrack.

September 13th

Happy birthday to my father!

September 24th

The first rain. Although the pace of release is slow, we are scheduled to be free by Yom Kipur; only optimists believe this.

Had a visit by Dr Magnes, chancellor of the Hebrew University.

October 2nd

Yom Kipur was yesterday, and as you can see, we are still here. The release of Tts continues, but at such a slow pace, that it is hard to visualize an early departure from the camp.

The newspaper reported riots in Prague. Von Neurath has been replaced by Heydrich. A building housing the Gestapo has been bombed.

October 10th

Of the 1700 Patria refugees only 300 are left in Athlit; I am one of them. It seems, that it is now only a matter of days for our release, but these days are the hardest. After watching the release of acquaintances, one has the bitter feeling to be left behind, which is reinforced by the emptiness of the camp. 50 of the Patria survivors (the ones that jumped overboard just prior to the explosion) will be retained. If I will be one of the last to be freed, I have a good chance to become barrack, section, or camp commandant. Even after the release it will be difficult. One hears of high unemployment, starvation wages, etc. But these worries can wait; the important thing is to get out of here, and I hope the next entry will report it.

October 19th

Only 140 Tts are left. We are concerned and recall the fate of the last members of the "Libertat", who were retained for a long period.

October 20th

I am resting again at the spot near the barbed wire fence, where I sat shortly after arrival. The evening sun colored the sky with a violet tint, and I feel indescribable happy. This morning we were moved to barrack 73, the same barrack we occupied on arrival. At the same time we learned that a new list arrived, and that I am one of the lucky ones to be released. My joy is hard to describe. Again, I started laundering and packing, and at noon I was ready to go. The usual farewell visits were made (finally it was my turn!), and I went for a final stroll with Bianca Werner. Our barrack is in a mess, since the

reorganization added more people to each unit. Despite it, I am in an excited mood, because tomorrow..... and here my train of thought stops. Unthinkable, to move freely, sleep in a regular bed, good meals, city life, the noise of traffic and all the things we had been missing for the last year and a half.

I am "relishing" the last night in Athlit, the barbed wire fence does not bother me, I hardly notice the guards, the lousy meal is eaten with enthusiasm, because.....the gates will open, a bus will be waiting for us, and we will be riding, and riding till Athlit is far behind us, and its existence forgotten.

1945

May 7th

For a year you rested forgotten in my shoulder bag. The time passed, nothing important occurred, and we were hoping for some positive event. This event took place today: the long-awaited news finally came: THE WAR IS OVER!

Joyful people, flag-bedecked streets, victory celebrations, music, and this was the scene, not only in Jerusalem, but all over where freedom loving people, after years of depravation, finally got the redeeming news. For us Jews, the war meant indescribable suffering, and this day should be signified with laughter, and also sorrow.

Personally, there is plenty of good news to report:

1) Got information that my family is safe in Theresienstadt; the letter is dated May 1944. I hope they will survive the rather short time from the date of this letter. The war is still raging in Czechoslovakia, but end of hostilities is expected any day.

2) I received a visa to emigrate to the US, but have difficulties getting a passport.

3) Got a position in the pharmacy of the Kupat Holim as apprentice. Out of 150 applications, only nine were accepted.

May 10th

Went evenings to a Cafe; the radio announced that the Allies liquidated the last resistance in Czechoslovakia; then they announced that the Russian by mistake bombarded Theresienstadt. The war is almost over, and all hope to see my family vanished.

July 20th

No news from my parents. How depressing!

On June 1st, I started my new position with the Kupat Cholim (National Health Program). I love the job, but the pay is insufficient. I had a problem finding a room I could afford, and settled on a former garage in Montefiore. I am at home now, and looking through the pages of the diary, I am reliving the places and people of the past that meant so much to me. This brings me to the hard present and the unknown future. Where will fate lead me?

1946

January 1st

Got a depressing letter from Kohn (friends of my parent):

"Dearest,

I can not describe the joy I had hearing from you, and I will be trying to answer your questions, although they will be depressing.

My husband and I were in the first transport to Theresienstadt (Dec.41), and my parents and sister followed in May 42; this transport was immediately routed to Poland. There were heart-breaking scenes at parting, sensing that we would never see them again. We got a letter from Gerti in which she wrote that after two days, she was separated from her parents, and does not know their fate. She suffered a lot, and I do not want to describe what happened to her. Got also a letter from father, who is in another camp, unhappy, not knowing where mother is. They were all exterminated between 1942 and 1943. The same fate happened to Fraiss, Heller, my in-laws, and my husband's siblings, except for a sister-in law who now resides in a sanatorium, infected with TB. She is also a widow. My husband was transported to Auschwitz during September 1944, and I followed him two days later. Since the horrible parting scenes in Theresienstadt, I did not hear from him. After my return, I learned of his courageous life in a number of concentration camps, his attempt to escape from a moving train (April 25, 1945), when he was shot to death. And this happened close to the end of the war! I myself was selected for the gas chamber, and by sheer miracle survived. It is impossible to describe the suffering, and whatever is being told about concentration camps, is understated. Today I am asking myself, why I am still alive; for what purpose? Why such empty, useless life? You cannot image how difficult it is for a single woman to survive, especially, with such a hopeless outlook. We planned in 1943 to have a baby, but the SS (German Security Service) aborted it in the fourth month. In other word, I lost anything beautiful that one could lose. The same fate happened to Bleyers, when they were deported to Poland. And Weiss? They remained a long time in Theresienstadt, Mrs Weiss bore a beautiful healthy boy (Tommy), Edith was deported to the gas chamber in Auschwitz(1943), and the same fate happened to Mrs. Weiss. I leave it up to you decide whether to tell Egon, or not. Of all the people from Karlsbad, only Rosl Dinn. Fahler, cantor Loewinger, Dr Wolf and Dr Hirsch survived. That is all.....

Hannerl"