

Diary written by Cypora Jablon-Zonszajn in the Siedlice Ghetto born in 1915

It was Friday, the 22 of August, 1942. For the past few weeks we have been living under a great deal of tension. There is a deportation of 600,000 Jews from Warsaw of Jews from Radom, Kielce and other places; the trains are carrying people to the death camp of Treblinka. Visiting us is Dusia Monczyk from Warsaw who is telling us about the terrible things that are happening in the camp. We know that the same fate is awaiting us, but we are deluding ourselves. Meantime like a bolt of doom we learn that there is a deportation from Minsk-Mazowiecki, which is located about 40 km we continue to delude ourselves even though we know that we are the next stop from Minsk. After all were we not assured, that we are "arbeitstadt". Many workers are necessary.

The atmosphere in the town grows worse and worse. I am trying to comfort my beloved parents, but at the same time I look at my 11-month-old daughter with tears in my eyes, our treasure. Dear God, what is going to happen to our child? What did she do to deserve findig herself in this hell.

By evening we learn that all deportations have ceased. People are kissing each other in the streets, in joy. Wee it only the truth.

Unfortunately as my husband said it only a reaction of optimists to bad news.

At 11 pm that evening as we are getting ready for bed, we have a visitor Ule Nusbaum, our friend tenant and Jewish policeman, Ordnungsmann, and states that there is a fear something is going to happen during the night. At two am during the night there is a meeting of all the Polish police, additionally many Germans have picked up their work, even the unfinished, from the area.

My heart begins to pound and tears fall from my eyes when I look at my child, I am so sorry for my darling. We continue to delude ourselves even now. Maybe it is really nothing. Maybe the police are going to capture the partisans? Dusia states that the Polish police will have no part on these actions, one says one thing another says something else. At 2 my husband arrives and tells us to be ready. I take some clothes out the suitcase for the baby and we wake our neighbors, who don't know what is going on and I try to comfort my mother. Suddenly we hear a shot the signal that the ghetto is surrounded. In silence I begin to dress the baby, we realize that the hour of horrible uncertainty is upon us. Until 4 in the morning we wait in this uncertainty when we hear a series of shots, in moment Jacob runs in and tells us that we are surrounded. My parents begin to sob. My mother cries out to save myself and the baby, so that her work will be worthwhile. I do not answer her but continue to dress the baby. I wrap her in a blanket and put on my coat and am ready to go to wherever. I don't think about taking some clothes or some food. The baby who was just woken up from sleep begins to cry. My beloved

father approaches her, and in silence as usual kisses her and me. Jacob has changed his clothes and orders me to go with him. I am so stunned and petrified that I don't ask where we are going, and I don't say good-bye to my parents or to Dosia, Mother walks with us to the front door and in a voice filled with tears tells us "children try to buy us in a proper way". Those words add to my distress and send me more over the edge. "Mother what are you saying that I will not be able to see you again?" Why don't I have poison, which I had begged for from Mr. O. We could have ended our life together.

People are gathering in the street, we hear crying and sobbing from the houses, from time to time we see someone running with a package, we hear shots, people talking people telling us what is happening. There is no possibility of leaving the area. My husband is leading us to the police command post, and into the attic above of the showers so we would be close to the command post in case they honored the agreement to leave in place the police families just as they did in Warsaw. I climb up into there, I hand the baby to someone but she calls Mama. I'll get you my darling. I try to settle myself, and ask that someone bring down the mattress and try to make the baby sleep. It's a mistake because she should be up now and talking, it would be better if she would sleep later, but who thinks of that. It is now 5:30, more and more people are coming but not mine. Why isn't Jacob bringing my parents and Dosia? At 7:00 I hear her voice but not my parents. "Where are they?" I am upset and I tell Jacob that he must go back for them.

Dosia has brought some crackers for the baby. Jacob has sent candy, lemons, apples, cherries and bread. I wonder why? I am so stressed that I don't understand the severity of the situation and the fact that we may have to spend a great deal of time there. God only knows how long.

There are now about 100 people here. We begin to hear more and more shots, the business of "resettlement" has begun and my parents aren't here. My mother's last words begin to sound in my ear, why did I go without them? Dosia tries to calm me down by saying that it was to save the child, but I could have saved the child with them as well.

It is now 10 am individual cries are now combined into one enormous scream, later we learn that the Jewish police maws ordered on pain of death to evacuate all apartments and sending the people in the main square. But at this time we don't know what these heart rendering screams are. Listening to these horrendous happenings I try to keep the baby quiet. She is content with nursing, but what will happen later? Later I feed her cybalgina (analgesic) so she will sleep. I try not to think about anything because I feel that I go mad – My dearest parents, where are they? I pray that they experience an easy death but learn later that even this was denied them.

12 noon is approaching. We hear the sound of boots of our tormentors and shots without any stoppage, and continuous weeping.

Suddenly the attic is shaken. They are destroying the stores around where we are hiding. They will come here soon. The baby wakes up and begins to cry. Our fellow victims become wild. One woman tries to grab the child and smother her; I push her away and tell her that if my child dies everyone else can too. In order to calm the baby they push me into a closet. I undress her and nurse her, sing songs to her and amuse her. Every minute seems like an eternity, eventually she calms down and becomes used to the noise. I am drenched with sweat from all these struggles; it is unbearably hot in this attic. Dosia hands me a lemon, which revives me. I let the baby walk around naked, I am shaken with grief. If only mother could have been here with me. She would have been able to amuse the baby. Dosia forces me to have a piece of bread in order to be able to nurse. How good that she is here. The noise has stopped, we learned later that the Jewish police broke down the door of the baths to show the Ukrainians that this was not an apartment and so they went further, and this was what saved us. I leave the baby with Dosia on a mattress and go up and look through a crack onto the street. There is desolation everywhere; I hear a loud lament, the cries of those being killed and continuous shots. We thought that the shots were to scare people but later learned that each shot meant that there was one less living person.

The sounds of the boots, the breaking in of the doors of apartments and stores, the screams of the victims, and the continuous sound of shots near and far were driving me crazy. My last parting with my parents, my mother's words and my father's soft kiss is worrying me, what is happening to them. We have only been here for half a day what if we have to stay longer. The baby is behaving extremely well. My little darling knows that when I put my fingers to my lips, it means quiet. She looks at me with her beautiful and dark eyes and understands what I am trying to tell her.

Our police is moving around our attic and by calling to each other is letting us know that they are thinking about us. The heat is unbearable and the hot roof makes noise, and every sound makes our hearts beat incredibly fast and loud. Night is approaching and I am hoping that Jacob will let us know something about him, but no one appears. I am so exhausted that I fall asleep. I am awakened by the sound of an alarm. I tell Dosia that maybe we will be lucky. But the alarm stops, there are no bombs to save us. Instead the asthmatics begin to cough. Trying to quiet them does not help that are not able to stop, but in this silence it is painful and I put my fingers into my ears. It is a shame that the night is ending. The baby wakes up hungry. I have no milk and my breasts are so sore that touching them is painful, but I will bear it as long as the baby is quiet. I give her a cookie dipped in juice which mother gave me at the last minute. I put some water in my palm and she drinks then bites me wanting more. Dear God how can I stand

my child's suffering. It is quiet until ten and then the orgy begins again, the screams and cries, more shootings. The orgy of "resettlement" is in full swing. Today it is even more horrible than yesterday. We hear the destruction of the stores the gunshots and finally the cries of the victims "Shema Israel". These are the words a Jew speaks when he is in a great crisis, and this cry is being heard more and more. The heat is incredibly bad so that it is even hard to breathe. What I fear the most happens. The baby is exhausted and begins to cry loudly. Again I have to fight with others but I am too tired. Dosia takes up the fight. She drags us out of the closet where we have been thrown, and gets some people to fan the baby. The fresh air revitalizes her and after a few minutes, which seem like hours she allows us to calm her down. I begin to breathe a little better, in spite of the fact that the Ukrainians and the Sonderdiensts are having a great time. They broke the bakery on Jatkowska Street, where they found many people hiding and shot them all. We hear in turn gunshots, the screams of the murdered victims, then a few minutes of silence someone walking and a beautiful rendition of "Volga". I look at Dosia in horror. "Volga" that beautiful sentimental song, sung by these bestial murderers of unarmed people, especially women and children. How much cruelty and sadism can these people have?

I am beside myself, don't know anything that is going on. I have to care for a hungry child who is eating whole cherries, is grabbing dry bread out of my hand and is drinking water in my palm. But I realize that I should not complain, maybe this too will vanish.

Suddenly we feel elated, someone is knocking and speaking in Yiddish. I am hoping that it is my husband but it is Ule. He has brought bread and tells us that the action is continuing. They have shot many people, but left 500 men to work. They will try to take all the young men out of the attic and use them to work. They don't know what will happen to the women at this point.

After he leaves we learn that the hospital is standing – and that some of the women may be placed there as nurse's aides. Rather than being happy, a terrible sense of despair falls over me. If that is true then my parents could have been saved. I feel responsible for their death; I wonder if they had an easy death? Or could they have survived? This blame will be with me for the rest of my life.

I have not heard from my husband. I hope and pray he is all right. I look through the tiny window onto the street. The nurse's aides are bringing water to those in the square. The Jewish police are driving the bodies of the slaughtered. I have not seen Jacob; I am so worried about him that my heart is stopping. Suddenly someone looking on the other side of the attic says that she sees him. Dosia confirms that she can see him. I feel better.

The heat is unbearable. The baby has collapsed and whimpers without stopping. What can I do? I gather my courage and write a letter to my husband asking him to get me some poison for the baby. My heart aches when I watch her suffering.

It is 4 in the afternoon. The gunshots do not stop, nor the cries and laments. The baby is sleeping so I am looking out of the crack and looking at the street. A large cart filled with a mountain of bodies, pulled by our policemen. They look terrible, pale and tired, sweat dripping off their faces. I marvel at their bravery and their ability to be involved in such happenings when they can see some of their nearest and dearest being murdered. I later learned that due to their actions hundreds of people were saved.

In a second the picture changes. A Ukrainian or Lithuanian (both devils) is leading a family of mother, father and child. The child is crying with fear and is unable to walk. The leader is kicking him to make him move, but when this doesn't seem to be working begins to hit him with the butt of his rifle. At this the unfortunate father with his last strength attacks the perpetrator and begins to hit him. In the space of a second, three gunshots are heard and three bodies fall to the ground. The policeman walks away whistling happily. I stand at the window in stunned horror, but I am pleased that the "pure blooded Aryan" felt the dirty, full of lice hand of of an unfortunate Jew. I hope that there were other happenings like that. Tears are falling from my eyes with stopping. Did they beat y loved ones? My darlings how could I have abandoned you and will you ever forgive me. I did this so I could save your beloved granddaughter.

Before evening Ule came for his cousin. He tells us that my mother-in-law; both her daughters, their husbands and grandchild were all shot. No wonder that Jacob has not shown himself. The news from the hospital are not firm either, we still don't know what will happen to the women. I give him my letter to Jacob [illegible txt] seeming like flies. Here they take the children from their mother, another wife loses her husband, a sister loses a brother. Here horrible beatings are very frequent and natural. A person is beaten because he is not dressed well or because he has a more intelligent face or just because. What does beating a person mean when being shot is a bagatelle.

A wagon drives but it is full of dead bodies. There are pyres of bodies, piles of people who just two days ago were living normal lives and who had hopes and dreams that they would survive the war. One body falls of the wagon it is thrown back as if it were a slab of meat. Every cow has more rights to live than all these people who are gathered in the square. These are no longer people; they are flies, which are flicked off the wall.

"Water, please give me some water. I need a drink. I am weak. It is hot here. These cries are combined with the hopeless screams of the murdered, innocent and unarmed people.

A policeman who has handed some water and an apple to his mother is stripped of his rank and told to sit with the others. Another dodges a bullet when he leans towards his wife and child, trying to talk to them. The cries of "Shema Israel" God of Israel which come from all sides.

People are you calling God, why don't you stand up and fight? You must know that you are going to a certain death. You must know what is Treblinka.

Unfortunately – the will to survive prevails. Each of these unfortunate ones hopes that he or she will be picked to work, maybe survive. This is understandable in one way but not another.

Later the transports went to the train station, all day Saturday, Sunday and Monday. On Monday, when I had been rescued already, they shot all the people in the hospital. Dr. Loeb, Dr. Glazowski, and Dr. Schwartz as well as all the nurses, aides and everyone else were killed. All the young and bright girls from Siedlce, who had wanted to assure themselves of a safe life, posing as nurses died too. Many a Ukrainian stopped near the bodies and muttered, "wot Krasawica" spat and moved on. Then they loaded all these valuable young people onto wagons, like cattle and they were driven to the cemetery. Some of the bodies had their clothes torn from them, others good shoes and still others valuables.

Now they are dragging people from their hiding places. Whole families are being put into cars, mothers, daughters, grandsons and sons. They are then driven to the cemetery. They stand in front of graves one by one, then they are shot and they fall into the graves. There is no need to do anything more for such cattle. So died my cousin Sucherowa Jablonicowa, with two beautiful, accomplished children, Dora Krugier and many others.

The groups were taken to the train station and loaded into railroad cars, about 100 to 200 in a space big enough for 50. The news came from people who escaped from such cars. The people were driven crazy, they cried for water, air and less heat. Unfortunately there was no water, slowly they began to undress until they were naked, men women and children. No one pays any attention. They are calling for air and saying that they are suffocating. The first to succumb are the elderly, young and ill. The people are fighting to get to the window and get air. They are pushing in front of others. The air is stifling. The small window is not enough to accommodate all of them. The young and strong prevail; very few of the elderly will survive the trip. They don't have the strength to fight any longer for a little fresh air. They are becoming disoriented. My parents, my beloved parents probably died in such a manner.

The wagons reach Treblinka. I have news from Mr. Max Bigelman of Warsaw, who for 15 days from the 27 of August until the 9 of September, worked in sorting clothes and then escaped from there. This man lived with us and told me many things. As I write this listening to him as well as Mendel Peza a councilman and historian collecting documents from the ghetto Siedlce. The wagons arrive at Treblinka; there are usually about 60 of them. Only about 18 to 20 wagons are allowed through the gate of the punitive camp, and then they are emptied of the people and their belongings. The people come out into a square where there are two barracks. The women and children go to the left, the men to the right. The women take off their shoes and go

inside and strip naked then go to a bathhouse. This bathhouse is housed in a second barrack, which is very tightly locked. About 400 women go into the bathhouse and the doors are locked. Outside of the building are four men with machine guns helping to move the crowd in from the outside. When everyone is in the gas is released. After 3 – 4 minutes everyone is dead, but they keep them for a little longer. After several more minutes the barracks is opened from the other side where there a Jewish workers (about 22) who take the bodies to their graves in smaller carts. Many of the bodies are stuck together so they are hosed down to separate them. After half an hour the building is empty and the next group can come in. Then the next few railroad cars are allowed in. The men are still waiting in the first area. When the bathing of all the women and children is finished, it is the men's turn. If by chance someone escapes and hides, then when he is found he is led to an already prepared grave and he is shot.

Those who are infirm, old people or children are not "bathed" but are taken directly to open graves and killed so that they fall in the graves.

Outside of the baths is an orchestra; all musicians are Jewish and playing for their brothers going to their death. The workers who remove the bodies are totally separated from their counterparts in the sorting area because no one in the front must know anything about the back. But it doesn't matter we know everything. The ones in front are sorting the clothes of the bathers, these are made into packages and immediately sent back in the wagons. Thank goodness for those wagons as several hundred people were saved. We have heard about them and from them.

In the first square are large signs proclaiming to the arrivals about the rules. "Attention you must undress here, (illegible) after bathing you will be issued clean new clothes and go to a clean barrack and will be sent to work etc, etc." What lies and what sadism and what bestiality.

Mr. Max told us with tears in his eyes how he saw his wife and daughter come to the baths. She was his only daughter and was only 13 years old. He tried to save them and begged his superior for help. Unfortunately this was impossible. His request was denied. He had to say goodbye to his daughter who told him "don't worry daddy." His wife did not know what fate awaited her, but he told his daughter. What a terrible tragedy. After two weeks, Mr. Max rode back in the train with the clothes and was thus saved.

My hair standing on end when I hear about all of this that he is telling us; terror is engulfing us. Will people who have not lived through this believe us? Will they believe everything that I am writing is the absolute truth? Let these words be the living witnesses to those who lived these horrors in these tragic times.

This was the resettlement of the Siedlce ghetto. In the manner they exterminated thousands of people. I have reported truthfully about everything, but not the loss of my beloved parents. I

know about their death in great detail, I have been talking and collecting information from many people with great care. I will tell about it in great detail so that my daughter will know who they died, those two who absolutely adored her. They decided to go to the Square on Saturday with their neighbors. When one of their friends wanted to give my mother poison, as she had a heart problem, she refused. She said that she had decided to share the hell with my father and perhaps in giving up her life she could bargain for the safety of me and my daughter. Ule gave them water and apples a few times, and all the time they asked about us. She said goodbye to Ule and wished him and us well and long life and hop that we will be saved. Sunday they were sent to the Station but there no cards to drive them. They returned to the square and were there all night. On Monday they learned that the baby and I had been saved. Then my wonderful mother said she was ready to face death and did as if it were a dance she was going to. They both went on Monday and more than likely they suffocated in the railroad car. I must believe that, since she was so ill and probably could not withstand any more torture. My darlings, I will never forgive myself and will always feel responsible for your death, for as long as I live. I am responsible for your suffering and torture. I hope that you will forgive me, especially since I have saved your darling child. I could not carry out my mother's last wish for a burial. Tragically she was not alone, there were thousands of people who were "bathed" in Treblinka and other similar places.

Who will avenge us? Who will avenge our suffering and this horrible cattle like death of thousands of bright, valuable intelligent young people, among them doctors, professors and other scholars who died as well. Who will avenge the suffering of parents whose children have been taken from them, the children who lost their parents, and wives taken from husbands. Who will avenge the suffering of the mother who has seen her child killed I front of her.

If I could live I would want to witness revenge. The moment that I myself could exact and take revenge for the deaths of my parents, cousins and uncles.

Unfortunately, this will not happen. We are living under terrible conditions with dirt and lice. It is full of gypsies who will become our heirs. The area is filled with the perpetual threat of death in the air. Everyone is in a panic. New people show up every day. Those who have ecaped from the wagons, coming from other places and towns. Lukow, Wegrow, Miedzyrzecze, Sokolow and many others. We hear that there were several actions in those towns. Why have they left us alone? This time, however, we don't delude ourselves. We know that this fate will not pass us by.

The situation is so horrible that, it is hard to understand and hard to picture what is going on. Every day the officials come and are looking for people to work for them. We need 25 men for the coal mines. We need 100 women to make bricks, 70 women to work for Rekman, and 100 women for Fleger. They need people to work, but the brightest and healthiest were taken to

Treblinka. Here where the dregs are left, they want them for work. Why don't they go to Treblinka and stop the new wagons? But we know they don't need workers, they just want to torture Jews before they kill them. They want to drag out their last breath. So it is not unusual that no one wants to volunteer for work. There are parodies of catching people in order to get them to work. Every worker for the firms has the right to beat, curse and frame any Jew. You are not a person, just a German working ox.

Our lives depend on one thing, news! Who is saying what? What is happening at the stations? Are the wagons rolling, filled with people? Who is new here? What are they telling?

On the 6th of November there is a news item in the official paper. It stated that there would be new districts created by combining towns including Warsaw and Lublin. In view of this all the Jews need to be moved there. Siedlce is also named in that group. We don't believe a word of this that they are going to allow us to live. We believe that the verdict will be accomplished in a while. We calm down for a day or two, but even that is not to be allowed. On Sunday we begin to hear that in Lukow, which is one of the mentioned districts, all the Jews have been gathered together, even the ones in the barracks and taken to the outpost. The murmurs, which were not affirmed before, are now true. So what were all the new items, what was the purpose of the newspaper article? We don't know anything, we don't understand anything except that we innocents have been condemned to a terrible and tragic death and we are waiting until the sentence is carried out.