

Abramek Koplowicz

Murdered aged 14



**Abraham (Abramek) Koplowicz
with his mother Johet-Gitel
and his father Mendel**

Credit: Yad Vashem

A Dream

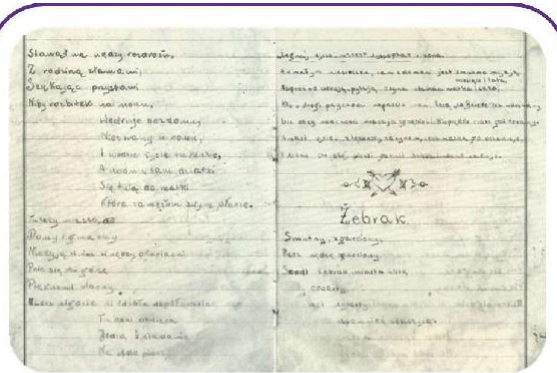
A poem, by Abramek Koplowicz

When I am twenty years of age,
I will burst forth from this cage
And begin to see our splendid Earth
For the first time since my birth!
In my motorized bird I'll soar so high
Above the world, up in the sky,
Over rivers and the seas.
With such stupefying ease,
With my brother wind and sisters cloud, I'll
Marvel at the Euphrates and the Nile
The goddess Isis ruled the land that links
The Pyramids and the massive Sphynx
I will glide above Niagara Falls,
And sunbathe where the Sahra calls,
If I want to escape the scorching heat,
I will fly up north to an Arctic retreat...



Who was Abramek?

Abramek was born in 1930 in the Polish city of Łódź. At age eleven, Abremek was confined with his parents in the Łódź ghetto and remained there until his deportation to Auschwitz. *Abramek Koplowicz was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944, aged 14.*



A page from Avremek's notebook with poems he wrote in his own handwriting

Credit: Yad Vashem

Historical Context:

During the Holocaust, before the Nazis started the mass murder of Jews by shooting or in concentration camps, they forced them into ghettos. These were areas in a city where Jews were forced to live separate from the rest of the population, often in the most run-down areas with very poor living conditions.

The Łódź ghetto was the second-largest ghetto, with approximately 164,000 Jews interned into only 4sq km. Ghetto structures varied, but the Łódź ghetto was sealed (meaning nobody could get in or out). Jews were packed tightly into the ghetto and had no electricity or water. 21% of Ghetto inhabitants died of disease and starvation. To survive, Jews had to work in factories to support the Nazi war effort. In August 1944, the final prisoners of the ghetto were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how does this poem make you feel?*
- *What does this source tell us about Abramek?*
- *Abramek wrote this poem in the Łódź ghetto. How do you think that affected his dreams?*
- *Why do you think Abramek doesn't mention the Ghetto or war when he writes this?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism: Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

Ghetto: A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group (in this case Jews and Roma and Sinti) are compelled to live. The first use of the term "ghetto" for a section of a city in which Jews lived was in Venice, Italy, in 1516.

Death camp: A type of concentration camp set up by the Nazis with the intent of mass murder. This would commonly take place using a gas chamber.



Anton (Bubili) Fojn

Deported to Dachau Concentration Camp aged 16



Anton's Testimony about arriving at Dachau Concentration Camp

"I cried when the prison barber clipped my hair and threw the locks into my lap. "A souvenir, Gypsy." At sixteen, I was very vain. My black wavy hair had reached to the nape of my neck. How could the Germans do this to me, Bubili, an Austrian Sinti? The barber put his hand on my shoulder to keep me from rising. "I'm not finished." With a dull razor, he shaved the rest of my head, my chest, my whole body. When he finished, my whole body ached. I stared at those standing next to me. My father, my uncles, and my cousins were unrecognizable, plucked birds from some strange planet.

And I? Without my hair, I was no longer Bubili. I was a piece of wood.

No, worse. Even a piece of wood could be used for something. We were rubbish, something to be thrown away. Why did the Germans have to strip us of our humanity?"



Who was Anton?

Anton (Bubili) Fojn was born into a Sinti family in Austria. He was 16 when he was deported to Dachau Concentration Camp. He was also a prisoner of Mauthausen Concentration Camp, a quarry work camp which was notorious for backbreaking labour. He survived the war and moved to Germany, where he worked in the clothing business. Anton gave this oral testimony after the war.

Historical Context:

Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) were an ethnic group that were persecuted by the Nazis and their collaborators. They were labelled “racially impure” and “criminals”. The Roma were kept in concentration camps and murdered, including being killed in gas chambers. An estimated 250,000-500,000 were murdered during World War II - somewhere between 25% and 50% of the total Roma and Sinti European population.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how does this testimony make you feel?*
- *How does Bubili’s identity change through entering Dachau Concentration Camp?*
- *There is no known photo of Bubili. Why do you think this might be?*
- *Bubili refers to himself as an ‘Austrian Sinti’, what does this tell us about his perceptions of his society and how he is viewed within it?*

Glossary:

Concentration Camp: Throughout German-occupied Europe, the Nazis established camps to detain and kill those they perceived as their enemies, including Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, and others. Imprisonment in a concentration camp was of unlimited duration, was not linked to a specific act, and was not subject to any judicial review.

Roma and Sinti: A nomadic people whose ancestors migrated to Europe from India. Nazi Germany and its Axis partners persecuted and killed large numbers of Roma during the era of the Holocaust. (Sometimes derogatory, referred to as Gypsies).

Work camp: A type of concentration camp set up by the Nazis with the intent of forcing prisoners to work, often in support of the war effort.

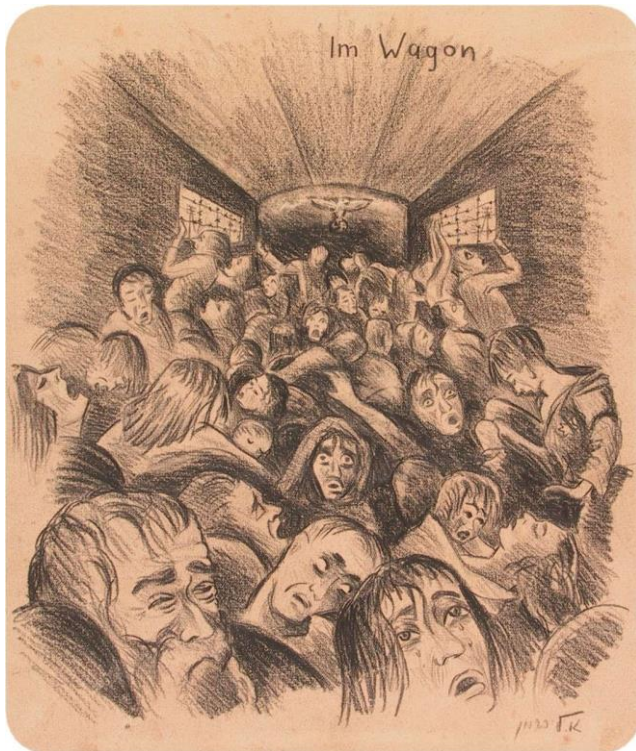


Ella Liebermann-Shiber

Liberated from Nazi persecution, aged 18

In the Freight Wagon

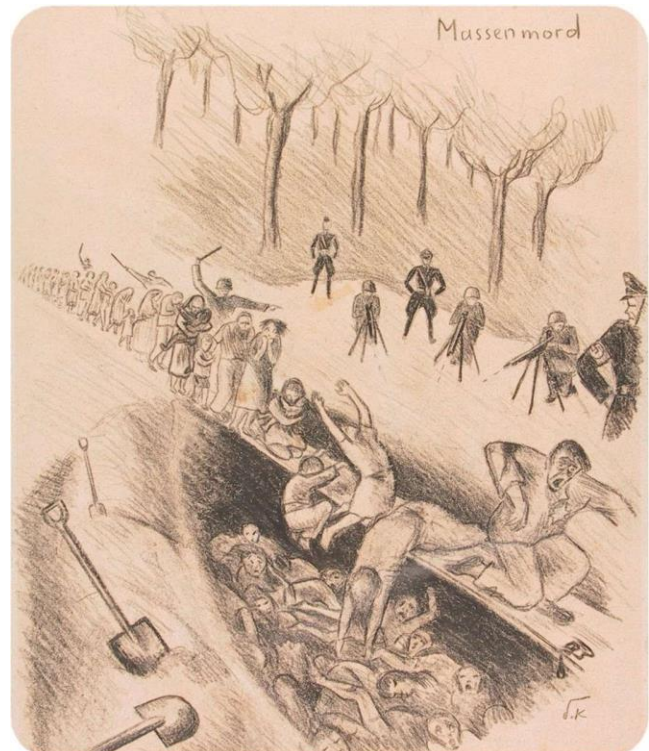
Media: Pencil on Paper



Source: Ghetto Fighters House Archive

Mass Murder

Media: Pencil on Paper



Source: Ghetto Fighters House Archive



Who was Ella?

Ella Liebermann was born in Berlin in 1927 to a well-off family. Her father was a fur merchant, and her mother was a midwife. As a Jewish family they were made to move to Poland and forced into a ghetto near Będzin by the Nazis. In December 1943, aged 16, Ella and her family were all deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Ella and her mother survived a death march and were liberated by the Allies on the 2nd May 1945. Ella made these paintings after the war.



**Ella Liebermann-Shiber
shortly after liberation**

Credit: Ghetto Fighters House Archive

Historical Context:

Prisoners were transported to the concentration camps in a number of ways: usually by cattle truck/ freight wagon, but some arrived by foot or train. The prisoners were not told their specific destination and the journey could be weeks. Prisoners were extremely tightly packed onto their transport to the point where it was usually impossible to sit or kneel down.

The transports usually held no food or water, and had no toilet facilities except one bucket in the corner (which quickly became overfilled). The smell of vomit, urine and excrement was overpowering, and most transports had no windows or ventilation. Many people died en route to the camp by dehydration, starvation or suffocation.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how do these drawings make you feel?*
- *Look carefully at the drawing “Mass Murder”. What objects do you notice, and why do you think the artist drew them?*
- *What does the way in which Ella has drawn the faces in ‘In The Freight Wagon’ tell us about the experience of deportation?*
- *Why do you think transport was such a key part of individual’s memories of the Holocaust?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

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Ghetto: A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group (in this case Jews and Roma and Sinti) are compelled to live. The first use of the term “ghetto” for a section of a city in which Jews lived was in Venice, Italy, in 1516.



Ernest Mayer

Escaped from Nazi Germany aged 16

The Last Goodbye

Painting by Ernest Mayer



Source: Yad Vashem



Who was Ernest?

Ernest Meyer was born in Cologne, Germany in 1923. His father was a butcher and his mother was a housewife. As a teenager, he studied art under Ludwig Meidner, one of the most prominent Jewish-German artists of the era, whose work was denounced by the Nazi regime, and his art was forbidden to be sold or displayed. After The November Pogrom, (commonly called Kristallnacht), in 1938, he and his sister got the opportunity to travel to England through the Kindertransport Rescue Programme, where aged 16 he produced the painting “The Last Goodbye”. He never saw his parents again, both were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Later, along with thousands of other Jewish-German teenagers, he was treated as a “enemy alien” (meaning citizens of a country that England was at war with) and was then arrested and put into a detention camp in Canada by the British Authorities.



**Mayer speaking at
Yad Vashem Museum in 2013**

Credit: Yad Vashem

Historical Context:

Following The November Pogrom, (a violent antisemitic outburst in Germany, which included the vandalism and burning of synagogues and Jewish businesses, schools and centers), the British Government eased immigration restrictions for certain categories of Jewish children after heavy campaigning from British individuals and charities. Unaccompanied minors were allowed to enter Great Britain from Germany, Austria and (then) Czechoslovakia. Private citizens and/or organisations had to guarantee payment for each child’s care and education, and parents could not accompany their children. Only around 10,000 of these children were actually permitted to enter the UK.

Following the outbreak of the war, these children were considered a security threat, due to their German passports, and were treated as “enemy aliens” resulting in many of these teenagers being held on the Isle of Man, Canada and Australia.

Questions to consider:

- *On first observation, how does this painting make you feel?*
- *What are your thoughts on how Britain acted towards Jewish people fleeing Nazi Germany?*
- *What does Britain’s decision to call the Kindertransport children and teenagers “enemy aliens” tell us about the UK during the war?*
- *How do you think Mayer felt, leaving his home in Germany for an unknown future in the UK?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.



Éva Heyman

Murdered aged 13



A photo of Éva, aged 13

Credit: Yad Vashem

The Diary of Éva Heyman

March 26, 1944:

“Dear diary, until now I didn’t want to write about this in you because I tried to put it out of my mind, but ever since the Germans are here, all I think about is Márta. She was also just a girl, and still the Germans killed her. But I don’t want them to kill me! I want to be a newspaper photographer, and when I’m twenty-four I’ll marry an Aryan Englishman, or maybe even Pista Vadas.”

April 7, 1944

“Today they came for my bicycle. I almost caused a big drama. You know, dear diary, I was awfully afraid just by the fact that the policemen came into the house. I know that policemen bring only trouble with them, wherever they go [...] One of the policemen was very annoyed and said: [...] No Jewkid is entitled to keep a bicycle anymore. The Jews aren’t entitled to bread, either; they shouldn’t guzzle everything, but leave the food for the soldiers.”

May 30, 1944.

“Dear diary, I don’t want to die; I want to live even if it means that I’ll be the only person here allowed to stay. [...] Just as long as they didn’t kill me, only that they should let me live. [...] I can’t write anymore, dear diary, the tears run from my eyes”.



Who was Éva?

Éva was born February 1931. An only child, Éva grew up with her maternal grandparents after her parents' divorce. She was from a secular middle-class family in Oradea, Romani which became part of Hungary in 1940. She started writing her diary just before Hungary was occupied by the Nazi's. Her last entry was three days before she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Éva Heyman was murdered in Auschwitz in October 1944, aged 13.



Jews undergoing the selection process in Auschwitz-Birkenau. A Nazi officer chose which side each prisoner would go to: being sent to one side meant death, being sent to the other meant slave labour.

Credit: Yad Vashem

Historical Context:

Éva was one of over 440,000 Hungarian Jews deported by German and Hungarian authorities to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most were murdered in gas chambers immediately upon arrival. This followed years of antisemitic laws in Hungary which limited Jewish freedom, even before Hitler's rise to power in Europe.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how does Éva's diary make you feel?*
- *Who else does Eva mention in her diary? Do any of them surprise you?*
- *How did antisemitism change Eva's childhood?*
- *Hungary was only invaded by the Nazis in the last year of the Second World War, but has one of the highest death tolls. How do you think this affected the Hungarian Jewish community?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.



Franziska (Fanny) Schwarz

Aged roughly 18 when sterilized



Testimony of Fanny Schwarz

“I never saw anything wrong with being deaf. My younger sister, Theresa, and most of my friends were deaf. [...] For me, the trouble started in 1935. I came home from the convent and found Mother crying. “What’s the matter?” I sighed. She handed me the letter that read, “Frau Schwarz and her daughter Franziska are to come to the health office to arrange for their sterilization. Heil Hitler.””

“I screamed all the way to the hospital. The nurse locked me in a room with two other deaf teenagers. The three of us cried all night. When the nurse came to give us tranquillizers, I tried to fight her off. She held me down and gave me the injection. In the morning, I woke up in a room full of beds. My stomach hurt. I touched the bandages and started to cry. The nurse who brought me water was crying, too. “I’m sorry, there’s nothing I could do to help you. With Hitler, you have to be quiet.””



Who was Franziska?

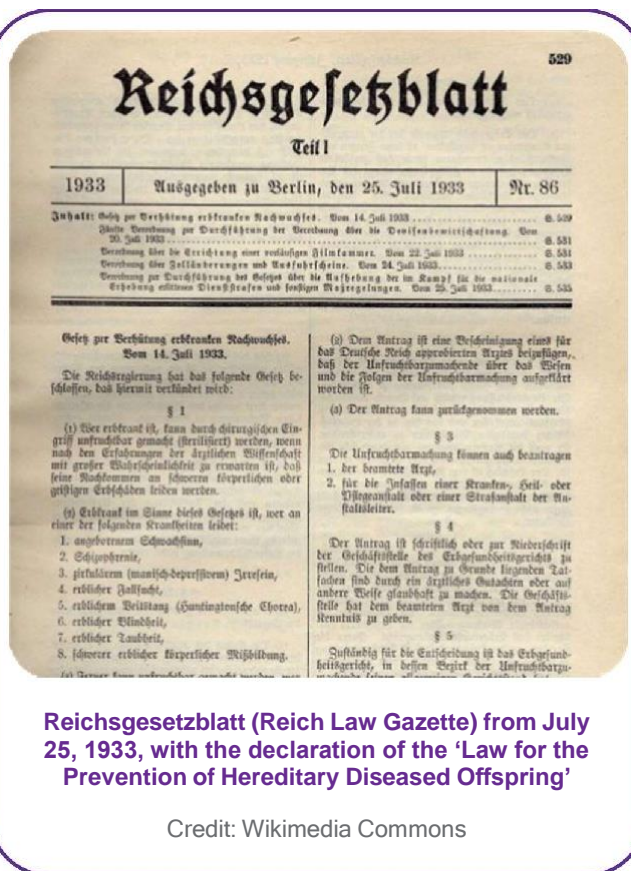
This is the testimony of Franziska (Fanny) Schwarz who was born deaf in 1918 in Munich, Germany. Her sterilization took place in a German hospital, where Franziska was desperate to escape. She tried to flee multiple times, and even tried to kill herself. Franziska was sterilised in 1936 when she was around 18 years old.

Historical Context:

As part of Nazi ideology of creating a 'Master Race' (a racist idea based on the ideas of creating the 'perfect human'), Germany started trying to prevent disabled people from having children. A health tribunal was established to decide who would be sterilised.

Following the outbreak of World War II, the Nazis changed policy from sterilisation to murder, named the T4 programme. In a short time 75,000 people with disabilities were put to death in a programme called "Mercy Killing". The T4 programme was officially halted in 1941 but continued in secret regardless.

Over 400,000 people were forcefully sterilized.



Reichsgesetzblatt (Reich Law Gazette) from July 25, 1933, with the declaration of the 'Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring'

Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how did this testimony make you feel?*
- *Why do you think perpetrators used medical terminology like a 'health tribunal' to hide their actions?*
- *What do you think the nurse meant when she said, 'With Hitler, you have to be quiet'?*
- *What is the significance of the place where Fanny was sterilized?*



Janina Bauman

Aged 13 - 18 during the Holocaust



The Diary of Janina Bauman

Undated entry

“I was in an unknown place, facing an unknown future among strangers. My own cruel but familiar world where I belonged remained behind the walls. I had deserted it, [...] I had deserted my people, leaving them to their terrible fate. In the early hours of the night, flooded with tears of agony and guilt, I crept out of bed and stretched myself out on the carpet. There, cold and miserable, I finally fell asleep.”

11 December 1944

How can I believe in God, this callous God who has allowed the slaughter of children, the gas chambers, my people’s martyrdom? How can I become a Christian? I don’t belong to them, I can’t, I don’t even want to. I belong to the Jews. Not because I was born one or because I share their faith - I never have done. I belong to the Jews because I have suffered as one of them. It’s suffering that has made me Jewish. I belong to people who have been murdered or who are still struggling to escape death. If some of them do survive the war, and if I survive myself, I’ll join them.

29 December 1944

I’ve been thinking now about this glorious future that I dreamed up last night. Will it come true? Shall I ever live a free, useful, happy life with someone I love, and who loves me? Will it happen soon, will a day come when the whole world suddenly opens for me and lets me choose what I want to do. I’ve been waiting so long, so long [...] I can’t wait any longer, I want to live now.



Who was Janina?

Janina Bauman was only 13 when the Nazis invaded her home city of Warsaw in Poland. Together with her mother and sister, she was forced into the Warsaw ghetto. The family managed to escape the ghetto before it was liquidated and survived the rest of the war by hiding with a Christian woman in the Polish countryside.

Historical Context:

In an attempt to survive, many Jews went into hiding. Some managed to obtain false papers and hide in plain sight, pretending to be Christian, while others hid in places such as attics, lofts and wardrobes. Many were caught and either sent to concentration camps or killed. Some non-Jewish people attempted to help Jewish people hide at risk to their own life. Many of these people have been recognised as 'Righteous Among the Nations', a title awarded by the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Yad Vashem, in Israel.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how do these diary entries make you feel?*
- *What are the contrasts between how Janina initially describes her escape and subsequent hiding to what it is actually like?*
- *What is Janina's relationship with her identity and fellow Jews?*
- *How do you think Janina's experience of being in hiding differed to the experience of other Polish Jews in the Holocaust?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

Concentration Camp: Throughout German-occupied Europe, the Nazis established camps to detain and kill those they perceived as their enemies, including Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, and others. Imprisonment in a concentration camp was of unlimited duration, was not linked to a specific act, and was not subject to any judicial review.

Ghetto: A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group (in this case Jews and Roma and Sinti) are compelled to live. The first use of the term "ghetto" for a section of a city in which Jews lived was in Venice, Italy, in 1516.

Liquidation: The Nazis used euphemistic terms to disguise their perpetration of genocide. Germans and their allies and collaborators murdered ghetto residents en masse and dissolved ghetto administrative structures. The Nazis called this 'Liquidation'.



Trigger Warnings: *Mentions of Suicide, Antisemitism, Starvation, Mental Illness, Murder*

Miriam Korber

Aged between 18 - 22 during the Holocaust



A photo of Miriam Korber,
age unknown.

Credit: USHMM

The Diary of Miriam Korber

June/July 1942:

“I don’t seem to want anything new for myself; all I want is to sleep. Some days I just want to die and wish for death to come with the same passion that I once wanted to study medicine. There are days in which I wish to live to see the end of this war, to live beautiful days as in the past. But death is kinder, all still and peaceful without tears.”

Friday September 3, 1943:

“General unrest. Since morning, one lie after another. Now we leave, now we don’t, lists of people, new lists. Nobody knows. [...] People are worried. In the afternoon it is said that we’ll leave for sure, but no one knows to where. At six in the evening, Dr. Katz, the president of the Committee, calls a meeting. People are nervous. Immediately any illusion is shattered. We aren’t going anywhere now. We are all disoriented.”



Trigger Warnings: *Mentions of Suicide, Antisemitism, Starvation, Mental Illness, Murder*

Who was Miriam?

Miriam Korber was born in 1923 in Southern Romania. At around age 18, Miriam and her family were deported to Transnistria, where they faced hunger and disease within an unsealed ghetto. Liberated by the Soviet Army, Miriam and her immediate family survived the war and returned to Romania. Many members of her extended family perished during the Holocaust.

Historical Context:

Romania was an independent ally of Nazi Germany and was a collaborator in the Holocaust. In the Summer and Autumn of 1941, the Romanian army was ordered to imprison Jewish people in the cities, while the Romanian police were ordered to kill any Jewish person found in rural areas. German and Romanian army units, aided by the Einsatzgruppen, carried out the extermination of Romania's Jewish Community. About 160,000 were killed in the first phase, with local ordinary Romanians and Ukrainians joining in the murders; tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews were also killed by the police and Romanian army.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how do these diary entries make you feel?*
- *What does this source tell us about what Miriam wants at different points during her life?*
- *What does this source tell you about what the Jews did and didn't know about what was happening to them during the Holocaust?*
- *How do you think location may have affected how the Holocaust impacted Miriam compared to other Jews in Europe?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

Einsatzgruppen: Units of the Security Police and SD (the SS intelligence service), as well as reserve Police Battalions and local Police groups that followed behind the German army as it invaded the Soviet Union that acted as mobile killing units. They were key perpetrators of mass shooting actions that killed a third of the Jews in the Holocaust.

Ghetto: A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group (in this case Jews and Roma and Sinti) are compelled to live. The first use of the term "ghetto" for a section of a city in which Jews lived was in Venice, Italy, in 1516.



Petr Ginz

Murdered aged 16



Petr Ginz

Credit: Yad Vashem

Opinion Piece in the magazine 'Vedem' ('We Lead')

“They tore us unjustly away from the fertile ground of work, joy, and culture, which was supposed to nourish our youth. They do this for only one purpose - to destroy us not physically, but spiritually and morally. Will they succeed? Never! Deprived of our former sources of culture, we shall create new ones. Separated from the sources of our old happiness, we shall create a new and joyfully radiant life!”



Who was Petr?

Born in 1928 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, Petr was of partial Jewish background. His father was Jewish, and a manager in a textile company, while his mother was not Jewish and the daughter of a village teacher. By age 14, Petr had written five novels, only one of which (*A Visit from Prehistory*) survives today. He was also a painter and wrote a diary. In 1942, he was deported to Theresienstadt Ghetto where alongside other boys his age he helped found *Vedem* - an underground magazine in the ghetto. Petr became its editor-in-chief and in total there were around 80 editions. In Autumn of 1944, aged 16, Petr was deported to Auschwitz- Birkenau, where he was murdered upon arrival.



Petr Ginz and his sister pre-war

Credit: Yad Vashem

Historical Context:

Theresienstadt, or Terezín, was a fortress town north of Prague that the Nazis set up as a 'Camp-Ghetto' hybrid between November 1941 until May 1945. It served as a holding camp for Jews before being forced onwards to other Concentration and Forced Labour Camps. It was used to keep up the appearance that the transports of German, Austrian and Czech Jews 'to the east' were for workers, and as the elderly could not be expected to be labourers they were placed in Theresienstadt. The purpose of the ghetto was also for propaganda, such as when the Red Cross visited in 1944 which led to the creation of a propaganda film. Starting in 1942, inhabitants of Theresienstadt were sent to other camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka, where they were murdered.

Of the approximately 140,000 Jews transferred to Theresienstadt, nearly 90,000 were deported to camps further east to an almost certain death. Roughly 33,000 died in Theresienstadt itself.

Questions to consider:

- *On first observation, how does this source make you feel?*
- *What emotions does Petr express in his column? Why do you think that is the case?*
- *Petr talks about losing his youth. What do you think he means by this?*
- *Why is culture so important to Petr?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

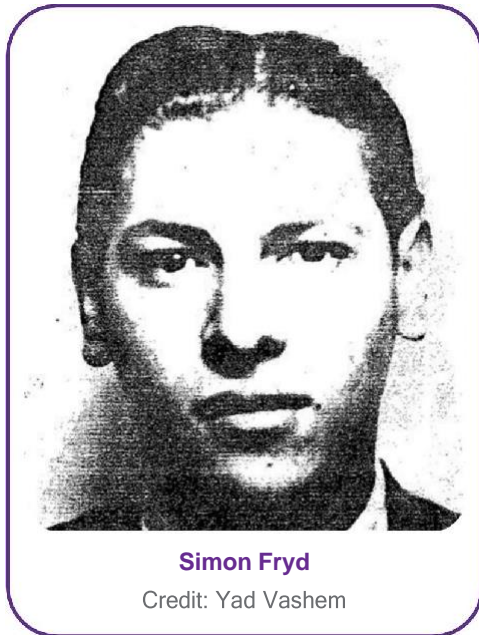
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Simon Fryd

Executed aged 19



Simon's Final Letter

“Dear friends,

It's getting closer. As is proper for a good member of the F.T.P [a partisan group] resistance, I am still in good spirits and courageous. It is with courage that I await death, a death that is no less glorious than one in the battlefield. Indeed, If I am to climb the scaffold [to be executed], it is not for a crime, but for the noble cause of human freedom.

Comrades, you who remain, you must continue the struggle until victory. You are the ones who must avenge others, those who have died in combat. It is essential, that under no circumstances must you abandon the fight. That would be cowardice, and would be unforgivable.

Never forget our dead, punish the criminals.

Until the end my thoughts will be with you”.



Who was Simon?

Simon Fryd was Jewish and born in Poland in 1924, but lived in France during the war. In the summer of 1942, he was one of the first volunteers of the Lyon Region FTP (Francs-Tireurs et Partisans), one of the major resistance movements in France. He established a factory for explosives, stored weapons in his home, and took part in attacks on German soldiers. In May 1943, he was arrested during an FTP operation and placed in prison where he was tortured. It was during his imprisonment that he wrote the following letter, his last words, to his comrades in the FTP. At the age of 19, he was executed by guillotine on 4th December 1943.

Historical Context:

During the Holocaust, resistance against the Nazis took various different forms. Although rare, some Jewish people banded together and fought back in groups called 'Partisans'. Many were concentrated in forested areas, where they collected food and hid Jews who were unable to fight, while also coordinating attacks on local Nazi forces and their collaborators. The largest groups of Partisans were in France and in Lithuania. In Lithuania, the Partisans managed to derail hundreds of trains and kill over 3,000 German soldiers. However, as the Holocaust occurred differently in separate locations, armed resistance wasn't an option most of the time.



Prison Saint Paul de Lyon

Credit: Panorama

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how does this letter make you feel?*
- *Does anything surprise you about this source? Why?*
- *How does Simon feel about the fact he is going to die?*
- *Why does Simon remind his 'comrades' to continue fighting?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.



Trigger Warnings: *Extreme Graphic Descriptions, Antisemitism, Murder, Genocide, Police Brutality*

Yitskhok Rudashevski

Murdered aged 16



**Yitskhok Rudashevski
with his father**

Credit: USHMM

The Diary of Yitskhok Rudashevski

6th September 1941:

(First day of the Vilna Ghetto - aged 15)

“I feel as if I am in a box. There is no air to breathe. Wherever you go you encounter a gate that hems you in... I feel that I have been robbed, my freedom is being robbed from me, my home, and the familiar Vilna streets I love so much. I have been cut off from all that is dear and precious to me”.

A later entry:

”The handful of surviving Jews has begun to become accustomed to the new conditions. My parents work and I have become the “mistress” in the house. I have learned to cook, to wash floors, and on this I spend my days. In the evening I go to meet my parents.”



Trigger Warnings: *Extreme Graphic Descriptions, Antisemitism, Murder, Genocide, Police Brutality*

Who was Yitskhok?

Yitskhok Rudashevski was born in Vilna, Lithuania in December 1927. He was an only child and enjoyed hiking and camping with his youth group. Germany invaded Lithuania in June 1941 when Yitskhok was 14 years old. Shortly after, 35,000 of the city's Jews were murdered in a nearby forest and the remainder, including Yitskhok, were forced into ghettos. When the liquidation of the ghetto began, Yitskhok and his family went into hiding in the attic of his uncle's house. Two weeks later they were discovered and taken to Ponar, a forest, where they were shot by the Einsatzgruppen (specialist Nazi killing squads).

Historical Context:

Many Jewish people living in modern day Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen and their collaborators. The Einsatzgruppen were mobile killing units, that rounded up local Jewish people and shot them. They were assisted by other German units and local police and civilians. Often the local Jews would be led to a local forest, forced to dig their own graves and then were shot. Around a third of Jews murdered in the Holocaust (2 million) were killed in this way and it is known as 'the Holocaust by bullets'. There are approximately 1,928 documented execution sites from the Holocaust by bullets.

Over 95% of Jews in Lithuania were murdered in the Holocaust, the highest percentage of any country.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how does this source make you feel?*
- *What does Yitskhok mean when he talks about being the "mistress of the house"?*
- *The 'Holocaust by bullets' is often less discussed than other killing methods, such as death camps. Why might this be the case?*
- *What do you think were the major factors that determined how Jews died in the Holocaust?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

Einsatzgruppen: Units of the Security Police and SD (the SS intelligence service), as well as reserve Police Battalions and local Police groups that followed behind the German army as it invaded the Soviet Union that acted as mobile killing units. They were key perpetrators of mass shooting actions that killed a third of the Jews in the Holocaust.

Ghetto: A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group (in this case Jews and Roma and Sinti) are compelled to live.

Liquidation: The Nazis used euphemistic terms to disguise their perpetration of genocide. Germans and their allies and collaborators murdered ghetto residents en masse and dissolved ghetto administrative structures. The Nazis called this 'Liquidation'.



Anonymous Girl

Age unknown



The Diary of Anonymous Girl

Friday, February 24

[Actually February 27], 1942

“1 ½ kilograms of pickled beets

½ kilogram of sauerkraut [finely cut raw cabbage]

10 decagrams [100 grams] of vegetable salad

60 decagrams [600 grams] of rye flour

20 decagrams [200 grams] of zacierki [egg

noodles] 50 decagrams [500 grams] of sugar

15 decagrams [150 grams] of margarine

10 decagrams [100 grams] of coffee

How can you survive on this for two weeks?

[...] Yesterday I weighed twenty decagrams of zacierki [noodles] and then sneaked a spoonful. When my father came back, he immediately noticed that some zacierki were missing. My father started yelling at me and he was right [...] What have I done? I regret it so much, but it can't be undone. My father is not going to forgive me. How will I ever look him in the eyes? He stood by the window and cried like a baby. [...] All the fights are started by me. I must be manipulated by some evil force. I would like to be different, but I don't have a strong enough will. There is nobody I can talk to. Why isn't there anybody who would guide me, why can't anybody teach me? I hate my sister. She is a stranger to me. God, show me what is right.”



Who was Anonymous Girl?

The identity of the Anonymous Girl is unknown. Her diary was written in Polish, and she and her family lived in the Łódź ghetto during the Holocaust.

Historical Context:

Many of those murdered during the Holocaust still remain anonymous, as entire communities were destroyed. There are photos with unidentifiable individuals because no one who knew them survived. In some cases all that survives of those murdered during the Holocaust are lists of names, but there are many occasions where details were not taken before individuals were murdered.

During the Holocaust, before the Nazis started the mass murder of Jews, the Nazis forced Jews into ghettos. These were areas in a city where Jews were forced to live separate from the rest of the population. They were often in the most run-down areas with very poor living conditions. The Łódź ghetto was the second-largest ghetto in the Holocaust. Some 164,000 Jews were interned into only 4sq km.

Questions to consider:

- *On first reading, how does this diary entry make you feel?*
- *Why do you think we don't know who the author of the source is?*
- *How does the author's anonymity affect how we read the diary?*
- *What can this diary entry tell us about the role of food during the Holocaust?*

Glossary:

Antisemitism anti-Jewish hatred): Antisemitism is hatred, bigotry, prejudice or discrimination against Jews as a religious or ethnic group.

Concentration Camp: Throughout German-occupied Europe, the Nazis established camps to detain and kill those they perceived as their enemies, including Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, and others. Imprisonment in a concentration camp was of unlimited duration, was not linked to a specific act, and was not subject to any judicial review.

Ghetto: A confined area of a city in which members of a minority group (in this case Jews and Roma and Sinti) are compelled to live. The first use of the term "ghetto" for a section of a city in which Jews lived was in Venice, Italy, in 1516.

