

Peter Ginz – the diary

4. X. 1941 (Saturday)

The whole day went relatively well.

I spent the morning at Turna's family in Troja. We were supposed to hold races, but they were not held. The wind was too weak and some (14-15 year old) boy was throwing stones at us.

One eleven- year-old boy stopped Turna on the way saying that he has no right to talk to Jews. He claimed he knew the law well and that he was going to find out Turna's name...

10. X. 1941 (Friday)

Morning at school, Ehrlich from next class is leaving with the first transport of five thousand Jews to Poland on Monday.

Each person is allowed to take 50 kg of luggage with them, money, blankets, food and insurance.

26. X. 1941 (Sunday)

Morning at home; afternoon with Mološ's at Hanyl's.

Neither Pavlíček nor Jožka or Jiřina were at home. Only Miluška was at home whom Mr. Karpeles was visiting. She was showing us sleeping bags. It was snowing for the first time this year, of course only with rain. We have received, (us) and Miloš's, summons to registration.

12. XII. 1941 (Friday)

Morning at school, I saw 6 moving trucks on my way to school, they had been moving equipment from the Dušní synagogue, about 20 Jews (Uncle Miloš among them) were carrying furniture there. We had to hand in Eva's ski boots, because the Germans ordered it. Afternoon at home. In the evening - daddy at the emergency service...

19. XII. 1941 (Friday)

Morning at school. It is already the last day of school, Christmas holidays are coming. The whole heel fell off my shoe on my way to school, so I was late because I had to walk slowly. In the afternoon in the city, at Orlický (who sells glass) workers dropped a large wooden box with glass (about 2 X 1 ½ m X 2 dm) and they have broken everything. I was watching as they were carrying it out, but some Jew was going by and told me to go better away, that it is a German shop and that they could beat me up. Earlier, the shop had been called Ohrenstein

and Orlický (who is German), but the German took the shop away from the Jew Ohrenstein and now the company only bears the name Orlický. Mum left to Hradec (Králové) this morning and left us unfortunately quite a vague description of what to cook. Well, it's all going to get fixed up somehow!

23. XII.1941 (Tuesday)

We have just received an announcement from the Jewish community to hand in harmonicas and other portable musical instruments, thermometers and so on, Cameras with accessories all before December 31st. Afternoon at grandmother's.

25. XII. 1941 (Thursday)

Morning at grandmother's, in the afternoon the whole family at Maniny. There was a strong wind, so we had to return. In the evening, the Kohner's Lianka came to visit us in order to ask us round at night, to see them lighting their Christmas tree. They have gone completely Aryan. Mr. Hůla, Kohners, Fuškus (newly weds) and Míla Weisbach were there. It is snowing and we are all afraid that it (snow) will remain on the ground and daddy will have to clear it. Once, last year, he had already been at an action like this, at Kbely airport. At that time, there were several dm of water and Daddy (he was there about 5 times) caught a cold. Jews might have to hand in even sweaters again.

9. I. 1942 (Friday)

Morning in town. Mr. Weisbach was visiting and told us how he was locked up behind bars for 10 days, because he didn't have J. on his ID. There was supposedly also the director (former of course) from Kolbeny Daňek and many other Jews.

3. II. 1942 (Tuesday)

Morning in town, afternoon at home. At half twelve at night a city attendant came round saying that our Daddy has to arrive at the exhibition center on Thursday morning. He was noted down as a car mechanic and that's why they chose him, regardless of the mixed marriage. We were in a horrible hurry, we were preparing everything for his journey and the Kohner's were helping us. Fortunately, Daddy got fever and Dr. Lang, called by the council, informed them that Daddy wasn't able to undergo any transport. Of course, we were very happy.

16. IV.1942 (Thursday)

In the morning from half past ten till eleven at Hagibor. We were exercising in our shirts and that's why we also had to have stars sewed on them. So I had three stars beneath one another: on the overcoat, on the coat and on the shirt. At school in the afternoon: performance of Kytice (Bouquet – a book of poems by a Czech author Erben). It also wasn't bad; better than Machar. – Vaňek's left at quarter to five.

27. V.1942 (Thursday)

Morning at school. I'm supposed to get a warning from Beinkolese. Afternoon with Pepper on a walk. There was a bomb attempt on SS Gruppenführer Heydrich. That's why an emergency state was called upon and people, who will show up today after 9 pm and tomorrow before 6 pm and won't stop after being called the first time, shall be shot. An award of 10.000.000 K to those who will hand in the initiators. Whoever knows about them and will not report it shall be shot together with their whole family.

How I found out about the transport

On 22nd of September I left for work as usual at seven o'clock to a repair shop for typewriters... When I cleaned up a couple of machines (I wrote the numbers down carefully. Old Fuchs only copied those numbers and let himself be paid for the cleaning. I did not get paid though) I was sent to do the check-up on the machines. Every two weeks it was necessary to watch the machines in all the departments of the community in case they need to be cleaned... At the law department I sat down to a machine and started cleaning. Suddenly a phone rang. It was the repair shop calling that I was supposed to go to the workshop immediately. I was very surprised, because it was usually me who called them (when I broke a string somewhere) rather than them calling me. I kept the surprise to myself, packed my things and went to the workshop. As soon as I entered the workshop, Wolf said calmly: "You are in, but don't worry about it."

Preparations

To my surprise, when Wolf told me this memorable sentence, I stayed calm. I said goodbyes in case I would not see them again. I suddenly recalled all the things I had done wrong to them and thought maybe they are happy that I will be gone. They looked as if they were really sorry to see me go.

I went home then. On the way home I was trying to absorb the noise and the atmosphere of the streets that I wouldn't be able to hear for a long time (I think my parents were counting that it would be several months). I got home (I hid the star from the corner to the entrance of the building). I did not want people to see that there were still Jews living in our building. There were only offices up until the third floor. Kohner's family lived on the fourth floor (three months ago they left for Poland and all their luggage was seized). Mautners (left for Terezín), Ichs (Aryans, employees of the railways) and us. We were protected from eviction, because the flat was written in my mother's name.

I finally came to the door and knocked. "Who's there", Mum asked and I said: "Me". Mum opened the door and wondered why I was home so early. "Mummy, don't get scared, I am in the transport." Mum was shocked, started to cry and did not know what to do. I was comforting her. Suddenly the doorbell rang and aunt Nadia came to tell us I was in, which we all knew already. Auntie is a practical woman so she started to get things moving. First we rushed to the community to pick up the forms they were just about to distribute. Otherwise we would not have found out about my transport until noon. The place to summon was at six o'clock at Veletržní (Fair)Palace. Then we ran back home where my good friend Harry Popper was waiting for me to say goodbye. There was a big chaos, packing, and the ladies from the Jewish religious community came to help us pack. In the meantime, we managed to have some lunch. What we had for lunch then I cannot remember. I would like to know what it was, I think burgers.

After lunch they told me to choose the toys I want to take with me. I took a supply of papers (including this notebook), linoleum, knives for cutting it, an unfinished novel called "Altay (Ceylon) Wise man" containing about 260 pages at the time. I wanted to finish it in Terezín, but then it didn't work out. I will talk about my laziness in Terezín later. I also took a thin piece of leather for binding and a few bookbinding papers. That was all. Sorry, also a few broken watercolors; I left the rest at home. That was all from my own drawer and the box. I affectionately packed these things to other pieces of luggage. I hope I will be forgiven that I was more worried about those things than anything else.

There was a huge mess of things in the middle of the table the Mautners left with us. We were supposed to pack them and they were everywhere on the ottoman, on the sofa. Paul and Hanka came (my cousins) and they were also helping as much as they could. I am writing it in a humorous style now, but that time we were far from laughing. Dad gave me his warmest shirts, vest, his skiing boots, anything possible. I told him as a joke it is not so sure as for his protection (The protected people were: married to an Aryan and their children until

the age of 14). The protection fluctuated those days and one day you could be protected and the other you could go.

We were prepared for my transport though. One SS member mentioned to me during the last registration „Der fährt mit nächsten Transport.“ („He is going with the next transport.”) My parents did not tell me about it at the time. I found out about it only today and I did not go with the next one, but with the one after.

Departure

The whole afternoon passed in complete chaos. My parents were packing my blanket. It was a comforter. Aunt Nadia was helping with it. I can still remember my Dad saying: “Let Peter pack it, now we are all doing it and he will have to do it himself at the fair.” So I grabbed the blanket, put few loaves of bread in it, pillow, sheets and a pair of pajamas. I turned the blanket and stepping on it with my knees I managed to roll it. I put a cover on it which Mum took off from the sink under the gas. I remember telling her that she would have nothing to cover the sink with, but she only brushed me aside.

The evening was approaching very fast. We pulled the shades down in the room (other times we did it only sometimes). It was almost an acrobatic performance how to darken the room. My mom did it in a way that she opened the inner window, stepped in a space between both windows and, hooked them on the circles to the corners of the blanket. There were already prepared (and sometimes unprepared) nails and hooks. I was more for the fenstre clasual meaning closed windows. I was moving slowly along the inner ledge and was holding on to the window frames. While doing this procedure I darkened it. Then I jumped down so hard that the windows trembled.

We continued packing. Auntie Nadia called me to the bedroom and was reasoning with me to be sensible, not to go with big boys, and spoiled . Then she undid the pockets of my coat and put a one hundred marks note in each of them. Then I also got a knife from my dad with a deepened handle and a one hundred marks note in it.

We had to do everything very fast, because at six o’ clock I was supposed to be summoned for registration. That is why there were the last heated preparations. I got rolls with salami to my pocket also the other pockets were full of food. Now, I don’t know what my parents gave me, but I am sure only some good things.

³ Peter uses his own confidential handwriting which I managed to decipher. He also uses Russian alphabet, Hebrew letters (but also writes a Czech text with them) and shorthand. Despite my effort to decipher and understand the whole text, several parts remained illegible: they are marked by three dots (...).

Eight o'clock was my time to be summoned. We went to the Fair by tram. The Jews who were in transport received a permit to go by tram from a Jewish community. You had to submit permit and personal ID, pay and then you could go. When I ...Dad was telling other passengers how complicated that is. Our transport starts the transport of those from mixed marriages. We arrived at the Fair it was dark. Daddy said goodbye to me. He kissed me several times and then aunt Nadia gave me the last kiss. I was given a new number 446. What is the name of our transport anyway? They did not know yet. I handed in the suitcases in an optimistic hope that I would see them again.