



But I Live Educational Resources

From Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust

From the Diary of Klaus Langer

From Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015)

Klaus (later Jacob) Langer was born on April 12, 1924, in the city of Gleiwitz, in Upper Silesia, which at that time was part of Germany. His father, Erich, had also been born in Gleiwitz; his mother, Rose, was born in Odessa and emigrated to Germany in 1912, where she and Erich Langer married in 1922. Klaus's grand- mother, Mina, joined the family in 1927, when he was three years old. After successive moves from Gleiwitz to Wiesbaden, then to a small town near Gelsenkirchen, the family settled in Essen in 1936. The events of the Crystal Night, when the Nazis incited a pogrom or violent riot against Jews across Germany, caused Klaus's family to begin preparations to leave the country.

November 28, 1938

[. . .] The Jewish youth center building is still standing, albeit burned out. Even the steps leading upstairs were burned. The gym looks terrible. Half of the ceiling is hanging down. At first the police were there to guard the building, but later any- one could enter it. One evening, Rotzig, Bobby, and I went in. After we walked around a while we entered Sternberg's apartment. He was the caretaker.

It was totally burned out. We also looked into the hallway and tried to go into the basement. We retreated, however, when we heard steps below. On Wednesday, fourteen days after he was arrested, Father was released from jail. There was great joy. Afterward Father talked about his imprisonment. The food and treatment were quite tolerable.

November 28, 1938 [second entry on this date]

On the first day of his arrest, Father was left all alone, which made him very nervous. Later he was placed into a small cell with two others. [. . .] They [. . .] were allowed to walk outside their cell, which brought them in contact with prisoners in other cells. Most disturbing was their lack of communication with their families. The same applied to us. Before the second visit to the prison, Grand- mother was up at 3 a.m. wanting to know whether it was time to leave for the prison. The women were harried to no end. They had to run from one place to another to get permission to leave packages for their husbands and relatives, which left them no more than ten minutes for visiting. Mother always returned from these visits most discouraged. The last two days before the prisoners were released were the worst.

On November 23, Father came home and immediately began to work on the emigration process. The only two countries to which Father's pension could be transferred were Chile and Palestine. By his calculation, his income would not be enough to make a living in Palestine and the question then arose whether he would be able to supplement his pension. There was also the question whether the Nazis would continue to send his pension abroad. As an amateur musician it was almost



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impossible to make a living in Palestine because of the many other Jewish musicians who had emigrated there. In Chile the situation was somewhat better and it would have been possible to live there on the pension. [. . .]

Yesterday, I applied with several others for making aliyah. I don't know which of these opportunities will work out, but I plan to take the first one that comes along. There also is a chance to attend a trade school in England. If the opportunities in Holland fail to come true, I may have to go to England, whether I like it or not. Father had to give up hope for emigrating to Argentina. He is now hoping to get a business license for Palestine. It would be best if we could all go to Palestine.

December 19, 1938

Regarding the emigration of my parents I have the following to report. First came two refusals from Argentina for lack of letters of credit. The rich uncle in America is unable to assume such a financial responsibility. We don't have an affidavit for the U.S. India requires firm employment there, or a contract. Father is now trying to make connections in India to obtain a contract. He also wrote to Peru and he was told to go to the Uruguayan consulate. Allegedly the Dominican Republic would take ten thousand Jews and provide them with visas. However, nothing further is known about that. It probably makes no sense to turn to them. However, with a Dominican Republic visa it is possible to get a half-year visa for Palestine. Shanghai also accepts Jews, even without a visa, but it is questionable how one can live there. The mail also brought no news from Palestine. We had submitted a request for a "commercial certification."

December 23, 1938

I have to make some additional entries regarding my emigration. England no longer is a possibility for me. I was not accepted because I was registered in Holland. My acceptance at the Jawne school in Cologne is in question. It might work out that we shall have enough money since we rented my room and that of Grand- mother for forty marks per month. In addition, Herr Bachrach reduced my parents' rent by twenty marks. That means that my attendance at the Jawne school is not totally out of the question. My frozen ear still keeps me at home. Outside there is wonderful new snow and we had planned a snow fight.

From the Diary of Otto Wolf

From Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*, 2nd edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015)

Otto Wolf was born on June 5, 1927, in Mohelnice, Moravia, the youngest child of Berthold and Ruzena Wolf. He had two older siblings, Felicitas (nicknamed Lici or Licka), born in 1920, and Kurt, also born in Lipnik, in 1915. Berthold and Ruzena instilled in their children a strong sense of their Jewish identity, but their daughter Felicitas recalled that before the war they did not rigorously observe the Jewish holidays, rituals, and laws, nor did they keep kosher at home. Indeed, like many Czech Jews of their generation, they were very much assimilated into mainstream culture, living a middle-class existence

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until the German takeover of Czechoslovakia. Throughout most of the 1930s, the family lived in the Moravian city of Olomouc, where Berthold was a businessman. Otto attended middle school there, as did Felicitas. In his lengthy diary, Otto Wolf records his family's experience of hiding in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (occupied Czechoslovakia).

June 24, 1942. Wednesday, first week.

At 4:14 a.m., we look for a stable hideout and manage to locate one. It is in thick bushes, so that we can't even sit up in there, just lie down. At five, Lici [Felicitas] and I go get some water at the spring by the forest. Only then do we lie down to sleep and sleep until eleven, bothered by hundreds of ants. Dad is cooking the first warm meal in two days: soup and meat with bread. [. . .] In the afternoon, we lie down again with the ants, and stay down until evening, and then have eggs and bread for dinner. We are waiting for Slávek. He is supposed to bring our backpacks today. He brings them around 11 p.m., and Dad makes coffee around eleven-thirty. Slávek sleeps with us all night until 4 a.m.

June 25, 1942. Thursday, first week.

At quarter after five, we go for water, then put away things from the backpacks. Right afterward, we have breakfast of warm coffee and then sleep until 10 a.m. Dad is improving the camouflage on our hideout: he cuts down two small trees with his pocket knife and uses them to hide the entrance well. Lunch consists of soup and rabbit with bread. In the afternoon, Dad cuts off all my hair and then, for the first time in his life, he shaves off his beard. We can't recognize him. [. . .] Slávek does not come, and no one seems to be looking for us yet. [. . .]

July 4, 1942. Saturday, 2nd week.

We fetch water at half past four, then lie quietly until eight. We have bread and black coffee for breakfast. We have practically no kerosene or bread left. We have no idea why Slávek has not come. We have bread and bacon for lunch. That is the last of our bread, and it's only noon. We have no idea what to eat in the evening and the next morning. In the evening, we have lentil beans softened in water and boiled just a little, because we have no kerosene left. Slávek did not come.

August 25, 1942. Tuesday, 10th week.

We go at half past four in the morning and then we have breakfast of coffee and bread. We then take a nap. At eight we start snapping beans. As soon as we finish our lunch of garlic soup and bread, we continue with the beans. We are done at 2 p.m. We have a tidy pile of them. Dad puts them on the roof of the hut [a makeshift shed in the forest] to dry. In the afternoon, something scares us terribly. We hear a noise in the hut and assume that someone had found the beans on the roof and is pawing them. Later we found out that some man had merely put some fresh chaff into the hut. We were really scared at the time. In the evening we have dinner of bread with jam and then sleep a little and then take off at quarter past ten to pick up food. But apart from some trifles there is no kerosene at the drop-off point, and we are almost out. Dad is the angriest because of it: he doesn't sleep one bit during the night. We don't know what we will cook and eat.



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April 19, 1945, Thursday.

At 6 a.m., they [the Vlasov troops] ask us all for personal identification. They confront our Otosek [diminutive for Otto] first. He is at a loss for words, and finally says that he is visiting the Oheras and that he is from Telc. The Vlasovite commander does not believe him, though, and simply says: "You're coming with me." Otto rises to his feet resolutely and goes, although his face is as white as paper. The rest of us feel like knives are being driven into our hearts. They demand identification from Papa, too, but he says that he has special dispensation and besides is sixty-one already, so finally they leave him alone. They don't even bother Mommy and me. [. . .] After a search, they line up all their prisoners. There are about fifteen of them...and some others we don't know....Papa decides that whatever happens, we cannot afford to stay here and must go off to the forest, though unfortunately without our beloved Otošek. We take nothing with us except a piece of bread and some shmaltz. [. . .] We are all so crushed by events that none of us has eaten anything since yesterday, and we all feel emotionally exhausted. Each of us tries to hide sadness, pain, and tears from the others. Papa laments and weeps terribly, and we have our hands full keeping him calm. Just before I returned from the Oheras' in the afternoon, he had gone off to cut some branches so we have something to lie on in our hideout: a job that used to be Otík's [diminutive for Otto]. It made him so sad that he had to return to Mommy. He was so weak that he could not talk or even breathe. Mommy immediately gave him some medicine to calm him down. The weather is changeable and somewhat cold. We go to sleep at seven without having eaten anything.

April 20, 1945, Friday.

We wake up at quarter after five and go to a clearing to move our feet a little since it has been dreadfully cold during the night. We have no blankets. We then pray: it is Yom Kippur Qatan. We fast until 1 p.m. At noon, I take the basket and go back to the Oheras' for the most indispensable of indispensable items. When I get there, I find Mrs. Oherová running around as if she had lost her mind. She says that I must leave right away, that the criminal police have already been here twice and that they had left just before I arrived. [. . .] Each one of us has a tiny piece of bread with a little shmaltz for dinner. Before noon, an old woman roaming around the place scared us. We go to sleep at seven.

April 21, 1945, Saturday.

We rise at 7 a.m. Breakfast consists of a tiny piece of bread with a hint of shmaltz. The weather is very cold now. At noon, I crawl through the forest toward Mrs. Tichá's, who is already waiting for me with a loaf of bread. [. . .] She doesn't know anything about our men: all Trsice men are home already but none from Zákrov.

She says that I shouldn't even think about going to the Oheras' because the Gestapo is showing up there constantly. The Vlasovites may also be roaming around Trsice all the way to the Korábko looking for us. She is afraid that they may find us. She looks terrible: she can barely walk. [. . .]

April 22, 1945, Sunday.



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The rain lets up in the morning, but the wind continues. It is terribly cold. We have lunch of a small piece of bread with a tiny bit of aspic that was still left in the bag from the attic. In the forenoon, the rain returns. We have to hide in a shed because our little tent is completely soaked and so is everything inside. The cold is more intense than anything we remember during our three-year exile. When a break in the rain occurs, we hope it is permanent and move outside the shed again because we don't feel safe inside. But the rainstorm returns four more times, bringing with it hail and such terribly cold wind that we keep moving back and forth between our hideout and the shed. Everything is so wet that we have to spend the night in the shed. We sit down on a narrow perch and huddle close together. The hut is very drafty, so we hang a raincoat in front of us to cut down on the cold wind. During the night, we have to get up several times to stretch because all our bones hurt terribly from sitting on that perch. We actually squat more than we sit. All our clothing and shoes are completely soaked, which adds to the cold. We shake like leaves. We keep praying and thinking about Otosěk, wondering what he is doing now. At times, we simply cannot explain to ourselves how such a misfortune could possibly have befallen us. At half past six, we pray and go to sleep.

April 23, 1945, Monday.

We rise at seven, pray, and each breakfast on a tiny piece of bread with a few molecules of shmaltz. We fix up our hideout. Papa uses his knife to cut branches from about ten trees and uses the branches to make a roof. I help a little, but in every-thing we do, we sorely miss Otosěk's able hands. At quarter to twelve, I go to see Mrs. Tichá. She provides two loaves of bread, half a jar of jam, ten hard-boiled eggs, a little shmaltz—about five decagrams, six to eight decagrams of butter, nine pies, ten apples, a little over a liter of milk, and medicinal drops. She also sends Papa twenty Zorkas [cigarettes] and a little tobacco, two boxes of matches, and two newspapers. She says that we have to make it last for two weeks. [. . .] Our dear ones have already been transported from U jezdz: no one knows where they are now, but the guess is Prerov. [. . .] At noon, I go for water. I feel helpless with grief when I remember that I used to walk through here with Otosěk. I have to monitor myself carefully so our parents don't notice anything. The weather is very cold now. We shiver at night, and get up in the morning nearly frozen.

April 27, 1945, Friday.

We pray at eight, then eat a little bread with shmaltz for breakfast. [. . .] Dad has stopped shaving: he is growing a beard. We don't even feel like washing in the morning: we just splash a few token drops of water on our faces. All we can really focus on are our prayers to G—d: we beg for liberation and for Otík's and Kurtík's [diminutive for Kurt] safety and well-being. [. . .] We have bread with jam for lunch, the same for dinner. Tomorrow will be Mommy's birthday. [. . .]