

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies
676, Ring. I/39 Enquete Internat Nowolipki 25
Ghettos under Nazi Rule – Daily Life
Translation: C03 Cyrla Zajfer describes her life

What changes have we seen since the outbreak of war?

Before the war we lived in Sochaczew. I had parents and two sisters. Daddy, a craftsman, a cobbler, earned well. I went to school, to fourth grade, and was a pretty good student. Suddenly, the war broke out. Bombardments began. When the first bomb fell on our city, everyone began to flee wherever they could. We took some bedclothes and linen, and went by cart to Wiskitki. After a short time, we learned that the house in which we used to live had been burned down. With no reason to return to Sochaczew, we stayed in Wiskitki. My parents rented an apartment and Daddy worked hard to be able to feed the family. We were not short of food, as we usually had work from the farmers, and the farmers gave us potatoes, beets, flour and grits in exchange for our work. But we did not have it good for long, for we were resettled, and not permitted [to take] with us more than 20 kg of baggage and 25 zloty. One day, the order came that we were to leave the city at once. Carts came, which took the sick, children, and elderly women to Żyrardów, and the men walked. In Żyrardów we spent one night. We were taken by train to Warsaw. When we disembarked the train, large motor vehicles were waiting, which took us to the centre at 20 Niska Street. We were at that centre for two weeks. Our parents rented a place to live, thinking that in a private apartment Daddy would have work and would be able to feed us. However Daddy had no work, and we went hungry for whole days at a time. Daddy felt weaker day by day, until one day he died. We mourned the death of our beloved Daddy for a long time. Mummy began to sell the rest of the things we had in the house. Things were very bad. Four weeks after Daddy's death, Mummy took very sick and shortly afterwards she died. We were left three orphans with no livelihood. Things were very bad, we had nothing to eat. There were days when we went to sleep without a crumb of bread. Until an acquaintance of my Daddy learned of our sad fate and managed to have us taken into a day boarding house. We started to attend the institution on August 1st. A few days later my youngest sister died. I feel a great pain in my heart, but I must accept my fate. My sister and I attend the institution, where we are given a meal four times a day and we are in the care of good people, who do their best to ensure that we grow up into good people.

Cyrla Zajfer

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Translated by Jessica Taylor-Kucia