

## Debora's Diary

Translation by Manya Friedman (12/2004)

I

Several calm weeks have passed, holidays and New \_\_\_\_\_. High Gestapo officials assured us there will be no more round-ups and here we have \_\_\_\_\_ perfidy of Hitler's gang. 4 Jan. 1943 news passed through the ghetto \_\_\_\_\_ it was not a matter of great concern because it is known that the so called "W" which means sign of life. Father went to work. Mother, however, not having any obligations remained with me. Mother's heart could not allow her to leave me all alone at home. Nearby in the neighborhood my fiancée's sister and mother remained. At \_\_\_\_ in the morning six acquaintances and I entered into the bunker. The shelter was located under the veranda, was well camouflaged, but had one fault, there was no air flow. Therefore it had to be opened every hour by someone from the outside. The morning went by peacefully. At once at 2pm we hear above our heads the gendarmes' heavy footsteps, then my mother's voice, then

II

begs them and the heart freezes from terror, but this is only the beginning. After a few minutes we hear the gendarmes' footsteps asking if there are any shelters on the veranda. The steps are coming closer, we can already hear them above our heads. We were sure that this is for us. We stopped breathing.... \_\_\_\_\_ we hear a question directed toward my mother. Is there a shelter here? If we find one then you will be shot on the spot. We do not need to wait long for an answer. My mother's firm voice replies. Very well, if there is a shelter in this house I bet my head. The footsteps subsided and we hear the gendarmes going to my friend's house. Suddenly a loud shot, they must have killed Marta's sick mother. Further silence..... Only my mother's quiet footsteps are heard, afraid to open the trap door even for a second, because danger is nearby. Slowly we are in need of fresh air, our breathing is getting shallow, time passes and help

III

does not come for us. Again we hear heavy footsteps and after a minute quiet. I no longer hear mother's footsteps,

I do not know what happened to her, I am suffocating...  
.....We start to \_\_\_\_\_ calling,  
no one is around. Where is my mother? What  
happened to her? I keep repeating this question.  
Again footsteps, lighter, but one can tell that they are made by men,  
that is the militia \_\_\_\_\_ hearing our calls, were  
yelling "Shut your mouths, danger!" \_\_\_\_\_  
You can already cut the air, the stench is terrible,  
we scream and hit our heads against the wall, but  
it does not help. We are lost! We do not care now  
about anything, we relieve ourselves, we bite  
\_\_\_\_\_ our hands. We can no longer catch our breath.  
I realize that death like this  
will be terrible. I stretch out my arm  
the penknife notched my arm, with one stroke cuts  
my veins \_\_\_\_\_, I rattle and spit blood,  
a few more minutes and I will not last. Suddenly a girl

#### IV

\_\_\_\_\_ age gets a madness attack. Hitting her head  
against our shelter as if it were  
a hammer and not \_\_\_\_\_ this saved us. The trapdoor  
was opened \_\_\_\_\_ a wave of fresh air  
revived us, exiting we drag out the ones that fainted  
\_\_\_\_\_ we can not \_\_\_\_\_  
faces terribly contorted \_\_\_\_\_. With difficulty I reach  
the apartment, I look everywhere but mother is not  
here. Nightfall is near. I go to my friend's  
room, I see her form, so I call-  
Marta! Marta! There is no answer.  
I come closer \_\_\_\_ here lies Marta and near her,  
her mother, they are both alive. One was  
shot in the nose, Marta in the cheek which  
she covers with her hand: mouth. I squeeze it! My mother  
is not here. It is quiet everywhere.  
I run to my room and look through the window, on the  
background of dark clouds I see a glow: the ghetto is on fire!  
What to do, I want to \_\_\_\_\_ sober people

#### V

because ours are madmen. I go \_\_\_\_\_  
small houses and grimness everywhere only corpses of  
children, mothers and \_\_\_\_\_ quiet. There is not  
even a living soul. \_\_\_\_\_  
I have the impression that I am going mad, I drag myself \_\_\_\_\_  
but I see, that this is useless. On the entire street  
there is no living person. I decided to run away

when it gets dark. It is very cold  
my underwear is wet, smelly, but  
I do not give it much thought. It is  
getting darker, and the fire  
intensifies. No one can  
imagine that feeling. To be  
in a burning ghetto, only among corpses,  
not knowing what is with mother. I am waiting  
for a normal human being, but none such  
appeared, only the dark night.  
Around 7 pm the living and sane started to  
gather, among them returned my father. I thought

## VI

that he was lost on the way. I hastily give a realization  
of everything and father rushed to save mother, he returns.  
Bribing all \_\_\_\_\_ mother would be released  
from the deportation place. We are going to a friend's,  
over there are two men, who were also  
released from the shelter. By the way, I looked in the kitchen.  
Horrors, on the floor lies the cold corpse of my  
mother, shot through her mouth from which  
a thin ribbon of blood flows,  
that formed a small puddle.  
I can not believe that she is no longer alive; she died.  
Acquaintances, who were in the shelter underneath this apartment  
explain to me in detail the entire tragedy. The first  
group of gendarmes shot Marta's mother, her cry  
was heard below. The other group took my mother  
from the house (maybe she was hiding at Marta's, it is not  
clear) They entered Marta's apartment. Being drunk  
they wanted to have some "fun." Marta started to fight  
(echoes of the fight were heard below) at this my

## VII

mother turned to those bandits- leave  
her alone- what conscience do you have to  
take advantage of such a young girl \_\_\_\_ the answer  
was a shot which my mother received \_\_\_\_\_  
After awhile two more shots were heard  
which were directed at Marta.  
We understood!!! Father understood even better  
than I, he knew one thing, that remaining in  
the ghetto is certain death. Without hesitation he removed  
mother's badge \_\_\_\_\_ and pinned it on me  
saying "- her \_\_\_\_\_ not necessary, she

sacrificed her life, to give to you; may her effort not be in vain.

The entire night we sat with corpses, in the morning we went through fields strewn with corpses, which were half covered with snow. In the evening through the press we found out what terrible drama took place on 5 Jan. 1943 in \_\_\_\_\_. Some of the people who remained in the houses were taken and

## VIII

shot \_\_\_\_\_ home and the worst \_\_\_\_\_ died those who lived in the other part of the ghetto. L. did not hesitate to burn houses; throw people into the burning houses, especially \_\_\_\_\_. Eyewitnesses confided about the atrocities. Mothers, from whose arms the children were torn and thrown into the fire, were running after them. They had the most fun with an infant. One bandit threw the baby into the air and the other shot at it while it was still in the air. Great amusement \_\_\_\_\_. W \_\_\_\_\_

At night we returned home, we took mother to the apartment and were sitting a long time by her, brother could not come. We found out that the chief of the ghetto gave out an order to bring all who were killed to one place, and from there they will be buried in a common grave. We did not want to agree to that and we decided to keep mother at home as long as there will be a possibility to bury her in a separate grave

## IX

After bribing the competent authorities, after 10 days, we received the permit. The day of the so called funeral, I found brother sitting near mother and conversing with her as if she were alive. What are you doing? - I asked. He replied. I am talking with mother, the reason she left, so she could be able to continue to take care of us.

By horses we took mother's casket to the funeral home. There were there some more corpses who were not yet buried. It was a ghastly sight. Those corpses were either shot, or burned. The Kantor said a prayer over mother's casket. I glanced at the pile of corpses.

Way on the top I noticed a child.  
A little girl maybe two years old  
she made the illusion of a little angel \_\_\_\_\_  
from pain when I thought \_\_\_\_\_ such a child.  
It's guilty! What crime \_\_\_\_\_?