

Eva Ginzova Prague, Czechoslovakia and Terezin Ghetto

Background Information

The Ginz family included Petr Ginz, who was born 1928, his younger sister, Eva, born in 1930, and their parents, Otto and Maria. Theirs was a mixed marriage as Otta was Jewish and Maria was born into a Christian family. The Ginz family maintained a liberal but traditional Jewish home: they kept Kosher, attended synagogue for Jewish holidays, Petr and Eva attended Jewish day school, Petr celebrated his bar mitzvah, and the family also included first cousins also from another mixed marriage. Petr and Eva spent Christmases with their maternal grandmother.

Major Events in Eva's Life:

1939:

- March- Annexation of Czechoslovakia by Germany
- June- New Race Laws were put into effect and Petr and Eva were labeled *mischlinge of 1st degree* and subject to restrictions due to having 2 of 4 Jewish grandparents.

1941-1945

- Summer, 1941- War was declared between Russia and Germany and wearing yellow Jewish Stars became mandatory for all Jews including *mischlinge* like Petr and Eva
- December, 1941- Terezin Ghetto was created and the deportations of Eva's family from Prague to Terezin began:
 - Uncle Milos – late 1941
 - Grandmother Berta Ginz- early 1942
 - Cousin Pavel (Milos' son age 14)- early 1942
 - Petr- (age 14.5)- October 1942
 - Cousin Hanka (Pavel's sister)- 1943
 - Eva (age 14) May 1944
 - Otto- February 1945

**Eva's mother and aunt (Milos' wife) were never deported since neither was born Jewish

Eva Ginzova's diary started on June 24, 1944 with her arrival at Terezin, and detailed daily life there until her liberation. Eva wrote about life for the young people housed in their own barracks called "children's homes", which were set up by Jewish ghetto administration to shelter children from the worst of the surroundings and to provide clandestine schooling.

July 1, 1944

When I arrived here, I thought I would definitely be back home within two months, but now I'm starting to lose hope because Uncle Milos keeps saying that we will definitely be here through the winter. I probably won't be able to last that long. I've already had enough of it here- all the grown-ups who came here with me are leaving today for Birkenau. They were the poor things that had been released from prison and were mostly skin and bones..... We still have a history test on Monday and I haven't yet [done] anything [for it].

A recurring element in Eva's journals are vivid descriptions of the harsher side of life in Terezin and her feelings about her situation: the barracks, disease, vermin, separation from family and yearning for family life, loneliness and homesickness, being unprotected and confusion.

August 8, 1944

We were sleeping in number 23 (in the entrance hall) on the ground. We put our mattresses down there and our blankets and pillows on them. We can't put up with our room any longer, what with all the bedbugs and fleas there.

August 20, 1944

.....We tried in vain to get to sleep... We were bitten by bedbugs and fleas (as were the other girls who had stayed and slept in the room). We caught 48 bedbugs on our mattresses, not even counting those we caught on the floor and on ourselves.

Unlike many of the other journalists in Salvaged Pages, Eva had the opportunity to maintain contact with her family, by being in barracks near each other in Terezin and through mail service to her parents while they were still living in Prague. This was both a source of strength and deep longing for Eva.

November 11, 1944

A few days ago it was a year since Granny died [deported to Terezin in 1942.] And it was Pawel's birthday yesterday [deported to Birkenau September 1944]. Oh, I want to go home so much that I can't even describe it. Dear Granny!

November 13, 1944

Today I received two letters from home. Mummy writes that she was in bed for a week, she was ill, poor old Mummy. I'm so worried about Mummy, whether she has completely recovered now and what was wrong with her. Dear God, why does the war have to go on for so long? My dearest Mummy, I love you so much. You must take good care of yourself so that you'll be well when we come back!

December 27, 1944

It's been five days since Mummy's birthday. I sent her a letter with my best wishes already.....I've been thinking about home the whole day and about how last year I went around to the shops with Daddy to buy Mummy a present and how sad we were that Petr wasn't there too. God knows what has happened to him. Sometimes I 'm so overcome and I miss him so much that I feel like crying all day.

One of the most poignant recurring themes of Eva's journal entries are about Petr: admiration of his academic success and writings, how exciting it was that he was teaching her shorthand, her efforts to mother him, and how she tried to keep him safe.

August, 16, 1944

Uncle complained about Petr to me that he had totally stopped taking care of himself and had become terribly forgetful. Uncle doesn't know what else he can do... Petr is really an incredibly clever boy. He [always] had the reputation of being the cleverest at school. When I arrived, one

girl asked me whether Petr Ginz was my bother, and [said] that he was the most intelligent boy from the *heim* (children's home). I was very pleased and I was very proud of him.

August 24, 1944

Petr and I have come across something new. We're studying shorthand. Petr got hold of a textbook and exercise books and I'm thoroughly enjoying it.

Eva's diary included a description of Petr's transit from Terezin to an unknown destination.

September 27, 1944

When I found out that Petr [and Pavel] was in the transport, it made me feel ill. I ran from here to the toilet where I cried my eyes out. I try to keep calm in front of Petr-I don't want to make him feel worse. They are supposed to go somewhere near Dresden.

September 28, 1944

The train's already here and both boys have already got on it. Petr's number 2392 and Pavel 2626. They're together in the same car. Petr's terribly calm and Uncle is full of admiration for him.... It was a horrible sight that will stay with me forever. A crowd of women, children, and old men were pressed around the barracks to get a last look at their son, husband, father or brother. The men leaning out the windows were pressed one against the other to catch a glimpse of their dearest ones.... The sound of crying came from all around.... We quickly ran home and brought the boys two slices of bread each so that they wouldn't be hungry. I pressed through the crowd, crawled under the rope that separated the crowd from the barracks, and passed Petr the bread through the window. I had enough time to hold his hand through the bars before a guard drove me away. At least it worked out all right. Now the boys are gone and the only thing left from them is their empty beds.

December 27, 1944

God knows what has happened to him. Sometimes I 'm so overcome and I miss him so much that I feel like crying all day. And there is still no end to the war. I'm so desperate!

January 16, 1945

Tomorrow I will have been here for eight months. It's almost unbelievable how fast time flies. I feel desperate when I imagine that our parents are at home alone and that Petr is God knows where.

As Eva's time in Terezin grew longer, her despondency was reflected in her commentary on her father's arrival and the arrival of transports from other camps. These entries are near the end of the war in spring 1945.

March 22, 1945

It's awful to see that Daddy would like to eat some more and I have nothing to give him. Sometimes I feel so hungry that I want to cry, but I won't let it show. I'm ashamed... Moreover I think Daddy is suffering from hunger. The food he gets here is nothing for a man doing heavy work.

April 23, 1945

My God, the things that are happening here now, it's difficult to describe. One afternoon (Friday April 20) I was at work when we saw a freight train go past. There were people sticking their heads out of the window. They looked awful. They were pale, completely yellow and green in the face, unshaven, emaciated, with sunken eyes and shaven heads, dressed in prison clothes...and with a strange shine in their eyes....from hunger.

I ran....They were just getting off the train, if one can call it getting off. Very few could stand on their feet (bones, covered in nothing but skin), others lay on the floor, completely exhausted.

They'd been traveling for two weeks with hardly anything to eat.....I was so upset I thought I would collapse. I was still looking for Petr among them...but our Petr wasn't there.....

I wish I could express on paper all the things that are happening inside me. But I'm not talented enough to do that....

I'm so worried about Petr and whether he's still alive.

Eva Ginzova's final journal entry was made two years after her liberation by the Soviets on May 8, 1945. Eva and her father finally returned home to her mother and Prague.

April 14, 1947

Petr hasn't come back.