

Miriam Korber Transnistria

Background Information:

Miriam Korber was born in 1923 to Leon and Klara Korber in Campulung-Moldovenesc, a small town in the Romanian province of Bukovina. Miriam's younger sister, Sylvia (Sisi), was born in 1927. In October 1941, the Jews in the Romanian provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina were deported to a part of western Ukraine known as Transnistria. By November 1941, Miriam was recording her personal experiences from the Djurin Ghetto in Transnistria.

Tuesday, November 4, 1941 [Djurin, Transnistria]

Who could have imagined that I would start this notebook, meant to be a poetry album, under these circumstances... Four weeks ago this Thursday, at nine-thirty in the evening, Dad came home with the terrible news of the evacuation. But nothing was for certain. On Friday people heard that we would be evacuated on Sunday. And so, the fever of evacuation set in. Crying, gloom, packing, boiling, everything in great disarray. We did not realize what the future had in store for us...

On Sunday, at six in the morning, we found out that we were leaving... But we could not even begin to imagine what we would live through; who could have such a dark imagination? At eleven in the morning, the wagons started to roll toward the train station located at the edge of the village. It was the first sight of our exile. The long road was muddy, strewn with wagons filled with bags, bundles, children, and old people... We leave Campulung behind and arrive at the train station. Here the scene is even more awful. Weeping, grief, bags, screams; we are loaded onto cars that are actually used to transport horses...

...On Tuesday morning we arrived in Atachi... Along the road we saw thousands of people... We were put about thirty in a room... It was the most awful night so far.

Friday, November 7, 1941

During the first night in Atachi I saw what human misery really means. I saw people without a human face, I saw children with swollen eyes, frozen feet, helpless little hands; mothers with dead children in their arms, old people and young ones wrapped in rags... Chased away, infested with typhus, covered with lice, almost starved to death, they poured into Atachi... In Atachi I saw that hunger knows no shame.

Sunday, November 9, 1941

On a rainy morning, a Saturday, we arrived in Djurin... I don't know, should we also have any hope? And so, days go by. [...]

Friday, December 26, 1941

...We are on each other's nerves only because there is nothing to keep us busy. It is two in the afternoon. It is cold in the room and I don't know how we will resist till evening without a fire. Firewood is so expensive. I can see on everyone's face the fear of tomorrow. What will happen? How will we live when we run out of money? There are good rumors from the battlefield. Perhaps salvation is closing in.

Thursday, January 1, 1942

Today is the start of a new year! Last night, for the New Year, we went to bed at seven-thirty so it wouldn't get too cold in the room, since it is awfully cold. If it goes on like this, I don't know how we will survive winter because in the past few days I could not warm my feet anymore...

Monday, January 12, 1942

[...] In Sargorod [a nearby ghetto in Transnistria] I saw so much misery, I can't believe that it could be any worse... We live like animals. We stare at someone's misfortune, yet we cannot help...

Wednesday, January 21, 1942

...If the bitter cold would only go away! It is awfully cold, we are frozen to the marrow, and the wind of the steppe bites with a fury unknown to us who lived in the mountains. And incessantly, the same concern: what will we eat today?! what will we eat tomorrow? [...]

Wednesday, January 28, 1942

Wind, snow, snowstorm, cold... Why should I complain? I should keep quiet; there are others who have no clothes and they must go out in this cold. Why is there in us such a yearning for life?... And will we survive in the end? Perhaps all of these things will turn us into real human beings and in other times we will know how to appreciate the good in life.

Monday, February 16, 1942

Our grandparents died. They reached the end of their lives one after the other in Mogilev... Poor Dad, he withstood much better than I thought the hard blow of fate. He wept silently and he carries the mourning in his heart silently... Tears came to my eyes as well, and my heart was heavy when I thought about their sad death. I am not crying because they died, death is everyone's fate and they lived their lives fully; they were over eighty years old. I am crying for them because they lived in Mogilev, far away from their home, from their clean bed, from the fruits of their long labor of many dozen years, far from everything they left behind at the mercy of fate. They passed away quietly, just as they lived, peaceful people who worked hard all their lives and raised their children by the sweat of their labor and made them into decent human

beings. And now they died in an asylum, among strangers, far from the children for whom they worked so hard...

Thursday, March 19, 1942

...In the past few days there is talk that we will be driven farther away, toward the Bug River. This will be the end, for sure, I think. Isn't it enough that so many are dying and dead already: forced to march on, I believe, even the strongest among us would no longer make it. How hard it is to survive everything anyway. I should have been in eighth grade by now [...].

Saturday, April 11, 1942

...So many people have died, so many. Good people, children, women, death has cut down all of them mercilessly...I will draw up a list of people I remember who I now heard have died. I don't think I will be able to include them all but at least I will write some of the names at the end of this so-called diary. I am so tense, I feel that I will crack up. And because of my nerves, I am mean to everyone...How many of us will return from here? How many and when? Home, how I miss my home.

Saturday, June 13, 1942

It has been about a month since I wrote in my journal. [...] Three weeks ago this Tuesday Dad became ill. I was terribly affected by this...We immediately suspected that he had typhus. Unfortunately, we were right.

Thursday, July 15, 1942

I know that all my writing is meaningless. Nobody will read my journal and, as for me, should I escape alive from here, I will throw into the fire everything that will remind me of the damned time spent in Djurin. And still, I write.

Saturday, October 2, 1943

...On Rosh Hashanah and on my birthday, we were extremely sad...What will happen? Will we perhaps be evacuated because the front line is getting closer, will we be put into a harsh ghetto? Will we be killed? What will happen? This is the question on the face of everyone.

Miriam's diary breaks off in October 1943 after her father was rounded up and sent to a forced labor camp. When the Russian army liberated Djurin in April 1944, Miriam returned to Romania with nine other young people. After two weeks of walking behind Red Army troops, Miriam arrived home in Botosani, Romania on May 2, 1944. Miriam's father, mother, and sister survived the Holocaust.

