

Eva Heyman on Confiscation of Jewish Property

Eva Heyman was 13 years old when she started writing her diary. She was brought up in a secular bourgeoisie family in Hungary. Eva started writing her diary in February 1944 and continued writing until May 1944, the day she was deported to Auschwitz. She died on October 17th, 1944.

April 20, 1944

Every day they keep issuing new laws against the Jews. Today, for example, they took all our appliances away from us: the sewing machine, the radio, the telephone, the vacuum cleaner, the electric fryer and my camera. I don't care about the camera any more, even though they didn't leave a receipt for it, like when they took the bicycle. They also took Uncle Béla's typewriter, but he didn't care either. When the war ends we'll get everything back. Ági said we should be happy they're taking things and not people. She's right about that, because after the war I may even have a Zeiss-Ikon camera I'll be able to work with until I'm old enough to be a news photographer, but a mother or a grandfather can never be replaced. Poor Grandpa, now he can't even go to the pharmacy, because Jews aren't allowed to be on the street except between nine and ten. Poor Grandpa, until now he was rather happy, because he was busy in the pharmacy all day and didn't see how it is at home. Grandma is a little better; she gets medicines and injections which make her sleep a lot.

Grandma spends the whole day either cleaning house or sleeping. She started by polishing the floors, as though that matter now. Until now she constantly fussed about polishing the silverware, but today all our silverware was taken away from us. I've stopped giving you an account, dear diary, of exactly what is taken away from us on which day, because in the end everything will be taken away. The apartment was still so lovely in March when Ági and the Uncle Béla came. Uncle Béla said such nice things about it – that actually it had been years since he had lived in an apartment worthy of that name. In Russia they lived in pig pens, and that was still good, because

most of the poor labour service people slept out in the open. Now the apartment isn't pretty any more. All the beautiful things in it have been taken away. The silverware, the rugs, the paintings, the Venetian mirror. They left a receipt for the rugs, but even Grandpa says that we will never get them back. Grandpa is very sad ever since he hasn't been able to work in the pharmacy any more. He looks at Ági in such an odd, sad way, and he keeps caressing her all the time, as though he is saying goodbye to her. Ági even said to him: Don't cling to me as though we are saying goodbye, my sweet Papa, because my heart is breaking. Ági wants to go on having a father forever. I can understand that, because I also want all of us to stay alive. Márta didn't want to stay here without her Papa and she went with him to die in Poland. Of course, she couldn't know in advance that she was being taken to her death. Dear diary, ever since the Germans came here I've often wondered: had Márta known in Várad what a horrible death was in store for her when she went with her father, would she still have gone? Dear diary, I given the same choice as Márta, I would stay even without Papa and without Ági and without anybody at all, because I want to stay alive!

Source: The Diary of Eva Heyman, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 80- 82.