Eva Heyman on Life in Hungary before the Occupation

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.

February 14, 1944

My birthday is over. We had tea with sandwiches and Sacher torte. We used to have cacao with whipped cream, but now there isn't enough milk, because of the war. Besides, drinking tea is more grown-up. It was quite a good party. Marica wasn't so nice, because she's a year older and studies dance, English and piano, though she hates practicing. Agi [Eva's mother] won't let me study piano, even though I have a good ear; she says I don't have any talent at all, and that I'll study English when I'm a little bigger. A news photographer has to know English, too. My father promised that at the end of the year I would get a magnesium lamp for taking indoor pictures, because I'm pretty good at that already. I've even taken a picture of Anni, but she came out ugly, and she said that I don't know how to take pictures at all. But I do know how to, and I'll do it still better if I have a Zeiss-Ikon like my father, and I'll learn how to develop the films. Anyway, the bathroom window is all pasted up with black paper against air raids, and it's absolutely dark in there, so it will even be possible to develop the pictures.

Many people say that there will be bombing here, too, as in Germany. Agi heard on some foreign radio broadcast that Munich doesn't even exist any more. But she loves the English very much, and the only things she believes are those she hears secretly on the English radio; it's forbidden to listen, and Grandma Rácz says that we will all end up in jail on account of Agi – she even listens to Radio Moscow, which is even more serious, but Agi thinks that the Russians don't tell lies, and neither does the Voice of America; only the German radio and the Hungarian radio tell lies. Just as we were having our afternoon snack yesterday, Agi telephoned from Budapest to say that she was going into the sanatorium tomorrow. She says there is nothing to worry about,

because it's only going to be a minor operation; if she were having the operation here I could visit her every day, but as it is, only Uncle Béla will be with her. She also says that in March they will come and stay here until the war ends. Uncle Béla can't work anyway, on account of the Jewish Law. The law also applies to pharmacists, but thank God it doesn't include Grandpa, because Jews are allowed to keep pharmacies if they actually own them; only pharmacy managers cannot be Jews. That is why Bácskay is now in the pharmacy, too, as manager, but Grandpa does the actual work, even though Bácskay is a young man.

Grandma says that our income has gone down because of Bácskay, but what can we do about it? We should only come out of the war in one piece, and then Grandpa will be manager again. Grandpa was the President of the pharmacists in our town, but he was thrown out because he is a Jew.

Source: *The Diary of Eva Heyman* (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1974), p.29-30