



“There is room for everything in a single life. For belief in God and for a miserable end... It is a question of living life from minute to minute and taking suffering into the bargain” – ETTY HILLESUM

Frederick Douglass' Reflections on Reading

The Columbian Orator, a Social and Political Magazine of the 18th and 19th Centuries

"The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own. Anything, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm."

Letter from the Birmingham Jail

16 April 1963

My Dear Fellow Clergymen:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a nonviolent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can

we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation.

Then, last September, came the opportunity to talk with leaders of Birmingham's economic community. In the course of the negotiations, certain promises were made by the merchants--for example, to remove the stores' humiliating racial signs. On the basis of these promises, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the leaders of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights agreed to a moratorium on all demonstrations. As the weeks and months went by, we realized that we were the victims of a broken promise. A few signs, briefly removed, returned; the others remained. As in so many past experiences, our hopes had been blasted, and the shadow of deep disappointment settled upon us. We had no alternative except to prepare for direct action, whereby we would present our very bodies as a means of laying our case before the conscience of the local and the national community. Mindful of the difficulties involved, we decided to undertake a process of self purification. We began a series of workshops on nonviolence, and we repeatedly asked ourselves: "Are you able to accept blows without retaliating?" "Are you able to endure the ordeal of jail?" We decided to schedule our direct action program for the Easter season, realizing that except for Christmas, this is the main shopping period of the year. Knowing that a strong economic-withdrawal program would be the by product

of direct action, we felt that this would be the best time to bring pressure to bear on the merchants for the needed change.

Then it occurred to us that Birmingham's mayoral election was coming up in March, and we speedily decided to postpone action until after election day. When we discovered that the Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene "Bull" Connor, had piled up enough votes to be in the run off, we decided again to postpone action until the day after the run off so that the demonstrations could not be used to cloud the issues. Like many others, we waited to see Mr. Connor defeated, and to this end we endured postponement after postponement. Having aided in this community need, we felt that our direct action program could be delayed no longer.

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

One of the basic points in your statement is that the action that I and my associates have taken in Birmingham is untimely. Some have asked: "Why didn't you give the new city administration time to act?" The only answer that I can give to this query is that the new Birmingham administration must be prodded about as much as the outgoing one, before it will act. We are sadly mistaken if we feel that the election of Albert Boutwell as mayor will bring the millennium to Birmingham. While Mr. Boutwell is a much more gentle person than Mr. Connor, they are both segregationists, dedicated to maintenance of the status quo. I have hope that Mr. Boutwell will

be reasonable enough to see the futility of massive resistance to desegregation. But he will not see this without pressure from devotees of civil rights. My friends, I must say to you that we have not made a single gain in civil rights without determined legal and nonviolent pressure. Lamentably, it is an historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but, as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups tend to be more immoral than individuals.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never

quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I it" relationship for an "I thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful. Paul Tillich has said that sin is separation. Is not segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness? Thus it is that I can urge men to obey the 1954 decision of the Supreme Court, for it is morally right; and I can urge them to disobey segregation ordinances, for they are morally wrong.

Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal. Let me give another explanation. A law is unjust if it is inflicted on a minority that, as a result of

being denied the right to vote, had no part in enacting or devising the law. Who can say that the legislature of Alabama which set up that state's segregation laws was democratically elected? Throughout Alabama all sorts of devious methods are used to prevent Negroes from becoming registered voters, and there are some counties in which, even though Negroes constitute a majority of the population, not a single Negro is registered. Can any law enacted under such circumstances be considered democratically structured?

Sometimes a law is just on its face and unjust in its application. For instance, I have been arrested on a charge of parading without a permit. Now, there is nothing wrong in having an ordinance which requires a permit for a parade. But such an ordinance becomes unjust when it is used to maintain segregation and to deny citizens the First-Amendment privilege of peaceful assembly and protest.

I hope you are able to see the distinction I am trying to point out. In no sense do I advocate evading or defying the law, as would the rabid segregationist. That would lead to anarchy. One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire. To a degree, academic freedom is a reality today because Socrates practiced civil disobedience. In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience.

We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was "legal" and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was "illegal." It was "illegal" to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws.

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice and that when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress. I had hoped that the white moderate would understand that the present tension in the South is a necessary phase of the transition from an obnoxious negative peace, in which the Negro passively accepted his unjust plight, to a substantive and positive peace, in which all men will respect the dignity and worth of human personality. Actually, we who engage in nonviolent direct action are not the creators of tension. We merely bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out in the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured.

In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery? Isn't this like condemning Socrates because his unswerving commitment to truth and his philosophical inquiries precipitated the act by the misguided populace in which they made him drink hemlock? Isn't this like condemning Jesus because his unique God consciousness and never ceasing devotion to God's will precipitated the evil act of crucifixion? We must come to see that, as the federal courts have consistently affirmed, it is wrong to urge an individual to cease his efforts to gain his basic constitutional rights because the quest may precipitate violence. Society must

protect the robbed and punish the robber. I had also hoped that the white moderate would reject the myth concerning time in relation to the struggle for freedom. I have just received a letter from a white brother in Texas. He writes: "All Christians know that the colored people will receive equal rights eventually, but it is possible that you are in too great a religious hurry. It has taken Christianity almost two thousand years to accomplish what it has. The teachings of Christ take time to come to earth." Such an attitude stems from a tragic misconception of time, from the strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually, time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be co workers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right. Now is the time to make real the promise of democracy and transform our pending national elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. Now is the time to lift our national policy from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of human dignity.

You speak of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. At first I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent efforts as those of an extremist. I began thinking about the fact that I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency, made up in part of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, are so drained of self respect and a sense of "somebodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation; and in part of a few middle-class Negroes who, because of a degree of academic and economic security and because in some ways they profit by segregation, have become insensitive to the problems of the masses. The other force is one of bitterness and hatred, and it comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up across the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement. Nourished by the Negro's frustration over the continued existence of racial discrimination, this movement is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incorrigible "devil."

I have tried to stand between these two forces, saying that we need emulate neither the "do nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is

the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of nonviolence became an integral part of our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, by now many streets of the South would, I am convinced, be flowing with blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who employ nonviolent direct action, and if they refuse to support our nonviolent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies--a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare.

Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself, and that is what has happened to the American Negro. Something within has reminded him of his birthright of freedom, and something without has reminded him that it can be gained. Consciously or unconsciously, he has been caught up by the Zeitgeist, and with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America and the Caribbean, the United States Negro is moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice. If one recognizes this vital urge that has engulfed the Negro community, one should readily understand why public demonstrations are taking place. The Negro has many pent up resentments and latent frustrations, and he must release them. So let him march; let him make prayer pilgrimages to the city hall; let him go on freedom rides -and try to understand why he must do so. If his repressed emotions are not released in nonviolent ways, they will seek expression through violence; this is not a threat but a fact of history. So I have not said to my people: "Get rid of your discontent." Rather, I have tried to say that this normal and healthy discontent can be channeled into the creative outlet of nonviolent direct action. And now this approach is being termed extremist. But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter I gradually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Was not Amos an extremist for justice: "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream." Was not Paul an extremist for the Christian gospel: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Was not Martin Luther an extremist: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise, so help me God." And John Bunyan: "I will stay in jail to the end of my days before I make a butchery of my conscience." And Abraham Lincoln: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free." And Thomas Jefferson: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal . . ." So the question is not whether we

will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice? In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified. We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime--the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.

I had hoped that the white moderate would see this need. Perhaps I was too optimistic; perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action. I am thankful, however, that some of our white brothers in the South have grasped the meaning of this social revolution and committed themselves to it. They are still all too few in quantity, but they are big in quality. Some -such as Ralph McGill, Lillian Smith, Harry Golden, James McBride Dabbs, Ann Braden and Sarah Patton Boyle--have written about our struggle in eloquent and prophetic terms. Others have marched with us down nameless streets of the South. They have languished in filthy, roach infested jails, suffering the abuse and brutality of policemen who view them as "dirty nigger-lovers." Unlike so many of their moderate brothers and sisters, they have recognized the urgency of the moment and sensed the need for powerful "action" antidotes to combat the disease of segregation. Let me take note of my other major disappointment. I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. I am not unmindful of the fact that each of you has taken some significant stands on this issue. I commend you, Reverend Stallings, for your Christian stand on this past Sunday, in welcoming Negroes to your worship service on a nonsegregated basis. I commend the Catholic leaders of this state for integrating Spring Hill College several years ago.

But despite these notable exceptions, I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.

When I was suddenly catapulted into the leadership of the bus protest in Montgomery, Alabama, a few years ago, I felt we would be supported by the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be among our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained glass windows.

In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.

I have heard numerous southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it is the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: "Follow this decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother." In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern." And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul, between the sacred and the secular.

I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"

Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I

am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.

There was a time when the church was very powerful--in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests. Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent--and often even vocal--sanction of things as they are.

But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If today's church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Every day I meet young people whose disappointment with the church has turned into outright disgust.

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the status quo to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true ekklesia and the hope of the world. But again I am thankful to God that some noble souls from the ranks of organized religion have broken loose from the paralyzing chains of conformity and joined us as active partners in the struggle for freedom. They have left their secure congregations and walked the streets of Albany, Georgia, with us. They have gone down the highways of the South on tortuous rides for freedom. Yes, they have gone to jail with us. Some have been dismissed from their churches, have lost the support of their bishops and fellow ministers. But they have acted in the faith that right defeated is stronger than evil triumphant. Their witness has been the spiritual salt that has

preserved the true meaning of the gospel in these troubled times. They have carved a tunnel of hope through the dark mountain of disappointment. I hope the church as a whole will meet the challenge of this decisive hour. But even if the church does not come to the aid of justice, I have no despair about the future. I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are at present misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with America's destiny. Before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth, we were here. Before the pen of Jefferson etched the majestic words of the Declaration of Independence across the pages of history, we were here. For more than two centuries our forebears labored in this country without wages; they made cotton king; they built the homes of their masters while suffering gross injustice and shameful humiliation -and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continued to thrive and develop. If the inexpressible cruelties of slavery could not stop us, the opposition we now face will surely fail. We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands. Before closing I feel impelled to mention one other point in your statement that has troubled me profoundly. You warmly commended the Birmingham police force for keeping "order" and "preventing violence." I doubt that you would have so warmly commended the police force if you had seen its dogs sinking their teeth into unarmed, nonviolent Negroes. I doubt that you would so quickly commend the policemen if you were to observe their ugly and inhumane treatment of Negroes here in the city jail; if you were to watch them push and curse old Negro women and young Negro girls; if you were to see them slap and kick old Negro men and young boys; if you were to observe them, as they did on two occasions, refuse to give us food because we wanted to sing our grace together. I cannot join you in your praise of the Birmingham police department.

It is true that the police have exercised a degree of discipline in handling the demonstrators. In this sense they have conducted themselves rather "nonviolently" in public. But for what purpose? To preserve the evil system of segregation. Over the past few years I have consistently preached that nonviolence demands that the means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek. I have tried to make clear that it is wrong to use immoral means to attain moral ends. But now I must affirm that it is just as wrong, or perhaps even more so, to use moral means to preserve immoral ends. Perhaps Mr. Connor and his policemen have been rather nonviolent in public, as was Chief Pritchett in Albany, Georgia, but they have used the moral

means of nonviolence to maintain the immoral end of racial injustice. As T. S. Eliot has said: "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason."

I wish you had commended the Negro sit inners and demonstrators of Birmingham for their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation. One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be the James Merediths, with the noble sense of purpose that enables them to face jeering and hostile mobs, and with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of the pioneer. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy two year old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness: "My feet is tired, but my soul is at rest." They will be the young high school and college students, the young ministers of the gospel and a host of their elders, courageously and nonviolently sitting in at lunch counters and willingly going to jail for conscience' sake. One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?

If I have said anything in this letter that overstates the truth and indicates an unreasonable impatience, I beg you to forgive me. If I have said anything that understates the truth and indicates my having a patience that allows me to settle for anything less than brotherhood, I beg God to forgive me.

I hope this letter finds you strong in the faith. I also hope that circumstances will soon make it possible for me to meet each of you, not as an integrationist or a civil-rights leader but as a fellow clergyman and a Christian brother. Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched

communities, and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

Yours for the cause of Peace and Brotherhood,

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Why We Went: A Joint Letter from the Rabbis Arrested in St. Augustine

June 19, 1964

Dear Friend:

St. Augustine is the oldest city in the United States. It was here on St. Augustine's Day, August 28, 1565, that Pedro Menendez de Aviles first sighted land. In 1965 it will celebrate its 400th anniversary – indeed it has requested federal funds to enhance this historic observance. St. Augustine has other distinguishing characteristics. In American history books yet to be written, this small, neatly kept Florida community will long be remembered as a symbol of a harsh, rigidly segregated, Klan- dominated, backward-looking city which mocked the spirit of the doughty African-born, dark- pigmented priest for whom it was named.

St. Augustine is a tourist town. By far the highest percentage of its income comes from the visitors who walk through its quaint streets staring at "excavations" from the 18th century only now being restored. Most visitors stop at the Slave Market, supposedly only a relic of bygone days. True, they no longer sell slaves in that market, but let no one be deceived into thinking that there no longer exists among this town's white residents the mental attitude and the psychology which first put slaves on those trading blocks. The spirit of racial arrogance persists and is reinforced by the sway of terror long exerted by hooded and unhooded mobsters.

We went to St. Augustine in response to the appeal of Martin Luther King addressed to the CCAR Conference, in which he asked us to join with him in a creative witness to our joint convictions of equality and racial justice.

We came because we realized that injustice in St. Augustine, as anywhere else, diminishes the humanity of each of us. If St. Augustine is to be not only an ancient city but also a great-hearted city, it will not happen until the raw hate, the ignorant prejudices, the unrecognized fears which now grip so many of its citizens are exorcised from its soul. We came then, not as tourists, but as ones who, perhaps quixotically, thought we could add a bit to the healing process of America.

We were arrested on Thursday, June 18, 1964. Fifteen of us were arrested while praying in an integrated group in front of Monson's Restaurant. Two of us were arrested for sitting down at a

table with three Negro youngsters in the Chimes Restaurant. We pleaded not guilty to the charges against us.

Shortly after our confinement in the St. John's County Jail, we shared with one another our real, inner motives. They are, as might be expected, mixed. We have tried to be honest with one another about the wrong, as well as the right, motives which have prompted us. These hours have been filled with a sense of surprise and discovery, of fear and affirmation, of self-doubt and belief in God.

We came to St. Augustine mainly because we could not stay away. We could not say no to Martin Luther King, whom we always respected and admired and whose loyal friends we hope we shall be in the days to come. We could not pass by the opportunity to achieve a moral goal by moral means – a rare modern privilege – which has been the glory of the non-violent struggle for civil rights.

We came because we could not stand quietly by our brother's blood. We had done that too many times before. We have been vocal in our exhortation of others but the idleness of our hands too often revealed an inner silence; silence at a time when silence has become the unpardonable sin of our time. We came in the hope that the God of us all would accept our small involvement as partial atonement for the many things we wish we had done before and often.

We came as Jews who remember the millions of faceless people who stood quietly, watching the smoke rise from Hitler's crematoria. We came because we know that, second only to silence, the greatest danger to man is loss of faith in man's capacity to act.

Here in St. Augustine we have seen the depths of anger, resentment and fury; we have seen faces that expressed a deep implacable hatred. What disturbs us more deeply is the large number of decent citizens who have stood aside, unable to bring themselves to act, yet knowing in their hearts that this cause is right and that it must inevitably triumph.

We believe, though we could not count on it in advance, that our presence and actions here have been of practical effect. They have reminded the embattled Negroes here that they are not isolated and alone. The conscience of the wicked has been troubled, while that of the righteous

has gained new strength. We are more certain than before that this cause is invincible, but we also have a sharpened awareness of the great effort and sacrifice which will be required. We pray that what we have done may lead us on to further actions and persuade others who still stand hesitantly to take the stand they know is just.

We came from different backgrounds and with different degrees of involvement. Some of us have had intimate experience with the struggle of minority groups to achieve full and equal rights in our widely scattered home communities. Others of us have had less direct contact with the underprivileged and the socially oppressed. And yet for all of us these brief, tension-packed hours of openness and communication turned an abstract social issue into something personal and immediate.

We shall not forget the people with whom we drove, prayed, marched, slept, ate, demonstrated and were arrested. How little we know of these people and their struggle. What we have learned has changed us and our attitudes. We are grateful for the rare experience of sharing with this courageous community in their life, their suffering, their effort. We pray that we may remain more sensitive and more alive as a result.

We shall not soon forget the stirring and heartfelt excitement with which the Negro community greeted us with full-throated hymns and hallelujahs, which pulsed and resounded through the church; nor the bond of affectionate solidarity which joined us hand in hand during our marches through town; nor the exaltation which lifted our voices and hearts in unison; nor the common purpose which transcended our fears as well as all the boundaries of race, geography and circumstance. We hope we have strengthened the morale of St. Augustine Negroes as they strive to claim their dignity and humanity; we know they have strengthened ours. Each of us has in this experience become a little more the person, a bit more the rabbi he always hoped to be (but has not yet been able to become). We believe in man's ability to fulfill God's commands with God's help. We make no messianic estimate of man's power and certainly not of what we did here. But it has reaffirmed our faith in the significance of the deed. So we must confess in all humility that we did this as much in fulfillment of our faith and in response to inner need as in service to our Negro brothers. We came to stand with our brothers and in the process have learned more about ourselves and our God. In obeying Him, we become ourselves; in following His will we fulfill ourselves. He has guided, sustained and strengthened us in a way we could not manage on our own. We are deeply grateful to the good influences which have sustained us

in our moments of trial and friendship. Often we thought of parents, wives, children, congregants, particularly our teen-age youth, and of our teachers and our students. How many a Torah reading, Passover celebration, prayer book text, and sermonic effort has come to mind in these hours. And how meaningful has been our worship, morning and evening, as we recited the ancient texts in this new, yet Jewishly familiar, setting. We are particularly grateful for what we have received from our comrades in this visit. We have been sustained by the understanding, thoughtfulness, consideration and good humor we have received from each other. Never have the bonds of Judaism and the fellowship of the rabbinate been more clearly expressed to us all or more deeply felt by each of us.

These words were first written at 3:00 a.m. in the sweltering heat of a sleepless night, by the light of the one naked bulb hanging in the corridor outside our small cell. They were, ironically, scratched on the back of the pages of a mimeographed report of the bloody assaults of the Ku Klux Klan in St. Augustine. At daybreak we revisited the contents of the letter and prayed together for a new dawn of justice and mercy for all the children of God.

We do not underestimate what yet remains to be done, in the north as well as the south. In the battle against racism, we have participated here in only a skirmish. But the total effect of all such demonstrations has created a Revolution; and the conscience of the nation has been aroused as never before. The Civil Rights Bill will become law and much more progress will be attained because this national conscience has been touched in this and other places in the struggle.

We praise and bless God for His mighty acts on our behalf.

Baruch ata adonai matir asurim. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who freest the captives.

Rabbi Eugene Borowitz

Rabbi Balfour Brickner

Rabbi Israel "Sy" Dresner

Rabbi Daniel Fogel

Rabbi Jerrold Goldstein

Rabbi Joel Goor

Rabbi Joseph Herzog

Rabbi Norman Hirsh

Rabbi Leon Jick

Rabbi Richard Levy

Rabbi Eugene Lipman

Rabbi Michael Robinson

Rabbi B. T. Rubenstein

Rabbi Murray Saltzman

Rabbi Allen Secher

Rabbi Clyde T. Sills

Mr. Albert Vorspan

ETTY HILLESUM, AN INTERRUPTED LIFE AND LETTERS FROM WESTERBORK

[Probably to Father Han and friends⁶⁶]

24 August 1943

There was a moment when I felt in all seriousness that after this night, it would be a sin ever to laugh again. But then I reminded myself that some of those who had gone away had been laughing, even if only a handful of them this time . . . There will be some who will laugh now and then in Poland, too, though not many from this transport, I think.

When I think of the faces of that squad of armed, green-uniformed guards—my God, those faces! I looked at them, each in turn, from behind the safety of a window, and I have never been so frightened of anything in my life. I sank to my knees with the words that preside over human life: And God made man after His likeness. That passage spent a difficult morning with me.

I have told you often enough that no words and images are adequate to describe nights like these. But still I must try to convey something of it to you. One always has the feeling here of being the ears and eyes of a piece of Jewish history, but there is also the need sometimes to be a still, small voice. We must keep one another in touch with everything that happens in the various outposts of this world, each one contributing his own little piece of stone to the great mosaic that will take shape once the war is over.

After a night in the hospital barracks, I took an early-morning walk past the punishment barracks. And prisoners were being moved out. The deportees, mainly men, stood with their packs behind the barbed wire. So many of them looked tough and ready for anything. An old acquaintance—I didn't recognize him straightaway; a shaven head often changes people completely—called out to me with a smile, "If they don't manage to do me in, I'll be back."

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But the babies, those tiny piercing screams of the babies, dragged from their cots in the middle of the night . . . I have to put it all down quickly, in a muddle, because if I leave it until later I probably won't be able to go on believing that it really happened. It is like a vision, and drifts further and further away. The babies were easily the worst.

And then there was that paralyzed young girl, who didn't want to take her dinner plate along and found it so hard to die. Or the terrified young boy: he had thought he was safe, that was his mistake, and when he realized he was going to have to go anyway, he panicked and ran off. His fellow Jews had to hunt him down. If they didn't find him, scores of others would be put on the transport in his place. He was caught soon enough, hiding in a tent, but "notwithstanding" . . . "notwithstanding," all those others had to go on transport anyway, as a deterrent, they said. And so, many good friends were dragged away by that boy. Fifty victims for one moment of insanity. Or rather: he didn't drag them away—our commandant did, someone of whom it is sometimes said that he is a gentleman. Even so, will the boy be able to live with himself, once it dawns on him exactly what he's been the cause of? And how will all the other Jews on board the train react to him? That boy is going to have a very hard time. The episode might have been overlooked, perhaps, if there hadn't been so much unnerving activity over our heads that night. The commandant must have been affected by that, too. "Donnerwetter, some flying tonight!" I heard a guard say as he looked up at the stars.

People still harbor such childish hopes that the transport won't get through. Many of us were able from here to watch the bombardment of a nearby town, probably Emden. So why shouldn't it be possible for the railway line to be hit, too, and for the train to be stopped from leaving? It's never been known to happen yet. But people keep hoping it will, with each new transport and with never-flagging hope . . .

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The evening before, I had walked through the camp. People were grouped together between the barracks under a gray, cloudy sky. "Look, that's just how people behave after a disaster, standing about on street corners discussing what's happened," my companion said to me. "But that's what makes it so impossible to understand," I burst out. "This time, it's *before* the disaster!"

Whenever misfortune strikes, people have a natural instinct to lend a helping hand and to save what can be saved. Tonight I shall be helping to dress babies and to calm mothers—and that is all I can hope to do. I could almost curse myself for that. For we all know that we are yielding up our sick and defenseless brothers and sisters to hunger, heat, cold, exposure, and destruction, and yet we dress them and escort them to the bare cattle cars—and if they can't walk, we carry them on stretchers. What is going on, what mysteries are these, in what sort of fatal mechanism have we become enmeshed? The answer cannot simply be that we are all cowards. We're not that bad. We stand before a much deeper question . . .

In the afternoon I did a round of the hospital barracks one more time, going from bed to bed. Which beds would be empty the next day? The transport lists are never published until the very last moment, but some of us know well in advance that our names will be down. A young girl called me. She was sitting bolt upright in her bed, eyes wide open. This girl has thin wrists and a peaky little face. She is partly paralyzed, and has just been learning to walk again, between two nurses, one step at a time. "Have you heard? I have to go." We look at each other for a long moment. It is as if her face has disappeared; she is all eyes. Then she says in a level, gray little voice, "Such a pity, isn't it? That everything you have learned in life goes for nothing." And, "How hard it is to die." Suddenly the unnatural rigidity of her expression gives way, and she sobs, "Oh, and the worst of it all is

having to leave Holland!" And, "Oh, why wasn't I allowed to die before . . ." Later, during the night, I saw her again, for the last time.

There was a little woman in the washhouse, a basket of dripping clothes on her arm. She grabbed hold of me; she looked deranged. A flood of words poured over me: "That isn't right, how can that be right? I've got to go, and I won't even be able to get my washing dry by tomorrow. And my child is sick, he's feverish, can't you fix things so that I don't have to go? And I don't have enough things for the child, the rompers they sent me are too small, I need the bigger size, oh, it's enough to drive you mad. And you're not even allowed to take a blanket along, we're going to freeze to death, you didn't think of that, did you? There's a cousin of mine here, he came here the same time I did, but he doesn't have to go, he's got the right papers. Couldn't you help me to get some, too? Just say I don't have to go, do you think they'll leave the children with their mothers, that's right, you come back again tonight, you'll help me then, won't you, what do you think, would my cousin's papers . . . ?"

If I were to say that I was in hell that night, what would I really be telling you? I caught myself saying it aloud in the night, aloud to myself and quite soberly, "So that's what hell is like." You really can't tell who is going and who isn't this time. Almost everyone is up, the sick help each other to get dressed. There are some who have no clothes at all, whose luggage has been lost or hasn't arrived yet. Ladies from the "Welfare" walk about doling out clothes, which may fit or not, it doesn't matter so long as you've covered yourself with something. Some old women look a ridiculous sight. Small bottles of milk are being prepared to take along with the babies, whose pitiful screams punctuate all the frantic activity in the barracks. A young mother says to me almost apologetically, "My baby doesn't usually cry; it's almost as if he can tell what's happening." She picks up the child, a lovely baby about eight months old, from a

makeshift crib and smiles at it. "If you don't behave yourself, Mummy won't take you along with her!" She tells me about some friends. "When those men in green came to fetch them in Amsterdam, their children cried terribly. Then their father said, 'If you don't behave yourselves, you won't be allowed to go in that green car, this green gentleman won't take you.' And that helped—the children calmed down." She winks at me bravely, a trim, dark little woman with a lively, olive-skinned face. She is dressed in long gray trousers and a green woolen sweater. "I may be smiling," she says, "but I feel pretty awful." The little woman with the wet washing is on the point of hysterics. "Can't you hide my child for me? Go on, please, won't you hide him, he's got a high fever, how can I possibly take him along?" She points to a little bundle of misery with blond curls and a burning, bright-red little face. The child tosses about in his rough wooden cot. The nurse wants the mother to put on an extra woolen sweater, tries to pull it over her dress. She refuses. "I'm not going to take anything along, what use would it be? . . . my child." And she sobs, "They take the sick children away and you never get them back."

Then a woman comes up to her, a stout working-class woman with a kindly snub-nosed face, draws the desperate mother down with her on the edge of one of the iron bunks, and talks to her almost crooningly. "There now, you're just an ordinary Jew, aren't you? So you'll just have to go, won't you . . . ?"

A few beds farther along I suddenly catch sight of the ash-gray, freckled face of a colleague. She is squatting beside the bed of a dying woman who has swallowed some poison and who happens to be her mother . . .

"God Almighty, what are You doing to us?" The words just escape me. Over there is that affectionate little woman from Rotterdam. She is in her ninth month. Two nurses try to get her dressed. She just stands there, her swollen body leaning against

her child's cot. Drops of sweat run down her face. She stares into the distance, a distance into which I cannot follow her, and says in a toneless, worn-out voice, "Two months ago I volunteered to go with my husband to Poland. And then I wasn't allowed to, because I always have such difficult pregnancies. And now I do have to go . . . just because someone tried to run away to-night." The wailing of the babies grows louder still, filling every nook and cranny of the barracks, now bathed in ghostly light. It is almost too much to bear. A name occurs to me: Herod.

On the stretcher on the way to the train, her labor pains begin, and we are allowed to carry the woman to the hospital instead of to the freight train—which, this night, seems a rare act of humanity . . .

I pass the bed of the paralyzed girl. The others have helped to dress her. I never saw such great big eyes in such a little face. "I can't take it all in," she whispers to me. A few steps away stands my little hunchbacked Russian woman; I told you about her before. She stands there as if spun in a web of sorrow. The paralyzed girl is a friend of hers. Later she said sadly to me, "She doesn't even have a plate, I wanted to give her mine, but she wouldn't take it. She said, 'I'll be dead in ten days anyway, and then those horrible Germans will get it.'"

She stands there in front of me, a green silk kimono wrapped around her small, misshapen figure. She has the very wise, bright eyes of a child. She looks at me for a long time in silence, searchingly, and then says, "I would like, oh, I really would like, to be able to swim away in my tears." And, "I long so desperately for my dear mother." (Her mother died a few months ago from cancer, in the washroom near the WC. At least she was left alone there for a moment, left to die in peace.) She asks me with her strange accent in the voice of a child that begs for forgiveness, "Surely God will be able to understand my doubts in a world like this, won't He?" Then she turns away from me, in an almost loving gesture of infinite sadness, and throughout the

night I see the misshapen, green, silk-clad figure moving between the beds, doing small services for those about to depart. She herself doesn't have to go, not this time, anyway . . .

I'm sitting here squeezing tomato juice for the babies. A young woman sits beside me. She appears ready and eager to leave, and is beautifully turned out. It is something like a cry of liberation when she exclaims, arms flung wide, "I'm embarking on a wonderful journey; I might find my husband." A woman opposite cuts her short bitterly. "I'm going as well, but I certainly don't think it's wonderful." I remembered admitting the young woman beside me. She has been here only a few days, and she came from the punishment block. She seems so level-headed and independent, with a touch of defiance about her mouth. She has been ready to leave since the afternoon, dressed in a long pair of trousers and a woolen sweater and cardigan. Next to her on the floor stands a heavy rucksack and a blanket roll. She is trying to force down a few sandwiches. They are moldy. "I'll probably get quite a lot of moldy bread to eat," she laughs. "In prison I didn't eat anything at all for days." A bit of her history in her own words: "My time wasn't far off when they threw me into prison. And the taunts and the insults! I made the mistake of saying that I couldn't stand, so they made me stand for hours, but I managed it without making a sound." She looks defiant. "My husband was in the prison as well. I won't tell you what they did to him! But my God, he was tough! They sent him through last month. I was in my third day of labor and couldn't go with him. But how brave he was!" She is almost radiant.

"Perhaps I shall find him again." She laughs defiantly. "They may drag us through the dirt, but we'll come through all right in the end!" She looks at the crying babies all around and says, "I'll have good work to do on the train, I still have lots of milk."

"What, you here as well?" I suddenly call out in dismay. A woman turns and comes up between the tumbled beds of the poor wailing babies, her hands groping around her for support.

She is dressed in a long, black, old-fashioned dress. She has a noble brow and white, wavy hair piled up high. Her husband died here a few weeks ago. She is well over eighty, but looks less than sixty. I always admired her for the aristocratic way in which she reclined on her shabby bunk. She answers in a hoarse voice, "Yes, I'm here as well. They wouldn't let me share my husband's grave."

"Ah, there she goes again!" It is the tough little ghetto woman, who is racked with hunger the whole time because she never gets any parcels. She has seven children here. She trips pluckily and busily about on her little short legs. "All I know is, I've got seven children and they need a proper mother, you can be sure of that!"

With nimble gestures she is busy stuffing a jute bag full of her belongings.

"I'm not leaving anything behind; my husband was sent through here a year ago, and my two oldest boys have been through as well." She beams. "My children are real treasures!" She bustles about, she packs, she's busy, she has a kind word for everyone who goes by. A plain, dumpy ghetto woman with greasy black hair and little short legs. She has a shabby, short-sleeved dress on, which I can imagine her wearing when she used to stand behind the washtub, back in Jodenbreestraat. And now she is off to Poland in the same old dress, a three-days' journey with seven children. "That's right, seven children, and they need a proper mother, believe me!"

You can tell that the young woman over there is used to luxury and that she must have been very beautiful. She is a recent arrival. She had gone into hiding to save her baby. Now she is here, through treachery, like so many others. Her husband is in the punishment barracks. She looks quite pitiful now. Her bleached hair has black roots with a greenish tinge. She has put on many different sets of underwear and other clothing all on top of one another—you can't carry everything by hand, after

all, particularly if you have a little child to carry as well. Now she looks lumpy and ridiculous. Her face is blotchy. She stares at everyone with a veiled, tentative gaze, like some defenseless and abandoned young animal.

What will this young woman, already in a state of collapse, look like after three days in an overcrowded freight car with men, women, children, and babies all thrown together, bags and baggage, a bucket in the middle their only convenience?

Presumably they will be sent on to another transit camp, and then on again from there.

We are being hunted to death all through Europe . . .

I wander in a daze through other barracks. I walk past scenes that loom up before my eyes in crystal-clear detail, and at the same time seem like blurred age-old visions. I see a dying old man being carried away, reciting the Sh'ma to himself⁶⁷ . . .

Slowly but surely six o'clock in the morning has arrived. The train is due to depart at eleven, and they are starting to load it with people and luggage. Paths to the train have been staked out by men of the Ordedienst, the Camp Service Corps.⁶⁸ Anyone not involved with the transport has to keep to barracks. I slip into one just across from the siding. "There's always been a splendid view from here," I hear a cynical voice say. The camp has been cut in two halves since yesterday by the train: a depressing series of bare, unpainted freight cars in the front, and a proper coach for the guards at the back. Some of the cars have paper mattresses on the floor. These are for the sick. There is more and more movement now along the asphalt path beside the train.

Men from the "Flying Column" in brown overalls are bringing the luggage up on wheelbarrows. Among them I spot two of the commandant's court jesters: the first is a comedian and a songwriter. Some time ago his name was down, irrevocably, for transport, but for several nights in a row he sang his lungs out for a delighted audience, including the commandant and his

retinue. He sang "*Ich kann es nicht verstehen, dass die Rosen blühen*" ("I know not why the roses bloom") and other topical songs. The commandant, a great lover of art, thought it all quite splendid. The singer got his exemption. He was even allocated a house, where he now lives behind red-checked curtains with his peroxide-blonde wife, who spends all her days at a mangle in the boiling-hot laundry. Now here he is, dressed in khaki overalls, pushing a wheelbarrow piled high with the luggage of his fellow Jews. He looks like death warmed over. And over there is another court jester: the commandant's favorite pianist. Legend has it that he is so accomplished that he can play Beethoven's Ninth as a jazz number, which is certainly saying something . . .

Suddenly there are a lot of green-uniformed men swarming over the asphalt. I can't imagine where they have sprung from. Knapsacks and guns over their shoulders. I study their faces. I try to look at them without prejudice.

I can see a father, ready to depart, blessing his wife and child and being himself blessed in turn by an old rabbi with a snow-white beard and the profile of a fiery prophet. I can see . . . ah, I can't begin to describe it all . . .

On earlier transports, some of the guards were simple, kindly types with puzzled expressions, who walked about the camp smoking their pipes and speaking in some incomprehensible dialect. One would have found their company not too objectionable on the journey. Now I am transfixed with terror. Oafish, jeering faces, in which one seeks in vain for even the slightest trace of human warmth. At what fronts did they learn their business? In what punishment camps were they trained? For after all, this is a punishment, isn't it? A few young women are already sitting in a freight car. They hold their babies on their laps, their legs dangling outside—they are determined to enjoy the fresh air as long as possible. Sick people are carried past on stretchers. I almost find myself laughing; the disparity between

the guards and the guarded is too absurd. My companion at the window shudders. Months ago he was brought here from Amersfoort, in bits and pieces. "Oh, yes, that's what those fellows were like," he says. "That's what they looked like."

A couple of young children stand with their noses pressed to the windowpane. I listen in to their earnest conversation. "Why do those nasty, horrid men wear green; why don't they wear black? Bad people wear black, don't they?" "Look over there, that man is really sick!" A shock of gray hair above a rumpled blanket on a stretcher. "Look, there's another sick one . . ."

And, pointing at the green uniforms, "Look at them, now they're laughing!" "Look, look, one of them's already drunk!" More and more people are filling up the spaces in the freight cars. A tall, lonely figure paces the asphalt, a briefcase under his arm. He is the head of the so-called Antragsstelle, the camp Appeals Department. He strives right up to the last moment to get people out of the commandant's clutches. Horse trading here always continues until the train has actually pulled out. It's even been known for him to manage to free people from the moving train. The man with the briefcase has the brow of a scholar, and tired, very tired shoulders. A bent little old woman, with a black, old-fashioned hat on her gray, wispy hair, bars his way, gesticulating and brandishing a bundle of papers under his nose.

He listens to her for a while, then shakes his head and turns away, his shoulders sagging just a little bit more. This time it won't be possible to get many people off the train in the nick of time. The commandant is annoyed. A young Jew has had the effrontery to run away. One can't really call it a serious attempt to escape—he absconded from the hospital in a moment of panic, a thin jacket over his blue pajamas, and in a clumsy, childish way took refuge in a tent, where he was picked up quickly enough after a search of the camp. But if you are a Jew you may not run away, may not allow yourself to be stricken with panic. The commandant is remorseless. As a reprisal, and

without warning, scores of others are being sent on the transport with the boy, including quite a few who had thought they were firmly at anchor here. This system happens to believe in collective punishment. And all those planes overhead couldn't have helped to improve the commandant's mood, though that is a subject on which he prefers to keep his own counsel.

The cars are now what you might call full. But that's what you think. God Almighty, does all this lot have to get in as well? A large new group has turned up. The children are still standing with their noses glued to the windowpane; they don't miss a thing. "Look over there, a lot of people are getting off, it must be too hot in the train." Suddenly one of them calls out, "Look, the commandant!"

He appears at the end of the asphalt path, like a famous star making his entrance during a grand finale. This near-legendary figure is said to be quite charming and so well disposed toward the Jews. For the commandant of a camp for Jews, he has some strange ideas. Recently he decided that we needed more variety in our diet, and we were promptly served marrowfat peas—just once—instead of cabbage. He could also be said to be our artistic patron here, and is a regular at all our cabaret nights. On one occasion he came three times in succession to see the same performance and roared with laughter at the same old jokes each time. Under his auspices a male choir has been formed that sang "*Bei mir bist du schön*" on his personal orders. It sounded very moving here on the heath, it must be said. Now and then he even invites some of the artistes to his house and talks and drinks with them into the early hours. One night not so long ago he escorted an actress back home, and when he took his leave of her he offered her his hand; just imagine, his hand! They also say that he specially loves children. Children must be looked after. In the hospital they even get a tomato each day. And yet many of them seem to die all the same . . . I could go on quite a bit longer about "our" commandant. Perhaps he sees himself

as a prince dispensing largesse to his many humble subjects. God knows how he sees himself. A voice behind me says, "Once upon a time we had a commandant who used to kick people off to Poland. This one sees them off with a smile."

He now walks along the train with military precision, a relatively young man who has "arrived" early in his career, if one may call it that. He is absolute master over the life and death of Dutch and German Jews here on this remote heath in Drenthe Province. A year ago he probably had not the slightest idea that it so much as existed. I didn't know about it myself, to tell the truth. He walks along the train, his gray, immaculately brushed hair just showing beneath his flat, light green cap. That gray hair, which makes such a romantic contrast with his fairly young face, sends many of the silly young girls here into raptures—although they dare not, of course, express their feelings openly. On this cruel morning his face is almost iron-gray. It is a face that I am quite unable to read. Sometimes it seems to me to be like a long thin scar in which grimness mingles with joylessness and hypocrisy. And there is something else about him, halfway between a dapper hairdresser's assistant and a stage-door Johnny. But the grimness and the rigidly forced bearing predominate. With military step he walks along the line of freight cars, bulging now with people. He is inspecting his troops: the sick, infants in arms, young mothers, and shaven-headed men. A few more ailing people are being brought up on stretchers. He makes an impatient gesture; they're taking too long about it. Behind him walks his Jewish secretary, smartly dressed in fawn riding breeches and brown sports jacket. He has the sporty demeanor yet vacuous expression of the English whisky drinker. Suddenly they are joined by a handsome brown groundog, where from, heaven knows. With studied gestures the fawn secretary plays with it, like something from a picture in an English society paper. The green squad stare at him goggle-eyed. They probably think—though *think* is a big word—that

some of the Jews here look quite different from what their propaganda sheets have led them to believe. A few Jewish big shots from the camp now also walk along the train. "Trying to air their importance," mutters someone behind me. "Transport Boulevard," I say. "Could one ever hope to convey to the outside world what has happened here today?" I ask my companion. The outside world probably thinks of us as a gray, uniform, suffering mass of Jews, and knows nothing of the gulfs and abysses and subtle differences that exist between us. They could never hope to understand.

The commandant has now been joined by the *Oberdienstleiter*, the head of the Camp Service Corps. The *Oberdienstleiter* is a German Jew of massive build, and the commandant looks slight and insignificant by his side. Black top boots, black cap, black army coat with yellow star. He has a cruel mouth and a powerful neck. A few years ago he was still a digger in the outworkers' corps. When the story of his meteoric rise is written up later, it will be an important historical account of the mentality of our age. The light green commandant with his military bearing, the fawn, impassive secretary, the black bully-boy figure of the *Oberdienstleiter*, parade past the train. People fall back around them, but all eyes are on them.

My God, are the doors really being shut now? Yes, they are. Shut on the herded, densely packed mass of people inside. Through small openings at the top we can see heads and hands, hands that will wave to us later when the train leaves. The commandant takes a bicycle and rides once again along the entire length of the train. Then he makes a brief gesture, like royalty in an operetta. A little orderly comes flying up and deferentially relieves him of the bicycle. The train gives a piercing whistle. And 1,020 Jews leave Holland.

This time the quota was really quite small, all considered: a mere thousand Jews, the extra twenty being reserves. For it is always possible—indeed, quite certain this time—that a few will

die or be crushed to death on the way. So many sick people and not a single nurse . . .

The tide of helpers gradually recedes; people go back to their sleeping quarters. So many exhausted, pale, and suffering faces. One more piece of our camp has been amputated. Next week yet another piece will follow. This is what has been happening now for over a year, week in, week out. We are left with just a few thousand. A hundred thousand Dutch members of our race are toiling away under an unknown sky or lie rotting in some unknown soil. We know nothing of their fate. It is only a short while, perhaps, before we find out, each one of us in his own time. For we are all marked down to share that fate, of that I have not a moment's doubt. But I must go now and lie down and sleep for a little while. I am a bit tired and dizzy. Then later I have to go to the laundry to track down the facecloth that got lost. But first I must sleep. As for the future, I am firmly resolved to return to you after my wanderings. In the meantime, my love once again, you dear people.

Selections from Nelson Mandela's Prison Letters

July 1, 1970

'Our Cause Is Just. It Is a Fight for Human Dignity'

Mr. Mandela wrote to his wife Winnie after a visit from Thoko, the widow of his son Thembi, whose father had recently died. He reflects on the persistence of hope in the face of repeated tragedy, and restates his commitment to the cause of the anti-apartheid struggle.

When I think of the disasters that had invaded us over the past 21 months, I very often wonder what gives us the strength and courage to carry on. If calamities had the weight of physical objects we should long have been crushed down, or else, we should by now have been hunchbacked, unsteady on our feet, and with faces full of gloom and utter despair. Yet my entire body throbs with life and is full of expectations. Each day brings a fresh stock of experiences and new dreams. I am still able to walk perfectly straight and firmly. What is even more important to me is the knowledge that nothing can ever ruffle you and that your step remains as fleet and graceful as it has always been — a girl who can laugh heartily and infect others with her enthusiasm. Always remember that this is how I think of you.

... We fight against one of the last strongholds of reaction on the African Continent. In cases of this kind our duty is a simple one — at the appropriate time to state clearly, firmly and accurately the aspirations that we cherish and the greater South Africa for which we fight. Our cause is just. It is a fight for human dignity and for an honorable life. Nothing should be done or said which may be construed directly or indirectly as compromising principle, not even the threat of a more serious charge and severe penalty. In dealing with people, be they friends or foe, you are always polite and pleasant. This is equally important in public debates. We can be frank and outspoken without being reckless or abusive, polite without cringing, we can attack racialism and its evils without ourselves fostering feelings of hostility between different racial groups.

Aug. 31, 1970

Individual Kindness Can Not Wipe Out Poverty

In this letter to his son Makgatho, Mr. Mandela regrets that he cannot be with him to celebrate his 20th birthday. He reminisces about Makgatho's childhood and reveals his thoughts on fighting poverty.

I have been reminiscing a great deal ... Those were the days when you lived a happy life free of problems and fenced from all hardships and insecurity by parental love. You did not work, grub was galore, clothing was plentiful and you slept good. But some of your playmates those days roamed around completely naked and dirty because their parents were too poor to dress them and to keep them clean.

Often you brought them home and gave them food. Sometimes you went away with double the amount of swimming fees to help a needy friend. Perhaps then you acted purely out of a child's affection for a friend, and not because you had become consciously aware of the extremes of wealth and poverty that characterized our social life. I hope you're still as keen today to help those who are hard-hit by want as you were then.

It's a good thing to help a friend whenever you can; but individual acts of hospitality are not the answer. Those who want to wipe out poverty from the face of the earth must use other weapons, weapons other than kindness. ...

This is not a problem that can be handled by individual acts of hospitality. The man who attempted to use his own possessions to help all the needy would be permanently ruined and in due course himself live on alms. Experience shows that this problem can be effectively tackled only by a disciplined body of persons, who are inspired by the same ideas and united in a common cause.

'God's Presence Felt in All Cell Blocks,' Son Writes Father From Mississippi Jail

(Continued From Page 1)

my cell block. It is full, and more students are arriving every day. We are praying that this will break in the near future.

"There are almost as many whites here, who have been arrested with the 'freedom riders,' as there are colored. It's such a grand feeling to see dedicated people fighting for a principle that is greater than laws and customs.

"I don't know what the people are doing in Pittsburgh, but I hope that they, especially at Metropolitan Baptist Church, are praying for us. Please take this to the association and tell them we are asking for their prayers.

"This is a great thing, and I am so grateful that I have a chance to be in on the momentum of it.

"As I told you in my last letter, we have a project in which we are encouraging people to spread our slogan, 'Free the Freedom Riders at Once.'

"It now is Sunday morning. Last night was one which I will never forget. We sang songs of freedom.

"Let me explain what happened. We are on

the fifth floor and the girls are on the third floor. The regular inmates are between. Well, last night we would sing a song and the girls down below would answer us. The regular inmates between the fifth floor and the third also joined in.

"It seemed as if the Holy Ghost got into everyone. Some almost were crying and became almost uncontrollable. Our objective appeared so clearly at that time. You could hear the emotional determined cries for freedom all over the jail.

"We are not old men. The majority of us still are in school. To see the dedication and determination on the faces of my fellow-inmates, and to hear the echoing answer coming from the girls singing such songs as, 'How Great Thou Art,' 'Swing Low,' and 'Freedom Is Coming By and By,' was one of the most rewarding experiences that anyone could ask for.

"Freedom has to come soon. You can see it on the next man's face. You can hear it in his voice. There are folk who are willing to do the same thing tomorrow for a cause that is more vital than missiles, going to the moon, or pacifying Castro.

"I can better understand now the plight of

Africa, the leadership of Gandhi in India, the Hungarian revolt, and every other revolution which was attempted to secure the basic rights of man.

"We here know that there is a God. His presence is felt in every cell block. You even can see His presence in the face of the jailor. This has been experience of re-birth for all of us.

"Yes, Dad, this thing has to break. The prelude to freedom is here, we are simply waiting on a formal decision and the manual opening of the doors.

"Keep spreading our slogan, 'Free the Freedom Riders at Once.' Yes, Dad, something is going to happen. Progress is our most important product, and this progress cannot be curtailed once it has started. This is a fact which has manifested itself through the annals of history.

"Jail is only a stepping stone. It is no higher than the nearest hill. Every hill can be climbed if enough effort is put forth.

"Please spread our slogan and tell Metropolitan Baptist Church that 93 'freedom riders' are asking for prayers.

"Tell all I said hello, and give my love to the family.

"Love, Obadiah."

The Pittsburgh Courier, June 24, 1961

N.S. Pastor's Son Writes from Mississippi Jail:

"God's Presence Felt in Every Cell"

By OBADIAH SIMMS III

Hinds County Jail
Jackson, Mississippi
June 10, 1961

Dear Dad:

It's Saturday evening and we have just finished supper. The morale of the group still is very high. We expect this thing to break any day. We spend our time singing, praying, writing letters, and reading. There are 84 of us in my cellblock. It is full, and more students are arriving every day. We are praying that this will break in the near future.

There are almost as many whites here, who have been arrested with the "freedom riders," as there are colored. It's such a grand feeling to see dedicated people fighting for a principle that is greater than laws and customs.

I don't know what the people are doing in Pittsburgh, but I hope that they, especially at Metropolitan Baptist Church, are praying for us. Please take this to the association and tell them we are asking for their prayers.

This is a great thing, and I am so grateful that I have a chance to be in on the momentum of it.

As I told you in my last letter, we have a project in which we are encouraging people to spread our slogan, "Free the Freedom Riders at Once."

It is now Sunday morning. Last night was one which I will never forget. We sang songs of freedom.

Let me explain what happened. We are on the fifth floor, and the girls are on the third floor. The regular inmates are between. Well, last night we would sing a song, and the girls down below would answer us. The regular inmates between the fifth floor and the third also joined in.

It seemed as if the Holy Ghost got into everyone. Some were crying and became almost uncontrollable. Our objective appeared so clearly at that time. You could hear the emotional, determined cries for freedom all over the jail.

We are not old men. The majority of us are still in school. To see the dedication and determination on the faces of my fellow inmates and to hear the echoing answer coming from the girls singing such songs as "How Great Thou Art," "Swing Low," and "Freedom Is Coming By and By" was one of the most rewarding experiences that anyone could ask for.

Freedom has to come soon. You can see it on the next man's face. You can hear it in his voice. There are some folk who are willing to do the same thing tomorrow for a cause that is more vital than missiles, going to the moon, or pacifying Castro.

I can better understand now the plight of Africa, the leadership of Gandhi in India, the Hungarian revolt, and every other revolution that was attempted to secure the basic rights of man.

We here know that there is a God. His presence is felt in every cell block. You can even see His presence in the face of the jailor. This has been an experience of re-birth for all of us. Yes, Dad, this thing has to break. The prelude to freedom is here. We are simply waiting on a formal decision and the manual opening of the doors.

Keep spreading our slogan, "Free the Freedom Riders A Once." Yes, Dad, something is going to happen. Progress is our most important product, and this progress cannot be curtailed once it has started. This is a fact which has manifested itself through the annals of history. Jail is only a stepping stone. It is no higher than the nearest hill. Every hill can be climbed if enough effort is put forth.

Please spread our slogan and tell Metropolitan Baptist Church that 93 "freedom riders" are asking for prayers. Tell all I said hello, and give my love to the family.

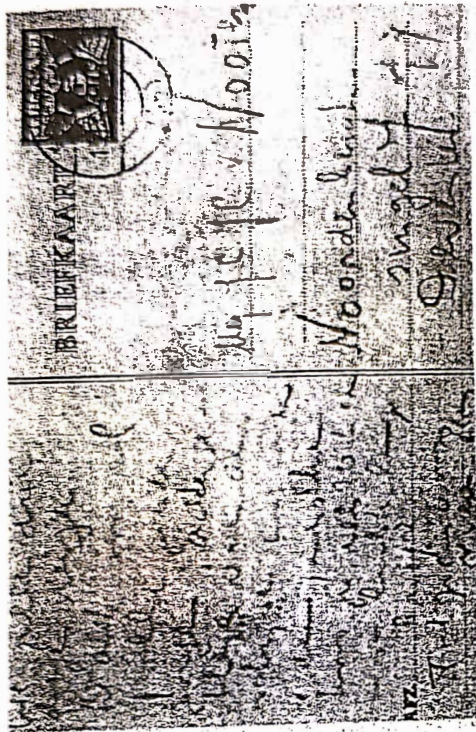
Love,
Obadiah

Thursday, 8 June 1943, ten o'clock

My dear people,

Not much heath is left now inside the barbed wire; more barracks are always being added. Only a little piece remains in the farthest corner of the camp, and that's where I'm sitting now, in the sun under a glorious blue sky, among some low shrubbery. Right across from me only a few meters away, a blue uniform with a helmet stands in the watchtower. A guard with an enraptured expression is picking purple lupins, his gun dangling on his back. When I look to the left I see billowing white smoke and hear the puffing of a locomotive. The people have already been loaded onto the freight cars; the doors are closed. There are many green police,²⁶ who sang this morning as they marched by the side of the train, and the Dutch military police are out as well. The quota of people who must go is not yet filled. Just now I met the matron of the orphanage, carrying a small child in her arms who also has to go, alone. And a number of people have been taken out of the hospital barracks. They are doing a thorough job here today; big shots from The Hague have come on a visit. It's very strange watching these gentlemen at work from close quarters. I've been up since four this morning dealing with the babies and carrying luggage. In a few hours you can accumulate enough gloom here to last a lifetime. The nature-loving policeman has gathered his purple bouquet now, perhaps he's off to court some farmer's daughter in the neighborhood. The engine gives a piercing shriek. The whole camp holds its breath; another three thousand Jews are about to leave. There are babies with pneumonia lying in the freight cars. Sometimes what goes on here seems totally unreal. I haven't been given any particular job, which suits me very well. I just wander about and find my own work. This morning I had a brief talk with a woman who had come from Vught, who told me her latest experiences in

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"We left the camp singing . . ." Etty's last postcard, thrown from the train; it was found and mailed on September 15, 1943.

three-minutes. How much can you really tell in a few minutes? When we came to a door, and I wasn't allowed to go any farther, she embraced me and said, "Thank you for being such a help."

Just now I climbed up on a box lying among the bushes here to count the freight cars. There were thirty-five, with some second-class cars at the front for the escorts. The freight cars had been completely sealed, but a plank had been left out here and there, and people put their hands through the gaps and waved as if they were drowning.

The sky is full of birds, the purple lupins stand up so regally and peacefully, two little old women have sat down on the box for a chat, the sun is shining on my face—and right before our eyes, mass murder. The whole thing is simply beyond comprehension.

Love
Etty

Appendix

NOTE: The text to follow is aligned to the workshop theme and is provided as a supplemental piece.

The Literature of Destruction

Jewish Responses to Catastrophe

EDITED BY DAVID G. ROSKIES



THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY

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93 The Czech Transport: A Chronicle of the Auschwitz *Sonderkommando*

ZALMEN GRADOWSKI

Introduction

Dear reader, I write these words in the moments of my greatest despair. I do not know, I do not believe, that I myself will live to read these lines "after the storm." Who knows if I will have the good fortune to unfold the secret I carry deep in my heart to the world? Who knows if I will ever again behold a "free" man and be able to speak with him? It may be that these, the lines that I am now writing, will be the sole witnesses to what was my life. But I shall be happy if only my writings should reach you, citizen of the free world. Perhaps a spark of my inner fire will ignite in you, and even should you sense only part of what we lived for, you will be compelled to avenge us—avenge our deaths!

Dear discoverer of these writings!

I have a request of you: this is the real reason why I write, that my doomed life may attain some meaning, that my hellish days and hopeless tomorrows may find a purpose in the future.

I pass on to you only a small part of what took place in the hell of Birkenau-Auschwitz. It is for you to comprehend the reality. I have written a great deal besides this. I am certain that you will come upon these remnants, and from them you will be able to construct a picture of how our people were killed.

I also ask a personal favor, dear finder and publisher of these writings. Using the address I give here, find out who I am. Then ask my relatives for the portrait of my family, as well as that of my wife and me and, using your discretion, print them in this book. In this way I hope to immortalize the dear, beloved names of those for whom, at this moment, I cannot even expend a tear! For I live in an inferno of death, where it is impossible to measure my great losses. And, of course, I too am condemned to die. Can the dead mourn the dead? But you, unknown "free" citizen of the world, I beg you to shed a tear for them when you have their pictures before your eyes. I dedicate all my writings to them—this is my tear, my lament for my family and people.

Here I wish to list the names of my martyred family:

My mother—Sarah
My sister—Libe
My sister—Esther Rokhl
My wife—Sonia (Sarah)
My father-in-law—Raphael
My brother-in-law—Wolf

They were killed on December 8, 1942—gassed and incinerated.

I also make mention of my father, Shmuel, who was seized on Yom Kippur 1942, and about whom I have heard nothing since. Two brothers, Eber and Moyshl, were captured in Lithuania, my sister Feygeleh in Otwock. This is my entire family.

I doubt that any of them are still alive. I ask you—this is my last request—to print under our photographs the dates on which we were killed.

My own fate is evident from the present situation. I know the day approaches—the day before which my heart and soul tremble, though not from love of life, for this life is a torment. Yet, in the moment left me I cannot rest: Live, live for revenge! And immortalize the names of my loved ones. I have friends in America and in the Land of Israel. I give the address of one below, and from him you can find out about me and my family.

J. Joffe

27 East Broadway, N.Y.

America

Everything described here I experienced myself during my sixteen months of *Sonderarbeit*, and my accumulated grief and pain, my terrible suffering, could have found no other expression under these "conditions" than through this writing.

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