

CHAPTER 13

JOHN RABE'S BERLIN DIARY

SIEMENSSTADT, 24 APRIL 1945

NONE OF THE RUMORS flying around here yesterday has turned out to be true. It's all just pure rumor. But the bridges in the area close-by have been blown up by our troops. Our antiaircraft is firing away constantly, and the enemy air raids did not stop all night. Even this morning there's whistling and whirring overhead. At three o'clock the water was turned off. But there's water again now, though not much pressure. We've filled all the containers we have in reserve.

8 P. M.

The whole day has been filled with air raid alarms, fighter attacks, and artillery fire. At 11:00 a.m. the house at 11 Harries Strasse was hit. The chimney flew out onto the street, the roof was demolished, but with the exception of bits of broken glass no other damage is visible. It appears to have been an artillery shell.

The Siemens cable works is burning. A huge pitch-black cloud is rising above it. Word is that the Russians occupied part of the works, and so we ourselves then put the torch to the rest. People say we have one division deployed nearby and three divisions that have pulled back from the western front are supposed to be on their way.

Mutti grows braver every day. I have to keep a tight rein on her. She goes out to shop in the midst of the worst air raid and takes cover only from strafers. She worked in our garden today in the middle of severe shelling—planting peas. Pure recklessness!

There's one hell of a racket at the moment. It feels as if we're being encircled. We're surrounded by black clouds of smoke.

25 APRIL

Last night was relatively quiet. This morning, the air raids started again and have continued with no letup.

Yesterday evening at 8:30: two hits—probably flak shells—in the roof of the building directly across from us. During this morning's shelling—there's not much choice, the shelling never stops—I fetched three loaves of bread from Wunicke near the post office, so that we're taken care of for a few days. The next street over, from Riepelt Strasse to the waterworks, is occupied by German soldiers and civilian militia. The bombardment has claimed three victims, slain by flak or bomb shrapnel: one woman, a soldier, and a civilian. According to news I've heard.

At 5:00 p.m. a bomb totally destroyed the building at 13 Riepelt Strasse. Five people are buried inside. By 8:00 o'clock we've managed to dig out four of them, all more or less badly wounded. The fifth, whom we are unable to bring up alive, is dead. Meanwhile the Russians have entered our part of Siemensstadt, but they don't stop our rescue work.

It's been quiet for a good while, and we go down to the cellar to sleep, after first getting some food gratis from the Konsum store (milk, pudding powder, etc.).

26 APRIL

Two armed Russians on patrol came down into the cellar at 4:30 a.m., asked a few questions, and left without bothering us.

8:00 a.m. We go to get some more groceries from the Konsum, where

there's no one in charge and the door and windows stand open to anyone. Willi⁵⁸ and I haul water over from Riepelt Strasse, since even our garden tap has dried up entirely now.

More Russians appear in our cellar, but then go away. At about 6:00 p.m. heavy bombardment. Word is that the German troops are staging a massive assault. Rumors, of course, with no way of checking on them.

Yesterday evening as some other civilians and I were carrying a critically wounded man through the woods to the first-aid station at 11 Gamme Strasse (Red Cross, Dr. Busch), we saw huge fires off to the right, behind the transformer house (the Röhren works or Osram. Couldn't tell exactly).

12:30 P.M.

A Russian soldier decorated with four medals enters our apartment, comes down into the cellar, and threatens to shoot us unless we hand over our watches and rings. I have to give him a ring and a pocket watch and Mutti's gold watch as well. Then with a handshake the Russian bids us a very friendly farewell. A couple of other Russian soldiers take a glass of cherry preserves from the cellar and wash them down with a bottle of wine and are in a fine mood. These people don't make a bad impression. They're simply taking what war tosses across their path.

Fighter attack. We keep taking refuge in the cellar. This time from German bombs.

27 APRIL

The first reports of rape are coming in. Frau Kitlaus at 1 Harries Strasse just missed being raped when a neighbor came by and interrupted the Russian. At Nos. 5 and 7, it's reported that two girls, aged 17 and 19, were raped three to four times. Ribbeck tells me that the same thing has happened on Rapp Strasse as well. Ribbeck has left his house on Rapp Strasse, and he and his wife have moved in with friends on Riepelt Strasse. We're very worried about how we're going to protect Irmi⁵⁹ and Erika Brechelt.⁶⁰

This morning at 5:00 heavy artillery shelling, machine gun and rifle fire, which has continued until this moment (10:30 a.m.) with only very brief pauses.

The Russian soldiers are making themselves at home in our apartment, but are very amiable—so far. They don't bother us, even offer some of their

food, but they're crazy about any kind of alcohol and are unpredictable once they've had too much.

28 APRIL

The night was quiet. No shelling. At 6:30 and 8:30 a.m., brief cannonades from the Russian side aimed into the city. It's horrible to be constantly aware that women are being raped. Frau Freier now admits that the night before last she had to give in to a Russian who threatened to shoot her if she refused. Last night she was able to hide. I'm writing these lines in great haste by the dim light in the room. Russian soldiers are constantly coming and going in our apartment.

The Siemens slaughterhouse (Süd Strasse behind the nursery) has been giving away for free whatever meat was left. A few residents of Siemensstadt walked away with whole quarters of beef. By the time I heard about it, it was too late: nothing left. And we need it so desperately. A Russian soldier, who likewise came away with a quarter, offers it to us—for a gold watch. Sure, if I had one! Both my gold watches have been taken. Frau Becker, our neighbor, is sympathetic and gives Mutti some frozen liver. Mutti is so happy to get it, even though her fingers are numb from preparing it.

Frau Becker brings another bit of sad news. Frau Dr. Orlich killed both her children and herself by injection with poison. I ask a German who lives close-by, but whom I don't know personally, if he knows anything about the incident. He replies: "No. Haven't heard about it. Too bad I don't have any poison, otherwise I'd be happy to take it."

SUNDAY, 29 APRIL

The night was quiet. This morning around 7:30 Russian batteries right outside our windows started firing. Stopped again after fifteen minutes. According to the Russians, Berlin has been surrounded. But in four different pockets, one of which is Tempelhof airport, where German planes are still taking off now and then. The Führer is said to be in Munich.

Our apartment was totally taken over last night by Russian soldiers. Along with the rest of the people in the building, we slept in the bomb cellar.

I've just heard from one of the Russians quartered in our apartment

that Himmler is supposed to have capitulated to the Americans and English; i.e., surrendered personally to them, but *not* to the Russians. The man's got it all wrong, the Russian says.

Herr Brechelt went to have a look at his apartment. Now, together with about fifty colleagues, he's being held to work in the pipe mill, but is allowed to visit his family every day.

MONDAY, 30 APRIL

The night was relatively quiet. We, Mutti and I, were able to sleep in the bedroom of our apartment for the first time again; the rooms to the right and left were home to Russians for the night. At the moment there's heavy shelling of Spandau, where they say the Deutsche Werke is still resisting.

Our garden has come through poorly. A Russian truck drove over Mutti's bed of peas. The hedges and garden walls have been partly destroyed, but we can surely endure that. If only we knew what we are to live from! Until now goodhearted neighbors have helped us out with potatoes; and we've been given a little bread and meat by the Russians.

Willi and I are busy hauling water from a pump in the neighborhood. The waterworks haven't been in operation for days, and the Russians want to wash. We hear from various sides that the Russians have chased people right out of their apartments.

TUESDAY, 1 MAY

Our most recent billeted soldiers, a Russian noncom (medical student) and several privates, had to move on yesterday, much to our regret. They were relatively decent fellows [*relatively* inserted as an afterthought], who gave us some of their rations now and then. No sooner were they gone than three Russian soldiers forced their way in, looking for girls. Herr Wagner's calm demeanor—and he speaks fluent Russian—convinced them to leave, after unsuccessfully searching the building and bomb shelter, but without doing any damage, either. The shock still sits in our bones.

All sorts of things have been happening in the neighborhood. A seventeen-year-old girl was raped five times, then shot. The women in a bomb shelter on Quell Weg were raped while their husbands looked on. Herr Gabbert was stopped on the street and had to take off most of his clothes because he claimed he had no jewelry. A ring he had hidden in one shoe was then taken. Only a little shelling overnight, but heavier this morning.

Himmler has shot himself, or so the Russians say. On 28 April the Anglo-American forces were about 20 miles outside of Munich, which they have probably taken by now. These are just oral reports from Russian soldiers.

We're down to our last slices of bread again. How Mutti is going to feed us is a mystery. People sometimes talk about how they would want to share their last crust of bread. *And you want to do it, too!* But none of us ever realized how hard it is. I sit down in a corner of the parlor and read. I'm having a go at an old Gustav Freytag novel—*Debit and Credit*. I'm trying to forget!

Wagner, our neighbor, has poured out all the rest of his alcohol, wines and liqueurs, because he was afraid it would fall into the hands of the Russians, who would get drunk and then get out of control. Who can blame him? But Mutti is crying, she would have so loved one or two bottles. Well, it's too late now. I have other worries: First thing we have to do is replenish our water supply.

5 P. M.

I've just come back from a walk that I took with Willi through Siemensstadt to see if we could scare up food of any kind somewhere. No success. There's nothing more to be had. We visited Fräulein Naumann, who has taken on a little job of some sort in the administration building, in exchange for potatoes or whatever, and who was visiting her mother. She didn't have any suggestions about where to find something to eat. Then we visited Paul Meyer, whose apartment above the pharmacy was horribly damaged during the last air raid and then by a German grenade. One room is ripped wide open. You can look right outside because a wall is missing. The furniture is ruined, and everything is buried under rubble and plaster. But Meyer is as calm and level-headed as always.

"Where are you living, where are you sleeping?" I asked.

"Well, in the bomb shelter. And we cook and eat somewhere together with the rest of the people in the building."

We then joined Meyer to go ask at the waterworks if there was any food to be had there. No go again! There was a food depot there that the Wehrmacht had secretly set up and that no one, not even the directors, knew anything about. What they told us at the waterworks was that directors Bauer and Buol had sworn on oath that there was no food there. When the depot was then found—ostensibly some foreigners were the informers—Buol and Bauer were arrested. There's no way to check the facts, I am

only passing on what we were told. The official there also mentioned that a number of local residents had behaved shamelessly when the depot was then cleared. They didn't just take food but used the opportunity to break into offices and steal office supplies, like mechanical pencils and other things stored there, including stuff they could have no use for, like screws and rivets, crates and crates of them. I'm simply recording this incident as well, and the revulsion with which it was described, just to give a feel for the times.

We've heard that street fighting is still going on in the West End and Charlottenburg. I met some refugees who had come from Charlottenburg and were trekking on to Karlshorst. At the east gate, by the war monument, near the T-works and outside the Werner Werk high-rise, are the graves of fallen Russians, decorated with red wooden pyramids bearing the Soviet star.

Frau Freier has just come by with the following news that somebody heard on some foreign broadcast:

1. Himmler's offer of capitulation was not accepted by the Anglo-Americans. Meanwhile, Himmler has been captured and sent off to Moscow.
2. Goebbels has shot himself.
3. Hitler and Göring are in Munich.⁶¹
4. Of the two tower shelters at the Tiergarten, one has been blown up, while a battle with flamethrowers is raging around the other.

We're told that a German-speaking Russian staff officer is living at 43 Rohr Damm, to whom you can apply for help if you're molested by Russian soldiers. They say the same officer is in charge of getting supplies to the civilian population promptly. That sounds very promising.

SATURDAY, 5 MAY

On Wednesday, 2 May, I went with Willi to the cable works to get some food. The works were in a sorry state, half destroyed, the offices plundered. In the cellar we found some dried vegetables and grain coffee. On the way home, still on the cable works grounds, we were arrested by a Russian officer and locked in a room with other prisoners in apartment No. 368 at 19 Schuckert Damm. Among others, we met Herr Steinberg along with Herr Bücking. We were fed well, and treated well, too.

verhaftet und in einem Haus 5:30 (19. Jahrhundert) untergebracht, wo wir mit
 in anderen Käftlingen in einem Gebäude
 eingeschlossen wurden. Wir trafen dort mit
 Herrn Steinberg und Herrn Brückner. Die
 Pflege war gut - auch die Behandlung
 war wunderbar; ich würde meinen
 Lebenslauf herüber und zwar mit
 allen beigefügten und ein darüber
 aufgenommenes Protokoll mitgebracht
 sein. Am Freitag, den 4.5. wurden
 Willi und ich wieder freigelassen,
 nachdem wir uns ehrenwörtlich ver-
 pflichtet hatten, den Russen in ihren
 Bemühungen hier in Potsdam wieder
 Ordnung zu schaffen, helfen zu wollen.
 Das versprochen wir gern. Wie konnte
 das geschehen? Keiner der
 die Direktoren von Siemens gesucht
 werden, die noch im ersten Minut für
 einer Wiedereröffnung der Betriebe der
 Werke interessiert waren. Die Russen
 waren derselben Meinung. Ich habe die
 russ. Offiziere, auch Herrn Steinberg frei-
 gelassen, der mir beim Aufsuchen der
 Direktoren gut helfen könne. Herr

Rabe's entry in his Berlin diary describing his arrest by
 the Russians

We were interrogated, and I had to tell the story of my life, down to the last detail, and then sign my statement, which they had taken down. On Friday, 4 May, Willi and I were released, after having sworn an oath that we would help the Russians in their attempts to restore order in Berlin. We were happy to promise it.

How could that be done? As I see it, the Siemens directors should be located, since after all their primary interest must be to get the operation up and running again. The Russians shared my view. I asked the Russian officers to release Herr Steinberg as well, who could help me locate the directors. Herr Steinberg was then also released.

We then went looking for Herr von Kissling in the administration building, from whom we received a list of the last known addresses of all direc-

tors, which we then gave the Russians. Herr Steinberg is supposed to search for individual directors today by car. In the meantime a certain Herr Brehm from AJ4 has been able to establish contact with directors Bingel and Dr. von Witzleben. When Herr Steinberg and I returned to talk with the Russians at eight that evening, we ran into Herr von Witzleben, who is probably being held under arrest now in the same room where Willi and I spent three days. I'm sorry that Herr von Witzleben has not been spared this discomfort, but without some rigor there is no way to impose a new order.

Herr Director Möller was found shot to death in a garage near his apartment and has already been buried. Herr Hofer is said to have shot himself and his entire family.

The news that Frau Dr. Orlich killed herself and her children has, thank God, turned out not to be true; but Frau Dr. Heyde did take her life with poison.

I have been ordered by the Russians to determine who on our vast staff has ever worked in the Soviet Union. A difficult task. I don't know how I'm going to carry it out.

Mutti was very brave during our arrest, but it was hard on her psychologically. She looked in vain for us everywhere. She wandered around close to distraction in the administration building and at the cable works, too, calling out my name. Words can't describe her happiness when we were able to return home. You have to experience such moments to truly and totally grasp them.

And how are the children doing? Ah, your heart simply overflows and you can't put the words that run through your mind to paper.

SUNDAY, 6 MAY

Yesterday the administration building was occupied by a column of 180 Russian soldiers. On Major Föderoff's orders, Herr von Kissling is rounding up fitters and engineers, most of them from the assembly mill, who previously worked in the Soviet Union. Dr. von Witzleben, with whom I was able to speak for a few minutes as he was getting into a car with a Russian officer to take care of some business or other, asked me to go to Herr Bingel's house where his wife is and tell her that he's all right. Since I have no way of driving there, I asked Herr Steinberg to convey the message, and he said that Frau von Witzleben had already been told.

I'm not feeling well at present. My blood pressure is too high. Yesterday afternoon I was close to collapse but managed to make it home. The Rus-

sians apparently had some sympathy with my condition and did not detain me, so that I was able to get back home quickly and immediately crept into bed. I'm doing a bit better this morning. I have to report to Russian Major Förderoff at 9 o'clock.

MONDAY, 7 MAY

I picked up an intestinal infection while I was under arrest, which I'm hoping I can cure with Yatren.

We received the order this morning to clear out of our apartment within three hours. We're moving in with Borowski, 71 Rapp Strasse. I'm storing my model ships, a good number of paintings and bronzes, as well as some Chinese pewter in our and K.'s cellars, since a Russian officer told me that we can lock the cellars. I'm doing so badly this evening that I call on Frau Dr. O. on Riepelst Strasse, who gives me a small package of Tannalbin.

TUESDAY, 8 MAY

I'm feeling a little better this morning, but still very drained, yet I get dressed anyway to be ready for marching orders if need be.

At 10 o'clock, we are ordered to clear out of the apartment that we've only just moved into, and within two hours at that. We drag our bags, mattresses, bedding, and so forth to Richters, 69 Rapp Strasse, 2nd floor. But will we be allowed to stay here? Since we have no coal or wood for the stove, we go to the cellar of our old apartment at 3 Harries Strasse and find the cellar locked on the outside, but all the individual doors inside have been forced open, the contents rifled or simply smashed. A Russian soldier comes into the cellar, sees that we're getting coal and doesn't bother us.

WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY

Orders have come from the Antifascist Central Office that all men must report for work at 7 a.m. Yesterday they had to load stuff from the cable works to be shipped off. Everyone got something to eat (soup and a large piece of bread). This morning Willi went to work as well. I cannot go just yet, since I'm still not over my intestinal flu.

The water has been on again since yesterday, the pressure's low, but there is running water at least.

Some shots this morning, presumably soldiers drilling; then music and hurrahs, down at the end of Rapp Strasse. We're worried whether we can stay on in our present quarters.

NOON

The Russian soldiers are dancing and are all very happy. They say some sort of peace or armistice has been signed between Russia and Germany. No one knows who's in charge on our side, who signed for us (Dönitz?).

Frau Freier comes to see us, very distraught. She had moved into an empty eight-room house with the Brechelts and the Fischers. A Russian commandant also occupied one room, but that night the whole house erupted in tumult. Frau Freier was raped. Frau Fischer and Frau Brechelt were too old and were left alone. The young girls escaped by hiding in the attic. In grappling with the Russians, Herr Brechelt was wounded in the face. And now they've all left the house, are strewn in all directions, and we take Frau Freier in. Part of her belongings are already here with us. The rest are to follow. She went off to get them a good while ago; let's hope nothing else has happened to her!

We have not one bit of bread left in the house. But when need is greatest, God is nearest. A neighbor lady, Frau Kitlaus, brings us a bowl of meat and rice stew. We carefully ladle off the fat. Given my current state, the rice is more than enough for me. Another neighbor, Frau Dr. Hermann, brings us a piece of meat. We've given most of Otto's medicine to Frau Dr. Orlich. Unfortunately she couldn't offer us anything to eat in trade. She doesn't have enough even for herself, and there are patients lying in the Red Cross station at her house, including the man we dug out of the house on Riepelt Strasse on 24 April.

THURSDAY, 10 MAY

From yesterday afternoon until 11:00 p.m., a lot of shooting (in celebration), a great banquet in the garden, with dancing and singing. Since there's a great deal of drinking, too, we fear the worst for the rest of the night. Irmi and Frau Freier hide. Frau Freier was raped four times yesterday. Thank God, the night remains calm. No one dared take off their shoes and clothes.

Willi came home at 5 o'clock yesterday. He brought a quarter of a loaf of bread, and during a break in work he'd been given some broth. He was

helping dismantle machines (lathes) at the pipe mill. The dismantling is a bad sign, since the plant cannot return to operation if the machines are all hauled away. Word is that Generals Jodl and von Krosigk⁶² signed the armistice.

We all shared Willi's bread, and now there's not a crumb left in the house. And neither do we know where we're supposed to get coal and firewood if the Russians won't let us into our cellar on Harries Strasse. Willi left again for work at 7 this morning. He's still physically strong and if he gets his soup every day from the Russians, he can probably manage the physical labor demanded of him for a good while, despite my illness.

I'm amazed at Mutti. She is brave, never complains or grumbles, and is constantly trying to beg some sort of food for us. God bless her! And along with Irmi she keeps the house in order, to the extent that you can speak of order. We sleep on the floor and hope that no one takes our mattresses away from us, or our bags and clothes, which we've had to drag along on each of our several hasty moves.

And we wonder, how are Gretel and her children and Otto and Eva⁶³ doing? You don't dare start brooding, it only leads to despair!

FRIDAY, 11 MAY

Ursi's birthday—dear Ursi, our loving thoughts are with you. May God protect you and your Mutti, Gudrun, and all the others there in Bünde. That is our daily prayer.

Yesterday the Russian soldiers left our building on Harries Strasse. Our apartment and our cellar are in a crazy state. The bed frames are gone, and the couches have vanished as well. They're probably somewhere in the neighborhood and we'll have to go looking for them. We found most of our tables and chairs out in the garden. All the crates in the cellar were broken into, the contents fished out and thrown on the floor. I suppose they were looking for jewelry or the like, which we no longer have. We shall try to put it all back in order a little and thank our Creator that we didn't have to go through worse. I have no idea what state the things are in that we left with Peschke or in our cellar in the city. We'll all pretty exhausted, but composed. I expected nothing different, actually even worse. Let's hope we are spared further surprises.

SATURDAY, 12 MAY

We spent all day yesterday straightening up our apartment on Harries Strasse, and we're still not finished. Willi went to forced labor this morning: shipping off machines and other materials, etc., so that he can get something to eat. I hope to be able to go along on Monday. A man really does want to work, as long as he knows that there is not a constant danger that his apartment will be confiscated while he's gone. And when we do have to move, Mutti can't drag the bags etc. around by herself, and usually we're given a leeway of only 2 to 3 hours.

1 p.m. Willi comes home truly exhausted. His only job today was "shoveling rubble," and he was given nothing to eat. I return from Frau Dr. Orlich, the woman who was mistakenly said to have died along with her children. I wasn't feeling well this morning—dizziness, heart palpitations, etc., symptoms of a weakened body. Her examination revealed: high blood pressure and some weakness in the heart muscle. I had her give me a signed statement that unfortunately I am unable to work.

I'm in a very poor mood. The Fatherland is defeated, vanquished, smashed to smithereens, unconditional surrender! After all the great words and promises of our government: This is the end of their dream of a thousand-year German Reich.

Still no word whatever from the children and grandchildren. Not in the best of health. Tossed out of the apartment twice on short notice, to take refuge with strangers, always worried and afraid that Russian soldiers will force their way in again, always short of our daily bread, for most of which Mutti literally has to go begging to neighbors and good friends, worried about what will become of the firm of Siemens and of us, meaning of Willi and me. Worried about how Eva is doing, who is expecting her first child about now. Want and worry wherever you turn! And yet you have to be happy that you've been spared even worse blows. And there are worse things, I saw more than enough of that in Nanking. But, chin up, even if it's bitterly hard to do! Onward!

SUNDAY, 13 MAY, OTTO'S 28TH BIRTHDAY!

My dear Otto, best wishes! Last night for the first time in a long time I slept in normal pajamas. That's been impossible up to now. We've lain in bed with our boots on to be ready at a moment's notice to clear out or to re-

spond to a military inspection. We don't have our beds anymore, maybe we'll still find them. We sleep on the floor, but we're happy that we could save our mattresses and our bed linens.

MONDAY, 14 MAY

Willi has been called back to work at the cable works. The call comes from the Antifascist Central Office. Today and tomorrow machine and materials are to be dismantled and shipped. Ostensibly the Russians are to pull out of here tomorrow. Nobody knows who or what comes then. The aforementioned Central Office has distributed a number of Russian propaganda fliers, dated from between 1 and 7 May. According to them, Hitler is dead and Mussolini has been hanged by his own countrymen.

Something dreadful—or eerie is going on all around us. Every house door is locked. You can't visit your friends because no one opens to a knock. If you're lucky you run into someone you want to visit on his way home, and after a brief exchange he quickly slips behind the door, which is instantly locked behind him. Why? Because everyone is afraid of Russian soldiers, who try to force their way into homes at every opportunity. Granted, many of them are harmless, but many aren't, and those that just rob you aren't the worst. Above all people are afraid, and rightly so, that they'll rape the girls and women in the house. I wish I could prove that the people who tell stories about these sorts of rapes are liars. But I can't!

Dr. Möhlmann has given us a whole pail full of groats (rye and oats—I'm not much of an expert here), for which I'm very grateful. It's stuff the Russians mix in with their horse feed, but we grind it to flour in our coffee mill, and can make a tasty soup out of that. Now and then we each get a piece of bread, too; last week, half a loaf per person.

I'm a little shaky on my feet at the moment: diabetes, high blood pressure, weak heart, and intestinal problems are all giving me trouble. Frau Dr. Orlich has given me a certificate so that I don't have to take part in the forced labor. So for now all I have to do is live, survive, and I want to do that, because without Mutti and me the children will have difficulty dealing with these new times. Maybe that's only my imagination; but it's what I think, imagined or not, and that should keep us two old folks on our feet!

Mutti lies beside me on the floor and sleeps, and outside the loveliest May weather smiles down on us. The most splendid spring days. The lilac is in full bloom outside our windows. How beautiful the world could be if the war had not been so wretchedly lost and the shadow of the future did

not loom ahead so dark and sinister. Cleaning up in the cellar, I found my two model ships, more or less smashed; but I've put them back in their old spot—they've been in "dry dock" once before, i.e., at the Naval History Museum, where a Pole repaired the damage they suffered on the trip from China to Berlin. Who knows, maybe they can be repaired again, although the damage this time is really significant.

We, Mutti and I, tried to get a look at our furniture, etc. in Dr. Selle's apartment, but couldn't find a way into the locked building. Then we visited Frau Meyer, who gave us some sweetener, something we had run out of. On the way we ran into Fräulein Krause, from whom we heard that Siemens employees are all supposed to register at the dynamo works. Before we even get to the dynamo works, we meet Herr Petermann, who tells us there's no point in registering there. He suggested I wait until the administration building is made available again, and then try to get my old job back.

Meanwhile I've found Gretel's iron bedstead at the Reinhardts on Harries Strasse, where the Russians had dragged it. We hauled the bedstead back and also found our furniture in Peschke's apartment, all heaped in a big pile and probably damaged somewhat. The Chinese chest is still there, too. We've just heard that the Russian occupation troops are to withdraw tomorrow and be replaced by the English, with whom we hope we can come to terms better. All the same, the Americans and English are preceded by the reputation of not being as genial as one might have hoped. Wait and see!

TUESDAY, 15 MAY

Willi didn't get home until 7 o'clock yesterday evening. He had to be at the cable works at 6 this morning again. That's 13 hours of work a day, and only a half-hour break to eat: too much for Willi, given how ill he is. As soon as he feels he can't go on, he should report in sick. The food at the cable work consists of a little bread and sweetened tea in the morning. Lunch: watery broth with a few pieces of meat, and a little bread then again in the evening. Not enough for hard labor. The work to be done: dismantling a huge lead press that's to be shipped off. They say that the Russians want to ship off 70 percent of the entire plant's machinery.

I'm still on vacation, involuntary, compulsory vacation, because I'm too old and probably too weak to work in the assembly plant. Just puttering around the house and moving a bit of furniture has left me totally out of

breath. There's probably some heart damage from all this toil and trouble. So let's rest up a bit!

If only the thoughts that keep running through your mind would finally give it a rest! The worry and anxiety about the children and grandchildren in Bünde and Munich weigh us down. Frau Freier just told us—she's been living in the front room and saw it all from the window—that a car full of Russians drove past at 10 o'clock last night. The soldiers broke into the cellar of the house across the street and dragged off a sack (of potatoes?). I didn't even notice, since I'd fallen asleep on my mattress on the floor. These nighttime visits are always very upsetting, and dangerous for the women and girls in the building.

Once again at noon today three Russian soldiers force their way into our apartment on Harries Strasse, allegedly searching for radio equipment.

Herr Gutmann and Fräulein Pechtel visited us on Rapp Strasse. What we've been through is harmless compared to what happened to Gutmann. A couple of German sharpshooters were on the roof of his building in Spandau. In such cases, the Russian military generally shot everyone in the building, and Gutmann can well say he was lucky to get out alive. His sister-in-law was wounded during an air raid and lost an eye.

He tells the most hair-raising stories of what went on as the city was being taken. Near Friedrich Strasse there were large numbers of women and children who had sought refuge in the subway tunnel, which the SS decided to use as a defensive position at the last moment. The Russians shelled the tunnel with antitank guns, blowing open a big water main, so that water flooded the tunnel and all the refugees drowned.

A division of soldiers and some civilians were surrounded by the Russians. The women and children were allowed to leave, and so waving white flags, they approached the German lines, but were then mowed down by their own countrymen. The German officer in charge justified his conduct by claiming that Russian soldiers were known to use the trick of crouching behind women in order to creep in closer, etc. etc.

A German-speaking Russian officer gave Herr Gutmann one interesting bit of information: According to him, there haven't been any commissars in Russia since 1941, and as a Russian officer he felt offended if someone addressed him as "commissar."

Gutmann tried to get into the Siemens administration building to visit his office but was warned off and told to give it up because, first, he might be shot by the Russians occupying the building and, second, they're waiting for the whole administration building to be blown sky-high, or so they said.

They didn't say blown up by whom. They let him get only as far as the personnel office. The people who warned him were Germans. The warning seems awfully simpleminded to me. I just heard from Herr Scheichler of the Antifascist Central Office that the Russians intend to pull out in two days. They ought to do it today and make room for the advancing English, who will presumably be quartered in the administrative buildings rather than in private homes.

WEDNESDAY, 16 MAY

Just in case, I had Gutmann give me his address again. Yesterday the Antifascist Central Office (Scheichler) had us all confirm our addresses for the new food distribution. To our great astonishment, we were told that new ration cards are to be given out because the Russians will be supplying us with food on a massive scale—something, as was noted, that the English and Americans cannot do, since they lack food in such tonnage.

Well, we'll be happy to be surprised because so far we've had great difficulty finding food. What have we actually lived on over the past three weeks? The basis of our diet is a pail full of groats, which the Russians use as fodder for their horses and were kind enough to leave behind for us when their first occupying forces left. We then ran these groats through our coffee mill, so that we could use the hulls as well, and that way we've always had some soup. Bread (only rarely) and meat and potatoes were kind gifts that, as noted, Mutti begged from the neighbors, or that Irmi was able to earn by doing some housework for a lady of her acquaintance. Yes, we'd be happy to see some order established in the matter of food.

Another surprise: According to a Russian officer, the Russians aren't even considering shipping the German populace off to Siberia. If that's true, they'll soon have us all on their side! Nothing would bring the Germans into their embrace more quickly than conciliatory policies. Well, somewhere between hope and fear, we'll wait to see to what happens.

And how are the children doing? Do they have food to eat? Are they free? Or captured? Will Otto be allowed to continue to study? What will they live on if he's not allowed to finish his studies? And what about Eva? Is she able to feed her baby? And how are Gretel and Ursi and Gudrun doing in Bünde? Questions that have to remain unanswered and that rob you of your sleep!

It's really pointless to keep jotting down the same complaints; but maybe someone will know what I'm going through when I write that our

suffering under this pressure is indescribable, although we keep telling ourselves that hundreds of thousands, indeed millions of Germans have the same, if not worse cares.

Japan, or so I've heard, will capitulate in a few days.⁶⁴ And with that, the second and most terrible of all world wars will at last, after six years, have come to a definitive end, meaning: for the others! For us? We'll have to wait and see. After the First World War, which was mild in comparison to this last one, there was a period of hunger and hate. The losers are to blame for everything. Will that be repeated? And what will become now of the Germany that has perished? Berlin has been so completely destroyed that, as I see it, it will be years before they have even cleared away the rubble and demolished buildings. And the rest of Germany's major cities probably came through no better. What I saw last autumn in Munich and Nuremberg was already bad enough.

We're still without gas and electricity, and no trains or subways are running at all.

The Brechelts had an hour and a half to clear out of their emergency quarters on Rohr Damm because the Russians suddenly wanted it, and have now gone back to their old apartment at 3 Harries Strasse. Mutti and I borrowed a wagon from Frau Mützel and helped them move. Presumably we'll be able to move back to our old apartment within the next few days, too.

A section of Harries Strasse is still occupied by the Russians, however, and the street is blocked by a medieval turnpike. While we were helping Frau Brechelt move, we ran into Frau Krüger, who also was being forced to move. I was able to help her a little to clear her apartment. It's a pitiful sight to see all the people in a building suddenly put out on the street with everything they have, except the large pieces of furniture. A fire can't be any worse a catastrophe.

FRIDAY, 18 MAY

We moved back into our old apartment (3 Harries Strasse) yesterday. According to the orders of the Antifascist Central Office, all men between 14 and 65 years of age must report to work. I asked for a deferment on account of my health. At the same time I got myself registered at the Siemens administration building, where let's hope they can soon put me to work doing something. I've heard that Dr. von Witzleben, one of the directors, has been released. Director Bingel is still being detained at the citadel in

Spandau, they say. Director Leiffert shot himself—or so I've been told. There's no way of telling whether it's a fact or just rumor. Some people say that Hitler has fled to Spain and that Himmler is dead. Goebbels, they say, killed himself and his whole family.

I spent the morning shoveling and carting off roof tiles (and other bomb debris) still lying out in front of the house.

The Russians have kept their word. We've been getting food according to the new system (enclosed here). I have been listed as a "worker" and am being given food. Mutti has not yet received her ration cards. Irmi is likewise classified as a "worker." As before, Willi is still working 13-hour days. There will be no Sundays off until the end of May. I've heard that Herr Brendel is being held under arrest. No one could tell me where.

I'm worried about where I'll put our furniture that's stored with Peschke and Dr. Selle when those gentlemen need their apartments again themselves. When I cautiously approach, that is ask, Frau Freier whether there might be some chance of her finding another place to live, she is very offended that I could even think of asking such a question at this point. Mutti also thinks my request is out of place!

Where can I turn with my worries if no one understands me? I don't want to throw Frau Freier out! But it might turn out that she could find lodging elsewhere, which would be a great help to us. But I won't touch the subject again for now. Women's logic and men's logic are two fundamentally different things. Neither side has any insight into the other. The best thing is to hold my peace. Some solution, some way out, will surely come with time.

SATURDAY, 19 MAY

I've just heard from Dr. Möhlmann that Robert von Siemens has been shot and killed. He was in a car with some SS men out on the Avus,⁶³ when they were surrounded by Russians, and except for one man who escaped all of them were shot, including R. v. S. by accident.

SUNDAY, 20 MAY (PENTECOST)

Mutti and I went into the city on foot today, with a child's wagon and a backpack, to have a look at the cellar on Xantener Strasse. It turned out that there were quite a few things missing, our good china for instance. But a lot of valuable keepsakes are still there, and we will try to salvage them. Today

we took the mask of the old man by Michelangelo and the Beethoven mask back home with us, as well as the carved pedestal for the green Kuanyin,⁶⁶ the case for medals (pried open at the back) and what medals were still in it; about half were missing, including all the good ones with gemstones and pearls.

We found a Herr Robert living in Dr. Hauser's apartment, who is said to be a prisoner of war. Dr. Hauser's brother, it's claimed, has become mayor of Ruhleben. On the way, we also ran into Herr Marr, who greeted me with these words:

"Well, so where's your 'Heil Hitler'? You should be ashamed of yourself!"

We just left him standing there. The man can't be normal! He's apparently forgotten that he himself was a party member, a commissar for the Ukraine, a civil servant, and I don't know what all, and truly has reason to be ashamed. Maybe he was angry at Frau Goll again, who's still living in their apartment but wasn't there when we called.

After our walk through the devastated city, Xantener Strasse did not come as any big surprise. The Schloss Bridge that leads to Luisen Platz is totally destroyed, evidently blown up by our troops. The Russians have built a provisional footbridge to one side, but no vehicles can cross it. On Wilmersdorfer Strasse we saw women clearing rubble from the street. The tower of the Charlottenburg town hall was badly shelled; it was probably being defended by German troops.

It's a splendid Pentecost Sunday. Willi had to go to work, but is supposed to get double bread rations and sugar. The Russians are still removing lathes and other machines from the Siemens factories and shipping them off. I was actually supposed to report in for the dismantling work, but I can't do that kind of heavy labor. I collapsed yesterday shoveling rubble. My heart just doesn't want to do its job; as much as I hate to admit it, I'll have to dodge the heavy labor. But let's hope we'll soon get some brain work to do at Siemens; otherwise I don't know how I'll feed my family.

There's a rumor that the firm will have to let all former party members go; but I hope that's only a rumor. The most important question is surely whether, and if so, when, the firm can be put back into operation. God grant that some way can be found! Mutti has received a *child's* ration card today, the same goes for Frau Freier. Unfortunately that means a significant reduction in bread, etc. for our household.

No sign thus far of the Americans or English. It looks as if the Russian occupation here will last for a while yet. Maybe that's to our best advantage

in terms of diet, since the Russians appear to have enough food, which they say is not the case with the American troops.

MONDAY, 21 MAY

Irmis and I were back on Xantener Strasse this morning and I fetched the following curios from the cellar of our old house: the Borghese fencer, the Goethe mask, the mask of *La belle inconnue de la Seine*, the porcelain laughing Buddha, Napoleon at the Berezina, a collection of Chinese copper coins, and a couple of medals, as well as the balance scale and the Japanese mushroom peddler's basket. We wrapped the really heavy bronze figurines in blankets and pulled them back in the wagon. When we got home, Dora surprised us with the news that three Russians are to be quartered here with us tonight; but, thank God, we can stay in the apartment. Dr. Möhlmann just paid a visit and told me that he has been hired to help in the carpentry shop at the Siemens Schuckert works. The news that Japan surrendered has turned out not to be true, but various large Japanese cities are said to have been destroyed in air raids.

Yesterday we saw a large banner that had just been hung from one of the half-destroyed buildings on Wilmersdorfer Strasse. It read: "Give me 10 years, and you will not recognize Berlin!" And today, when we were about 50 yards away from the same building, it suddenly collapsed with a great crash. On the wall under the arches of the bridge at the Jungfernheide train station is another motto, this one from our recent government: "Let our motto be: Berlin stays free."

Mutti and Irmis have just been told they are to report for work at 7 o'clock tomorrow morning.

TUESDAY, 22 MAY

Mutti was lucky: The grandmothers were allowed to go home without working. Irmis, however, has been ordered off to the waterworks for some kind of task. I met Herr Steinberg, who told me that Dr. Reyss and Herr Brendel, both of them directors, are still being held at Spandau citadel. He couldn't tell me why.

The three Russian officers who were quartered with us last night behaved impeccably, but it's sad to have to constantly hear from the Russian military how badly our troops behaved in Russia. We wouldn't have believed a word of it had we not already heard similar stories from German

soldiers who had very bad things to say about their fellow countrymen, and especially party members, the so-called "Golden Pheasants," in the Ukraine. Along with the great misfortune that has come upon our fatherland, comes the feeling that we bear a great deal of guilt, for which we will now have to do bitter penance.

Mutti is indefatigable! I feel so useless by comparison, particularly since in my poor state of health I can't really lend a hand. She's gone to fetch tomato plants. The garden is to be put back into tiptop shape. She's already planted lettuce, but everything takes time; you can't just pull things out of a hat. Crushing the hat is so much easier. One or two army trucks have turned Gretel's lovely parcel into a deeply rutted wasteland. White sand shows through everywhere, but good neighbors will give us some topsoil to spread over the garden and cover the wounds.

A man has just arrived on foot after walking for two weeks, all the way from Minden in Westphalia, and he reports that the American occupation troops in western Germany have not behaved as badly as is generally claimed. The rations doled out to the German populace are no worse than what the occupying forces have. Looters are shot without exception, even when they're Americans. And so the neighborhood is rife with rumors and stories—some good, some bad. People say that the post office is about to be cranked up again, but only in Berlin for now, i.e., inside the city district, which just by itself will be incredibly difficult, since there are no forms of transportation at present. All you see are Russian trucks hauling off dismantled machinery from the Siemens works. It's truly a sad sight and a sad prospect for the future. Word is that thus far no machines have been removed from the AEG plant.

THURSDAY, 24 MAY

It's said that Herr Brendel and Dr. Reyss are still being held at Spandau citadel. I would so much like to fetch the gilded wooden temple and some more vases, along with the bambino, from the cellar on Xantener Strasse, but I'm not up to it. Our insufficient diet, especially the lack of any fat, is probably the reason for my weakness, which has rapidly worsened over the past few days. My diabetes is probably worse, too, and I keep wracking my brains about how I can get through this lamentable state with some dignity and grace.

There's a large billboard across the arches of the bridge at Charlottenburg train station (Wilmsdorfer Strasse): "The Red Army will provide the

people of Berlin with food." On the radio, i.e. the crystal set,⁶⁷ we hear that 5,000 grocery stores are already back in business in Berlin. That's probably true, for I saw several shops open in the city with long lines of women waiting outside.

We're still living behind closed doors. Yesterday evening two Russian soldiers broke into our cellar rooms in search of radio vacuum tubes, even though the Russians have been forbidden to enter our houses without special permission from the commandant. Quite apart from the fact that all our watches have been stolen, we are constantly uncertain about what time it is. There are three different time zones: Moscow time, Central European daylight time, and standard time. Each an hour apart—a crazy hodgepodge!

There are nasty rumors about the punishment to be meted out to former party members. Some people say they won't be rehired at Siemens, that they'll be kicked out of their apartments and given the lowest level of rations; there are others, however, who believe they'll be deported or even shot. One poster in the Communist Party headquarters reads: "Those who like the werewolf rave, will join a hundred Nazis in the grave!" etc.

Thus far I've heard not one word from Siemens about the possibility of its being put back into operation. As long as Dr. Reyss and Herr Brendel are prisoners, you can hardly expect any news in that regard.

Unfortunately I don't enjoy the basic health and energy required for physical labor that Willi Schläger still enjoys, despite his illness. Sad to say, for now I have to spend my time at all sorts of puttering about the house: mending the garden fence, dipping candles, etc. What a bore! It's a mystery to me how, now that Irmi has been put to work, Mutti manages all the housework and still puts a meal on the table, when in reality she's physically weaker than I am.

SATURDAY, 26 MAY

Radio announces: Himmler was arrested on 21 May 1945 and committed suicide by taking cyanide on 23 May 1945. Göring, Darré, Backe, Speer, Hans Fritzsche, and others are reportedly under arrest. Irmi is feeling a little better, she'll have to return to work on Monday, since Frau Dr. Orlich can issue certificates only to those who are so seriously ill that they cannot work at all.

I was at the administration building at Siemens today. There's only a very slim chance I will be rehired there, at least according to Herr Fischer.

It looks for now as if most of the employees will be let go or given retirement. Rumor has it that the Russians will provide a pension of 90 marks a month. Regular salaries are to be paid in four tiers: 1,150 marks, 2,250 marks, 3,350 marks, 4,450 marks a month.

Most recent reports have it that Robert von Siemens is still alive. Someone claims to have seen him near a water tank. No news about Dr. Reyss and Herr Brendel. Fischer doubts that they're both still under arrest.

Irmi was at the police station to see if there's any chance of her being able to travel to Bünde. The answer: "Passenger service has not been restored. Perhaps in two weeks."

Sunday is to be reinstated as a day off. Dr. Schacht is to retain his old post as the president of the Reichsbank. Today is Gudrun's ninth birthday!

TUESDAY, 29 MAY

Herr Steinberg and his wife visited us the day before yesterday. Steinberg is very pessimistic. In his opinion, the Siemens concern will be restored, if at all, to at most 15 percent of its former capacity. Hardly anything is left of the firm's huge machinery plants.

Dr. Möhlmann visited me and brought me a letter from Frau Brendel, whose husband has been held prisoner by the Russians since 5 May. While on his way to the office, he was arrested outside director Bingel's house along with Herr Backe and has not returned home since, whereas Herr Backe was released after four days.

Frau Brendel is close to despair, especially since her husband has kidney problems and was scheduled to undergo a kidney operation shortly before Berlin was taken. Dr. Möhlmann says that Herr Steinberg saw both Brendel and Dr. Reyss at the Spandau citadel some time back, although only from a distance.

I was told that the West Power Plant is to be dismantled as well and that a good number of the elevated's cars have already been shipped to Russia. Mutti and I were on Xantener Strasse again and discovered the entire set of metal and wooden idols that belong to the Chinese gold-enamel temple, and we brought them back with us to Siemensstadt. We used the opportunity to stop by Dr. Hauser's apartment, where Herr R. lives now, whose wife is expecting a baby in the next few days. While we were in the apartment, Mutti spotted a cup from our missing good china. The rest is probably there as well. Mutti bravely kept her concern to herself. The time is not

yet ripe to ask to search Herr R.'s and Frau Goll's apartments. We'll have to be patient.

Frau Fischer, Frau Brechelt, and Frau Wagner are all on the warpath with me since yesterday—their husbands as well, probably—because I insist that one must open the door when Russian officers urgently demand entry, as was the case yesterday, when three officers wanted to search Herr Brechelt's cellar for radio vacuum tubes, of which he has a large supply. The opposing party is of the opinion that one need not open the door. I have had no success thus far in pointing out that in such cases German soldiers would have broken down the door without hesitation, and that if we do not give in, our windows will be broken or something even worse will happen.

Dr. Möhlmann was quickly removed from his job at the Siemens carpentry shop. They are looking for a real carpenter, and not one's who self-taught. Dr. M. is now with the Berlin Transportation Company and is gathering up sections of broken trolley wire. Not pleasant or easy work. He looks very tired and drawn, for the work requires a great deal of walking. The Berlin rapid-transit system, some of whose cars, as I already noted, have been shipped off, is to be put back in operation with steam locomotives for now. Not very pretty, but better than nothing!

Together with Dr. Möhlmann, I went to see Herr Steinberg to let him know about Frau Brendel's letter and he promised that a letter from Frau Brendel would get through to Dr. Reyss. Both Herr Steinberg and I consider it totally pointless to try to approach the commandant on Herr Brendel's behalf. That sort of thing can only harm Brendel's cause.

You can't visit prisoners, either, to give them any advice, which could only consist of telling them to answer all the Russian questions truthfully and without equivocation. There is no other way to gain one's freedom! There is no point in trying to tell these people fairy tales or to hide the truth from them. We would not have behaved any differently in their place.

WEDNESDAY, 30 MAY

Mutti and I trekked out to the distribution office in Spandau today to get the ration cards for the sick and ailing (for fat and milk) that Frau Dr. Orlich had prescribed for us. It was a pointless trip unfortunately. There are no special ration cards for the sick. But since we were in Spandau, we visited Herr Gutmann, who, sad to say, does not know any way to help Herr Brendel, either.

Gutmann's living room is badly scarred by shelling. When the city was taken, a good many shots came right through the windows. G.'s sister-in-law, who was in the room at the time, lost an eye and her other eye was badly injured. It was 10 days before she was able to get medical help. She was there during our visit and looked so helpless it was downright pitiful.

Gutmann described a few especially horrible incidents that had taken place during the battle in Spandau. Among them, how 120 Hitler Youths lost their lives, while their leader, a man who'd been awarded the Knight's Order of the Iron Cross, got out alive. Gutmann accompanied us back home.

As we walked by, just looking at the ruins of the Siemens, Osram, airplane, Auto-Union works, etc. made us very sad. Fields of rubble everywhere you look! How can it all ever be rebuilt? You have the feeling that it will take decades just to remove the debris.

THURSDAY, 31 MAY

Money plays a very peculiar role in our current life. Our bank notes have no value for the Russians, who won't touch them. When I was arrested I had over 12,000 reichsmarks in my pocket, which were returned to me in full upon my release, whereas my watch fob, pocketknife, and fountain pen were confiscated, or simply got lost. The Russian soldiers have brought their own German bank notes along, with different colors from ours; but this occupation money is not in circulation. Since other than grocery stores, only the pharmacies are open as yet, you can't buy much with your money anyway. The price of food has stayed the same as before the occupation, so that we've noticed no difference in that regard, and since the Russians aren't selling any food but rather supplying it to us through German shops, there's almost no money of any kind in circulation. Willi and Irmi have left for work, Willi to dismantle the cable works, Irmi to dismantle the waterworks.

I'm still having these fainting spells, especially in the morning. My heart just doesn't want to function right. A man doesn't like to write about his own ailments, but I feel I must record them to explain why I'm no longer fit for any physical work or at least not fit at the moment. I run the danger of not being given a food ration card, or one with very low value, but, as much as I'd like to, I can't change that.

A directive has just come from the Antifascist Central Office that Jews,

people of mixed race, and former political prisoners are to register. I'm actually one of the latter, even though I was a party member, but I hesitate to register; it goes against my grain to take advantage of the fact that I was temporarily held by the Gestapo. I'll make some inquiries shortly to learn what the real purpose of this directive is. Only a few people know about my experiences in China, which were connected with my arrest back then, and my fellow countrymen and neighbors would find them difficult to understand. Besides, the Gestapo let me go and didn't even throw me out of the party, although they had cause enough to do so because I had told the Japanese my opinion in no uncertain terms, but there was probably some fear of an international scandal if they punished me, since my activity as the head of the International Nanking Safety Zone was known worldwide.

If, as has happened on occasion, I were to be asked today why I remained in the party, I can only reply that those of us overseas never came into contact with the kind of people who were eyewitnesses to the atrocities that are said to have been committed by members of the SS, etc. We were "idealists of the first water" and it was our impression that any ugly stories were just rumors, nothing more than enemy propaganda, especially, since as I've mentioned, no one could say that he had seen the atrocities he was describing with his own eyes.

I must admit I shed tears of joy when I read that Germany had taken Bismarck's advice at last and formed an alliance with Russia. Which only made the shock all the greater when it turned out shortly thereafter that the Führer had no intention of joining forces with Molotov, and it was out of that that the war and all its hardships really began.

FRIDAY, 1 JUNE

Mutti has had to stay in bed today; her varicose veins are giving her trouble, she didn't wrap her leg for our walk to Spandau. I'm very worried about her. Without her we would all be helpless. Who is going to do the housework and round up food and prepare it, now that Irmi has been put to work?

I was at the administration building again yesterday and spoke with Herr Steinberg and Dr. Drescher. Steinberg tells me that the management of Siemens is optimistic about the future. That sounds very nice, but it's puzzling. I don't know what the basis for their optimism can be, and no one can explain it to me, either.

TUESDAY, 5 JUNE

According to an announcement of the "Antifas" [Antifascists], "party members and their kin," including the kin of dead, imprisoned, or missing party members must report in daily.

I've been to the administration building on several occasions, but always to no avail, for the present there isn't any chance that I'll be hired. My old division has apparently been left out of all calculations, they haven't even set up a "contact person," although they say Dr. Krohn has been trying hard to do something about it. Herr Brendel is still under arrest.

I visited Herr Scheichler today to ask whether I am among those people who are supposed to register as "former political prisoners." He took a very disparaging attitude, and accused me of having become a party member for personal advantage. I disputed this very energetically and pointed out that one reason among others for my joining the party was to receive a subsidy from the German Reich for our German School in Nanking. The fact that, with only a few exceptions, all the overseas Germans joined the party for the sake of solidarity, appears to be unknown here. As far as I know, no one gained any personal advantage from it. Scheichler then told me to go see a Herr Zienicke at the House of Comradeship.

In my attempt today to register somewhere for some kind of work to do at home, I ended up at the "Siemens Waterworks Registration Center" on Siemens Strasse, which could not use me. My chances of being rehired by Siemens are very dim. I don't know what will become of me. Will they put me on pension, perhaps? And would the money be enough to live on? All unanswered questions that weigh heavily on the soul.

It's obvious that our entire railroad system is to be reduced to single tracks. Even the Russian officers don't know why, but—they say—Stalin knows why, and *he* has never been wrong! The machinery plants at AEG have been dismantled and shipped off, too, by the way.

Our building got more Russians to quarter again today. Fifteen Russian soldiers have been placed in the building next door. Our worries seem to have no end. Let's hope we can stay in our apartment! We don't have enough food. So far this month the only supplies distributed in sufficient quantity have been bread and potatoes. In the west, however, with the Anglo-Americans and the French, things are even worse in this regard, or so we constantly hear.

THURSDAY, 14 JUNE

We don't have much to eat, but the bread and potatoes are adequate. The days just drag on. I'm a free man, but I feel like a prisoner. I don't have any real work to do. I've signed up at the Registration Office and the Labor Office, but have been given a medical certificate releasing me from work for the next two weeks.

We've had all sorts of sickness at home. Mutti sprained her left hand, Irmi is not feeling up to par, Willi has had a temperature of 104 for days now. He evidently can't go on doing such heavy physical labor—dismantling machinery at the cable works—much longer. He's very weak and helpless at the moment. His voice, which was never strong, has been reduced to a whisper that you can barely understand.

All this and the uncertain prospects of some paying job (nothing doing at Siemens!) is discouraging of course, particularly since we still have no news from the children. We're afraid that in the Anglo-American occupation zone they have even less to eat than we do.

Some progress is being made clearing debris in the city. The sidewalks have been shoveled clear in places, and a lot of the street barricades have been taken down. People are hammering away inside shops and putting up primitive displays out front. In a good many places you see announcements that a company will be opening again soon. We've got electricity again now, too. We still lack gas, and the same goes for mail and any public transportation. The subway is running in a few places, and there are a couple of buses, but no regular consistent schedule has been set up yet.

Frau Freier was given 60 marks of occupation money for sewing some pillows for the Russians, but she doesn't know if she can even use the notes.

SUNDAY, 17 JUNE

Yesterday we celebrated Mutti's 61st birthday. Our thoughts were with the children and grandchildren, who surely were thinking of us as well.

This evening, a visit from a Herr Vollbach, whom the Antifas delegated to inform me that for now, and probably later as well, there can be no administrative position for me as a former party member. For all that, he was very polite and very happy to be able to borrow a few books from me, because, as he said, his own library of 5,000 volumes had been lost in the horror of the bombing.

In response to my question as to what I could do, he suggested: Wait, stand back, and let time do its work. I can only hope that's possible for me. It takes money to live after all, and you have to work to get money. But what do you do when you can't find any work?

Herr V. provided me with a vivid description of the events that occurred in the center of town in the last days before the city was taken. After his apartment on Wilhelm Strasse had been bombed out, he and his wife fled to a huge bunker filled with thousands of refugees somewhere nearby (the Reich Chancery?). Once there, with only a little baggage and scarcely anything to eat, he was cut off from the outside world for days. On 1 May⁶⁸—Siemensstadt had already been occupied on 24 April—a high-ranking officer, decorated with the Iron Cross, appeared and delivered the following speech: "Comrades! I have just come from the Führer, who sends his greetings and thanks you for having held out so bravely thus far. The Russians have already been pushed back across the Oder. Berlin will be freed very shortly. And to keep you from having to suffer here any longer, you are to be taken to a safer place. Follow me!"

And then they moved in procession through the subway tunnel, at times wading through water up to their chests, past corpses and debris of every sort, as far as Stettin Station—or was it some other train station? The exact name has slipped my mind—a procession that Vollbach said he would never forget till the day he died. Herr Vollbach is not the only person to describe this incident to me. Who would have thought it possible!

On 1 May, when the entire situation was already hopeless and the center of the city was about to be taken, they were still lying to the people. Was that necessary? Couldn't it have been done some other way, openly and honestly?

News on the radio today that Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop has been captured in Hamburg. Göring has been captured, too, it's said. Only Himmler and Goebbels took their own lives. The latter that of his wife and all his children as well. Nothing is said about Hitler. It's assumed that he fell in battle and is buried in some mass grave.⁶⁹

MONDAY, 18 JUNE

All Nazis and their kin have to appear for work this morning at 7:45. Mutti and I as well! We don't know what will become of Willi, who is bedridden with dysentery. Frau Freier can look in on him perhaps. Irmis has to work, too. Yesterday, Thursday, she was gone from 8 in the morning till 8 at night. There is no one left at home to take care of things, find food, cook, etc.

FRIDAY, 22 JUNE

Instead of putting us to work cleaning up the administration building, as they had promised, the Russians took us to the transformer works, where cleaning up involves heavy physical labor. We had to move iron and brass rods, the debris left behind from both the bombing and the dismantling had to be cleared from the floor of the main hall. We spent two days of drudgery, scrubbing away the oily filth, ruining our clothes. From children of twelve to seventy-year-old adults—all of them party members or their kin—we were kept busy from 8 in the morning to 7 at night, with one hour's rest. The food, which was doled out at the dynamo works, was relatively good.

We've been laid off again now and can take care of our own personal business, to the extent we have any, at least we older folks can. Irmi still has to work 13 hours a day.

Herr Vollbach was here again yesterday to borrow some more books. I was able to help him out with some food as well. He told me that he and his wife have not had anything warm to eat for four days now. Why not? Don't the Antifas, with whom he's associated, take care of him? He doesn't go into it, but despite his incredibly threadbare clothes, he gives the impression of a well-mannered man of better than average education; and since Mutti and I help anyone who's in trouble, without asking the why's and wherefore's, we helped him out, too, to the extent we could.

Irmi has gone out today to find the authorities who can provide her with a travel permit so that she can return to Bünde. Let's hope she has some success. We can well understand that she's homesick. Dr. Rüsche has received news that both his parents, who were staying in the Uckermark, are dead. Poisoned? Suicide? There were no details.

A large number of Russians have departed, but have apparently been replaced by new troops. The Anglo-Americans have not yet shown their faces at any rate.

SATURDAY, 30 JUNE

The Russians are still here. This evening at 11 o'clock, Mutti goes to fetch whatever soup the Russian soldiers have left. She is not the only one who goes begging for soup, but we have no other choice: We don't have enough food.

I've heard from Dr. Rüsich that not only his parents but also his sister and her two children died in the Uckermark. Director Möhle from the assembly division and Director Lüschen (awarded the Iron Cross) both took their lives. Möhle shot his wife as well. Herr Brendel has vanished into some prison camp or other, perhaps has even been sent to Russia. Word is that he did not stick to the truth in his statements and said that Dr. Reyss would substantiate them. Instead Dr. Reyss contradicted them, and Brendel then admitted he hadn't told the truth: leading to solitary confinement and continued arrest. That's what Herr Steinberg told me. We ask ourselves if that's how it really was. Might not Brendel have been trying to protect Dr. Reyss? The latter has been released from detention.

MONDAY, 2 JULY

The Russians pulled out yesterday and took along much of the furniture from the apartments where many of them had been living. The English or Americans who drove their cars down Harries Strasse looking for quarters didn't want to move into any apartment where Russians had been living, and when they heard that Russian troops had been quartered everywhere in this neighborhood, they drove on.

We have very little to eat. Yesterday Mutti had to beg five potatoes from Frau Freier so that we could have something for our midday meal.

At midnight we heard screams for help coming from Riepelst Strasse and the Rohr Damm. We don't know what happened. We kept our clothes on all night again, but thank God we weren't molested.

There are only a few crusts of bread left in the house today. We haven't been able to buy potatoes for two weeks, but we're hoping that some will arrive today.

I spent yesterday making what repairs I could on my two model ships, which had been badly damaged by some Russians visiting our cellar. They look quite neat and trim again.

Things must have been dreadful in Landsberg. My three books (*The Life of Confucius*, *Pudge and Bones*, and the picture album with the silver corners) as well as all the clothing the children had to leave behind before their trip (at Christmas), have probably been lost, because Landsberg is currently occupied by the Poles, who are expelling all the Germans and not letting anyone in. In another week or so Irmi intends to try to travel to Bünde, although we're being warned on all sides, since no one is allowed across the Elbe.

24 AUGUST

I've not made any entries for a long time now—I'm tired, but will at least try to catch up with what I've left out. Only the most important things: We're hungry, but thank God we haven't starved yet. Often there aren't any potatoes, then again there's no bread; but each time, just when we were close to despair, something edible showed up and kept us alive.

On 12 July 1945, I was hired as the chief translator at the headquarters of the English military government. I was so happy, despite the fact that I had to walk to and from Spandau every day. I had to leave the English, who were very sorry to see me go, because former party members cannot hold such positions. Just as I left their service, the English were starting to be well-supplied with rations. What a shame I wasn't allowed to share in them, I could have brought home a nice snack now and then.

The English sent me on my way with a letter for the SSW (Siemens Schuckert Werk), saying they had nothing against my being rehired by Siemens. The official advisors at Siemens have nothing against it, either; but so far that has not been any help. There's no position open for me at SSW.

I'm at the end of my tether. Willi is back at work, which is to say, the Labor Office has put him to work clearing rubble. Hard labor—how long will he hold out? According to a decree of the military government, I have to register the rest of my Standard Life policies with the City-Kontor Bank in Spandau today. The policies, worth a total of £1,027—all that's left of £5,000—and for which I saved for so many years, are with Gretel in Bünde. I leave the receipts with the bank. The money's lost now!⁷⁰ Last Sunday Mutti and I were on Xantener Strasse. Someone had forced open our cellar door and stolen my typewriter, our radio, and a long list of other items—*meyou faze!*⁷¹

Mutti weighs only 88 pounds in her clothes; we've both become very thin. Summer is drawing to a close. What will winter bring? Where are we to get fuel, food, and work? I'm translating Timperley's book *What War Means*—that won't bring in any money for now, but perhaps it will get us a better ration card.

At present, for every 300 marriages there are 200 births and 3,000 deaths! No comment.

28 AUGUST

On Wednesday 29 August, Irmi can perhaps travel to Hannover in an English car that's transporting released German prisoners. Lisl Hohmann can't go with her unfortunately, since she was never part of the Wehrmacht, which Irmi was. My attempts to convince the English military government in Spandau to make an exception and give Lisl a travel permit came to nothing. Lisl still intends to leave on Wednesday. But by train, at first as far as Eisenach.

Until now we've been unable to put together any provisions for the girls to take along on the journey, they must each have at least a loaf of bread. Mutti found a ride out to Lichterfelde (a walk of 5-6 hours) to beg a loaf from Frau Brendel; we got another one from a neighbor, Frau Haltermann, for ten cigarettes that an English fellow gave Willi.

This morning's breakfast was only two slices of bread. I saved one for lunch. I'm trying to adjust to the least quantity possible. Thus far we've always had something to nibble at, but what happens from here on is uncertain.

First, two loaves of bread will have to be rounded up for the girls' trips. For Irmi the trip is expected to take about two days, but it can take as many as four or six. And there's no telling how long Lisl Hohmann will be under way—she's trying to get to Essen to look for her mother. Perhaps she'll just have to depend entirely on the kindness of others. What a dreadful thought! But we don't have anything left to eat ourselves!

MONDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER

After two fruitless attempts to find shelter at the camp at Ruheleben before traveling on to the west with an English transport, Irmi was ordered to report to Falkensee and from there was sent to the camp in Staaken, which was supposed to be the starting point for a transport on 1 September. She hoped to be home by Sunday, that is yesterday. We hope so, too.

Lisl is still stranded in Ilseburg in the Harz Mountains. Erika Brechelt returned home having got nowhere. Lisl will have to wait until a transport leaves; allegedly only 40 people are allowed over the border at a time.

I brought home two potatoes (two!) that fell off a Russian truck. Every passerby dives for precious booty like that now. You have to be quick, otherwise you come up empty-handed. Yes, that's what we've come to. Hunger

hurts, but complaining doesn't fill your belly. Question: How long can a man hold out?

At school, the teacher told the children: "Death by starvation isn't fast, it's slow. You finally grow so weak that you die almost without pain." Why you would tell children that, I don't know. I suppose it's meant to console them.

SUNDAY, 14 OCTOBER

Finally news has come through from Gretel that she and the children, Ursi and Gudrun, are all right. As we learned from Dr. Möhlmann, who returned here a short while ago, Gretel has found a job with the English, where she hopes to get better rations. Irmi must have arrived in Bünde by now, too.

A letter has arrived from Otto's father-in-law, telling us that all the Stubenrauchs and Rabes are all right. A little boy was born to Otto and Eva on 12 May 1945. A letter from Otto came today, too, confirming the news.

The baby's name is Michael Detlef Nicolai. Meanwhile the Munich Rabes surely must have arrived in Mannheim, where they planned to move after their Munich apartment had to be returned to Herr Amann. Grandfather Stubenrauch is alive and working as a librarian in Mannheim.

As of 1 October 1945, I became a retiree, pensioned off by the SSW, which then hired me temporarily as a translator the very same day. I hope to God that I can keep the job, since the pension is very small.

Willi is a timekeeper for the English troops and returns home faithfully each day with his ration of corned beef and butter—small, very small portions, but absolutely essential for the three of us here, since we have so very little to eat. We have all been inoculated for typhoid now, which is rampant at the SSW. The furniture we had left with Dr. Selle in Xantener Strasse, or what was left of it, has now all been stored in our cellar here because our cellar on Xantener Strasse was badly pilfered by our fellow Germans.

We're moving into winter. There's no heat at the SSW, and only the kitchen is warm at home. Electricity and gas are rationed. Let's hope we stay healthy. Things are just as miserable for all Germans!

18 APRIL 1946

Tomorrow is Good Friday, and our mood fits the day. We have suffered hunger and more hunger. I didn't have much of anything else to report, which is why I stopped making diary entries. To supplement our diet, we

ate acorn-meal soup, from acorns that Mutti secretly harvested last fall. For days now, ever since our supply ran out, we've been eating nettles, which taste as good as spinach.

My petition to be denazified was denied yesterday. Although as head of the International Committee of the Nanking Safety Zone I saved the lives of 250,000 people, Chinese people, my petition was turned down because I was temporarily the local group leader of the NSDAP in Nanking and—or so the newspaper writes—a man of my intelligence ought never to have joined the party.

I'll file an appeal with the Sector Commission in Charlottenburg, the next step up. If they take away my chance of continuing to work at the SSW, I don't know we're supposed to live, or to keep on fighting—I'm so tired.

I'm being interrogated daily by the English police (23rd Field Security Police, Spandau Detachment).

A member of the examining board for the Denazification Commission accused me of having been friends with the advisors to Chiang Kai-shek, who is driving his Chinese to their deaths—to wit: the news that he is fighting the Communists in Manchuria! What can you say to that?

If I had heard of any Nazi atrocities while I was in China, I would never have joined the party, and if my views as a German had clashed with those of the other foreigners in Nanking, the English, Americans, Danes, etc. in Nanking would never have chosen me to be *chairman* of the International Committee of the Nanking Safety Zone. The "living Buddha for hundreds of thousands" in Nanking, and a pariah, an outcast here! That would soon cure you of any homesickness.

I haven't reported this yet, either: Confidential Secretary Brendel and Director Dr. Bingle both died in the Russian detainment camp at Ketschendorf.

16 MAY 1946

As of 3 May, I'm no longer allowed to work officially in the Siemens office. A letter from a Mr. Coulden, deputy of Wing Commander McEvan, who is head of the Industry Department of the British military government and on vacation at present, forbade me from keeping my "former position." I think Mr. Coulden means my position with the English military government, but Siemens management wants to avoid complications of any sort.

As of 31 May 1946, then, I will be working at home, picking up my work from one of the directors (Herr Jäckel), who lives near Siemensstadt and

has been very kind to me, and so for the moment I've been saved from direst straits—unemployment, etc.

So now I have plenty of time to attempt to prepare for my appearance before the Sector Commission, which is the 1st level of appeal. I don't know just yet when the hearing will take place. I'll be submitting my petition in the next few days, am already almost done with all the written material required.

In the meantime, on 12 May, little Michael was baptized on his first birthday, and on 13 May (Otto's birthday) Gretel arrived here from Bünde along with Ursi and Gudrun. We thank God that all three are here again, all with colds, but generally up and about.

7 JUNE

On 3 June, I was finally denazified by the Denazification Commission for the British Sector in Charlottenburg (District Office, Witzleben Strasse 3-4). The decision reads: "Despite your having been the deputy local leader in Nanking and although you did not resign from the NSDAP on your return to Germany, the commission has nevertheless decided to grant your appeal on the basis of your successful humanitarian work in China, etc." And with that, the nerve-wracking torture is over! Thank God! I've received congratulations from many friends and the directors at Siemens and been given a few days vacation by the firm to recover from the ordeal.

Mutti is off today with our Chinese carved wooden gods to see Dr. Krebs, who has provided us with food now and again and who is in love with our idols. We've sold my Chinese carpet, the runner given to us by Kong, to Frau Töpfer for three hundredweight of potatoes: You simply cannot do without food. And in such a plight a man has to part with his curios and keepsakes from China. I'm very happy that at my age I'm still allowed to work at Siemens.

The sweetest photographs have just arrived of Otto, Eva, and little Michael, who can already walk. If only the borders between zones were open, we could make the trip to Mannheim and see our little grandson. Travel is still not possible at present, that is private travel; and unfortunately I have no reason to travel on business, and I'd want to take Mutti along, since she's never even seen Eva. But we shall not be ingrates: We're simply thankful that fate has kept us all alive and healthy!

With that, John Rabe completed the last page of his diary. He never began another.