Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl [An Excerpt]

Saturday, June 20, 1942

My father was 36 when he married my mother, who was then 25. My sister Margot was born in 1926. I followed on June 12, 1929, and, as we are Jewish, we emigrated to Holland in 1933, where my father was appointed Managing Director of Travies NV. This firm is in close contact with the firm Kolen and Company in the same building, of which my father is a partner.

The rest of our family, however, felt the full impact of Hitler’s snit-Semitic laws, so life was filled with anxiety. In 1938 after the pogroms, my two uncles escaped to the USA. My old grandmother then came to us, she was then 73. After May 1940, good times rapidly fled: first the war, then the surrender, followed by the arrival of the Germans, which is when the suffering of the Jews really began.

Anti-Jewish decrees followed each other in quick succession. Jews must wear a yellow star. Jews must hand in their bicycles. Jews are banned from trains and are forbidden to drive. Jews are only allowed to do their shopping between three and five o’clock, and then only in shops which bear the placard “Jewish Shop.” Jews must be indoors by eight o’clock and cannot even sit in their own gardens after that hour. Jews are forbidden to visit theatres and other places of entertainment. Jews may not take part in public sports, swimming baths, tennis courts, hockey fields, and other sports grounds are all prohibited to them. Jews may not visit Christians. Jews must go to Jewish schools, and many more similar restrictions.

So we could not do this and we were forbidden to do that. Jopie used to say to me, “You’re scared to do anything because you fear it may be forbidden.” Our freedom was strictly limited. Yet things were still bearable.

Thursday, November 19, 1942

Countless friends and acquaintances have gone on to a horrible fate. Evening after evening the green and gray lorries roll past. The Germans ring at every front door to inquire if there are any Jews living in the house. If there are, then the whole family has to go at once. If they don’t find any, they go on to the next house. No one has a chance of evading them unless one goes into hiding. Often they go around us with lists, and only ring when they know they can get a good haul. Sometimes they let the off for cash, so much per head. It seems like the slave hunts of olden times. But it’s certainly no joke; it’s much too tragic for that. In the evenings when it’s dark, I often see rows of good innocent people, accompanied by crying children walking on and on...bullied and knocked about until they almost drop. No one is spared – old people, babies, expectant mothers, the sick – each and all join in the march of death.

How fortunate we are here. So well cared for and undisturbed. We wouldn’t have to worry about all this misery were it not that we are anxious for all those dear to us that we can no longer help.

I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed, while my dearest friends have been knocked down or have fallen into a gutter somewhere out in the cold night. I get very frightened when I think of friends who have been delivered into the hands of the cruelest brutes that walk the earth. And all because they are Jews!

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1 organized persecutions of Jews
2 laws
3 Anne’s best friend
4 trucks
Wednesday, May 3, 1944

Why all this destruction? The question is very understandable, but no one has found a satisfactory answer to it so far. Yes, why do they still make more gigantic planes, still heavier bombs, and at the same time, prefabricated\textsuperscript{5} houses for construction. Why should millions be spent daily on the war and yet there’s not a penny available for medical services, artists, or for the poor people?

Saturday, July 15, 1944

In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can’t build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery, and death. I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquility\textsuperscript{6} will return again.

Questions to Think and Write About

1. Anne lived in a Europe with severe restrictions on Jews. She mentioned several anti-Semitic laws in this excerpt. What were some things that she mentioned in this passage which demonstrate the conditions she was living under?

2. How would you describe the tone of this excerpt?

3. Reread the paragraph written by Anne on July 15\textsuperscript{th}. What are your thoughts about her feelings?

\textsuperscript{5} mass-produced homes

\textsuperscript{6} pace