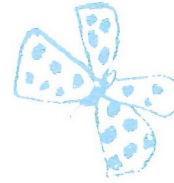


. . . I never saw
another butterfly . . .



*Children's Drawings and Poems
from Terezin Concentration Camp
1942-1944*

*Edited by Hana Volavková
Expanded Second Edition by the
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

*Foreword by Chaim Potok
Afterword by Vaclav Havel*

SCHOCKEN BOOKS • NEW YORK





THE BUTTERFLY

The last, the very last,
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
 against a white stone. . . .

Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly 'way up high.
It went away I'm sure because it wished to
 kiss the world good-bye.

For seven weeks I've lived in here,
Pinned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don't live in here,
 in the ghetto.

4. 6. 1942 Pavel Friedmann

HOMESICK

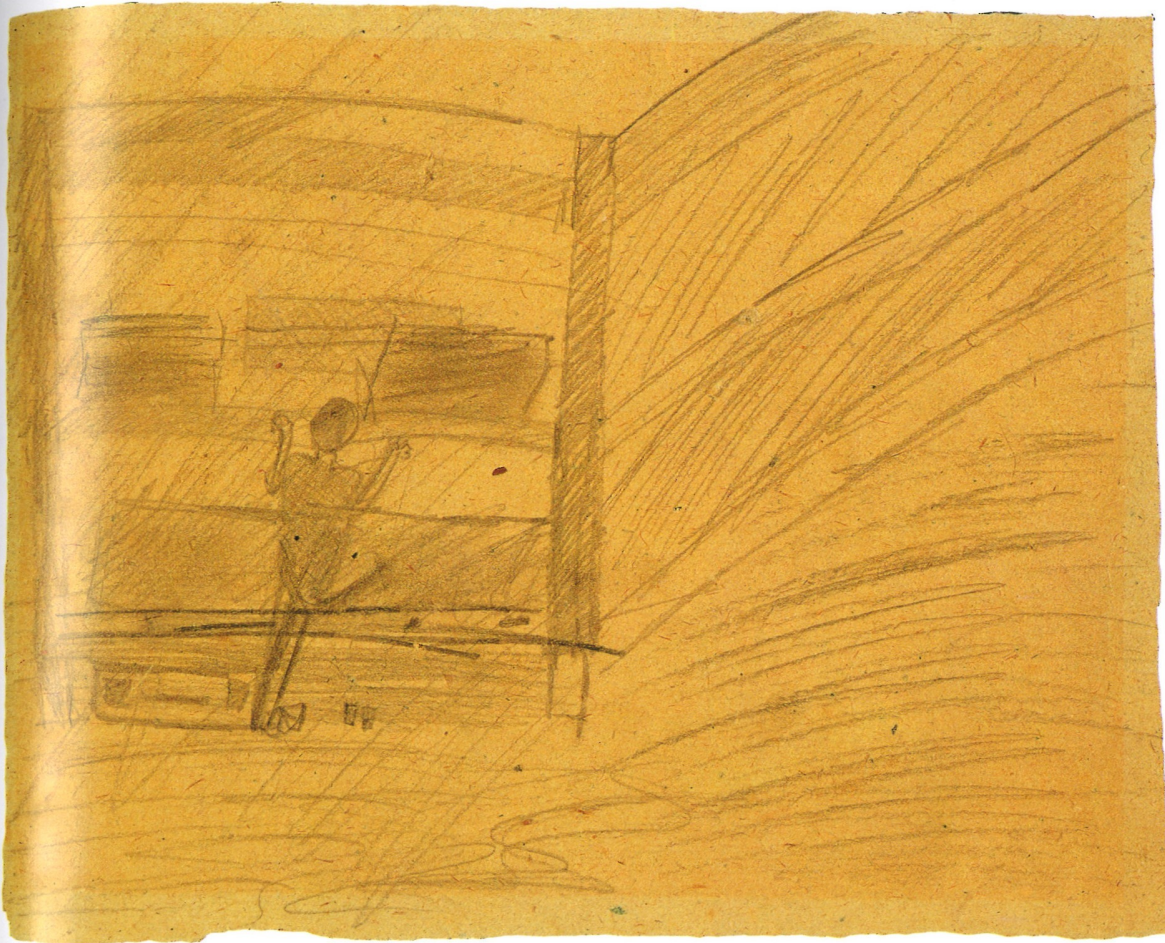
I've lived in the ghetto here for more than a
year,
In Terezin, in the black town now,
And when I remember my old home so dear,
I can love it more than I did, somehow.

Ah, home, home,
Why did they tear me away?
Here the weak die easy as a feather
And when they die, they die forever.

I'd like to go back home again,
It makes me think of sweet spring flowers.
Before, when I used to live at home,
It never seemed so dear and fair.

I remember now those golden days . . .
But maybe I'll be going there soon again.





People walk along the street,
You see at once on each you meet
That there's ghetto here,
A place of evil and of fear.
There's little to eat and much to want,
Where bit by bit, it's horror to live.
But no one must give up!
The world turns and times change.

Yet we all hope the time will come
When we'll go home again.
Now I know how dear it is
And often I remember it.

9. III. 1943 *Anonymous*



ON A SUNNY EVENING


On a purple, sun-shot evening
Under wide-flowering chestnut trees
Upon the threshold full of dust
Yesterday, today, the days are all like these.

Trees flower forth in beauty,
Lovely, too, their very wood all gnarled and old
That I am half afraid to peer
Into their crowns of green and gold.

The sun has made a veil of gold
So lovely that my body aches.
Above, the heavens shriek with blue
Convinced I've smiled by some mistake.
The world's abloom and seems to smile.
I want to fly but where, how high?
If in barbed wire, things can bloom
Why couldn't I? I will not die!

*1944 Anonymous
Written by the children in Barracks L318 and
L417, ages 10–16 years.*

EPILOGUE
by Jiri Weil



In Czechoslovakia there is a strange place called Terezin, some 60 kilometers from Prague. It was founded by order of Emperor Joseph II of Austria 200 years ago and was named after his mother, Maria Theresa. This walled-in fortress was constructed on plans drafted by Italian military engineers and has 12 ramparts that enclose the town in the shape of a star. It was to have been a fortress and it became a sleepy army garrison dominated by the barracks, where the homes of the inhabitants were a necessary nuisance. There were homes, taverns, a post office, a bank, and a brewery. There was a church as well, built in a sober style and belonging to the barracks as part of the army community. The little town seemed to have been forced onto the countryside, a lovely countryside without either high mountains or dizzy cliffs, without deep ravines or swift rivers . . . only blue hills, green meadows, fruit trees, and tall poplars.

Today a shadow still lingers above this little town, as though funeral wagons still drive along its streets, as though the dust stirred by a thousand footsteps still eddies in the town square. Today it seems sometimes as though from every corner, from every stairway and from every corridor, peer human faces, gaunt, exhausted, with eyes full of fear.

During the war years, Terezin was a place of famine and of fear. Somewhere far away, in Berlin, men in uniforms had held meetings. These men decided to exterminate all the Jews in Europe, and, because they were used to doing things thoroughly, with the calculated, cool passion of a murderer, they worked out plans in which they fixed the country, the place, and the timetable as well as the stopping places on that road to death. One of those stopping places was Terezin.

It was meant to be a model camp that foreigners could be shown, and it was termed a ghetto. At first, Jews from Bohemia and Moravia were brought to Terezin, but finally they came from all over Europe and from there were shipped farther east to the gas chambers and ovens. Everything in this small town was false, invented; every one of its inhabitants was condemned in advance to die. It was only a funnel without an outlet. Those who contrived this trap and put it on their map, with its fixed timetable of life and death, knew all about it. They knew its future as well. Those who were brought there in crowded railroad coaches and cattle cars after days and days of cruelty, of humiliation, of offense, of beatings, and of theft knew very little about it. Some of them believed the murderers' falsehoods, that they could sit out the war here in quiet safety. Others came to Terezin already crushed, yet with a spark of hope that, even so, perhaps they might escape their destiny. There were also those who knew that Terezin was only one station on a short

timetable and that is why they tried so hard to keep at least themselves alive and perhaps their family. And those who were good and honorable endeavored to keep the children alive; the aged and the ailing. All were finally deceived, and the same fate awaited all of them.

But the children who were brought there knew nothing. They came from places where they had already known humiliation. They had been expelled from the schools. They had sewn stars on their hearts, on their jackets and blouses, and were allowed to play only in the cemeteries. That wasn't so bad, if you look at it with the eyes of a child, even when they heard their parents' lamentations, even when they heard strange words charged with horror such as mapping, registration, and transport. When they were herded with their parents into the ghetto, when they had to sleep on the concrete floors in crowded garrets or clamber up three-tiered bunks, they began to look around and quickly understood the strange world in which they had to live. They saw reality, but they still maintained a child's outlook, an outlook of truth that distinguishes between night and day and cannot be confused with false hopes and the shadow play of an imaginary life.

And so they lived, locked within walls and courtyards. This was their world, a world of color and shadow, of hunger and of hope.

The children played in the barracks yard and the courtyards of the onetime homes. Sometimes they were permitted to breathe a little fresh air upon the ramparts. From the age of 14, they had to work, to live the life of an adult. Sometimes they went beyond the walls to work in the gardens, and they were no more considered to be children. The smaller ones acted out their fairy tales and even children's operas. But they did not know that they, too, as well as the grownups, had been used deceitfully, in an effort to convince a commission of foreigners from the Red Cross that Terezin was a place where adults and children alike could live. Secretly, they studied and they drew pictures. Three months, half a year, one or two years, depending on one's luck, because transports came and went continually, headed east into nothingness.

From these 15,000 children, who for a time played and drew pictures and studied, only 100 came back. They saw everything that grownups saw. They saw the endless lines in front of the canteens, they saw the funeral carts used to carry bread and the human beings harnessed to pull them. They saw the infirmaries that seemed like a paradise to them and funerals that were only a gathering up of coffins. They saw executions, too, and were perhaps the only children in the world who captured them with pencil and paper. They heard the shouts of the SS men at roll call and the meek mumblings of prayer in the barracks where the grownups lived.

But the children saw, too, what the grownups didn't want to see—the beauties beyond the village gates, the green meadows and the bluish hills, the ribbon of highway reaching off into the distance and the imagined road marker pointing toward Prague, the animals, the birds, the butterflies—all this was beyond the village walls and they could look at it only from afar, from the

barracks windows, and from the ramparts of the fort. They saw things, too, that grownups cannot see—princesses with coronets, evil wizards and witches, jesters and bugs with human faces, a land of happiness where for an admission of one crown, there was everything to be had—cookies, candy, a roast stuck with a fork from which soda pop trickled. They saw, too, the rooms they'd lived in at home, with curtains at the window and a kitten and a saucer of milk. But they transported it to Terezin. There had to be a fence and a lot of pots and pans, because pots and pans were supposed to be filled with food.

All this they drew and painted and many other things besides; they loved to paint and draw, from morning till evening.

But when they wrote poems, it was something else again. Here one finds words about "painful Terezin," about "the little girl who got lost." These told of longings to go away somewhere where there are kinder people; there are old grandfathers gnawing stale bread and rotten potatoes for lunch, there was a "longing for home" and fear. Yes, fear came to them and they could tell of it in their poems, knowing that they were condemned. Perhaps they knew it better than the adults.

There were 15,000 of them, and 100 came back. You are looking at their drawings now after many years, when that world of hunger, fear, and horror seems to us almost like a cruel fairy tale about evil wizards, witches, and cannibals. The drawings and poems—that is all that is left of these children, for their ashes have long since sifted across the fields around Auschwitz. Their signatures are here and some of the drawings are inscribed with the year, and the number of their group. Of those who signed their names, it has been possible to find out a few facts: the year and place of their birth, the number of their transport to Terezin and to Auschwitz, and then the year of their death. For most of them, it was 1944, the next-to-last year of World War II.

But their drawings and their poems speak to us; these are their voices that have been preserved, voices of reminder, of truth, and of hope.

We are publishing them not as dry documents out of thousands of such witnesses in a sea of suffering, but to honor the memory of those who created these colors and these words. That's the way these children probably would have wanted it when death overtook them.