**Diary Hedwig Schlenger**

Schwerin, June 1st, 1945

By September 1944 we had survived 5 years of war.

My husband passed away in August after being severely ill for 8 weeks; my 19-year-old son Eberhard was an aircraftman in Wrocław [Breslau] and only my second 13-year-old son Jürgen was with me in Tiegenhof[[1]](#footnote-1), where I lived with my mother-in-law in the mill and where my husband also used to work as a mill merchant.

The Russians advanced further and further into East and West Prussia and on January 23rd, 1945 the first tanks appeared in Elbląg [Elbing], 20 km away from Tiegenhof. At 8 in the evening we received the first order to evacuate. My mother-in-law, my mother, Mrs. Baumfalk (gardener and friend), Jürgen and I, and Siedenbiedel (an employee) as the driver were supposed to go by car; Steiniger (an employee) with the luggage and both horses – in the carriage; and people with family and friends – in the truck with a trailer, driven by Möhsen (machinist). At 11 p.m. it was all cancelled as the danger should have been over, and at 5 in the morning the situation became very serious.

Everything was packed and loaded. In the truck, there was now also Mrs. Herzberg (vet) with Lieselotte, my sister Lisbeth, Ms. Dudat (admin) with her mother, the Franz family (baker) and our people. It was the 24th, my husband’s birthday, when we left the beautiful mill site at 8.30 in the morning.

Foreman Schmidt (miller), the local group leader, informed us that we were being evacuated to Langenau, in the Danzig district, and that we all had to go there. There was glorious sunshine and snow. Tiegenhof was already almost empty as we drove through the town and perhaps for the last time past our house. What is going to happen to us and will we ever come back?

The dead are lucky as they have overcome everything. I would have much rather laid down with my husband on the peaceful snow-covered hill, but I have a responsibility towards my sons.

On the road, we were soon driving in convoy and moved forward very slowly because of the ice. We drank hot coffee for the first time at 3 p.m. in Steegen (15km), and all the vehicles gathered again at 7 p.m. in Mikoszewo [Nickelswalde] (25 km). Our Wanderer (the car) soon crossed the river on the ferry, and I was supposed to prepare accommodation in Langenau for all our followers. At 9.30 we saw Mr. Krüger in Langenau, who soon arranged some very good accommodation for us with the Höfner family.

It was very cold and a severe snowstorm started so that our trailer and the truck had to be left behind in Bohnsack.

Mr. Fleischer, our representative, arrived from Bohnsack, unloaded all our luggage and drove away in the carriage with his family and the Steiniger family in the direction of Neustadt. The carriage was never seen again. Meanwhile, we were still in Langenau, where my mother-in-law and Mrs. Baumfalk also had a nice accommodation with Mr. Ruschke, a landowner. But it was bitter cold.

Convoy after convoy passed through the village and many young children and infants froze to death in the cold.

On Monday 29th, we carried on past Praus towards Danzig in very bad road conditions and stopped at a nursing home.

Frida (maid) received us all very well and Siedenbiedel went straight away to Bohnsack, where my sister and my maid Meta were still stuck with our luggage. The truck broke down and was in Bohnsack (on Vistula [Weichsel]). All the people had been moved to Danzig, where I already visited our foreman Lehmann (machinist), the Struh family (miller) and Möhsen. After many difficulties (towing etc.), Siedenbiedel arrived on Tuesday with Meta (cook) and Lisbeth, and our suitcases, at which point we discovered that Omama’s[[2]](#footnote-2) and Mrs. Baumfalk’s suitcases had been lost.

That same evening, Omama, Jürgen, Meta and I went to Sopot [Zoppot] where the Doemkes were already very much looking forward to see us and where we found a home from home for 4 weeks. Afterwards my mother even relocated to Sopot [Zoppot], as did Mrs. Baumfalk. We met here a lot of other people from Tiegenhof. The Dudats and the Franzens lived very close to us, the Hillmanns (dentist) had opened a practice in Mackensenallee, B. Stobbe (liquor) lived with his 5 children in Wilhelmstraße, and Eva Baumfalk lived with Mrs. Krieg from Kumehnen[[3]](#footnote-3) (east Prussia) and her mother at Mr. Roggenhausen’s. In Danzig, I met Ruth van Bergen. I also visited her in Crakow (near Danzig) where she lived with her husband.

Thanks to her, I went once more to Tiegenhof by car. Our house was completely occupied by our soldiers and plundered, there was not a single chair for me to sit down in my own apartment. The whole beautiful house was unrecognizable, and I looked for things as fast as possible, so that I could leave again.

The mill was in use, which means new flour and whole grain were produced by means of an electric motor. Foreman Schmidt was back, as well as some other people that returned to work in the mill. Zoppot was the first one I saw and he was probably the only one that stayed there all this time. He and his wife then also helped me pack and load things and food. Ruth van Bergen and I spent the night in her apartment and one could hear shooting from the frontline, which was 8 km away.

The next day we drove back through Burnwalde (on Vistula [Weichsel]), where another pig was slaughtered and packed for us to take. The ferry from Rothebude took 10 hours because the roads were full of convoys all the way to Danzig. I made it once more to Tiegenhof with Erna[[4]](#footnote-4) Baumfalk. In fact, a truck picked us up, and we drove into the night on top of its loader full of hay. This time the house did look worse. All the windows were shattered because of artillery fire and a grenade exploded in the yard.

Some people lived in the basement and the rest in the rooms that could be heated, as the central heating broke down in the big freeze. They switched on the generator in the mill, and Mr. Fleischer had also returned. That night we stayed with the Regehrs (uncle), where Mrs. Zoppot (laundrywoman) lodged with her husband and Meta. They were wonderful hosts – they gave us good coffee and cake, and packed us some flour and semolina. Then we visited the Kriegs (dairy store) and the Zellers (butcher), who were also very generous.

In the afternoon, we drove back with the Wehrmacht. I had a feeling then that I will never see my home again. The cemetery was the only place that remained untouched. I will never forget that peaceful image amidst the war. Will I ever see my husband’s grave again?

The situation in Danzig became increasingly dangerous. The Russians reached Grudziądz [Graudenz], Piła [Schneidemühl] and were close to Tczew [Dirschau]; they were closing in on Szczecin [Stettin] in Pomerania. If we stood a chance to go west by train, we had to leave Sopot [Zoppot] again. Many of our friends had left by ship but it was very difficult to get tickets; train tickets were hard to get. Philipsen, my brother-in-law, left on the *Gustloff* as boatman. The ship was torpedoed at the beginning of February near Leba. Most likely he died in the attack. My sister often went to Gotenhafen to get some news, but it was always in vain.

All of a sudden, Doemke, my brother-in-law, managed to get me 3 places on a hospital train and on February 24th my mother, Jürgen and I set out from Nowy Port [Neufahrwasser] towards an uncertain destination. There were 15 wounded in the carriage who arrived by boat from Königsberg and were loaded onto the train. Apart from us there were about 10 other women with children so that it became quite cramped. We slept between the beds on top of our suitcases and blankets; the soldiers gave us a cup of coffee in the morning and one in the evening, and some vegetable soup for lunch. It was very cold in the compartment and it took us 3 days to get to Szczecin [Stettin] through Pomerania.

On the 27th we arrived in Bad Kleinen in Mecklenburg, where we got off the train. Then we travelled through Schwerin, Ludwigslust, Wittenberge, and Neustadt (on Dosse) to Rathenow, where we found the Königs living at the Jaeckels’, and stayed there for 5 days.

They arranged for us to stay with Mr. Kriewitz, where we had a nice room, a shared living-room and a kitchen. Mr. Kriewitz let us help around the house and shared his potatoes and heating with us.

In the morning, we had breakfast together. We had lunch in a restaurant and he – at his daughter’s. In the evening, we ate together again. There were daily alerts: every evening at 8 and again in the night, we went down to the basement.

In the end, we stayed in the house and just got out of bed because the constant back and forth was unbearable in the long run.

Here I received out of the blue a letter from Eberhard, who travelled from Wrocław [Breslau] to Fürstenfeldbruck near Munich. It was the last letter I received from him. Is he still alive; has he been captured?

I visited Evchen Mayer-Falk in Stendal, where she lived with Gundula, Ulrike and Hanna, her sister-in-law, at the apartment of Hanna’s mother. We actually wanted to travel south together, but it turned out differently due to the rapid advance of the allied forces.

On April 12th, the Americans were already marching into Stendal and the Russians were advancing towards Berlin.

On this occasion, I wanted to leave Rathenow again for I did not wish to fall into the hands of the Russians, I did not flee from the east for that.

In Rathenow we encountered the Helbings from [Poznań](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pozna%C5%84) [Posen] with their 3 children and Otto Anders with his wife. There were a lot of refugees in the city and one had to line up everywhere, especially for food. We still ate well at Großer Kurfürst [restaurant]: a soup, a potato or vegetable dish and a fish dish. We always had enough to eat even if it was very expensive. Here I also received family allowance for March and April.

On April 13th, my mother, Jürgen and I travelled through Neustadt and Karow to Krakow am See, where Otto Hinz and his wife had a shop and a room.

We arrived at 10 in the evening during the red alarm and they both warmly welcomed us.

First they travelled to Güstrow with the Knoblauchs, Mrs. Hinzens’ daughter and her 2 children. Here Otto Hinz had the opportunity to open a shop and to have a small warehouse. He installed generators and motors at a dairy farm and various butcher shops and bakeries. Everyone already knew him and he worked from morning till night.

Hilde worked in the shop: she organized and sold goods. I took care of the household and cooked, sometimes well, sometimes not so lavishly, as the case may be, depending on what Otto delivered to us. There was plenty of whole milk and cottage cheese, hence we were able cook a lot of dairy dishes. Asparagus was also already available. Once we got to have a nice fish dish with thick eels as Krakow lay on a beautiful lake, where fishing thrived.

There we met Hilde’s friend Ms. Luchirer from Konitz. Once I received a letter from Klara König. Her husband has stayed in Tiegenhof and, when the city burned down and then was flooded on March 8th, the Volkssturm[[5]](#footnote-5) had to move to Steegen. Dargatz, Fritz Epp, Hans Albrecht, Frida Wagner, the Hoffmann family and the Anders family (Tiegenhafen) were still there. Who knows what happened to them. I also received a letter from Sopot [Zoppot] dated March 19th, saying that Olly, Walter (Doempke[[6]](#footnote-6)), Omama and Mrs. Arnswald wanted to stay there. My sister Lisbeth moved to Bremen area. Fridel wanted to go to Christine in Konstanz. Linchen lived in Lüderhagen near Stralsund with Heini und Martin; Else went to Kronach in Franconia with Brigitte and Renate. Will we ever meet again?

In the meantime, the Russians were getting closer and closer to Berlin, the allied forces kept advancing from the west, and the Russians began new attacks even close to Stettin. They were now near Mecklenburg, and on May 1st they were no more than 20 km away from Krakow. At the time, we lived with the Knüppels. We packed our belongings once more and wanted to go to their basement. They still had all sorts of things in there, as they also had a grocery store.

My mother, who lived with Mrs. Kuhl, an elderly lady, still wanted to stay there. However, in the morning one of the soldiers advised us to get on the truck going in the direction of Schwerin and make our way to Lübeck. By 9 we had packed everything and set out again to flee from the Russians, who were supposed to reach Krakow by 12. They were constantly on our heels during our journey. The streets were lined with tanks again, between them were soldiers, wounded and prisoners – a bleak string of hardened people, who had lost their homes and their country.

We travelled through Goldberg and Criewitz. From Schwerin on we saw more and more soldiers around us, there was no sign or mention of combat. We had to jump into the ditch twice because of low-flying planes, otherwise we pressed on until all of a sudden a soldier shouted: “You are going directly into the enemy’s hands.” Just then an American vehicle drove up asking us where we were coming from. “From the east”, said Otto Hinz and pointed to DW[[7]](#footnote-7) on his car. “If you are coming from the east, you are going to the west”, said the American. He just asked if we had weapons, and then we could drive on.

Refugees and soldiers were now coming together from everywhere. One saw trucks with goods being looted; everywhere one could get a bit of butter, food, soap etc.

Now we had to drive into Schwerin, where we got a room in a small villa in the suburbs. The 5 of us slept in one room on the floor; in the entire house, there were 52 people with many children. Outside, thousands of soldiers were arriving in trucks, they were gathered here and then transported to Hagenow, 26 km away. The soldiers gave us a lot of things as they couldn’t take anything with them and otherwise had to throw them away on the street. There was plenty of everything, but it went against our moral sense to profit from the situation. The Americans lived in the neighborhood and also opened a kitchen there. They gave us cocoa, white bread and goulash once, that tasted wonderful.

And suddenly the war ended and not how we thought it would. For nearly 6 years our brave soldiers fought only to end up in captivity anyway.

And if Eberhard, who was stationed by Munich, managed to stay alive, he will become an American prisoner. How and when will I see him again, and he should be my whole support and hope. Postal service has been temporarily suspended, so no one knows where the other ones are. He has, of course, my address in Rathenow, but the Russians got there by now. We lived for 5 days at Mrs. Mathies’, took turns to sleep in the car and cooked the best we could in the kitchen, that we shared with all the many people. Finally, we got an empty store and a room in Wittenburgerstraße 17 at Mrs. Spicher’s. Little by little we also brought our luggage in the city, we did two 30-minute trips a day with a pushcart.

It wasn’t easy, but Otto pulled the heavy cart steadfast and upright, and Hilde and I pushed. In the meantime, Otto managed to have his car towed to the city and fully repaired. We have now nicely settled. Otto and Hilde sleep in the room and Jürgen and I – in the store.

We are using the electric cooker and the immersion heater that Otto brought for cooking.

Here we met Dr. Thomas and his wife from Sopot [Zoppot], their chauffer von Zink from Tiegenhof and the dentist Dr. Stumer from Danzig.

After almost all the foreigners and the people from the concentration camp have been evacuated, there are now around 100.000 refugees in Schwerin. There are long lines in front of administration and stores; it is very hard to get anything, and we can’t even think about staying here permanently.

My mother sleeps in a small room at Mrs. Spicher’s, who also had my shoes resoled as I cannot get it done here.

Last week Jürgen started taking English lessons from a secondary school teacher Gemoll from Górzna [Gursen] and it keeps him somewhat occupied.

We have a pass to be outside between 5 a.m. and 10.15 p.m., but the people start lining up in front of grocery stores from the early morning. Last week the butcher had horse meat, now there is beef again. The banks don’t yet work with our checking and savings accounts. Only the Post Office gave everyone with a Post Office savings account 100 marks in June.

I had a dress and a jacket made at a clothing store. Otherwise only the grocery stores are open. American troops have been replaced by the English, and now the Scots should be arriving too. I met Marta Schröter from Tiegenhof while queueing at fishmonger’s, we both barely recognized each other.

June 24th

We are still in Schwerin, although every minute there is a rumor that the Russians will occupy this part of Mecklenburg as well.

Many people from Danzig walk around with Danziger coat of arms on their clothes, and the rumors are circulating that a free city shall be established again. But they lack any foundation.

For the last 14 days one has been able to send postcards to Holstein, Hamburg and the part of Mecklenburg controlled by the English and I have written to Krohn in Hamburg. And he replied straight away that he has already been released, and sent me the address of Edith Lau who works at the local registration office. Perhaps she can help me find out where the Laus from Danzig are, as they should be in Holstein. Recently I met the Jansons from Neukirch, the young Balke from Danzig and Mr. Kurt Störmer. At the Janzen flour trader, I met a mill owner Dust from Stavenhagen near Neubrandenburg, who visited me and brought me flour and semolina. This is truly a rare delight.

July 22nd,1945

Since the 19th we’ve been in Rostock.

The Russians replaced the English in Schwerin, and now all mail service with the west has stopped. I had already written the postcards to Hamburg, Bremen, Stendal and Kronach, but I cannot get a response now. Mail service only works on the territory occupied by the Russians, which includes Western Pomerania, where Linchen lives, and I am now waiting for the news, whether she stayed there with the children.

All the refugees from the east and the west that gathered in Schwerin were sent to Mecklenburg and Western Pomerania, and we drove together with a family from Bremen to a lady in Rostock who has a house here. The house of Mrs. Rosenfeldt was occupied and we didn't hear anything from her, so I found an apartment for myself at the station hotel, my mother and the Truderungs found a furnished room each. The Ottes from Danzig, who I already know from home, live in the same hotel, as do the Fischers (company Fischer & Nickel), Mrs Lehmann etc. We hope to receive a pass from here to Bremen, for we cannot return to Danzig. The Poles are expelling all the Germans there. Where might be the Doempkes and Omama? Are they still alive?

Life is calmer here and if it wasn't for the constant worry about Eberhard, I could relax here. Potatoes and vegetables are in good supply, there isn't much fat, but then there is oil. The Hinzens stayed in Schwerin, as Otto was employed at AEG. And now we are alone again but, as usual, I hope that everything will be fine and that we see our relatives again.

August 29th, 1945

We are still in Rostock. The refugees from the east keep coming still. Amongst them was also the Schritt family from Sopot [Zoppot], who knew for sure that Omama had died there. They didn’t even know though where or how it happened and how her life came to an end. Allegedly the Doempkes tried to take their own lives, after Walter had returned from the camp. They were then taken to the hospital in serious condition. This is the last thing I heard about them. Will I ever see them again? They have given me so much support in life, and now I cannot do anything for them. One must have nerves of steel in this life, and it is hard to always appear calm on the outside.

The last few weeks marked one year anniversary of my husband’s suffering and his death on August 20th. He escaped a lot and, if I didn’t have the boys, I’d wish that I had managed it too already.

The supplies are scarce: there is no fat and only 100 g of meat a week, there is an abundance of potatoes and vegetables, and also bread (1.5 loaf a week). This week there is 100 g of jelly, 100 g of compote, 50 g of Bratlingspulver[[8]](#footnote-8), 50 g of coffee creamer, 100 g of rye flour, and for Jürgen another 100 g of wheat flour, 2 kg of vegetables, and 4 kg of potatoes. We also have stamps for restaurants, which allow us to have a warm meal at the guest house once a day. In the evening, we cook potatoes and vegetables at my mother’s or at the Truderungs’, so that we can be properly full at last. Mother also received some pears from a gardener and they were delicious.

Last week we were vaccinated against typhoid and there will be another two vaccinations.

Although we hope that we will soon be on our way to Bremen. We gave the papers for this to a man, so that he can arrange the passes, and we hope that we can leave shortly. But now it’s autumn and we are still here. What is going to happen in winter! We have no heating and I am terrified of the dark days.

Eberhard’s fate weighs heavily on me. You sit around so helpless and cannot do anything for him or inquire about him.

Recently I met a Mr. Kurt Schlenger who is a distant relative of ours. He lives here in Rostock; he’s married and is a distinguished violinist. They live in Massmannstraße 10, have an 18-year-old daughter who wants to become an artist. I even met a sister of this Mr. Schlenger, a widow named Mrs. Seidel, who lives in Tremsenweg 4. They are very nice people, but completely different to us. They are dark, small and not as handsome as our Schlengers.

Recently I met up with Manfred Treibe, former Tiegenhof, who came here as a refugee from Sopot [Zoppot] together with Mrs. Wiegand.

We spent a lot of time together as they too want to move to the west. Weeks and months pass and finally, on October 16th, mother, Jürgen and I drive to Berlin with a group of travelers. The trip took 3 days and was thwart with obstacles.

Our provisions consisted only of bread and some fat, there was no warm meal during this time, and in Hagenow the Russians took Jürgen’s suitcase from us.

We spent the first night in Berlin at the Central station – Lehrter Bahnhof – and in the morning, we then travelled loaded with backpacks, suitcases and bags to Ruth van Bergen in Friedenau. She lives there with her husband; they have a room, a hallway and a kitchen. We received a very warm welcome, were looked after and got plenty of sleep.

We stayed there for 8 days, but because we had no food stamps, we had to get our meals from the camp in Kruppstraße, where we had to stay overnight because of the long journey. We slept on the floor of a bombed barrack building with around 40 other people, we couldn’t get undressed or clean up properly. The food consisted of 200 g of white bread and a potato soup, which, of course, was far from enough. Bakers sold us bread for 100 marks and the refugees from the camp snapped it up. We often went to the “Esplanade” at Potsdamer Platz, where we could get a meal for 25 marks without stamps.

We also spent a lot of time with Mr. Treibe and Mrs. Wiegand here. We often went to Ruth as well to clean up, wash and get some sleep. Much of Berlin is destroyed, but the subway trains and the trams are running and it is kept very tidy.

Our papers are in order and every day there is a chance of transportation.

It is November and it is cold to spend the nights on the floor.

Mother and Jürgen look terrible, and I buy butter for 500 marks. A cup of ground coffee costs 5 marks, as do cigarettes, which one smokes from hunger.

Finally, on November 16th, our transport, a closed cattle car, departs. We receive half a loaf of bread, 30 g of fat and 50 g of sausage each as provisions, and before that our potato soup with a little meat.

We drove through Rathenow, Stendal, Oebisfelde and in Glusingen we arrived in the first English camp. There we were, as in any other camp, deloused, examined and registered.

We slept in tents, 14 people a tent, and received good food and generous portions. Shortly before we left Berlin, I received a postcard from Ebenhard, which came through Ruth van Bergen. He was in Hamburg-Altona living with the Krohns. I was, of course, delighted and I thank God that he returned me my eldest safe and sound.

Then I changed my destination and went up to Hamburg instead of Bremen. The next day, we drove through Lüneburg, Harburg and Hamburg, where unfortunately we didn’t stop, to Bad Segeberg in Holstein, where we were again deloused, registered and examined.

The food here was excellent. We received 2 buns, honey, butter, sausage and generous portions of hearty warm food. In the afternoons, we were transported to Flensburg, where we were to join farmers in the countryside.

We slept in a school and were very well catered for. Here we were visited by the Hillmanns. All three of them live here, as do priest Kurowski, the Dietzes and Mrs. Claassen with her daughter.

We were transported to the countryside by buses and, as it was over 20 km away and I saw no opportunity to get to Hamburg from there, we left my mother there. She was too distressed for any more exertion. She was then placed with very nice people and wrote that she was well catered for.

Jürgen and I took the bus back to Flensburg, and the next morning we went on a nine-hour journey in an open truck to Hamburg. It was already very cold and foggy, and I was glad that mother wasn’t with us. In Altona, we received a very friendly welcome from Krohn, his mother and the Tamm family, but Eberhard wasn’t there. He had received a postcard from Mrs. Hinz saying that we were on the way to Bremen and he went there.

We were completely exhausted and very hungry, so coffee with warm bread, home fries and meat seemed like a delicacy. Finally, we slept in a bed again and sat in a room.

Eberhard had been released from American captivity back in June. He came to Kronbach and worked as a street sweeper and gardener. He had a nice room there and actually wanted us to come there.

But as he heard that we were in Schwerin, he went up to Hamburg and found Kurt Lau and the Krohns. He stayed 4 weeks but didn’t hear from us and went straight to Bremen. We arrived a couple of days after that. The Krohns helped him reserve a room in Glückstadt and, as we planned to notify Eberhard, the Krohns told us that he wanted to stay here. And so, I wrote to him to come here. It took a long time before I received a message and as he wrote that I should come to Kronach, he already had my postcard telling him to come here. I immediately wrote back that we were coming, but it was too late.

Eberhard arrived in Hamburg and so we stayed here.

The joy of having my boy back safe and sound was immense and my biggest worry was the thing of the past. Now he will help me and everything will be fine.

It is a shame, he had to leave behind the apartment (in Kronach), heating and potatoes. Many knew him there already too and he could have got us all kinds of things. Mrs. Herzberg with her boys lived there, and aunt Else with Brigitte and Renate were in Heinersberg; and I would have loved to be together with them all.

Now we had to stay in Glückstadt though.

We live with Mrs. Sommer who has four children aged 6-13. Her house is half an hour from the town and is near a levee on the Elbe. She grows vegetables, has 2 cows and slaughters pigs. She often gives us milk and potatoes, which we don’t get here at all. We get lunch from a communal kitchen and we are usually full after 2 portions and give in return 60 g of fat, 200 g of meat and a pound of processed food per person. The food costs 40 pfennigs and consists for the most part of cabbage, beets, beans and compote with very few potatoes.

In the evening and in the morning, we cook for ourselves milk or water gruel.

So far the food is significantly better than in the Russian territory and we look quite well.

There are 3 bed frames in our room, one of which cannot be used yet because it’s missing a mattress. So, Eberhard and Jürgen still sleep together.

At the beginning, the stove was unusable because it needed to be fixed. It got very cold and the beds were completely damp. I suffered badly from rheumatism and could barely lay down. Now Eberhard took upon himself to clean the stove, fix the pipe etc. Eventually, he got the furnace to burn and we at least had a warm room, for we had received some wood and peat. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that Eberhard will receive an apprenticeship.

Jürgen has been going to school since February and has a lot to catch up, as he has not been to school in 15 months.

I often went to Hamburg and visited the Danzig registration office, which at the time was run by Kurt Lau. There I spoke to Milchen Krieg, who lives with his family in Göppingen. The Knoblauchs also live near Hamburg, as do the Kapahukes and Mrs. Lindau (born Meinhard). We still expect that there will be a Free City of Danzig again, for all the German territory east of the Oder is managed by the Poles who are expelling all the Germans.

Many have taken their own lives, like my mother-in-law in Sopot [Zoppot], who, according to a letter from Mrs Übe Zoppot, is burried in the garden in Heidebergstraße. Olly and Walter (Doempke), who also took poison, were taken to the hospital, where they lay severely ill. Walter was supposedly taken away and Olly was taken to Konradstein. Are they still alive? And where might Reinhard be? He was deployed in the east already back in February.

Kurt has not sent a message since February. His family lives in Heinersberg, in Upper Franconia. Linchen with Heini and Martin is in Neulüderhagen near Stralsund and would like to move into the English zone to her husband. He recently returned from American captivity and is staying with his relatives in Friedrichskoog.

Rudi is in captivity in Naples and Brigitte lives in the north in Eastern Friesland [Ostfriesland]. Lisbeth (born Fenger) lost her husband on *the* *Gustloff.* Her son is going to Sweden under the English flag. Friedel and Christine live in Radolfzell on Lake Constance [Bodensee]. Friedel has an office job and Christine is learning phography. I have addresses of many people from Tiegenhof, and I write to many of them. Evchen Mayer-Falk is stuck with Gundula and Ulrike in Stendal, but she heard that Wilfried is working in a Russian hospital in Astrakhan.

There’s no news from Richard. Mother sent good news from Poppholz; she is to stay there for the time being.

It is sad though that we are all scattered around so far from each other. It would be good to be able to see each other once more and to talk at length.

We received news from home that our property should remain, and I still have the hope that we can return. The people here don’t understand us: they haven’t gone through anything, nor have they lost anything and they see us, refugees, as a huge burden.

Now we’ve found the Respondecks in Glückstadt and we often spend time together. They live with a nice old lady who is also very friendly with us. We also often visit Mrs. Ferner from Neustadt, related to the Hoffmanns, Tiegenhof and Olivaer refugees. We tell each other stories from home, which we all would like to see again.

Eberhard has been working for 5 weeks at the English barracks and he likes it there.

May 1947

A year has passed and we are still in Glückstadt.

In the summer, we got plenty of vegetables from our landlady and in the autumn – pears that are planted along the road.

The winter was so horribly cold and long that we still shudder at the memory.

The school was closed for weeks because there was no coal. We stayed close to the stove or in bed. When we had to go shopping, we froze, for the clothes are getting thin and the shoes are bad too.

For a while I did laundry for the English and got paid with cigarettes, which I then exchanged for coal. Now this is over too. Eberhard was fired in February and is looking for a new job.

Jürgen has been transferred to the 9th grade[[9]](#footnote-9). On April 23rd, he had his confirmation, a hard day for us being homeless and without the support of my dear husband. The Regehrs are now all together in Friedrichskoog and have applied for emigration to Argentina, where a Mennonite settlement is to be formed. Heinz registered us as well and, if we don’t make any progress here, we will also emigrate. But only as the last resort.

The food is getting worse. We get 1 loaf of bread a week, 100 g of meat, 200 g of fat a month, a little fish, processed food only every now and again, and ¾ liter of skim milk a week. If I didn’t have potatoes, we would be starving.

In April, we had a visitor, Ruth van Bergen came all of a sudden for a day. It was such a joy for me because I am often alone.

Christel Jeglin often writes from Denmark, where she lives with her parents. She lost both her children (starved in a detention camp, author’s note) and her husband is in Russian captivity.

In the meantime, the Big Four conference took place in Moscow in March. It was supposed to facilitate peace negotiations with Germany. However, no significant decisions were made, and a new conference on the peace agreement with Germany will take place in London in November. But I don’t believe that it will give us back our homeland. We will spend years in misery of furnished rooms, with no home or apartment.

August 1947

Jürgen and I are alone again. Eberhard has been working as a miner in a coal mine in the Ruhr since July 1st. He volunteered because he couldn’t find any other job. He also wants to stick to it and hopes to be able to attend college after a year of working underground in order to get ahead. Jürgen and I would very much like to go there too, but will that happen?

I am often alone here and yearn for my dear relatives and for my home. 4 weeks ago, I spent 16 days in hospital with an abdominal infection. It was very nice there, Dr Ramke is very good, the nurses are very nice and the food is superb.

Hopefully, everything heals well, for a refugee cannot be ill. Through my mother we received a message from our relatives in Amerika. The would like to send us parcels. That would be very nice, as Jürgen will soon have nothing suitable to wear and my clothes and shoes have worn out. There is nothing for us to buy: we have nothing to barter and cannot afford the black-market prices.

There is a lot of misery in Germany, the elderly and the young children are dying, and many adolescents have tuberculosis.

At school, there are school lunches from England, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland and Switzerland, but unless some fundamental changes happen soon, we will all perish.

A beginning is nowhere to be seen.

1. now Nowy Dwór Gdański [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This could be a variation of Oma – grandmother, as some people would refer to their mothers or their mothers-in-law as Omas out of habit, although it is hard to say for sure. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Now Kumatschowo [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Most likely Eva, not Erna [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Volkssturm – National Nazi militia, is not translated [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Doempke or Doemke – there are instances of both in the text [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. DW – part of the license plate referring to Danzig-Westpreussen (Danzig West Prussia) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. There is no equivalent in English. It is a soy based powder used as a filler for patties and for binding sauces. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Corresponds approximately to the 8th grade in the US [↑](#footnote-ref-9)