

# The Onslaught of Nazi Occupation

The children's daily routine was disrupted with the Nazi occupation. Although the Germans began to target Jews for persecution, the situation differed from country to country and region to region.

*March 19, 1944*

*"Dear diary, you're the luckiest one in the world, because you cannot feel, you cannot know what a terrible thing has happened to us. The Germans have come!"*

Dawid Sierakowiak was born in Lodz, Poland in 1934. He perished in the Lodz ghetto, a victim of starvation and illness. In his diary, he describes hearing the Germans have entered Lodz:

*September 8, 1939*

*"Lodz is occupied! The beginning of the day was calm, too calm. In the afternoon I sat in the park and drew a sketch of a girlfriend. Then all of a sudden the terrifying news: Lodz has been surrendered! German patrols on Piotrkowska Street. Fear, surprise [...] Meanwhile, all conversation stops; the streets grow deserted; faces and hearts are covered with gloom, cold severity and hostility."*

Yitskhok Rudashevski was born in Vilna (now Lithuania) in 1927. He eventually perished in Ponary.

In 1941, the Nazi's captured Vilna. Fourteen-year-old Yitskhok writes:

*June 1941*

*"Monday was also an uneasy day. Red Army soldiers crowded into autos are continually riding to Lipovke. The residents are also running away. People say with despair that the Red Army is abandoning us. The Germans are marching on Vilna. The evening of that desperate day approaches. The autos with Red Army soldiers are fleeing. I understand that they are leaving us. I am certain, however, that resistance will come. I look at the fleeing army and I am certain that it will return victoriously."*

## **Discussion Questions**

Read the following descriptions:

How would you characterize the different reactions to the invasion?

What do these reactions tell us about the children's view of the situation?

Teacher Notes: with the outbreak of the war, many Jews hoped and believed it would end quickly.