

**On 1 April 1941 Willy Cohn notes in his diary that he has heard of the murder  
of Jewish psychiatric patients in Chelm, near Lublin<sup>1</sup>**

Handwritten diary of Willy Cohn, Breslau, entry for 1 April 1941

Breslau, Tuesday. Today was really a busy and exhausting day for me. Unfortunately, I haven't got much stamina! Waited a long time to fetch milk; bank; had the pleasure there of learning that 100 Reichsmarks from the school had been deposited. I am not greatly attached to money but, after all, one needs it to live. And in general, I have to be especially thankful that I am permitted to earn some. But at the bank something also made me feel very sad. I saw an elderly Jew paying an invoice from the mental asylum in Chelm near Lublin.<sup>2</sup> That is the institution where, it is said, all the Jewish mental patients are killed. Full of sympathy, I asked him whether he was paying for someone who, one hoped, was still alive. In reply he said that his wife, in any case, was no longer alive. I asked him where she had been previously: 'In Braniß',<sup>3</sup> and whether she had been completely insane, and he replied that she had been suffering from mania. It is horrible how the patients are dealt with. A former pupil of mine, Mamlok from Militsch, died there of circulation problems. Death announcements with such diagnoses are then simply sent by post. The news made me feel so low that I missed my tram stop later and rode too far.

Archive: continued sorting through the very interesting files from Sagan. If one only had time to look through them all. Susannchen<sup>4</sup> then turned up out of the blue, with Hanna Schmollny. They actually wanted to go to the Pottery Market and had got lost. At first I was somewhat startled, because I thought that Trudi<sup>5</sup> had a message for me, but then I was delighted. I could not work on my things today, which is no disaster anyway.

The pastor from Tarnowitz was here again. In the concentration camps, three persons die every night, it is said. Then, the next morning, the blankets of the deceased must be present at roll call. In Upper Silesia, the Poles have had their food rations cut by half. Noteworthy from the newspaper: the Italians admit to heavy losses in the naval battle in the Mediterranean. They have lost three cruisers, among other vessels.<sup>6</sup> In Yugoslavia a very intense anti-German movement has broken out! I think Italy will not take part much longer. But all the setbacks will affect us German Jews.

Went with the children to the Neumarkt. We thought that a pottery market was on, but that was not the case. Put both girls on the no. 18 tram. I myself took the no. 9 to the Community to fetch the food ration cards that Miss Silberstein obtained for us.

1 CAHJP, P88/102, fols. 119–123; abbreviated English translation published in Cohn, *No Justice in Germany*, pp. 347–348. This document has been newly translated from the original German.

2 The formerly Polish psychiatric institution in Chelm (Cholm), whose patients had already been murdered, was used as a cover address to conceal the murders of Jewish patients in the 'euthanasia' killing centres of the Reich. Family members were notified that the patient had died in the mental asylum in Chelm: see Introduction, p. 34, and Doc. 201.

3 The writer means the town of Branitz (Branice) in the district of Leobschütz (Głubczyce). In 1940, its psychiatric hospital had 1,600 patients.

4 Susanna Cohn.

5 Gertrud Cohn.

6 In the battle of Cape Matapan, the British Mediterranean Fleet sank three heavy cruisers and two destroyers of the Italian navy on 29 March 1941.

Talked to many people, and in the street I chanced to come across old Leß, whom I do not hold in very high esteem and who spoke with me about the comments in the news bulletin, then I talked for a long time with Dr Pex. He was very complimentary about Trudi's work in the course. I am certainly not very happy about it [the course], but at the same time I am glad that Trudi is finding recognition, which I certainly did not doubt would happen. Greeted Ella only in passing. Rode with Hannah Lemm, the rabbi's daughter, the pretty nurse, as far as Viktoriastraße. She seems to be a very reserved person. We chatted about her brother. They had three Red Cross letters recently from her brother in Jerusalem; he apparently attends school there. We are waiting so eagerly for news from the children!<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang and Ernst Abraham Cohn.