

SPOTS OF LIGHT

TO BE A WOMAN IN THE HOLOCAUST



"SPOTS OF LIGHT PRESSED INTO THIS DARK MATTER..."

Dalia Rabikovitch, *The Complete Poems So Far*,
Hakibbutz Hameuchad, Tel Aviv, 1995

The Holocaust was an historical event of orchestrated acts of brutality and murder by the Nazis and their accomplices against the Jewish people. In this exhibition, we attempt to reveal the human story and create a space for the unique voice of the women among them, and to emphasize the responses and actions of Jewish women to the situations they faced.

Before the Second World War, Jewish women - like most of their counterparts - inhabited a society that was largely conservative and patriarchal. Accordingly, most women did not take part in the leadership that was tasked with administering the Jewish community during the Holocaust. Instead, Jewish women assumed the main familial role involving the “affirmation of life” - survival under any circumstance.

During the initial phases of the war, large numbers of Jewish men were mobilized for forced labor or escaped to the east. In the later stages, men tried to flee to the forests and many others were executed. As a result, countless women remained alone with children and the elderly. Overall, they often constituted the greater part of the ghetto population in subsequent stages. Even when the men remained, their inability to continue serving as the breadwinners of the family often left them psychologically shattered and impaired their traditional role as heads of household. As a result, women often assumed the duties of obtaining food for their families, trying to provide a minimum level of family functioning despite their grim situation.

The identification of women with children, both by the surroundings and by the women themselves, became a motivating force for clinging to life, but also bound them to extermination together. Women who survived the annihilation campaign and became part of the Nazis’ slave-labor force entered the world of the camps. There, usually in women-only camps, they attempted to rehabilitate their psychological identities after having been deprived of their individuality, families and cultural traditions.

Women in the Holocaust applied their minds to a place that deprived them of their minds; and brought strength to a place where they were denied their strength. In a place where the very right to live was wrested from women and their families, faced their deaths with fortitude and invested every additional moment of life with meaning.

It is these women’s voices that we wish to sound and whose stories we wish to tell.



Jewish woman with a wrinkled paper yellow star, marking her as a Jew, photographed by a German soldier, Kutno Ghetto, Poland, 1941
Getty Images

The Kutno Ghetto was established in the muddy outdoor compound of what had once been a sugar factory. The Germans packed some 7,000 Jews into this compound, forcing them to live without shelter in roofless buildings and improvised shacks fabricated from furniture and random objects.

The vast majority of the Jews of Kutno were murdered during the Holocaust.

This exhibition is an adaptation of the "Spots of Light" exhibition, curated by Yehudit Inbar and exhibited at Yad Vashem.

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SHOAH - THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust was an unprecedented genocide, total and systematic, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people, culture and traditions from the face of the Earth. The primary motivation for the Holocaust was the Nazis’ antisemitic racist ideology. Between 1933 and 1941, Nazi Germany pursued a policy of increasing persecution that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and property, and later branded and concentrated the Jewish populations under their rule into designated areas. By the end of 1941, the policy had developed into an overall comprehensive, systematic operation that the Nazis called “The Final Solution to the Jewish Question”.

These policies gained broad support in Germany and across much of the European continent. Nazi Germany designated the Jews of Europe, and eventually the rest of the world Jewry, for total extermination. Alongside the mass extermination of millions by shooting, millions of Jews from all over Europe were rounded up and deported on freight trains to extermination camps - industrial facilities in which the Jews were gassed to death. During the entire process of registration, rounding-up and boarding the trains, the Germans deceived the victims as to the real purpose of their journey. By the war’s end in 1945, some six million Jews had been murdered.

Yad Vashem was established in 1953 as the World Center for Holocaust commemoration, documentation, research and education. As the Jewish people’s living memorial to the Shoah, Yad Vashem safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meanings for future generations.

A photograph sent from the Eastern front by a German soldier.
Written on the back of the photo: "Jews in an *Aktion*, Ivangorod, Ukraine, 1942"
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington DC, USA



LOVE

Love was a haven and island of comfort in a world of chaos

Couplehood and family form the basis of human society. During the Holocaust, as the whole world came unglued, couplehood and family were almost the only refuge. People did not know what the next hour, let alone the next day, would bring. Accordingly, they endeavored to establish settings that would give them the illusion of stability. People fell in love in the most implausible places; they married even though they did not know whether they would be able to survive individually or together, let alone establish a conjugal nest. They felt the need to make their marriages official, sometimes as protection against deportation to the east and other times due to the wish to be deported together. Concurrently, there were "free" couplehoods - quick, provisional and informal assignations. These occurred as a way of obtaining money, food, life. At other times, they expressed a psychological need for warmth and understanding in the face of the depravity surrounding them. Many were "forbidden loves" that probably would never have occurred in the world that used to be.



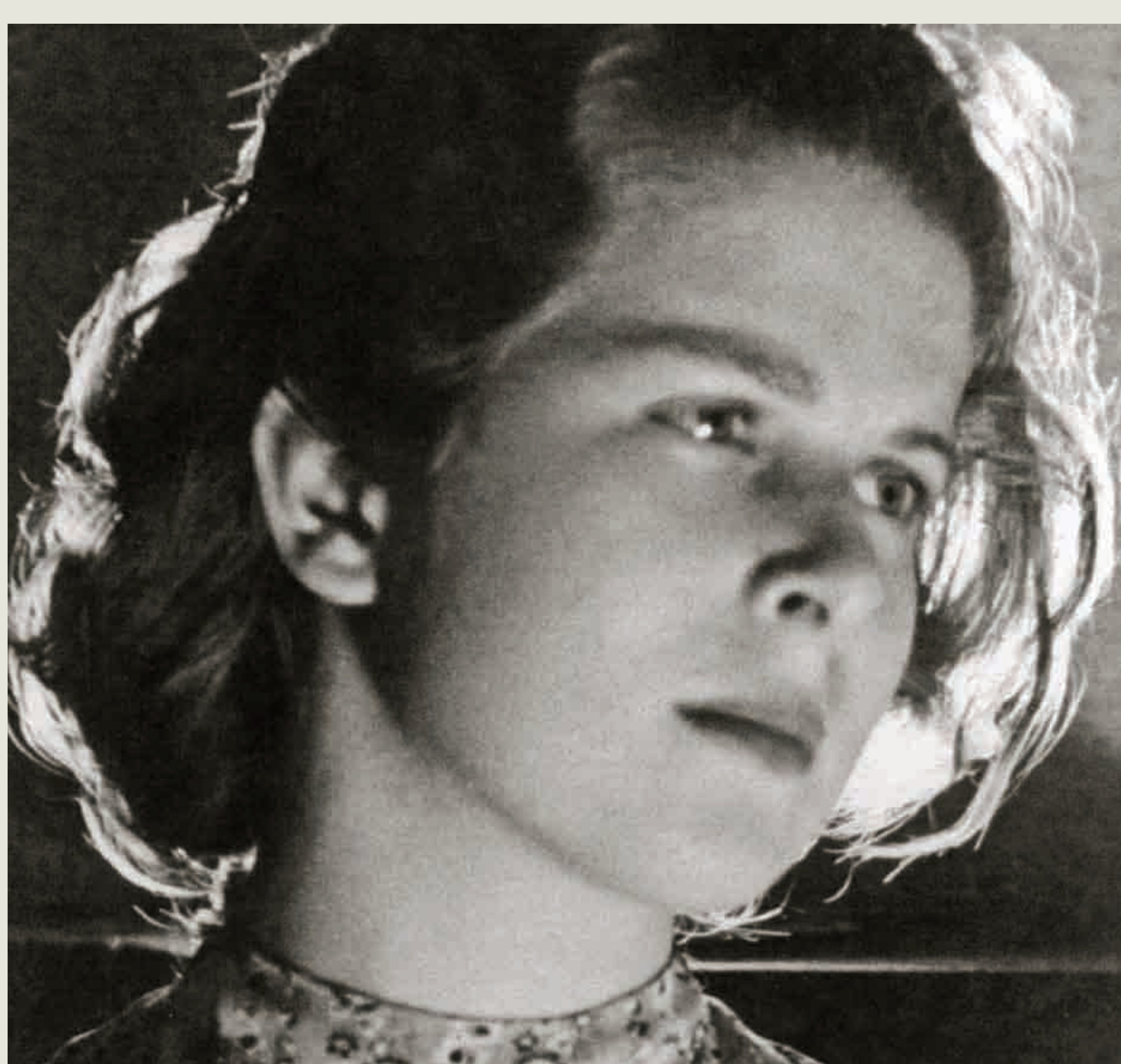
Wedding celebration in the Lodz Ghetto
Yad Vashem's Collections



The Last Farewell
Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1945
Zinovii Tolkathev
Yad Vashem's Collections

LOVE

MARTA BYK



Marta, Vienna, Austria, 1938
Yad Vashem's Collections

In 1939, Gertrude Byk managed to obtain US immigration permits for herself and her two children, Marta and Herbert. Sixteen-year-old Marta, an ardent Zionist, refused to come along. In November, she set out for the Land of Israel, joining a group of 1,300 Jewish refugees who sailed down the Danube. They got as far as Serbia, but when they could go no further they decided to stay in Sabac.

Marta began to write letters to her mother in January 1941. After the German occupation of Serbia, the group was placed behind barbed wire and subjected to abuse and murders. In October 1941, the men in the camp were taken away, ostensibly for labor, and were murdered. One month later, unaware of the men's fate, Marta told her mother in a letter that in March she had married a man from the camp named Marjan Furstenberg.

On November 1941, Marta communicated with her mother for the last time.

By January 1942, the entire group, including Marta, had been murdered.

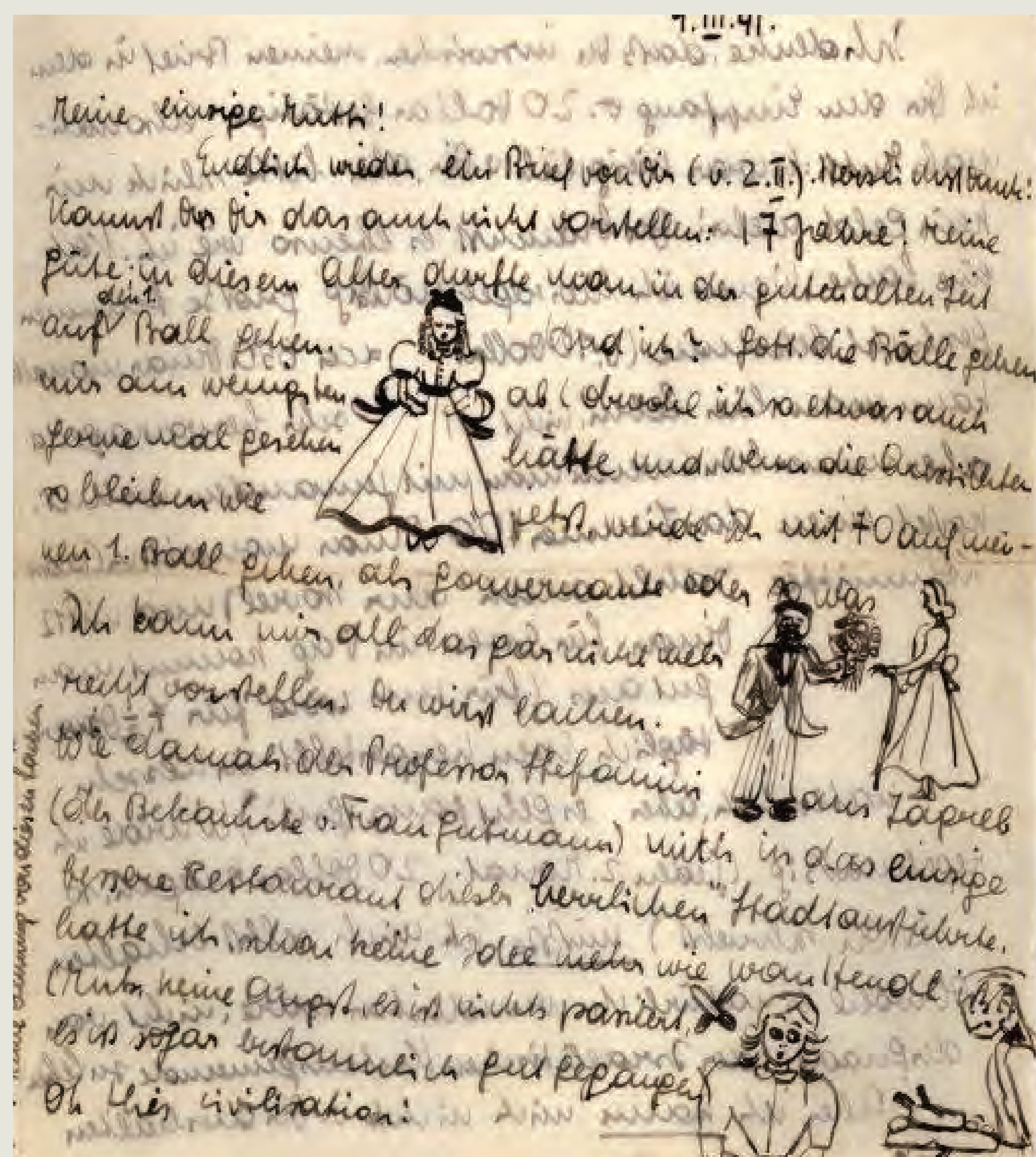
November 1941
To: Trude Byk
Brooklyn, NY

...Above all, do not worry; ...and something else: I got married; in fact, already in March. I am very happy and you will be very satisfied with your son-in-law.

Name: Marjan Furstenberg, in Sabac, Jewish Emigration Camp, Serbia; 24 years old; Profession: auto mechanic, electrician and radio technician. At the moment he cannot write as he has been working in the surroundings for a few weeks.

*Many greetings and kisses
From Marta and Marjan*

Letter written by Marta to her mother and brother
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MOTHERHOOD

The need to save their children placed mothers in the face of terrible dilemmas

One of the initial dilemmas that families faced was how to find hiding places, especially for the children, while this was still possible. Knowing that there was a high chance that they would never see their child again, many parents could not marshal the psychological will to take such a step, unless they sensed that the alternative was certain death.

Since such an insight was difficult to internalize, many parents did not surrender their children to others even when they could have done so.

In the ghettos, mothers were preoccupied with daily survival, mainly in providing food and maintaining hygiene in order to stave off illness.

Pregnant mothers wished to abort in most cases, knowing that they could not feed and care for the newborn with the rest of the family barely hanging on. Even so, here and there the very ubiquity of death infused women with the wish to create new life.

Mothers of children in selection queues may have been the only ones to whom the murderers offered a choice - that of going to death with their children. Even there, however, at moments of difficulty unparalleled in human history, children were sometimes torn from the arms of the few women who were selected for a life



Women and children during deportation of the Jews of Szydlowiec and the vicinity, Poland, to the Treblinka extermination camp, September 23, 1942
Yad Vashem's Collections

of slavery, and were handed to grandmothers or those nearby, who went with them to their deaths.

Amidst all of this violent terror, some mothers, impelled by the survival instinct, made decisions or took actions that clashed with the accepted social norms that govern the mother-child relationship. Other mothers, however, elected to die with their children even though they could have chosen differently - and this, too, was a "choice" not always comprehensible in ordinary times.

MOTHERHOOD

GENIA JUDZKI



Genia, Sosnowiec, Poland, before the war
Yad Vashem's Collections

In August 1943, the Sosnowiec Ghetto was liquidated and Genia's husband, Ber (Bronek), was murdered. Genia and their son Michál fled to the "Aryan" side, where Genia managed to obtain false ID cards for them both. She handed Michál into the care of a Polish woman named Bronja. Genia found a job running the household of a German physician. After the doctor received instruction to relocate to Vienna, he took Genia and her son with him.

Sometime later, Genia's identity was revealed; she was taken to a prison and Michál was placed in an orphanage. When the Gestapo informed Genia that they were about to deport her, she decided to take her son with her, fearing that the orphanage would be liquidated.

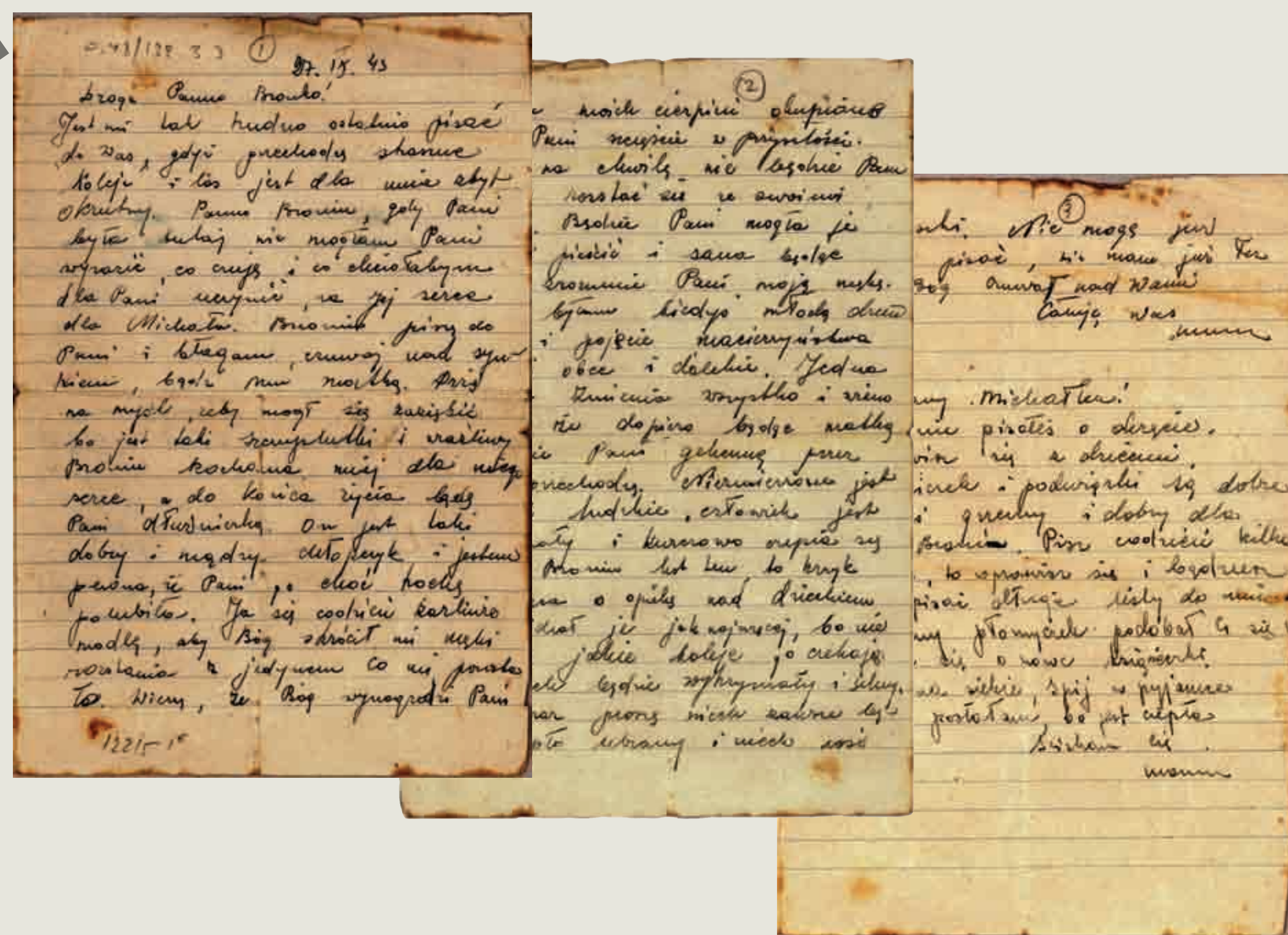
In 1944, the mother and son were deported to Auschwitz and murdered; the children in the orphanage survived.

September 27, 1943

Dear Miss Bronja,
It is so hard for me to write to you...
Miss Bronja, I beg you, look after my son,
be a mother to him.
Michál should eat as much as he can for who
knows what is to come? He must be strong
and able to endure great suffering.
Please make sure that he dresses warmly
and that he also wears socks. I cannot write
any more, my tears have all dried up.
May God watch over you both.

Kisses

Genia's letter sent to Bronja, the woman who hid her son
Yad Vashem's Collections



Genia and Michál, Sosnowiec Ghetto, 1941-1942
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CARING FOR OTHERS

Women played
a central role in
caring for those
more vulnerable than
them

Women discharged a range of functions during the pre-Holocaust period. Most working women, however, were kindergarten teachers, schoolteachers, shopkeepers, childcare providers, cooks, seamstresses, and the like. This behavior pattern persisted during the Holocaust; one may even say that it expanded. Almost all women had to work. During the ghetto period, many women sought public functions that involved helping and caring for others.

Women managed public kitchens, ran children's homes and built networks for care of the elderly. They served as teachers and caregivers for children whose parents had been deported or mobilized for forced labor. They worked as doctors and nurses in the ghettos, with the partisans and in the camps.

Women risked their lives and health by treating contagious patients and children in hiding places. Many went to their deaths with the children they cared for, although they could have been saved. They toiled from morning to night as the situation deteriorated with each passing moment, not allowing their physical weakness to abate their efforts.



OSE welfare officer Margot Stein giving children a medical checkup, Hotel Bompard quarantine camp, Marseilles, France 1941-1942
USHMM, Courtesy: Margot Stein Samuel



Story Hour
Terezin ghetto, 1942-1945
Pavel Fantl
Yad Vashem's Collections

CARING FOR OTHERS

STEFANIA WILCZYNSKA



Stefania
Ghetto Fighters' House Museum Archives, Israel

Date: April 2, 1940

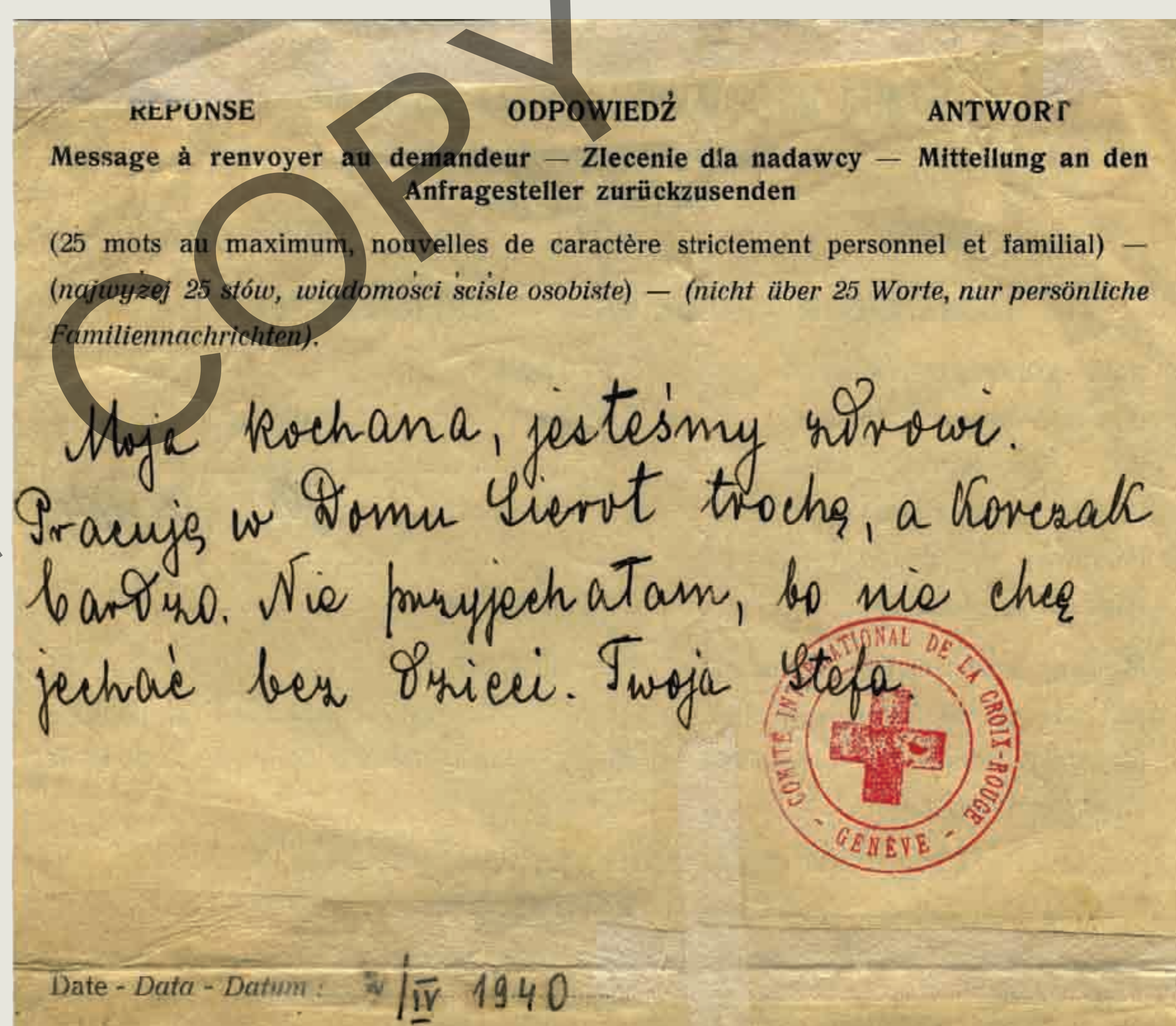
My dear, we are well. I work a little at the orphanage while Korczak is doing a great deal. I have not arrived [to the Land of Israel] because I do not want to go without the children.

*Yours
Stefa*

Stefania (Stefa) was born in 1886 in Poland. After completing her studies at the University of Liège, Belgium, she returned to Warsaw, and was placed in charge of a Jewish orphanage.

In 1909, she met the renowned educator and author Dr. Janusz Korczak and the two formed a bond. In 1919, all the children were moved to a new orphanage, where Stefania served as general manager and Korczak as director-in-chief. When World War I began, Korczak was recruited into the army and Stefania remained in charge of running the orphanage, which had expanded and now housed some 150 children. In 1938, Stefania visited the Land of Israel.

She lived at Kibbutz Ein Harod until 1939 and then returned to Warsaw. With the Nazi occupation, the members of Ein Harod arranged for her to leave Poland, but she turned it down and moved into the Warsaw Ghetto along with Dr. Korczak and the children. On August 6, 1942, they received the order to deport the orphans. Stefania, Korczak and the other staff members refused to abandon their charges, and marched with the 192 orphans to the *Umschlagplatz* gathering point, with Stefania in charge of the group of children aged 9-12. **All were murdered in Treblinka Extermination Camp.**



Postcard written by Stefania and sent via the Red Cross to the members of Kibbutz Ein Harod, 1940
Ghetto Fighters' House Museum Archives, Israel



Dr. Korczak and Stefania with the children in their care, 1923
Ghetto Fighters' House Museum Archives, Israel

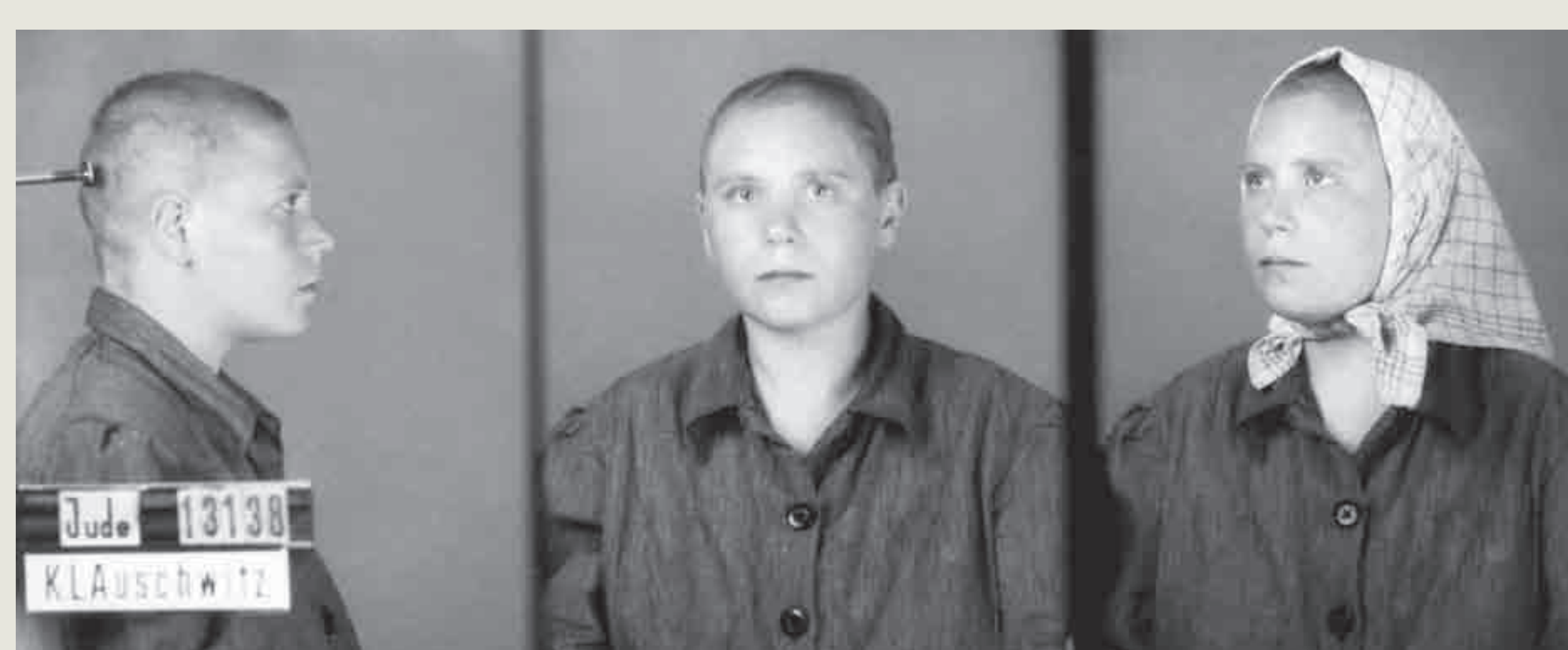
WOMANHOOD

By asserting their femininity during the Holocaust, women attempted to maintain their humanity

There is no contrast more glaring than that between the Holocaust and womanhood. Investing in one's femininity were considered indulgences at such times. Nevertheless, a woman's feminine aspects was a basic component of her personality. An affront to womanhood was an affront to women themselves as complete human beings.

Some women used their sexuality to survive or in order to earn a favor - to save a family member, to obtain a slice of bread, etc. From their standpoint, it was just another way to stay alive. Looking good during the Holocaust also carried the meaning of life - before selections, women smeared crumbs of rouge on their cheeks or pinched them to make them look healthier and thus avoid death. A lice comb in a camp might enable a woman to live, since lice carried disease. Women continued to wash themselves in whatever water they could find - even if it was frozen from the harsh European winter - if they were fortunate to have the opportunity.

Although the racial laws forbade sexual contact between Nazis and the victims, there were plenty of ways to attack women: ordering their total undressing in public places, touching their bodies, and carrying out harsh beatings. In the camps, selections in the nude were part of the daily fare.



Jewish prisoner no. 13138 from Radom, Poland, after her hair was shaved off in Auschwitz

Panstwowe Muzeum w Oświęcimiu, Poland



A blouse received by Helen Ryba in a camp near Leipzig, to which she added an orange bead

Yad Vashem's Collections



In Plaszów we found some used lipstick... we took a piece of celluloid, smeared what remained on it, and folded it. Whenever we went to a new camp, we smeared it on our cheeks very delicately.

Maryla Szerling

Yad Vashem's Collections

WOMANHOOD

LINA BERESIN



Lina (left) and her sisters Betty and Anna, October, 1945
Yad Vashem's Collections

Lina was born in 1910 in Lithuania. She married Jacob Beresin in 1933 and moved to Kovno. Her daughter Shulamit was born in 1935. In 1941, all the Jews were deported to the ghetto. In the March 1944 *Children's Aktion*, Shulamit was taken to Auschwitz, where she was apparently murdered. When the ghetto was liquidated in July 1944, Lina and her two sisters were deported to the Stutthof Concentration Camp, where Lina made the bra for herself. Her husband was sent to Dachau and murdered.

Lina and her sisters survived. She immigrated to Mexico, where she remarried.

*They dressed us in prisoners' outfits.
As a professional seamstress, I began to dream about how to make myself a bra and what materials I would use.
I removed the lining from the sleeves [of men's jackets] and now had some fabric.
From my men's shirt I removed three buttons.
A woman who found a needle in her jacket gave it to me in return for a full day's food ration.
I unraveled thread from the ribbon around the blanket. I found a broken window and removed a shard of glass from it.
I lay down on the ground with my fabric and the shard of glass and I cut my prized item.
Then I sewed it.
I wore the bra for almost seven months until the liberation.*

The bra made by Lina in the Stutthof concentration camp
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RESISTANCE AND RESCUE

Women used their gender to contribute towards resistance efforts

Almost anyone who engaged in warfare against the Nazis and their accomplices during the Holocaust was expressing a choice - accepting active, rather than passive, death (e.g., in a gas chamber). Jews could neither ensure their survival nor win the war by fighting back. It was foremost an act of pride.

On the whole, women avoided this option altogether, as long as they remained in the family setting. The only women who could indulge in the idea of fighting or going underground were young adult women who were not yet responsible for others.

As a rule, women were totally unwanted in non-Jewish partisan groups. Insofar as women were admitted to such units, they were forced to mop floors, wash men's laundry and endure sexual harassment even if they established hospitals, performed surgery and engaged in other lifesaving actions.

Yet women had an important role to play in the resistance, mainly in rescue. When women were tasked with transferring clandestine materials from place to place, they disguised themselves as social workers involved in child care. In the camps, women's active role in resistance was usually limited to sabotaging the armaments they manufactured. Occasionally, a woman attacked a guard and was immediately murdered. Escape attempts ended similarly. These actions were threatening in that the price for them would be paid not only by their instigators but also by many hostages who would certainly be executed.



Rachel Rudnicki with a group of partisans that operated in the Rudniki forests. Taken upon the liberation of Vilna, 1944
Central Government Archives, Moscow



Three women resistance fighters removed from bunkers during the repression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, 1943.
Right to left: Malka Zdrojewicz and her comrades, Bluma and Ruchaleh, members of the Jewish Fighting Organization
Yad Vashem's Collections

RESISTANCE AND RESCUE

FANNY SOLOMIAN



Fanny in uniform
"A Girl Facing the Gallows," Moreshet and
Sifryat Poalim, 1971

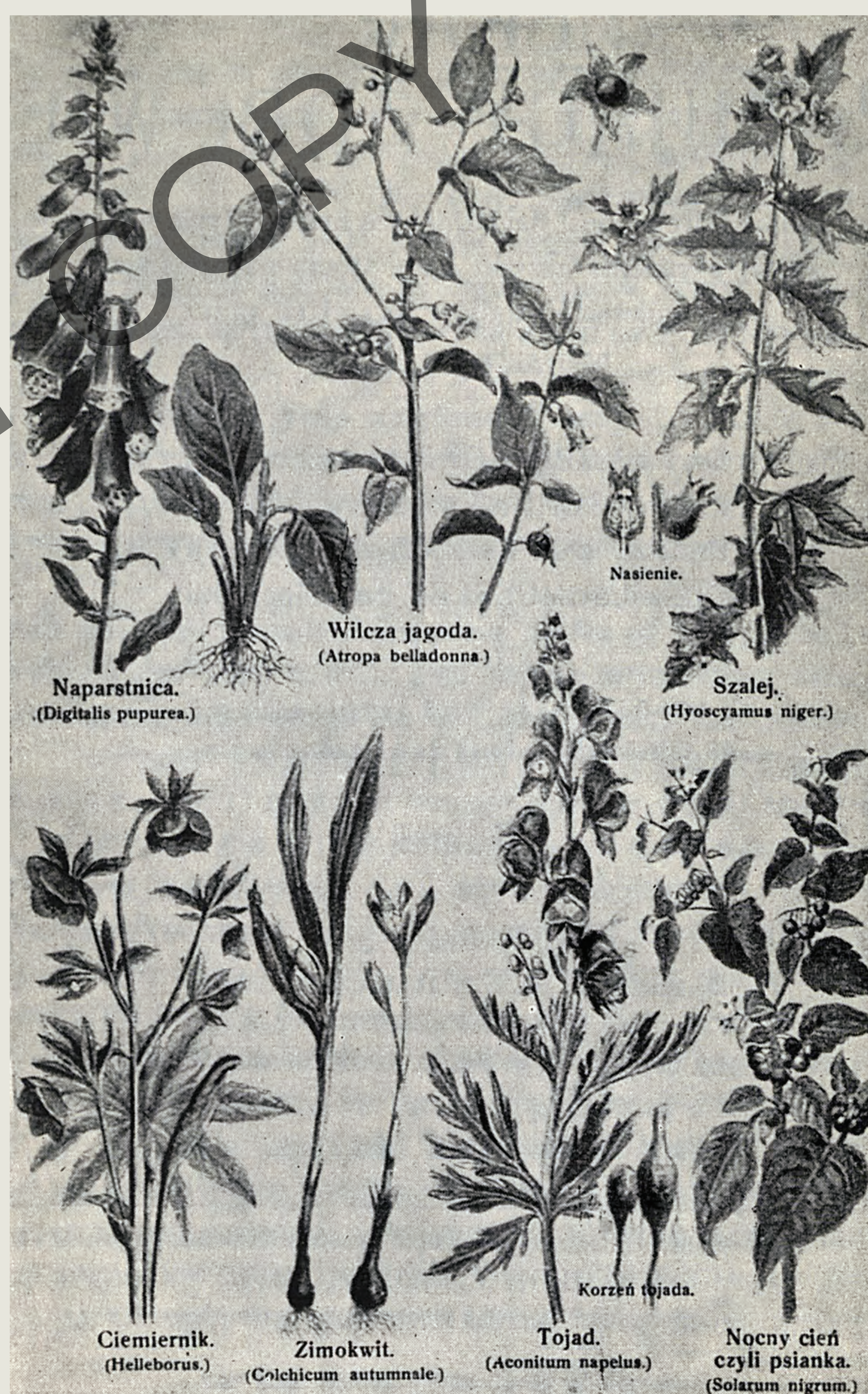
Fanny studied physical education and worked as a medical gymnastics instructor in hospitals. The Polish Ministry of Education sent her to Sweden for advanced studies but she returned to Pinsk, her hometown, when the war broke out. When the Pinsk Ghetto was liquidated and all its inhabitants murdered, she was one of the few who managed to flee to the forests and join the partisans. Initially, she served as a nurse with small partisan companies, but later on worked as the chief physician of a partisan brigade and set up an operating room where she performed numerous operations.

Despite her status and centrality, Fanny felt that her colleagues did not give her the treatment and respect she deserved because she was both a woman and a Jew. **After the war, she moved to Israel with her husband and daughter.**

I began performing surgeries right away. I drained pus that had not congealed; I even amputated a finger. I did it all not with great knowledge but with all my heart... After I found the book "The Health-Preserving Doctor," based on the fundamentals of natural healing, I became an ardent aficionado of this method.

Almost all the women in the unit had spouses, who served them concurrently as masters and as defenders of their "honor" against other men...

I couldn't get used to the thought that to be privileged with relative calm during the day I had to agree to annoyance at night.



Victory medal and page of a medical book used by Fanny in the forests
"A Girl Facing the Gallows," Moreshet and Sifryat Poalim, 1971



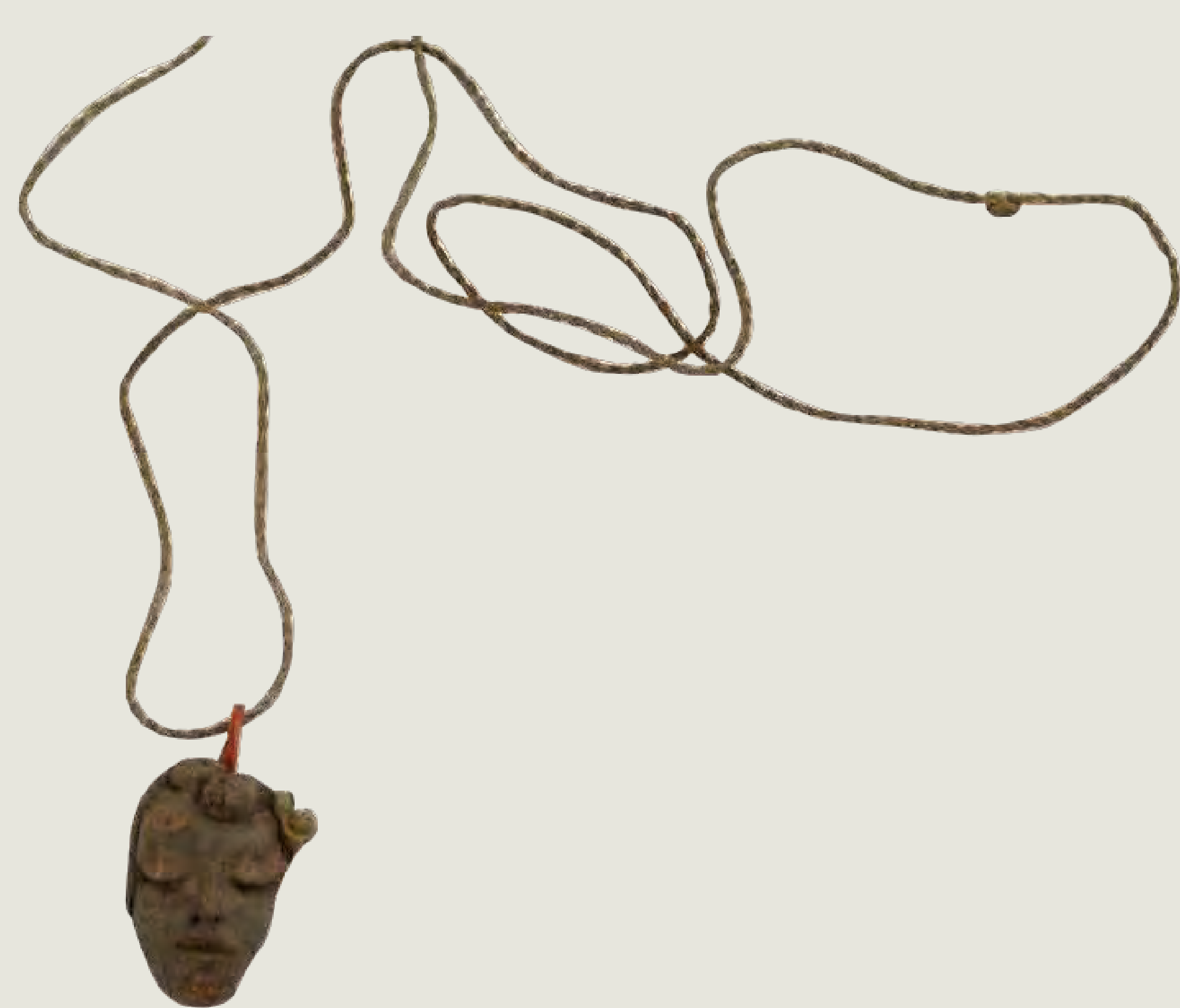
FRIENDSHIP

Groups of friends became substitute families that saved lives

Growing up took place very quickly during the Holocaust. Girls normally considered very young functioned as adult women. In many cases, parents ceased to be the family's breadwinners. The girls often developed survival mechanisms and took their fates into their own hands. Nevertheless, girls yearned for a friend who would support them and to whom they could give of themselves. Together, they derived strength from memories of home, friends and the very fact of discovering inner strengths of which they had been unaware.

Adult women also needed friends - in the ghettos if they had survived without spouses, in gender-segregated labor camps, or upon the loss of the family that had been their source of strength and support.

Group companionship in the Holocaust was a phenomenon unique to women. As stated by the historian Judith Baumel-Schwartz, it was advantageous to "stay invisible" at this time; a network of friends was something that attracted attention. Grouping, however, provided an advantage in terms of the possibilities of support and survival that it facilitated. Small groups composed of a couple or threesome of friends, relatives or older women came together to form larger groups that protected a girl or girls younger than them.



A pendant made of bread given to Hana Frankel as a birthday present from her friends in a labor camp
Yad Vashem's Collections



A card given to Fella Rosenberg at Auschwitz on January 10, 1945, for her 14th birthday, from her mother's friends, prior to their departure on a death march
Yad Vashem's Collections

FRIENDSHIP

HILDE GRÜNBAUM



Hilde (right) with the members of the orchestra, after the liberation
Courtesy: Hilde Zimche, Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel

Hilde was born in Berlin. She studied violin, and played in a youth orchestra. In 1940, Hilde joined a Zionist training farm in Ahrensdorf. On April 20, 1943, the trainees were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In Auschwitz, they continued to stay in touch; their counselor, Anne Borinski, was their main liaison in the women's camp. The girls slipped notes to each other to keep up with the news, and looked out for each other's needs. Hilde was recruited by the women's orchestra in Birkenau. The conductor of the orchestra was Alma Rosé, a virtuoso violinist. Alma considered the orchestra as a means of survival for the women. She also managed to provide the orchestra members with conditions considered good by camp standards. Hilde managed to transfer as many friends as she could to the orchestra, and provided food to those left behind. Hilde played the violin at first, but later became a recorder of notes and Alma's main assistant.

Alma was murdered in Auschwitz. Hilde, Anne and some members of the training farm survived and eventually immigrated to Israel.

We were always one for all and we felt that the others were all for us. Even if we were not always together, we always had a sense of belonging. It helped us very, very much, both practically and, without a doubt, psychologically.

Anne Borinski

Alma believed that if we survived this period, we might be able to prove that we could build something in the camp, that there would be some point in having survived.

Hilde Grünbaum



Music bag made by Hilde from a pillow cover given to her by a friend at Auschwitz and a pen used by Hilde to write the music for the orchestra at Auschwitz
Loaned by Hilde Zimche, Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel



Anne, Switzerland, 1945
Kibbutz Maayan Zvi, Israel, Courtesy: Eldad Aloni



Alma playing the violin, Netherlands, 1942
Amadeus Press, Courtesy: the Mahler-Rose Collection, Ontario

FAITH

In the years of despair, women found comfort and moral strength in faith

Many questions have been raised regarding religion during the Holocaust. Some Jews felt that God had abandoned them, and did not understand how and why they endured such suffering. Others found solace and mental fortitude in faith during the Holocaust, as they could nowhere else.

Words can hardly describe the power that these people derived from faith, the moral strength it gave them, and the subsequent difficulty in breaking their spirit as human beings even when their bodies could no longer endure the agonies. Religious women who adhered to their religion continued to observe the commandments and festivals as best they could. They prayed, fasted, abstained from bread during Passover, and lit candles for the Sabbath and on Hanukah.

Apart from maintaining their faith and continuing to observe religious customs, these women obtained moral strength from their conviction. This affected their behavior in the hellhole they inhabited, and enabled them to give and be more considerate of others.



A prayer service on Yom Kippur, Lodz Ghetto, Poland, 1941
The Jewish Heritage-Writing Project



Ester Obstfeld, hiding in a cellar in Amsterdam, Netherlands, Hanukah 1942.
After the hideout was discovered, Ester was deported to the Sobibor Extermination Camp, where she was murdered.
Yad Vashem's Collections



Women baking matzot for Passover, Warsaw Ghetto, Poland
Yad Vashem's Collections

FAITH

LIVIA KORALEK



Livia (second from right) and her students, Csorna (Sopron), Hungary, 1943
Yad Vashem's Collections

Born in Gyor, Hungary, Livia was deported to Auschwitz in June 1944. In August, she was transferred to the Parschnitz Concentration Camp, where she worked in a factory manufacturing aircraft parts.

On the eve of Yom Kippur 1944, at the request of her friends Livia gave a sermon to the women in the camp. "I didn't want to be a kapo, I didn't want to be a leader. There was no need for it. I only wanted to give [them] encouragement." The women did not eat the bread that they received on Yom Kippur; instead, they stored it under their pillows.

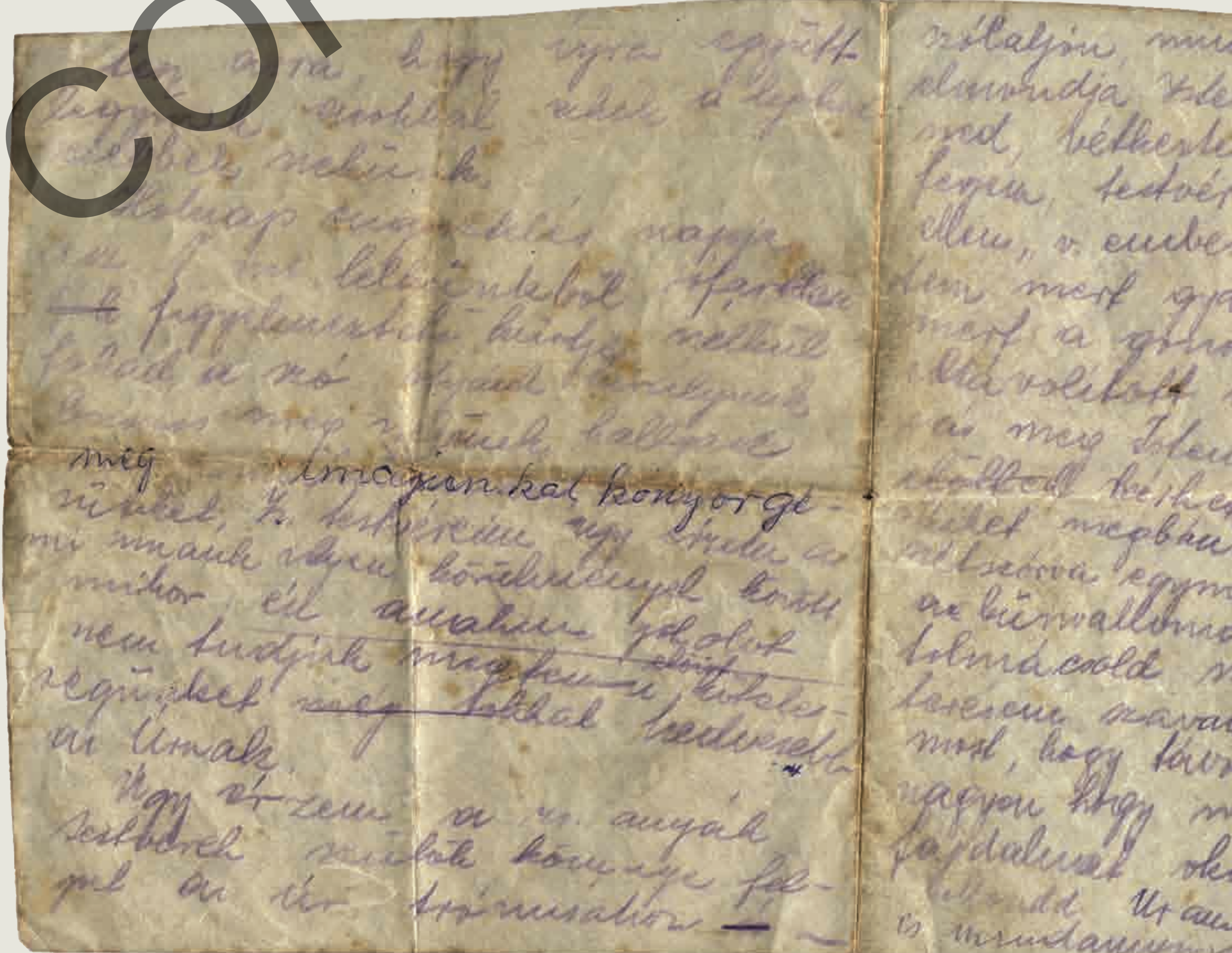
On Passover, the women attempted to conduct a seder but the Germans broke it up. Livia refrained from eating bread that entire week.

After the war, Livia married Aladar Spiegel and immigrated to Israel.

Our rabbi in the town of Gyor gathered us before he went to Auschwitz, and said, among other things: "It is not the place that sanctifies man but man who sanctifies the place." On this holy day, we are being put to a test. We must observe the commandment 'You shall not steal.' Each of us receives a tiny ration and has to be content with it.

From the sermon given by Livia in the Parschnitz Concentration Camp, Yom Kippur, 1944

Paper fragments of the sermon that Livia gave on Yom Kippur in the Parschnitz concentration camp
Yad Vashem's Collections



FOOD

When the stomach is empty, the imagination cooks

When women reached the camps after having lost their entire families, they attempted to maintain vestiges of their humanity. One way of doing this was to occupy themselves with food recipes.

Recipes are a tradition among women; handed down from mothers to daughters, they capture the women's family, community and geographic traditions. For this reason, in the most unexpected place of all, amidst terrifying physical slavery and the shattering of their world as they knew it, women engaged in remembering and creating recipes.

Women recorded recipes as if to prove to and remind themselves where they had come from, and to hand them on for posterity. Sometimes, they prescribed exaggerated proportions of ingredients in order to make the fantasy more enchanting.

They wrote on any scrap of paper that they could obtain, and with every precious piece of pencil they either found or obtained in exchange for bread. And when they had no pencil or paper, they shouted the recipes at night from bed to bed in the darkened camp barracks, transforming their quarters, for a moment, into the homes they had once had.



Woman at an improvised
cooking facility,
Gurs Transition Camp, France
Yad Vashem's Collections



Woman feeding a girl, Lodz Ghetto, Poland
Yad Vashem's Collections

FOOD

YEHUDIT AUFRICHTIG



Yehudit shortly before her arrest, Netherlands, June 1944

Born in Hungary, Yehudit immigrated to Amsterdam in 1938. Upon the German occupation, she met the wife of the Hungarian ambassador to the Netherlands, who equipped her with a passport that did not identify her as a Jew.

Yehudit became a member of the resistance, distributing forged food ration cards and food to Jewish families who were hiding on Dutch farms.

When she was betrayed by a Dutch woman, she was deported in 1944 to Westerbork Camp and from there to the Ravensbrück women's Concentration Camp, where she was put to work at a Siemens factory. **Yehudit survived the war, moved to France and later immigrated to Israel.**

Yehudit Aufrichtig was ill, and missed the distribution of the daily slice of bread.

Edith Gombus, her best friend, sent her the bread along with a note telling her what they had imagined themselves as having eaten.

Breakfast: Karlsbad-style breakfast - eggs, butter, cheese, jam.

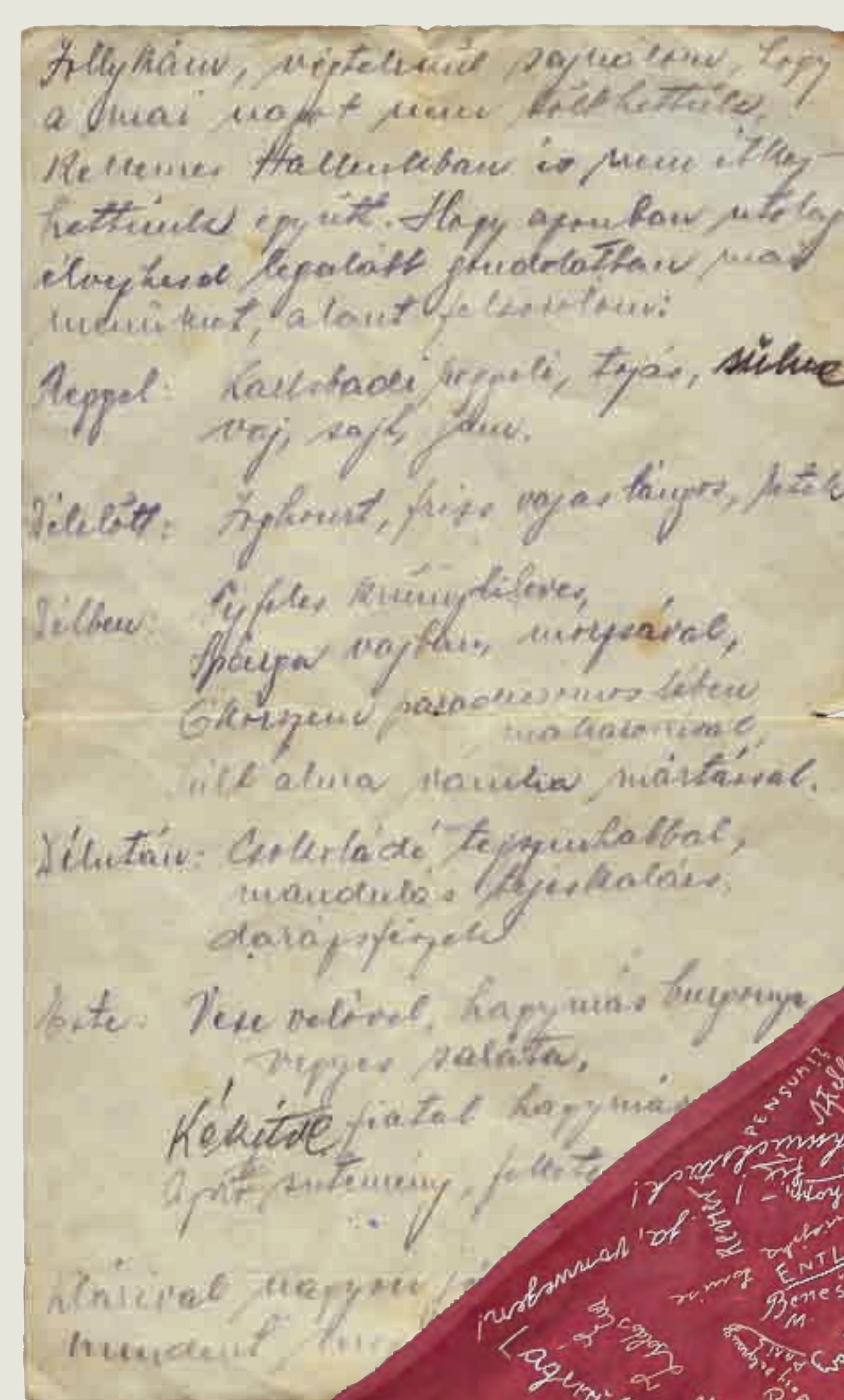
Brunch: yogurt, langus and a radish.

Lunch: potato soup with sour cream and laurel leaves, asparagus in sour cream and bread crumbs. Sunny-side-up egg and beef in tomato sauce with macaroni. Fried apple in vanilla sauce.

Afternoon: chocolate milk with whipped cream and egg bread with almonds and a "hornet's nest."

Supper: marrow, fried potatoes with onion, salad with green onion, little cookies and black coffee, fruit.

We ate everything apart from a little slice of bread, which we saved for you.



The "fantasy meal" letter that Edith forwarded to Yehudit and a strip of cloth left from a Nazi flag, embroidered by Yehudit with the names of women prisoners in the Ravensbrück women's Concentration Camp
Yad Vashem's Collections



ART

To create is to breathe!
To create is to escape
the difficult daily
reality

At this time of darkness, there was an extraordinary need for signs of normalcy. One such sign was creating art.

Women were active participants in this phenomenon. They performed in concerts and plays in the ghettos and camps. In the domain of painting - at least as measured in the extent of material found - women were a minority. However, female historians in Warsaw played an active role in documenting the ghetto for Emmanuel Ringelblum's archive. Poetry was written much more intensively and much evidence of it, including many poems by women, survived. Women were also represented in art forms that were relatively new at the time, such as photography.

Most artistic endeavors were an expression of a psychological and social need, a source of oxygen amidst suffocation. Anything one could use to express one's pain or, in contrast, the use of laughter and irony to escape reality, provided a vehicle that people grasped and used to express the essence of their talents.



Self-portrait of Julia Pirotte,
Marseilles, France 1942
USHMM, Courtesy: Julia pirotte

As a member of the resistance, Julia used her camera to document operations of the Maquis resistance in 1944, women and children in camps, and additional matters. In 1943, she smuggled to the United States a photographed report that she titled "France under occupation." Later on, she documented the liberation.



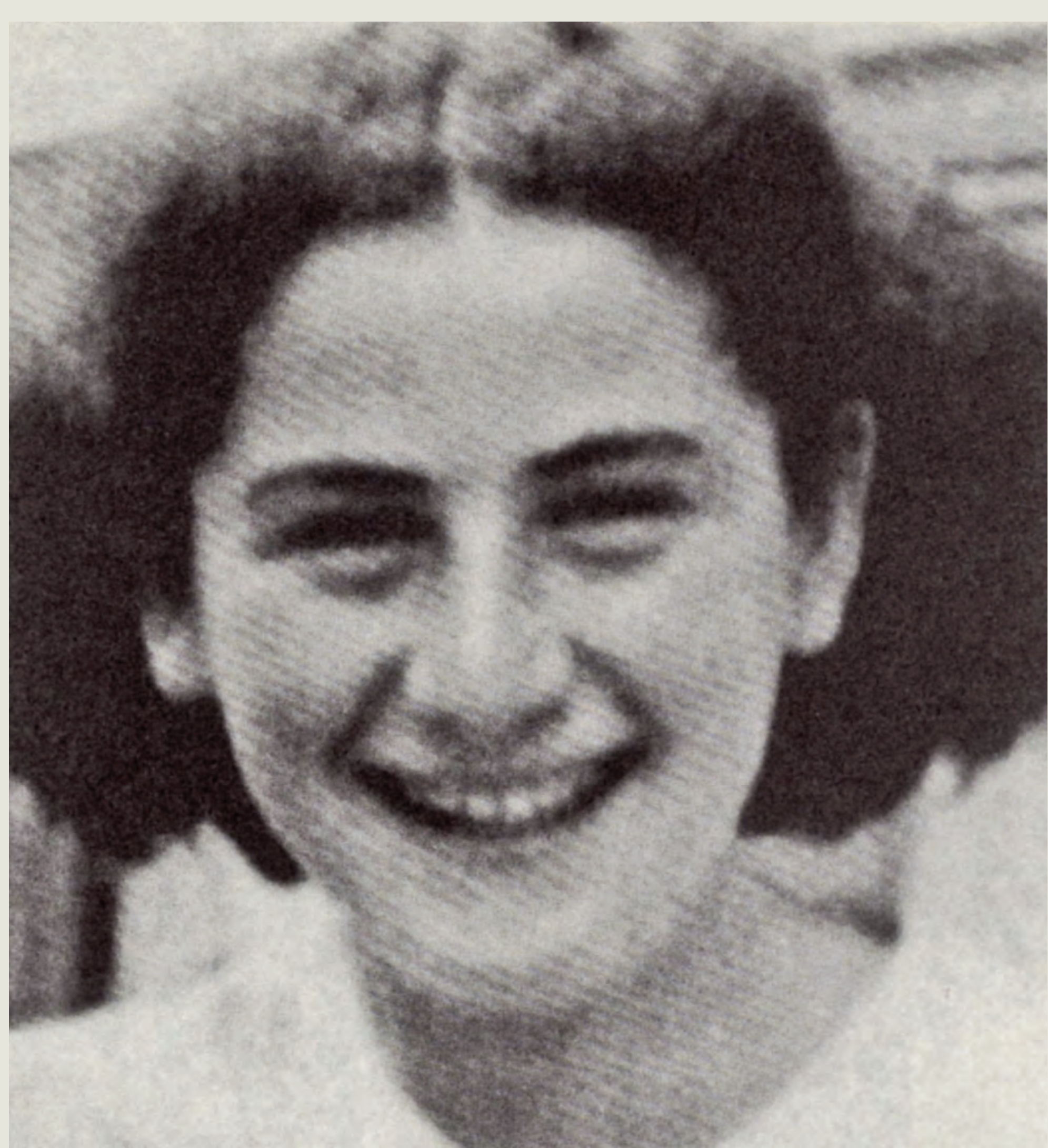
Scene from a play performed in the Warsaw Ghetto
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz, Germany



Flamenco Dancer Catharina Frank
Terezin Ghetto, 1944
Charlotte Buresova
Yad Vashem's Collections

ART

SELMA MERBAUM-EISINGER



Selma, Czernowitz, May 1940
Yad Vashem's Collections

Selma was born in Czernowitz, Bukovina and began to write poetry as a teenager. In October 1941, Selma and her parents were interned in the Czernowitz Ghetto, and the following June, the family was deported to Transnistria. After an exhausting march, they were sent to the Michailovka Labor Camp, where the Germans and Ukrainians starved and terrorized the prisoners mercilessly.

Prior to her deportation to Transnistria, Selma managed to give her album of poetry and paintings to Leiser Fichman, her boyfriend from the *Hashomer Hatzair* youth movement, to whom she dedicated the poems. Selma died of typhus on December 16, 1942 at the age of eighteen. Her parents were murdered a year later.

Leiser was taken to a forced-labor camp at the beginning of the Nazi occupation. He kept the album until 1944, when he sent it to Else, Selma's friend, in Czernowitz. Then he boarded the clandestine immigrant vessel Mefkure on its way to the Land of Israel. **The Mefkure was torpedoed and sank in the Black Sea; Leiser perished without knowing that Selma had died.**

"A Poem"
July 7, 1941

*I want to live.
I want to laugh and give comfort,
fight battles, love and hate,
hold heaven in my hand,
be free to breathe and shout:
I don't want to die. No!
No.*



Selma's album of poems and paintings
Yad Vashem's Collections



The Death of Selma Merbaum-Eisinger
Bershad Camp, Transnistria 1943
Arnold Daghani
Yad Vashem's Collections