

Letters

1 9 3 8 - 1 9 4 6



San Francisco
California
U. S. A.



1 9 3 8 - 1 9 4 6

During the years of the Holocaust, as avenues of escape from Nazi persecution in Germany and occupied Europe disappeared, many European families found themselves separated – on one side were family members safely living in the United States or England – on the other side, family and friends subject to ever increasing dangers were living under Nazi rule and the threat of extermination.

Communication was difficult. Letters were delayed; letters were opened by censors on both sides; and later, letters were returned to the sender. Delays meant that letters crossed each other, and family members on both sides waited anxiously for word – word about the safety and well being of their loved ones; word about the prospects for visas, boat tickets, and the means to escape Nazi-ruled Europe.

These letters were the only means of contact between parents and children, husbands and wives, friends and relatives who had been cruelly divided. As time passed and the hope of



"In the meantime, I beg you again and again, do not lose courage, and support one another as well as you possibly can. Remember, things can't go on like this forever."

The letters in these display cases are those written by family and friends in Nazi-occupied Europe. The letters sent to them are lost. Selected from collections of the HCNC Archives, they provide an intimate view into the events of those years. Each letter is just one small part of a true story of real men, women and children trapped by dangerous events in a terrible time. The love, anguish, persistence, courage and heartbreak they express are a testament to each individual, the lives they led and those they lost.

"When will we see each other again?"

... d. holden a

...children is not!
...to be back home with you



a children!!

already had received
later news

You will be glad
to receive a letter

Zeiten war wir
außen lange, &
dann

...Inzwischen empfa
...Hinter ...

Nr 849. USIT 146/5969
U.S. in response of.
We let you know.
that Berszel Telmar

SAN FRANCISCO C
AMERICAN NATIONAL

To Paula Prager, Klaus Pinkheimers 58/15
Münster / Germany.

San Francisco,
1850 Fulton St

292 525
Nürnberg, 6. Jan. 1941.

CABLES: "JOINTDISCO" NEW YORK
TRANSMIGRATION BUREAU
OF



"Each day is priceless."

"Our situation is such that you have to send us right away, without any delay, the papers and boat passes. Otherwise we are simply destined for the worst fate that is possible."

The Becker family of Poland was divided

Postcard after postcard to Martin and Zelda pled for assistance in obtaining exit visas and boat passes. But they were helpless to rescue the father and brothers who remained in Poland. Despite the terrible obstacles to escape and the deteriorating conditions in Warsaw, in one postcard Tadek reassured his mother that they were managing well and asked her not to worry. Abraham, Tadek and Lolek Becker perished in Treblinka.

My dear!

Just imagine -- we are presently living in Warsaw. Write and send your letters via the Red Cross to Edzia's address..

Our situation is such that you have to send us right away, without any delay, the papers and boat passes. Otherwise we are simply destined for the worst fate that is possible. It is very easy to get papers and boat passes (this is what they told me in the U.S. Consulate) and many people left Poland that way, for example Mr. Orzechowski from Warsaw. Remember that this is our last resort and the only chance to survive. Contact our uncles right away, to tell them that they should do all that is possible to save our lives. They should not procrastinate about anything. Each day is priceless. Send the papers and boat passes for us to the American Consul in Warsaw, 29 Aleje Ujazdowskie. We are begging our uncle, simply falling on our knees, with tears in our eyes. The cost of all of this is very low. Where is Mom right now? Write to us about all of that via the Red Cross (this is the simplest way). Write a letter to our uncles right away about our case. We will not pull through much longer than spring. Regards from all of us to all of you, Tadek.

Translation by Ewa Basinska and Jeffrey Mifflin.

Mój drogi!
 W Warszawie. Sixty pisa do nas przez
 my Ksya na adres Edri:

U. Lipiński
Warschau
ul. Górszewska 11a

ja nara jest tego rodzaju, że
nie nam matylniarst, bo
jej zwłosi musiał papiery i karty
owe, gdyż w przeciwnym razie
my przetracimy poprostu na
stos najgorsze, jakie tylko istnieje.
Karty osiastane teraz b. łatwo,
i mówili w konsulacie U.S.A. i dużo
tak pociągło m. p. Oroszówni
kary. Pamiętaj, że to jest nara
nie dawa natunka i jedyna szansa
ia. Skonsumuj się matylniarst
szansa i niech oni robią wszystko
o mił łine, by uniknąć nara
Niech z niczym nie zwłaczają,
drzwi jest zupełnie drogi.
y i karty osiastane musielicie
as do Konsula amerykańskiego
ranie, ul. Łódzka 29. * Nara
my o to poprostu na ulgach
ui w oszale. Kart tego jest b. mało.
jest teraz szansa? Nara nam
tym przez Czerwony Krzyż (tak najłatwiej)
irz list do misjonar w nara sprawie.
jan do niemu nie dociąganiem
ustony osiastane i dla wszystkich
Tadek

WIDZIANE

CZTOWA



U. Zecker
Carleton College

Northfield, Minn

U. S. A



Deportation from Wiesbaden.
Copyright Foto-Rudolph.

"Now, my dear children, I have to say goodbye, hope and wish all luck is with you. Thanks very much for everything, whatever you did for us. Goodbye and God bless you, your dear mother"

my hope and
March 8
Engelhof
My dear children!!
Whether you ever get
is a question? I try to write
I am alone my thoughts is
especially I am thinking of
will the, maybe he dies, I hope
he goes to death? I had a
about Jan. 4. 1942. He was
to work. I was with him
and even 4 weeks I was

"Whether you ever get this letter is a question."

"Everything is so terrible and I am wondering when they take us away."

The letters of Hans Esberg

Dr. Hans Esberg lived in San Francisco during the war years. His mother remained in Wolfenbüttel, Germany. She wrote a final letter to him in March 1943, shortly before her deportation to Theresienstadt, and entrusted it to a friend to deliver.

When the United States Army was fighting in Germany, this friend passed the letter on to an American soldier, himself an immigrant from Germany. The soldier, Berthold Berlzheimer, translated it into English and sent it to his wife in Los Angeles. Mrs. Berlzheimer in turn sent the letter to Dr. Esberg in San Francisco. But Dr. Esberg's mother had already died in Theresienstadt by the time the letter was received, over two years after it had been written.

He is in concentration camp
From the other people I hear,
It is everything so terrible
when they take us away.
Now I will write
to you dear Father.
right after our Golden Wedding
will be August 42. He had
and lost some of the brain.
better he tried to go every
Bahnhof. I heard a



"We live in the hope that we will be able to embrace you once again."

"I beg you again and again, do not lose courage"

The letters of Mae Berschtel Mendelsohn Mandl

The Berschtel family were among the over 17,000 Polish-born Jews who were forced from their homes and businesses in Germany in late October 1938 and relocated in Poland. Marie (Mae) Berschtel left shortly after for the United States where she married Felix (Peel) Mendelsohn. Mae's brother and his wife escaped to Palestine. Mae's parents and two sisters – Hilde and Anni – remained behind in Poland.

The letters to Mae from her parents and sisters were full of love and concern for her, and downplayed their hardships. The last postcard Mae received, dated October 12 1941, however, provides a glimpse into the privations the family was enduring. Mae Mandl's parents and sisters perished during the Holocaust.

Mae Mandl's parents wrote to her regularly – her father wrote in German and her mother wrote in Yiddish. But even their intimate correspondence was limited by the Nazis. In a letter dated May 22, 1941, Hilda's father tells Mae that writing in Yiddish is no longer permitted: "Mother didn't get to write.. one is only allowed to write in German. "

Anni Berschtel

r. Parents;

211

No letters since October -

Anxious about you - don't lose hope.

Write through Red Cross. Peel and I well
and happy. Love

POLSKI CZERWONY KRZYŻ
Biuro Informacyjne
Warszawa

GRUD. 1942

Mie Mendelschne



Chapter San Francisco

Date March 18, 194

2015 Steiner Street

ADDRESSEE - DESTINATAIRE

Polish

Name BERSZTEL

(Nom)

Christian name Zelman

(Prénom)

Street Polna 17

(Rue)

Locality Otwock

(Localité)

Province near Warsaw

(Province)

BIRTH - NAISSANCE

Lublin - Poland

Place
and Date

1879

(Lieu et Date)

Citizen of Poland

Name first

Bersztel unknown

Relationship to inquirer Father

(Parenté au demandeur)

Country Poland

(Pays)

Reply on the reverse side
Write very legibly

g. g.

28 JUN 1942

Réponse au verso
Ecrire très lisiblement

"Besides this I beg you very much to let me have any available information as to what else or what more could be done to free my poor old parents from Theresienstadt."

The letters of A. Leo Oppenheim

A. Leo Oppenheim and his wife Lilly left Vienna in 1938, and arrived in the United States in 1941. Dr. Oppenheim's sister and her husband also managed to escape Austria. Their elderly parents – Alfred and Johanna Oppenheim – remained behind.

Upon his arrival in the United States, Dr. Oppenheim worked to secure his parents' safety. He obtained visas to Cuba for them, but the entrance of the United States into the war in December 1941 made it impossible for the Oppenheim parents to leave Germany. They were sent to Theresienstadt.

Dr. Oppenheim's efforts to secure his parents' release continued long after their deaths. In 1945, he attempted to have them included in a prisoner exchange for Palestine, not knowing that they had perished in Theresienstadt the year before.



Nazi troops
parade in
Vienna.



ed February

the persons
any. From
ned.
ry 1200
erland.

the
of the
time-
the
by chance.

We are very sorry not to be able to assist you in this matter. We understand how anxious you are to help your parents. But in view of the latest military developments it would not be of any use to apply at this moment for certificates in behalf of the internees of Theresienstadt.

We do hope, that your parents will be amongst those, who are still detained there, and as soon as Tchecho-Slovakia will be liberated, you

"May our dear God protect our loved ones and give them the strength to endure all the horrors."

The letters of Hilda Prager Silberberg

Hilda (Hilde) Prager emigrated to the United States from Germany in late 1938, leaving her mother Paula Prager behind in Nuremberg, Germany. Hilda and her mother enjoyed a close and loving relationship and corresponded frequently. From 1938-1941, Paula Prager wrote to her daughter Hilda weekly.

Hilda's last letter to her mother, dated November 30, 1941, was returned to her in July 1942 with the note: "Return to Sender. Services Suspended." Despite the best efforts of Hilda and her husband Otto Silberberg to bring Mrs. Prager to the United States, she was deported from Nuremberg in early 1942.

Hilda's cousin wrote her on April 29, 1942: "What we have suspected for a long time has now become a fact. [They] have gone on a long journey and it will be a long time until we hear anything from them." Pauline Prager was deported to Izbica, Poland, and perished in an extermination camp.

Hilda kept all her correspondence from family and friends until her death. There were over 135 letters from her mother alone.



Hilda Prager Silberberg

1850 Fulton St.
San Francisco California
November 30 1941

To: Paula Prager
58/ II
Obere Pirkheimer Strasse
Nuremberg, Germany

My Very Dearest Mama:

We received your dear letter and are so happy to learn that you are all in good health and getting by. We are the same, thanks be to God. We never did get the letter, in which you write that we shouldn't do anything else about the Cuba matter (you wrote about that on November 11), and we never got your telegram of November 11. The only one we got was from the Hamburg-America Line (Hapag) on November 20, and we wrote you about that last week.

Dear Mama, it is in no way a sacrifice by us, to do everything for you, and on our side everything has happened so that you might come. We are able to fulfill all the conditions set by Cuba, and would do so only too gladly. As you know, and know better than we do, there is no exit permit, as Hugo telegraphed me on Friday. It was a real blow to us and we only hope, that this is only a temporary measure, and that with God's help we shall see each other soon. In any case, dear little mother, everything is prepared, and at the moment, when you telegraph that you can come, we will take further steps. You can well imagine how awful it is for us to be so near the goal and for everything to be postponed all over again. For the third time now. ... We want to remain brave and not lose our courage. Papa always used to say, the old God still lives and will help us. ... Greet all the dear ones from me. Be kissed and greeted yourself in the most loving way. Hold your head high! In all faithfulness! Your Hilde

San Francisco, Cal. 30.11.47
1850 Fulton St.

Deinen lieben Brief v. 6.11. haben
daraus zu erschen, daß Ihr
auch in sind in d. 2.8.
daß wir nichts mehr in der Leber-
reibe darinnen aus 6.11.) & kein Tele-
halten. Es kann bloß eines aus 20.8.
we ich für schon Briefe vorher geschrieben
ein Opfer von uns, für dich alles
, ist alles geschrieben, daß du
Bedingungen, die von Leber ver-
is nur all zu fern sein. - Wie

My Dear Mother!

I am terribly sorry that everything has been deferred, although not
cancelled; there's no way to fight against current conditions. Keep on
living well and be most lovingly greeted and kissed
Otto

Translation by John Bass



"It is vital that not a single moment be lost as it is a question of life and death.... It depends on you alone."

Harry Goodman was the secretary of Agudath Israel, a political arm of Orthodox Jewry, located in London. He spent the war years desperately trying to rescue Jews trapped in Europe.

These letters, smuggled out of Camp Vittel in France, were written on cigarette paper and the lining of a jacket. They provide names of over 250 Polish Jews about to be deported from the camp to the East, and beg for assistance in saving their lives.



Harry Goodman papers on loan courtesy of Nachman Goodman.

N.F.
LEHEIN ELEONORA

HUSB. IND.
SALOMON + F

CHILDREN
1
2

NATIONALITY
COSTA RICA 1130
11

MESSAGE
SCHEIN CHAIM TEL
- SZWARCBAUD LONG

ZUCKER FALON
SZAPU ROSA
ZURAWIN LIZA
KADYSZ BRUKHA
GETLER STELLA
GEHORSAM BAUMINGER
HELENA

SZYMON -- 1
ADAM 2
KONRAD+M 1
ROMAN+P

HONDURAS 430
" "
PARAGUAY
"

FAMILIES HERE

- 1) SZWARLBARD CHIEL, PERLA, MARTIN [MARTA DEPORTED 7.9.42]
WESTERBOURK HOLLAND NOT ON COSTA RICA PAS. 1911 MESSA
DR. SZWARLBARD QUEENSCOURT QUEENSWAY LONDON W
2) JOSKOWICZ MOSZE, RENIA, JACKLINE. PARAGUAY MESSAGE
FANNY FRIEDMAN LONDON W1 60 CLAREWOOD COURT SE
SISTER FELA SUSS SIDOR BERGAL
3) EISENZWEIG SZYJA, GINA, GUTTA, PARAGUAY MESSAGE
GOODMAN, ARONSON ISRAEL-HAIFA GOULAN STR. 6 1/2. 60
HOROWITZ TELAVIV BEZALEL 9. STERNBUCH SUISSE ST. 6
VADIAM STR. 39
4) MARIA SZPINADEL-KAHAN NATION. BOLIVIA
5) FLORA BUCHNICK LIT. RUS.

**Laszlo N. Tauber, z'l**

A gifted athlete, brilliant surgeon and creative businessman, Laszlo N. Tauber, z'l, was born in Budapest in 1915. Upon graduating from medical school he was designated the acting chief of surgery at the Jewish Hospital, later renamed the International Red Cross Hospital. In 1944 as the Nazis began their persecution, deportation, and murder of Hungarian Jews, Tauber performed surgeries on the wounded and rescued countless Jews by forging identity papers. Tauber escaped to the United States in 1947, giving his first charitable donation of \$250, from his \$1600 annual income, to Walter Reed Army Hospital. "I am a Hungarian Jew who survived the Holocaust," Tauber wrote. "As a token of appreciation, my first savings I would like you to give to a soldier of your choice."

Settling in Washington, D.C., Tauber built a thriving surgical practice, started his own hospital, and created real estate holdings that enabled him to pursue many philanthropic endeavors. Among the numerous important causes Tauber supported was the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust. In 1995 Tauber was given the Medal of Merit, the highest award bestowed by the Red Cross, for his courage in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. Following his death at age 87 in 2002, his children Dr. Ingrid Tauber and Dr. Alfred Tauber established The Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation to continue his philanthropic work. It is through the Foundation's generosity that this exhibition is made possible.

Letters: 1938-1946 is made possible by a grant from the Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation.

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Monday-Thursday
10am - 5pm

Exhibit curated by Judith Janec
Exhibit design by Daniel Buckwald