17 LETTERS:
for the last time and forever
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Introduction

The Montreal Holocaust Museum invites you to discover powerful letters preserved in its collection.

A husband asks his wife to be happy, a mother throws a message of hope to her children from a deportation train, a father leaves his daughter in his brother’s care, and a Jewish soldier discovers the fate of his people in concentration camps.

Some 17 letters, dated between 1941 and 1944, were selected from the Museum’s collection. They were written by people caught in the storm of Nazism and the genocide of European Jews during the Second World War.

The letters were a call for help or held messages of farewell or hope, and these words were often the last traces of life that relatives of Holocaust victims received.

These letters tell us about their writers’ living conditions, hunger, and misery, and, especially, their feelings of despair and even resignation in the face of tragedy. They also illustrate the complex history of the Holocaust and the diversity of lives shattered by a relentless policy of mass murder. Although many of these writers died during the Holocaust, their last few words express a glimpse of their humanity and a symbol of hope for the living.

The texts of these letters were performed during a public reading on the occasion of the International Day in Memory of Holocaust Victims on January 27, 2011, with the participation of the National Theatre School of Canada.

January 27 – the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – was proclaimed the International Day in Memory of Holocaust Victims by the United Nations in 2005. Unless mentioned otherwise, all documents are property of the Montreal Holocaust Museum.
Links to Manitoba’s Curriculum

**Grade 11 & 12 English Language Arts**

- General Learning Outcome Three: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view and represent to manage ideas and information

**Grade 11 - History of Canada**

- Achievements and Challenges (1931-1982)
- Historical Thinking Concepts

**Grade 12 - Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability**

- Oppression and Genocide
- Peace and Conflict

**SPECIFIC CONNECTIONS**

**Grade 11 and Grade 12 English Language Arts: Comprehensive Focus, Literary, and Transactional Focus**

**GLO 3: Students will listen, speak, read, write, view, and represent to manage ideas and information.**

*In Grade 11 and 12 Language Arts, students engage in inquiry projects. Through inquiry projects students:*

- Learn to determine the information needs of each audience
- Develop questions that will be an effective base for inquiry
- Survey their personal knowledge and the resources available to them, and determine the most likely sources of needed information
- Learn to use a wide range of primary and secondary sources
- Appraise and select information for its credibility, relevance, completeness, and suitability to a particular audience
- Work individually or collaboratively to develop and implement inquiry plans and time lines
Grade 11 - History of Canada (new curriculum)

Achievements and Challenges (1931-1982)

• Canada continues to be influenced by issues of war and peace, international relations, and global interactions.
• Global interdependence challenges Canadians to examine and redefine the responsibilities of citizenship

Historical Thinking Concepts

• Use primary sources
• Cause and consequences
• Take historical perspectives
• Ethical dimensions

Grade 12 - Global Issues: Citizenship and Sustainability

Oppression and Genocide Area of Inquiry

Understanding a contemporary world issue (oppression and genocide)

Students are encouraged to consider:

• What constitutes genocide? Define the terms genocide and human rights.
• Use as cultural reference points the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)
• Whether crimes by different categories of people less likely to be viewed as crimes, to result in an arrest, to be brought to trial, to result in a conviction, to lead to punishment or imprisonment or the death penalty, and so on?
• How is genocide experienced differently by different groups in society (genders, class, cultures, religions, ability...)?

Peace and Conflict Areas of Inquiry

Understanding Concepts of Peace and Conflict

Inquiry questions related to peace and conflict issues may include the following:

• What elements should be present/absent in order for peace to occur?
• Are there different kinds of peace? Can you describe them?
• What effect does inner peace have on external circumstances?
• Aside from the individuals/groups in conflict, who else is affected by conflict (e.g., innocent civilians in national armed conflicts, children in parental conflicts, etc.)? How are they affected (e.g., emotionally, physically, intellectually, etc.)?
• How do people of different ages or gender experience and/or deal with conflict differently?
Teaching with Primary Sources in the History Classroom

To make sure that students can learn from the documents available at the Museum, we propose that you introduce them to a five-step approach to critical analysis of sources. In addition, before you have them read these texts, take time to ask your students what they already know about the Holocaust and what they would like to learn by looking at these primary source documents.

Glossary

*Primary source document:* A document written by an actor in or witness to the events recounted. Examples include, but are not limited to, testimonies, travel literature, legal codes, letters, newspaper articles of the time, and inscriptions on tablets (stone, clay, or wood).

*Secondary source document:* A document written by a person who analyzes, comments on, or interprets primary source documents. Examples include, but are not limited to, works of non-fiction on historical subjects, novels, magazine articles, and websites.

*Fact:* Information that can be verified.

*Opinion:* A personal perspective, often arbitrary, not based on facts.
1. Preliminary Reading

The first step is to have students read the document and then locate the subject and the main topics of the document.

2. External analysis

External analysis of a document deals with the context in which the document was produced: the date, the identity of its author, his or her intention, the nature of the document. Students must then answer the following questions:

- What is the date of this document? (When was it written?)
- Who is the author?
- Is the author an actor in or a witness to the events recounted?
- For whom is this document written?
- For what purpose has it been written?
- Is this document an original or a translation?
- Is this a summary or a complete text?

3. Internal analysis

Internal analysis of the document focuses on its content. It should highlight the information and facts contained in the document. To do this, students answer the following questions:

- What is the main subject of this document? (general)
- What are the topics? (more specific)
- Does the author present facts or opinions?
- Is the content reliable? (Does it match with what is already known on this subject?)
4. **Interpretation**

Once the review is complete, students can pursue their historical thinking in trying to make sense of the content and themes that they found. To do this, they answer the following questions:

- What was learned from reading the document?
- For what purpose could the document be useful?
- Does the document answer the questions we had about this historical event?
- Which questions does it answer?

5. **Questioning and research**

If you wish, you can use these documents as a basis for students to conduct historical research. From the topics identified in steps 3 and 4, students can formulate questions to go further in their exploration of the subject matter and then proceed with the research in order to find answers. In doing so, they identify the subtext of those letters and raise questions that will help them get a better overview of the historical event.
Student Questionnaire

1. What is the context in which this document was produced?
Who is the author?

Who is the letter for?

Why was it written?

Is it an original document or a translation?

Is it an excerpt or a complete reproduction?

2. What is the content of the letter?
What is the main topic of the letter? (in general terms)

What are the themes discussed? (in specific terms)

What do we learn about the author’s quality of life?

Does the author use facts or opinions? (Use examples to back up your answer)
Is the content realistic? (Does it correspond to what we already know on the topic)? Use examples to back up your answer.


What do we learn about the Holocaust through this letter?


3. What is the historical value of the document?
Would you use this letter as a source for a historical research project?


If you were conducting a historical research project on the Holocaust, how could this letter be used? What specific event or phenomena could it illustrate?
List of documents

1. Postcard sent from Warsaw ghetto (Poland) to Paris (France) on February 19, 1942. Language: Polish. The letter is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition.

2. Postcard sent from Warsaw ghetto (Poland) to Paris (France) on May 18, 1942. Language: Polish. The letter is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition.

3. Postcard sent from the Warsaw ghetto (Poland) to Moscow (Russia) on May 30, 1941. Language: Polish.

4. Letter sent from Ukraine on September 19, 1941. Language: Russian.

5. Letter from Willy Deutz, state police jail, Darmstadt (Germany), April 6, 1943. Language: German.

6. Letter from Paula Deutz to her husband for his birthday, Offenbach am Main (Germany), July 11, 1943. Language: German.

7. Postcard addressed to Paula Deutz, Offenbach am Main (Germany), from husband Willy Deutz, interned in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp (Poland), on July 25, 1943. Language: German. The letter is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition.

8. Death notice for Willy Deutz, Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp (Poland), September 7, 1943. Language: German. The notice is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition and part of stop 308 in the app.

9. Letter written by Bella Kaminski from the train deporting her to Auschwitz, date unknown, Belgium. Language: German. The letter is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition and stop 109 in the app. Bella’s daughter’s video testimony accompanies the letter in the app.

10. Last letter sent to Lothar Lewin in the internment camp in Sherbrooke (Canada) from his parents in Berlin (Germany), January 6, 1943. Language: German.
11. Postcard written by Otto Bondy to his children, Malines transit camp (Belgium), September 20, 1943. Language: German. The letter is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition.


14. Smuggled letter from the Bund Coordinating Committee in Warsaw ghetto (Poland) to Charles Kotkowski in Piotrkow (Poland) forced labour camp, 1943. Languages: Polish and English. The letter is featured in the Museum’s permanent exhibition and stop 113 in the app. Charles’ video testimony accompanies the letter in the app.

15. Letter from a Hungarian father (in Hungary) to his brother living as a refugee in Italy, March 26, 1944. Language: Hungarian.

16. Letter from a Hungarian mother (in Hungary) to her sister-in-law, March 26, 1944. Language: Hungarian.

17. Letter written by Saul Stein to his father, Ben Stein, in Montreal (Canada) while serving in the RCAF, Germany, April 30, 1945. Language: English. The letter is part of stop 116 in the app.
Document 1
Warsaw, February 19, 1942

Beloved Mom & Beloved Ala,

We received your cards for which we thank you, but of what value are simple words of thanks compared to what you and Ala are doing for us? I really don’t know how to thank you for what you are doing for us. It means so much to us, and this keeps us alive.

I’m selling some of the things from all the parcels I receive, shoes, margarine, and other things, and I live on the proceeds.

I was late in answering your letter because I was waiting for the parcel of clothing, the green suit, the shirt & socks that I received, as well as a fur collar, but if possible send me clothing and maybe also shoes for Andzia.

I have received a notice from the post office. They have a parcel of clothing for me but there seems to be some problem and it will take some time to get it.

Dear Ala, I thank you for everything you do for me. I regret that I can’t return the favours you do for me, but I will do so when conditions are better.

Sadness at present at the Racimorases’ because Mr. Racimoras died Feb 15th of pneumonia. They received a parcel about five to six weeks ago and they thank you for your regards.

Blincia and Mordche thank you. As well, regards from them, everything is well with them, I haven’t seen Andzia for a long time because they moved elsewhere and I don’t know where.

So be healthy, I send you regards from everyone, regards to Izak, Adela & Eliza, regards to your husband, thank the children for the shoes on my behalf.
Document 2
Warsaw, May 18, 1942

Dear Everyone,

After waiting for some time I finally received your card in which you write that you sent cards & parcels. Unfortunately we haven’t received anything yet, and we don’t know what to think. Beniek sent two cards and had no replies.

You must be wondering why Beniek doesn’t write. He left in April for Uncle Obozorski. If you receive letters from him, conditions are not bad, reply, don’t worry about him.

Rosette and I beg Grandma & Auntie to send parcels because they should be sent to Beniek. Nothing new with us, we are healthy, what’s new with you? How is your health? Do you have work?

Mrs. Racinora is asking why she is not receiving any letters and parcels. Dear Ala, if possible, please send the old clothing you are not wearing anymore to me because I’m in need of a coat. I received only sleeves. Be healthy, I kiss you.

Regards, Rosette
Dragi mizaniku,

Na čekam na odgovor, ipak ću vas drugi čestovite drugu poslužiti, ali je ta tema endesetna kritikovana. Promenit ću drugi rozenku ni neutređen me ni još uvijek svi demokratske osobe. Jedino da se može reći da je teško da se ne promijeni ni u kontinuiranoj glasnostiji, ali se mora poštovati obilježen jezik. Nekada su ističući da mi je neophodno imati navode o tome da se ne smiješa s ostalim materijalima.

Crajevina je i treći person.

Draga Sonja,

Sve dobro mi je i dalje dobro;

Darina, darina, darina i darina;

Druge nekada;

Zbog čega mi je i dalje dobro;

Darina, darina, darina i darina;

Za svakoga se i dalje dobro.

Iako Renata, poslanaš i ne dozvoljena da je i dalje dobro, svi nekada;

Darina, darina, darina i darina;

Za svakoga se i dalje dobro.

Sve dobro, poslanaš i ne dozvoljena da je i dalje dobro;

Darina, darina, darina i darina;

Za svakoga se i dalje dobro.

Iako Renata, poslanaš i ne dozvoljena da je i dalje dobro, svi nekada;
Postcard sent from the Warsaw ghetto (Poland) to Moscow (Russia) on May 30, 1941

Dear Uncle!

I am not waiting for an answer and I am writing a second letter to you. I received your second parcel, for which we are very grateful. Please, my dear uncle, do not forget us. We are in a very critical situation. We don’t have enough money for a piece of bread. We are starving every day, but we have no choice but to hope that something will come from you. All the best regards to all of you. Your niece, Chaya.

Dear Renia, there is a little place left on the card so I am trying to write a few words. How are you? Are you healthy? How is your child? Is your husband working? Your sister, Chaya.

Dear Mrs. Renia, thank you for the little note. My mother received the second parcel. This is her only food. Unfortunately, we can’t help her too much – we are starving ourselves. Please remember them and see what you can do for them. Dorka.
Дорогие дети. Итак сегодня 16 сентября 1941 года. После всех переживаний дальше жить невозможно. К тому вывезли всех евреев и укрываться негде. Все близкие друзья и соседи боятся укрывать до наступления лучшего времени. И правда, а потому будьте навсегда здоровы. Целую и жму Вас крепко в последний раз, навсегда.

Не волнуйтесь. И некого обвинять. Бабушку забрали машиной, где дедушка и мама не знают.

Бац отец. Билич.
Dear children,

Today is Sept. 19, 1941. It’s impossible to continue to live after these horrible experiences. All Jews have been taken away and there is no place to hide. Close friends are afraid to hide us until better times come. And they are right.

I kiss you and hug you tight for the last time, and forever. There’s no one to blame.

Grandma was taken away by the car. I don’t know where Grandpa and Mother are.

Your father. Billich.
Document 5

[Image of the document]
Darmstadt Police State Jail
Sender: Willy Israel Deutz
Darmstadt, April 6, 1943

Dear Paula, I am well so far. Please bring a large towel, soap, a leather tying belt, tooth powder, and a set of laundry, if permitted, in a large briefcase. A set of cutlery, no knives, drinking cups. My work boots would have to be resoled. You will have to find the material for everything. Collar, tie, and sport shirt or polo shirt. All most cordial congratulations and all the best for your birthday, belated! Did you spend the day well? Did you have visitors? I always think of you. Perhaps you can send more bread, but more thickly cut and more thinly spread. Did you speak to Herbernack and did you pick up my belongings? You could shorten the blue suit from there. But everything has to be done in a way that it can be put together and possibly carried under the arm. Do you manage with the (amount of) leather? Do you think about the possibility of taking in “subtenants”? How is your relationship with Isl’s wife? I get along with him as well as with the others.

For the heavy boots you will find nails, some leather, and a horseshoe. I hope you don’t hang your head and live as withdrawn as I do. Haas’s wife is particularly interesting, since she travelled a lot. Try to get in contact with her. She spoke to her husband yesterday. Please send Leucicot-creme, powder, and dishcloth.

Did you ever hear anything about Arab and Maggie? I hope Aunt’s leg is well again. Is Uncle Praimham healthy and have you gone there sometimes? I hope that I will get a detailed account from you.

Are you still going to the beauty salon to get your hair cut on Saturdays? My greatest concern is that you take care of yourself and eat properly as well! I need foot rags, large size if possible, so that I do not get holes in my socks. Did you give the wooden box to Mrs. Maier? We have nevertheless felt so much so deeply in our 14-year marriage that it would be enough now, if only we would be together again.

All my thoughts and concerns are with you and your acquaintances. Stay healthy and happy; it is better to take someone into the apartment than to move out. Write detailed news as soon as possible. Stay in contact with the others.

Greetings and kisses,

Your loving Willy.
Mein lieber, mit Geburtstag feiert, soll ganz gebührlich
richtig sein zu finden, das Anrufen noch nicht adressiert zu
Marry ist so schön, daheim neigen Haf, möcht fehlen Deiner Hand, ihr Drinnen an meinem Herzen Spuren zu
Was magst die seine, som wie bi geben, Wert, was nicht drinnen bringen
Doch hoff ich, auf eure Wünsche
This letter, written on July 11, 1943, was never sent because Paula was receiving no news from her husband and did not know where he was interned at that time.

For you dear Willy, on July 11, 1943

It’s my darling’s birthday today, 
would love to congratulate (him), 
would love to send him my wishes. 
However, I don’t know where to address them.

Woeful and fearful is my heart.  
Would like to feel your hands,  
Press you against my wounded heart  
and in your heart speak of love.

Where might you be, how are you doing,  
I may not think of it.  
Still I hope for our reunion  
God will bestow you upon me once again.

May he (God) give you daily strength 
to endure everything 
that the human mind so gruesomely creates.  
may you never quail.

A time will come, it won’t,  
when we will have each other again.  
Then we will in happiness  
move on through our life.

Your Paula
Document 7
The letter, sent on July 25, 1943 from the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, was received only on September 29.

My dear Paula!

So far I’m well and I hope you’re well, too. Please contact me soon. Letters and parcels are allowed. Please send a washcloth, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap. Please write extensively, if you write. Don’t worry about me, I’m fine. I’m waiting desperately for your stories. For today, best wishes, heartfelt greetings, and kisses.

Intimately yours,

Willy
Konzentrationslager Auschwitz
Kommandantur/Abt. II.

Anr.: 14 f. 9/13/Qu.

Betr.: Willy Israel Deutz
Bez.: Ohne
Anh.: 1 Sterbeurkunde
An Frau
Paula Deutz,
Offenbach a/Main
Bahnhorstr. Nr. 26

Ihr Ehemann
ist am 25. 8. 1943
in den Folgen von Septischer Phlegmone
im Heiligen Krankenhaus gestorben.
Die Todesursache wurde am 29. 8. 1943 im staatlichen Krematorium eingetragen.

Falls Sie die Übernahme der Urne mit den Ascheuraten des Verstorbenen wünschen, dann ist von Ihnen eine Bestellung der derzeitigen Friedhofsam verwaltung einzusetzen. Aus dieser Bestellung ist hervorgegangen, daß der eine Stätte für die Beisetzung vorhanden ist. Nach Eingang

der Bestellung wird die Urne der Friedhofsam verwaltung kostenfrei überreicht. Die Friedhofsam verwaltung wird rechtzeitig von dem Verwandt bestätigt.

Die Sterbeurkunde wird Ihnen unliegend überreicht.

Her Leiter der Abteilung II
[Unterschrift]

Auschwitz, den 7. September 1943
Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Command, Department II

Auschwitz, September 7th, 1943

Concerning: Willi Israel Deutz
To: Paula Deutz
Attachment: Notice of Death

Your husband, born 11 July 1898, died in our hospital on 25 August 1943, as a result of septic phlegmon. The corpse was cremated on 29 August 1943 in the governmental crematorium.

If you would like the urn with the remaining ashes of the deceased, you must send us a certificate from your cemetery director. This certificate must state that there is a plot available for the remains. After receipt of this certificate, we will forward the urn to the cemetery free of charge. The cemetery director will be advised beforehand of this shipment.

The death certificate is enclosed.

Chief of Section II
SS Second Lieutenant
Letter written by Bella Kaminski from the train deporting her to Auschwitz, date unknown, Belgium

I'm leaving, am healthy, don't worry, with the help of God we will soon see each other again.
Berlin den 6. I. 43

Mein lieber, guter Sohn,

Sicher werden wir abgeholt und
müssen die Fahrt in's Ungewisse
antragen. Wir werden dir verständig
wirrer helfen können und hoffen,
that this Abschied nicht endgültig
sein wird, sondern mit Gottes Hilfe
in der Tat noch möglich ist.

Hebe des Indenken an deine Eltern
hoch und versuche etwas für uns
zu thun, falls irgendwie möglich.
Wir stehen in Gottes Hand und
fürchten uns seiner Willen.
Tausch meine Grüße mit Kisse
von deiner tiefsten Eltern

Yuri

1000 Rine Seine Eltern
Last letter sent to Lothar Lewin in the internment camp in Sherbrooke (Canada) from his parents

Our dear, good son,

Right now we are being picked up and have to begin our journey into the unknown. For the time being we are sending you our last greetings and hope that this farewell will not be final but that, with the help of God, we'll meet again.

Keep up the memory of your parents and try to help us, if at all possible.

We are in God's hands now and will comply with His will.

A thousand heartfelt greetings and kisses from your faithful parents.

Daddy

1000 kisses, your Mom
Document 11

Image of an old letter and a postcard with handwritten text and a stamp. The letter contains a personal message, possibly written during World War II, and the postcard features a advertisement for 'Méral'.
Otto was a prisoner of the Malines transit camp (Belgium)
Hasselt, 20/9/43 (September 20, 1943)

Dear Family,

We are still on this journey. I cannot complain, there is much variety on this journey.

Someone tried to escape and was shot but not killed. It was bad luck that I lost my good shoes.
The journey goes to Holland (Haeren). I hope we can write from there. It should be a good camp - secluded. We are together with people from Belg. J.

Greetings and kisses

Otto
Document 12

[Image of a handwritten letter and envelope]
Dear Mother,

We are on our way to Holland, don't be worried, we are well and we are very cheerful because we know that we'll soon return home. W. will always bring the money to you as in the past. Give him also this letter to read. We are already on the Dutch border. You know me and Otto, we don't lose our courage. We received all parcels and letters. I'll write again as soon as I can.

1000 kisses

Gretl
Letter from Teddy Liebowitz to Wladek Biberkraut smuggled out of Warsaw ghetto (Poland) 1942

Dear Wladek,

I have written to you before, but that letter was probably lost. I told you a lot in that letter.

Heniek, Olek, Salek, and I stayed together all the time, and also did everything jointly. Recently, Olek left us and joined p. in the g. area. He is doing well there and isn’t allowed to leave without permission. Heniek is dumb. He doesn’t know what he wants – the moron. It would be best to leave this place, but it’s impossible.

You have no idea how many weapons are in our possession, also lots of eggs.

In any case, there will be a fight for every stone and window, and of course, it may be the end of us. Remember the plan we had before you left the ghetto? Your go-between is useless, or am I mistaken?

This is most likely my last letter going this way. In any case, you should know that I didn’t go like a sheep!

There is a possibility that we will be taken into the forest after the battle. In any case, remember all I told you!

See you on Broadway!

Regards to the Felenboks. A son’s kiss for your mother. A brotherly kiss for your sister!

Until our next meeting,

Your Teddy
Smuggled letter from the Bund Coordinating Committee in Warsaw ghetto (Poland) to Charles Kotkowski in Piotrkow (Poland) forced labour camp, 1943

Dear comrades!

We are sending the sum of 20,000 zlotys to Chil Kotkowski, so that in the meanwhile you should not suffer from hunger. We the Coordinating Committee and the Jewish fighting organization are very pleased to be able to help you, so that you will not lose your self-respect and courage. For the Coordinating Committee, Henryk Wiktorsi
Válaszolat

Kedves Neitzén,

És úgy, hogy soha sem fogjátok egyetemre erősíteni. Ám ha úgy fogjátok elfogadni, hogy még mindig értékelj az életemet, kérlek, ne engedjétek neki megnyomni a kezemet.

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Kedves Neitzén,
Letter from a Hungarian man to his brother living as a refugee in Italy

Puszta Csataszőg, March 26, 1944

My dear Brother,

Fate has chosen you to survive the horrors of this inferno, and when it is over, you will resume your life. It has not been as kind to us, and now we are standing on the brink of extinction! I turn to you with a brotherly request.

Our darling little Marika in all probability will survive this cataclysm. I implore you, please take her and bring her up as your own. I beg you, take our place and be mother and father to her! You will see what a sweet, affectionate child she is, and in return she will shower you with a child’s innocent love and gratitude.

Her inheritance, I believe, will cover the expenses of her upbringing, but if it does not, I beg you, please support her, educate her, and steer her toward a serious profession so that she will grow up to be a fulfilled, self-reliant adult.

I leave to my darling little Marika Csataszöög, with all the surrounding land, livestock and machinery (except one tractor and one combine) as well as all the crops, one third of the house in Szolnok (Madach u. 43), one third of the money from our mother, and all my other worldly goods.

Dear Brother! I beseech you be her loving father, not only her guardian, in my stead.

May God be with you and with all of us.

Pistu
Document 16
Letter from a Jewish Hungarian mother to her sister-in-law living as a refugee in Italy.
Hungary, March 26, 1944

My dear Hedy!

With heavy heart and infinite sadness we bear this heavy burden that is ours. I don’t know if you can understand what I felt when I had to part with my six-and-a-half-month-old angelic darling little Marika so her life could be spared. We are doing this because we believe that you will survive this horrific inferno and that you will take our Marika in with love. I know it is unnecessary to ask you to bestow your parental love on her. At six months she is already so sweet that it is impossible not to adore her.

I implore you, nurture her and steer her toward a lucrative career so that she will grow up to be a well-educated self-sufficient adult.

I beg the good Lord to give you strength to bear the responsibility of guardianship of our little girl and bring her up as we would have done, so that she never lacks love and attention. May the Almighty bless you and guide you throughout your lives.

Take care of our darling little Marika.

I will always think of you with warmest sisterly love.

Zsugsi
Document 17

[Image of a handwritten letter from a concentration camp]

From my brothers and sisters,

I am writing this letter to keep you all informed about our condition. We are confined in a small cell, and we have very little room to move around. The food is rotten, and we are suffering from hunger. I am writing to you now, because I want to tell you about our situation. We are in a concentration camp, and we are being treated badly. We are not allowed to see our families, and we are not allowed to speak with each other. We are in a hurry to get out of here, but we are not sure when we will be able to do so. We are very worried about our future, and we are not sure what will happen to us.

Yours truly,
[Handwritten signature]

[Date]

[Note: The handwriting is difficult to read, and the text is a translation of the original German text.]
Letter written by Saul Stein to his family in Montreal, somewhere in Germany

April 30, 1945

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am writing this letter to each and every one of you at home and also my friends.

After what I have seen and experienced yesterday has left me completely heartbroken.

It is something that will forever remain in my mind. As you know the Allies are overrunning Germany today and as they pass on they are liberating concentration camps and prisoner of war camps. This is what I want you to know that your brother Saul was the first Canadian Jewish boy to enter a concentration camp filled with Jews. It was also the first concentration camp the Allies liberated. The name of the camp I cannot disclose but it is one of the largest the Germans had. It is a long story how I got to know of this camp. I do expect to derive any publicity from this but I will only give you a few facts about this camp.

After three and one half years I have finally found out for myself what I am fighting for, to liberate our own Jewish people and other nationalities. Our Jewish padre from 2nd T.A.F. came to see us Thursday night and the first thing he said to the Jewish boys that he needs help. He described the picture to us but after a while broke down.

We gave him whatever food we had and he left for the camp to feed a few people. The next day we made a collection of food, candy, and cigarettes from our wing. The donations were tremendous and everyone gave whatever they had with their full heart and soul. It took myself, our Protestant padre and another Jewish lad to collect all the donations with my section's truck. By the time we got through the truck was loaded and it was impossible to pack in any more. In the evening the padre came back from the concentration camp and I showed him all the stuff. He was surprised to see how well response was from the wing.

The next morning we left for the camp. My boss and another lad from the office came along. They wanted to see what the inside of one of these places looked like. When we arrived there we had to wait a while before we could unload the food. Before entering the camp we had to bee deloused with a spray gun as the place was full of lice. There was also a danger sign of “Typhus” which you know is a very dangerous disease but we all had inoculations against it.

While waiting the Jewish padre showed us around the camp. I have never yet seen so many people in all my life in one camp. There were dead bodies sprawled outside wherever we walked. Those who are living look practically dead and everyone is starving from hunger. The army is trying their utmost to clear out the camp and get them to hospitals. The main problem is food and medical supplies. I cannot begin to describe to you how grim the picture is. We have got to do something for these people immediately as they are dying like flies. Our own people must help them. I never dreamt that one day I would see such horrible scenes. I can’t believe how there could be such a fanatic race as the bloody German people. The greatest pleasure I had in the camp was to see German prisoners load the dead and believe me the army is working the ass off them. This is just a few of the things which I can tell you, but when I get home I am going to see what I can do to help them. If only more people would see this camp they would realize how they were tortured by the Germans. I never slept all night thinking of that camp.

You were told all this but your brother who is there to see all this and who was the first one to visit a concentration camp. Kindly relate all this to Micky and see whether he can write an article in the “Y” Beacon. Cheerios for now and the best of luck. Hoping to see you all soon.

Saul
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