

The excerpts below are from *After All that Pain and Anguish: First Letters After Liberation*, edited by Robert Rozett and Iael Nidam-Orvieto.

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2.6.45

Dear Nesia!

I, who only four weeks ago existed as no. 87292 in the concentration camp Mathausen [sic], was, like all other companions in misery, destined for the crematorium, but I survived and am alive!

I am alive and healthy! This is something unusual!

A new-born human being, your brother, Benek!

I have an opportunity to write a letter, first one after many years, to you and to Bronka!

Thoughts jostle with each other, it's very hard to concentrate, so much to talk about, but it's difficult at a distance. Pain constricts the heart, the hand trembles! The criminals who divided Europe, not being able to put their diabolical plan into practice, decided that at least with regard to the Jews they would be consistent, in which, unfortunately, they succeeded. European Jewry, particularly Polish Jewry, was destroyed, and our families torn apart. It was terrible, but unfortunately I had to go through it myself...

I have no information whatsoever about my loved ones. I turned to the Red Cross to inquire about them. I would like very much to be at home, perhaps I could see some of ours, or learn something about them. However, I decided not to return to Poland for good, no such journey is possible at the moment. For this reason I have to give up on that for the time being.

Heartfelt greetings, Benek



Bernard Zucker,  
Yad Vashem Photo Archives

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Brno 13.10. 45

My dearly beloved Ned,

In the meantime [since I last wrote] I received your two letters on 27/9, and as you know, my birthday is on 25/9. Your letters were the most wonderful gift, thank you, for you have made me very happy. Nadénko, I too would give everything to be able to see you, only to feel you close, to feel your hands – without the need to talk – because everything I witnessed and endured during those last 4 years cannot be told or written down. It is beyond human imagination. No one who has witnessed Oświęcim [Auschwitz] – that concentration camp – will be able to become human again in his lifetime – will never – never ever be able to forget the horror.

Nadénko, we have no mother – she was gassed – the most wonderful and divine has been taken from us in such a bestial way. Then I went with Fritz – namely to Auschwitz. On arrival, we were separated – and Fritz, the man that I loved endlessly – does not live anymore – gassed...

... Oddly enough, we survived. Totally exhausted – I weighed 32 or 34 kilos [70-75 pounds], I do not remember anymore – the Russians took us (our escape took us to the frontline) into their care. After many detours through Germany, Russia, Poland, Hungary – Slovakia, I arrived in Brno in May. The horror grabbed me – an utterly devastated city – I walked through the streets that were so dear and precious to me – and cried my heart out – the parents dead, Max dead, my brothers somewhere on the globe – the friends dead – nothing remained – only the two small houses...

[unsigned]

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[undated]

My dearest brothers and sister!

We received your letters from Oct. 25 and Oct. 28. I am your sister Hava who is writing this letter to you. Your sister who miraculously managed to escape the clenched jaws of the vicious dogs. What more can I say to you, my dearests? Trust me, I don't know where to begin. Shall I start with the monstrous crimes the fascist dogs committed? The many different methods they used to murder us all? You have surely read all about it. Those who never lived through these experiences are obviously incapable of comprehending them. We endured hellish years. We were forced to witness with our own two eyes how our dear parents, brothers and sisters were led to the slaughterhouse, and we ourselves waited for the day we would be slaughtered, knowing full well there was nothing we could do to prevent it. We saw with our own two eyes how the streets were swamped with our blood.

Yes, my dearests, we are no longer human beings because we don't have any human feelings left, except for the awful pain in our hearts. There is no solace for us and there will never be until the day we die....

Now I am asking myself: Where shall I go? Whom will I meet at home? To whom shall I go? There is no home, there is nobody. Only graves and ruins are awaiting me... I traveled home knowing I would find there only ruins.

Just imagine how it is to live in our own town where all of us used to be together. Every path and every street is drowned with blood and reminds us of so many things. One must be as tough as nails in order to be able to endure all this. And we are strong, yet, at the same time, petrified and frozen.

...I am closing my writing. Stay well and strong.

Your sister who is thinking only of you,  
Hava.