

TWO LETTERS FROM KUTNO GHETTO

by Bella WALCER, Buenos Aires
translated from the Yiddish by Shoulamit Auvé-Szlaifer

These letters were written in *Konstancja*¹ on May 2, 1941 (in German) and October 13, 1941 (in Polish) and sent to Buenos Aires, to mother and sister. Donation for Yizkor Book by: S. Walcer, Buenos Aires.

Konstancja, May 2, 1941

My darlings,

I received the letter with the money. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You made it possible to keep the children alive. I immediately bought bread, made hot drinks and gave them to them. The children were happy that Yente sent the money. They will be able to eat their fill. Imagine how terrible our situation is. Here, in the ghetto, we have no possibility of income, the children have nothing to eat. When they ask for bread, I always say that when we are with daddy, we will have everything. Except that at the same time I cry because the pain is immense, when no child can be given a simple piece of dry bread. They are extremely weak, can barely stand. Thank

goodness, my son and I were already released from the hospital in February. I'm barely coming back to life. Returning from the dead. The doctor said people rarely recover from such a serious illness. And after this serious illness, I have to face such difficult conditions, I have to



The letter from Bella Lustigman-Walcer

fight against hunger. I don't speak for myself but my children's pain is much worse and I find it hard to stand.

¹ TN: name of the sugar factory of Kutno, where the ghetto was.

Now, I share with you the last letter I received from Chana in December, from Lemberg². She writes to me that Salomon was sent to deepest Russia because they had registered to return to Poland. They were all sent there. Salomon had signed up. Since then, I have not received any mail from him. If Salomon had been in Lemberg now, he could have helped us a little. Because from Russia, they can now send parcels. Those who have relatives or acquaintances there often get help. This is how business is in the ghetto. We must be hungry.

My darlings! I beg you not to forget us. Continue to



Postcard from Łęczyca to Paris

eat at our uncle's place anymore. I sold my garnet coat, which I only wore twice, and also other things, wedding rings, etc. I received the warm clothes for the children on the eve of Yom Kippur. I had not a penny left; I sold the warm clothes for 22 marks, so that I could buy something for the child. I had no choice left, to buy something for the child for the holidays. I cried bitterly over the sad fate that befalls me, to have to sell such a gift.

My dear ones, I forgot to wish you a happy new year. Stay healthy and may we soon see you and Nathan



... and from Kutno to New York

help us. It's very rude of me to ask for money again right after receiving some, but we are in dire need and I want to keep my children alive. May Solomon be in good health, he always did what was necessary for it. I greet everyone very warmly and thank you once again for your help.

From me, Bella Walcer

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Dear Roza!

I'm glad you now have a son, who is named Fishel as far as I know. To you, the parents, I wish an easy raising and happiness. I ask you once again, Roza, don't forget us. I salute you, your husband and your dear son.

From me, Bella.

My address: Dvora Eilenberg-Lustigman, Kutno-Konstancja, Council of Elders.

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(Second Letter)

Kutno, October 13, 1941

Dear mother, sister and dear children!

I can thank all four of you for all the packages I have received from you. The sweater, warm clothes for Lonien, shirts and a package for the child. Everything was received, one after another, at long intervals. Immediately after, my dear ones, I sent you two small postcards and a letter. You, my darlings, did not receive them. Now I will write to you about me.

I have been living in our own home and at our expense with my wife and child for a long time. We don't

again. This is our wish.

At present, my dear ones, there is no work for us that would allow us to earn some money. We live as we can. I walk around with shoes that have no soles, because they are very expensive here, well beyond my means.

Dear sister, I am writing this letter as I am alone, maybe you could send us some clothes, such as woollens, if you have any. I'll deal with it because otherwise I don't know what fate awaits the three of us. We don't have an ounce of fat left since Pesach. Maybe it would be possible to send something like that.

Now, dear sister, thank you for the packages you sent. My wife will write more to you because I have a headache. Help me as much as you can. I salute you from afar and send kisses to my beloved mother, sister and her children,

Itzik, Sonia, Shlomo

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Dear sister³, write to tell me where Nathan is and ask him to write us a few words. A special greeting for Nathan from all of us. Stay healthy, answer quickly.

It is only when I receive something for the child from you that can I give him something.

Just one thing, Sonia, he doesn't particularly like the "Nestlé". Send something else instead. Manna porridge, or little gnocchi, or sugar and a little fat – white goose fat or coconut butter, so that I have some fat to put on for some

² TN: Lviv, in Ukraine.

³ TN: This part seems be written by the wife of the previous author, named Sonia, as being the person to whom she is speaking, which makes it a bit confusing...

time, because we continuously live without any. Besides, my dear, I am returning the coupons to you, because they are not valid for us. I would have written you a letter before the holidays but, word of honor, I didn't have enough money to even buy a stamp. I used the money for the bread and I wrote this letter. You wanted to know if Sonia⁴ was healthy again – yes, she is healthy. Edzhe also receives money from her brothers and, from time to time, a package. Sister-in-law Ruzha also received all the parcels and wrote you two cards. She and her beloved little girl, who keeps telling you all the time that she's going to visit you, are in good health. About my son, no evil eye, I can't write so much; as soon as he reads your letters and sees what I receive, he shows them to everyone who comes home and says it is from his aunt. Now I wonder,

aunt, if Malka has been married for a long time. It looks like it's been two years now.

The Fast gave birth to a son, some weeks ago. Mania Nosol married Wolkowicz, they already have a baby girl some months old. Hinda-Ratza's son is dead. I have a lot to write to you about some acquaintances, but it will be for another time. You ask if our bread is expensive for us. With the ration tickets, 80 pfennigs for two kilos and without the ticket, five times more. In Warsaw they use only zlotys, so it does not cost as much with a ticket, but without a ticket it costs as much. Ask about feathers. We Jews are not entitled to it; we sell what we have.

We all greet you and kiss you from afar. We hope to see you soon. Write to me about Nathan. A special greeting for him. Write if he lives with Aunt Keila-Masha. From your

Sonia

⁴ TN: It seems that the author of this part speaks about herself in the third person singular form.