



# In Their Own Words

Diaries from the Holocaust

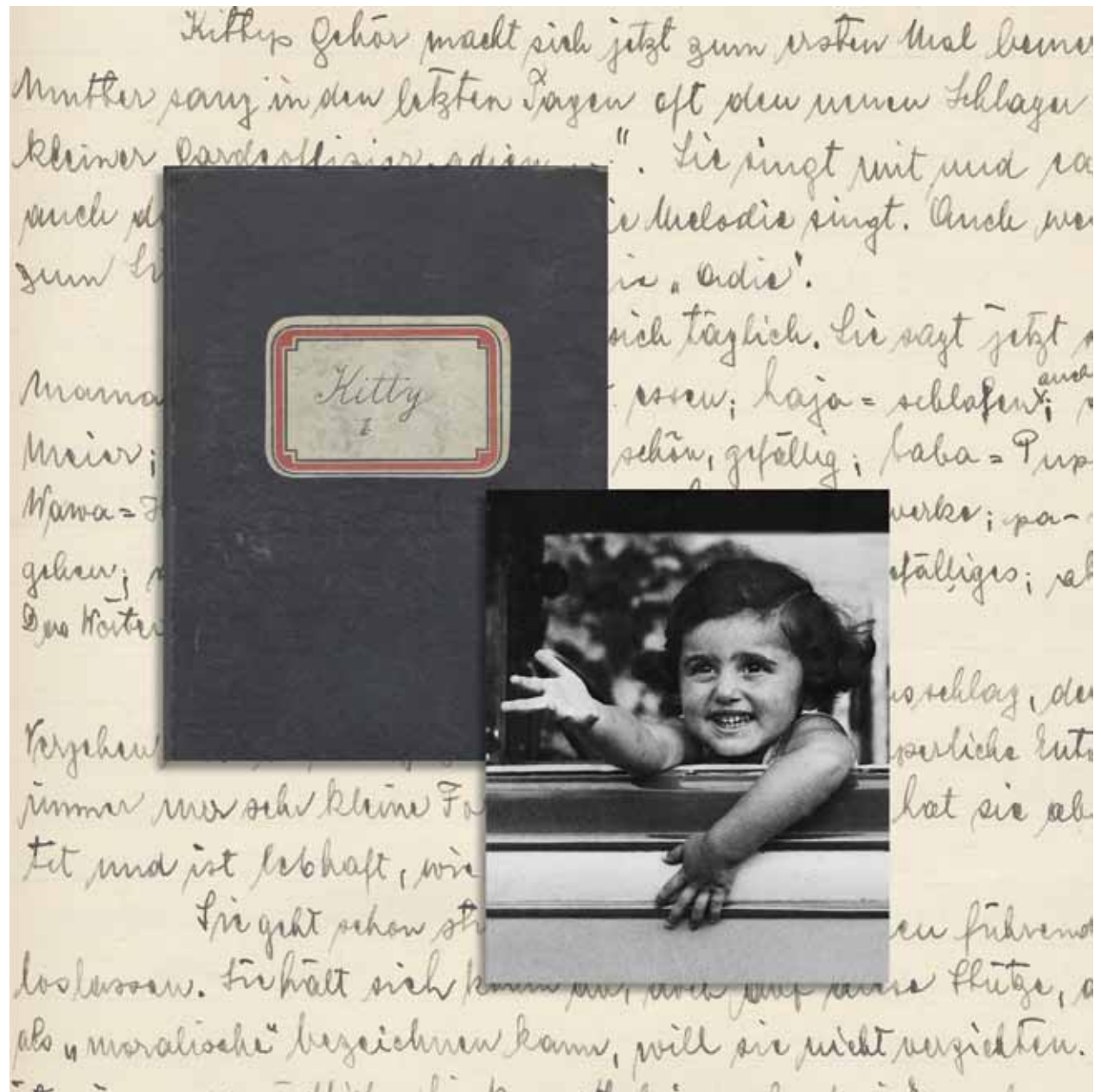
A RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS

UNITED STATES  
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MUSEUM [ushmm.org](http://ushmm.org)

I only wish for one thing:  
That we will be able to go  
together with Mama and  
Kitty...Kitty is strong enough  
for her age, but one wants to  
stand by their children's side  
in these difficult days.

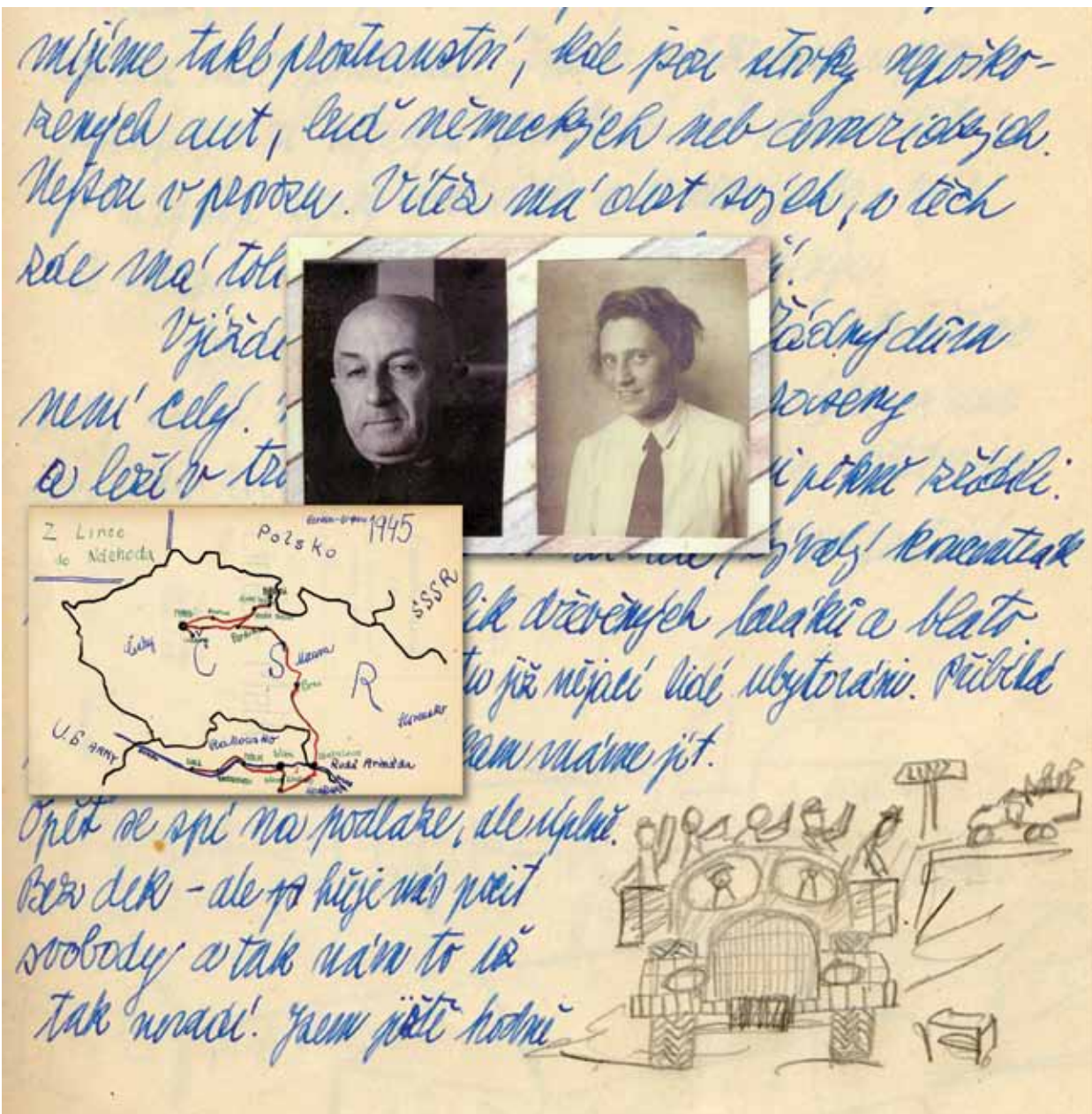
—Bela Weichherz  
March 1942

Cover, page, and photo (ca. 1933–35) from the diary Bela Weichherz kept for his daughter, Kitty. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Judith Landshut.



**BELA WEICHERZ** began a diary after the birth of his only child, Kitty, in 1929 to chart her development. As the treatment of Jews in their native Bratislava worsened, Bela's proud inscriptions of his daughter's accomplishments gave way to the heartbreaking expressions of a father's fear for his family. Bela last wrote in his diary shortly before their entire community was deported—the words he left behind the only record of Kitty's short life.





Again we sleep on the barren floor—no blankets—but the feeling of freedom warms us and so we don't mind it anymore.

—Michael Kraus

Page from the diary of Michael Kraus, along with a map he drew on another page of places he was sent during the war, and photos of his parents, Karel and Lotte, which he tucked in between. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Michael Kraus.

MICHAEL KRAUS had just turned 14 when he was imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau with his parents. After witnessing the subsequent deportation of his mother and the death of his father, he was liberated from a death march by the American army and spent the next few years filling three diaries with painstaking descriptions and drawings of his wartime experiences—all in an effort to honor the memory of his beloved parents, Karel and Lotte.



Tues

MARCH 15

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1938. The "Tilber" due to speak at 11  
in Heldenplatz. We went and  
hope we got some good pictures  
of the saluting exodus, as well  
as of him at his Hotel. They yelled  
until he came out on the balcony  
"heilber Tilber sei so nett: Geig dich  
auf dem Fensterbrett."

19 Meanwhile troops had arrived  
and tanks & machine guns etc. etc.  
till they filled the streets & no cars  
were returning. Army of Occupation!

19



Papers full of annexation  
of Austria... Jews trying to  
escape over border, arrests...  
Jewish stores marked "Jude."  
See the downstairs couple  
looking so sad.

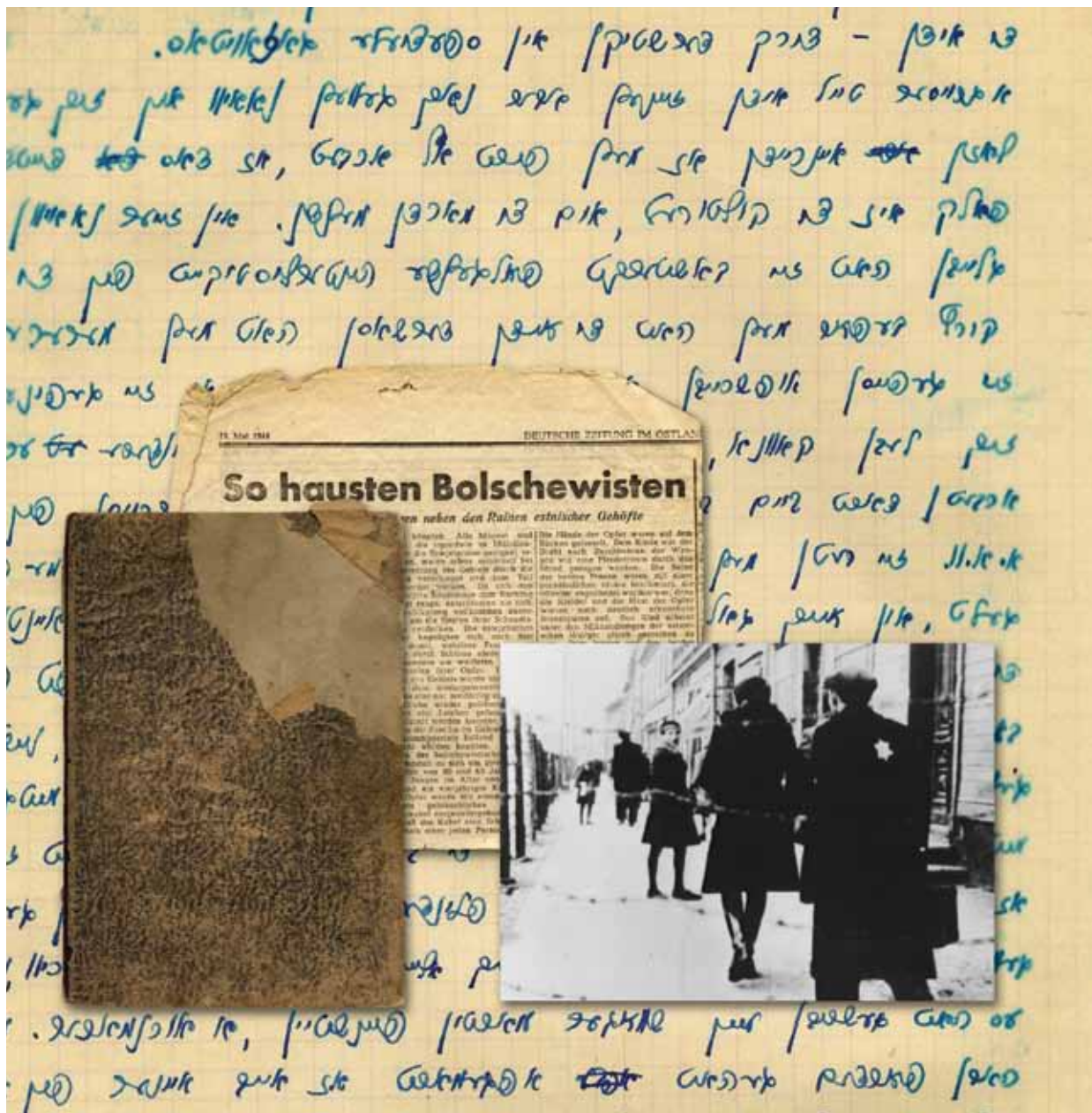
—Helen Baker  
March 16, 1938



Pages from the diary of Helen Baker; stills from film footage the Baker family shot of graffiti on a Jewish-owned store and Helen's attempt to enter a Jewish shop guarded by a Nazi; and the Bakers' 16mm Kodak movie camera. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Stanley A. Baker.

An American living in Vienna with her children and husband while he was on a six-month sabbatical, HELEN BAKER became an eyewitness to history when Germany annexed Austria in 1938. The Baker family filmed what they saw on their Kodak movie camera and Helen wrote it all down in a notebook, capturing the chaos in the streets, the Nazis' use of propaganda to foment antisemitism, and the mounting distress of her Jewish acquaintances as persecution against them intensified.



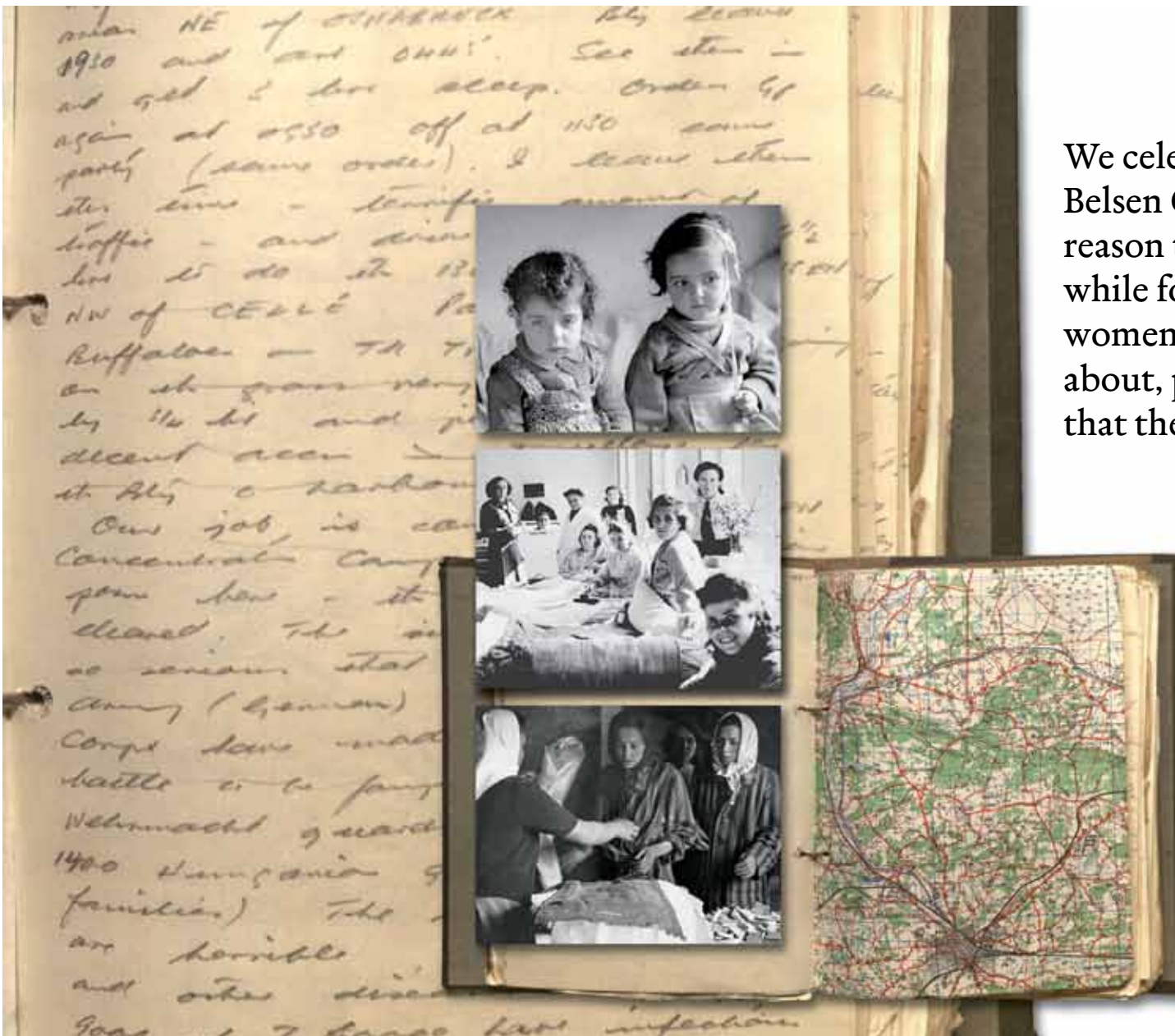


My heart beat in me, it threatened to explode...At that moment, I reached the iron decision never to give myself up alive into their hands, to fight against the murderers until the end.

—Kalman Linkimer  
June 5, 1944

Cover and page from the diary of Kalman Linkimer and a newspaper clipping he tucked inside it chronicling the discovery of Soviet atrocities against the local Estonian population. The headline reads "That's How Bolsheviks Lived." U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Photo of Jews walking along a street in the Riga ghetto, ca. 1941–42. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Staatsanwalt beim Landgericht.

After escaping from a forced labor camp in Latvia, KALMAN LINKIMER and two other prisoners returned to their hometown of Liepāja and found refuge with Robert and Johanna Sedols, who hid them and eight other Jews in their cellar. In his diary, Kalman chronicled his dramatic escape from the camp and the men's terrifying days in hiding, where they remained until liberation—among the very few Jews of Liepāja to survive.



We celebrate the VE day in Belsen Camp...if for no other reason the parade was worthwhile for this—it gave the women something to think about, perhaps it registered that they were free.

—Charles Phillip Sharp  
May 8, 1945

Pages from the diary of Major Charles Phillip Sharp, including a map of Germany. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Peter Stevens.* Top photo, children who were liberated from Bergen-Belsen, April 1945. *Imperial War Museum.* Middle photo, survivors in the women's ward of the hospital at Bergen-Belsen following liberation, 1945–1950. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Gedenksätte Bergen-Belsen.* Bottom photo, survivors receive soap at Bergen-Belsen after liberation, May 1945. *Imperial War Museum.*

One of the first British Army officers to enter the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after liberation, MAJOR CHARLES PHILLIP SHARP oversaw the arrest of the camp commandant, the care of women and children, and the burial of the dead. And all the while he kept a careful diary, tucking maps and documents in between the pages to provide irrefutable evidence for those who were not there to see what he saw.



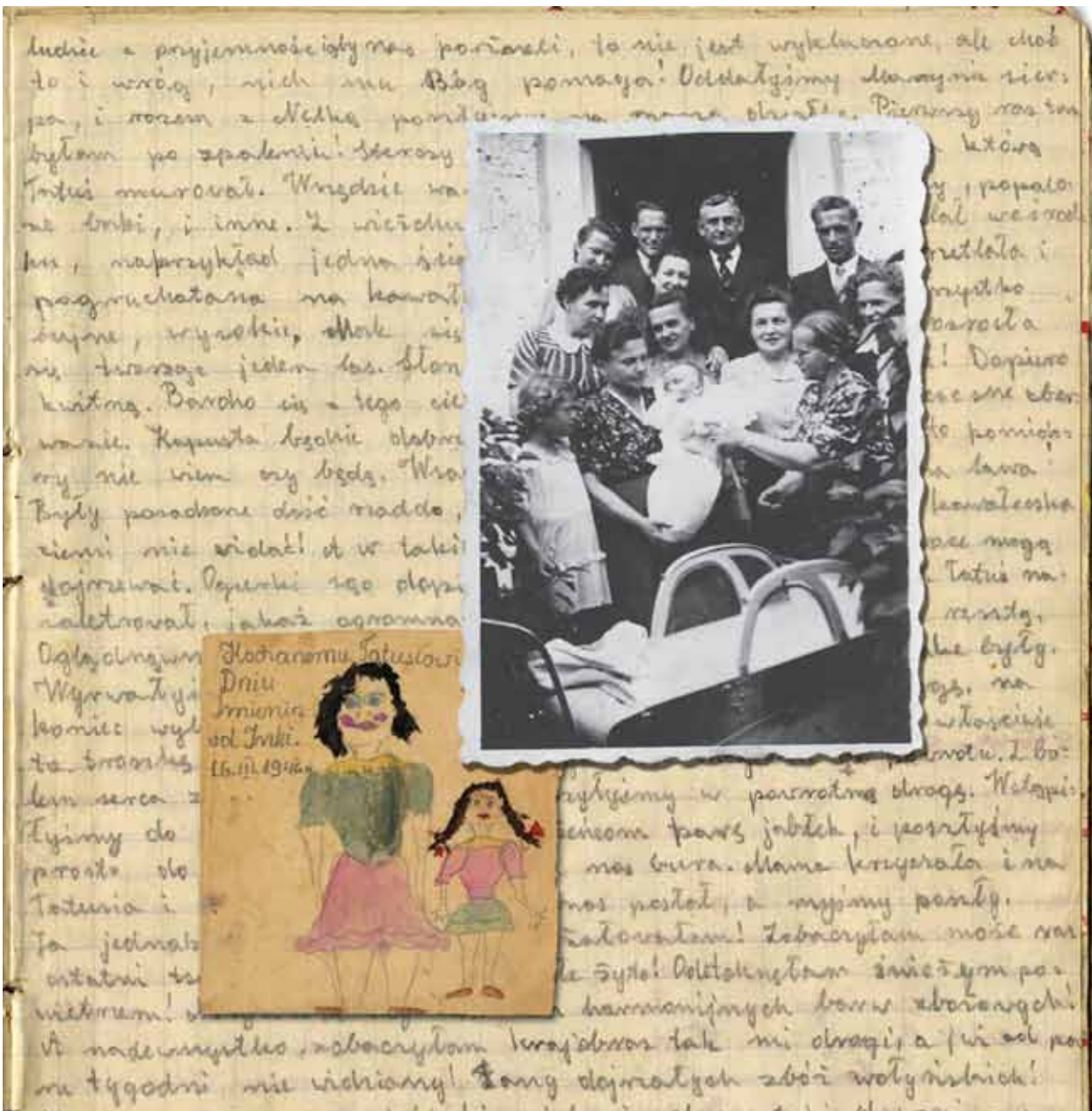
I know that all my writing is meaningless. Nobody will read my journal and, as for me, should I escape alive from here, I will throw into the fire everything that will remind me of the damned time spent in Djurin. And still, I write.

—Mirjam Korber  
July 15, 1942



Page and photos from the diary of Mirjam Korber. The photo of her parents, Klara and Leon, is dated 1932; the photo of Mirjam was taken in 1928, when she was five. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Mirjam Korber Bercovici.

MIRJAM KORBER was 18 years old when she began keeping a diary of the difficult days she and her family faced after their deportation to the Djurin ghetto in the Transnistria region of Romania. The family survived, and Mirjam's determination to record what she witnessed and experienced—the harsh winters, the outbreaks of disease, the exploitation by local residents—produced a rare, invaluable account of ghetto life in Transnistria.



Today the first time since Inka is with us she started to smile. We are like children, Inka starts laughing, and we start laughing. In other words wonderful Inka.

—Stanislawa Roztropowicz  
July 14, 1943

In 1943, JOSEF AND NATALIA ROZTROPOWICZ welcomed Sabina Kagan—a Jewish infant who had been abandoned—into their home in a Polish village, where they renamed her Inka to hide her identity and cared for her until the end of the war. The Roztropowicz's daughter STANISLAWA recorded Inka's arrival in a diary, writing affectionately of the joy the little girl brought them despite the deprivations of war and the risk they undertook in hiding her.

Page, drawing, and photo from the diary of Stanisława Roztropowicz. Inka is the little girl on the left of the photo; Stanisława, who kept the diary, is on the far left of the top row and her mother, Natalia, is on the right in the front row, with her arm outstretched to the baby. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Stanisława Roztropowicz-Szkubel.



When in a single move Destiny  
unleashes its terrible game  
And sweeps you away to some  
far distant land  
When our exile stretches ever  
further  
Will the last bonds of our  
community be torn apart!?

—Manfred Lewin  
1942



Cover and pages from the keepsake book Manfred Lewin made for Gad Beck, which Manfred titled *Erinnerst Du Dich* (*Do You Remember*). U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Gad Beck. Signed portrait of Manfred Lewin, 1941. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Jizchak Schwensen.

MANFRED LEWIN and Gad Beck met as teenagers when they joined the same Zionist group in Berlin. The two fell in love, and Manfred created a keepsake book for Gad to memorialize their relationship and the community of Jewish youth from which they drew their strength and their solace. Though Manfred died at Auschwitz, Gad was spared from deportation and joined the underground, risking his life to help fellow Jews hide and escape.



A year ago today—we were probably in the movies, after that at home listening to the radio...Now the five of us are suffering in 3 different places—we are cold and hungry and working.

—Lilly Isaacs  
February 10, 1945

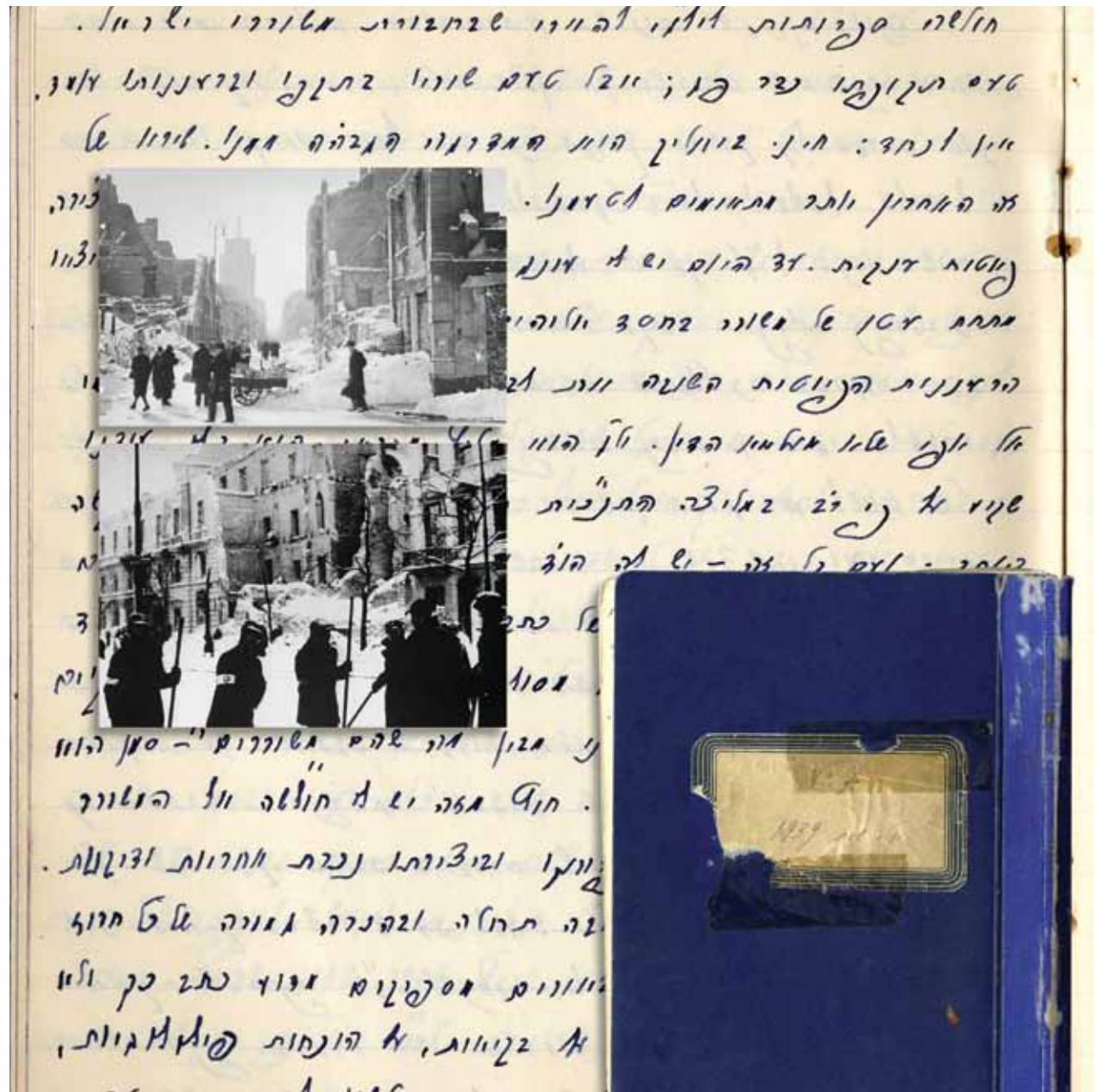
Pages and blue cover from the Sömmerda diary of Lilly Isaacs, along with a photo of Lilly and her then-future husband, György Ickovits, in their backyard in Hungary in 1943. *Gift of Lilly Isaacs.* Cover (with scenery) from the diary of Clara Kempler. *Gift of Clara Kempler.* Cover from the diary of Sari Ickovits. *Gift of the estate of Charlotte Neufeld (née Sari Ickovits).*

In October 1944, the Nazis deported more than a thousand Jewish Hungarian women to Sömmerda, a subcamp of Buchenwald, where they were forced to manufacture ammunition. Despite the dire living conditions, THE WOMEN OF SÖMMERDA managed to create a camp newspaper, write and perform songs, secretly observe their Jewish faith, and record it all for posterity in their diaries. In April 1945, the majority of the women were sent on a death march and later liberated by Allied forces.



In our scroll of agony...every entry is more precious than gold, so long as it is written down as it happens, without exaggerations and distortions.

—Chaim Kaplan  
October 26, 1939



Cover and page from the diaries of Chaim Kaplan. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Top photo, a street that has been bombed in the area that later became the Warsaw ghetto, December 1939. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum*, courtesy of Jerzy Tomaszewski. Bottom photo, Jews forced to remove snow from the streets of Warsaw, December 1939. *Archiwum Akt Nowych*.

CHAIM KAPLAN began his diary on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. For the next three years he faithfully recorded the starkly circumscribed world of the Warsaw ghetto, capturing both the hardships the Jewish residents faced and the religious and communal life to which they defiantly clung. Chaim is believed to have died at Treblinka, but his work as a respected writer and educator—and the enduring spirit of the people of the Warsaw ghetto—lives on in his diaries.



Finally, we hear shouts of HURRAAH! And HELLOOO!  
We simply cannot believe that, after three years, it could finally be over for us...we finally emerge, all covered with yellow mud and in terrible condition.

—Felicita Wolf  
May 8, 1945

Cover and pages from the diary of Otto and Felicita Wolf and their portraits.  
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Felicita Wolf Garda.

OTTO WOLF, a Czech Jewish teenager, began his diary the day he and his parents and sister, FELICITAS, escaped from an assembly center where they had been brought for deportation. For nearly three years Otto recorded his family's life in hiding in the woods and makeshift shelters provided by local villagers until he was captured and killed two weeks before the end of the war. Felicita finished her brother's diary for him, ensuring neither he nor their harrowing experiences would be forgotten.



This little book is for me...  
 about the time that my man  
 and I are hidden in a hayloft  
 somewhere in Poland. I have the  
 hope that I will live free again.

—Selma Engel  
 June 21, 1944



Cover and pages from the diary of Selma Engel and a photo of Selma and Chaim Engel (center) with their child, ca. May 1945. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Selma Wijnberg Engel.

SELMA ENGEL, a Jewish woman born in the Netherlands, met her future husband, Chaim, a Polish Jew, when they were imprisoned in the Sobibór killing center. Young and in love, they made a daring escape with other prisoners during the camp uprising and found refuge with a farmer until liberation. In her diary Selma writes about Sobibór and her deepening relationship with Chaim, with whom she created a translation dictionary so the two could communicate with each other.