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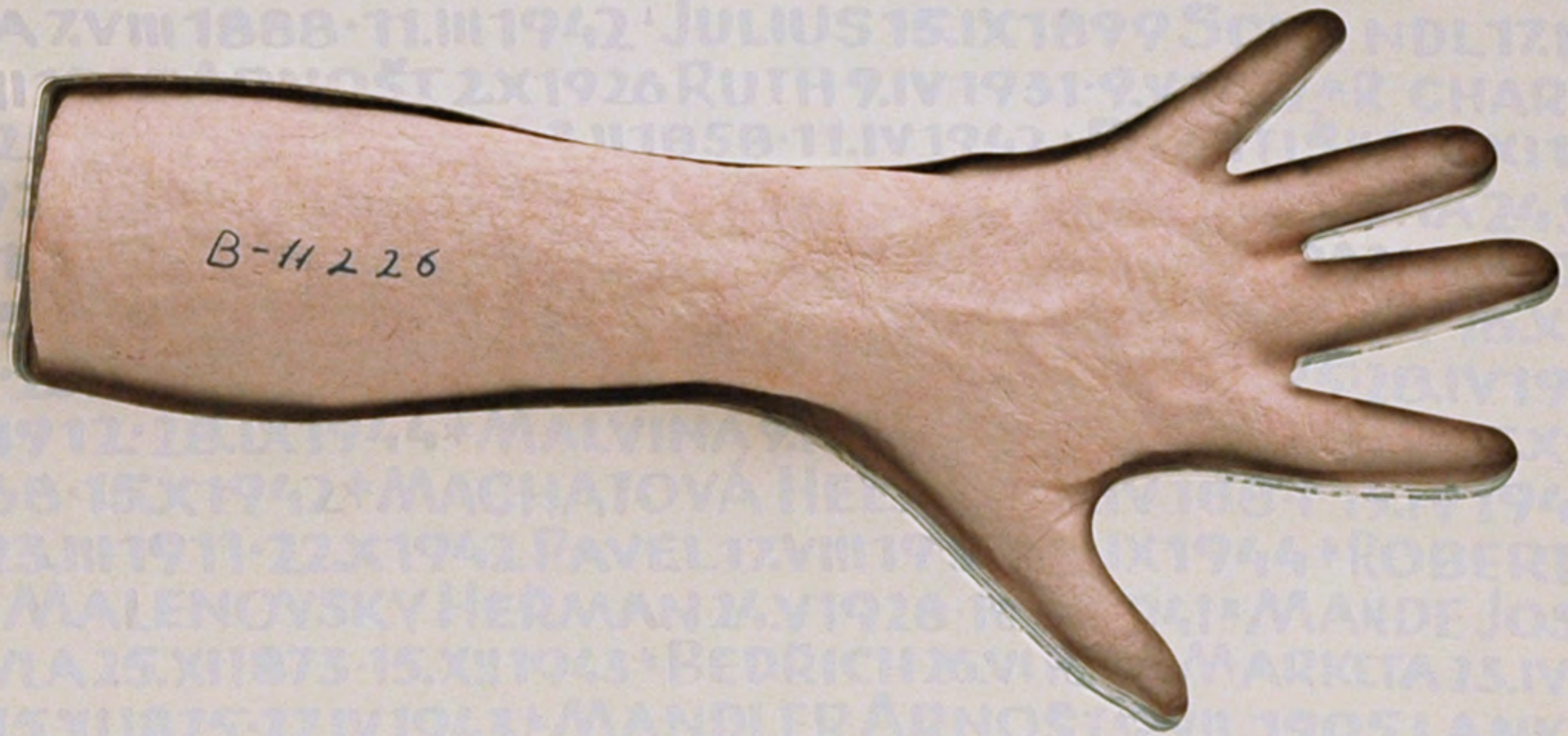
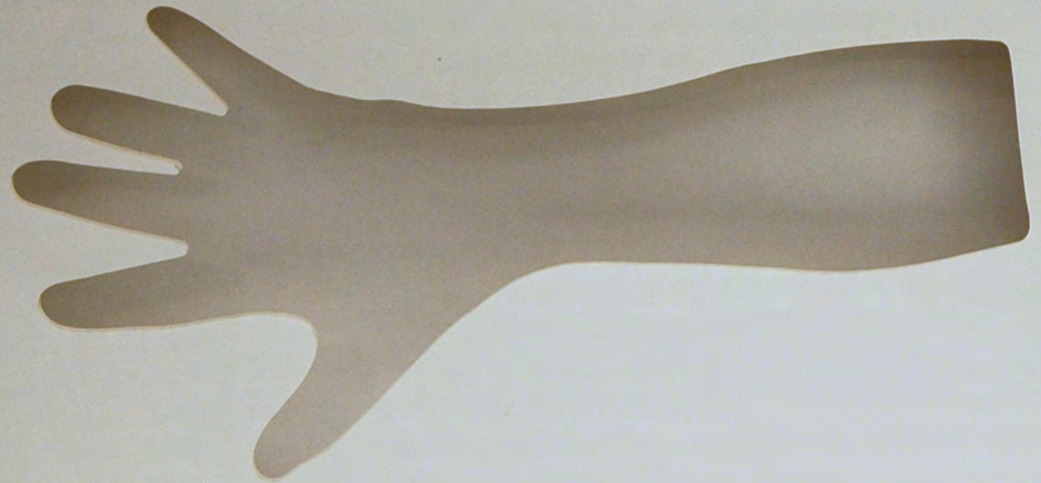
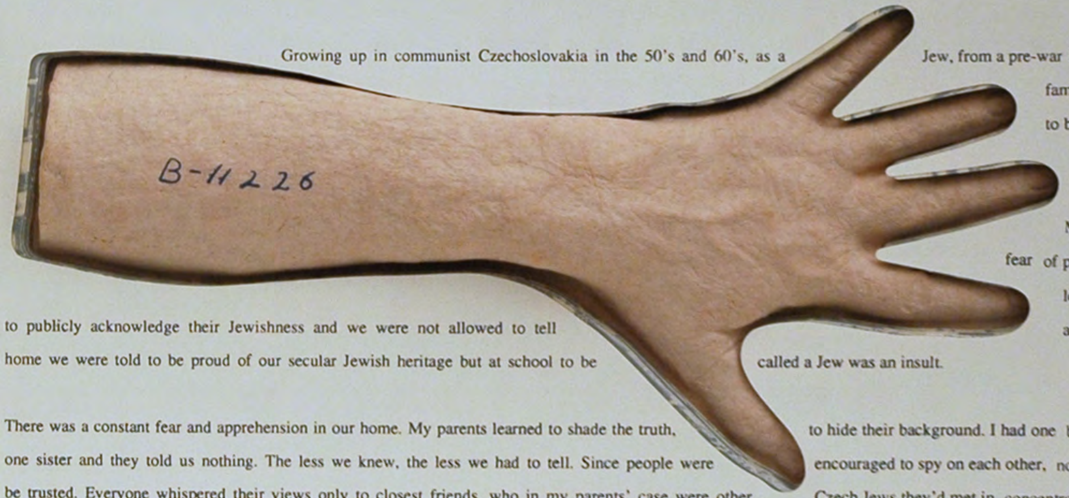
FIFTY YEARS OF SILENCE




# FIFTY YEARS OF SILENCE



I have known since I was a child that my parents were concentration camp survivors, since both of them had a number tattooed on their left arm. I used to spend a long time studying their tattoos, wondering what it must have been like. My mother never talked about her experiences. My father only talked about it when he was scolding us, especially about eating everything on our plates. Once when I was at his side on an after dinner walk, he told a friend the stories of the medical experiments performed on him and the ten day transport when people began devouring each other. I think he must have forgotten I was there. I didn't inquire any further for fear of hurting him.

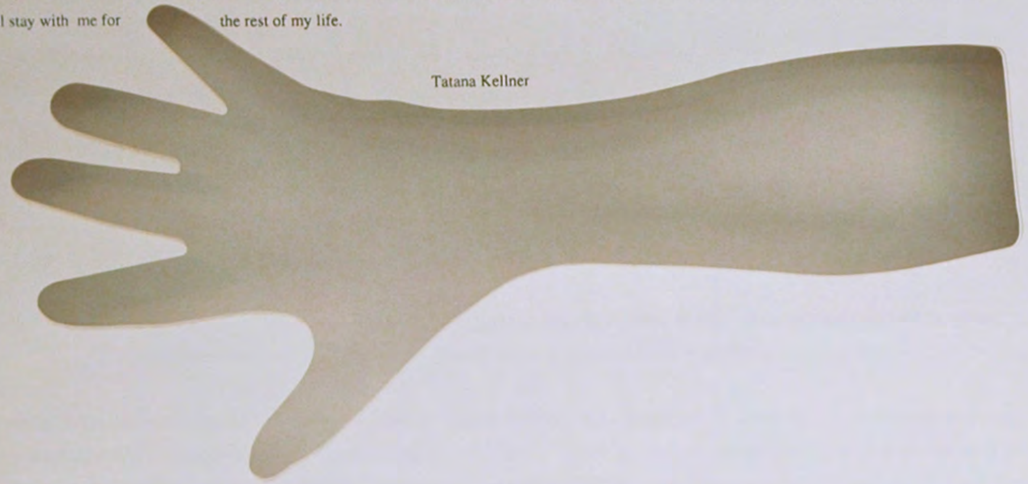



Growing up in communist Czechoslovakia in the 50's and 60's, as a Jew, from a pre-war bourgeois family, meant to be discriminated against. My parents' fear of persecution led them not to publicly acknowledge their Jewishness and we were not allowed to tell anyone. At home we were told to be proud of our secular Jewish heritage but at school to be called a Jew was an insult.

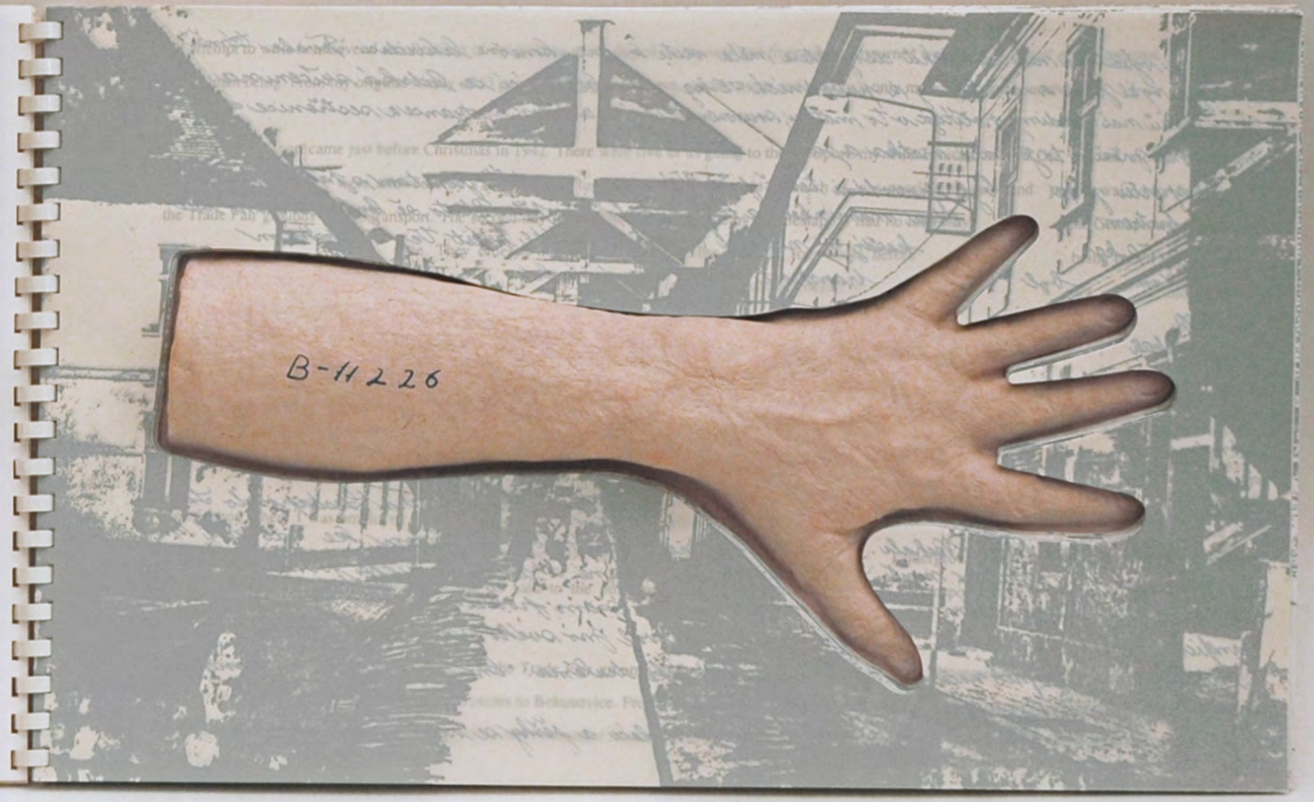
There was a constant fear and apprehension in our home. My parents learned to shade the truth, to hide their background. I had one brother and one sister and they told us nothing. The less we knew, the less we had to tell. Since people were encouraged to spy on each other, no one was to be trusted. Everyone whispered their views only to closest friends, who in my parents' case were other Czech Jews they'd met in concentration camps and who survived with them. As far as I know, we were the only Jewish children in our school. The only other Jewish children we knew were children of my parents' friends.

I always was curious about my parents' experiences and am very sad that I didn't ask my grandmother; her story died with her. I didn't want the same to happen to my parents' stories. Even after almost fifty years, they had some reservations to awaken these painful memories but when I explained why I wanted to record their reminiscences, they agreed to write them down in Czech. They sent them to me and I translated the text to English. Except for the questions I had in terms of accuracy, this is still not something we can talk about. After reading their stories I was driven to visit some of the former concentration camp sites which still exist. I travelled to Auschwitz, Terezin and Bergen-Belsen. Once there, I was simply overwhelmed. It was a very sad, ominous and awesome pilgrimage, an experience which will stay with me for the rest of my life.

Tatana Kellner



In memory of Olga Kellner, my grandmother



Pokusím se vylíčit jen několik úseků cesty, která měla vésti k mé skoněčné likvidaci. Trvala téměř 3 roky a vyšel jsem z ní s 39 kg z původních 75 kg jako bělhající se lidská stříčenina. Z 53 členů naší rodiny, počítáje v to matku, souroozence, strýce a tety, bratrance a sestřenice a mého syna, přežila to jen má matka a já.

Do transportu jsme byli povoláni těsně před Vánocemi 1942. Šel jsem tam s první manželkou Otou, maminkou a tchyní. Bylo nás pět. Přesto, že bylo dovoleno vzít každý se nabalil co nejvíce mohl unést. Ve Veletržním paláci byl transport svolán. Nás bylo přes 1000 lidí a čekali jsme tam 3 dny. Ihned druhý den ráno jsem byl povolán na Gestapo do Stresovic. Nevěděl jsem proč. Nechali mne čekat 4 hodiny. Potom ke mně přišel jeden z SS a nařídil mi, abych se postavil k zeď a zůstal stát čelem k ní. Po 4 hodinách mne zavolali dovnitř. SS Burger mne klade různé otázky a nicméně se cosi našlo v psacím stolu, který jsem používal dva roky. Byly to anglické překlady zpráv, které jsem překládal pro svého známého, kterého zatkli. Statečně jsem vše popřel, nic jsem

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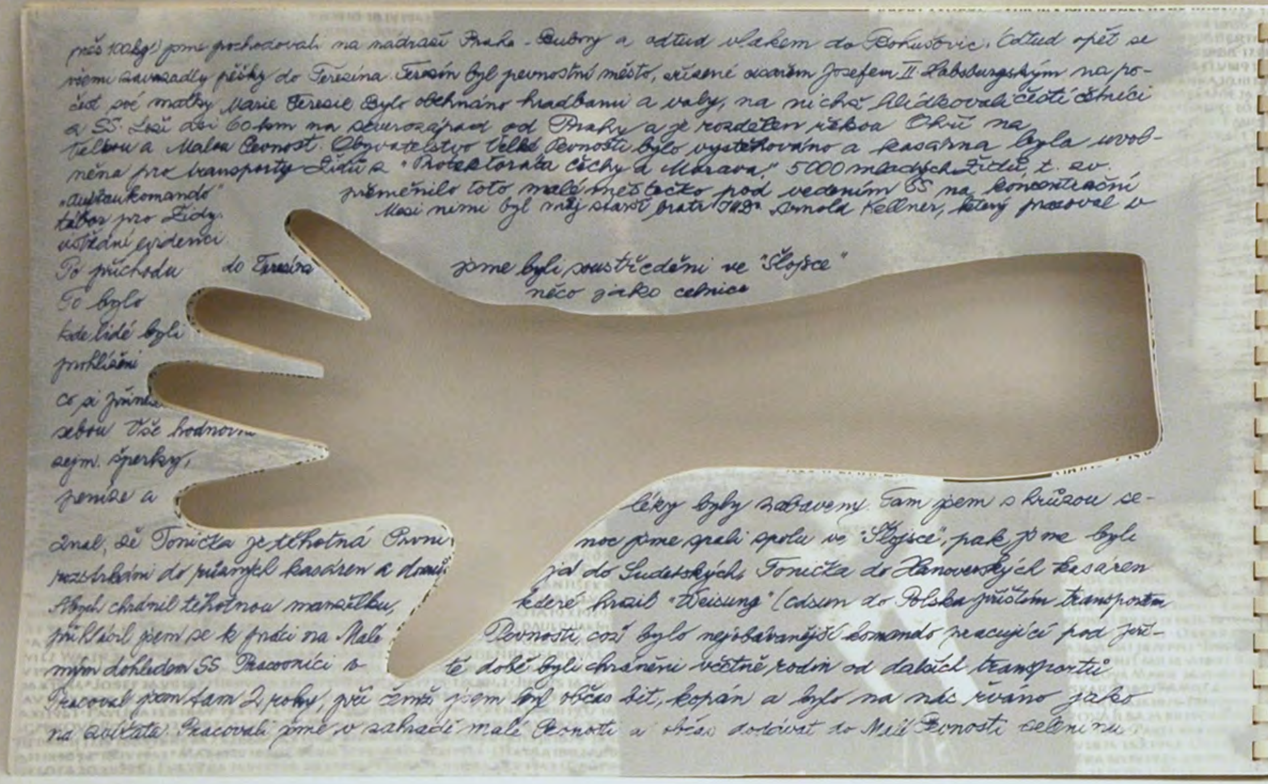
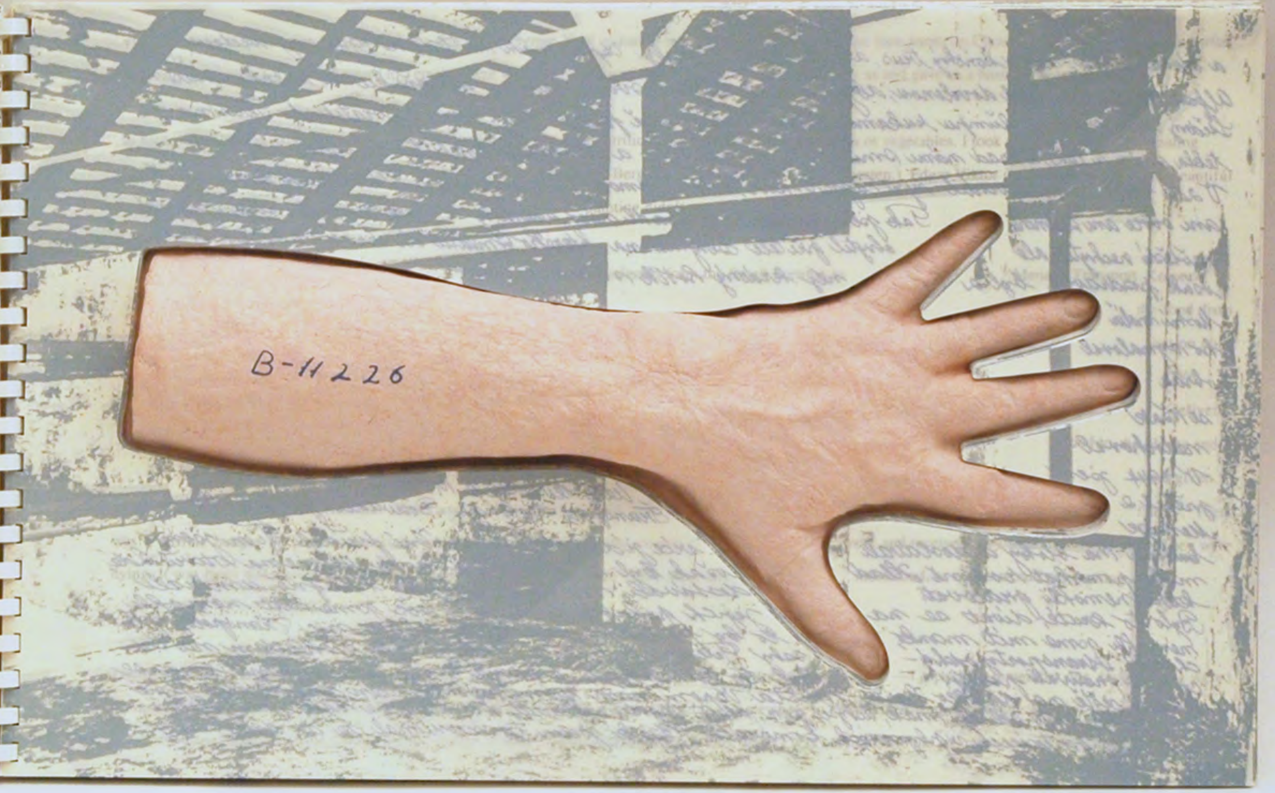



guarded by Czech police and SS so no one could escape. Terezin was divided into two parts by the river Ohre - the Large and Small. Fortress. The citizens of Terezin were moved out to make space for Jewish transports from the "Czech and Moravian Protectorate". 5,000 young Jews (known as Aufbaukommando II and III) under SS command, transformed the small town into a concentration camp for the Jews. One of them was my older brother, Dr. Arnold Kellner, who was a registrar.

After our arrival we gathered in "Slojska", something like a custom's house where our luggage was inspected. Anything valuable, especially money, jewelry and medicine, was confiscated. Here, to my horror, I discovered that my wife, Tonicka, was pregnant. We spent the first night in Terezin together, then we were assigned to different barracks. I to Sudeten barracks and Tonicka to Hannover barracks. I wanted to protect my wife, who was in danger of "Weisung" (being deported to Poland in the next transport) because she was pregnant, so I volunteered to work in the Small Fortress. The Small Fortress had been used before the war as a prison and the Gestapo took it over in June, 1940 and established a political prison there. Working there was the most feared since it was directly under SS supervision and the SS were known for torturing and killing their prisoners. At that time that work assignment protected not only the workers but also our families from further transport. I worked there for two years, was treated as an animal - beaten often, kicked and yelled at endlessly. We worked in the garden, delivered vegetables to the Small Fortress and brought back not only horse manure but also human excrement. One Christmas SS Alfred Utthard wasn't granted vacation to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a odvážet odtud nejen koňský trus, ale i lidské výkaly. Vzpomínám na Vánoce 1943, kdy vedoucí SS
Alfred Utthard neudělal dovolenou, aby mohl navštívit svou rodinu v Thüringsku. Ze vzteku nás na
Štědrý večer vyhnal do šumpu, kukama, takže jsme hrozně páchli. Když jsme se vrátili do Terezína, ne-
tekla voda a tak se nad námi smilovali v kuchyni a dali nám kotel teplé vody.
V září 1943 se mi narodil syn Edgar Viktor, velmi nemocný avitaminozou. Potoulali jsme tolik
ani ovoce ani zeleniny. Tak jsem riskoval a kradl něco zeleniny z Malé Pevnosti. Mne Alfred
nechytil, ale
však přichytil. Byl to
kamarád přítele Bergmanna, kterého zmlátil do krve. Vyvinul se
Malé Pevnosti. Byl
krásný kluk s blond kudrnami.
Malé Pevnosti
tu vymalovat
obraz
se však
nedochoval.
V 1944 jsem
přešel z
Menage
kuchyně na bloky a dostávali
mohl pomáhat rodině. Hlad
které nemohli pracovat.
Bylo to hrozné, dívat se na
nemohli jsme mít monty
chudáky. Transporty odhá-
ce jsme prožívali každý
dokázali ještě na dálku hrát
na Malé Pevnosti. Sbírali mák, usušil jsem, tak E. Wagner vykládal Utthardovi, že někde v Polsku
bali Židy pro trucích v plynových komorách. Nějak jsem to nevnímal až do doby, kdy

Transport Kolonne. Rozváželi jsme jídlo z
více jídla než normální příděl. Tím jsem
však byl v Terezíně hrozný, zejména lidé,
dostávali malý příděl a hlavně umírali.
jejich pokleslé tváře, ale víc jsme dát nemohli
to by poslední nedostali vůbec nic. Transporty při-
zely Terezín byl čistě krutý, ale s ohledem na to,
byl to koncentrák, o němž jsme snili, když jsme se
mluvili. Vzpomínám zejména na jeden den, když jsme

visit his family in Thuringen. He was mad as a dog. As a revenge 20 of us had to empty the septic tank with our bare hands on Christmas Eve. The stench was awful; we smelled pretty bad. Upon our return to Terezin, there was no running water. The kitchen staff felt sorry for us and gave us a basin of warm water.

In September, 1943 my son Edgar Viktor was born, suffering from malnutrition, since we didn't get any fruits or vegetables. I took chances and started stealing vegetables from the Small Fortress. Luckily I was not caught. (My friend Bergman was caught and severely beaten.) Edgar Viktor got better and became a beautiful baby boy with blond curls. A local artist painted his picture, but the painting didn't survive.

In 1944 I was transferred from the Small Fortress to "Menage Transport Kolonne", the food distribution unit. We delivered food to the blocks and were given more food than the other prisoners. This way I was able to help my family. There was a terrible hunger in Terezin, especially among the older people who couldn't work and received very small rations of food. They were dying. It was heart wrenching to look at their sunken faces but we couldn't give them any more food, or others would get nothing at all.

Transports came, transports went. Terezin was cruel, but later, it was a concentration camp we dreamed of. I especially remember one day when we were harvesting poppies in the Small Fortress. I overheard SS Wagner tell SS Alfred Utthard that somewhere in Poland they were liquidating Jews by the thousands in gas chambers. Somehow I couldn't comprehend the content of their conversation until much later when I was very close to the gas chambers myself. In the Fall, 1944

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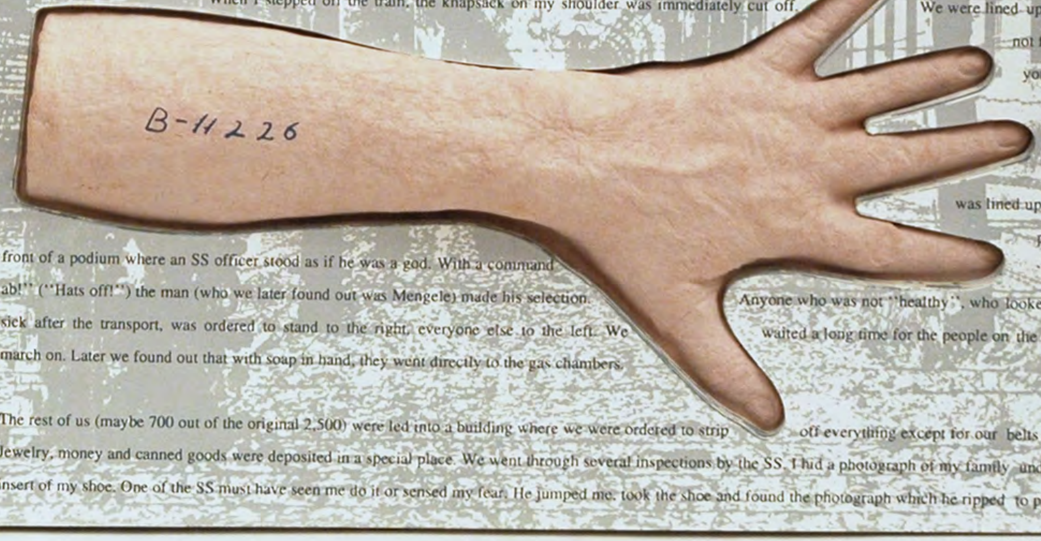
there was a large liquidation of Terezin population. First young men were transported, presumably to build a new family camp. I was in this first transport which was planned to include 5,000 men. Ota, my brother, was supposed to be in the same transport. At the last minute the transport was divided in half and I went alone. Women and children were to follow when the family camp was built. We were loaded in the boxcars and I was able to sneak into the bathroom of a passenger car. We tried to figure out the train's route in hopes of determining where we were going. In Dresden we saw the train veer to the right, over the Elbe river and we knew that we were being transported to Poland. We traveled for a whole day and a night. In the early morning when the train stopped we saw, in the fog, prisoners in striped clothing running around and SS men with dogs. "Alles raus!" (Everyone out!), they were screaming. We'd arrived in Auschwitz.

When I stepped off the train, the knapsack on my shoulder was immediately cut off. We were lined up. If you were not fast enough, you were beaten. When everyone was lined up, we were paraded in front of a podium where an SS officer stood as if he was a god. With a command "Hut ab!" ("Hats off!") the man (who we later found out was Mengele) made his selection. Anyone who was not "healthy", who looked old or sick after the transport, was ordered to stand to the right, everyone else to the left. We waited a long time for the people on the right side to march on. Later we found out that with soap in hand, they went directly to the gas chambers.

The rest of us (maybe 700 out of the original 2,500) were led into a building where we were ordered to strip off everything except for our belts and shoes. Jewelry, money and canned goods were deposited in a special place. We went through several inspections by the SS. I had a photograph of my family under the insert of my shoe. One of the SS must have seen me do it or sensed my fear. He jumped me, took the shoe and found the photograph which he ripped to pieces. Then



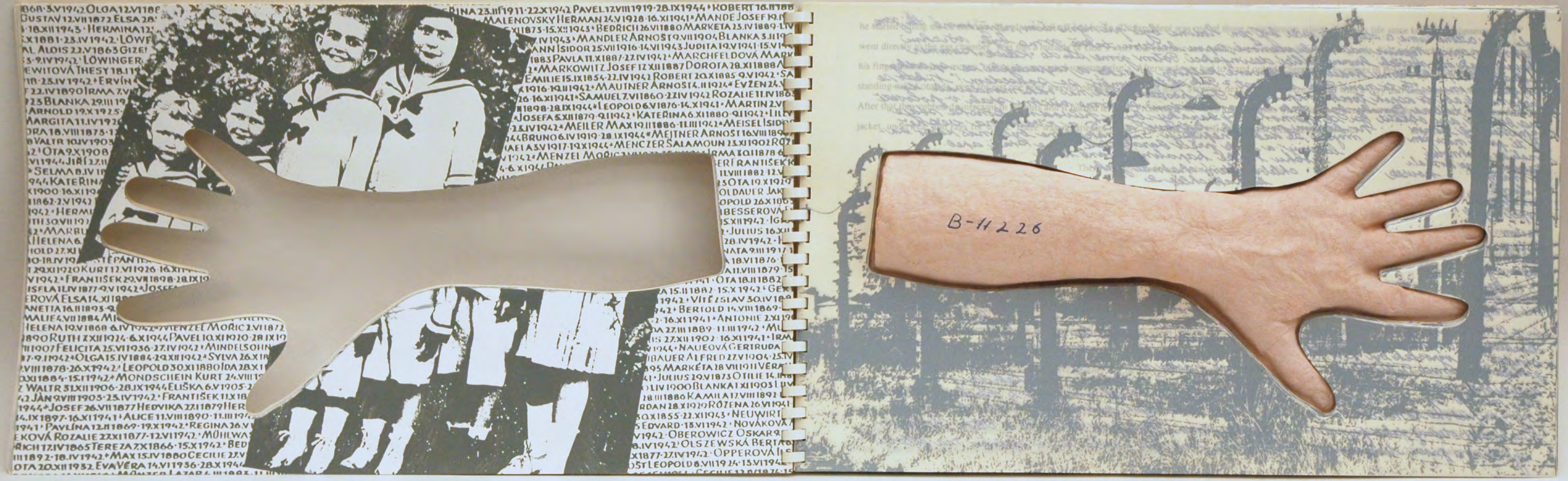

pom z kti plynové komoře dostal velicí blíže. – Ta podzim 1944 byla velká likvidace Terezína. Odsamo-vání mužové, mladí muže, aby prý měli zřizovat nový rodinný tábor, a já byl v 1. transportu, Mělo nás být 5000, já měl číslo před 2500 a Ota, bratr, pracoval v zemědělství, měl jít ve druhém transportu. Ženské ten transport rozpůlili a také kam s tím transportem odjel, sám Bůh ví, a den měsíc nakládovat, až ten „rodinný tábor" bude vybudován. Nakázali nás do dobytčích vagonů. Jsem se však dostal na záchodek osobního vozu. Sledovali jsme trasu, kam nás povezou. Jedna jsme v Drážďanech viděli, že vjedeme napravo přes Labe, věděli jsme, že nás vezou do Polska. Jeli jsme tam den a noc. A ráno za svítání, když zastavil, viděli jsme v mlze pobíhat pruhované ve vlaku domácího nic namířeným. Lidmi te velká vřava. Křičí na nad rampou „Alles raus!" a SS-áky se psy. Probudil jsem se a vyšel jsem z vagonu. Batoh mi ihned sekli. Byla vše nadšeno, pochodovali jsme na místě jako Bůh SS-ák. Bůvl.

vezmi a SS-áky se psy. Probudil jsem se a vyšel jsem z vagonu. Batoh mi ihned sekli. Byla vše nadšeno, pochodovali jsme na místě jako Bůh SS-ák. Bůvl.

„Mützen auf" a ten SS-ák, o kterém jsme se dověděli, že byl to Mengele, roztřídil těm co leželi „gesund" nebo vypadali starší a „remoonní" jestem do pravo.

ostatní do leva. My, ti levé" dlouho čekali než jsme se dověděli, že s mýdlem v ruce. Z nás zbylo asi 700 z 2.500, jsme byli zave-dení do budovy. Tam jsme se musely svléct do naha, a nechat si jen pásek uložit šperky, peníze a konzervy. Procházeli jsme jsem si pod vlasku boty fotografii své rodiny. Najednou ke mně, vzal baču a z ní ukrytou fotku. Tak, že mi spadly a rozbily se byla, jak jsem se prý mi to život, protože „Bilderträger" (nosič fotek) z plynu. Byl to záskrab, či Bůh věděl.

Prohlíželi nám také ústa, a když jsi měl čeřtí, stříčili ten prst do Fuchs radku jinak ten pes, vrčí Dodkem jiného. Pak nás vyhnali na mráz. V Polsku koncem září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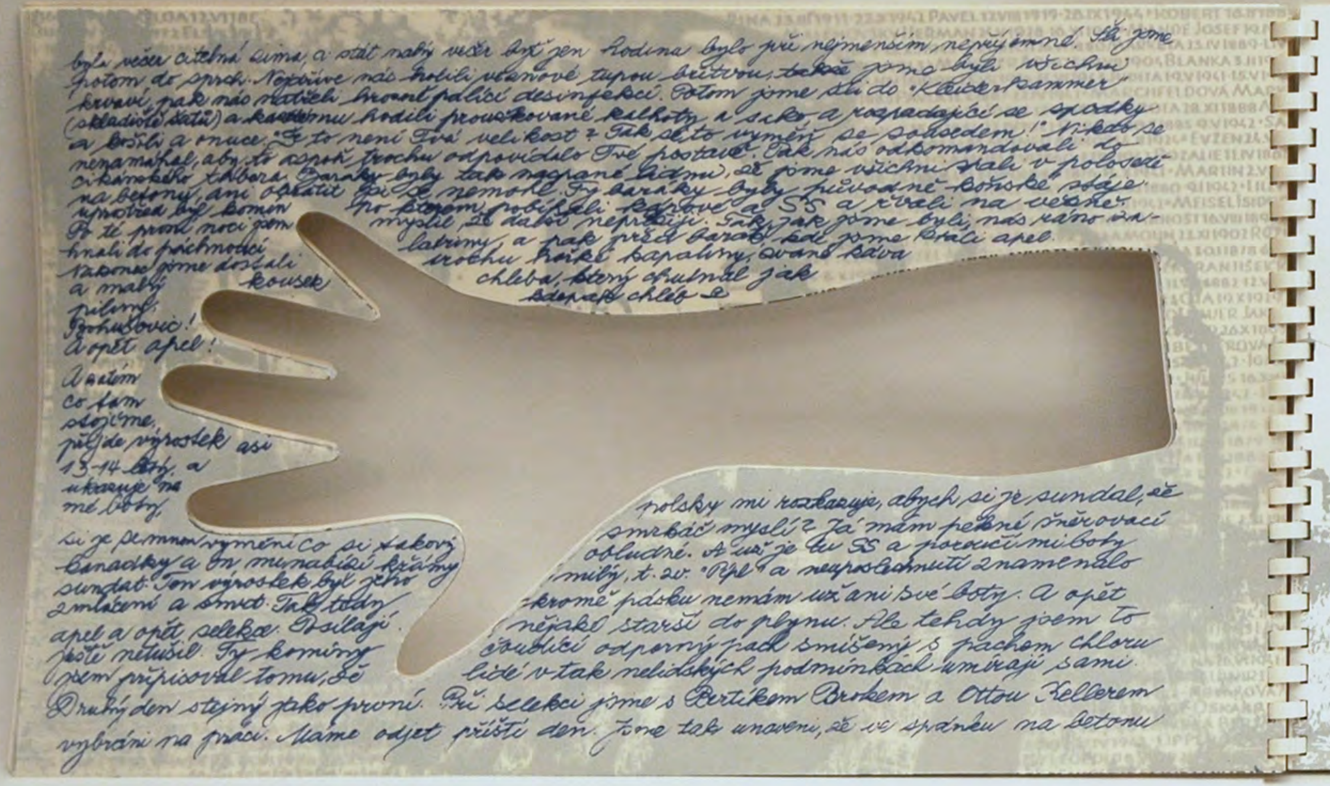

byla věcí citelná zima, a stát celý večer byl jen hodina byla při nejmenším nepříjemné. Šli jsme potom do sprch. Nejprve nás holili vlasové tupou břitvou, takže jsme byli všichni krvavi, pak nás stříkali hrozně pálivou desinfekcí. Potom jsme šli do "Kleiderkammer" (oblaciště šatů) a kde nám hodili prověšované kalhoty a sako a rozpadající se sandály a bušli a nutili, že to není tvá velikost a tak se to vymění se sousedem!" Nikdo se nenamáhal, aby to aspoň trochu odpovídalo tvé postavě. Pak nás odkomandovali do cikánského tábora. Baráky byly tak napaché zápachem, že jsme všichni stáli v polosetu na betonu, ani opřít se nemohl. Ty baráky byly původně koňské stáje. Uprostřed byl komín. Po tomto komíně byli kapové a SS a křičeli na všechny. Po tě prvé noci jsem myslil, že dalšího nepřežiju. Tak jak jsme byli, nás vedli do sprchovací latrýny, a pak před barák, kde jsme dělali apel. Ráno jsme dostali kousek chleba, který chutnal jak sáspak chléb a malý kousek pilovaného Jochubovic! A opět apel! A zatím co tam čekáme, přijde výrostek asi 13-14 let, a ukazuje na mé boty, polsky mi rozkazuje, abych si je sundal, že smrkáč myslí? Já mám pěkné šněrovací obuvi. A už je tu SS a poroučí mi boty, smrkáč si je vymění co si zakovi. Kanadky a on mi nabízí krátky sundat. Ten výrostek byl jeho milý, t. zv. "Pipl" a nepřátelství znamenalo zmlácení a smrt. Tak tedy kromě pásku nemám už ani své boty. A opět apel a opět selekce. Dostaly. Ještě nějaké starší do plynu. Ale tehdy jsem to nechtěl. Ty komíny odporný pach smíšený s pachem chloru jsem připisoval tomu, že lidé v tak nelidských podmínkách umírají sami. Druhý den stejný jako první. Při selekci jsme s Bertikem Brokem a Ottou Kellerem vybráni na práci. Máme odjet příští den. Jsme tak unaveni, že už spánku na betonu

he started hitting me on the face. My glasses fell off and broke. This incident was one of those coincidences which saved my life since later on "glasses wearers" went directly to the gas chamber. Was this a miracle or God's will? Our rectums and mouths were inspected for hidden goods. You were lucky if the inspector used his finger first in your rectum, otherwise you tasted someone else's. Afterwards we had to stand outside. September evenings in Poland are freezing cold and standing naked outside, even for just one hour was not pleasant, to say the least. Showers next. Then we were shaved with a very dull blade, so everyone was bloody. After that they rubbed disinfectant in the cuts and it burned terribly. From there we went to the clothes warehouse and everyone was thrown striped pants and a cloth jacket, underwear and rags for socks. There was no attempt to give you your size: "It doesn't fit? Change it with your neighbor."

Then we were ordered to the Gypsy camp. The buildings had originally been stables and were so full of people that we all had to sleep sitting up on the cement floor; you simply couldn't move. In the middle, running the whole length of the building, was a low chimney on which Kapos and SS men stood and screamed at prisoners.

After the first night I wasn't sure that I could survive another one in this hell. In the morning we were rushed to the latrines and then moved in front of the building to stand for the roll call (Appel). After an eternity we were given a hot liquid called coffee and a small piece of bread which tasted like wood shavings and roll call again. While we're standing there a young boy (13 or 14 years old) points to my shoes and orders me in Polish to take them off, he wants to trade me his. "What does this young snot think? I have good warm Canadian boots with laces to my knees while his are worn out. I refuse." Out of nowhere an SS man appears and orders me to take my shoes off. The teenager is his lover and if I don't follow orders, I'll be beaten and killed. So

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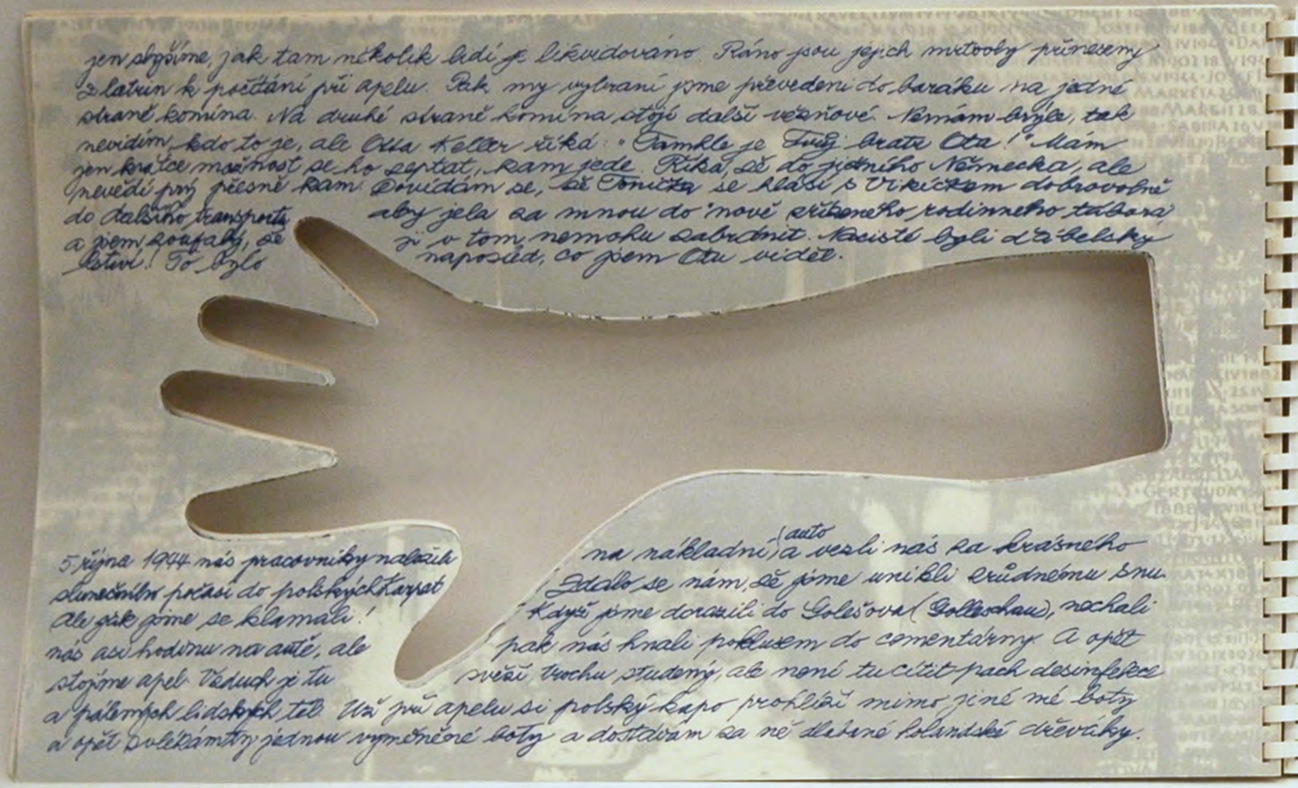


now my shoes are gone. The only thing left is my belt. Another roll call, another selection. Older people are sent to the gas chambers, but at the time, we didn't know that was what was happening.

The chimneys are smoking. The stench is terrible, a mixture of burning flesh and chlorine. I attributed the stench to the fact that under these atrocious conditions people were dying off. The next day is the same as the first. During the inspection I'm selected for work with Bertik Brok and Otta Keller, among others. We're to depart the next day. We're so tired from sleeping on the cement floor and overhearing the execution of several people. In the morning the dead bodies are carried out for the count during roll call. The people selected for work are transferred to the other side of the building; the rest of the prisoners stand on the other side. I don't have my glasses, so I can't see. My friend Otta Keller says, "There is your brother Ota". I have just a minute to ask Ota where he's going. He thinks to southern Germany, not sure exactly. I find out that Tonicka with Edgar Victor is volunteering for the next transport from Terezin in hopes of joining me "in the newly built family camp". I'm in despair since I can't stop her. That was the last time I saw Ota.

On October 5, 1944, a beautiful sunny day, we, the working prisoners, were loaded on a truck and taken to the Polish Carpatian Mountains. We thought we had escaped the nightmare of Auschwitz. But how disappointed we were! When we arrived in Golleschau, after about an hour's wait, we were chased to a cement factory. And another roll call. The air here is fresher, a bit cold, but there is no smell of disinfectants and burned flesh. During the roll call a Polish Kapo is inspecting, among other things, my shoes. Again I have to take these (once exchanged already) shoes off; instead I am given wooden clogs. After a

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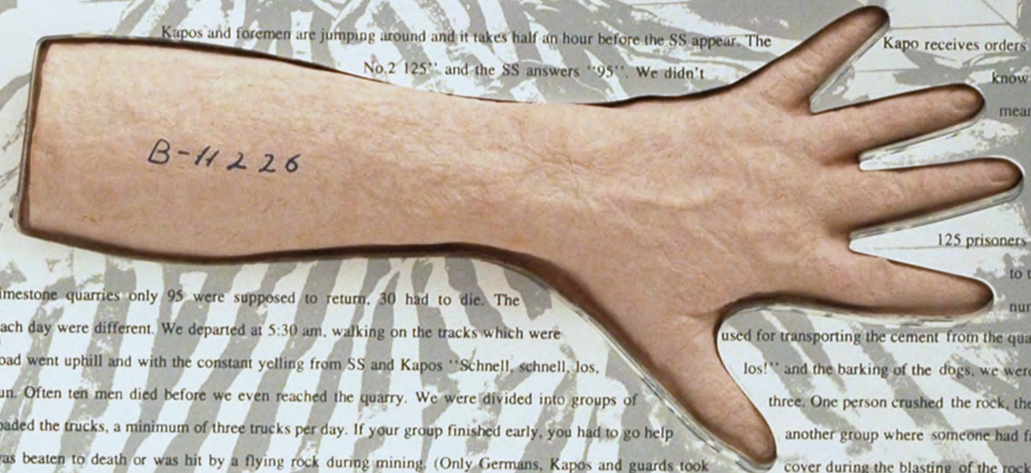
meal (watery soup and bread) we are herded to a large cement hall, our sleeping quarters, where five people sleep on one bunk bed. The night is wild; the "senior" prisoners try to steal whatever they can from the new arrivals. I lost my towel, which I wrapped around my neck so no one would take it, but during the night someone did. Before 3 am we are awakened and rushed to the latrines where only cold water runs and there is no soap and now, for me, also no towel. Immediately they are after us to stand in line for coffee which smells bad and tastes like dishwater. This is the only hot liquid of the day. And rushed again to the freezing cold roll call square where we are ordered to line up five deep.

Kapos and foremen are jumping around and it takes half an hour before the SS appear. The Kapo receives orders "Quarry No.2 125" and the SS answers "95". We didn't know what it meant. Later we found out that from 125 prisoners who went to the limestone quarries only 95 were supposed to return, 30 had to die. The numbers for each day were different. We departed at 5:30 am, walking on the tracks which were used for transporting the cement from the quarries. The road went uphill and with the constant yelling from SS and Kapos "Schnell, schnell, los, los!" and the barking of the dogs, we were forced to run. Often ten men died before we even reached the quarry. We were divided into groups of three. One person crushed the rock, the other two loaded the trucks, a minimum of three trucks per day. If your group finished early, you had to go help another group where someone had fallen and was beaten to death or was hit by a flying rock during mining. (Only Germans, Kapos and guards took cover during the blasting of the rocks.) If someone was hit by a rock and didn't die he was finished off in order to reach the daily quota of dead. Then they run us back to the factory on the tracks. If they didn't like you, they squeezed the trigger by mistake. The clogs were a big handicap for me. I was a young man in good physical condition but the clogs irritated my




Po 4 ev polévce a kousku chleba nás nahánějí do velké betonové haly a spíme po pěti na palandě. Noc je velmi bouřlivá. Ti "starší" se nás snaží v noci okrást, za ztracený ručník, který jsem si omotal okolo krku, abych o něj nepřišel, ale který mi ve spánku někdo sebral. A nejsou sestry. O hodiny rána se už nás vyhánějí se spánku do umývárny, kde teče jen studená voda, není mýdlo, a teď ani ručník. Ihned nás honí na kávu, která páchne a chutná jako bukvice bez cukru a mléka, ale je to jediný horký nápoj za celý den. A opět nás honí do mrazivého "appelplatzu" a čekáme do příchodu rodiny naší. Kapové a "Vrarbeiti" poskakují okolo nás, a teprve se objevují SS-áci. Vedoucí tábora přijímá jednotky. "Steinbruch 2" - 125 odpoví "95". Vyvezdili

jen 95 zato mrtvoly. Ty dny byly samozřejmě každý den jiné. O 5 hodin ráno jsme vyrazili přes kolejnice, po nichž se dopravovaly zásobníky cementu do cementárny. Cesta šla do kopce za stálého řevu "Schnell, schnell los-los..." a neustálého psotu psů, a často není ani 10 metrů, byli jsme rozděleni po třech, jsem rozbíjel vápencové balvany a dva to nakládali do vozů. A za den bylo minimum nakládá 3 vozy, když je jeden byl ale hotov, hnal se pomoci k druhé skupině, kde třeba někdo byl ubičován nebo zasažen při odstřelování skal. Byl-li mrtvý, tak ho mi běželi do dílen, aby byl počet mrtvých splněn. Pokud se Němci, kapové a stráže se byli před odstřelováním dle ani po 4 ne.

ARBEIT
MACHT FREI
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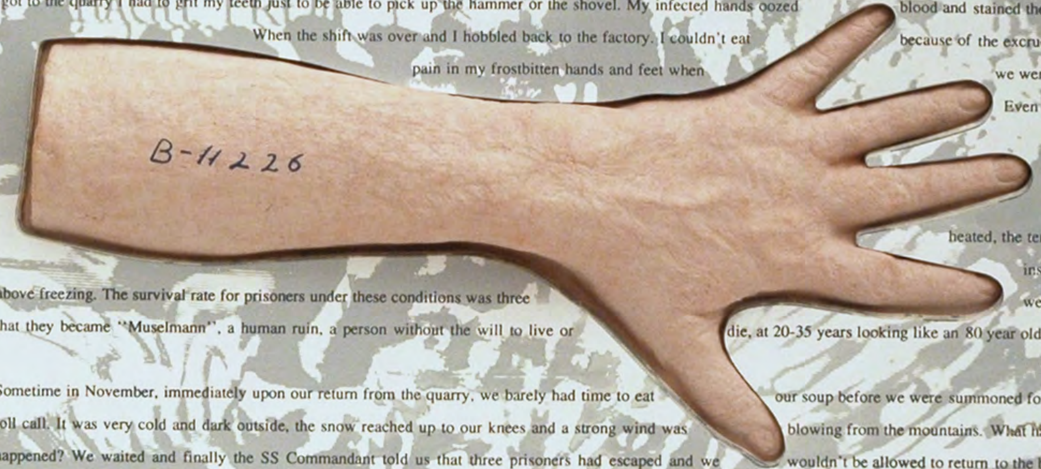
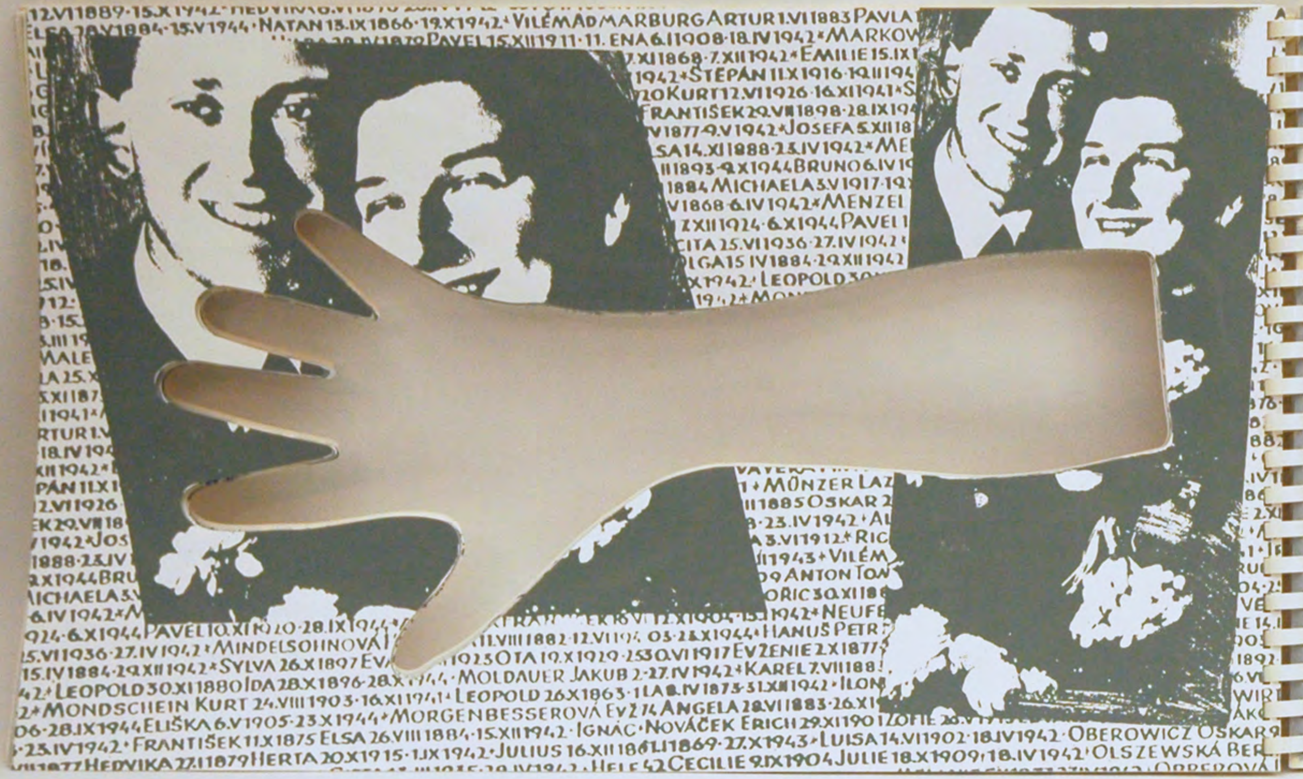
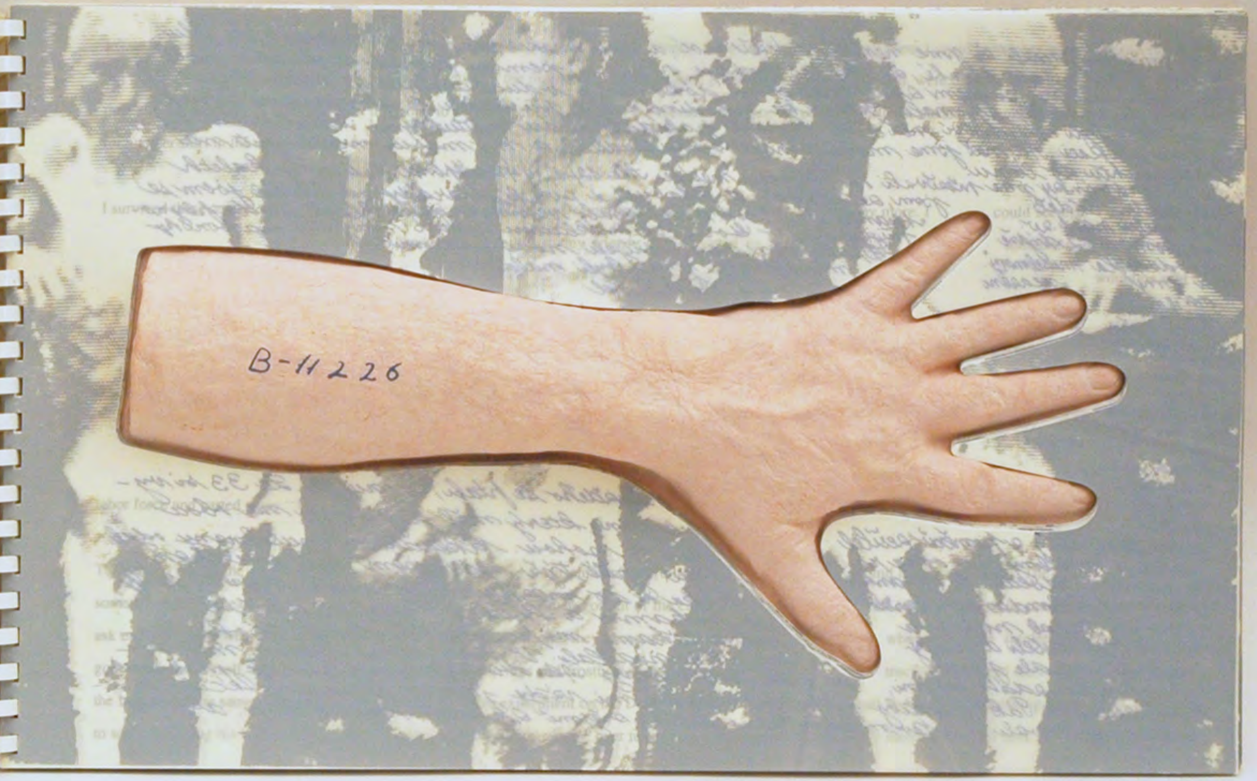
feet, my skin cracked, and the flesh got infected. During the bitter cold in the Polish mountains in October and November, my hands and feet were frostbitten. Fallen rock injured my legs in several places and I got blood poisoning in my legs; they swelled up like elephant's feet. My underwear fell apart and I had only striped "pajamas" to wear. For insulation against the bitter cold, we stuffed paper bags from the cement into our clogs. I got sick with an infected gall bladder and couldn't control my bladder. I hobbled to work wearing the clogs and if it weren't for my friends Oto Keller and Bertik Brok, I wouldn't have survived the daily selections when SS looked for the most wretched prisoners to fulfill their quotas of dead. Often Oto and Bertik supported me on the journey to and from the quarry. When we got to the quarry I had to grit my teeth just to be able to pick up the hammer or the shovel. My infected hands oozed blood and stained the handle. When the shift was over and I hobbled back to the factory, I couldn't eat because of the excruciating pain in my frostbitten hands and feet when we went indoors. Even though the building wasn't heated, the temperature above freezing. The survival rate for prisoners under these conditions was three weeks. After that they became "Muselmann", a human ruin, a person without the will to live or die, at 20-35 years looking like an 80 year old man.




Sometime in November, immediately upon our return from the quarry, we barely had time to eat our soup before we were summoned for another roll call. It was very cold and dark outside, the snow reached up to our knees and a strong wind was blowing from the mountains. What had happened? We waited and finally the SS Commandant told us that three prisoners had escaped and we wouldn't be allowed to return to the barracks till they were caught. He ordered us to lie down on the snow covered ground with our heads buried in the snow. He, with several other SS, kept circling us like lions in a cage. Anyone who raised his head was beaten. It was about six o'clock in the evening. We were so cold that we urinated on ourselves and the wet clothes froze

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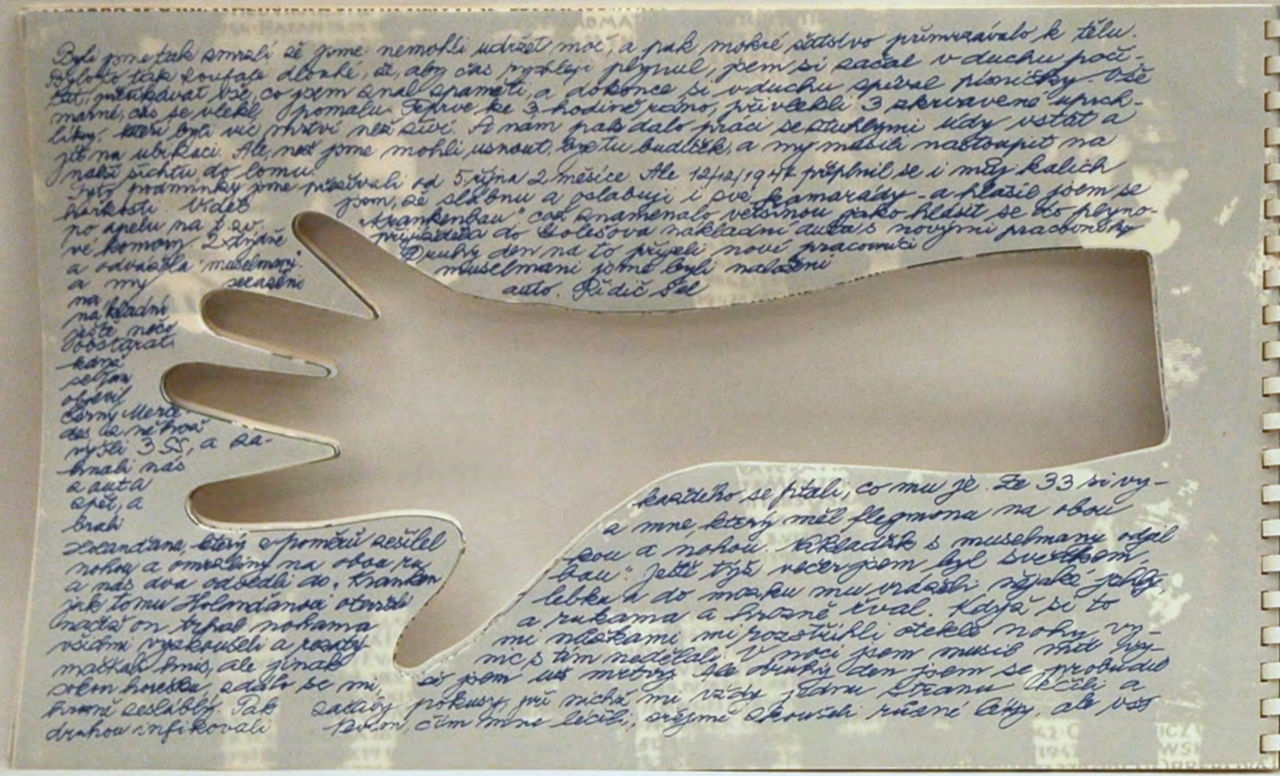
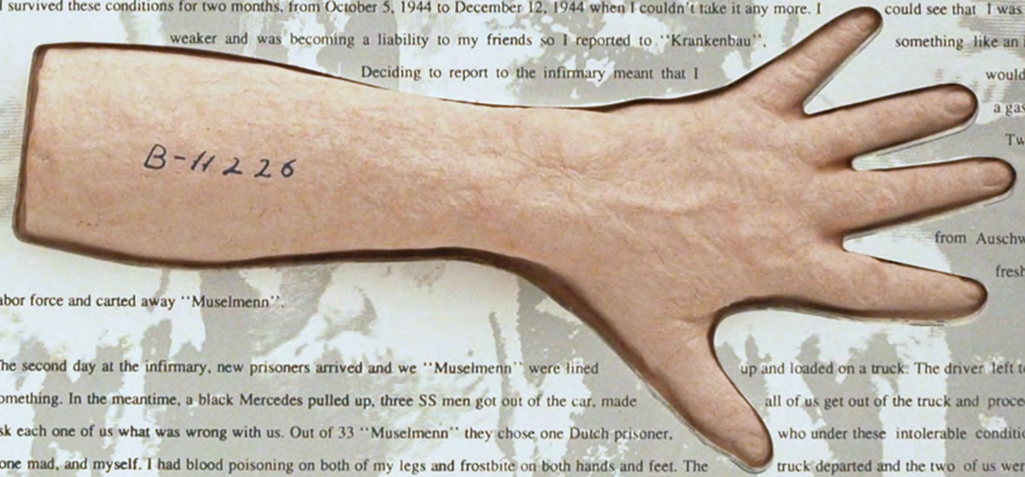


to our bodies. The wait was terribly long. To help the time pass, I started to count silently, to recite in my head every poem I could remember and even to sing songs, but to no avail; time passed very slowly. At three o'clock in the morning the three escaped prisoners, covered with blood, were dragged in. They were more dead than alive. It was very difficult for us at this point to move our frozen bodies to the barracks. Before we could fall asleep, the alarm sounded and we had to get up for another shift in the quarry.

I survived these conditions for two months, from October 5, 1944 to December 12, 1944 when I couldn't take it any more. I could see that I was getting weaker and was becoming a liability to my friends so I reported to "Krankenbau". Deciding to report to the infirmary meant that I would be sent to a gas chamber. Twice a week trucks arrived from Auschwitz with a fresh prison labor force and carted away "Muselmenn".




The second day at the infirmary, new prisoners arrived and we "Muselmenn" were lined up and loaded on a truck. The driver left to get something. In the meantime, a black Mercedes pulled up, three SS men got out of the car, made all of us get out of the truck and proceeded to ask each one of us what was wrong with us. Out of 33 "Muselmenn" they chose one Dutch prisoner, who under these intolerable conditions had gone mad, and myself. I had blood poisoning on both of my legs and frostbite on both hands and feet. The truck departed and the two of us were taken to the infirmary. The same evening I was a witness to a bizarre experiment on the Dutch prisoner. They opened his skull and injected something in his brain. He started to scream, jerking his legs and arms. After they worked on him, they came over to me and with rusted scissors cut my swollen legs and took the infected pus out.

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se ku podivu hojilo. Abych nezapomněl, tu první noc, když mi mačkali ten hnis, ten puch byl tak hrozný, že ten SS to nevydržel a šel si ven dokouřit a na ochmě. Ze jsem byl statečný a ani nepípl, mi nabídl cigaretu (byl kontrabánd a byl pro Židy zakázán). Já mu poděkoval a řekl, že bych radši chlíb kousek chleba. "Dostaneš, dostaneš," řekl, ale nikdy jsem ho nedostal. Jak jsem se dozvěděl, nebo ten SS válka lékař, ale řezník, který měl zájem o anatomii, řekl, že se doktorátu dodělá po válce.

Je zajímavé, jak nacisté dovedli, vše využít. Když ozebračili Židy a vzali jim vše, co jim patřilo, nezůstalo jejich dovedli využít i zbytek pracovní energie a když i tu vyčerpali, tělo na pokusy, to po smrti vykostili a tuku kůži na mýdlo a z kostí hnojivo.

Na "Krankenbau" byli i jiní pacienti. Jedním z nich byl bajecný člověk a filosof Dr Fischl. Když jsem byl po "ošetření" byl vyčerpaný, vyhledával mi zábavky. Nastalo ze svého života a spolu jsme i hráli šachy, často jsme ale museli přestat, protože jsme si nebyli jisti po dvacáté tahu, jak partie vlastně stojí. Ja měl výhodu proti němu, protože jsem hrál v Praze 2 turnaje "na slepo" a aby čas lépe ubíhal, cvičili jsme se v anglitině, on byl ambasador. Blížily se Vánoce a byly to nejpodivnější Vánoce zatím v mém životě. Dozvěděli jsme se že válka je pro Němce prohrána, a byla to jen otázka času, kdo kdoriší dříve my nebo Třetí Říše. Nejak dobře se nepamatuji, jak k tomu došlo, ale vedle Krankenbau bylo skladiště černého tuku. SS-áci se opili a spali, a my dva mrzáci jsme se doplazili do toho skladiště

nothing else. That night I must have had very high fever and I dreamed that I was dead. I woke up the next day in a much weakened state. Then the experiments on my legs and hands started; they always healed one leg and one hand while infecting the other one. I don't know what they used, but somehow both legs and hands, much to everyone's amazement, started to heal.

I almost forgot. When they were removing the pus, the smell was so bad that one of the SS couldn't stand it and had to leave the room to smoke a cigarette. Because I was so brave and didn't make a sound, he offered me a cigarette too (Jews were forbidden to smoke). I thanked him and told him I'd prefer a piece of bread. "You'll get some, you'll get some," he promised, but I never did. I found out the SS man who was conducting medical experiments was not a doctor, but a butcher who was interested in anatomy. He said he'd finish his doctor's training after the war.

It's interesting how the Nazis could exploit anything. When they robbed Jews of all of their possessions, their health and strength by forced labor, they used their bodies for experiments. Even that wasn't the end of it. Women's body fat was used for soap and human bones for fertilizer. There were other prisoners at the infirmary. One of them was Dr. Fischl, a wonderful person and a philosopher. After the treatments I'd be exhausted and he would try to make me feel better by telling stories of his life. We spent time playing chess (blindly, since we had no chess board). After about 20 moves we had to stop, since neither one of us could remember the positions of the figures. I had an advantage over him since in Prague, before the war, I had played two tournaments blindly. To help time pass, we practiced our English. His was much better than mine.

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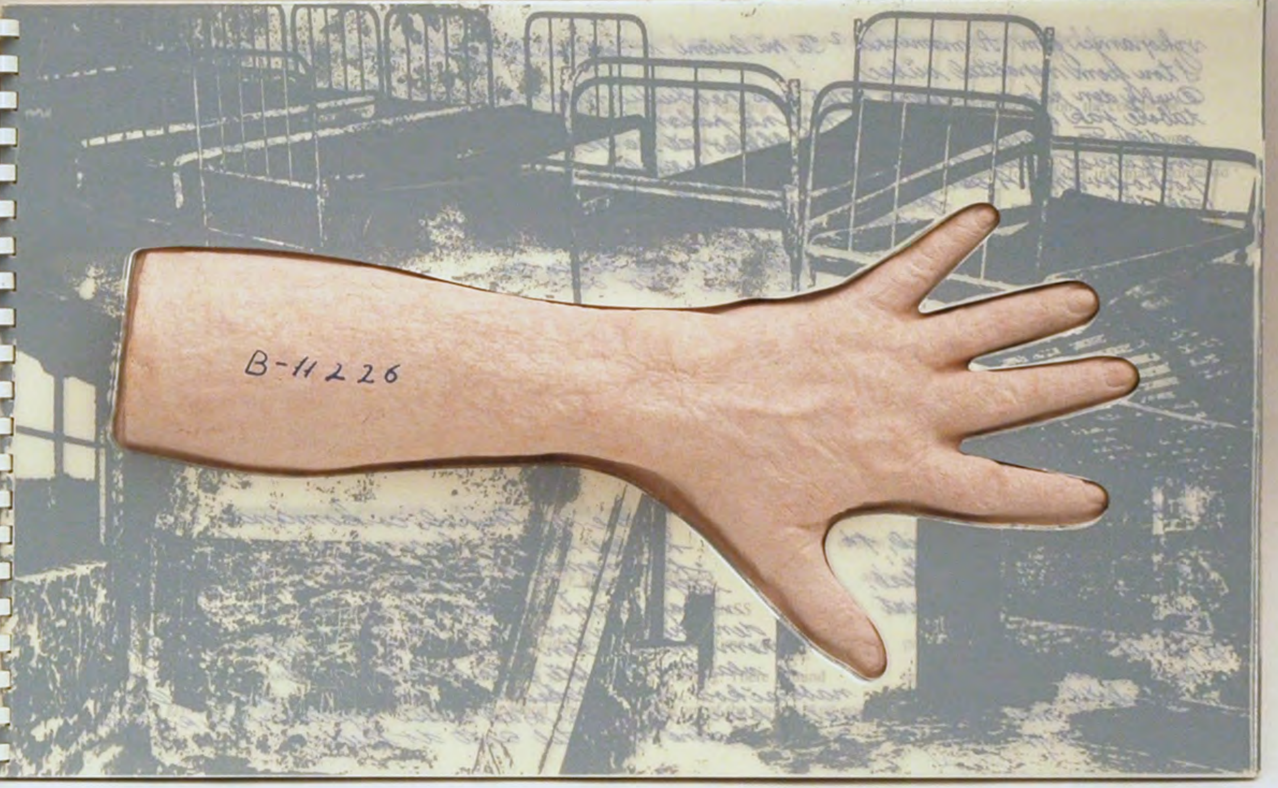
a každý si ukousl jednu červenou řepu. Nevím jak dlouho nám to trvalo, ale
začali jsme asi ve 2 hodiny v noci na Štědrý večer a asi ve 4 hodiny ráno jsme se
troufali uchrupnout si kousek řepy. Při našem hladu to byl pamlsek, přestože
řepa byla nemytá a zanechávala pachuť na jazyku. Nad námi na palandě
ležel nějaký Polák, probudil se při našem chroupání a začal vykřikovat, že
nás udá, neříkáme k mu ten kousek. Tak jsme mu dali kousek, ale stejně nás
udal SS nám
Přiblížil se
tam ten Polák,
oslavovali příchod
Nového
roku 1945
přišel
s
hrůzu-
ným mrazem
a vánicemi
My na
bále
1945 přišel za mnou dr. Blu. ka
se zastoval SS-ky "doktorů" a
auto a Tebe už nemůže chránit
tak se Ti teď hledá Rabbet."
Půjdu já dřív než 3 říše."
Dopadl všech drahých a
z nich se zachránil Uherské
rezna s bylou, ten asi selekci nepřežije. Tonička s Vikíčkem neměla šanci, a
Greta s rodinou odjela dávno do Balstokyk, čtyři, tam prý je střílely do předem
Krankenbau jsme
toho nejhorského ušetřeni. 18. ledna
ostravský Žid který se zachránil tím
řekl: "Zítra, 19. ledna přijede z Oswiecimu
nemocné. Oni už se na Tebe vše vykoušeli
Poděkoval jsem mu a řekl si: Tak tedy
Tu noc jsem uvažoval o svém životě, o
přátel si, aby aspoň oni, nebo aspoň někdo
jsem, kdo to asi bude. Asi Ota. Arnold odjel do Te-
hernia s kýlou, jeho šance na přežití byla velmi malá, a
Greta (moje sestra) byla dlouho transportována. Dlouhá doba

It was close to Christmas and this was the strangest Christmas I ever experienced. We found out that the Germans lost the war and that it was just a matter of time. Who was going to hold on longer - us or the Third Reich! I don't quite remember how it happened but next to the infirmary was a warehouse with red beets. The SS got drunk one day and two of us cripples crawled to the warehouse at night. We took one red beet each. I don't know how long it took us; we started at 2 am on Christmas Eve and at 4 am we each took a bite from our treat. We were so hungry that the beet was a real treasure, even though it was covered with dirt and left a strange aftertaste in our mouths. In the bunk bed above us was a Polish prisoner who was awakened by our crunching and threatened to turn us in unless we shared the beet with him. We gave him a piece, but he turned us in anyway. The SS didn't punish us; they called us pigs instead. Next came New Years Eve. The SS got drunk again and we ventured to the warehouse again to get more beets.

1945

The Polish prisoner was gone and this is how we celebrated New Year's Day.

In January the weather was bitter cold. Snow storms raged and we at the infirmary were protected against the worst of it. On January 18, 1945 Dr Blumka (a Jew who saved himself by helping the SS "doctors") came to see me and told me that the next day a truck would come from Auschwitz and that he couldn't protect me any longer. The SS "doctors" had finished all of their experiments on me and now they wanted to get rid of me. I thanked him and thought to myself, "I guess I'll go before the Third Reich". That night I thought about my life, about all my dearest ones and wished that at least they, at least one of them, would be saved. I pondered who it might be, probably Ota. Arnold (my older brother) went to Terezin with a hernia and his chance of surviving a selection was very slim. Tonicka and Edgar Victor didn't have a chance and Greta (my sister) had been transported a long time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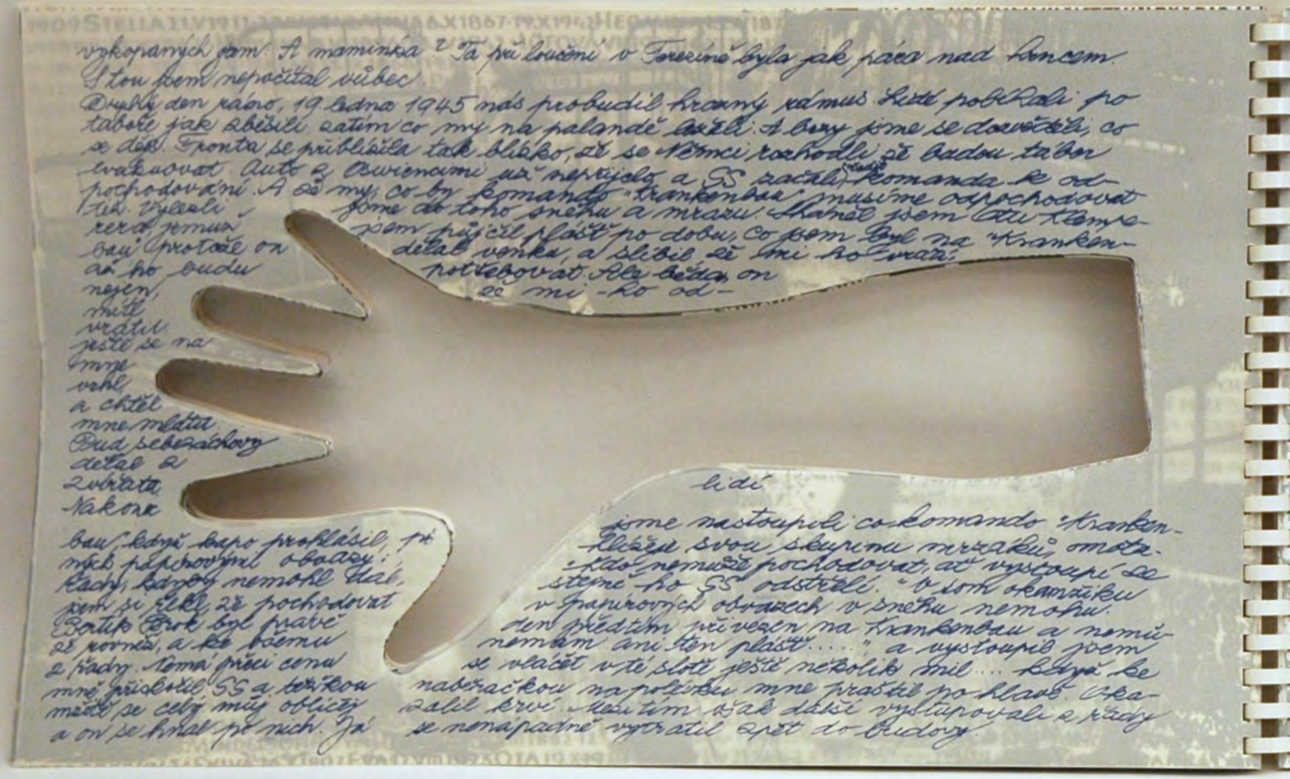

ago to the Baltic states with her whole family. And my mother? She was so weak that when I said goodbye to her in Terezin, I had no hope for her survival.

The next day - January 19, 1945 we were awakened by a tremendous uproar. People were running around the camp like mad, while we laid on the cots in the infirmary. Soon we found out what was happening. The front had come so close during the night that the Nazis decided to evacuate the camp. The truck from Auschwitz didn't come and SS men started to arrange the prisoners into komandos to march out of the camp. We, the sick prisoners, formed the infirmary komando and had to march out, too. I tried to find Ota Klemperer; I'd lent him my overcoat while I was in the infirmary and he promised to return it to me when I needed it. Not only did he refuse to return it, he jumped me and started beating me. The survival instinct made animals out of people. Finally, we formed the infirmary komando. When the Kapo, after surveying this group of cripples covered in paper bandages announced, "Whoever can't walk, step out of line. If you can't walk the SS will shoot you anyway." At that moment I decided that I couldn't walk in the snow in paper bandages; I had no shoes or overcoat. Bertik Brok had been transported to the infirmary the day before and also couldn't walk. I stepped forward. There was no point in dragging myself in the sleet and snow for several miles just to be shot... Suddenly an SS jumped me and struck me on the head with a heavy soup ladle. Immediately my whole face was covered with blood. In the meantime other prisoners stepped out of line and the SS started running after them and beating them. I carefully stole away back to the infirmary building. There I found mountains of underwear which the SS had refused to give us. I put some on and used others to wipe the blood which was oozing out of the wound. And another discovery - soup in the kitchen - which no one was guarding.

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Byly tu haldy spodního prádla, které nám odmítali dát, tak jsem si něco na sebe
sehnal, a do třetího útěku kroj, která se mi zachytila o plotu a další obyv.
v kuchyni navařená polévka, kterou nikdo nehlídal. Dnes jsem se dal do
jídla, poslední snaží tě kme před koncem života, jako na smrt odsouzený? A hned
přicházel další spolu vězeň, a každý si postavil stejně.
Mezitím odpracovávaly všechny pracovní skupiny. V táboře nastal klid. Už
jsme se těšili, že jsme sami, když tam přišli SS, začali nás nahánět do řad
a počítat. Bylo nás těsně 100 a měli jsme být zlikvidováni po setmění –
obávali se už polských partyzánů. Zamkli všechny brány a okna – zřejmě
nás nechali, abychom si vybrali
a přiblížil se večer a tma.

Klidně
jedli navařenou polévku. Den

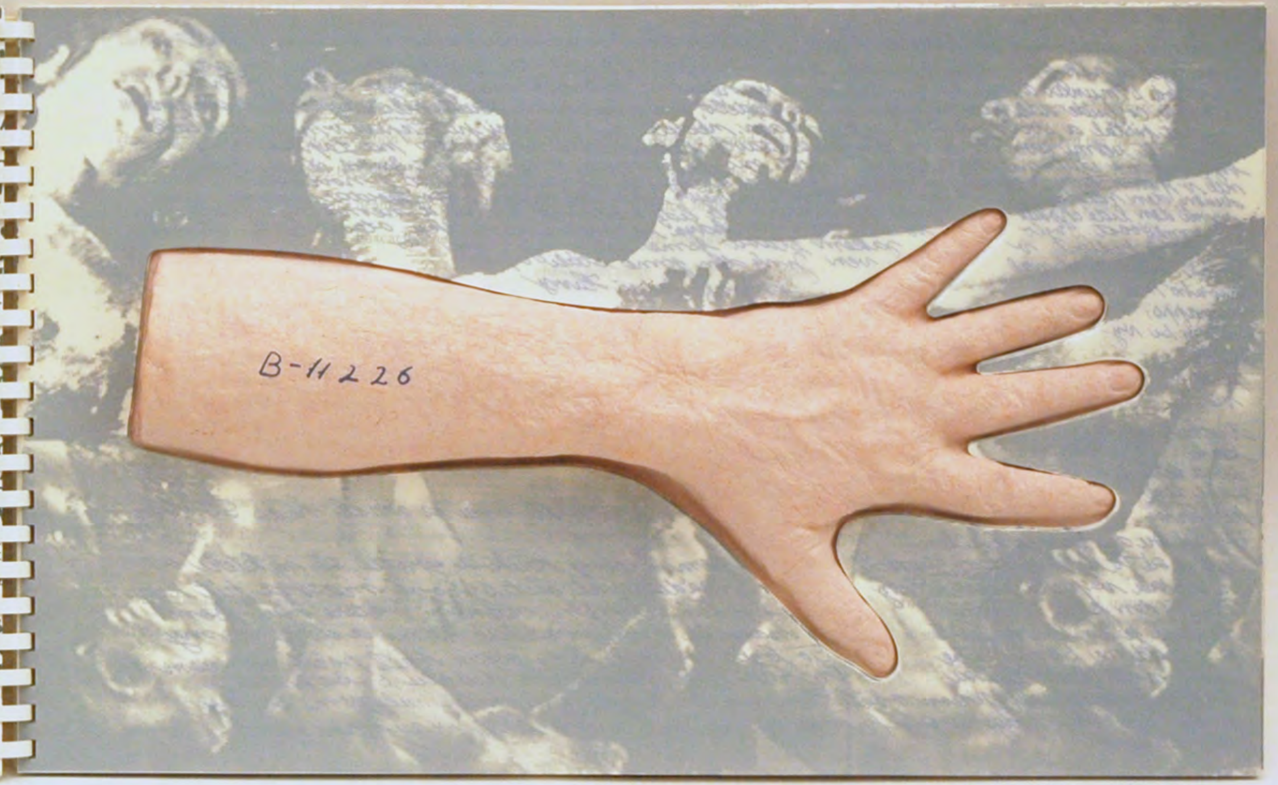
čekali jsme, že přijdou SS
a ti
všechny
nás
se mnou
Boris Berník,
Leo, Oldřich Meltzer
nato ty
přitáhli
zůstali
přes noc a SS-ci se už neukázali
zase pak a my trávili další den
v napětí, dostali jsme
Zbytek jsme si brali
Bohužel SS zřejmě
my, ale ke ztrátám doba
Za tma zase nás: však
mráz, zbytek bodin. Pak vlak
nehnal, a dostali namačkali
jsme v druhém. Byli jsme jako
Mrázovi. Omotáni papírovými obvazy

odvezl na Slezskou Ostravu SS-ci
v dávnou krytu. Nálet trval přes
tyto se nás zlikvidují ráno. Ale ráno
na studené polévce, ho nic nestrel, ne-
jedu ještě jiný Brik-Ber Meltzer, a tak jsme se dali
pracovat, že naše lidi dace se odložila o 24 hodi-
jako 19. přišel i 20. tma nalet a vše se opakovalo.
SS vzbudili a hnali ke dráze. Tam jsme čekali v
přišel vlak a do ze mnoho dobytčáku nás mezi
jsme nemohli jen polosedět, opuzaje se
jeden o druhém. Byli jsme jako
omotáni papírovými obvazy

I start gobbling it, probably the last meal I'll ever have. Other prisoners started coming and everyone did the same. In the meantime all the work komandos were marched out of the camp and the factory was quiet. We were happy. We thought that we had been left alone when three SS men appeared and ordered us to line up for a count. There were more than 100 prisoners here and they planned to shoot us at night. (They were too afraid of Polish partisans to shoot during the day.) All the gates were locked and the windows barred and they let us choose underwear. We ate more soup. The day passed quietly and dusk approached. We waited for the SS to come and kill us. Instead, the sirens sounded, announcing an air raid of "enemy" planes on nearby Ostrava. The SS men stayed in their bunker. The air raid lasted past midnight and the SS didn't appear. The rumor circulated that they'd liquidate us in the morning. Morning came, they overslept and we survived another day eating cold soup. Some of the prisoners ate too much and got sick with diarrhea.

I find out that another Czech, Leo Meltzer from Ostrava, is here, so Berik Brek, Leo and myself stay together. The SS men postponed our liquidation for another 24 hours. The next day, January 20th, another air raid followed and the routine was repeated.

On the morning of January 21st we were awakened by the SS men and rushed to the railroad station. We waited for several hours in the freezing cold until the train finally arrived and we were all squeezed into one boxcar. We couldn't lie down; all we could manage was to sit leaning on each other. We looked like silkworms covered in paper bandages soaked with blood and infected pus. The train moved several meters and then stopped. It moved again and afterwards we were switched on to a siding while other trains carrying ammunition and soldiers headed for the Eastern front and trains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carrying wounded German soldiers headed West. We waited the entire day; our train didn't move. All we heard were the whistles of the passing trains and guards walking around outside the boxcar. No food or water was delivered. Finally, at night the train moved very slowly with many interruptions and our journey to the West continued. We spent the second day on a siding again, again without any food or water. In the bitter cold our breath changed to a steam which froze and changed to ice crystals. Out of desperation we started licking it. Several people died the second day and some of the stronger prisoners dragged the dead bodies to a corner of the boxcar which had been used as a rest room the first day. Gradually everyone got weaker; we no longer had anything to excrete, became apathetic, laid down and waited for death. Only occasionally was there a commotion in the boxcar. I think it was the third day when the doors of the boxcar opened and an SS came to see what condition we were in. The awesome stench quickly chased him away. Another day, we again waited a long time on a siding when Harry Schnaps, who dug out a wood knot in the siding of the boxcar so he could see a bit of the outside, proclaimed, "The Russians are here; I see the red flag!" whereupon an SS voice next to the boxcar shouted, "Shut up!"

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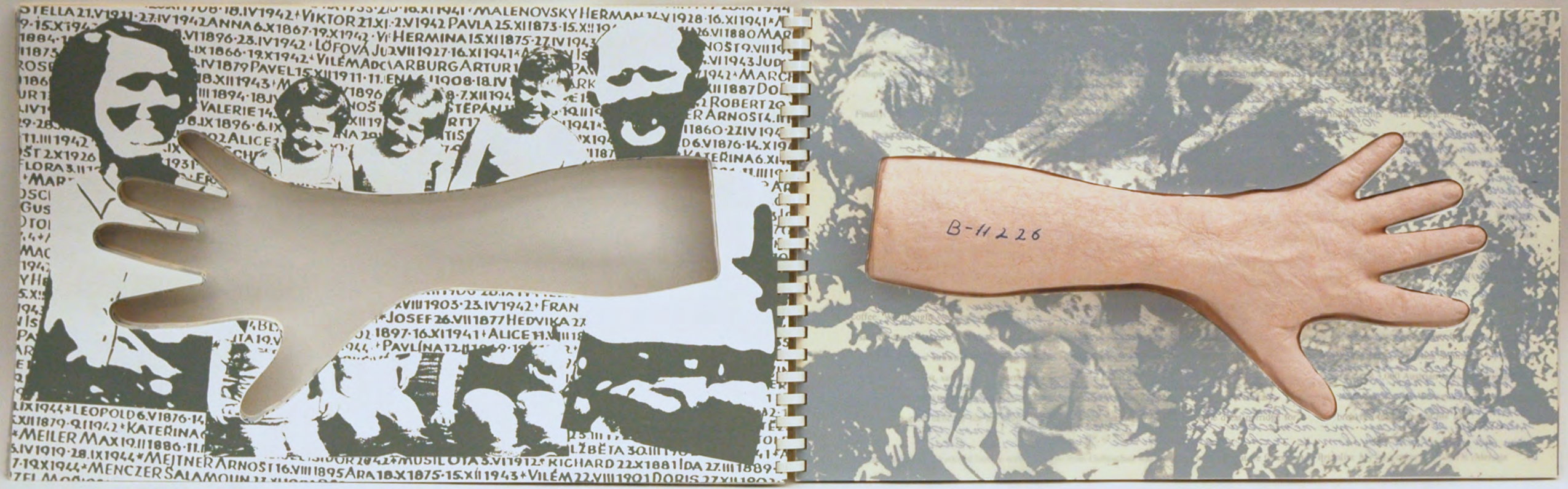
It was about the fourth night when I heard a terrible scream and discovered that some of the prisoners, led by their survival instinct, began to kill the weaker prisoners, drinking blood and devouring their raw meat. The next day I spoke with another prisoner and told him how horrendous this is: the Nazis are killing our wives and children and we're killing each other. I had the feeling that I'd be the next victim. The prisoner I spoke with had a vehement debate with the cannibals. They chose another victim. The fifth day, when they slept, the three of us Czechs crawled to a corner of the boxcar behind the pile of dead bodies and this is how we escaped their cannibalism. Hunger and thirst had different effects on people. Some were agitated and aggressive;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Hlad a žízeň působil na různé různě různě. Někteří začali být podrážděni a
útočni jiní se modlili, a někteří byli apatičtí, téměř nic už nevnímajíce.
Byly bitky a třenice a abychom se toho uvarovali, zdržovali jsme v rohu vagonu
za haldou mrtvol, která rostla den za dnem. Většinu času jsme ze slabosti
prospali, a když se povídalo, tedy jen co kdo kdy dobrého viděl, zažil, snědl.
Terezínský koncentrák se nám zdál nesplnitelný ráj, a vlak stále stál
beze dne, a v noci ho vždy posunuli kousek blíž na západ. Když pak konečně 30
dne 1945 pro
vagon otevřeli v
Brnovci ten transport
odhlasení mrtvol
živých
stavu,
kteří nebyli
schop-
ni
pohybu
vytáhli nás
nejdříve do sprch
a dali nám
napít
jsme se
které jsme měli na sobě
ovšem vymenili také obvazy
kde dva měli dohromady
a v dalších dnech jsme
koncentráku koncentráku
Oskar Schindler, polský
předstírajíc, že pracují pro německou muniční továrnu. Celý únor 1945
jsme byli ponecháni, abychom se trochu zrestaurovali. Krmili nás kaší,
10. denním putování v dobytčáku bez jídla a pití ten
Trnava Drezna domněleli se, že jsou tam ten motivy
"Transport dmrtvých" Skutečně se však divili, když po
tam našli ještě asi 35 lidí
ve zaboxšném
vrcu tu trnkovou kávu. Přirovnali
jako Pán Bůh v Anglii. Spálili hadry,
dezinfikovali nás, a dali nové oblečení.
ušetřili hnisavé rány, a dali nás na ubikaci,
jeden celý slamník.
se dozvěděli, že od další ho putování od
a tím od jisté smrti nás zachránil
Němec, který zachránil 300 židovských Židů.

some prayed; others became apathetic and didn't comprehend their situation. There were fights and skirmishes and we three tried to avoid it all by staying hidden in our corner. Since we were very weak, we spent most of the time sleeping and when we spoke we reminisced about what we ate, saw and experienced before the camps. Terezin seemed, by comparison, like a heaven on earth. Our train remained stationary during each day and at night inched very slowly westward.

Finally, January 30th, 1945, after ten days without any food or water, the doors of the boxcar were pried open at Brinnlitz camp. The people there (prisoners from the munitions factory) heard voices from the boxcar. After removing the pyramid of frozen corpses, they were surprised to find 35 people still alive, in horrendous condition, skeletal and unable to move.

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We were taken first to the showers and then given real coffee. We thought we were in heaven. The rags we wore were burned, our bodies disinfected and we were given new clothes. They also changed our bandages, cleaned the pus from frostbitten and infected wounds. We were brought to a room strewn with straw mattresses, two people per mattress. In the ensuing days we found out that Oskar Schindler, a Polish German industrialist, saved us from further wandering from camp to camp and certain death. He also saved 3,000 Austrian Jews by pretending that they were working for the German munitions factory. We spent the entire month of February 1945 recuperating. We were given porridge, which was a great delicacy for us. Bertik Brok proclaimed that when he got home he'd eat porridge for breakfast for the rest of his life.

We didn't know that a second boxcar with prisoners from Golleschau was traveling with us; that we found out in Brinnlitz. My co-worker from MTK (Menage

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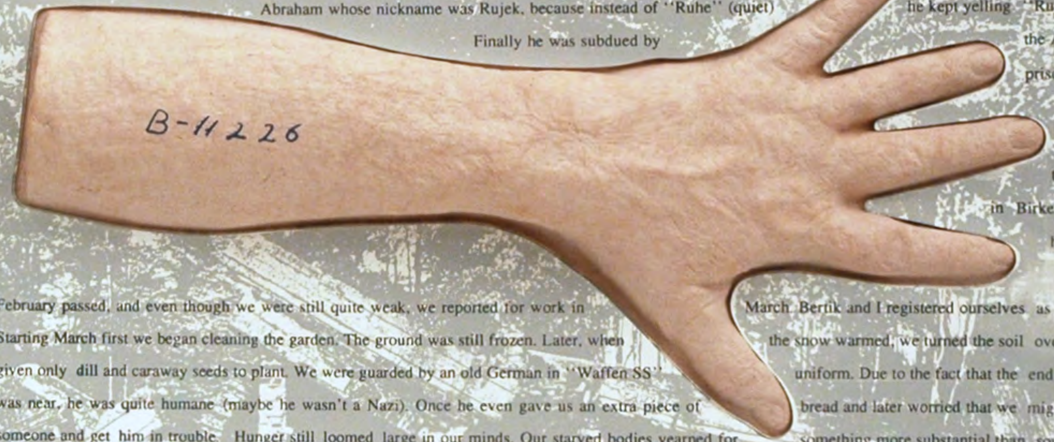
a Bertík Jirka prohlásil, že doma po válce nic jiného k snídani nebude jíst do konce života. Asi v Breslavi jsme se dozvěděli, že k našemu transportu byl připojen druhý vagon. Byl tam kovněž můj spolupracovník z MTK - Manage Transport Kolonne) Singer z Breslau. Přijel do Birkenau s Terezínem se stejným transportem jako Tonička s Viktorkem a pověděl mi o jejich osudu. Když Tonička s Viktorkem přijeli do Birkenau, kočár jí říkal, aby dítě nechala svému osudu, a sama se snažila zachránit. Ona neposlechla. Kolonu s Viktorkem odebrali, dostala mýdlo a šla [illegible] do plynu. Jelikož byl nedostatek Cyklonu, děti hákli do vykopaných [illegible] jám, polévali benzínem a upalovali. Tak skončil můj první syn.

Vězni, kteří se ve vagonu chovali jako kanibalové, byli opět normální lidé. Jediný, který si za chování, protože místo "Ruhe!" vykřikoval "Rujek!" Polák Abraham, kterému se přezdívalo Rujek. Toho dali zvlášť, který byl rozdíl od Birkenauských.

Únor uplynul a my, přestože značně slabí jsme měli v březnu nastoupit do práce. S Bertíkem jako zahradníci dělníci jsme na zahradě 1. března 1945, kde jsme odklízeli stopy zimy. Půda však byla první dny ještě zmrzlá, takže se nedala ani rýt, ale později, když vyvítr slunka, jsme začali. Dostali jsme jen semena kmínu a kopru.

Transport Kolonne), Singer from Breslau was in the second boxcar. He had come to Birkenau in the same transport as Tonicka and Victor Edgar and he told me of their fate. Tonicka, was transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau with Edgar Victor. Everyone told her to abandon the baby to his fate, but she wouldn't listen. At the end he was taken from her and with soap in hand she went to the gas chambers. Because there was a shortage of Cyclon gas, children were thrown into pits, doused with gasoline and burned to death. This is how the life of my first son ended.

The prisoners who became cannibals during the ten day transport were back to normal. The only one who remained aggressive was a Pole named Abraham whose nickname was Rujek, because instead of "Ruhe" (quiet) he kept yelling "Rujek". Finally he was subdued by the Austrian prisoners, who in contrast to the ones in Birkenau, were humane.




February passed, and even though we were still quite weak, we reported for work in March. Bertik and I registered ourselves as gardeners. Starting March first we began cleaning the garden. The ground was still frozen. Later, when the snow warmed, we turned the soil over and were given only dill and caraway seeds to plant. We were guarded by an old German in "Waffen SS" uniform. Due to the fact that the end of the war was near, he was quite humane (maybe he wasn't a Nazi). Once he even gave us an extra piece of bread and later worried that we might tell someone and get him in trouble. Hunger still loomed large in our minds. Our starved bodies yearned for something more substantial than soup, bread and imitation coffee.

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Dozor nad námi měl starý Němec v uniformě „Waffen-SS", ale buď to byl už blížící se konec války, nebo ať byl nacista, choval se k nám dost lidsky. Jednou nám dokonce podstrčil kousek chleba, a pak se bál abychom to mu komu neřekli. Ale hlad byl stále velký, a naše podvyživené tělo toužilo po něčem výživnějším, než pro polévce, chlebu a kávové náhraze. A v táboře byli ještě ostří nacisté, kteří se neváhali vařit. Otrávili jsme na zahradě i dubem, kde jsme byli nakomandováni na nádraží tušim, že ve Svitavách, abychom šli skládat do vagonů sušené řepné řízky pro dobytek. Z hladu bychom na- vrhli se. Také jsem to okusil. Měly pálivě sladkou chuť. Nemohl jsem to nemohl. Mnoho vězňů dostalo krvavé průjmy a někdo

řízky a přichází, ale jsou ti, kteří to jedli. Konec zemřelo. A přiblížil se začátek

Května. Prostýchalo se, že na nádraží přijde nová kolona na kolejích a že si Schindler pokomandoval. Ho to stálo hodně peněz.

Konečně, 8. května 1945 jsme

nám měl Schindler řekl mimo

Německo podepsalo unconditio

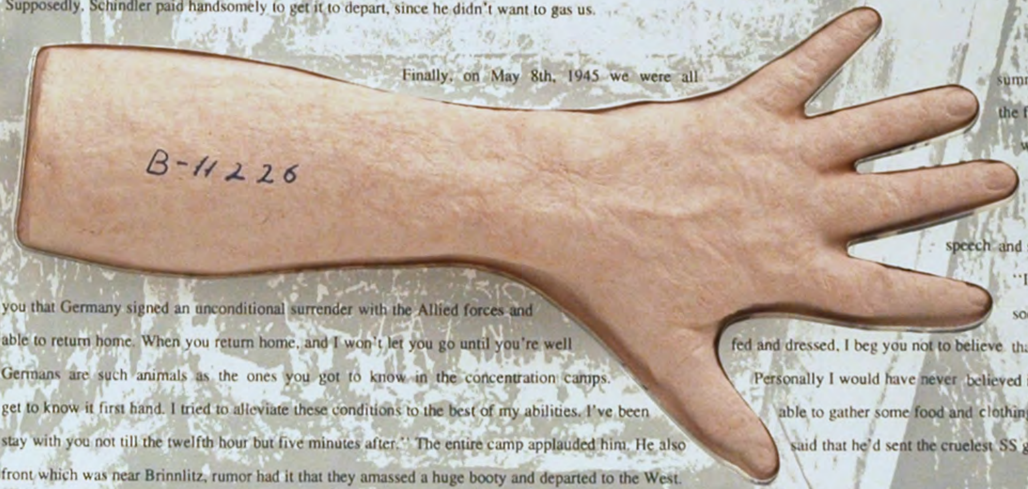
vlak, něco jako plyn- dám stála ta soupravu asi 3 dny, nechtěje plynovat vězně a že prý

x. zv. plynový

Konečně, 8. května 1945 jsme byli všichni svoláni do tovární haly, kde k nám měl Schindler krátké mimo- ní prohlásil: "Musím Vám všem oznámit, že Německo podepsalo unconditional surrender" spojencům, tak se brzy budete moci vrátit domů. Až se budete vracet domů, a já Vás dřív nepustím, dokud Vás řádně nevykrmím a neoblékna, prosím, nevěřte, že všichni Němci jsou taková zvířata.

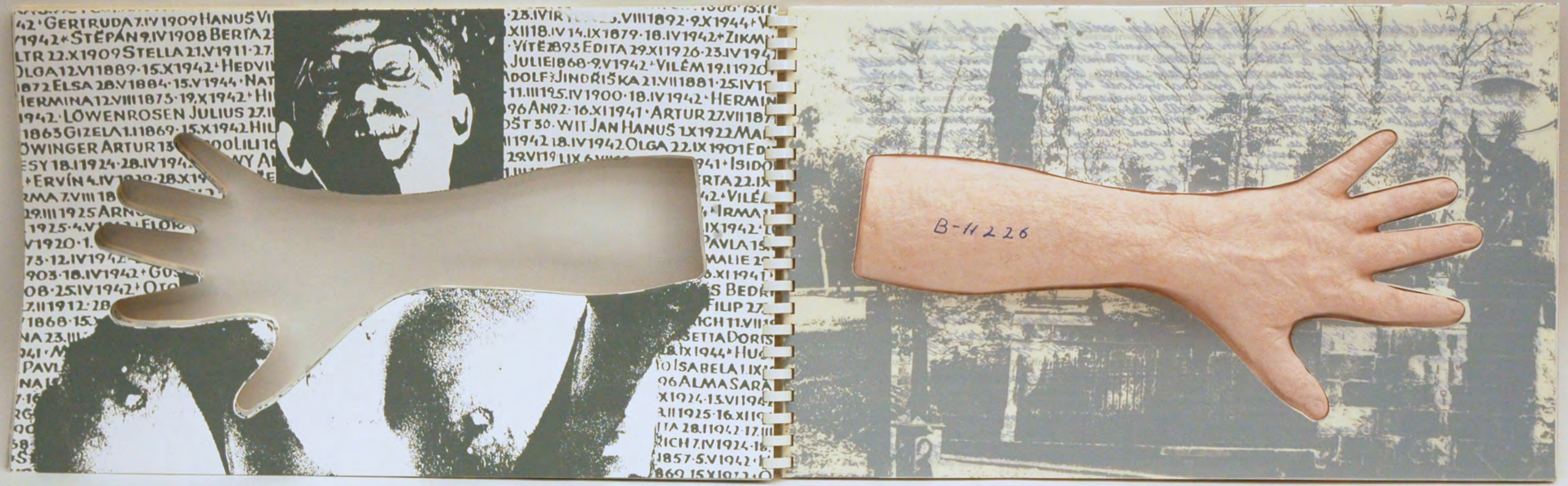
We spent April in the garden. Once we were ordered to the railroad station (I think it was in Zwickau), to unload dried tops from sugar beets - animal feed. People were so hungry that they started eating them. I tried, but the sugar beet tops were so burningly sweet that I couldn't. Many prisoners who ate them got terrible diarrhea and several of them died.

May came. Rumor had it that a "gas train", something resembling a gas chamber, had arrived at the railroad station. The gastrain stayed there for three days. Supposedly, Schindler paid handsomely to get it to depart, since he didn't want to gas us.




Finally, on May 8th, 1945 we were all summoned to the factory hall, where Schindler gave a speech and said to us, "I have to tell you that Germany signed an unconditional surrender with the Allied forces and soon you'll be able to return home. When you return home, and I won't let you go until you're well fed and dressed, I beg you not to believe that all Germans are such animals as the ones you got to know in the concentration camps. Personally I would have never believed it if I didn't get to know it first hand. I tried to alleviate these conditions to the best of my abilities. I've been able to gather some food and clothing and I'll stay with you not till the twelfth hour but five minutes after." The entire camp applauded him. He also said that he'd sent the cruelest SS guards to the front which was near Brinnlitz, rumor had it that they amassed a huge booty and departed to the West.

We didn't have to work for the rest of the day, received an extra ration of bread and went to sleep happy. The next morning we were not awakened as usual. At 8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jaké jste prožívali v koncentrácích. Já osobně bych to nikdy nevěřil, kdybych nebyl měl moje
rodiče to poznat tak zblízka. Snažil jsem se to pochopit, co bylo v mých silách.
Nahromadil jsem nějaké jídlo a šatstvo, a přistoupil s Vámi jsem do hodiny dvanácté
ale 5 minut po 12 té." Celý tábor mu provolal slávu. Ok. Také prohlásil, že poslal
pracovní, ale SS-aky nakonec, která byla na východě od Brněnce zatímco se pro
zbývalo, že oni odjedou s nejhromadnějším lupem směrem na západ.
Po odchodu se tři nedělali dostali svobodně přádlo chleba a všichni opravdu usnuli. Druhé
ráno nás nevzbudila jako každé předchozí ráno hlídka, my byli zamčeni a čekali,
co bude. Jsme
kapové dozvěděli
a dal vídovské se
klíčů od skladiště
brány
zavřeny
a hlídky
posta-
veny
aby
nikoho do tábora
nepustily, dokud
nepřijdou
svobodáci
z tábora
provolá nějaká armáda. Po ní
chtěl dostat do tábora a Bertik
se vrátila tábor oblonkem
Bylo vidět, že ti vítězství
dostali pravidelné jídlo
šatky a přízraky kbiti
Ovšem 13. května 1945
je nahlíkou Svobodovy armády a zjistoval, kolik se tam československé
nekteří přišli vzem se vypravili do školy Někteří chtěli zabrat od Němců provozy
a koně a vozíčeti. Ještě den, 14. května 1945 přišla do tábora skupina Svobodovy

bylo vidět na silnici po které ustu-
pením pobusu, kdy se někteří vojáci
odebírali střelbu, bylo vidět, jak
vyhýbala.
Vězňové dobře ovládali organizaci, takže jsme
a za dávali nám ze skladiště nějaké prádlo,
oblekli a kabátů.
dorazil do tábora český četník, který nám řekl, že
Brně a vojáčeti. Ještě den, 14. května 1945 přišla do tábora skupina Svobodovy

o'clock in the morning breakfast was delivered to us by Austrian prisoners. We found out that Schindler and his helpers left the camp that night heading to the West. He appointed a Jewish self-government and gave them keys to the storage rooms and access to guns. He recommended that the gates of the camp remain locked and guarded and that no one be allowed into the camp until the liberators came. From the camp we could see the road, which was used by the retreating German army. After one trial, when some of the German soldiers tried to enter the camp and were chased away by the sound of our guns, they avoided us. The Austrian prisoners who were in charge of the camp were capable organizers. They delivered food regularly, gave us some underwear and distributed cloth for making new clothes and coats.

On May 13th a Czech constable arrived in the camp and told us that Svoboda's army camp. In the horses and soldiers from Svoboda's army came into the camp. Prague. Leo left for his home, Ostrava, and Bertik Prague before May 16th when President Edvard trying to help us. We looked like skeletons.

was nearby and wanted to know how many Czech prisoners were in the meantime several Polish prisoners left the camp; some were able to acquire wagons from the Germans and left for home. The next day, May 14th, a group of One of the officers who knew Leo Melzer offered to have us join them on their journey to and I climbed into a truck and on May 15th were near Prague. Svoboda's army couldn't enter Benes was expected to arrive there. As soon as we appeared on the streets of Prague, everyone was Bertik and I didn't weigh more than 70 pounds, wearing striped "pajamas" and paper bandages.

We decided to go to Rybna Street, where Bertik's father owned a large flat. Bertik thought that the caretaker Svoboda and his family lived there. He was right, they

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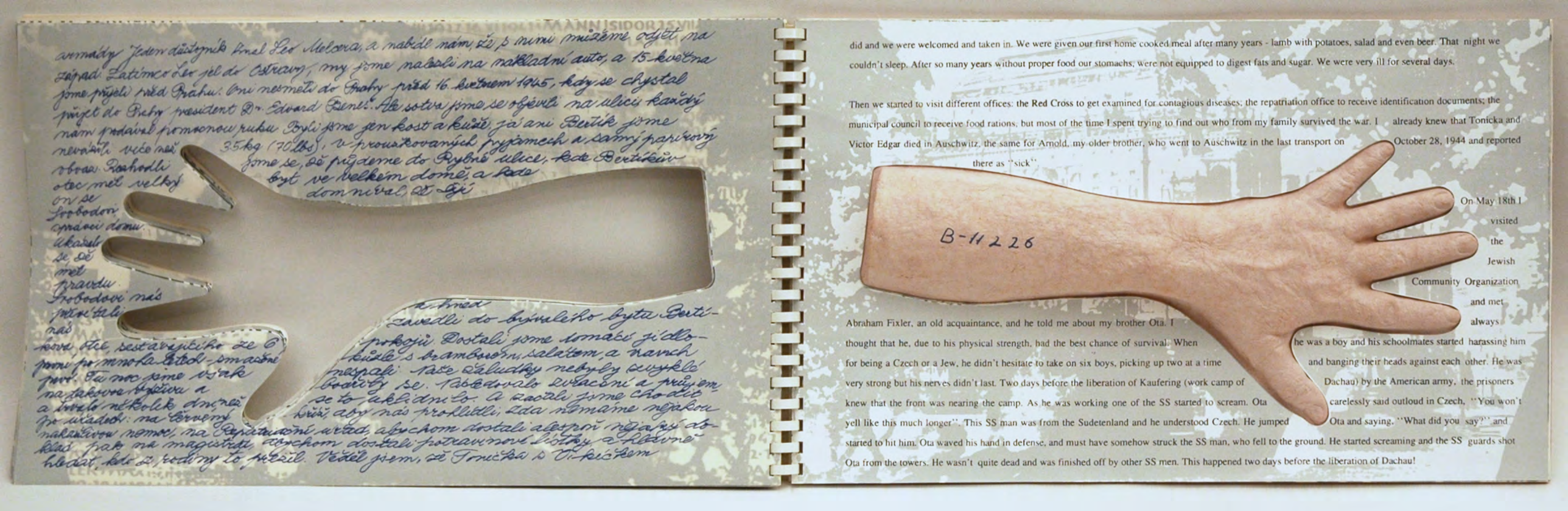

did and we were welcomed and taken in. We were given our first home cooked meal after many years - lamb with potatoes, salad and even beer. That night we couldn't sleep. After so many years without proper food our stomachs were not equipped to digest fats and sugar. We were very ill for several days.

Then we started to visit different offices: the Red Cross to get examined for contagious diseases; the repatriation office to receive identification documents; the municipal council to receive food rations, but most of the time I spent trying to find out who from my family survived the war. I already knew that Tonicka and Victor Edgar died in Auschwitz, the same for Arnold, my older brother, who went to Auschwitz in the last transport on October 28, 1944 and reported there as "sick".

On May 18th I visited the Jewish Community Organization and met Abraham Fixler, an old acquaintance, and he told me about my brother Ota. I always thought that he, due to his physical strength, had the best chance of survival. When he was a boy and his schoolmates started harassing him for being a Czech or a Jew, he didn't hesitate to take on six boys, picking up two at a time and banging their heads against each other. He was very strong but his nerves didn't last. Two days before the liberation of Kaufering (work camp of Dachau) by the American army, the prisoners knew that the front was nearing the camp. As he was working one of the SS started to scream. Ota carelessly said outloud in Czech, "You won't yell like this much longer". This SS man was from the Sudetenland and he understood Czech. He jumped Ota and saying, "What did you say?" and started to hit him. Ota waved his hand in defense, and must have somehow struck the SS man, who fell to the ground. He started screaming and the SS guards shot Ota from the towers. He wasn't quite dead and was finished off by other SS men. This happened two days before the liberation of Dachau!

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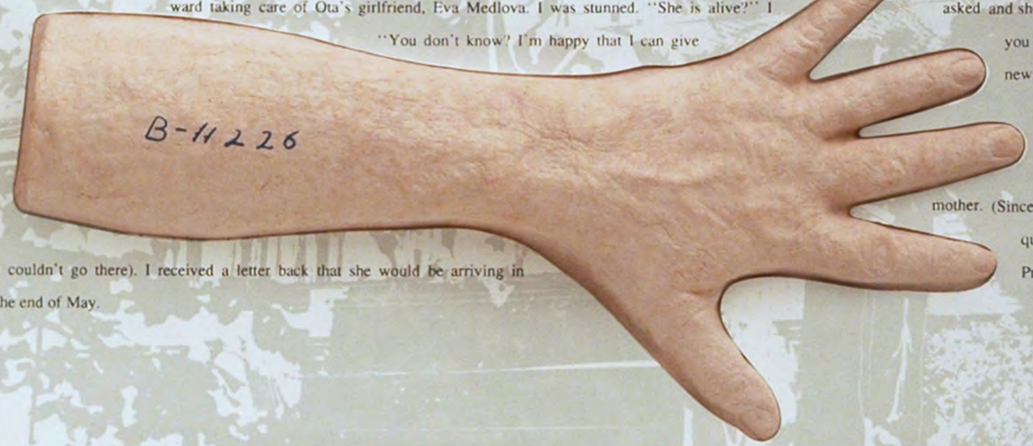
zahynuli v Osvětimi, rovněž Arnold, který přijel tamtéž posledním transportem z Terezína na 28.10.1944 a hlásil se nemocen. 18 května jsem byl na Židovské náboženské obci, když tam přišel můj známý Fixler Abraham, který mi pověděl o mém bratru Otavě. Ale mého mínění byl to on, který po fyzické stránce měl nejtěžší možnost to přežít, jako mladík neustále s postavou 6 venkovským chlapcům, které na mě hrubě křičeli: "Žide!" nebo "Čech!" - zpravidla vždy 2 až 3 a mířili hlavou do hlavou. Ano, samozřejmě byl ošetřený, ale v poslední fázi jeho nervy to zvládly. 2 dny se Bronca ... když SS-ák začal řvát: "Ty už tu dlouho ... řvát nebudeš!" zavolal si Ota poznámku česky. Česky ... - Jak hezký ... na obrazu mávnul rukou a strčil z věže Otu. Potom přiběhl k smrti ubitému. Počítal jsem ani se postavena do pohlaví vykopat jámu, postavit se přímo do jam, které mohly být promptně zasypány. A má maminka?

Tom SS-ák byl však ze Sudet a rozumně. Přiskočil k Otovi a chtěl ho udeřit, ale otec byl jen a SS-ák byl na zemi. Začal řvát, bili. Zbytek dodělali ostatní SS, kteří a to bylo 2 dny před osvobozením. sestrou Gretou, která s rodinou byla trans- Lazi kde transporty se nejdříve musely před ní a byly postaveny tak aby padly

I didn't count on my sister Greta to survive. She was transported to the Baltic states where the prisoners dug their own graves and then they were ordered to stand in front of them and were shot so their bodies would fall directly into these pre-dug pits.

And my mother: the last time I saw her in Terezin, she was in wretched shape. On May 19th, on my 28th birthday, I met Eva Bonnova on the street of Prague and I got the best birthday present. Eva was the wife of Dr. Hanus Bonn whom I worked with at the Jewish organization in Prague from 1939-42. He was killed by the Nazis and I had the sad task of giving her the bad news. During our conversation she asked me if I knew that my mother was in Terezin in the typhus ward taking care of Ota's girlfriend, Eva Medlova. I was stunned. "She is alive?" I asked and she said, "You don't know? I'm happy that I can give you this great news." The same day I wrote to my mother. (Since she was quarantined, I couldn't go there). I received a letter back that she would be arriving in Prague by the end of May.



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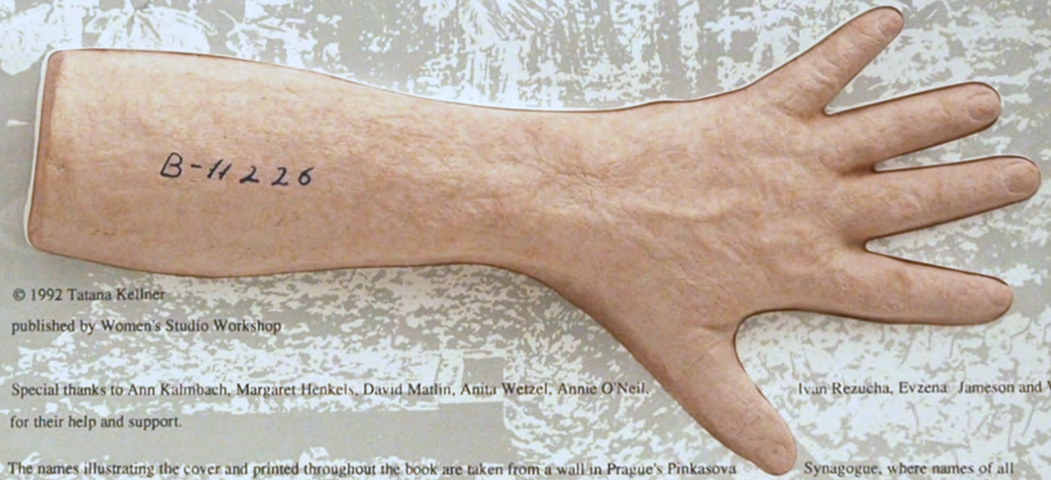
Ta byla v tak zuboženém stavu, když jsem se s ní loučil v Terezíně
A tak když jsem na své narozeniny, 19 května potkal v Ploudě, tiráč Evu
Bonnovou, dostalo se mi toho nejkrásnějšího narozeninového dárku. Eva
byla manželka Dr. Tonaše Bonna s nímž jsem byl na Židovské náboženská
obec v letech 1939-1942, a který byl nadšen porraven. A já měl tu krutou
povinnost jí tu krutou zprávu oznámit. Mezi řečí mi řekla, zatím
že vím že moje maminka je v Terezíně na pavlonu
skvělého týbu, kde ostatní Otova dívka Eva
Mendelovou "Což ona žije?"
jsem se ptal ona.
řekla
Ty to nevíš?
To
jsem
opravdu
rád že za tu
zprávu a
Hermíšové
mnohem
Ještě tři den jsem maminu
nemohl, a dostal zprávu,
porraví já přicházím s něčím
lepším."
jsem k ní jsem pro karanténu
Že do Prahy přijede koncem května

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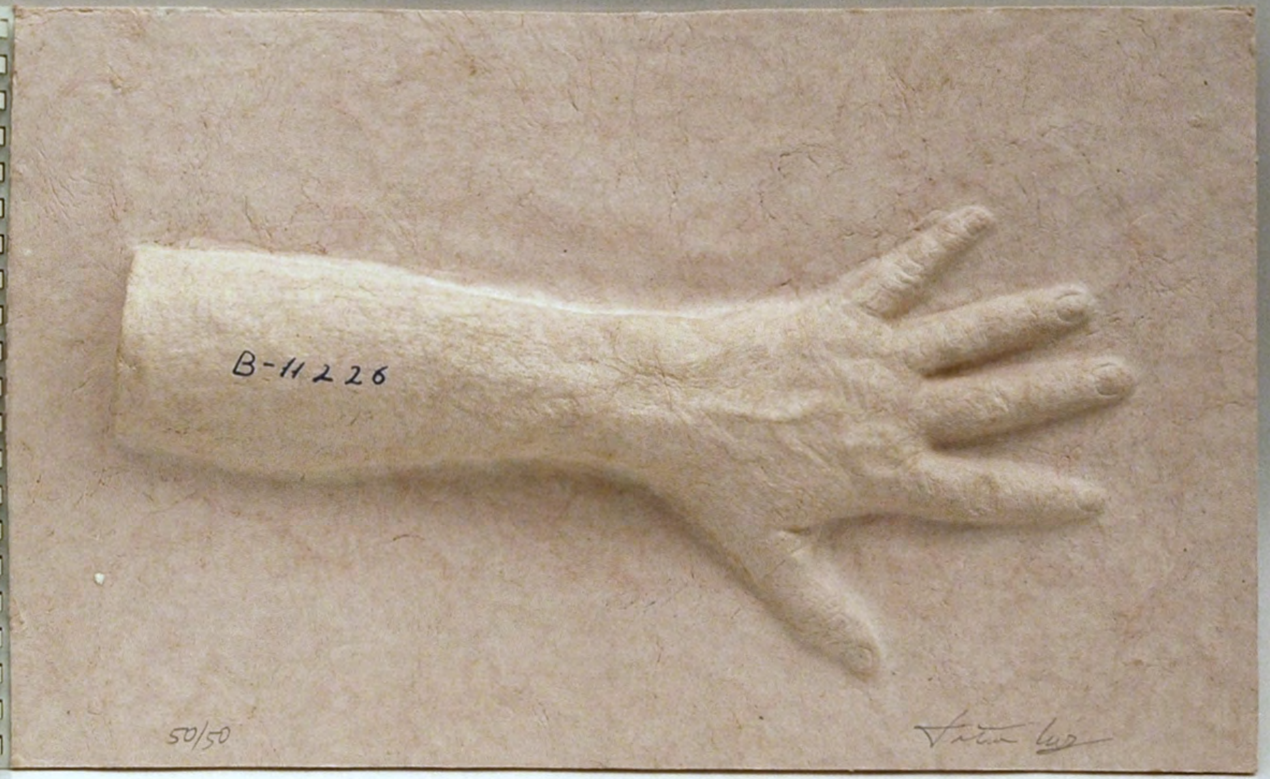
published by Women's Studio Workshop

Special thanks to Ann Kalmbach, Margaret Henkels, David Matlin, Anita Wetzel, Annie O'Neil, Ivan Rezucha, Evzena Jameson and WSW for their help and support.

The names illustrating the cover and printed throughout the book are taken from a wall in Prague's Pinkasova Synagogue, where names of all Czechoslovak Jews, who died during the Holocaust are recorded. The photographs was taken by Hnizdo in 1956.

Text paper has been provided by Mohawk Paper Mill. Die cutting was done by Rylance Printing.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