

Mrs. Rita Berger¹
1165 Shakespeare Avenue.
Bronx, New York

7.6.45

[1/1] Dear Rita. I spent time with your parents in Bergen- [1/2] Belsen, a concentration camp, from 7/7/1943 to 5/24/1944. On that day, [1/3] along with Ms. Rosa Berger they were evacuated to a different [1/4] camp in Germany—we can't be sure where.² Until the departure everyone [1/5] was well, and during their stay in the camp they were under my [1/6] medical attention. I gave you the specific dates; please start [1/7] looking for them if they haven't already given a sign of life.

[1/8] My family and I were able to escape death only thanks to a miracle after a 21-month [1/9] stay in the camp. We were freed about half a minute before [1/10] midnight by the American forces.³ Right now we're in a [1/11] British convalescence camp, cut off from the world, [1/12] with no way to communicate.⁴ There is no mail yet. [1/13] From here we'll go west, and when I get a permanent address I will [1/14] write again and ask you what you've found out about the fate of your [1/15] parents. Please also graciously pass on the above news to Ms. [1/16] Freda Gottfried from 1161 Shakespeare Avenue. I promised her mother. [1/17] I promise that once I find out more, I'll [1/18] write immediately. Don't write back to me for now. Please also [1/19] eventually notify your brother in Kenya about this. Your mother used to read his letters aloud and [1/20] was very proud.

[1/21] Yours truly⁵ and I cordially wish your husband all the best,

Dr. Schwieger

¹ Rita was the wife of Jakob Berger from Vienna, cousin and close friend of Dr. Birnbaum.

² In letters that came after this one, and after doing some investigating, Dr. Schwieger came to the conclusion that the Birnbaums and Bergers were most likely sent to Auschwitz by the Germans.

³ It might be the case that the letter was written immediately after Dr. Schwieger's release.

⁴ Apparently this letter was hand delivered by an acquaintance. This was the case with a lot of the mail during, and immediately after, World War II.

⁵ The Polish literally reads as follows, "I kiss your hands", which is still something practiced in Poland.