



**Gedenkstätte
Deutscher Widerstand**

**German Resistance
Memorial Center**

**German Resistance
1933–1945**



Ilse Rewald

**Berliners Who Helped
Us to Survive
the Hitler Dictatorship**

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Ilse and Werner Rewald with Hanning Schröder
Berlin, about 1970

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Berliners Who Helped Us to Survive the Hitler Dictatorship

by Ilse Rewald

translated by Hanna Silver

1940

My husband receives a summons from the Berlin Labor Office for Jews on Fontanepromenade. There are only two possibilities: do forced labor for either the sanitation department or the German Railroad. He chooses the railroad and works on the tracks on the day and night shift for the usual hourly wage for Jews: 72 Pfennigs. His colleagues are university graduates, businessmen, or craftsmen who are not used to the hard work of joining and laying tracks. In addition to this, there is the insufficient nourishment, because the ration cards for Jews which are specially marked with a J have many restrictions. Eggs, milk, white bread, cake, fruit, fish, poultry, canned goods are omitted. Our shopping time is restricted to 2 to 3 p.m. only.

1941

I am assigned to work in a Luftwaffe armament factory. We work ten hours a day, are not permitted to go to the cafeteria, and have a toilet for Jews only. We inspect heavy iron parts, check the threading, and have to put our inspection stamp on the parts when we are finished. Whoever stamps defective parts is charged with sabotage. Paradoxically, we work for Germany's armament and are happy that we are needed.

Many of the "Aryan" employees know of our food restrictions and secretly give us some fruit, a bottle of milk, a cigarette. The Jewish colleagues come from all parts of Berlin, they have a long way to travel to work and are between the ages of 14 and 65. One fellow worker tells me that she has a mixed marriage, is a professional cellist, and has no protection against this hard work which is so hard on her hands. I always have a sheet of paper next to me to make notes of my thoughts because we are not allowed to talk. So I make up little stories, write poems, and try to remember happier times. I write my notes in shorthand, hastily jotting them down now and then, because I must not allow myself to get caught. But in this way I can better endure the monotony of the work, the noise of the machines, and the length of the work day. We all have thermos bottles with coffee substitute, we put an artificial spread of wheat paste on our bread.

The stool I sit on, with no back, is torture and during the last hours of the day my back hurts so much that I think it is going split in two. Since September 19, 1941 every Jew has to wear a yellow star clearly visible on the left side of the breast. It has to be sewn on and must not be covered by a briefcase or packages. Every work

coat or smock has to have a Jewish star! We are given a travel permit which specifies the exact location of our apartment and place of employment because private travel is forbidden for Jews; relatives or friends can only be visited on foot which with the distances in Berlin is almost impossible. In spite of this we walk for over an hour on Sunday morning because my brother-in-law and his friends are giving a house concert. His landlords love to listen. The owners of the apartment are elderly, the man used to be a lawyer. I will never forget how my brother-in-law told me that they committed suicide. He put on all his medals and decorations from World War I and then brought death to himself and his wife by taking sleeping pills because this was the only way for him to avoid his impending deportation.

October 1941. A young, pretty girl, 18 years old, works next to me in the factory. She is extremely excited because they have received lists from the Jewish Congregation in which they have to record their furniture, their clothing, their bank account – in short their property. There is talk of losing their apartment, they do not know whether they will be given another or whether they will go to a ghetto in the East. She tells me of her sick mother from whom she has to keep all excitement because of her heart attacks. The next day her place is empty and we hear that she and her mother have been picked up by the Gestapo and brought to the former synagogue on Levetzowstrasse. There the Jews are assembled for the transport contingent, they have no connection with the outside world, and after two or three days people hear of their evacuation to Litzmannstadt. Everybody puzzles over the criteria according to which the “lists” are sent out. We cannot find a key, wealthy and very poor Jews are affected. They can take along 10 Marks and as much baggage as they can carry themselves. Our friend, the pianist, has also been picked up, as was a relative of my husband. We label our bags with our names, every item has “Ilse Sara Rewald” written on it, the knapsack is ready because nobody knows when it will be our turn. We assume that we will go to a ghetto in Litzmannstadt or Minsk and will live and work there under tighter surveillance. Some optimists hope that there the persecution will not be as bad. Everyone who has “Aryan” friends packs up his most valuable possessions and asks for safekeeping.

On December 20, 1941, my third wedding anniversary, my mother calls me at the factory. She has received the lists and asks me to try and take off from work. The foreman grants my wish and I try to face my mother calmly and composed. We still do not give up the hope of finding some way of preventing the deportation. A friend says that the transport contingents have been stopped, another promises that money could make the file disappear. I go to the Gestapo on Burgstrasse myself because I do not want to rely on any rumors. An SA man faces me and asks me why I have come. I tell him that my mother takes care of my husband who is doing forced labor for the German Railroad, and also takes care of my aunt and I who work in the armament factory. I beg him to exempt my mother from the evacuation since my father went into World War I as a volunteer at the age of 41 and contracted a kidney ailment during the 4 war years of which he later died. I cannot plead for my mother alone because the lists are in the name of my aunt, my mother’s sister, as well. I specify both names and numbers and the SA man yells at me, demanding to know who I think I am and whether he is supposed to make special laws for me. The time would come when I will no longer be able to show such brazenness. Deeply dis-

couraged and disappointed I arrive at home; we will make a final attempt. We still believe in the ghetto and labor camp in the East and are expecting our own evacuation shortly.

But then we do not know whether we will be sent to the same place where my mother and aunt are sent. My husband agrees to having the two of us volunteer to go to prevent being separated from our relatives. We still believe that nothing will happen to us if only we can keep from being torn apart. I talk to the factory management and the foreman and they agree to release me to join the contingent. We pack our knapsacks, we put on the warmest clothes in layers because it is an icy winter. My husband also applies to the German Railroad to be released from his duties. The Railroad inspector goes to the Gestapo who refuse their approval: the Jews working for the railroad are desperately needed as labor and cannot be released for transport contingents. The lists of my mother and my aunt have been filled out. Gestapo officials come to the apartment and pick them up on January 11, 1942. A colleague in the factory tells me that she was able to sell her oriental rug for 1000 Marks. She is so happy about it because she was bought Veronal with the proceeds. When she receives the lists she is calm and composed. The next day we hear that she has poisoned herself. The suicides do not shock us anymore, we envy everyone who has the courage and does not have to suffer any longer. One evening our doorbell rings sharply. We figure it is a Gestapo search and feverishly think of what we have in the apartment in the way of prohibited food. We throw a can of sardines, apples, etc. out of the window, they were gifts from our Christian friends. The doorbell rings again and we try to appear calm and open the door. Before us are good friends who have a mixed marriage and help us and take care of us as much as they can. Only now does our excitement dissipate and my whole body shakes and I cannot say a word. They do not understand why we are so bewildered and only slowly do I tell them that we had expected the Gestapo. Possession of the prohibited food would have been grounds for evacuating us! Yet they had only wanted to cheer us up by bringing a sign of life from my mother. A friend of theirs had succeeded in smuggling a little note out of the Riga ghetto. I am overjoyed at seeing my mother's handwriting and finally know where she is. They have to work for the Wehrmacht, they live in the Riga ghetto, and I can send her something to eat by way of the friend. The ghetto used to be inhabited by Riga Jews who had all been murdered. I live and draw my strength from this news from my mother who gives me courage with her little note and only expresses her concern for us.

1942

The food situation is becoming more and more difficult. Jews do not get any meat at all anymore. My husband has a ration card for hard labor for which we receive 200 grams of meat per week. Friends secretly bring us fish, the vegetable woman gives us a head of cabbage, my old nanny saves from her ration and brings us a nourishing meal in a little pot. My first teacher, with whom I have been friends for many years, is in hospital with tuberculosis. She sends us little packages with hard-boiled eggs which she was supposed to eat to give her strength. All of our Christian friends show us their love and compassion. They visit us only in the evening when it is dark. You do not know who might see them in the building visiting Jews and having contact with them. A large Jewish star is pasted on our apartment

door, too. We are not permitted to leave the house after 8 p.m. My husband has a special permit from the Gestapo because he has to work the night shift for the railroad. During this time we hardly see each other at all. I leave the house at 6 a.m., in the evening my husband goes to work when I return. They have to work at the railroad on our most sacred holidays as a matter of course. But some succeed in observing the tradition of fasting despite this. The *Rottenführer* and foremen enjoy giving special abuse. They call out "Isaac" or "Jewish pig", get drunk and behave in an insulting manner. The inspector is fair and tries his best to treat the crew decently.

December 1942. My in-laws have been picked up and deported to Auschwitz. The 16-year old step brother of my husband tore himself away from them and then comes to us totally bewildered. We are helpless, we cannot hide him and so he has to take this hard road together with his parents. We meet in the factory the next morning with frightened faces. There are more and more new lists, contingents, more and more new suffering, and my fellow workers have become very close because of our common plight. Almost everyone of us has lost either her mother, or her brother, or good friends through the deportations. Everybody trembles at the news of the others, which all heighten our own misfortune. Selfless friendships develop and a spirit of sacrifice for each other, as only times of need and shared fate can bring forth. I will never forget how a fellow worker baked a cake for me on my birthday, the first one in my life that I had to experience without my mother. She had to save the ingredients for a long time to be able to give me a little happiness.

Little by little news from the concentration camps Auschwitz, Birkenau, Riga, and Theresienstadt filters through. People hear of mass executions, of shootings, soldiers tell of murders in Minsk, and it becomes clear that every "evacuee" is going to his death.

One morning we hear the horrible news that from now on the deportations will take place street by street or directly from the place of employment without prior warning. There is no more protection, even if you are working as a forced laborer for the German Railroad or in an armament factory. My husband's brother is the last one of our family to be picked up, and for us there is no longer any danger that we could pose to our relatives by escaping. If someone goes into hiding, the Gestapo will hold a member of the family as a hostage. Good friends who have a privileged marriage, that is a mixed marriage with a child, encourage us to attempt to live illegally in Berlin. They promise us that they will hide my husband first. I try to find a place to live for myself with other friends, but they are all afraid of the neighbors or the air raid warden. It looks as if there is no salvation.

1943

On January 11, 1943, it is a winter day 20°C below zero with a biting east wind, I go to the P. family who I do not know personally at all. I have heard of their great compassion and constant willingness to help only through friends. The Jewish father, a doctor, had died not long ago. The Christian daughter and mother do their utmost to help the persecuted Jews and lessen their suffering. I am so desperate that I dare to ask them for shelter. They tell me that they are already in great danger and

cannot take additional risks. As I go down the stairs crying, they call me back. They could not be responsible for leaving me to the Gestapo, and they offer to let me live with them temporarily.

From this day on we do not wear the Jewish star anymore, live without police registration and without ration cards. We have left behind our apartment with all furnishings, linen, porcelain. I want to go to the apartment one more time to retrieve a sack with bedding and other warm clothing. My new friends see too great a danger in doing so. The Gestapo's henchmen are said to wait for days sometimes because they suspect that those who have gone underground urgently need some of their belongings and will return. My husband and I do not go to work anymore from this day on because new contingents for the concentration camps are assembled there as well.

Though we have now found shelter and do not have to tremble at every ring of the doorbell, we cannot expect our hosts to take care of our food, too. The rations for all consumers are planned so that they just barely last from one allocation period to the next. Besides we are in danger everywhere on the street, in stores, in the subway. Somebody could recognize us as Jews and denounce us because we are not wearing Jewish stars anymore. The new problem has to be solved, we have to find work either as pay for eating there or to buy something on the black market. A distant Christian relative offers me work in her laundry shop, two days a week. The other employees of course have no idea who I am; I have long since changed my name and everybody knows me as "Mrs. Röttgen". I sort dirty laundry, mark it, stand for hours at the rotary iron, and fold mountains of clean laundry. My back hurts, my mind is occupied with all the problems, and I have to make an effort to endure the work. But I am fed there during the day and in addition to that I receive food like bread, eggs, and marmalade to take home. One day the door opens and a man from the Labor Office enters to inspect our employment books. I am an illegal worker without proper papers and without health insurance and cannot afford to arouse any suspicion. So I go to the toilet, outwardly calm, actually out the back door trembling, to hide from his questions. When he has finished his inspection I am sent on another errand so that none of the other employees get suspicious. Once again all has gone well!

We only live from one day to the next anyhow, the worry about our very existence keeps us in suspense. My husband has to give up his hiding place after two weeks because a new action against mixed marriages is underway. Now he sleeps somewhere else every night, he has what he needs for the night in his briefcase. He is put up in the apartment of a Jewish doctor because they are still protected. The doctor works at the Jewish Hospital on Iranische Strasse and gets a hint there that his apartment is not safe anymore. Immediately he returns home to warn his mother and my husband. At 5 a.m. my husband has to leave the apartment, but where can he go at such an early hour? He takes the subway from one end of the line to the other until he finally arrives at my shelter in order to talk to me about the new situation. The elderly lady who took us in must not be too unsettled by our worries, and we must find a way out ourselves. We remember a small hotel whose owner used to be married to a Jew. She always displayed great compassion and willing-

ness to help. And so we want to ask her whether my husband could sleep there temporarily. The only problem is how he can enter the building and leave again unseen. The hotel is located in our old neighborhood where we are too well known to be seen during the day. My husband is extremely tall... I get her permission for a few nights, we relax for the moment and then have to keep looking. He has found work in a cleaning business in the southeastern part of the city so that he leaves the house when it is dark and only returns late in the evening. So all day long I do not know whether he has survived the air raids which are increasing daily because they are concentrating on different districts of the city. The owners of the cleaning business are devout Catholics, the men are in the Wehrmacht, so my husband helps out by cleaning and oiling the machines. Here they help because they are religious, and he is given food in addition to his board. They take the risk because it is only a small family business.

On the street and in the trains the identification checks are becoming more and more frequent. We have long since buried our Jewish ID's marked with the "J" in a garden and realize that it is absolutely necessary for us to have false papers. Friends advise us to give them our photos because they have heard that an official issues ID cards for 300 Marks. With a heavy heart we decide to give them the money since we no longer have access to our bank account because of our illegality and a pound of butter costs 90 Marks. But the thought of acquiring false papers is important enough. Weeks of anxious waiting pass until we realize that we have fallen prey to a swindler who only wanted our money.

The German Railroad inspector who was my husband's boss when he worked as a forced laborer had always shown himself to be an opponent of the Nazis. With hidden hints he suggested to my husband that he "go underground", so we might expect help from him. In the evening my husband goes to him and explains that we can no longer exist without some sort of identification papers. He has taken our photos along and asks him to provide us with papers from the German Railroad. Two days later we are in possession of two identification cards from the German Railroad with an official stamp. We have attached our photos and filled out the identification papers for my husband with the name "Erich Treptow, deputy *Rottenführer* in the service of the German Railroad". We know that this Erich Treptow really exists so that any check or inquiry with the police or the German Railroad would confirm the entries in the identification papers. My husband is a double so to speak. But what is Mrs. Treptow's first name, when and where was she born, where does she work? Without knowing these details we cannot fill out my identification papers. There is only one way, which I undertake. I put on a Nazi party insignia which my husband found in an old armchair and go to the apartment of Mrs. Treptow. There I tell her that I come from the Labor Office to complete the existing documents and files. I have brought a sheet with me on which other entries have already been made and so I ask my questions to learn everything of importance from her. After some angry remarks at first, that she is already registered with the Labor Office and that she cannot understand all this, I calm Mrs. Treptow. We did not ask her to come to the office herself, I came because the files were no longer complete due to the air raids, etc. Finally I learn everything I need to know and also hear that she works for the Gestapo! Now I can fill out my identification papers and learn by

heart that from this day on I am Maria Treptow, maiden name Juretzko, born on May 3, 1917 in Beuthen. My friends who gave me shelter know of course about my undertaking and anxiously await my return. The German Railroad director of course did not take a penny for his help. The problem of living quarters for my husband is getting worse; he cannot sleep in the hotel any more because the days are getting longer. Through friends he has found a painter who is willing to take my husband in temporarily. He is an old Social Democrat and dares to give shelter to a Jew. Relieved, we hope that he will find a bit of peace in a totally different part of town as the painter's "guest". After about two weeks my husband comes to our meeting place all flustered. The painter was in his tavern drinking his beer when he heard the following conversation: "Here in our neighborhood there are supposed to be Jews living in hiding, isn't that outrageous?" The painter, frightened, replies clumsily, "The one staying with me is my friend and no Jew!" This conversation was alarming enough and my husband does not want to sleep there another night. I go there to retrieve his shoes, nightclothes, etc., and to thank the painter in his name. Now he is offered work in a garden house which he also uses as a shelter for the night. My husband always wears the party insignia so that there is no suspicion; the conversations in his presence become reserved. The constant air raids, the losses among the civilian population and the defeats in Russia have changed the mood. In spite of this there are many of the "community of the people" who still believe in "final victory"! On the bus ride coming from the garden parcel identification papers are inspected. They are not looking for Jews as much as for deserted soldiers. My husband shows his railroad ID, states that he is going home from the night shift, and – can go on!

At intervals I visit my old nanny, who is almost 70 years old, and who helps us as much as she can. She saves a few ration stamps for bread, sees to it that I have soap powder and soap substitute and gives me 50 grams of coffee from her ration. After particularly heavy bombing raids the population is supplied with special rations of coffee. Otherwise you only drink coffee substitute, malt coffee. For the most part we eat food substitutes such as yeast flakes, salmon paste, rye cookies. A casserole lunch has become a delicacy. The health impairments are beginning to show, my fingernails break off as a result of calcium deficiency in addition to other serious disorders. But we want to hold out whatever the cost. On November 23, 1943 there is another reason for hope for a soldier from Riga brings greetings from my mother and aunt. He wants to contact an "Aryan" friend before returning in order to take something back. But during the night there is such a heavy air raid on Berlin that all communications are interrupted. We don't know if the soldier has been killed or whether it is impossible for him to get through under the prevailing conditions. Whole streets in Berlin are smoking piles of rubble. We wear protective glasses and wet cloths because you can hardly breathe due to the phosphorus fumes. I have sewn an extremely narrow strip of linen with all the addresses of my relatives abroad into the hem of my dress in order to save them whatever happens. I wear our wedding rings as a belt buckle, they are wrapped with leather and in this way are probably my only valuables if I should fall into the hands of the Gestapo.

1944

On January 30, 1944 the light in the cellar goes out. After a deafening detonation we hear the screams of the air raid warden: "The cellar must be cleared immediately! Phosphorus bomb in the attic, all men out to extinguish the fire!" We try to save some of the precious things from the lady's apartment in the third floor where we are now living. But the smoke is getting thicker and the rooms in the back are already burned out. Again we have lost our shelter. Where should we go, and where will we find such generous people so willing to help again? In the ground floor apartment all four of us are given shelter in the corridor. There is no light, no gas, no more water. The bombing raids have caused us to lose clothing and laundry again. Since I cannot wash in these makeshift quarters, I go to my old nanny.

I do my laundry at her apartment and carry the wet clothes back home in a pail in the subway. In the train a woman asks me if I am Mrs. Rewald who used to live in Berlin-Charlottenburg. I deny this emphatically and tell her that I have never lived in Charlottenburg and that she must be mistaken. Whenever I take public transportation in the future I will hold a big newspaper in front of my face and pretend to read.

The apartment problem is getting more and more urgent for us because we cannot stay in the corridor any longer. I look up my former colleague, the cellist, from the armament factory who is married to an Aryan musicologist. She did not know that we had not been deported and is very happy to hear of how we survived until now. In the meantime she has been drafted again for forced labor and has to wash and sweep out streetcars during the night. It is impossible to give us shelter in her small apartment in a housing block, but she gives us the address of good friends in a single-family house on the edge of town. My husband can do some work there as a handyman. Later I help out in the household with ironing, etc. My colleague has since told them the truth about us, and the political and humanitarian convictions of her friends ensure that they will keep quiet. Their little daughter is in Bavaria to be safe from the bombing raids. Her room was requisitioned by the Housing Office and rented to a captain from the Army Supply Office. So we have to be careful in front of him, the party member. In addition to him, a friend who is an instructor at the Music Academy is living with them. He knows about us and sympathizes with our situation. The repeated and increasing air raids make it necessary for the mother and daughter to move to a parish house in Mecklenburg, so that we can temporarily live in the little house. Of course the captain must not become suspicious. We tell him that our apartment in the city has been heavily damaged by bombs and that we cannot live there for the moment. In the morning my husband allegedly has to go to work with the German Railroad which has also exempted him from military service. He believes this version because my husband knows a lot about the railroad and can tell stories. On my birthday the captain asks me with interest why I have not received any birthday cards and letters. At the moment I cannot think of an appropriate answer until my husband interrupts and says that our mail is in town in our apartment. Actually, nobody knows where I am because we keep our address strictly secret. There are even Jewish informants who are allowed to move around freely as long as they can name other Jews who have gone underground and deliver them to the Gestapo.

One morning I am alone in the little house busy cleaning and tidying up. The doorbell rings and there is a man standing in the door who asks me if any other of the occupants are here. When I tell him that he can talk to me he wants to know who I am and whether I live here. He leafs through his book and makes some brief notes. Finally he tells me awkwardly that he is the mason who made the opening in the cellar wall to the building next door months ago. This opening had been made as a protective measure to provide a second exit in case the entrance was buried in rubble after raids. He had not packed all his tools and wanted to pick them up now. Of course I cannot let him in and he leaves angrily. When I think about the way he questioned me, I suddenly come to the conclusion that he must be a Gestapo agent. He certainly chose this excuse to make sure that I was alone in the house to have me picked up. I rush into the cellar to take the things I need most from the air raid pack when the doorbell rings long and continuously. My whole body trembles and I assume that the Gestapo or the SS are already in at the door. So I crawl through the cellar wall opening to the building next door and hide in the dark behind a cupboard. My mind is working feverishly: Will the Gestapo break down the door? Will they search the house? Should I tell the neighbor who I am if she happens to come down into the cellar and discover me? I do not know how long I stood in that dark little corner. It seemed to be an eternity. When I no longer hear the doorbell or any other noise from upstairs, I sneak back up on tiptoes out of the neighbors' cellar and see a telegram lying on the doorstep. Was it only the telegram courier who had been ringing so furiously? Was I so frightened for nothing? In any case I cannot stay in this house another minute after all this uncertainty and leave in a hurry. On the way I call my husband so that he will stay out of danger. Then I go to the Music Academy, call the friend of our host out of his lecture, and tell him about the incident. He is also very concerned and promises to find out about it before we do anything rash. In any case we should not sleep there tonight, but where? Not only are we in danger, but our hosts, too, risk being incarcerated in a concentration camp for "aiding Jews" by offering us shelter.

I have hardly arrived at my husband's place of work when the wired broadcasting reports the approach of thousands of bombers toward Berlin. We have to go to a public air raid shelter which provides some measure of safety. Children are screaming, mothers are crying, the bunker rocks, the air is completely stale, I am at the end of my endurance. When we come up into the street after the all clear signal, the sky is blood red, and with the flames all around it is so bright that you can read a newspaper despite the time of night. It is general chaos! For hours we walk through the burning, smoking streets until we gather the courage to telephone our host and ask him if he thinks it is possible that it was the mason who had terrified me so. In the meantime he has found out that it really was the mason Behrendt who wanted to pick up his tools. His questions were those of a simple, uneducated man who out of curiosity wanted to know whether I was visiting there and for how long. We have to put on a comedy for the captain and explain to him in some way why we were both gone the entire night without a word. So we tell him that we had a call from an aunt who had a severe gall bladder problem and needed our help.

A short time later the Army Supply Office is relocated from Berlin to a small town. The captain deeply regrets to have to leave our "living community", and we are

relieved! My husband can no longer be seen on the street because the Wehrmacht has increased searches for deserters, escaped foreign workers, and soldiers on leave who did not return to the front. His papers from the German Railroad are no longer sufficient, he escaped a check by a hair. Everybody has to carry his deferment papers with him.

1945

17-year old children are being drafted to serve in flak crews. Even the oldest men are sent to the *Volkssturm* (People's Militia). They have to dig one-man foxholes for defense, are trained in the use of hand grenades, are supposed to construct street fortifications in the city to defend Berlin. Our host and his friend are also served with conscription orders for the *Volkssturm*. The friend goes to the Black Forest and has himself committed to a sanatorium because he allegedly had a nervous breakdown. But what can our host do? If he tries to evade the *Volkssturm*, his house and we two illegal persons will be in even greater danger. If he obeys the conscription order, then we will be alone and unprotected. On the other hand, he must not arouse any suspicion because of his help to us. The only small hope that remains is to have him declared indispensable by his orchestra's administration. We promise to do everything humanly possible for him. My husband rides through all of Berlin on a borrowed bicycle because there is no more public transportation. The orchestra administration gives him a letter stating that the orchestra cannot function without the viola soloist. This letter has to be stamped by the municipal administration of the Nazi party. But the regulations have been tightened up and changed again in the last few days so that now even the county administration of the Nazi party must countersign it. I do not hesitate long, but go into the lion's den. A fat SA man with medals and decorations receives me. I tell him that as a secretary of the UFA (state-controlled film company) I have been sent specially by the orchestra administration to affect the immediate deferment of the viola soloist from conscription into the *Volkssturm*. He looks at the letter from every angle, anxious minutes of waiting pass by. I emphasize the crucial cultural importance of the UFA and the orchestra again and receive the stamp! Now I must go to the *Volkssturm* battalion, for every minute can mean mortal danger. After I have finished everything, I speak to our friend in the barracks and tell him about our efforts. He does not believe there will be any more deferments at all as a general rule. As a matter of fact, he was the last one who was released from the *Volkssturm* and we are happy to have our protector home again.

The air raids are continuous, we stay in the cellar all the time, sleeping on lounge chairs and on the floor if at all. We hear the thundering of the approaching Russian tanks, the screeching, roaring impacts of the bombs. We do not know if we will ever leave the cellar alive. Berlin has become the front! We live on wafers and raw carrots. The municipal organization of the Nazi party attempts to stop the tanks from advancing with hand grenades and hand-held antitank weapons. It is in vain! On May 2 Berlin is conquered and we can leave the dark cellar for the bright daylight. After twelve years we no longer have to tremble before our persecutors! We have escaped once again.

The emotional strain which has burdened us, the constant fear for our lives, diminishes only gradually. My husband is still very reserved towards other people and

timid, he would prefer to hide; I still dream of arrests, of mass executions, and persecution. We wait from day to day, from month to month, for a sign of life from our relatives. We follow every tiny trace of survivors from the concentration camps. A Russian Jewish soldier does not believe that we are Jews and have survived in Berlin. We buried our papers, the Jewish identity cards, in a garden far outside the city. We have to walk through Berlin for hours, past corpses covered only with a newspaper, past horse cadavers, through bomb craters and rubble until we finally reach the garden. The owner had left Berlin long ago because of the bombing raids, and we cannot remember where we buried the glass jar with our identification papers. We dig for hours, for how can we prove our identity otherwise and live legally again? Our former police station has been destroyed, we are listed as "dead" at the Revenue Office. Finally the shovel hits something hard, we dig more carefully and find our documents! The hated "Jewish papers" with the signature of Ilse Sara Rewald, with the finger print and the large J will prove to the world that we are still alive!

The government agencies and the police are already creating new file systems, one day we are visited by a policeman who brings us an inquiry from my brother in England. Direct postal communication with foreign countries is not yet possible. A short time later I hold his first letter in my hands: He is working as an interpreter in Germany and has found out that we are alive after making many investigations. At Christmas he visits us for a few days for the first time. We are swamped with news, we have a lot of sad things to tell each other, yet we do not forget that many merciful people have helped us to survive the "thousand-year Reich"!