

C. The Closest Souls

Regarding the closest circle, family, that which has been written proves that, in most cases, it did not fail.

And it was not just about married couples. Mothers, with their daughters, were an inseparable pair. So were the sisters. Marysia Lewkowicz wrote:

“I was with my older sister. There was mutual help, people shared what little they had.”

The siblings supported each other, like Izrael Zylberglajt, who ran to his younger brother to give him an “unneeded” slice of bread. Kromołowski was happy when he managed to bring his young brother-in-law from the Raków camp to Apparatebau. Róża Bloch still remembers with excitement her cousin, Helena Kasman, who cared for her and supported her, not only with bread, but also with words of encouragement. And Zeew Blic would certainly not have survived during his illness if it were not for two cousins, who cared for him with devotion.¹ There were certainly relatives who failed, but this was not the majority.

If it was important for an adult to find a kindred spirit, who provided both help and family warmth, it was even more important for children and teenagers.

Fourteen-year-old Szlamek was already an orphan, but he had a sister, Natka Glazer, who ran with a portion of bread and jam to Szlamek’s barrack, so that the boy would eat another slice. Chanoch Dziubas, twelve, was among the group of boys rescued by Director Lütt. He did not work in the factory and his two sisters, Malka and Sonia, took care of his finances.

Younger children had even less chance of survival. Nevertheless, miraculously, a few children aged eight to twelve remained in Apparatebau.

Szulamis Korn, eight, was with her aunt and they were both brought from Skarżysko. She did not work here, only the aunt. According to her, there were ten children in the hall where she slept.

Ruben Wajngarten, born in 1932, who came with his mother, worked twelve hours on a machine and held out. Gabriel Gurt, ten, came from Piotrków and even managed to work with his father in “Morsch’s” carpentry shop. Frania Pomeranblum, nine, was also a “worker”.² Sara Altman, who was seven years old at the outbreak of the War and was left with only her mother, went through the torments of adults. She worked for more than two years in the “Infantry” and looked after four machines. She does not remember any additional help, and yet she survived.³

¹ Zeev Blic, *My Memories*, Tel Aviv, 2002.

² S. Kurn, M-49/E/1112; R. Wajngarten, M-49/E/1557; G. Gurt, 0.3/7648; Frania Pomeranblum M-49/E/2182

³ Testimony of Sara Altman, YVA, M/1/E/2347.

The most famous among the children was undoubtedly two-year-old Dudu Cohen. His father was a policeman and perished in the July selection, but his mother hid and managed to save the boy, whom the entire camp knew. He did not receive any food rations. His mother would give up every crumb for him. His best friend was... Stieglitz. He did nothing bad to the boy, but looked at him and laughed peacefully... He was probably pleased to have found someone smaller than him... And women were found who were happy to hold the boy for a few minutes and tell him a fairy tale.

But the love of a mother or sister was not enough, and there were people in the camp, who insisted on the need to help the children.

According to **Willa Orbach**, in the first period, by the autumn of 1943, two initiatives had come together in this regard: a group of women in the camp decided to establish an underground kitchen, which would distribute soup to children in need and also to recovering patients.

According to **Liber Brener**, the initiatives were led by two: Zosia Weksztajn and Hofmanowa [*TN: Viz. Mrs Hofman*], who raised money for the kitchen from those with means.

At the same time, the Jews, who still worked in the Garibaldi warehouses, agreed to finance the kitchen from the money they obtained from selling various items to the Poles. They also sent clothes, groceries, and money to relatives or acquaintances. **Rut Sztern** says:

“Both of us, my friend Bela and I, thirteen years old, were without family and suffering from hunger. Luckily, Dr Konarski, who knew my parents, brought me coupons for a children’s kitchen, and the soups, which were really good, saved us.”

It is very difficult to know how many children and teenagers received help from the kitchen because, for understandable reasons, the beneficiaries preferred not to publicise the matter.

The fact is that not all children received help from the underground kitchen. Edit Cyrer, born in 1930, arrived alone at Apparatebau. Here, she worked at the drill and her supervisor was Finkelsztajn. Once during the selection process, Finkelsztajn was taken out of line, and then little Edit announced in fluent German (her father was from Vienna) that, without the supervisor, she would not be able to fulfil the quota of twelve boxes. Finkelsztajn returned to work.

Edit did not know about the existence of the children’s kitchen. How did she survive, without a soulmate? Unbelievable, but it was *Meister* Meyer, known as wicked and a sadist, who took care of her - he brought her sandwiches and soup⁴.

⁴ Testimony of Edit Cyrer, YVA, 0-33/7149.