

The Holocaust Historiography Project

Remarkable Nonsense about the Holocaust

Music soothes the savage beast

Playing for your life in Auschwitz

- Learning a musical instrument may have unexpected benefits. It was because she could play the cello that Anita Lasker-Wallfisch survived Auschwitz in 1943....

[...]

"We got to know them by communicating through a hole in the **lavatory wall**," she says. **"I could write in Gothic script, which the Germans use on official documents, so I started to forge papers for escapees.** If the Nazis were going to kill me, I wanted to die for what I had done, not for what I was."

Anita and her sister tried to escape too but were arrested at Breslau station, imprisoned as trouble-makers and deported to Auschwitz.

"The camp had a cello but no one to play it, so I was lucky. I played every day in the women's orchestra, sitting at the gate, accompanying other prisoners in and out of the camp to Strauss's Radetzky March. We were only a jumble of instruments so we couldn't play anything too elaborate.

"Dr Mengele was there. I had to play Schumann's Trumerei for him. But playing in the orchestra saved my life. And my sister's, too, as I was able to get her a job as a gofer, running messages and errands.

"We were in Auschwitz for a year, living in a hut opposite the gas chamber. When the Russians came in 1944 we were moved to Belsen, where prisoners died so often that they didn't need a gas chamber. But we knew by then that the war was already going badly for the Germans and in six months we were liberated by the British." Anita Lasker-Wallfisch lit a fourth cigarette in half an hour and sighed. "It is important that the world knows about this."

[...]

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Webmaster note: In the late 1930s, Hitler forbade the use of the old German script, changing Germany over to the more modern letterforms. It would appear that Ms. Lasker-Wallfisch was at the very least an inept forger.

Send all questions and comments to webmaster@historiography-project.org.