

The Holocaust: The *Briefaktion* "Operation Mail" deception

By mid-1944, rumors of the Holocaust had spread beyond the boundaries of the Third Reich. In an attempt to allay them, the Nazis concocted a brazen deception, forcing doomed Jews to write cards to friends and relatives stating that they were safe and in good health, just before they were gassed to death at Auschwitz. They were collected and delivered in batches, usually without postage. But when mail from this operation was addressed to foreign destinations, it was stamped and mailed at Berlin.

This September 1, 1944 (date of the message), post card from Herta Falkenstein, ostensibly sent from the Theresienstadt Jewish ghetto in Czechoslovakia to Louis Falkenstein at Zurich, Switzerland, was posted and canceled at Berlin six weeks later, on October 12, 1944, and censored at Munich. By then the sender had probably perished. The message reads:

My dears

We hope that you are healthy, just like us. Write to us frequently. Daddy is sending his best wishes.

All the best yours

Herta Falkenstein.

The black handstamped inscription states, "Reply only on a postcard in the German language, via the Jewish Elders Council of Prague."

