“I am Mariya Kemerova from Belarussia. Greetings my dear American friends. Hearing from you tells me that in distant America, someone remembers me, a person practically from another dimension.

Running from the enemy we left behind our comfortable dwellings, left our photos and all our belongings, and about this sorrow nobody ever speaks: we left behind our old people, who met all pleas to leave with refusals since “who would touch them, old people?”

But of course they did touch them, they burned them alive.

So parents grabbed their children and fled. Our lives were spared but our roots were destroyed. Nothing was left of the Jewish community. Not a memory, no language, no holidays, no schools, no synagogues, and above all no old people, the roots, who could raise the young ones, like mother earth feeds offshoots and leaves.

But these shoots and leaves now had to begin from nothing. And this “nothing” did not remember its G-d, because it didn’t even know its own language, and so it did not know how to pray. And there was no one to teach, no one to guide. Nothing.

That is why our correspondence is dear to me personally, my dear American friends. You are my roots.

I save all the letters that I have received from you and often reread them. You see, from my past, I have only one thing, just one photograph: my grandfather and grandmother on my father’s side.

It is all that remains for me of my life from before the war, although I don’t know a thing about them, who they were, where they lived, what they did, how they laughed, and about what and whom they cried over.

I will bring this conversation with you to a close. I don’t write, I simply speak with you about whatever comes into my head. Be happy, my dear ones.

Mariya”