

# No Life Without You

## REFUGEE LOVE LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

EDITED BY  
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# Twenty-four: “I Will Come to London Directly”

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19 June through 24 July 1937

## POLITICAL TIMELINE, JUNE-NOVEMBER 1937

- 16 July 1937: Buchenwald Concentration Camp opened.
- 19 July 1937: Nazi exhibition of “degenerate art” (Entartete Kunst) opens in Munich.
- 27 July 1937: Ritual murder trial of five Jews opens in Bamberg, Germany.
- 7 September 1937: Hitler declares Treaty of Versailles invalid.
- 12 October 1937: SS begins euthanasia program with crippled infants as targets.
- 8 November 1937: Opening of Der Ewige Jude (the Eternal Jew), anti-Semitic art exhibition in Munich.
- 25 November 1937: Germany signs military accord with Japan.
- 1936 through 1938: Mass arrest and execution of Trotskyites and Bolsheviks by Stalinists in the Soviet Union, known as the Great Terror or Great Purge.

*Mope's left Leipzig assuming that he would return to oversee any residual credit arrangements, organize shipment or disposal of his personal effects, and tie up loose ends prior to traveling to London to marry Vera. His resignation from the Gebrüder Felsenstein was facilitated by the offer of the Compagnie Internationale de Pelleteries in Paris, to employ him as its representative in Russia. In 1937, Communist Russia was beginning to unlock its doors to international trade.*

*The notifications concerning the PalTreu payments that he received from Leipzig and from his brother-in-law, Fred Rau, in London appeared at last to be in order. Mope even expected to extend his purchases on his return to Leipzig in July. That expectation was thwarted. Before leaving Leipzig, he had settled in cash with the single creditor who had demanded an advance deposit. The bombshell that Mope had not anticipated was that that same creditor—a fellow Jew—denounced him to the Nazi authorities for having engaged in illegal currency transactions. It was sufficient excuse for the SS to raid his lodgings and put out a warrant for his immediate arrest. Here is how he describes this ill-fated episode in his post-war account:*

While I was in Russia, I received warnings by telegram from London and Prague not to come back to Germany, because a warrant for my arrest had been issued there. One of the sellers of the raw fur materials had forced me to make an advance payment to him, because he would not have been able to sell to me otherwise. I paid him RM 4,000 under the condition that the money be paid back after he received official payment.

This man used my absence to denounce me to the local authorities, telling them that I had violated the foreign currency regulations, which was completely false, but which permitted him to keep the money I had already paid. The German authorities—aside from the arrest warrant—confiscated my bank accounts, and they succeeded in commandeering back to Germany the larger part of the merchandise stored in Antwerp, although this merchandise had been warehoused at my brother-in-law's [Fred Rau's] disposal. Additionally, all my furnishings, including a very valuable library and a number of precious paintings, were seized.

*In a post-war letter to a family acquaintance in Leipzig, he reveals the identity of his betrayer, who had also found refuge in England:*

Karl Herzberg has been residing in London since the end of 1938 or the beginning of 1939. In Leipzig, I bought martens from him in the amount of RM 19,500 to use in the transfer for which I had received permission from the Nazi authorities. He had me pay a deposit of RM 4,000 for the martens. Shortly after that, I traveled to Russia, and while there, I was informed that I had been denounced, and that it would not be advisable for me to return to Germany. I was told that, because of

what he did, Herzberg was able to use the merchandise as well as the deposit for his own purposes. Additionally, he had curried favor with the Nazis because of it and had not been taken to a concentration camp in November 1938 [the aftermath of Kristallnacht] like everyone else. I was not the only victim of this man.

*In later years, Mope never forgot the brave action taken by his cousin, Semy, through whom he was to learn that he could no longer return to Germany. The absence of a paper trail prevented him from attempting to prosecute Herzberg for his putative crime.*

*Mope's initial tenure in the Soviet Union saw him shuttling between Moscow and Leningrad, and his initial impressions of each are punctuated by the long hours of the fur auctions, followed by obligatory late-night vodka-filled banquets that were organized by "Sojuzpushnina," the Soviet fur trade consortium. Both he and Vera were conscious that Stalinist Russia was hardly less a totalitarian state than Nazi Germany, and, given the likelihood that their letters would be inspected, both correspondents remain careful in refraining from any overt political commentary and in deliberately painting a more than rosy picture of life there.*

*In England, Vera was making arrangements for their wedding in London, the date of which was now settled at Sunday, 1 August. Planning for this was made challenging as the Staff Welfare Department at Marks & Spencer sent her once again to run one of their summer camps, this year under canvas for two weeks in mid-July near Whitby in Yorkshire.*

*After learning of his denunciation to the Nazis, Mope was concerned that this could lead to the arrest of his mother, who had been staying with her daughter, Grete, in Freiburg. Avoiding Germany himself, Mope's journey to England was anything but direct. On his arrival at Croydon Airport, late at night on Friday, 30 July, Vera whisked him by cab to Hammersmith, where an accommodating registrar had agreed to stay until after midnight in order to issue a marriage license. The civil marriage certificate of "Ernst Moritz Felsenstein 38 Years Bachelor" to "Vera Hirsch 27 Years Spinster" is dated 31 July. Their religious wedding would take place the following day.*



## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 19 June 1937

Since our conversation on Thursday, you will have received my somewhat drowsy card from Warsaw. My trip was very pleasant and, since the clock has to be moved forward by two hours when you pass the Russian border, it was not all that long. The entire landscape from Warsaw to here alternates between beautiful forests and green meadows and fields, and only every once in a while, there is a village with its farm cottages, or a city along the way.

From Berlin all the way to the Russian border, I had two sleeper cabins to myself, because there were few fellow passengers, so that I was able to use one as a bedroom and the other as a day room; and from the border on, I had one cabin—also by myself—with a good bed and impeccable linen.

Shortly after Warsaw—in the dining car—a very nice-looking young lady sat down at my table. At first, I paid little attention to her, but then, we started to talk and I found out that she was a French teacher from Tel-Aviv, which of course meant that she had my complete attention. We talked to each other in French and stayed in my day room conversing pleasantly until Baranovica <sup>63</sup> where her parents live. The father is a medical doctor and since he is very ill, she flew from Palestine to Warsaw.

My first impression of Moscow—superficial naturally—is a good one. Already, I had quite a few things to take care of today and took the very attractive Metro whose stations make a much more elegant impression than those of the London underground, and I also traveled by bus—the bus was one story high, just as the cable cars and the trolleys. But everything is in very good condition and you can see very modern models. The streets are alive and you can see many satisfied people and many who seem to be quite content. They are dressed very simply, but noticeably clean. There are many hugely broad streets with beautiful, partly older and partly very modern grand buildings made of some very pretty stone material, while most houses in the countryside were made of wooden logs in the form of bungalows. There do seem to be enough forests for that.

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63 i.e., Baranovich, a town in present-day Belarus. Before the war, the town had a vibrant Jewish community, which was annihilated by the Germans in 1942.

Since there is no airmail from here, I will send the letter by express and really hope that it will reach you on Monday, so that you won't be without any news for too long. Please don't forget to let me know when you get this letter.

I am extraordinarily relieved that my suppliers will come into possession of their money either today or Monday at the latest and really do hope that, in the meantime, Fred has taken care of further transfers, so that the later purchases can also be covered. You can let Fred know that there will be martens among the merchandise for which I paid directly, so that the cumbersome manner of payment with its allowance to the Haavara does not have to be followed this time.<sup>64</sup>

I was put into the Hotel National for the time being, because there was no room at the Metropole, but tomorrow, I will most likely get a room there, which will be more enjoyable for me, because my acquaintances all reside there.

I registered with the local office for furs today and was received in a very friendly manner and will inspect some merchandise tomorrow and might purchase it if it is adequate. The task here will be very interesting and educational for me, because I have never seen so much merchandise in one place.

The bad thing is that I have no knowledge of the language whatsoever, but the gentlemen with whom I will be dealing all speak German, English, or French. However, on the street, I communicate like a deaf-mute and that seems to work if I just write the goal of my travels on a piece of paper and hold it up under people's noses.

Now I am enfolding you in my arms, my beloved, sweet girl, although that has become even more difficult because of the greater distance and I kiss your beautiful mouth and many other sweet things your body has to offer and that I long for almost as much as an oral exchange of ideas with my passionately and exceedingly loved darling.

Your now very 38-year-old Mope

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64 Mope was still trying to resolve the Haavara/PalTreu issues regarding imbursement for the furs he had purchased in Leipzig. The direct payment he had made was presumably to Karl Herzberg who responded by denouncing Mope to the Nazi authorities for engaging in financial irregularities.

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 21 June 1937

Hannalein and Fred were here until just a little while ago, and we had a very harmonious evening. Fred said that he would take care of the necessary transfers, of course, and so the entire matter is taken care of and I am happy about it.

Tomorrow, I will probably receive the long-awaited letter from my beloved and I am so looking forward to it. Hanna and Fred know your new boss, they even talked to him here not too long ago and both of them acknowledged, of their own free will, your judgment, that he is a really good man. I really do like Hannalein and Fred and I think it is nice, as I have said many times before, to be given so many likeable people! Apart from the one who is my husband and whom I love and who means everything to me!

My most beloved, once again, it is after midnight! Do you feel my love all the way over there in the U.S.S.R.? Your Lilongo

## MOPE TO VERA

Telegram, Moscow, 25 June 1937

= ELT = HIRSCH ADDISON COURT GARDENS BLYTHE ROAD LDN =  
TRAVELING TODAY LENINGRAD 29 IN MOSCOW AGAIN SEND  
LETTERS TO MOSCOW HAVE WORK AM CONTENT THANK YOU  
SATURDAY LETTER LOVE GREETINGS KISSES = MOPE +

## MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 25 June 1937

I arrived here this morning around 10 a.m., had a very good and very comfortable breakfast and afterwards, I went to the local office of the "Sojuspuschnina," which is the central fur trading company for all Russian furs and whose main office I had been dealing with in Moscow. Since I could not take care of any business today, I will go on a tour of the city in an open car.

When you were writing to me on Saturday at 5.45, it was 7.45 here and according to local time, I would have been done with work before too



long, while you still had three difficult hours in front of you in London. Here, every sixth day is "Wychodnoi," (that is, away from work). On the 6., 12., 18., 24., 30. of each month, people have the day off and they go outside and relax. Yesterday, we saw large groups of people—from the train—who were out camping, and the surroundings are really very inviting. People use all the languages of Europe here. It is amazing how many can speak English, French and German, and if I cannot seem to get ahead with my knowledge, I will try to talk with my hands and try to use a Russian word here and there that I heard somewhere and express my wishes that way.

The handling of business here is completely different from Leipzig, naturally, because you only buy. I knew just a little bit about this kind of work and also knew some of the gentlemen through doing business with the Russian trade mission. Incidentally, I am also buying for the Gebrüder Felsenstein here.

Hopefully, everything is working out with the transfers to my Leipzig suppliers. It is very important to me and I do not have any kind of overview from here or influence over it. In any case, I am convinced that Fred won't desert me, although I cannot correspond with him from here, because I am completely uninformed concerning the status of things.

Here, the weather is warm and at this time, we have the white nights, during which it remains light both day and night. You cannot even go to bed with all the brightness and the sun, which is something I cannot afford to do while I am here.

Your photo is standing in front of me and you are smiling at me in such a way, my golden girl, that I feel all warm around my heart. Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 26 June 1937

I have been in the U.S.S.R. for a week now and have seen much and got to know many new things, but the language is still a book with 777 seals to me. Leningrad is a beautiful city with excellent streets, parks and plazas and I like it—from an architectural standpoint—better than Moscow.

As I was getting ready to send off a telegram to you earlier to let you know that I will return to Moscow today, at night, they handed me your dear telegraphed greetings, and since I found out that an "E.L.T."

telegram<sup>65</sup> (that is much cheaper) has to contain at least 25 words, I added to the cable that hopefully reached you on a *free* Saturday.

Yesterday, I went on a beautiful tour through the city and today, I will visit a Rembrandt exhibition that shows the complete collection of all the Rembrandt works in the U.S.S.R. and a museum with paintings by Russian artists. Actually, you were supposed to receive a reproduction of Saskia (first wife of Rembrandt) lying on her bed waiting for her husband, but I have not been able to get it yet. I know most of the paintings from books and I was very happy to see them in person. It is a good and very comprehensive collection.

Aside from the museum, I also visited the Isaac Church, which serves as a godless museum. That is a fantastically beautiful building that was furnished with extraordinary taste and riches. In order to reach the cupola, from which you have an especially nice view of the city, you have to climb 521 steps, which we did not go up because we were scared of those many steps. You need a lot of idealism for something like that.<sup>66</sup>

I had hoped to take on merchandise here, but that was an error and so I am going back to Moscow where I have lots to do and won't come back here until around July 3. As you can see from this description, I indulged my muses here instead of working. The high point of it all was yesterday's dinner at the Hotel Europesky. From there, one had a wonderful view of a large part of the city. I went there around 11.00 p.m. and stayed until about 1.30 a.m. People here eat at very different times than we are used to. At midnight, the dance bands began playing, and that is when the real life starts. Until around midnight, it is almost as bright as during the day, and dusk does not start until then, a dusk that is soaked in beams from a full moon so that artificial light is unnecessary.

As I already telegraphed you, I urgently hope to receive a letter tomorrow from my beloved girl and to find out if you are receiving my messages in a timely manner. I have made different experiments and put different stamps on letters: I have sent letters for 1.60 Rubles and others for 2.40 and 2.60 and I would really like to know if the more expensive letters get there faster, or if that is a certified mail fee because I always get a receipt. Beginning on July 1, a new airmail connection from London over Stockholm to Leningrad is being created, with whose help we will be able to inform each other about everything much faster. It will work

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65 E.L.T. = European Letter Telegram.

66 St. Isaac's Cathedral was built in the first half of the nineteenth century. During the 1930s, the Soviets transformed it into a museum of atheism.

out really well, because I will be here—probably for a few weeks—since the auction here begins on 12 July, and there is a week during which the merchandise can be inspected.

Please don't forget to report my well-being to my mother, without mentioning the U.S.S.R. or any city names, so that she does not worry and please forgive me for burdening you with this. Most passionately,  
Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 27 June 1937

So today, my beloved arrived back in Moscow and hopefully found many letters from me. I am so curious to hear about your impressions in Leningrad and your business there.

Is it completely necessary that you visit Dr. J. one more time before we get married?<sup>67</sup> I am not comfortable with the thought that you want to visit this man and his entire circle once again. I know that you want to make several more purchases with him, but can your agent not take care of that for you? I think that Dr. J.'s surroundings are so unpleasant and would prefer that my husband, after he undertakes such a long and exhausting trip, were spared such extremely annoying and disagreeable things, as they seem to me anyway.

Are my misgivings exaggerated and is the man and everything that is connected to him actually not as bad as I imagine him to be? I am very willing for you to teach me better, but I would truly like to ask you urgently to really ponder it, which is something you probably have already done anyway. Although I do not know Dr. J. personally, he was described to me repeatedly and just recently by different people as "most unpleasant," and even worse. Do you understand me or are you laughing at me? It's just that to me, purchases, if you want to make more later, don't seem that terribly important, or do I not understand due to a lack of knowledge of the business situation?

It is late at night once again and now, there are only four weeks and a little left; that is not soooo terribly long, but nevertheless much too long for me. You—your Lilongo

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67 "Dr. J." alludes to Dr. Jacobson, Mope's landlord in Leipzig, though Vera is actually referring here to Nazi Germany and her legitimate fear of the worsening situation for Jews there.

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 27 June 1937

Now to the answers to your question whether I have to go to Leipzig before I can come to see my darling. 1.) I have not emigrated yet and I better not stay out of Germany for longer than two months, 2.) I want to begin taking the necessary steps to officially emigrate, 3.) I might have to request my new visa for the U.S.S.R. from Leipzig or maybe from London, because I have to come back here immediately following our honeymoon. As I told you some time ago, I will have to spend a significant part of the year here and I am already racking my brain trying to figure out how you—without losing your position—will be able to manage to spend at least a few months here with me. Of course, one of the conditions is that I will be getting a permanent position here, that is, they have to be happy with me. The expenses for your stay here will be paid by the company. 4.) I will try to buy some more merchandise during my stay in Leipzig, since, as far as I can see, there is still money enough for that. Until then, the accounting from the bank should be available and I will be able to determine how highly Fred's transfers have been considered by the Haavara. I was unable to find out before my departure.

Yesterday, while in Leningrad, I received a telegram from Jerusalem to the effect that Haavara finds fault with my invoicing. I wrote immediately and in detail to Julius Rosenfeld about how the personal invoice came to be, and I really do not understand why people keep taking exception to it. I would like to ask you to let Fred know about this matter, so that he is informed. The customs clearance that is mentioned in the telegram is in Antwerp where the merchandise is stored. Only the devil knows why they are using different methods now than they did with the first three shipments. You can tell from it that all obstacles have not been removed yet.

Just now, I discovered several doves on the windowsill of my room which is on the fourth floor. How nice that they can welcome me although I don't have any crumbs I could give them.

I have not fully taken care of any of my business correspondence and so, I want to end this rather business-like letter—for the most part anyway. Your Mope

## VERA TO MOPE

London, 29 June 1937

How beautiful the white nights of Leningrad have to be; and I am glad that the warmth seems to be lasting there. It turned a little cooler here today and although it still is not cold, you can definitely feel the difference after the preceding warmth.

I have heard from all sides that the climate where the camp is can be quite rough. I will prepare for a bit of cool weather when I choose my clothing, since the nights in a camp, despite the wonderful clearness and fresh air, can be a little drafty. I am looking forward to camp life, a life I really like, because it finally lets me be a little natural again, which is something I appreciate after London with all its busy people. I only hope that the camp and its inhabitants keep me just as occupied—even if it is in a different and more pleasing manner—as the store does, because otherwise, the waiting for you will become unbearable. My most deeply loved beloved, you—despite everything that I say without reservation—do not let any of it keep you from any business dealings that appear important to you, and your wife will and would like to never get in your way, but will walk with you and beside you, even if it is just in her thoughts, but with no less intensity because of it.

I am discovering your lips with mine and I am completely Your Lilongo

P.S. The precise camp address is: c/o Mr. Welford, Ravenshill Farm, Dunsley near Whitby, Yorkshire. There is only one M&S camp there.

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 29 June 1937

Right now, 1.30 at night, I am sitting at the dinner table, after I went to a fantastically beautiful ballet in an outdoor theater. While I am sitting here writing, a jazz band is playing in the dining room of the Hotel Metropole, and the people are constantly dancing past our table. You can see that I am enjoying my life. The food is also exceptional and I think back to Zellner's with horror. I am feeling quite strange that I can experience so much joy in life again—dancing, music, etc.—after I had not heard or seen that kind of thing in Leipzig for years.

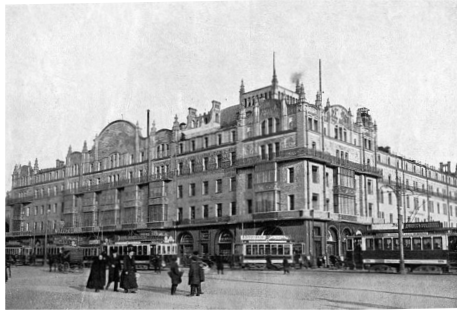


Fig. 74 Hotel Metropole, Moscow.

As I came back from swimming today, I found a telegram announcing a telephone call. My joy knew no bounds when I found out that I would get to hear your beloved voice. Since 9 o'clock here (7 o'clock where you are), I have been sitting waiting for the call.

Just now, we talked to each other. They were only a few words and still, the awareness that I heard you one more time before you go on your trip to the camp fills me with so much joy that I am completely happy. I am so happy that our voices were so clearly audible. Usually, you can understand next to nothing, something that probably can be traced back to atmospheric influences of the summer, because communications are supposed to be much better in the winter.

I dropped my intention to go on a city tour today, which was supposed to take place during the blazing midday sun, and instead drove to the outskirts of the city with two acquaintances where we swam in the river (Moskwa). Unfortunately, the sun gave way to thunder clouds at that time and as we were driving off, it came back out freshly polished. That was the first time this year that I got around to swimming, because it was not possible in Leipzig.<sup>68</sup> The swim was very refreshing.

How I hope that you will adjust well to the camp and that you will rest and that you will meet pleasant colleagues and girls there.

I kiss you and embrace you, my darling, and I am happy that June is reaching its end now and that we have removed another obstacle between us. Towards the end of July, I hope and long to really put my arms around you, and the thought makes me so happy that I cannot wait for that to happen. I love you just a little bit indescribably, my sweet, beloved wife and friend. Your Mope

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<sup>68</sup> Under the Nazi regime in Germany, Jews were forbidden from swimming in public places.

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 1 July 1937

Today was an exceedingly lazy day. From 9.30 to 1.30, I sat in the office of Sojuspushnina and waited until I received permission to go to the warehouse, only to find out there that there was no appropriate merchandise for me in stock and that the warehouse manager had to leave. Admittedly, I was not the only one who had to wait, there were nine people who did arrive later than I did. My desire to be clever by arriving early (here, 9.30 is very early) did not amount to anything and the day was less than successful. By the way, that is not an exception around here, but most people who have been here for years have become used to those things that our odd trade demands and only newcomers like me think that it's peculiar, if not to say unpleasant.

It is still very hot here and the other men are glad that they don't have to work very hard, while the heat only heightens my desire to be active, as you know. Tomorrow evening, I am traveling to Leningrad, as I wrote to you already, and hope that my darling sent her mail to that address in time so that I won't be without your longed-for reports for too long. On the 5<sup>th</sup>, the viewing begins for the auction which is scheduled to take place on the 12<sup>th</sup>, and there will be lots of work, because I have to look at and describe everything closely for my customers.

The day after tomorrow you are moving to Ravenshill, and my thoughts will accompany you to the unknown region where you will hopefully have lots of sun and a happy time and most of all, I want you to take the opportunity and rest. Is Yorks. short for Yorkshire? I have no idea where that is and would be very grateful for a small position plan so that I can at least have some idea where it is. We two people roam around the world, although we wish nothing more than to be together. It is not that easy, what my beloved girl took on with the man she did not even want at first. Hopefully, my beloved does not feel any regret and remains as brave and loyal to me as she has been, because that gives me so much incentive to high achievement and most of all, it gives sense to the achievements, because I know that all the work and all the deprivation lead to a goal, a goal that seems to me the most beautiful on earth, namely to prepare a future for you and our children, children I am looking forward to so very much.



My most heartfelt and loving embracing and kissing has been waiting for you much too long now and my entire being is made of longing for you and the need to caress you, to let my lips fondle your sweet body so that you melt with me and into me, inwardly and outwardly.

Your Mope

### MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 1 July 1937



Fig. 75 Photograph of Danaë by Rembrandt, mailed with letter from Mope to Vera, Moscow, 1 July 1937.

I already wrote to you today, but since I just got a picture of “Saskia” that I had told you about from Leningrad, here are a few more words.<sup>69</sup>

Even if the shape of my beloved is incomparably preferable to that of Madame Rembrandt, I can imagine my girl in that same position—waiting—and I hope this reproduction that does not even come close to portray the beauty of the original will give you a little joy.

Not only the woman—so ready for the game of love—but also the old servant woman and the other small details of the painting are only foreshadowing the memory of what the reality of the painting has given to the one who is constantly occupied with his beloved.

The fine hands ready for caressing, growing from the bejeweled arm. The blanket thrown back in beautiful folds ready to receive the lover. The beautiful body waiting for the final, deepest happiness and under it, the soft sensuous pillows and on the floor, the impatiently thrown off little shoes—all of that looks so much richer in color, so much more

<sup>69</sup> The painting by Rembrandt at the Hermitage that Mope endearingly describes is that of Danaë, for which the original nude model was the artist’s wife, Saskia.

prepared, drunker with longing, and I feel the happiness that is waiting for me and will find complete fulfillment soon, soon.

I love my Saskia and long for the day that will have her that prepared for me, like Rembrandt's wife in the picture, to give and receive all the joys that life is ready to give at its best. How much I love my Lilongo!

### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 4 July 1937

I want to use the first free minute since I arrived here to write to my beloved and to thank him for the beloved loving messages and to answer them.

One of the letters arrived here at 5 o'clock, at the same time as we did and welcomed me here, and I received the other one quite unexpectedly early today (Sunday). It probably arrived here yesterday during the late afternoon, and no one brought it up here until today. Our camp is situated on a bank that takes about five minutes to climb. At this moment, I am sitting on my camp bed, in front of me, our meadow stretches out, which is framed by a hedge. From the back fields, wonderful old trees are looking over at me and in front of us lies the sea that is wrapped in mist just now. We cannot go through the camp field directly to the ocean; we have to go down a hill, cross a street and then climb down to the beach, but it only takes eight minutes to get there; it is probably better that way, because the climate here is much rougher than in Somerset, where we were last year.

Just now, it is raining very lightly and the sound of the light click, click, on the tent roof is the only sound in the complete and wonderful silence. This morning, the sun was shining with interruptions, and now it is completely overcast, unfortunately, but the weather changes so rapidly here—before lunch rays of sunshine and warmth and a half hour after we were done, cool and rainy—that we can hope for the sun to come out again rather soon.

Our two predecessors left around 12 o'clock, after they handed over the cash box, books, supplies, medical utensils etc., etc., introduced us to suppliers, and then the ever so very important post office. I just found out that we have to pick up the mail twice a day from there, at nine in the morning and three in the afternoon, which I will do myself.

Seven girls decided to stay on for the coming week, the others left this morning, the other (new) twenty-nine will arrive during the course

of the afternoon; the cook with her twelve-year old daughter and the porter who is extremely reliable also stayed here with us.

Three girls will sleep in each tent. Each one of us has a tent to herself with a table, chair and a shelf made of wooden boxes. On my table, there is a bunch of violet-colored flowers that we picked this morning from a hedge and whose name I do not know. They are deeply violet standing umbels that look especially decorative and glorious in their color surrounded by the wax-like green leaves.

Sandsend is a tiny place with a few bungalows, a few fishing huts and hotels—if you want to give them that elegant name. Whitby can be reached by a bus—every two hours—and seems to be a larger, and well frequented seaside resort. The bus takes about ten minutes to get there, so it is not far at all.

Now enough about this place and to your dearly beloved letters. As far as your projected trip to see Dr. J. is concerned, I thank you very much for your precise explanation. Should anything displeasing happen at Dr. J.'s, which is something I hope does not happen, and I don't think it will, I will travel there *immediately*, although I actually cannot do that after such a long absence, since he certainly won't remember me and, because of that, would not be too happy about my arrival, but I hope that your visit with him will be a very short one and that you will come to me right away. In your letter dated 30 June, you mention that you will probably be here towards the end of July. I will travel back on 18 July. Do you know HOW much I am looking forward to you?!

I am very glad that my beloved was able to take a refreshing swim. Unfortunately, I will not be able to go into the water for the first few days. They say that the water is ice-cold around here, but that will not bother me at all. Please don't worry—I will be very careful! Just now, the sun is trying to peek through the clouds.

My most heartfelt thanks for the telegram that reached me before I left and made my day much brighter. I still can hardly believe that we are really going to live together starting in August. You!!! It sounds so unbelievably beautiful! Completely Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 4 July 1937

Early during the day before yesterday still in Moscow, I was able to procure a large amount for the purchase of merchandise for Leipzig,

after I had been trying for days. As I have probably already written to you, people are just not very interested, and they have every right, in selling to Germany, while the traders in Leipzig are very dependent on it in order to keep their businesses running. I was able to receive permission to take on merchandise valued at RM 42000.-, maybe a little more, that can be paid for in marks. I had to work hard during rather depressing thunderstorm weather in order to connect with Leipzig and London and consult with them as to what to buy, to inspect merchandise, to negotiate, etc. In the evening, the long-awaited storm finally came in never before seen dimensions. The rain was coming down in streams, such streams that might find an equivalent in Palestine—maybe, and the entire sky was in commotion.

Tomorrow, the inspections for the auctions start. They say, in general, that the auction work here is one of the most difficult and exhausting that is known in our trade. And there won't even be a Wychodnoi on the 6<sup>th</sup> or on the 12<sup>th</sup>. So if I should write a little less in the next few days, please blame it on the work and the business reports I have to file in the evening. At the moment, I just have my head full with work and I cannot afford to make any mistakes. On top of that, there are a lot of dinners and drinks during this time from which I cannot excuse myself completely out of politeness. I really dread that kind of company.

Now, as to why I really have to see Dr. J. again, I already wrote to you about in detail and I assume that the reasons appear plausible to you. I will not stay there longer than a day or two and then travel on to my beloved.

I kiss you there, where it lets you be happiest, with all my feeling and all my love that only belongs to you. With all my passion and all my heart, Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 5 July 1937

Today, the inspections began for the imminent auctions. We were in the warehouse until 5 o'clock and then calculated all the prices that can be spent for the merchandise whose quality we had jotted down. The banquet last night did not end all that late, since most of the participants were more or less sea-sick and left the hall around midnight. When I saw the quantity of vodka being consumed, I started filling my fourth glass with mineral water and drank to the health of "I don't know who,"

so that nothing happened to me, although they served white and red wine later in the evening. It is after 1.00 a.m. once again and I don't want to go to bed too late, so that I won't be yawning tomorrow. I don't think I will get to see much of Leningrad this time and I am glad that I have already been here once before despite the great and wasted expense.

### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 6 July 1937

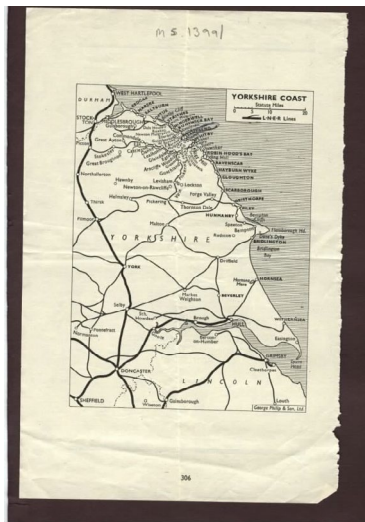


Fig. 76 Printed map of Yorkshire Coast included with letter from Vera to Mope, Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 6 July 1937.

I am sitting in a canvas chair on our meadow, it is a little after 9.00 in the evening and although it is a little overcast and one side of the sky looks heavy with rain, but it is wonderful to be able to experience the sinking evening so entirely and completely. The sun visited us a little more often today, but I would not call it hot at all. I think that, even if it turned really warm, there will always be a wind blowing up here on our meadow. Last night, you could actually call it a storm, but that did not stop me from getting a really good night's rest.

Aside from the organization of meals, the administration of the "moneys," the so-called "first aid," putting on a dressing, etc., our main occupation consists of: buttering sandwiches, since, as you already know, bread and butter-sandwiches are prepared beforehand and

forty-one stomachs devour a lot of these sandwiches during four meals a day, so this activity repeats itself every few hours, accompanied by the sounds of the gramophone and with the cook's assistance.



Fig. 77 Photograph of Vera (middle of second row) with vacationing Marks & Spencer shop girls.

The girls do not have to do *anything*, unless they volunteer and there are always at least four of them who do the dishes after the meals, something that gets done with a lot of laughter and amusement. My other work consists of enjoying the air and the sun and to be lazy. Of course, it is necessary for one of us to be present at all times, since we might be needed when one of the suppliers shows up or the girls have some kind of concern.

### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 7 July 1937

I have written a letter to you every single day, and since the end of last week, I have been sending everything to Leningrad. I hope that at least the telegram I sent on Saturday after I arrived here came into your possession. It seems that they had never sent one from Sandsend to the U.S.S.R., judging by the astonished face of the postmaster.

The weather is still the same: it changes from sun to rain to wind to storms and back again to a little bit of sun about every two hours in downright regular intervals. At this very moment, the sun is coming out again and it is nicely warm (not hot), and I am lying on my blanket in the grass in front of my tent, stretched out in short white linen pants (white might be a little exaggerated, but that was the original color) and a back- and sleeveless top in order to catch all the sun's rays, after

I wore three woolen jumpers, one on top of the other, long pants and your jacket, which has served me very well once again, during my night watch and I still thought it was cold.

Yesterday morning, I went to Whitby and was lucky enough to be given a ride by a friendly soul, in a car, so that I did not have to walk down the country road for three-quarters of an hour. The female driver was a summer vacationer in Sandsend who showed great interest in the M&S summer camp, as do most people here, and the other one (male) was a Sandsend farmer who gave me the well-meaning advice to never accept an invitation for a car ride at night, and I laughed and made the promise.

Whitby is a charming old harbor with an old abbey; a pity that I did not have time to go up there; it is only preserved as a ruin and looks extremely picturesque amid old trees on a bank overlooking the red roofs of the skewed little fishermen's homes, and I hope that I will have another opportunity to visit and explore it.

Our household here is running smoothly, and the girls seem to be very happy with our meals. Most of them come from Northern England and speak a very charming dialect, and they are, with almost no exception, happy, easy going, very nice young girls, and the stay here is a real joy.

I have to stop now; the fisherman just came and told us that it would be turning very hot tomorrow; hopefully, he is right. I love you and I am very close in my thoughts, with you and beside you, passionately and gently, Your Lilongo

### MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 7-8 July 1937

After I was without mail yesterday, I sent a telegram to your dear parents. Finally today, your letters arrived here via Moscow. Why are you not writing directly to me here? I did ask you for that in time and told you on the 27<sup>th</sup> already that I would be here from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of this month and will be staying for some time. I really don't want to reproach you, but you know just as well how longingly the two of us wait for news.

I did not write to you yesterday. I worked to exhaustion for thirteen hours yesterday without a break and I just could not do anything after that. Today, it was eleven hours, then I slept for an hour, ate dinner and have to go back to work after finishing this letter, because I still have to



do some calculations for tomorrow's inspections. I am more than busy and have to work until deep into the night which is why I am wrapped in silence at the moment. Aside from that, everything is working out rather exceptionally.

Hopefully, your stay at the camp is satisfactory and favored by the most beautiful weather. It has become cooler here, something that is welcomed by everyone, except me, and so I submit to the heavens and the majority.

Most probably, I will be here until the 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> and will travel back to Moscow. Please adjust the addressing of your letters accordingly. While I am in Moscow, please address your letters to the "Metropole Hotel," because that is the location of the main post office for the local organization of the "Intourist." Starting on the 14<sup>th</sup> of this month, you can use the Moscow address again.

Unfortunately, this letter is terribly formal, but at the moment, I am lacking the leisure time to write differently, although I am always with my beloved (very, very much beloved) in my thoughts, but if I want to avoid from tearing open my mouth to yawn, I will have to go to bed soon. Your Mope

### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 9 July 1937

I am a little sad today, because I still don't have any news from my beloved. To hell with all the postal, flight, train, and ship connections; in the end, they are not much good anyway. Or at least, they are not sufficient to satisfy my impatience. The only sign of my beloved husband's thoughts that I have in my hands from this week is the telegram to London, and it showed me that he was in a similar mood at the beginning of the week as I am today.

Sunday morning, most of the girls are leaving, and in the afternoon, a new shipment will arrive.

Yesterday evening—we needed a little more milk—I went to the farm that is about ten minutes away and met the owner. It was a real joy to have a conversation with this woman; she has spent her entire life up here, has never been to London, yet her perceptions on life are so broad-minded and intelligent that it proved to me once again that it is not or only in small part the outward influences that make a human being, but

that you get it put into the cradle with you.—Let us hope that we will give our children many good and useful things to make their way in the world and then, let us try to take care of and cultivate it.

To come back to my farmer's wife, among other things, we got to talking about whether it would be desirable to live up here cut off from the world forever, and then she replied very simply: she could get used to any place and could be happy anywhere, as long as she had her loved ones there and a sufficient income. The farm is square and the barns are built around it, there are no electric lights and the wind blows from all sides. You have the most beautiful view down to the sea across meadows and fields that sink down gradually into the great blue water.

My beloved, unfortunately I have to close my evening—my Friday evening of chatting with you. Some of the girls are waiting with their evening walk so they can post this letter and I don't want to make them wait too long.

I love you, my most loved one, and I long for you, Your Lilongo

### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 10 July 1937

Strange how irregularly plane traffic has to run. I was more than glad to finally hold another letter from my beloved husband in my hands, and it almost seems as if the heavens sympathize with my respective moods; as I was wandering down to the post office this morning shortly before 9 o'clock, the sun was shining and the sea shone deep blue; I had the feeling that, this time, there has to be a letter from my beloved.

It is 3.00 in the afternoon, the wind is blowing, the sky is completely overcast again, and it has been raining on and off. The camp participants' mood and mine as well, however, is still good. Yesterday, I was in the water for the first time despite the weather, but only for about one minute, because it was ice cold, but so much the warmer afterwards; such a cold bath, or swim as the case may be, is extraordinarily good.

For the first time here last night, I experienced a clear, starry night—the west side stayed so bright that I almost felt like I was in the land of the midnight sun. I wonder if you also had such a clear sky above you last night—Friday night—and if you looked at the same stars as I did and asked them to carry many loving words to a certain someone far in the East.

You don't have to worry: our tents are really warm and quite comfortable. They are built like sugar loaves and the radius of the

base circle is about 2-2 ½ meters. The camp beds all have a well-filled straw sack lying on the beds' waterproof canvas, and there are enough blankets, and if you want, there are also hot-water bottles. I think I would live in a tent all year long if the climate allowed it—I wonder if you would move into one with me.

I kiss you again and again and am completely, Your Lilongo

### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 11 July 1937

After a lovely morning, it started pouring down in buckets until the evening, and the storm was blowing so hard that we put on all the coats and woolen jumpers we could put our hands on. To compensate us, Saturday was an uninterrupted day of bright sunshine, and up here on our bank, it never becomes oppressive and it was never too hot for me. Our brown coloring deepened quite a bit today thanks to the sun.

After the rain stopped, a girl who shares my sense of adventure went on a lovely walk with me. We wandered along the country road to Whitby, and for the first time, I had the leisure to look more closely at this charming little old city. Just for that, the sun came out and we enjoyed the sunset in the church yard of the abbey—and this time, the fireball sank into the sea, which is something I really do love. A steep climb with 199 stair steps, if you want to call the bumpy stones a stair—lead up to the little church that was newly built a few meters away from the ruins of the abbey.

Since this is the last evening for the greater number of the girls, we gave them permission to bring their "boy-friends" along, served them coffee, sandwiches, sweets, etc., let the gramophone play, and the entire company sang and seemed to be in a very good mood. This lasted until about 11.30 in the evening.

I hope that my beloved is not too exhausted in Leningrad. You write that you will stay there until 18 July; are you going back to Moscow? I suppose not after you took all of your luggage; or will you go on your visit to Dr. J.?

This morning, I had a wonderful swim, that is, the waves were too high for swimming, and it was only a wonderful and refreshing sea bath. As soon as some of the photos taken here are developed, I will send them to you.

Your Lilongo

## MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 15 July 1937

In my thoughts, I have answered all of my beloved's letters that are lying in front of me, but it has been factually impossible for me to find the time to sit down and write to you. Since about an hour ago, my work has been taking on normal proportions once again. The auction was over around noon, and, until about an hour ago, I had to complete the shipping orders of the entire bought merchandise—and that was a lot. Just now, I finished packing most of my things, and once I have written this letter and eaten dinner, the night train to Moscow will be leaving. As you already read in the last few letters, there was such an unbelievable amount of work to be done that there was not one single night when I was able to sink into my bed before 3 or 4 in the morning. I have never before seen such quantities of merchandise of such diversity in one place.

In between all that work, there were different banquets and dinners in smaller circles from which I could not excuse myself, even though I would have loved to have done so, and, instead of drinking vodka, I would have preferred writing to you. However, it just couldn't happen. Hopefully, my telegrams made up for the lack of letters just a little bit and told you that I am doing well.

I was very happy with your reports on camp life. They were refreshing for me after all the exhausting work and more important than eating and sleeping. How regrettable that your stay there did not make camping a more enjoyable activity, because the climate which is usually rough was made worse by wind and rain. Even if your tents were more comfortable than what I am familiar with, sunshine and a calm sky are requirements if you camp outdoors. I thank you for the mailing of the map. Now, I have some idea at least as to where my thoughts will meet my beloved when I send them to her—and I do that constantly.

I found out yesterday that my transfer things, which caused me quite a headache as well, are finally being taken care of. I actually felt quite weak after that tension—when I found out—and my stomach was acting like something was missing, but that was easily taken care of, and I am breathing a sigh of relief, because all of these unimaginable difficulties have been overcome.

Please excuse me for saying this, but the things you are writing about Dr. J. and that you might possibly visit him, are nonsense. You have absolutely no business there and I would be very indignant if you even

approached his vicinity. There is no reason for any misgivings, but just the thought that you—for whatever reason—traveling to him is revolting.

While I am sitting here writing, many singing girls are passing by and I am happily enjoying the beautiful melodies and voices. And now, I have to stop chatting with my beloved again, because I have to get to the train on time, and since I have not eaten anything since lunch and that was in a hurry, I am feeling really hungry, and it's 10 o'clock at night.

I will send this letter, or better, this confused mess, which I ask you to forgive, to London, because it probably will not reach you in Sandsend anymore. I hope, that you, my beloved girl, will have a few more enjoyable days in camp and a pleasant trip back, after which these words will welcome you home with all the love and passion that I put into them for you. I wonder if they will get there on time. Your Mope

#### VERA TO MOPE

Ravenshill Farm, near Whitby, Yorkshire, 18 July 1937

In about 20 minutes, the coach will arrive and pick up our herd of campers to take all them to York, from where they will leave by train in all four directions.

Yesterday evening—after the last day was wonderfully sunny and warm again, the usual goodbye party with “boyfriends” took place; there were about 20 soldiers (there is a camp quite close to here with about 2000 residents—and I was surprised that no more showed up).

Later:

Now, there are only four girls and the cook left who will all leave around noon, and then, only my co-worker, the porter and I will stay here until tomorrow.

We two supervisors stayed awake last night, or this morning actually, until 4 a.m. (half asleep), because two girls disappeared with some soldiers and did not come back until dawn; they said nothing that sounded like “I’m sorry” but only “we did not know you would sit up for us!” Of course, it makes no sense to say something on the last day, and they know that very well and used that, and so, neither of us said a word.

It is a little later now, and once again, we climbed up and down our hill and took the cook, including her luggage, to the bus. Now, out of thirty-six little Indians, only four are still here.

Actually, I am supposed to help now with packing everything up, but the mailbox only gets emptied once on Sundays and my beloved just has to get some words from me, even if they are only gibberish caused by constant interruptions and getting little sleep.

Tomorrow at noon, we are going back to London after these two very relaxing and recuperative weeks, and maybe, I will find a few words from you at home.

My beloved, today in two weeks!!!!!! Most passionately, Your Lilongo

### VERA TO MOPE

London, 19 July 1937

This afternoon, or actually evening—I got home around 6.45 p.m.—I found your dear Thursday words and your telegram!! You always make sure that such beloved mail from you welcomes me, while I am afraid that I never manage to get my letters to you at just the right time.

Yesterday, we had a very busy day during which we really worked like “laborers;” among other things, 160 wool blankets had to be rolled up and tied, and after we were finished with that job, which required a lot of bending over and physical strength, our porter found us (my co-worker and me) sleeping on the mountain of blankets; on top of everything else, it was rather hot, which really does not bother me, but the previous night did not bring all that much sleep, as I told you earlier. In any case, everything was packed up by evening and all of the shipping lists were written, so that our last night in camp was a relatively early night. It was a really enjoyable stay, unburdened by all the worries of the every-day and suffused by a harmless joy, the dear letters of my beloved and the awareness that the longed day is nearing.

Tomorrow, I will go to the head office, among other things, to turn in our books and a report, and while I am there, I will ask if I can take both the long weekends that I still have and add them to my vacation—that means three extra days altogether. Of course, I will give our marriage as the reason, because there is usually no leave of absence for anyone at M&S that falls before a bank holiday, because that always is a very busy week. I hope that they will approve my plan, and I will be there to pick up my beloved on Friday at the train station—God willing, he will come home on Friday, 30 July—if only I could make time move faster!

You—I put my lips on yours and kiss you, kiss you, totally, Your Lilongo

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 20 July 1937

Yesterday evening, my new boss called from Karlsbad and since he needs copies of the auction catalogues, I sat there until after 2 a.m., despite my great tiredness, and wrote and wrote down all kinds of things that did not interest me at all at such a late hour. But what could I do? Today was less strenuous than yesterday and around 7 p.m., I lay down for an hour and let the catalogue scribbling be.

Afterwards, we, that is, several acquaintances and I, went to the "Eremitage." It is a kind of amusement park with a theater, cinemas, open restaurants, and very many people who relax there after work.<sup>70</sup> Since I have been in Russia, this was only the second evening during which I was able to do something for my private amusement before midnight.

I have given Julius Rosenfeld's accounting a cursory glance and assume that it is correct. Without the documents that are still in Leipzig, it really is not possible for me to check the accounting accurately and I won't get around to it in the foreseeable future either. Fred will have let you know that I will come to London directly and that I will postpone the visit to Dr. J. to a later date.

The fact that my dear mother's trip to London had to be postponed *really alarms me*, and I hope that there is no cogent reason that will keep her in Germany for a longer period of time???

I kiss you most passionately, my beloved, as always full of burning longing and love and will not be really happy until I can hold you in my arms. You! Your Mope

## MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 23 July 1937

I shall depart from here on Monday around 4.30 at the latest with the Northern Express and travel via Prague. I will go to Karlsbad for a day to confer with my boss and then I will fly to London on the 29<sup>th</sup>.<sup>71</sup> I am

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70 The Moscow Hermitage Garden remains a popular city center recreation spot.

71 In the end, Mope had to travel by train following a highly circuitous route that avoided Germany through Austria, Switzerland and France. He arrived late on Friday, 30 July.



so very happy and glad to have this difficult time behind me and can finally travel to my most dearly beloved girl.

If only I knew what is going on with my dear mother. The postponement of her trip alarms me extraordinarily, and I have been without contact with her for about five weeks now. I don't know how she is, what her plans are, if she will be able to travel to Palestine or come to London for our wedding. This is an abominable situation, something you will understand, because you know how attached I am to that dear lady.

Now I want to close this letter, one of my last letters from here, and go to dinner. Today, there will be a grand ball in the Metropole, especially since an extraordinary number of tourists, especially from America, are here right now. The eve of Wychodnoi gives occasion to be a little happier and friskier, just as it is normal for a Saturday night elsewhere.

Please begin to consider how and where I am supposed to kiss and caress you,

Your Mope who is so very much in love

VERA TO MOPE

London, 24 July 1937

Just a few minutes ago, I heard from Muttilein that a telegram for me arrived early today and she read me its contents over the phone. I am so happy to have some kind of date for your arrival and I am so indescribably and unspeakably happy!!!

This time, I can really come to the train station in order to receive my beloved. I am on vacation until 18 August (I have to be back at work on that day) and I was happy that I saved my long weekends.

I received a charming letter from your dear mother on Tuesday. She is really hoping to be able to be here at the end of the month, and so do I! She wrote that Semy has been going out of his way for her to try and get the necessary document for her.

My beloved, I can hardly wait and would like to sleep for the four days (I am not counting Saturday, although it is only 3.30 in the afternoon) and then wake up and fall into the arms of my beloved, You—