

No Life Without You

REFUGEE LOVE LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

EDITED BY
FRANKLIN
FELSENSTEIN





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Twenty-five: “The Alpha and Omega of My Life”

16 September through 27 October 1937



Fig. 78 (a) and (b) Photographs of Vera and Mope at their wedding, London, 1 August 1937. Vera's mother, Alice Hirsch, stands behind the couple in the second of these photos.

The marriage of Vera and Mope on Sunday, 1 August 1937 was a modest affair with family and friends adding up to a guest list of hardly more than a dozen. The only damper upon an otherwise joyous occasion was the absence of Mope's mother, who did not obtain permission from the Nazi authorities to travel to England.

On the first leg of their honeymoon, the newlyweds flew to Basle, and, to Mope's delight, his mother (along with her daughter Grete and son-in-law, Norbert, who lived in nearby Freiburg) were granted day permits to cross the border into Switzerland for a brief reunion. The honeymoon itself took place in northern Italy, the itinerary for which had been mapped by Mope before he had left Leipzig. It included a visit to Genoa, where they were the house guests of Hilde and Walter Lewy. Hilde was Vera's most intimate friend from her schooldays.

On their return to London, Vera had to go back to work at M&S, whereas the duration of Mope's stay was limited to a few short weeks. Recalling his predicament in his post-war curriculum vitae, he writes: "Since I was without any financial means, the English authorities did not permit me to stay in England or to establish my residence there. At the beginning of September, I received an order to leave within 48 hours." Fortunately for him, his replacement as representative in Russia of the Compagnie Internationale de Pelleteries had turned out to be a failure, and Mope was persuaded to take up his former position on a more permanent basis. "Since the Parisian company wanted to send me back to Russia for additional purchases and contract negotiations," Mope writes, "I had requested a new Russia[n] visa in England that arrived just in time." Concern about travel costs obliged him to travel to Moscow by sea and rail, a journey of five days.

During his earlier trip to Russia, Mope had been more than occupied during the intense days of the fur auctions, and he expected to be no less again. What neither he nor his Parisian employer had fully taken into account was the economic impact of the devaluation of the French franc. It had been devalued by about thirty per cent in October 1936, and further pressure during the ensuing year forced the French government to remove the currency from the gold standard, creating tremendous financial uncertainty. An immediate result was a flattening of demand for such luxury goods as furs. Mope arrived in Moscow to find himself made largely idle. The newlyweds were already sorely tried by their separation so soon after their marriage, and their correspondence captures well their acute depression and longing for each other.

Adding to the difficulty of being apart was the relentlessness with which Karl Herzberg pursued Mope for further payments under the PalTreu scheme.

Without full documentation, the precise details are difficult to ascertain although Herzberg's refusal to reach a settlement and the accelerated threats of legal action and confiscation leave little doubt that his actions against Mope were being directed by the Nazi authorities. "A man like Karl Herzberg would—I am quite sure—be a scourge for his contemporaries if he would have remained in Germany," writes Mope from London in 1944. "Here he tries to adapt himself to English ways and customs but this is no more than face cream."

Lacking permission to hold foreign currency, Mope had been offered by his British brother-in-law, Fred Rau, a surety to allow him to engage in the PalTreu scheme as a legal means of transferring money abroad, primarily for his mother but also for himself. The furs that he had purchased and then warehoused in Antwerp were destined for Palestine, where their sale could have released the capital that had been invested in them. The foreign currency office in Leipzig stymied all attempts to allow that to happen. The threatening letters that were sent were all addressed to Mope in London, and, in his absence, the new Mrs. Felsenstein was left to deal with these. Although she was valiant in her efforts to respond to the constant demands from Germany, Vera became increasingly skeptical about the wisdom of having engaged in the PalTreu scheme and fearful of its long-term effects upon them both.

After a month and a half of largely wasted time in Moscow, Mope's stay there was cut short by his employer's decision to recall him. He was to reach London toward the start of November. During his absence, he had missed the visit to England of his mother, before she embarked on a trip to Palestine, where her son, Adolf, and daughter, Alice, each lived. The debacle of the PalTreu plans and consequent lack of funds would have been contributory factors in her eventual decision not to settle there.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 16 September 1937

My Mopelein—When these lines reach you, you will have hopefully arrived hale and healthy in Moscow and had a pleasant and maybe even relaxing trip behind you. Let me tell you one more time and at the beginning of your stay there: I am completely and totally convinced, without any kind of reservation, that you will fill that position magnificently. I would not say that so implicitly, if I had not arrived at this definite opinion through observations, facts, and also a little knowledge about people that I inevitably have to have because of my

work. A human being who has such a will to succeed, the experience and knowledge of the trade and added to that a clearly capable mind *has* to be 100% successful! It is nice, very nice to know, that the person who has all of these attributes is the man whom a very kind fate has given me as a life companion and friend and lover, and I am extremely happy about it.

My dearest, I would like to say to you one more time, as a return for those ever so rich days we spent together: They were not only filled by so many beautiful things, I also have the feeling that they brought me along a little bit as a human being, and I thank you, my beloved, for everything, for your love and kindness, your patience and your understanding and your intensity in all of your thoughts and emotions. Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

*On Board the M/S. England between Harwich and Esbjerg, Denmark, 17
September 1937*

My most beloved, I thank you for all your love, your desire to understand, your empathy for everything that occupies me and every minute, so precious to me, that I was able to spend with you. These seven weeks have been the happiest of my life, and this happiness could not be reduced by any difficulty I encountered, other than the pain to have to leave you again.

You, my darling, I embrace across the wide sea that stretches out between us and kiss your beloved eyes and your lips and all of you, from awakening until going to sleep, with all of my love that belongs to you and only you. Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Helsinki, 19 September 1937

I am sitting here with an Englishman and a Greek from Egypt in a restaurant that is situated high above the city in the uppermost story of a hotel tower, and we had dinner while looking at the view of the setting sun. My two fellows are travel acquaintances with whom I spent a very pleasant day first from Åbo to here in the train and then here.

We really enjoyed the beautiful weather that finally won victory over the horrible rain. The Greek Egyptian is the most intimate friend of my good acquaintance Sistovaris in Alexandria, with whom I spent a very pleasant evening during my stay in Alexandria.⁷² As my darling usually says in such cases: "How small the world really is!"

This evening, I am traveling on to Leningrad. We will pass the border, as far as I know, tomorrow morning. The departure from Stockholm yesterday was breathtakingly beautiful. We traveled for hours through the fjord with many inhabited and forested islands and the sun was going down behind them. It was a real experience. The boat is very clean, and, although it was overbooked, I had a cabin to myself which I succeeded in getting by pleading with the man that I had been urgently warned about bad smelling people. As far as I could see (or smell), this warning was actually—for yesterday anyway—not needed.

In Copenhagen, where I just barely received the last free room in the second hotel, I rushed "around the corner" to drink a cup of coffee before going to bed. The nearest tavern was a bar from where a very pretty girl waved to me after I sat down. I waved back and there she was sitting at my table with a colleague. Since everything was very reasonably priced, as in most Danish taverns—coffee, a whole pitcher of very good coffee around 16 Kronors I did not have a problem with that. We could not talk at all and I only determined that the girl who had a fine face and was built well but had rather coarse hands. After I had ordered something to drink for both girls, the one gathered all of her knowledge of the English language, pointed her finger at herself, her colleague and me and said "home." When I did not understand immediately, she took a paper napkin and wrote on it "Kronor 40." Now, that was too much for me in every way and I drank my coffee, paid and rolled into the hotel that was exactly six steps distant. I was told that was nothing unusual for Copenhagen, the Paris of the North!

The main purpose this letter is meant to fulfill is to bring you my most passionate kisses and my love and all of my emotions and feeling that exists only for you. In the meantime, I am already in the sleeper compartment of the train and want to quickly post this letter. Your Mope

72 The Sistovaris family were well known furriers in pre-war Egypt. Mope had docked in Alexandria en route to Palestine in 1936.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 22 September 1937

I have been here since yesterday. On the 20th, I arrived in Leningrad after a comfortable trip. While I was traveling, I met three American women who want to travel across Russia for about two weeks. We visited the "Pioneers' Palace" in the afternoon and went to the theater in the evening, since I could not leave until the 12.30 train, because there was no room in the sleeper car on the 9.50 train.

The Pioneers Palace is a home for children. It is a former place of the Czar that had been reconstructed in a grand way as an entertainment home for children from about eight to sixteen years old. You cannot imagine what kinds of motivation for all different types of things the children receive. It is the most outstanding method to motivate young people and to awaken latent talents or abilities that they might have. There is, to mention only a few things among many, a chess hall, a dance hall, halls for dexterity, rooms in which someone is reading to the children or telling them stories, a café with radio music, a hall that is furnished to look like a salon on a ship, lecture halls, etc. There are about six thousand children who visit daily and, as a reward for special accomplishments in school, children are given tickets to go there. Every day, there are different children, so everyone gets his turn.⁷³

In the theater, a fairy tale was performed, a tale I didn't know, but whose content was completely understandable because of its grandiose presentation. It was an opera, by the way, and the performers were really first rate. The choirs were especially good as well, so that I was happy to have taken this nice break in my mostly rainy travels.

Now I have to tell you something completely unexpected. I was greeted here by hot summer weather that is lasting through today. It is even warmer than it was for most of July; all the leaves are still green. I feel myself pushed back by two months, but unfortunately, very unfortunately, I do not have the same beautiful time ahead of me as I did then.

73 The Anichkov Palace, commissioned by Empress Elizabeth in 1741, was used during the Soviet era as the Zhdanov Palace of Young Pioneers, an equivalent of a Boy Scouts' Museum.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 26 September 1937

Finally, finally—letters from my darling arrived today. I had really been quite desperate, without any news, and today was quite a holiday with three letters.

This evening, I am going back to the opera again. The three American women with whom I traveled from Helsingfors to Leningrad have come here for three days and ordered a ticket for me as well. When I asked them today to accept the money, they were actually offended. They are very nice and cultured and most of all, well educated, and are really enjoying their stay with sightseeing tours of art galleries and bring back very interesting reports on everything I have not seen yet while we have dinner together. Tomorrow, they are traveling on to Kiev.

If I do not close now, this letter will not reach the airmail anymore. I love you so indescribably, and I kiss you everywhere with the greatest longing and passion and embrace you again and again with so much intensity that you just have to feel it.

Your Mope

In the future, please address the envelopes with the typewriter or in block letters. Apparently, they are having problems reading your handwriting. And please address them to the Hotel National for now—maybe the letters will get here a little sooner then.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 28 September 1937

Pretty soon, you will have every right to say: "*Now she got him on the safe side, she does not write to him any more!*" Well, do you say that? Yesterday evening, I went directly to bed, because I was not feeling well at all. Nothing to get worried about and everything is back to normal now! Please don't be sad, and don't think that I have forgotten about my beloved!

My work meeting today took almost the entire afternoon at the head office, but did not result in any real new things. The essence of it was this: 1. the request to us (and the girls through us) to have as much knowledge about the merchandise as possible; 2. to not only instruct the salesgirls constantly, but also the supervisors on the floor, since they are

in constant contact with the counter-girls; and 3. the request that we get involved everywhere in everything at any time. I suppose that such a meeting is quite beneficial as a reminder for self-determination and as a critique (and it was really meant as one).

I kiss you, my beloved, on your eyes and your forehead, every so quietly and tenderly.

Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 28 September 1937

A little while ago, the three American women left. Their presence was a welcome change, although I could only share my evenings with them, of course, as far as my business correspondence left me the time to do so, and I will probably be in more need for such a change in a few weeks, since all of my colleagues are leaving here in the course of the next few days.

At the same time as the Americans were leaving, a tall, slim and really distinguished looking older gentleman was traveling to Kiev. Someone told me that he was American, but I don't believe that, since the similarity to the Archbishop of Canterbury was totally uncanny. Unfortunately, I did not find out until later that it had to have been him. His passport gave the name Prof. Johnson and was English. If I had known that, I would have returned his good wishes for a safe trip which he gave us at Easter in 1936. He looked at me rather questioningly as if he knew me, but I did not have the heart to just go and start talking to a complete stranger, and he might just have been one.⁷⁴

The weather turned noticeably cooler here since yesterday, and I am running around in a summer coat. Nevertheless, the sun is shining all day long.

The mail has to be sent now, and that is why I have to close many pages earlier than I would like, but I am writing to you about the many, many and most loving kisses that I would love to give you personally, but this will have to do. Your Mope

⁷⁴ Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the so called "Red Dean" [not the Archbishop!] of Canterbury had greeted Vera and Mope in the cathedral grounds shortly after their engagement. His pro-Communist leanings as a so-called Christian Marxist led to his visit at this time and to the later publication of his book, *Soviet Power* (1941).

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 29 September 1937

My work—especially since the correspondence that goes with it cannot be taken care of during the day—does not end until 11 in the evening. However, dinner usually takes place from 5-7 o'clock, and aside from that, I am quite lazy at this time, since I am supposed to put on the brakes concerning the purchase of merchandise. This is a consequence of the devaluation of the Franc.⁷⁵ Usually, all of us fur buyers sit in the Metropole's restaurant and you hear about business matters when people have been drinking too much, things you would otherwise hear nothing about. I usually do not participate in all the drinking, because it is important to me that I do not have a hangover the next day.

I have to tell you that my life here is meaningful only because of you. How lonely I would feel if my thoughts were not always with my sweet darling I cannot imagine at all. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 2 October 1937

Yesterday evening, I came home dead tired after a long and aggravating day at work, and your sweet words made it so that everything looked much more bearable and made me feel happier.

I had the feeling to have wasted energy all day long for nothing, and that leaves a person with an empty and ugly feeling. The reason for all of it was that a girl's coat (if alleged or actual has not been determined yet, but I tend more towards actual), the best coat she owns, was stolen from the locker room. I spent my day to interview almost all of the girls, one by one, without any positive success. Some of them allege that the girl was wearing her old coat that morning which was actually still hanging there, but she said that she always left it here and that she had to go home dressed in just a suit a few days ago, but that she wore her good coat for a special occasion Friday morning. More details would get too

⁷⁵ The French franc was devalued by about thirty per cent in October 1936. Further devaluation took place in June 1937 after Léon Blum's government abandoned the gold standard, and allowed the franc to float. Naturally, the fur business, a purveyor of luxury items, was to suffer considerably as a consequence.

involved here (especially since I have to go back to the store). The fact remains that the coat is gone—I left everything else yesterday and it was all for nothing; I went home tired and downhearted, so thank you once again for your letter that got me back on my feet.

I am still without an assistant today and actually should not be writing at all. However, I do have to tell you something important: There was a registered letter yesterday from Herzberg; he wants to hold the 150 pieces for you until the 9th of the month; otherwise he wants to be compensated for damages. I think that is good news and bad! The latter, because he seems to be unable to sell the merchandise at that price, good, because you won't have to pay damages and won't have to purchase the merchandise again. I passed the letter on to Fred immediately and will talk about the matter with him tomorrow. I don't believe that everything can be taken care of by the 9th, but very soon after that, and I think it would be best to write to Mr. Herzberg and tell him so. I am curious to find out about Fred's opinion and of course, I will go along with his suggestions. Actually I think it is much, much better this way than I had dared to expect, since economies do and will change again.

Many passionate kisses, Totally Your Lilongo

VERA TO MOPE

London, 3 October 1937

Today, we were able to set the clock back an hour, and because of that, I woke up at 9 a.m. instead of actually 10 a.m., which really was the actual time, I slept in and slept very well.

I talked to Hannalein and Fred on the telephone this evening. Fred advised me to make a copy of Herzberg's letter and send it to your representative in Leipzig with a cover letter referring to our last letter to him. He thought that I should not even answer Herzberg.

And your representative should try to get Herzberg to ship those 150 pieces, which could then be paid for without delay and only then. Whether Herzberg will do that remains to be seen. However, please do not worry about that—everything will be taken care of. Fred will send the correspondence back to me today, and then, I can take care of it tomorrow evening.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 3 October 1937

It is Sunday night and I ordered sandwiches and tea to be brought to my room, thinking that you are probably sitting at High Tea, and I was considering if my darling's thoughts are with me as intensely as mine are with her. It was a rather odd feeling for me, almost as if I was sitting there with you, and my girl was sitting next to me, taking care of my physical well-being and thereby encouraging the psychological well-being, as she always does when I am with her.

Early today, I received the letter that you wrote after our conversation—with block letters on the envelope, and later on, the express letter from the day before arrived. How strange and still natural that you give voice to the same thoughts about our conversation as the ones I wrote down afterwards. There is a great harmony of the souls between us that causes and creates the same emotions in us despite all the distance.

I have so little to do at the moment and that is more exhausting than working hard, because I keep thinking about having to make people who are entitled and pushing to take over the merchandise understand why that is not possible at the moment.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 8 October 1937

Today, I received a letter, or better a form letter, from the head office with the following: Mrs. V. Felsenstein, wages from £3-10-0 to £3-15-0; starting this week. I am glad that I got the raise without having said anything about it, that is £1-0-0 more per month, and since I have been here for over 18 months, I will receive two weeks' pay, that is £710, as a Christmas bonus, in addition to my usual salary. This raise is not exactly great considering what those people ask me to do for it, nevertheless, it is better than no raise at all, and finally, you have to add all the benefits to the salaries: cafeteria, discounts, highly reduced dental treatments (which I am taking advantage of again now), etc.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 8 October 1937

It is peculiar how far removed I feel from the entire Herzberg matter, almost as if it concerned a different Mope, but not me. Since I cannot do anything from here to take care of things, that is a good thing, because, as long as I was in the center of things, it caused me so much heartache that I am probably lucky to have moved to the periphery, before the whole affair made me sick. However, I really hate for it to affect my darling who has so selflessly taken care of all the correspondence and conferences until now, and that is why I am asking you to let matters take their course as they will or as the idiot Herzberg will. You should never push too hard in matters of business. Before my departure, we had made such fair suggestions concerning the arrangements that it is his own fault if he does not accept them. If this schlemiel still does not know that we took care of the matter in a completely correct manner and keeps going against it due to his stupid mistrust, we do not want to keep making new attempts.

Ultimately, everyone is responsible for his own salvation. I will send you a telegram concerning this matter, because I do not want my beloved to waste any more energy on this apparently fruitless business. If you get more messages, I ask you to give expression to my above opinion and then put an end to it. Your very accurate opinion that Herzberg's sudden wanting-to-get-it-done can be based on the bad economy is entirely correct. It is trending downwards in a rather bad way, and there is no recognizable point for this trend to stop. In our trade, back-treading economies often last years, and I cannot wait that long and hope that I will live to see better days. Why did the idiot not agree to my suggestion made through my Leipzig representative? I suppose that he believed he might be able to make a better deal somewhere else, and when that didn't work out, he turned back to me. However, I am too good for that and I did not find my money in a back alley either.

The textbook 1000 words still has not arrived and I have given up hope. In any case, it shows that you cannot send books.

Please send my dear mother my most heartfelt greetings. I have not written to her since the card from Esbjerg and hope that she has begun her trip to Palestine in the meantime. Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 11 October 1937

I just wanted to jot down a few quick words, although it is terribly late again. Early today, the mail brought me your letter from Wednesday. At the same time, there was one from Julius Rosenfeld that said, as far as customs was concerned, he was hoping to take care of matters, but that the original import permit was only good until the 31st of the month, that for further permission, either you or your mother would have to apply anew for which a 50% cash payment would be required. I sent a copy to Fred whose answer I am expecting tomorrow morning. For this reason, Herzberg's agreement has to take place immediately, or it won't be valid any longer.

I also got a letter from your Leipzig attorney that I found anything but pleasant. He raised the matter of your landlord Dr. Jacobson, rather unfavorably as a matter of fact. I read his letter again today, and he is complaining that the large room without the use of the smaller one would be absolutely impossible to rent to anyone, that August–September was the best time to find a new tenant, and since he did not have both at his disposal and if you wanted to end the lease at the end of the year, he would have the large room sitting empty for another three months, which would cause a rather large loss for him. He accounts for the expenses of five Reichmarks with telephone calls and trips on the tram to run after his rent.

It is horribly late and I am closing this hastily scribbled letter, that is supposed to bring to my beloved friend all the good things I wish for him and all my love, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 14 October 1937

Today, there is no mail again from my beloved. It is bad how little you can count on it, and since I am waiting with such longing for your letters, I always feel really sad when I am forced to accept a negative head shake from the lady at the Intourist mail department. She actually seems happy when she can tell me something positive, because she apparently regrets having to see my disappointed face, when a "no" from her is the cause for it.

However, quite unexpectedly, I received the little bi-lingual phrase book you sent to me on 17 September, and I am glad that it did reach its destination after all. My first Russian lesson meant a very huge demand to my tongue that earned it sore muscles. However, I think I will be able to get over that more quickly than I will learn the language for which the next lesson is scheduled for 8.30 the day after tomorrow.

I did not write to you yesterday. Snow has been falling since yesterday morning, but as soon as it hits the ground, it melts. In any case, winter has begun, and since there still is not heat—hopefully tomorrow—in the hotel, I am sitting in my room freezing and would rather stick my hands in my pockets, because they are too stiff for writing anyway. Just now, I came back to the hotel from a warming meal and for the time being, writing seems to go the way it is supposed to. Later on, I will go to the theater so that I won't have to feel like an ice block all evening long.

Unfortunately, at the moment, I am damned to complete inactivity. There are no assignments because of the miserable economy, and I am already so fed up with sitting around and doing nothing that I would love to pack my bags and leave. When the next opportunity presents itself, I will ask my boss if it makes sense to prolong my visa.

It seems that the stock exchange values in the U.S.A. are very low, because otherwise, business should start now and new assignments should come in. Has the French Franc stabilized at 147 against the British pound, or did it grow more uncertain and fall even lower?

I am so bored that I am reading detective novels by Edgar Wallace and in that, I see the sinking moral niveau. I have already read three!
Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 16 October 1937

Since yesterday, they have been heating and I can sit in my room again and write, something that had been impossible on the days before. Because of that, I sent a detailed report to my boss. To my question as to whether or not I should extend my visa, his unfortunate answer was, "of course!" so that the small hope that I was taking care of with utmost tenderness to see you earlier than originally expected disappeared.

Yesterday evening, we went to a concert with a wonderful program: Beethoven—Egmont Overture, 8th Symphony, and the one I love so very

much: the 5th Symphony. The conductor, Oskar Fried,⁷⁶ who is supposed to have lived in Germany some time ago and already suffered two strokes, tried very hard but he still cannot touch the conductors of the Gewandhaus despite the strokes. I had never heard his name before. The orchestra was very good in their cooperation and overcame a lack in its conductor without his help, nevertheless, in the second movement of the 5th, the tempo was much too quick, because he was conducting too fast. The 3rd and 4th movements were very beautiful though and made up for the messed-up 2nd.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 18 October 1937

I found out to my surprise that the merchandise still had not been shipped from Antwerp. The shipper is now demanding money from Fred, because the extra pieces that are included had not been paid in full. Of course, Fred refused, and the shipper argued that Herzberg was holding them responsible for it. I had explained to Fred not too long ago that they had been paid in full and did not report anything else on the matter. But now, the Antwerp shipper is refusing to ship the merchandise, which of course is completely improper, because it belongs to Fred, and he sent a registered letter to Antwerp on Wednesday and threatened with a lawyer if the merchandise was not shipped immediately.

This evening, I made the firm decision that I will no longer worry about the matter, since it seems to require more strength of nerves than it is worth. Please do the same thing, because it is completely futile to keep worrying your head about it.

P.S. Late at night

I just talked to Fred one more time; he will call Antwerp tomorrow and ask them to remove the disputed forty pieces from the shipment, if the merchandise won't be sent with them included, and send the rest immediately. The Haavara in Jerusalem will be able to confirm that the amount for the back-ordered wares is still available to Herzberg. I really do not care if it will be sold at a loss or a gain, as long as everything is back in order.

76 Oskar Fried (1871-1941) was a German conductor and one of the foremost interpreters of Gustav Mahler. He emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1933 following the rise of Hitler. He became the conductor for the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Fred thought it futile to call you, because no one could explain everything in three minutes and that it would just cause more expenses than what he suggested, not to mention that he would have to bother you with all of that and then that you would be unable to get a good overview in such a short time and make a decision.

Enough now, it is very late. Please don't be sad about this letter. I just had to explain everything to you. Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 19 October 1937

At the moment, I am virtually unemployed. Other than the morning hours during which I often take Russian lessons from 8.30 to 10.15 and exercise my tongue that would look better on a snake than on me, I have nothing real to do at all. I am almost embarrassed to go to the Sojuspuschnina and report every day that I have no orders. The only other buyer who is still here besides me is at least purchasing some batch of merchandise or other almost every single day.

My life here is so uneventful that I keep reading thrillers and other novels, but to be perfectly honest, I do not find that activity particularly fulfilling or satisfying, even though I am quite curious to find out what will take place—according to the wish of the one who authored such thrillers. One pollutes one's imagination with such garbage, in which I have never had an interest.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 19 October 1937

Today, I was toying with the thought of calling you to find out if the merchandise in Antwerp was paid in full or not, because otherwise, I would almost like to suggest that the amount be paid from the account that seems to have been established with Fred, so that this terrible matter will finally be taken care of. It actually appears to me in my sleep, or at least, it is the first thing I think of in the morning when I open my eyes; and I am writing so many letters to all kinds of different people, and everything seems to be for nothing, the thing is stuck and will not move. I don't want to do anything more from here without at least talking to Fred one more time. I am sure that he is more than fed up with all of it, even if he is very pleasant whenever I talk to him.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 20 October 1937

I hope that my letter from yesterday did not depress you, maybe it would have been better not to write all of that to you, but there was no other way out and I had to say it. By the way, Fred told me this evening on the telephone that he talked to Antwerp, and I hope that everything will be shipped after the forty pieces have been taken out.

I talked to Hannalein around noon today on the telephone and she said that Ketty is supposed to arrive tomorrow; I am quite curious to meet her.⁷⁷

How are things going with your passport extension? It will expire around the middle of January, as far as I know. As far as my residence and work permit and the extensions necessary are concerned, I would have to be present during the issuance of the recording in the alien book and in the passport, but maybe one of the senior managers can try to get it resolved around the end of December or the beginning of January, which I hope for with confidence.

You are right when you say that life is really too short to have the time to postpone being together and it already makes things difficult enough without artificially adding even more to it. Nevertheless, my beloved, I know that we have to be happy to have the opportunity to work, that we have each other, even when we are miles apart, but still in the exhilarating awareness of the other's sharing in life and emotions and thoughts.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 23-24 October 1937

I have registered a telephone call to my most beloved for 3 a.m.; it should connect with you there around midnight. Since I wrote to you on various occasions that I would call you, I hope that you will be happy and not too surprised when the advance notice comes in. I did not send another telegram, because that would have caused an extra ten rubles in expenses. This time, we will be able to talk undisturbed and freely, so we

77 Mope and Hanna's oldest sister, Ketty Goldschmidt, still living in Hamburg, was due to make a visit to London to explore the prospect of moving her whole family to England.

should use the time to tell each other only sweet and beautiful things, since we find out about everything else in our letters soon enough.

* * *

The conversation with my sweet darling was simply wonderful. The communication was phenomenally good and we were able to really “smooch” without being disturbed, just as if we were in the same place. It was so nice to hear your beloved voice, and the feeling that you were very close and that I was completely with you and you with me gives me new strength and joy in life. To me, you really are the alpha and omega of my life.

Ever since then, I have been feeling great, and even the information you gave me concerning Herzberg and the transfer events did not upset me at all; however, the thought that this matter causes you to worry a lot gives me grief. I had no idea what new things this disgusting pig has come up with to keep burdening us. The foreign currency office has to realize once and for all, that there is good will on my side and that I am only kept from following their wishes through the intrigues of another.

Only one more remark on this: that it is irresponsible sloppiness on the part of the Antwerp shipping agent that he did not inform Fred about the delay until fourteen days after the merchandise was supposed to have been shipped. We should let him know that we plan on making him accountable for the resulting damage. Please update Fred, and even more importantly, please keep all thoughts concerning this matter from your mind. You have more than enough to deal with, so that this matter—that remained unresolved despite all your efforts—should no longer cause you any kind of depression. As you can see for yourself, the intellect of several people was not enough to break the meanness of one man.

I am enfolding you in my arms with passion and love and I return the kiss you gave me on the telephone a thousand times, covering you and enfolding you and protecting you from everything bad that you might encounter. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 24 October 1937

My beloved, I am so happy that I was able to talk to you and hear your voice as if it were in the same room. I wonder if it was alright with you

that I talked to you about so many business matters, but you told me that is what you wanted, and I can no longer carry the responsibility and burden all by myself. I was hoping, at the beginning, that I would be able to take care of everything for you without burdening you with any of it, but the matter keeps getting more complicated, and, as it seems to me now, almost more hopeless.

Hanna whom I talked to this morning on the telephone told me that Fred has not heard anything else from Antwerp since his call on Wednesday, but keeps getting the most horrible letters from the shipper. She also said that it was awful, because Fred needs to have his money back by the end of December.

I intend to be completely serious with Fred and get him to send the £ 30.—from the balance of your work account, if there is no other way to get the shipper to send the merchandise, because if the merchandise is not sent soon, the consequences, as far as I can see, will be much more far reaching. It is definitely better to pay this sum—without even considering that there will be no possibility for your dear mother to make this deal—and the fact that all of your things, books etc. will be confiscated from you, and that is the most deciding factor to me.

This letter is turning out quite different than I intended, but I think that I have just lost my courage at the moment. *I beg your pardon.* That is really very bad and I know only too well that it makes no sense to worry for months in advance and that you cannot make anything turn out better because of that worry. Don't you think that you have a really bad wife who burdens you with all kinds of things across all those miles? It's just that these things are so real to me and sometimes I just cannot get them out of my head, and then, such ugly letters are written. Add to that, of course, that I feel such awful longing for my beloved.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 25 October 1937

It is really so unbelievably sweet of you that you take care of my matters with all your heart and I am ever so grateful to you for that, but you should not let it depress you like that. I have made myself as well as my beloved crazy with it for several months now, and I will not continue with it, because it eats up too many nerves. Your decision from Monday to not let those things upset you any longer was already forgotten by Tuesday.

Because I cannot have any money in a foreign country and also do not have any idea what I would use it for, it is out of the question that your credit balance with Fred is used for these matters. You should never throw good money after bad.

Most passionate, loving and totally sweet kisses, my golden one.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 25 October 1937

I am lying in bed today: I have a "silly" cold, which is really not all that bad and I don't feel quite like myself, which is completely natural; neither is it worth mentioning. It is pouring and storming outside, and I am lying here inside and really have some undisturbed time to follow my thoughts, and many of them are trying to put down on paper what has been bothering me for days now. I really do not know if I will actually mail the letter later, since I know that it will be extremely difficult and almost impossible to make someone understand something that is very difficult in itself across such a distance and in such a way that brings what is said as close to them that it really will be understood and cannot be misunderstood and also sees the reason why it was written and won't be swallowed up by it.

Mopelein, you know from all of my past letters that the Antwerp matter with everything that is connected to it really affects me a lot and constantly occupies my mind (with the exception of the time when I am involved with M&S). I have tried to understand why that is so and did not come to any kind of conclusion. It does not concern the possible financial loss. We are both young, willing to work and will hopefully get ahead without material possessions, of that I am sure; and as long as one has straight limbs and is healthy, a mere financial loss should not and cannot affect any human being, in my opinion.

What bothers me and burdens my inside is that it seems something was not planned or thought out completely to the end; or am I in error there? Mopelein, I have finally forced myself to talk about the existence of this painful unevenness on our way to overcome it, because I really do have the best will to do so, I just need my dear husband's guiding hand to accomplish it, so I can walk with him down our road together all the more sure and determined.

I wrote all of that down, although I know that it is a great risk, at such a distance, in time as well as spatially, and although I know that my beloved might not be in the best mood because of the momentary state of forced unemployment, because of our separation and the above-mentioned matter itself and the fact that I should make him feel better with my letters. But you, our friendship is too deep, isn't it, than that we should lie to each other or be able to, even if the insincerity was created with the best motives. I feel that it was right to write that down, because all of a sudden, I feel so completely relieved to have an opportunity to really put everything on paper that weighs on my soul, things that have been burdening it for days; and that was "worth much more" to me than a day at M&S!!!

I think I completely forget to tell you last night that I really liked Ketty. She is coming over for dinner on Monday and Hannalein might come as well if she does not have to accompany Fred to a lecture, and I am really looking forward to Muttilein and Ketty getting to know each other. I am sure that those two will like each other.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 26 October 1937

Before you will receive this letter, I will have informed you by telegram that I will leave here in all probability on the 28th and Leningrad on the 29th to travel to London. Today, a huge telegram arrived from Schapiro, my boss in Paris, that, besides assignments, contains the following remarks: "Due to the catastrophic circumstances I think it would be better if you go back to London now. Please have a visa sent to London as quickly as possible so [giving you the] possibility to travel back to Russia."

If I were not worried that something might interfere, I would jump for joy. I am so indescribably happy to be able to take my darling into my arms again so unexpectedly soon. As you can see, I am jumping for joy in my happiness! I will leave here on the 28th and from Leningrad where I still have to inspect a few things on the 29th and travel directly to London by steamboat. I will most likely arrive there on November 3 so that we can enjoy your free Thursday afternoon together. So please do not make other arrangements for that day!!! I would like to take this opportunity

to inquire if there is room for me in the Hirsch Hotel (preferably in your bed) where I can be accommodated.

Apart from the sadly awful economy, everything is working out exceptionally well, because tomorrow, I will receive the money that was transferred and the day after tomorrow my laundry is coming back from the cleaners, so that these technical questions won't pose any problems. I also hope to get my passport back tomorrow with the exit visa.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 27 October 1937

It is self-evident, my girl, that you have to write to me about everything that occupies your mind and especially when it is such an ugly story as the Herzberg one, and I would probably find it more depressing if I knew that you do not tell me something—for whatever motives—even if they could be regarded as considerations towards me. I do not at all agree with the removal of the forty martens because the danger exists that they will be used for further mischief. For this reason, I sent a telegram stating “all the merchandise.” Were it not for this apprehension, I would not care at all or feel even more comfortable with the idea that they stay in Antwerp.

Now quickly to bed—my last Russian lesson before I leave is scheduled for 8.15. I also have not packed yet and I am unshaven, as if my barber is a pig.

I am eternally grateful to you for the great love that rings from your dear letters, and soon, soon, I will take you in my arms and tell you everything without words, but with innumerable kisses and by caressing your ever so beautiful body, which I long for almost as much as your soul. I do have to say it that way; otherwise it will sound too sensual!! Your Mope