

No Life Without You

REFUGEE LOVE LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

EDITED BY
FRANKLIN
FELSENSTEIN





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Twenty-six: “This Ever so Long Time of Insatiable Longing”

18 December 1937 through 27 March 1938

POLITICAL TIMELINE, DECEMBER 1937–MARCH 1938

- 21 January 1938: Romanian Jews stripped of their citizenship.
- 4 February 1938: Hitler names himself supreme commander of the Wehrmacht (German Army).
- 13 March 1938: The Anschluss (Annexation) of Austria by German troops.
- 28 March 1938: Jewish community organizations in Germany stripped of their official status.
- 31 March 1938: Polish Parliament revokes citizenship of Poles living abroad, many of them in Germany.
- March 1938: Show trial in Moscow (known as “The Trial of the Twenty-One) of so-called “Rightists and Trotskyites” with unanimous guilty verdicts.

Mope had to leave London for Russia avoiding Germany. He took a circuitous route through France, Switzerland, Austria, and Poland. In England, Vera played host to two visitors from Leipzig. One was “Max” Goedicke, a trusted non-Jewish employee of the Gebrüder Felsenstein, whose travel was underwritten by Mope with instructions that he should bring over personal possessions that had been stored in the company warehouse. It was hoped that Max might be of help in trying to resolve the remaining PalTreu issues once he returned to Leipzig. The other visitor was Annelie Freimann, Vera’s cousin. She had now qualified as a dentist and was doing everything in her power to emigrate from Germany.

For her, the visit was a brief respite from Nazi oppression, and an opportunity to explore possible openings abroad.

Both Max and Annelie were apprised of the continuing endeavors to resolve the impasse over the blocked furs under the PalTreu scheme. Shortly before they each returned to Germany, news came through to Vera in London that some of the goods would soon be released from locked storage in Antwerp. Those furs that were shipped back to Mope's denouncer, Karl Herzberg, in Leipzig were never recovered. A protracted court case to reclaim the insurance value of the lost furs was still to follow.

At Marks & Spencer, Vera (always known there as Miss Hirsch) sought promotion from the Kilburn store at which she was head of personnel. To her delight, she was offered a similar position with a raised salary at the company's larger Hammersmith store, far closer to home. Much more critical and a cause for jubilation was the decision by the Home Office that gave her permanent approval to remain in Britain almost five years after she had fled Germany. A similar request concerning Mope was denied.

During this time, Mope's mother returned from Palestine to Leipzig where she was visited by her British son-in-law, Fred Rau, though arrangements to bring her out of Germany on a permanent basis remained at a standstill. In London, Vera's parents, "Pepper" and "Muttilein" (Hermann and Alice Hirsch), each endeavored to supplement the family income, he by dabbling in the tobacco business, she by sub-letting rooms in their rented house to newly arrived Jewish refugees, giving German lessons, and offering her skills as a cook. These activities and the strains they had undergone had the effect of debilitating the usually energetic Alice Hirsch. To Vera's exasperation, when her friend, Hilde Lewy, invited her mother for a recuperative visit to Genoa, Pepper opposed, fearing to have to fend for himself during her absence.

The lull in fur trade activity that had affected Mope during his previous stay in the Soviet Union was no longer in evidence by the early months of 1938, and it was hard to persuade his clients that his need to return to his wife was his more pressing concern. He and Vera planned for themselves a "second honeymoon" in Paris with Mope traveling the route through Warsaw and Vienna that he had taken on the passage out. The Anschluss (the annexation of Austria by Germany) on 13 March thwarted those plans, while also totally panicking Vera. At the end of the month, Mope took a safer journey to England by sea via Helsinki and Stockholm. The final letter in this chapter, written from Helsinki, is his sigh of relief at being out of the Soviet Union.

MOPE TO VERA

Warsaw, 18 December 1937

Today is Sabbath and I am sitting here in Warsaw, against my plans, in the hotel and will not be able to continue my trip until tomorrow morning shortly before 9 o'clock. My train was delayed so that I was not able to make my connection. If I said that I am mad about it, I would not be lying.

Now, I will tell you about my trip from the beginning and how it went. At Paris, I was greeted in the most pleasing manner. I found out that everyone is pleased with my work so far. The merchandise I bought had sold quite well, despite the difficult business situation. If they had counted on me being able to buy so advantageously, they would have given me larger orders.

The trip through the Tyrol and Arlberg Alps would have been quite beautiful, had it not been for my inner depression. The snowy countryside and the happy faces of people who were traveling for winter sports stood in deep contrast to all of my emotions, so that I could only become sadder when I looked at the great white expanses.

Our local fur trade representative called and told me that he would come here and pick me up. We spent about six hours together. First in a cabaret with few exciting performances. However, my enjoyment might have been affected by my mood, so that I did not give enough attention to the acts. Mr. Blum—that is the name of the man—had also invited, aside from his girlfriend, her girl-friend to the cabaret as company for me, and I was quite surprised, since I had no idea of my good fortune beforehand. Unfortunately, she kept asking me if I was tired and things like that, because I did not seem to give her the necessary attention. Later, we went to a very pretty new restaurant for dinner. Mr. Blum ordered everything on the menu. He even went and picked out the hors d'oeuvres personally and found an appropriate excuse to leave the table for a while so that I was the lucky one who had to pick up the tab. Afterwards, I went to the hotel to continue writing to you, because that was more important to me than anything else.

You will have probably received the check from my commission in the sum of £87.10. Please do not forget to buy something pretty for yourself for about £20 that will give both of us joy. Please send the remaining amount to repay Fred Rau, so that it will be there before the year ends.

Now I am sitting in the hotel, waiting for a call to you.... It is 12.15 here already and the call still has not come through, so that I will go and get myself ready for bed, since I have to get up rather early. I embrace you and love you, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 24 December 1937 [postcard]

All of a sudden Annelie is arriving here tomorrow evening. She sent a telegram yesterday. I am not free to pick her up and also not free to welcome Max, but Muttilein will take my place. Unfortunately, I still have no news from you. I hope that you are feeling very well. All my love, your L.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 25 December 1937

So now you have two guests. I am surprised that Max has arrived already, since people were still working at Gebrüder Felsenstein until yesterday. I hope he uses the time in London to gain an impression that he can take home with him of the huge city. I wonder what he brought along. I hope everything has now been taken care of with that old crock Jacobson and the shack has been vacated.

I am interested in finding out what kind of impression Max made and if he is a pleasant guest—actually, I am convinced that he is. What reasons is Annelie giving for her exculpation? Is she behaving? How long is she staying? I hope that her cure is not lacking my hard and strict hand. Please don't forget to wash her head⁷⁸ and then put it back in the right place. And has she finally climbed over Fetz or is she still as depressed?

For New Year's Eve, there are a lot of things going on here. The entry ticket to the Metropole with dinner, performances, and, as I hear, ½ bottle of champagne costs 100 rubles. That is almost £4. In the Albert Hall in London, it costs £3 without dinner, so that is even more. Since I have to be without you, I am not looking forward to it at all and I would not go, if the other fur traders were not all going, so that I can hardly avoid it.

78 i.e., give her a piece of my mind.

The general mood in the trade is still very depressed, and in London and New York, more bankruptcies and even lower prices are expected. Here, my work program becomes more and more reduced. I am starting again with reading books. I really did not have to come here for that!

VERA TO MOPE

London, 25 December 1937 (with enclosures from Annelie Freimann and Max Gödicke)

I really survived all the Christmas bustle at M&S quite well. In the store, everything went off as planned, turkey dinner, Christmas pudding, etc., and the girls were in an excellent mood until the end. They presented two pairs of very beautiful, pure silk stockings (not M&S stockings) to my assistant and to me, which I thought was very charming. Around 10.30, we were done and at 11 p.m., I left the store; so that was not so terribly late. At home, I found Annelie and Max.

Annelie has not changed and is as charming and dear as ever. Since her passport expires on February 22, and an extension won't be approved unless she decides to leave permanently, she resolved on making the trip within a few hours. Incidentally, when should I apply for the further passport extension for you? Will you please give me the detailed information?

Max is really nice. He thinks everything here is just great; he brought along your typewriter, suits, underwear, and bathrobe and arrived here with everything without any kind of difficulty. He really is very reasonable and explained to us that he would have already taken care of matters had it not been for your attorney, but according to all appearances, everything will finally be arranged.

Unfortunately, I still have not received any letters from you, since you have been over there. Hopefully, it is not too cold and you take your medicine regularly. I think I mentioned to you that your payment check arrived. Papa cashed it for me and I will send a check in the amount of £50-0-0 to Fred; I gave Max £3-0-0, with which he was very happy. I will write to you in detail about what I buy for myself. After Christmas, everything is much more reasonably priced.

I wonder if you don't have to work either today. When is Wychodnoi? I am constantly and always with you in my thoughts! Please excuse this motley letter, but at the family table, it never works without interruptions, and Annelie is making rascally remarks in between. Totally, Your Lilongo.

ANNELIE FREIMANN TO MOPE

London, 25 December 1937

Dear Mope, I decided just a short while ago to travel to London, because it will be presumably the last opportunity for me, and I really wanted to take advantage of it. It feels to me like I have never been away from here, because I feel so at home. I am breathing much more freely, and slowly. One dares to talk again. The Hirsch couple, and not to forget Mrs. Felsenstein, are wonderful people. Yesterday evening, Veralein came home around midnight—she is such an industrious person. She looks marvelous—I am just a little in love with her, but as far as any competition is concerned, you have nothing to worry about!

I am feeling reasonably well, better than anyone should actually expect. My work in the clinic helps me get over many things, although it is still difficult at times. However, I just have to go on. Kisses, Your Annelie

ERICH GÖDICKE (“MAX”) TO HERR FELSENSTEIN

London, 25 December 1937

Dear Mr. Felsenstein! After a very interesting trip, I was sorry that I was unable to meet with you. Your wife and your honored parents-in-law are very concerned about me. I brought along the items that you ordered, and I hope that you will be satisfied. I looked around in London for a little while today, but it was very foggy.

Before my departure, I talked to your attorney and found out that he still has not received the import certification from Palestine and that the foreign currency exchange does not want to continue negotiating. I will contact the attorney again immediately after my return. It is really a shame that you charged him with the matter, because the man is so anxious and awkward that he has made a mess of many things. However, there is no use to hire someone else, because that would complicate matters even further.

I also had a rather unfriendly altercation with Jacobson concerning the demand for payment, but he was unable to convince me, since I had already told him he should go ahead and rent your room together with the other as soon as he could. However, I told him not to deregister you with the police so that you won't have any difficulties. He answered

that he could not wish for a better tenant who is hardly ever there and still pays his rent. After I did not relent, he told me that he would at least like to have the various expenses in the amount of 7 Reichmarks reimbursed. I consented to that and I hope that you agree. Jacobson accepted the amount as a loan, since he had been asked by the foreign currency exchange to file an application. We agreed on January 4 as the date for moving the furniture still in the room since neither one of us is able to take care of it sooner. Concerning Jacobson, I would like to let you know that we parted ways in a friendly manner. I hope that I will be able to tell you more after my return.

I bought a wardrobe trunk for you which is here in London now. Additionally, I brought along the following items: 3 suits, top hat, new hat, typewriter, warm underwear—I chose the 10 best pieces—2 sweaters, 2 scarves, bathrobe, various pajamas, dress shirts and collars; I only regret that you don't have all those things there with you.

Now I want to pass on the greetings people asked me to give to you, from Mr. Semy and from all the other employees. Gebrüder Felsenstein celebrated their one hundredth anniversary on Dec. 7, 1937. It was not announced but still, flowers and well-wishers appeared anyway in such a number that you can hardly imagine. As a jubilee present, the staff received between Reichmarks 50 and 200, depending on how many years they had been working here. I received RM 150.—and we also received a Christmas bonus this year. Business has been very quiet, after a very good start around the beginning of November. I hope that you can get a better picture of matters now. Sincerely Yours, Erich Gödicke

VERA TO MOPE

London, 26 December 1937

I would like to get back to Max's letter from yesterday one more time, after I talked to him about everything in detail. Since the price for martens has fallen by around 50% and the Haavara is now demanding a minimum of 50% in currency submission, it actually would not be worth it to make another offer to Herzberg, although I am sure he would like nothing better right now. I suggest to offer a compensation amount to Herzberg to rescind the purchase, and I am sure that he will make his own demands. With all of that, we can hope that the bank deposit will be freed up then so that the capital can be paid out, and then, you

will at least have the money at your disposal so you can either give it to your dear mother or buy something for it. After the customs receipts arrive, they will hopefully remove the lock on the deposit that occurred through the PalTreu at the request of the Reichsbank since they were suspicious. Max also thinks that the locked account will be freed up as soon as the customs receipts are on hand.

Early today, we were very lazy (that is, Max went sightseeing with Pepper again, and around noon, Annelie, Mutti, and I went on an excursion to Whitechapel; unfortunately, the market was over already when we arrived, but we still did not regret our outing). Annelieschen is really a lovely person, and Max is more than nice and decent and completely enthusiastic about everything (this afternoon, he went to the movies).

I kiss you most passionately and wish you all the best and sweetest things—You, my beloved—totally your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 31 December 1937

Unfortunately, I got really upset over your letter of 26 December. All of your suppositions expressed in your letter are incorrect according to my feelings and my knowledge. I really did not ask Max to come to London to turn your heads, and I beg and beseech you to waste no more thought on this damn matter. I sent Herzberg a short-term request to send the merchandise again and directly to Palestine. He not only did not do so, but did not even answer. During a purchase, it is necessary that both buyer and seller agree to the conditions, because otherwise, the business deal cannot be made. Herzberg had the merchandise sent back without my consent. So the deal is annulled and he has no right to any kind of demand against me.

Your remark concerning the demand for the currency draft from the Haavara lacks any kind of basis, since there is neither a permit nor was one requested. So that is a supposition based on thin air. Additionally, in order to do anything further, the approval of the foreign currency department would be needed which does not exist any longer either. A pity that all of you spent so much time pondering over it! There are much more pleasant topics to warm your heads.

The amount owed to Herzberg for the forty martens is Reichmarks 180.63 exactly and I will not hesitate and pay it as soon as my money has been released. This part of my merchandise is the only one that did not get paid for in advance by Fred. You really cannot expect Max to have that much of a mind for business to have a good overview of the matter.

What comments on the last day of the 5th month of our marriage! This evening, my colleagues and I will be at the Metropole, but I really don't feel like celebrating, because I feel nothing but longing for my sweet, beloved, beautiful, golden madame. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 1 January 1938

After another detailed conversation with Max today, I would like to write the following to you: When I made the suggestion to you to send the forty pieces back, I meant only in case that the simpler solution might be a compensation payment that Herzberg would demand, under certain conditions. However, if the customs receipts are on hand on Max's return to Leipzig, he will only need to take them to the departments concerned and show them, and then, the money will be available again. However, I really do not believe that the purchase can be so easily annulled, and I am certain that Herzberg will assert compensation claims for damages.

We sent Max to the cinema for the evening, at midday to watch ice hockey, yesterday evening to the ice ballet. So you see, he did not miss anything and is completely blissful.

My beloved, I love you and I am completely and totally convinced that we will get our way. You, I kiss you on your eyes and temples and caress you in my thoughts, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 1 January 1938

Was my letter from yesterday bad? I hope that you understood me and that, should I have written something wrong, my beloved will be understanding, because from so far away one's aim is never the best. The main thing is that I want to let Max know my point of view before he leaves and does not go home loaded down with inaccurate impressions.

Since your German passport is still valid, they will only keep it at the embassy for a day at most if you apply for a new one. That is why I would recommend to you to take care of that immediately, so that you won't have to wait for a long time later.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 2 January 1938

Max left early this morning, feeling quite blissful, and I am convinced that he will take the greatest pains to get everything done as well as it can be done.

Yesterday, a printed matter from Schwimmer arrived, an etching that was designed by him as a New Year's card (I will enclose it soon, because just now, I cannot put my hands on a large enough envelope). I am curious to hear if you like it. You, my beloved friend, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 2 January 1938

Today, the longingly awaited letter from the 25th finally arrived with its enclosures from Annelie and Max. Although I did not do anything all day long, it is almost 11 p.m. now that I am starting to write this letter.

In the afternoon, some of us were invited to a cocktail party given by Dr. Bunkley and wife. He is the doctor attached to the American Embassy and lives in a very nice apartment in the house.⁷⁹ The conversation was quite animated, since the people there had seen a lot of the world and told interesting stories. We stayed there for almost two hours. Afterwards, we had dinner in the room of a colleague who is here with his wife, and listened to the radio.

I am sure that, by the time you receive this letter, Max will have left. I am really grateful to him for all the effort he put into my affairs and I hope that the invitation to London gave him new energy to keep taking care of things for me. I really don't believe that Max would have been able to take care of everything, had he not consulted my Leipzig attorney, because, as clumsy as that man might be, I am sure that he

⁷⁹ Lieutenant Commander William Bunkley was a Naval Surgeon assigned to the American Embassy in Moscow.

is much more experienced in those matters than Max. In any case, it cannot be changed now.

I was also very happy to receive Annelie's correspondence. It would be really horrible if Annelie did not get an extension for her German passport. That would be a bleak outlook for an unlimited number of people who would be affected as well. I would like to ask you to contact the consulate concerning my own passport extension around the middle of the month. If the extension has already been approved, please find out if it can be granted for a year—I have already given them the necessary documents. Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 6 January 1938

The air here is so perfectly clear because of the cold that walking is a pleasure despite the heavy clothing. My ear warmers serve their purpose very well; I am rather pleased that I put so much effort into their purchase. Yesterday evening, I went for a little walk, because it was snowing so wonderfully. I have never seen such fine snow in my life. It looked like the finest powdered sugar, and today, everything has been swept away cleanly; they use snow shovel excavators for that, which transfer the snow to trucks with amazing speed. The heater in my room is working well—knock on wood!

It is terribly late again, but I do not want to go to bed before I send my darling at least an especially tender kiss. When I went to dinner at the Metropole a little while ago, I took stationery along, but I did not get around to writing, because all the colleagues were sitting there having dinner, and I could not have placed myself somewhere else.

Actually, it is a shame that I did not start to write to you earlier, since I did not do anything today besides write a report to Schapiro. Once you start to be lazy, you fail to do even the holiest of tasks! However, I do have to rehabilitate myself somewhat, because I had a 2 ½ hour Russian lesson, which really tires the brain quite a bit.

Yesterday evening, one of my colleagues reported that he had not smoked at all that day, whereupon I declared that, if he was able to stick to it for a second day, I would also not smoke for 24 hours. Because of that, neither of us smoked a cigarette until midnight tonight, and that

first cigarette did not taste good to me at all. In the meantime, I have smoked two more anyway!

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 12 January 1938

Yesterday, although I really did not have anything to do, I still did not get around to writing. My colleagues and I worked in the office until 5 p.m. and then went to dinner, and since some of us, among them me, had tickets for the Jewish theater, we had to hurry so we would not arrive there late. The performance was excellent where the acting was concerned. Those people are great artists. The play did not finish until midnight and afterwards—since it was Pod-Wychodnoi—we went to the Metropole for some food and did not get home until very late. Because of that, I slept until noon today, which turned out to be really good for me, since I have a little bit of a cold. They got me some more tickets today without my knowledge, this time for the ballet “Swan Lake” that I have seen once before. They already want to pick me up for the theater and I will continue writing during the intermissions.

In the meantime, two acts have been danced. The ballet is extraordinarily good in every aspect. The orchestra, dancers, and scenery are exemplary, and every theater in the world could learn from them and use it as an example for the exactness, the feeling for the music, and the scenic composition. After the third act, which might be the most beautiful, at least the most colorful, I have remained seated so I can continue writing. My passport is serving as my writing table and naturally, my handwriting is suffering, but I hope that you will be able to read it nevertheless.

Now, I am sitting at the Metropole. We have ordered dinner, and since we will have to wait for a little while, I went to the foyer so I can continue my letter to you. You can see that every free minute is dedicated to you.

Of course, you are right that I should not have been upset over your letter in the transfer matter, but what can I do? Things just happened by themselves and I was a hapless victim, *nebbish*. As far as I can see the matter, I don't think it would make much sense to apply for further transfer permits, because, with the condition of the 50% foreign currency through the Haavara, nothing much can come from it.

The medicine for my cold is almost gone, and I will try to get more from here tomorrow. If that is not possible, I will mail you a telegram to send me three or four bottles again, because I am noticing that I feel better, and I would really hate to be without for too long especially now, while I have a cold.

I could also use some more cigarettes and I will ask Pepper to have 1.000 sent to me. Since the English customs fees are eliminated and the local fees have to be paid in London, they won't be much more expensive than the regular ones.

Now, I am sitting in my room again and the letter, interrupted so very often, is supposed to get finished. A new colleague who already has a little boy was complaining to me yesterday how bad it is for him to have been married for only four years and to be here for months on end. Such people have no idea how difficult other people have it. Today, it has been four weeks since I left and I still cannot say when I will come back.

I love you indescribably with the greatest of all loves, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 16 January 1938

It rained without interruption today. I got a very good night's rest, which was really nice. Annelieschen has to leave on Thursday, and so, today was the last day that we could spend together—the last day of her stay here this time. After I wrote a long letter for her in English to a relative in America, who is supposed to give her an affidavit if needed, we decided to go for a little walk, despite the rainstorm.

Our walk ended in a cinema: the Broadway melody "of 1938," a very nicely arranged revue with good-looking people, some of whom had very beautiful voices and brilliantly accomplished dance techniques. Annelieschen is so sad that she has to leave again, and I would have been glad if something could have been worked out here for her. Herr Ehrmann⁸⁰ recommended America to her with urgency, and if an opportunity arises, I am sure that she will go there.

The things that Annelie discussed with me about marriages that she knows has me even more convinced—if that is even possible—that ours seems to be something completely different than those of other people,

80 Robert Ehrmann was a Leipzig fur trader who had relocated to London.

something much more deeply founded, all-fulfilling and delightful, independent of any outside forces.

In the matter of Herzberg, Annelie was so sweet and offered to tell Max and your Leipzig attorney in person everything you talked about in your last few letters concerning the annulment of the order from October. Of course, that is the best way.

Most passionately and close, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 17 January 1938

Since I cannot know when these lines will reach my darling, I will start them with my most loving and heartfelt wishes for a completely and utterly happy, healthy and successful year that will see its beginning on Sunday, fortunately a day away from work.⁸¹ How can I put into words how happy I would be if I could spend that very important day together with my beloved, *sweet witch*? I hope that my beloved likes the new name I gave her just as well as I do, because what you did to me and what you let me become, is pure witchcraft. Until about two years ago, I was smitten at times, but never completely wrapped up in love, a man with a healthy dose of common sense and a calm demeanor, and now, although he wore out his children's shoes long ago and is approaching the years when others start the so-called contemplative way of life, he does not think about anything without considering his *little witch*. And I have to admit that I like the feeling of being bewitched *sooooo* much that I can no longer imagine any other condition or would want to.

Today, it is Pod-Wychodnoi once again, and a little while ago, I had my hair and fingernails worked on, something that should have been done ten days ago. In a little while, I will go on a pilgrimage to the Metropole in order to have dinner with my fur trade colleagues. One of my top clients will be here for the next Wychodnoi. I hope that he will be satisfied with my preparations for his visit (I am inspecting as much merchandise as possible so all he has to do is give it a quick look). There will be a lot of work, because he only wants to stay for five or six days, and I doubt that I will be able to write to you as regularly during those days.

81 Vera was born on January 23.

I have to keep repeating my affectionate words from darling to witch, because my vocabulary is so very inadequate compared to what I feel for you, and also my kisses which are becoming more burning because the longing for you is growing stronger, sound the same on paper and belong to that part of the letter that my girl might not read with all of her attention any longer, because she already knows it by heart. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 20 January 1938

After work yesterday, I went directly to the German consulate. However, I forgot to take along three passport photos, but the decision was not unfavorable concerning the extension. They assured me that, as soon as I turn those in with my passport, I would receive an extension of the one that is valid until the end of April. However, they did not tell me how long that would take.

Earlier today, an invitation arrived for you and wife and grown children, if any, from K.J.V.⁸² which is comprised of resettled members living here in London, and will be celebrating its first get-together on January 31 with a meeting afterwards which is supposed to be used for discussion purposes. The letter contained a list of all the local K.J.V. members here. I am sure that my beloved will be sorry to have to miss this first meeting. I will thank those people in your name and let them know that you are away on a business trip.

Nothing has shaken me in my at least somewhat developed knowledge of humanity as much as what happened in the store on Tuesday. We found out via another store and the head office that one of the most decent and most dependable girls, or so we all thought, who was already working there when I was relocated to the Kilburn store, is actually a criminal. She had worked out quite a complicated scheme to exchange club stamps that were completely worthless for merchandise. It would go too far to explain all the details here, but the most shocking thing that hit me like a sword stroke was that I should have believed that one of the girls whom I considered to be 100% beyond reproach turns

82 The *Kartell Jüdischer Verbindungen* (K.J.V.) was the Zionist Student Union within which Mope had been active in Germany. By 1938, a sufficient number of its members had escaped to England to form a local chapter. The London group remained active even many years after the war.

out to be a cold-blooded thief; and there is not even the excuse of no appropriate home surroundings or momentary temptation. I was deeply saddened and shaken by it and had to try to come back to myself. My beloved—how much I miss you in everything and how your intelligently thought-out judgment, your support, and your empathy and ability to analyze would have helped me to get over it much more quickly.

Completely *your* Lilongo

P.S. I wrote sideways on the paper because that was much more comfortable while lying in bed!

VERA TO MOPE

London, 23 January 1938

It was so indescribably beautiful to hear your beloved voice yesterday evening, and I have *never* before had the feeling during a telephone conversation that the conversation has to be taking place in the same room, as I did last night. It seemed unimaginable to me that so many miles are supposed to be between us, and I had to force myself to put the receiver down, driven by a guilty conscience (guilty because I allowed you to spend soooo much money on me), and afterwards, I could not believe or even fathom for quite a long time that my beloved is very far away and that he is not standing right next to me. What a pity that you seemed unable to hear or even understand me as clearly as I could hear you.

I do not think I have told you yet how beautiful the carnations are, but it is rather difficult to describe them. They are standing in a broad, high, wide vase and I haul them from one room to the other, depending on where I take up residence for the moment. Their glow is so incomparably beautiful that you just have to be happy and your heart laughs when you look at them, and every single one of them expresses so indescribably many dear things from my best loved friend, and the strength of their glow tells me of his love and their fathomless calyxes speak of the depth of his soul; their folded and frilled flower petals tell me of his quickness and flexibility and their fullness of his kindness, and the fine green of his gentleness and cautiousness. And together, they call to me: *He loves you!* And I respond very quietly: *And I love him!!!!!!!!!!!!!!* —

Today was a rather relaxed day, and we only went to Kensington Gardens for an hour before high tea to get some fresh air. Of course,

Muttilein spoilt me most lovingly, as always, she gave me an especially beautiful striped blouse, a very charming bed jacket, a home-baked birthday cake, and Pepper gave me Egyptian cigarettes.

Hildelein wrote me a very dear birthday letter. Here is part of it: "Since there is so little opportunity to show you my appreciation with a small token, I sent, with the same mail, the book "Reuben, Prince of the Jews," which, as far as I can remember, attracted Mope's special interest when you were with us in Genoa, and he recommended that you read it, something that did not happen due to lack of time back then.⁸³ I am really looking forward to reading it.

Then Hilde adds something that makes me especially happy: "What would you think if your mother decided all of a sudden to get on a train and came to visit us?" Muttilein has not had any opportunity to relax for such a long time. She looks really bad and often complains of painful joints (though she really does not complain). The Riviera sun would most likely blow all the pain away in short order, aside from the fact that Hilde would be terribly happy. *Her own* mother is not allowed to visit her and she really likes Muttilein, and her company would really be good for her.⁸⁴ What do you think of it?

Muttilein does not want any part of the idea as she says she could not leave Pepper alone. Here is just another point where I just fail to understand Pepper. Instead of helping me to convince Muttilein, he only moaned when I even mentioned the plan (not because of the possible costs as one might expect, since I will pay for all expenses, but) because he just whines like a child when he thinks that Muttilein might not be at his service just once. What can I do? Diplomacy from my side will be without success, and on top of that, it is even harder now to convince Muttilein how much she needs to relax and how good the trip would be for her and how all of us would profit from it when she comes back strong and recovered.

Hilde describes in such a dear manner what she is planning on doing to cheer Muttilein up. *One* reason I gave Muttilein seemed to change her mind just a little. I explained to her that, as soon as the matter with Cooper is taken care of, the two of us are planning on having a child and hopefully will have, and that she needed to be strong and healthy,

83 Max Brod's *Reubeni, Prince of the Jews* (1925; English translation 1928) was an historical novel centered on a sixteenth-century false messiah.

84 Hilde's mother was refused permission to leave Germany at this time.

because I would need her help more than ever then.⁸⁵ I did not even try to use such arguments on Pepper, because he acted like he was certifiably insane when I even tried to mention it. That surely sounds very hard, but that is exactly what happened.

In my thoughts, I nestle my body into your beloved arms, ever so close, my Mopelein, and wish that you were here with me—Your Lilongo

VERA TO MOPE

London, 26 January 1938

It was rather quiet in the store today. Since last week, I have started my staff training sessions again, and the girls are reacting quite positively after such a long break. As there is not much else to do, I held two sessions today. Outside, it is raining in sheets.

Mutti took the three photos to Carlton House⁸⁶ for me today and they told her that it would take about two months for me to get my passport renewed. That seems to be the usual thing. I also called Miss Stiebel today.⁸⁷ She said that I should let her know when you will arrive back, and then, Cooper will make contact with the people so that there will be no difficulties arising for you, even if—which I hope does *not* happen—April 15 is not too far from the date of your travel. As she told me, Otto Schiff will contact Cooper & Co. directly and she mentioned that there had been a similar case recently, and after it had been turned down repeatedly, it had finally been approved, so let us hope for the best!!!!!! As soon as I hear anything definite and hopefully positive concerning the matter, I will let you know, of course. I just wish we were there already!

We heard from Annelie that she had a good trip and arrived hale and healthy, and that she longs to be back in London.

85 Vera and Mope recognized that it would be unwise to start a family before their application for permanent residence status in England was granted. Their case was being handled by Ernest Napier Cooper, a sympathetic principal in the Aliens Department of the British Home Office.

86 The German Embassy was at 8 and 9 Carlton House Terrace. Vera was seeking a renewal of her passport.

87 Joan Stiebel (1911-2007) was Otto Schiff's Private Secretary. She acted as an intermediary to Ernest Cooper in the Aliens Department at the Home Office, often (as here) funneling applications for residency status.

The book Hilde announced has also arrived in the meantime; I started reading it and I really like the way it is written (I am still at the very beginning).

So we will celebrate another honeymoon in March; that is still six weeks away! Today, it has been six weeks exactly since my beloved left and now, there is still the same amount of time left. Sleep well, my love—I kiss you and I love you *very* much, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 28 January 1938

Just as my sweetest beloved knows that I am always with her in my thoughts, I know that her thoughts are constantly occupied with me. That is the greatest and happiest part of our love, a love that regrettably cannot be experienced in its entirety because of the enormous distance from there to here, but despite the distance between us, it does not only not diminish in its intensity, but is cultivated and even beautified in some ways. We come to know a deep, unspeakable longing, a very, very strong feeling that people who are together constantly are unable to feel, and our being together will always be new and cannot be reduced by habit, because this longing lets us grow inwardly and teaches us how infinitely much we mean to each other. Nevertheless, *how* completely happy I would be without this ever so long time of insatiable longing, but we must and want to make the best of it, the very best, then everything will seem much easier to bear. *Your Mope*

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 30 January 1938

After I took my previous scribbling to the post office without reading it again, I went for a little walk with several acquaintances and then, we had coffee together. Now, I will come back to my beloved and continue the conversation we had started.

I already sent a telegram to your dear mother with my thoughts concerning her Genoa trip. It seems urgently necessary to me that she should have a change of surroundings. Such a change in atmosphere of every form will certainly be of significant benefit to her general

condition, which can regrettably be read in her face, even if she does not say anything about it. Such times of relaxation contribute to extending the life expectancy of everyone, especially that of older people, and how could anyone who loves your mother as dearly as Pepper does be against it if there is a pleasant opportunity to make such a relaxing holiday possible for her. I am almost convinced that everything will be taken care of in such a way that Pepper won't lack for anything (other than his beloved wife, of course), while she is absent, and the joy of welcoming her back will more than make up for the time he was a straw widower. We men react sourly when someone tries to force something, but if my beloved—and I am sure you have never done that before—sits down on his lap and is nice to her Pepper, even he might declare himself ready to commit a burglary for you, and if you don't lose your patience, he might do even more, that is, agree to the trip.

The reason you gave your mother to talk her into making the trip makes me *unspeakably happy*. I was even happier with your news concerning Cooper & Co. It is such a pleasure to know about it, although I hope not to arrive at the last minute. For that and your ever so great effort my most heartfelt gratitude! It not only sounds unrealistic to my beloved, but to me as well, even though the facts confirm it that we have only known each other for a little over two years. I almost feel like diving into the first, still so very reserved letters and let the development of our love pass before me like a *good* film—although I do have all of it in front of my eyes.

I was told today that cigarettes sent here absolutely have to be declared there, because they cannot do it here. One of my acquaintances just paid £2-0-0 including customs fees (very cheap, as a matter of fact) for 1,000 Camel cigarettes. Unfortunately, my cigarettes are all gone and the Russian ones are not so good for my throat, because I am not used to the tobacco, which is why I have to ask the others for cigarettes, something I loathe doing.

I kiss you most passionately, my beloved, and embrace you most lovingly in my thoughts, so lovingly that I want you to dream about it, as I do, and all of my caresses and tenderness are meant to be brought to you with my words. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 1 February 1938

Today, we have been a *married couple* for six months and unfortunately, we also cannot celebrate this half year anniversary together, and we have to console each other with the thought of "Later" when the two of us no longer have to live separated all the time! I believe that we can look back on these first six months with the knowledge that every single day brought us a little closer to each other—even if it was not in proximity—and that those days were filled with inner happiness, with harmony and the joy in the awareness of the other, and the understanding and the love the one feels for the other in such a special measure!

My dearest one, today I can finally say: next month, my beloved is coming home! Just the simple thought of that lets a hot wave wash over my body and I try to forget that, in all reality, the moment when my beloved comes home is still weeks away.

I have been able to get ahead just a little concerning the trip to Hilde since your telegram arrived on Saturday, and after I negotiated with Pepper again on Sunday; however, no final decision has been made yet and Muttilein also will not hear of it at all, but I think it is the best thing for her and really, really hope that it will happen.

At lunch today, I once again had three future staff managers with us at the store who, among other things, listened in on one of my "talks" and gave me their heartfelt approval. That is quite pleasing to me, especially since they will give a report on everything at the head-office tomorrow, since they routinely have to file a report concerning their lunchtime *store excursions*.

Joan Stiebel whom I called again assures me anew that I do not have to worry at all about your landing possibilities, and just as soon as I know the date I will let her know immediately. I just wish I already knew!!!!!! Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 3 February 1938

Unfortunately, I did not get any news from my beloved today and I hope that I will receive mail again tomorrow. Today was a very long and exhausting day. At 9 a.m., I had a lesson with a new teacher and

after that, I worked without a break until 5.30 p.m., from the office to the warehouse and rushing back, and in the end, I did not accomplish what I wished. Then, in the evening, I wrote business letters for 4 ½ hours and took care of similar matters so that I feel very tired as I begin this letter, with very good reason. While I am writing, I am sitting in the restaurant and just ordered my dinner. After that, I will go to the horizontal with the speed of an express train, because there is much work to be done tomorrow.

My colleague Mr. Aisenstadt left here yesterday for London and promised that he would give you my love over the telephone on Friday or Saturday. He also told me he would let you know that I should not write to you so often. Whenever he saw me writing a letter, his conscience started bothering him concerning his own lady. He just cannot fathom what kind of need and pleasure it can be to chat with one's darling, even though it is such a poor replacement for a face-to-face conversation, when one has to rely on letters. I wish it were that time already that we could live together and would no longer have to think of saying good-bye when we see each other again. I hope that Otto Schiff will help us achieve that. I would be so unspeakably happy about that.

In the next few days, I might have to travel to Leningrad for a day. I will not give up my room while I am gone, because I won't get one in Leningrad, since I will travel overnight on the way there and back. The matter is by no means sure yet though. Contrary to that, it is just about certain that I will travel to the auction in Leningrad around the 26th of the month and I ask you to begin sending your mail to Leningrad, Hotel Astoria, around the 21st. I am afraid that the mail sent there will take longer.

I am counting on leaving here around the 20th, March 25th at the latest. That is still a frightfully long time, but time does have to go by eventually, and then, we will begin our second honeymoon in Paris, and we will continue it with a Muttilein who will come back relaxed and well from Genoa. *Entendue, madame?* Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 4 February 1938

Just a little while ago, I received your lovely, loving, loveable words from Sunday, and I cannot describe to you *how* happy I was with them.

They tell me so many loving and tender things and they pour out such a depth of gentleness, sensitivity, and warmth that they make me feel completely and utterly happy on the inside, or to be more precise, the awareness of the writer who stands behind those words. This evening, I am very tired once again and that is why I will only send you a short greeting.

Today, after repeated negotiations, etc., I finally succeeded to order 1.000 Du Maurier for you through Pepper (yellow packaging cork-tipped), since the other ones cannot be exported, and they will be declared here. I do hope that they will arrive there towards the end of next week, and besides the fact that I am glad that you will have them for your own use, you will like being able to invite your colleagues for a smoke, especially after they seem to have supplied you with tobacco in such a kind manner.

Mr. Aisenstedt called just a short while ago, which I thought was very nice, because he did not arrive before noon today, and he gave me your greetings and told me that my beloved was extremely busy for days, and most of all, he assured me that you are in good health and doing well. I want to close and get some sleep, my love, and I long for you——Your Lilongo

VERA TO MOPE

London, 16 February 1938

This morning, when I arrived at the store, my assistant welcomed me with the question whether it was true or not that I would be relocated to Hammersmith. Around noon, head office called and disclosed the "*great news*" to me with much ado such as "*that I had done so very well at Kilburn,*" etc., and that they wanted to move me to Hammersmith, since I had recently asked for a promotion. They told me I would receive a raise in the amount of 5/-a week. Since I will also save about 4/-in traveling expenses, it will be almost 10/-a week. There has been a new manager in Hammersmith since January who is said to be very friendly, competent, and likable. I have never met him.

I have not told the girls at Kilburn anything about it yet, but things like that have a way of spreading like wildfire, and the office personnel came to me and told me how sorry they were, etc., and all of them were rather charming. I know that taking over the Hammersmith store means

there is a lot of work ahead for me, and many difficulties and obstacles will have to be overcome before I get it the way the Kilburn store is now—I mean as far as the standard of the personnel—but Kilburn was not like that right from the beginning either. Hammersmith is the second largest London store, and I am curious to find out what working with the new manager will be like. The short distance from home and the raise make the farewell from Kilburn much easier, of course, although I have to admit that I feel attached to the staff after a year and a half.

At head office, I also mentioned the vacation days still owed to me, and they assured me that I could still take them in March. Tomorrow I will make some enquiries concerning train connections and weekend tickets to Paris and I will let you know what I find out. Completely and entirely, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 18 February 1938

Finally, I get around to writing a few lines to my beloved girl again. I hope that you will have received my telegram from yesterday in which I expressed my pleasure over the advancement that you cabled to me. I think it is great that you will be moved so close to Blythe Road, and with the fares saved, the raise will mean not a 5/-, but an 8/-raise per week. I hope that you will be able to keep your long weekend reserved for the days in Paris, because I am looking forward to that so immensely that I do not want to do without.

My Leningrad trip was pleasant. On the way there as well as on the way back, I had a sleeper compartment all to myself, which I welcomed not only for the work, but also because of sleeping alone. It was cold in Leningrad, but the sky was the most beautiful blue you can imagine, cloudless and full of sun. Contrary to that, it is snowing here constantly and the sky is covered with clouds. I have been working until now in order to calculate everything I have inspected in the last few days. Today is Wychodnoi, which I will use to catch up on everything else, because tomorrow, there is a lot of work to do again. However, I did sleep in this morning, and that was really necessary.

I had a long telephone conversation with Schapiro concerning a number of orders, among them one I just took care of, to buy merchandise

for a little over £5,000, merchandise that I inspected in Leningrad and which he sold on after my telegraphed description.

Here, I had to interrupt the letter again. In the meantime, I was able to close another deal worth about £3,200. You can see that I am not sitting around doing nothing. Admittedly, it does not happen every day that you have such sales or even near that. Additionally, I had dinner, got reports on the deals others have made, and it is time to post this letter so that it will be transported today.

I love you most passionately, my sweet little girl, and in my thoughts, I am kissing you everywhere, where it gives you pleasure and joy, long and with such great passion and intensity that your beloved beautiful body arches with the sweetest excitement. Your Mope

P.S.I think the ban of the *Rundschau* in Germany is terrible. It was the only means through which the people there could find out the truth, even if they had to read between the lines. I hope that the ban will be lifted.⁸⁸

VERA TO MOPE

London, 18 February 1938

It is 11.30 once again and I know that I should actually turn off the light, but since I am already lying down and therefore resting, you are not allowed to be mad at me when I write you a quick little greeting and thank you for your dear lines from last Sunday. Tomorrow is my last day in Kilburn and my successor is coming in so that I can give her some tips. All of my girls in Kilburn told me that they are very sad about me leaving.

I do not think I told you yet that I bought a very pretty dress, at least I think it is, very simple and navy blue, its decoration is white pearl embroidery and it has a very nice cut. I am very curious to find out if my beloved will like me in it, and I wish that we were in Paris already; I will

88 The twice-weekly *Judische Rundschau*, published by the Zionist Organization in Germany, had remained the main conduit by which Jews living under Nazism were still able to receive more or less independent news. Because the paper strongly advocated the exit of German Jews to Palestine, its publication was initially tolerated by the Nazi authorities. However, it was temporarily banned in the early part of 1938, and finally closed down later that year, its last issue appearing on 8 November.

bring the new dress along, of course. M&S provided us with fabric for a store frock again; this time, the quality is good, it is soft, but for my taste, the color is too light, although it is supposed to be navy blue as well.

For the time being, Muttilein's trip to Genoa will not take place. I regard the trip as postponed only and I do hope that it will happen later. Muttilein has some paying guests arriving next week and several orders for baked goods, so she is to all intents and purposes very busy.

My love, today was Wychodnoi and I hope that you took the time to rest and recuperate and maybe even write a detailed letter to me. Oddly enough, I have not heard anything else from Julius Rosenfeld although I sent him the necessary forms weeks ago.

My beloved, in my thoughts I am nestling my body into your beloved embrace and dream that you are with me, and I kiss you with all my love and tenderness. *Your* Lilongo

P.S. Just now, I found out that Annelieschen was involved in a car accident and suffered a concussion. Her sister Trude is writing at her request, because she is supposed to keep absolutely still. I feel very distraught over that news.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 21 February 1938

The first day in Hammersmith is over and I am very tired today, and I just want to write a few quick lines so you can *see* that I am thinking of my beloved. I think that the work there will be very interesting. Instead of forty-nine sales assistants, there are sixty here, instead of four office girls, there are eight, etc., all in all, there are over one hundred employees there. The manager here is very young, has only been here for the last four weeks, is very interested in his work, and seems to be quite a gentleman. I hope that I will get along well with him.

I moved into a new office right away and he ordered that they install a house as well as a general telephone for me, etc. The store earns much more than Kilburn; it is significantly larger. The counter displays are much behind those at Kilburn and if I could manage that the girls do it the same way as they do in Kilburn, then the Hammersmith earnings could be improved significantly as well. It is a great pleasure to work so close to home, I was at home shortly before 7.30 already.

I received a letter from Julius Rosenfeld this evening, with a copy of a letter he wrote to Fred. In it, he writes that the matter of the customs fees refund is still not resolved, unfortunately. He had visited the department three days ago and had received notice that we can count on the final decision very shortly. Then, he will send his accounting to Fred and will also mail his check for the balance. I have not heard anything else about the furs.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 23 February 1938

Usually, the mail arrives here in the course of the morning, but there was none for me. When I looked again in the afternoon to see if an expected telegram had arrived, I found the parcel with the cigarettes. They taste absolutely wonderful and seduce me to smoking, after I have spent the last fourteen days smoking Russian cigarettes exclusively, and they dry out my throat. The enjoyment I get from it is *even* greater, because my beloved went to such lengths to procure the cigarettes, and that really does mean something.

Yesterday evening, I had a lesson, and then, an acquaintance of my teacher came by, so that it was really late, before I was able to write my business report for Paris. As I was informed today, I will probably receive my exit visa around March 20. I hope that I will be able to take care of all business matters by then, so I can depart with a clear conscience.

I am very, very sorry to hear that Annelie had a car accident. That poor girl has had a lot of bad luck lately, and I hope with all my heart that she will enter a streak of good luck soon for a change. With all the bad luck, she seems to have been lucky, because a concussion—as far as I know—only needs time to get better, but usually does not leave any disadvantageous aftereffects. Maybe she will meet a nice, good Uncle Doctor who falls for her, then one would at least know why everything happened the way it did!

I am kissing you most passionately in my thoughts and enfold you in my embrace, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 24 February 1938

Since I am extremely occupied during the day just now—I still take great pleasure in it—because the staff is *completely* untrained, at least compared to my former staff. The counters are not taken care of, and hardly anything has been organized or arranged. I was just not able to write to you when I came home last night, but simply fell into bed because I was so very tired.

The manager is very receptive to all the suggestions and improvements I have made so far—of course, I try very hard not to give him the impression Americans who come to Europe inevitably do when they say, “*Oh, we in America do this and that this way, and everything is much better, etc.*” However, he is intelligent enough to see it is not meant that way and I try to be receptive to his ideas as much as I can. During our conversation, I had told him emphatically that I would be very grateful to him to tell me if he did not agree with something I do or if he wanted things done a certain way, he would please talk to me under any circumstances and not just try to ignore it, because that would make working together difficult, if not impossible; and then, after we had discussed all the pertinent points and our discussion was over, he asked me to do the same for him. Actually, that would be the polite thing to do, but for the M&S manager type I have come to know until now, that is a rather *better than average* attitude!

Hannalein who is a straw widow again, too, will have high tea with us on Sunday. Fred is on the continent and, among other things, will also go to Leipzig and see your dear mother there. Do you know that my residence permit expires on February 28? I called the head office secretary today. She told me that she had submitted all the documents weeks ago, or better, sent them to Otto Schiff, just as I had requested, and that I should not worry, because lately, it usually took as long or longer, and that it did not mean anything.

I have to close so that this letter will fly away from here with the night mail. I think it is so unbelievably beautiful to be married, although we have so very little time together to show for it, which is almost unbearable, but the awareness of your love and our harmony and our mutual consent echoes through my days like a beautiful melody. *Your*
Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 26 February 1938

I just got done packing my things. It is 11 o'clock and the train leaves at midnight. I was unable to get a 2nd class sleeper for the earlier train and so I preferred the later one. I am having to consider what to take to Leningrad and how to arrange the suitcases in the dumbest way possible so that the things I need cannot be added, and so on. Now, I am sitting in the restaurant and just want to send my most loving greetings to my little witch before I leave.

Today, I was without mail, but if I understood you correctly, you started sending your letters to Leningrad beginning last Sunday, and I am already looking forward tremendously to finding them there.

I did not do anything at all involving business matters today. As I was putting on some fresh socks this morning I was much enthused to find that not even a single pair was without toe air vents. So I had to sit down and darn 9 pairs. Do you admire that feat as much as I do? However, I did not cut the old darning patches out, as I have often watched my dear mother do, but let my own work use the old frame. I hope they won't pinch!

I am so very happy that the month of February is almost over now, and then, we only have March, and we two happy lovers will celebrate our second honeymoon. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 28 February 1938

Today, I have *very good news*! Mrs. Stiebel called today to let me know that I now have a *permanent permit to stay in England* and that I should please send my passport to her so that it could be entered in it. I called her today during lunch and she assured me that *all conditions are cancelled*, and that means that I am not only allowed to stay here but also take any kind of work. Added to that, she told me that Otto Schiff would go there again this week and try to do what he can concerning your application to reside here. I just wrote to him and put the matter close to his heart once again. I did not expect this result and I am afraid that our two applications might collide at some point in the end. My beloved, if we get lucky with Cooper and Co. now, I would be *completely* happy!

I arrived home at 7.15 this evening, although I had lunch there because I want to try the store cooking first. It seems to me that it is not too bad. However, my assistant's management abilities—my predecessor seems to have given her free hand—are questionable. The cafeteria shows a loss, although double the number of personnel stays here for lunch than did in Kilburn and so should definitely be profitable, and that even though the portions are smaller than in Kilburn and the quality most certainly not better. I have already found different things she does unnecessarily, and I told her how they can be done differently, and she was very responsive, at least up to now. I now know every staff member by name and I know in which department they work, and of course, that makes things much easier.

Unfortunately, I have not heard anything from Annelieschen, although I sent her a bouquet of spring flowers last week. I do hope that she is feeling better and that your loving wishes for her will come true; she really deserves to have a little bit of good luck for a change.

My Mopelein. I am counting the days with the greatest impatience, and despite my work and the new sphere, I am constantly with you in my thoughts, ever so close and so filled with passion. Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 1 March 1938

So today really is the first of March! And it brought me *such* a dear letter from my sweet little witch that I feel completely happy with everything. But, I find it less satisfying than you that you have to do such exceptionally exhausting work in Hammersmith, and hope that it will only be a temporary matter and that the girls will soon be trained well enough to relieve the burden on you. There is one thing I want to suggest to you in connection with the new work. They will not estimate your work all that highly if you introduce all of your improvements at once than if you keep introducing one thing after another and reorganize things over a period of time. Then, your success will be all the more obvious to them, because the brats will be able to understand things so much better if you advance one step at a time, than if the "new broom" (how awful to call my beloved something like that) starts sweeping away everything dirty right from the beginning and wears out its brush right away so that it can no longer reach into all the corners. And it is really the higher art to

rebuild slowly—with everyone's comprehension—because that takes the talent of finding just the right sequence.

It is like being married—you should never go for broke and always keep something in reserve to keep the partner's interest, and so it is while working if the work is meant to be creative. If you follow the work method suggested, your new manager will never have the feeling that you think everything is bad and only see that things could be done better, and psychologically speaking, that is most definitely the best way where he is concerned—to show him that you are especially able, since he seems to be open-minded and intelligent.

My stay here was extended to the 20th and as soon as I return to Moscow, I will apply for my exit visa, so I believe that I will be leave Russia right on time, and I should be able to leave here around the 20th.

I am really happy that Fred went to visit my dear mother. She has to feel horribly lonely over there. I wonder what will happen to her in the future. I keep thinking about it all the time but I can see that the longer she waits the worse the prospect becomes to get her out of that damnable country in reasonable shape. Unfortunately, all of my suggestions have been ignored and it has been proven that the path I originally chose for myself was not the most fortunate one either.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 3 March 1938

Just now, I received your dear lines from Sunday, the ones from before your departure. Monsieur, I am impressed, nine pairs of socks—that is really quite an achievement, and if you can actually walk in them, then that is all the more wonderful!

I just heard from Hannalein and Fred that your dear mother looks very well, was feeling well, and has a pretty room, something that made me feel very happy. Fred visited her last Wednesday. He really congratulated me for the permit and said that that would also make things easier concerning your matter in this area. I hope he is right!!!! I just wish that the furs would finally be sold and the debt to Fred paid back. I find this debt so unpleasant and I hope that we will be able to settle it soon. Yesterday, I received the Jewish Rundschau once again.

So my beloved will have started his main work from today. I hope that it is not too strenuous for you. The difference for my beloved between

the auction last August and this one is the fact that, back then, aside from the exhausting work, you had so many stressing worries resting on your shoulders, while these kinds of worries have almost completely dropped away this time. And so I hope that my love is feeling less drawn before, during, and after the auction than in the summer. I can hardly believe it: today in a fortnight, my beloved will hopefully begin his trip back!!!!

You hit the nail square on the head in what you write concerning my work, my beloved: it will definitely prove to be much more successful and effective to proceed gradually and with a plan in reorganization and improvement; in the meantime, I have come to that realization myself—it happened when I bumped my nose—admittedly, just a tiny bit—your prediction came true. There was *one* moment at the end of the first week during which it seemed to me that the manager felt rather uncomfortably touched—to have to see so much all at once as needing to be changed, when he had not noticed those things at all before. It was—as I said—just for a moment, and he immediately gave in and changed his mind; and *so did I!!* And I mean drastically, and I came to the conclusion that my beloved, even from afar and without practical groundwork, formulates things so clearly and intelligently.

Thank you, my Mopelein, for your interest, your overview, your ability to place yourself in situations, and your intelligent advice that I will take to heart completely and entirely with a renewed appreciation for its accuracy. It is something immensely necessary in my field of work, but also something that is very difficult for me and goes against my nature—it wants to act quickly and precipitously—and that is only possible for me if I engage all of the brain cells available to me or better, the activation of their functioning.

I want to close, because I would still like to go to the post office and take care of a few errands. *Your Lilongo*

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 5 March 1938

After working for thirteen hours today without a break and dinner with customers following immediately after work and then more work after that, I am dead tired, but I just cannot go to bed, before I write a few lines to you. Tomorrow afternoon, the auction will start, after a banquet

during which there will probably be a lot of drinking once again in order to put the customers in the mood.

I already sent a telegram yesterday congratulating you on your permanent permit, and I would like to repeat that here with all my love. I am so tremendously happy about it, and your independence, as far as work is concerned, as Miss Stiebel told you, has been achieved.

In a bit, it will be 2 a.m. again, and tomorrow will start at eight in the morning. So, off to bed, after I have given my beloved my kisses and all my tenderness through this paper. I am expecting you in my dreams, full of longing and love and my entire being, so I can embrace you and pull you close to me, and you know about everything else, and I am sure that you are waiting with the same feelings as your Mope who loves you with all his strength and his soul.

VERA TO MOPE

8 March 1938

I talked to Mrs. Stiebel on the telephone. Otto was there on Friday, and for the time being, they did not give their permission for you. They would *not* object to a visit every six months or so, but they would not permit a permanent *stay*. It is supposed to be a *matter of principle* and *not* to be taken personally, on the contrary, Mr. Cooper was looking at our matter with all possible goodwill. Otto wrote me a letter today that I will bring to Paris for you, in which something is mentioned about that month long stay. He said, when you are here, both of us should see him; then, he will try again; despite everything, he thinks that it is just a matter of time. I think it best that you do *not* mention this matter to your colleagues. For all they know, the case is still with Mr. Cooper and still moving forward, and no decision has been made yet. I will not let that ruin my good mood—and not for you either, my love, I hope and beg. We are strong and young and one day, with perseverance, patience, and a good disposition, things will hopefully come to pass. *Completely and Entirely* Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 10 March 1938

Now, all that auction work is finished, and I am really glad and relieved to have that behind me. As I let my darling know yesterday in the telegram, it was completely impossible for me to write to you during the last six days. At night, once I was finished with making calculations, writing catalogues, composing telegrams, etc., I just keeled over totally exhausted. Actually, the exchange of letters with you is supposed to be relaxing and joyous and a much-needed change and diversion from the daily vulgarities, but a condition for that is that I have a clear mind and do not see everything doubled because I am so tired, as has been the case in the last few days.

I am exceedingly happy that my sweetheart now has a permanent residence and knows where her home is. Hopefully, I will get there as well in the near future.

I can walk very well in those stockings I darned myself, but unfortunately, to the side of the darning, new holes are forming. I wonder if that is always the case or if it lies in a mistake made by the darning, but that escapes my judgment, since I have never before paid much attention to such things. In the greatest love, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 10 March 1938

I wrote a detailed letter to your dear mother, and I assume that she was especially happy with the letter this time, because it was filled with good news. I told her about the permit, the new store, that my beloved is doing well, and that he is working successfully.

I sent £50-0-0 to Fred, and I feel glad and relieved this debt is shrinking so visibly. By return, I received the receipt from Fred, and I have the feeling that he was very pleased. I think I already told you I am glad that another piece has been paid back, and I am sure that my beloved feels the same as I do.

I wonder when you will know for certain on what day you will be able to leave. I hope that your boss will not try to keep you there. It almost seemed to me as if he intended to do so, when he announced that

there would be much more work after the auction than *during and before* it. Is that true?

By the way—I think I did not tell you Wednesday night—I received another copy of Cooper's letter to Otto Schiff—a letter that really does not sound all that unfavorable and says that it is going to be that way *for the time being*. I hope that, once we have talked to Otto together, the matter will be resolved somehow. He seems to be rather optimistic himself.
Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 12 March 1938

The decision Otto Schiff let you know about is a little progress, at least when compared with the last time, and I am really very satisfied with it. Please give Otto and Mrs. Stiebel my most heartfelt thanks. Somehow, the matter will and has to be cleared; we just need a lot of patience. At the moment, all the signs make me believe that my path so far has been the correct one, and we cannot know the future in advance. Anyway, I am happy to have turned my back on that deadly land of my birth.

It is really very sweet of you that you wrote to my dear mother again, and I am very happy that Fred found her well and apparently quite content. I hope that she did not pretend to be in good spirits just for him, because she is too proud to complain.

VERA TO MOPE

London, 14 March 1938 [written immediately after news of the Anschluss]

Mopeleichen, I just called Fred to ask for his advice, because I am really worried! I would like you to alter your traveling plans, by all means necessary, that is, that you take a different route back, either Warsaw, Yugoslavia, Trieste, Paris, or through Sweden and Denmark, like you did when you traveled there. Mopeleichen, please let me know immediately! *I am worried*, my love. If only you were with me already. This last week of our current separation, I hope it is the last one anyway, is virtually unbearable to me. I do not know *how* I could bear it if I was not so occupied at work.

My beloved, hopefully, Schapiro does not put obstacles in your way and postpones your departure, that would really be horrible. It really has been long enough now—that is, if you think that you have to stay longer, then please do so, but I do hope very much that that will not be necessary. *I am worried to-night and cannot think about anything except that I want my beloved husband back !!!*

Mopeleichen, I just cannot write a letter this evening—please send me a telegram immediately! So I can meet you at the right time, that is, should you come directly to London, so I can pick you up. *I think life is sometimes very, very difficult!!!!* If it is not absolutely necessary, please do not stay there past the 20th.

My love, what a horrible letter! But I am sure that my beloved will understand me. Maybe, by this time next week, you will already be on the way to Paris, over Warsaw and Trieste!!! I kiss you, my beloved, and I love you indescribably, *Your Lilongo*

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 14 March 1938

Just now, I talked to the most wonderful of all bosses. He gave me quite a few orders and supposed that I would have to extend my visa. But if I do not want to, it will not happen, and I do not want to! I will try to get everything done by the 20th, if possible, and I hope that things will work out. It is still a puzzle to me as to how I will travel back, because, if I travel by boat via Stockholm, I have to go to London first and then to Paris, because—so I hear—none of the boats make a stop in Amsterdam or some other harbor. Another possibility would be to travel to Prague and fly from there via Amsterdam or Rotterdam to Paris, but my beloved writes much to my surprise that I should not fly under any circumstances! Although I do not understand the reason, I will try to act in accordance with your wishes. Now I will try to get information concerning the possibility to get to Amsterdam via Riga, without setting foot on accursed territory.

I kiss you, you beloved, and embrace you full of the most heartfelt tenderness and love, and I am so happy that the 15th has started now. It will probably not even be 14 days now—I hope, only 10—until we can finally snuggle close together and find compensation for all the deprivation. I love you sooooooooooooooooooooo much, my girl, you! Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 15 March 1938 [Telegram]

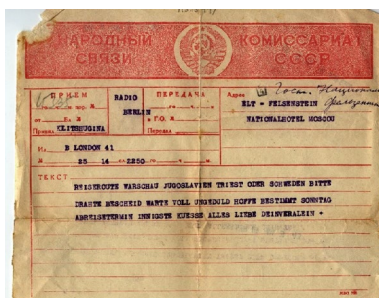


Fig. 79 Telegram from Vera in London to Mope in Moscow, sent via Berlin, 15 March 1938.

ELT FELSENSTEIN NATIONALHOTEL MOSCOU

RADIO BERLIN

KLITSHUGINA

B LONDON 41

2524 2250

TRAVEL ROUTE WARSAW YUGOSLAVIA TRIESTE OR
 SWEDENPLEASE CABLE REPLYWAITING IMPATIENTLYHOPE
 SUNDAY DAY OF DEPARTUREMOST LOVING KISSESALL MY LOVE
 YOUR VERALEIN

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 15 March 1938

Today, I was without mail from my beloved. Actually, that is not true at all, because I received a very worried telegram this morning. So today, I went to get exact information concerning the connections. It looks like I will leave next Monday or Tuesday evening to travel to Leningrad. The next evening to Helsingfors. Again, in the evening over Åbø to Stockholm. The night after that to Copenhagen and from there to Esbjerg, from where a ship leaves for Dunkirk on Saturday, but just once a week. Since I can only travel overnight the entire trip, as there are no daytime connections, the trip will be very long, but what can I do? I have to make the best of the fact that I will be separated from my darling for a few days longer than I would have imagined.

In any case, I am counting on arriving in Paris on Monday in eight days. I am asking you to get information as to when the boat traveling from Esbjerg (Denmark) at 5 p.m. on Saturday to Antwerp-Dunkirk will arrive in Dunkirk. Should you have a good connection that makes it possible to meet me in Dunkirk without having to wait too long for each other. Please write to me about this to Stockholm, because your answer would not reach me here in time. Should my exit visa from here be issued for precisely the 20th, I would leave on the evening of the 19th, but I think that they will give me a few days leeway. In that case (I mean if I do leave on the 19th) I would have to alter my plans in such a way that I would come to London first and pick up my sweet beloved, since I would have to wait around for days to take that boat otherwise. As soon as I know, I will send you a telegram. By the way, I would like to ask you to add the remark "via Northern" to your telegrams in the future, so that they will not be sent through Radio Berlin of all things, like the one today.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 17 March 1938

Today was the feast of Purim. I am sure that you know that famous story. I only wish that the current enemies of the Jews suffered a similar fate to that of Haman. Unfortunately, it seems that my wish will not come true, and, if it did, that would really be much more important to me.

I talked over the telephone to Schapiro in Paris three times. Twice, we were interrupted. I explained to him that I will probably leave here on Monday the 21st. Actually, I was told today that my passport will not be ready until the 22nd, so that I would not leave until Wednesday the 23rd at the earliest, if that is the case. I asked if it might be possible to have the exit visa issued earlier—I should get the answer to that on the 20th and will send you a telegram then.

Tomorrow is Wychodnoi, so this evening I will go to the Metropole, although I feel very tired, to spend some time with my colleagues. *How* happy I would be if it were a week later and there really were only a few days left between now and our reunion. I cannot describe it or say anything, but only talk about the fact that it occupies my senses and thoughts completely, and there is no room in my brain for anything else besides envisioning the reunion and smearing all the beautiful and more beautiful colors on the palette to mix them into the most beautiful

color of all. We have now been separated for over three months and that is a longer period of time than I have ever lived through, because my innermost being was always with my sweet, most beloved little witch, to protect her, to take care of her and to read all of her wishes in her eyes and on her lips and make them come true, despite the distance. And that is how I experienced that time.

It is difficult for me already to imagine your beautiful body in my head, that is how long I have not been able to see it. I still have to wait!! How difficult that is!! I kiss you, my beloved, and my hunger for you is so great that the kissing will be more like biting and never letting go, until we go to sleep drunk with love. I wish it were that time already!!! I am beginning to hate the paper I have to trust all these dreams to, because I cannot experience them yet. *How* much I do love you!!!! Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 18 March 1938

Because of the quick mail transportation, I had the great pleasure not to be without mail today, as your loving and worried sounding letter from the 14th of the month reached me. I am very, very sorry that you were so unnecessarily worried. As you were able to see from my various letters, I made up my mind to travel via Stockholm or a similar route, as soon as the unheard-of measure that gives reason for the alteration of my travel plans happened. Just now, I finished writing the weekend telegram to my sweet darling to give Tuesday the 22nd as the anticipated date of departure and hope that that will work out.

I still have a big program for the last few days, and Schapiro will call me again later and most likely make it even bigger or at least try to make it bigger. How far I can get things done, I cannot say in advance, since the prices and other wishes of the clientele can only be brought under the same roof as other demands here with the greatest difficulties.

It has become cold here again since yesterday evening, and an icy wind contributes to making it even more uncomfortable outside—whereas over there, things are beginning to bloom. Now, I will close this writ, which will probably be the last I will write from here before I leave. By the time these words reach you, you will be able to pack your suitcases in order to meet me.

With limitless love, Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Helsingfors, Finland, 27 March 1938

"Who never ate his bread with tears"⁸⁹—can never understand how good my breakfast tasted today. I cried tears of joy on the inside, and they added spice to the wonderful warm toast and did not ruin the taste of the excellent coffee. And at the same time, even the sweetness of the honey that flowed so golden yellow on my bread could not lessen the bitterness to still be without you—my everything, my dream and my desire, my most beloved and longed for girl. All my organs, my pores, my entire being is filled with longing for you as if with electricity! An electric light bulb placed against me would flare and die, because the wire would burn and melt—it will still be days before I can take you in my arms to be led back to balance and to normal thoughts and emotions through your love and tenderness.

I sent my weekend cable to my sweetest little witch from the first station outside of "the" country, and I hope that it gave joy, even though it was late. Today is Sunday and I have a Sunday feeling, after I went into the bathroom here at the hotel that was gleaming with cleanliness—without resembling a terrarium. I kept looking here and there at a bold head to see if it was a cockroach or some other kind of zoological monster, but alas, there was just nothing to beat to death.

My trip until now has been very pleasant and undisturbed. Two female guides from Intourist took me to the train in Leningrad, both of whom were named Vera, and one of them said that they each represent one half of what my beloved means to me. They told me that—if I came back with you—there would be three Veras. They want to take care of you lovingly while I work, show you the city and take care of your entertainment so that you won't feel lonely. Everyone is expecting my darling to come with me the next time. All of Moscow already knows that I am not human without you, because the longing is eating me up inside and I just could not bear it a second time to be separated from you for such a horribly long time. All the colleagues, every porter, and every hotel manager already knows that my sweet one will accompany me the next time, and only I—I still have not received your confirmation! Why

89 Mope echoes the opening verse of "The Song of the Harper," a short poem by Goethe.

do you leave me without an answer to this question and often repeated request???

From Stockholm–tomorrow–tomorrow–I will call you and then, I will come to you, and *everything* will be good!! So you love me as unspeakably as I love you? Were you as loyal to me as I to you? Are your thoughts as filled with me as mine, mine with you? Soon, you can give me your answer and make me happy and glad, my most beloved!

Once again, I trust my kisses and caresses to the paper that is meant to bring them to you. You, finally–Your Mope

P.S. Please tell me nothing, nothing, nothing related to business for the first two days!

