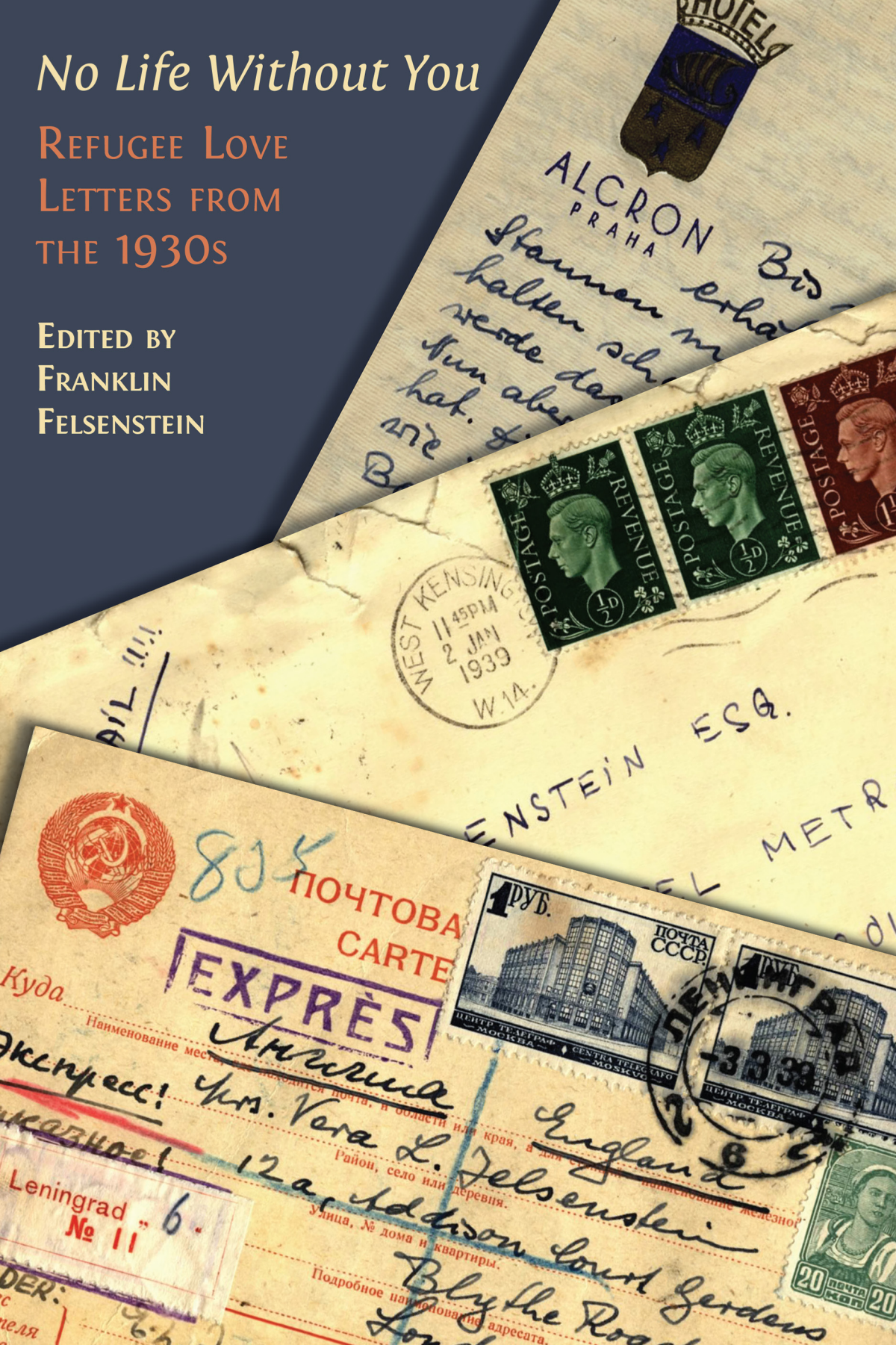


No Life Without You

REFUGEE LOVE LETTERS FROM THE 1930s

EDITED BY
FRANKLIN
FELSENSTEIN





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Twenty-seven: “10,108 White Foxes”

30 May through 31 July 1938

POLITICAL TIMELINE, APRIL–SEPTEMBER 1938

- 26 April 1938: Decree requiring all Jews living within the Reich to register all of their assets with severe restrictions on moving assets abroad.
- May 1938: Following the Anschluss, Austrian Jews forced to scrub the streets to the delight of onlookers.
- 19 May 1938: German military manoeuvres along border with Czechoslovakia gave rise to widespread fears of an imminent invasion. The “May Crisis” was averted by warnings from Britain and France that they would respond in the event of an attack.
- 28 May 1938: Intensified boycott of Jewish businesses in Frankfurt.
- 31 May 1938: Germany outlaws so-called “decadent art”.
- 9 June 1938: Main Synagogue in Munich set on fire and burned to the ground.
- 15 June 1938: Any Jew in Germany “previously convicted” of a crime (even a traffic offense) is to be arrested.
- 25 June 1938: Law passed under which German-Jewish doctors only allowed to treat Jewish patients.

- 6 TO 15 July 1938: International conference at Evian-Les-Bains to discuss “Jewish problem” fails to open doors abroad for persecuted refugees.
- 23 July 1938: Jews in Germany ordered to carry identity cards to be shown to police and other officials on demand.
- 25 July 1938: Licenses of German Jewish doctors canceled.
- 8 August 1938: First Austrian concentration camp established at Mauthausen.
- 10 August 1938: Great Synagogue in Nuremberg destroyed.
- 17 August 1938: Law passed by which male and female Jews must adopt the respective names Israel and Sarah by the following new year.
- 26 September 1938: Hitler promises that Sudetenland will be his final territorial demand in Europe.
- 29-30 September 1938: British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and French premier Edouard Daladier sign the “Munich accord” with Hitler, permitting the annexation of the Sudetenland by Nazi Germany.

The two months that Mope enjoyed with Vera in England before being obliged to return to the Soviet Union at the end of May 1938 culminated with the “sympathetic” allocation of provisional residency papers, stipulating that he could now spend four weeks in Britain no more than twice a year. With his German passport no longer valid and loss of his natal citizenship imminent, the British authorities granted him a “stateless document” that allowed him to travel back to Russia, where his work visa would be subject to renewal every few months.

The validity of the Certificate of Identity issued by the British to take the place of a passport was to prove problematic causing snags for Mope whenever he entered or exited another country. The original Certificate had an expiration date. Its later replacement is illustrated here.



Fig. 80 Later Certificate of Identity issued to Mope by the British Home Office in 1946. The earlier certificate has not survived.

In Russia, the prolongation of his permit to stay depended on the good will of Sojuzpushnina (the state-run fur trade organization) and his continuing success in the purchase of furs—white foxes setting the trend during 1938—for his western European and American clients. Although well treated for the most part, he lived in constant fear that the visa would be rescinded with the likelihood that he would be deported, or that he might be randomly arrested and taken away as did happen to at least one of his fur trade colleagues.

Before his departure from England, he was able to share with Vera a short vacation, which they spent in Downderry, Cornwall, though during most of his stay she was occupied with her work at Marks & Spencer. As his earlier route through Austria was now shut off to him, Mope planned his return to Russia via Paris (a required stopover in order to consult with Schapiro), and Strasbourg, flying over Germany to Prague (where he still retained several business clients), and then on to Moscow via Warsaw. In both Czechoslovakia and Poland, his newly issued stateless papers only granted him short duration transit permits. But for his sheer determination, good luck, and quick thinking, he was almost forced to abandon much of his belongings during his stopover in Warsaw. During the succeeding four-and-a-half months, he quartered in Moscow, making several trips to Leningrad, the most significant of these being for the main fur auction in the first two weeks of July.

In England, Vera was promoted with a small salary increase to the new position of "staff manager-staff supervisor," with responsibility for overseeing four stores, including her "home" store of Hammersmith. The soon-to-be-opened store at Ealing would occupy much of her time during the next months. As in previous years, she was also assigned camp duties for two weeks, this time from the end of June at the Marks & Spencer staff summer camp at St. Anne's, outside Blackpool, in the north-west of England.

Just before her departure for Blackpool, Vera responded to a demand to visit the German Embassy in London, where she was told that she must surrender her passport as her citizenship was revoked. In Germany itself, a new law (14 June) called for the compulsory registration of all Jewish-owned businesses. Very shortly thereafter, the Gebrüder Felsenstein, now a shadow of its former self with Mope's hapless cousin Semy as the sole partner still in Leipzig, was Aryanized and sold at a fraction of its value to Nazi accessories. To Mope's relief, his mother (Oma Lenchen) was finally allowed to leave Germany and dwell in England, arriving in mid-July. In faraway Moscow, he was able to rejoice at "the fact that my beloved mother got out of that hell healthy and happy" (18 July 1938).

MOPE TO VERA

Prague, 1 June 1938

When my beloved receives these words, she will have certainly overcome the amazement that overcame her when I called her from Prague. I will explain with a chronological report about everything that has happened. The trip was very comfortable, although the sea rocked the boat quite a bit, as I noticed when I was awake for a short time. Schapiro picked me up at the railway station in Paris. The man does not speak one word of French, but he sticks his nose into everything, and that is why they would not give me the checked suitcase because it contained tobacco. After I showed them my ticket to Moscow and many expenses, "Air de France" brought my suitcase to the airport accompanied by a customs official, which took more than two hours of coaxing.

By the way, the flight was wonderful. After we left Strassburg behind us, we flew, in the most beautiful summer weather, over Baden, Herrenalb, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart, Nürnberg, Marienbad and landed here. I had never before had such a clear view while flying. It was rather pleasing that they gave me a map with which I could get my bearings.

When I wanted to depart from the airport, people explained to me that I only had a transit visa and would have to commence my air travel immediately. They were very determined and would not listen to any explanations, until I said that I had a headache, that I would not get back on an airplane today and would just have to take the train. After waiting and negotiating for an hour and a half they agreed, and I was told that only the police directorate would be able to make any changes, as far as issuing a permit to stay here until Friday was concerned. (The Warsaw plane only leaves on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). When I arrived at the police station, the top person had already left for the day and so, I will have to go again tomorrow. In the meantime, I went to see a doctor who gave me a written report stating that I need a few days' rest before traveling on.

Until now, I have only visited Mrs. Adler here who is a very charming woman who runs her husband's entire and quite significant business all by herself as an authorized partner.⁹⁰ Around here, the furriers close at 4 p.m. during the summer months, so that further visits were not possible, and then, the visit to the doctor including the waiting had taken a full hour and a half.

Now I will go and have dinner, since I have not eaten anything since Strassburg, besides a piece of cake.

I love you all the way into my innermost heart—unutterably—you!
Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Prague, 2 June 1938

While I am beginning to write this, I am standing in the post office to get instructions concerning my trip. *How* happy I was yesterday to talk to you and I am still really sad that you were worried! *How* awful that we could not say good-bye yesterday. Since the call costs more than ten shillings for three minutes, I had demanded that they would let me know as soon as three minutes were up, and those idiots just cut us off without saying a word about ending the conversation.

I already wrote that I had to go to the police director's office *immediately* after arriving here in order to avoid unpleasantness. Then,

90 Perhaps foreseeing the deteriorating political situation, Mr. Adler, in conjunction with his son, had recently opened a branch of their business in London.

it was necessary to get some of the local currency, and following that, I determined that the consultation hours of the doctor who had been recommended to me only lasted until 4 o'clock, and I arrived at his office one minute before four. The whole story there took about an hour and a half, and I arrived at the hotel around a quarter to six. First thing tomorrow, I will have to get more Polish money, before I can confirm my time of arrival in Warsaw.

I made a number of purchases today, shirts, lipsticks, skin lotion, a smaller briefcase for me, since it is uncomfortable to have to carry the heavy "suitcase" around in Moscow, a bathing suit, lady's stockings,⁹¹ and on top of that—after I received permission to stay here until tomorrow—I visited customers. Several promised to give me smaller orders as soon as the political situation gets better.

Life here plays out exactly the same as always: people are sitting in the coffee houses and take walks around Wenzelsplatz, the main traffic center, as if war had not almost entered this country ten days ago.⁹² Human beings really are the strangest creatures living on this Earth. Contrary to others—at least that is what they claim—they can reason and have the ability to think; and after such a very short time, they have already overcome the greatest nervous crisis they can possibly meet, as if nothing had happened at all.

It is a quarter after midnight, and I have a lot of work ahead of me tomorrow, which is why, despite my need to keep chatting with you for hours on end, I have to close so I can climb into bed. The music has stopped already, music which is produced here in the hotel lobby during the evening at a pleasant volume, and they are drawing the shades. Only a few customers are still sitting around, much to the chagrin of the tired

91 Fashionable ladies' stockings from the West were a particularly prized commodity in the Soviet Union. These and boxes of western cigarettes could be used both for currency and tipping purposes.

92 On 21 May, the Czechoslovak government had ordered the partial mobilization of its armed forces following reports that Hitler was about to attack the country in furtherance of his claim that the Sudetenland, which had a large ethnic German population, belonged to Germany. The ensuing "May Crisis" had the world believing that war was imminent. Hitler finally annexed the Sudetenland in early October 1938 as his prize, following the fateful Munich conference. The area included Karlsbad and Marienbad where Mope and Vera had vacationed together in September 1936, and where many German Jews had found a temporary respite from Nazism.

waiters, and I do not want to be the last one to leave. I hope that I will receive mail from my darling tomorrow.

Your Mope, who is the last guest to leave, after all.

MOPE TO VERA

Warsaw, 4 June 1938

Early yesterday, I made quite a few visits in Prague and schmoozed with the customers. Then, Mrs. Adler drove me to the airport. My plane took off after a forty-minute delay. It rained today as if all the water gates in heaven had been opened, and we were flying between the clouds and only saw a small ray of sunshine in the cabin here and there for the last half hour of our flight. You could see lightning strikes shoot down towards the ground left and right, but our pilot was extremely capable and avoided the thunderstorm. By the way, he told me later that a thunderstorm is not dangerous to an airplane. Interestingly enough, we were much faster than the bad weather, which did not arrive here until two to three hours later. I have now been roving about Middle Europe in this way for all of a week. I shall be departing for Moscow early tomorrow morning, where I will arrive in the morning on the 6th. The reason for this is that here they do not want to extend my transit visa under any circumstances, so that I do not have any other choice.⁹³

Today, I was extremely busy, since I spent most of the morning at the mayor's office because of my passport. However, that was nothing compared to the afternoon. Yesterday, at the airport I had requested that my luggage, which was supposed to go all the way to Negoreloje (Russian border), be sent to the customs office at the railway station, but they explained that that would not be possible until today. When I got there, they reported that the suitcase was there, but that the customs office had closed immediately after it had arrived and would not be open again until Tuesday. I had a man from the hotel with me as a translator, but he was not aggressive enough for the impending difficulties, so I took another man from *Air France*. After we found out who was the

93 The Polish authorities treated German-Jewish citizens particularly harshly as many so-called "Ost-Juden" (Polish Jews) had been expelled *en masse* from Germany to Poland by the Nazis, thus intensifying an already endemic anti-Semitism. Traveling with "stateless" documents, as Mope discovered, greatly compounded the problem of obtaining visas.

director of the customs office and could not find his telephone number in the directory, we took a taxi and learned that he had moved to a new residence. We worked on finding the new address, and when we arrived, he was sleeping. They were afraid of his divine wrath if they awakened him, but I insisted and then heard that he did not have the keys at all. He gave us the name of a clerk whose address we found after waiting at the train station for half an hour. Despite the wonderful weather, that man was at home as well and promised to come to the train station within a quarter of an hour. After he got there, he leafed through all of his files—and there were quite a few—again and again, and could not find any documents concerning the suitcase. Finally, he determined that the suitcase was still stored in one of the customs rooms within the customs enclosure, for which another clerk had the only key. However, this man lives far outside of Warsaw. So back into the taxi and filled with fear that he might have gone out for the day, I went to find him. Had we got there ten minutes later, we would not have caught him at all. So we took this man and drove to the first man—or better, the second one—and after four hours of fear, agitation, anger, and finally joy that the no longer hoped for success was achieved, we landed back at the train station where I could hand in the suitcase to be sent to the border station, after paying the overtime hours for both clerks. And that even though those people readily admitted the unbelievable mistake had been made by the airport customs people, and said it was very unjustified that I should experience such expenses and lost time because of it.

This detective story was a small piece of bravura because of my complete ignorance concerning the language, and I am convinced that, halfway there, most people would have let the matter go. Add to that the fact that the translators certainly spoke Polish very well, but other than that, spoke very little French. What a long story and how little does it tell you about the feelings it excited.

It is now terribly late, and tomorrow, I have to get up at 7 o'clock. Tomorrow, I will go to the station at approximately the same time as it is with you, because there is no time difference here during the summer. However, in Russia, there will be a difference of two hours. *Your Mope*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 5 June 1938

Today, beginning at 1 o'clock, I was in Ealing where I would like to hire five or six old girls (that is, girls who have left the company of their *own* free will for some reason or other—mostly *married women*—who are already trained). Especially during this time of year, no one is fully capable of working continuously in the warm air in the store between seven and nine in the evening. I expect that the arrival of fresh girls at that time would make a significant difference. I have a lot of extra work because of the Ealing store, as I have had to interview girls for the new store here in Hammersmith and also do not want to neglect my own store, if at all possible. Next Wednesday, I will go back to Ealing and hire more personnel, for the opening of the new store that will take place during early autumn.

Yesterday afternoon, I was at the *head office* for a *camp supervisor meeting* where I heard more ranting than anything else, but still—it was a restful change from the store. I am leaving here on Saturday, 25 June, around noon and will be in Blackpool around 4.30 in the afternoon. My address there is: M&S Holiday Camp, Blackpool Road, St. Annes, Lancashire.

I heard yesterday that, according to a new German law, no more than RM 5,000 will be allowed to be taken out and then only as *Sperrmark*! Professor Immelmann is back from Germany where they let him know today that they will not pay him *another* penny in pension, because he has a home here! He is supposed to be quite beside himself, Muttilein said, and is also quite thunderstruck psychologically, because oddly enough, he still feels quite attached to all of that—⁹⁴

My love, it is very late again—I love you unspeakably and completely, and I am *totally your* Lilongo

94 Immelmann and his wife were family friends of the Hirsches who had left Germany in 1933 after he had been dismissed from his position as a university professor. He appears to have revisited Germany in 1938, and learned there that his pension was permanently rescinded. The *Sperrmark* system limited the amount of cash that could be taken out of Germany, and particularly affected Jewish refugees.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 6 June 1938

I was unable to get a room in the National, because nothing was available, and so I booked in at the Metropole. Tonight, my colleagues and I drank a lot of alcohol while having our dinner. Unfortunately, I could not get away from it, because we had been invited by the gentlemen from the Sojuspushnina. Until now, we have not been able to do anything, but I really hope that we can soon get down to business. I will do what I can for my part.

The weather here is extraordinarily pleasant once again. The sky is clear and the sun is shining, but it is not too hot. It seems to me like I have been here for several weeks now, although it has only been fewer than two days. People greeted me everywhere in the friendliest and most pleasant manner, so that I would be able to feel quite at home, if I did not miss you so terribly. Most people asked me why you did not come with me. No one can understand why my darling leaves her husband so alone, though if you had to travel here at my expense there would really be nothing left of my salary, because the trip would gobble up too much money, but *life would be beautiful!*

This tired letter did not turn out all that nice, but nevertheless, it brings my gentlest kisses to my beloved little witch. Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 9 June 1938

If my beloved only knew how happy I was today to receive mail again, writing would surely give her even more pleasure—I am assuming that she does take pleasure in it! At the same time as your letters, I received one from Hugo Fränkel in Stockholm, in which he lets me know that the office of the Russian embassy there wrote that they would issue a transit visa for me if necessary. Without that, granting it would otherwise take more than fourteen days, and I cannot wait that long, if I want to leave some day.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Hugo Fränkel (d. 1940), a longtime Leipzig fur trader, had moved his fur business to Stockholm. He generously undertook to act on Mope's behalf if it became necessary at this politically charged time to obtain a transit visa at short notice.

I did not expect anything other than that they would take Professor Immelmann's pension away some day. He should have thought about that earlier if he cannot do without it and made different decisions. There is an infinite number of people who suffer just like him, but they are forced to suffer that kind of treatment only because they are Jews, and they did not volunteer for it. I do not feel any pity for him.

Now I will lay me down in my chaste bed and dream of my darling and be ever so close to you, caress you and kiss you, put my arms around you and be ever so happy with you, just as I am in my knowledge of you.
Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 12 June 1938

A few days ago, the manager of the Hammersmith store and I had a longer conversation during which he asked me what kinds of plans I had made for the future, whether they lay in the company or in my "*married life*." I told him that my immediate future was in the company, of course, and he asked me if I was hoping for a larger store, or what else I was thinking about as a future. I explained to him that I was not thinking of anything specific, aside from wanting to advance, and since they were drawing on me so much for the new store opening, the future might lie in the position of a supervisor. Why he asked me, I am not quite clear about. However, I would have considered it completely wrong to say anything about my *actual* plans.

But maybe, you, Sir, might be interested what kinds of plans they are: *no matter what kind of position M&S offers me in the near future*, I am hoping to have a baby around May or June next year, and that I wish for with all the fibers of my being!! So that means that I will quit my job around Christmas time, or sometime around then, have my child, hopefully, and as long as it is still small, I hope not to have to go back to my job. What will happen then, whether I will go back to work, when the child is past its infancy is very difficult to know, and a position a little higher up than the one I have now would naturally appeal to me very much, but first of

His son, Jury Fränkel (1899-1971), was a friend and contemporary of Mope. Jury's posthumously published memoir, *Einbahnstrasse: Bericht Eines Lebens* (2 vols., Murrhardt: Rifra-Verlag, 1971, 1972), includes many insightful descriptions of the pre-war Leipzig fur trade.

all, I want my, *our* baby!!!! Do you agree with that, my beloved, or do you not completely agree with the *proposition* presented to you????

You—totally and completely, *Your* Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 18 June 1938

After I inspected approximately 8.000 white foxes piece by piece from nine in the morning into the evening around six o'clock, I was so tired after dinner at 8.00 p.m. that I lay down on the bed—despite the need to get work done—and slept for a few hours. After that, I worked until five in the morning and examined approximately 4,000 more white fox pelts today. I bought 10,108 white foxes yesterday and today, after I had already bought 6,094 before. That is almost twenty-five per cent of the entire Russian white fox harvest and a very significant transaction. On top of that, I also bought other things, and I think that Schapiro will not be dissatisfied. Despite all the work, I am uncommonly fresh and feel excellent, as long as I disregard the impact of the longing for my sweet little witch.

I came here for the first time a year ago tomorrow, and when I consider how lost I felt without any knowledge of the language whatsoever and how different that was compared to now, I become aware of the fact that 365 days have gone by, a long time that has just flown by. My knowledge of the language is still laughable, but at least they seem to understand my stuttering when I want something.

The new law would mean a complete catastrophe for the poor Jews who are still living in that country of pigs! It is really inconceivable what kinds of dirty tricks that rabble comes up with and on the other hand, it is proof of how bad they are doing economically, that they have to keep devising new shabby tricks despite the opinions of foreign countries.⁹⁶

Now I want to get something to eat before I go to sleep. I wish you a wonderful trip to Blackpool and much satisfaction for your stay there! Your Mope

96 A new German law that came into effect on 14 June made it compulsory for all Jewish businesses to be identified and registered. As Mope may have foreseen, this was simply a prelude to their confiscation.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 19 June 1938

The last birthday before the end of the fourth decade of my existence is almost over, and I will begin the new year just like I ended the old one with a letter to my darling. Early today around 9 o'clock—usually, the mail does not come in until the afternoon—I received your ever so beloved letter from last Sunday and your loving congratulatory telegram, and I would like to thank you so much for all your love and friendship, which make life so beautiful to me and make me happy. It really was the *best* decision of my life. Since I did not work all that much today and the weather unfortunately did not entice me to go outside, I spent most of the day alone and enjoyed the peace and quiet.

Your conversation, or better, your answers to your store manager's questions were very intelligent and appropriate. It is no one else's business that we are already looking forward to producing a baby of our own. So you want to place it on my next birthday table and I cannot begin to tell you how happy that will make me some day, to carry a photograph of my own child instead of pictures of other children, or maybe even two of our own (if that is not too much for my beloved).

How long I will have to stay here I cannot say at this time, but I will only stay here past the beginning of September if my beloved will join me here; if not there is no way! In any case, I recommend that you file an application for a visa soon so that you would have it in time, if that should come to pass. It would not cause any problems if you did not use it. It is valid for three months after receipt and for two weeks after it is recorded in the passport until the entry takes place. Now I will go to sleep, I am very tired and hope that the letter does not prove that.

Mope who only belongs to my Veralein!

VERA TO MOPE

London, 21 June 1938

After my beloved wrote to me once again how important the question of citizenship is to him, I went to see Mr. Treger, Carlton House Terrace, with Muttilein during lunch yesterday. He asked for my passport, which was supposed to belong to me until the end of September, and explained to me that the two of us would *never* receive one again. They kept mine

and demanded that I also bring yours. Mr. Treger is a decent man, at least I think so, and he had told me the other day that I would not have to see him until you were back. I hardly think that the matter could have been handled differently by me, since they only sent the letter of invitation for *both* of us last Thursday.⁹⁷

VERA TO MOPE

London, 23 June 1938

At the moment, it is hot and oppressive, and everyone is tired and exhausted and probably more touchy than normal. Yesterday, Muttilein went to the Home Office first where she had to wait in the heat, and then, in the afternoon, she went to Carlton House Terrace where she was forced to wait for several hours. As they told her, they will send me a receipt for both of us in the next few days. Over the telephone, Joan Stiebel assured me that, even without a receipt, if she described the circumstances of the case to Mr. Cooper for me, we would get everything we wished and would have nothing to worry about!!! I am happy with that.⁹⁸

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 24 June 1938

Just a few minutes ago, I arranged for a six-minute telephone call to my darling—I would like to talk to you one more time before you set off for camp tomorrow, because I feel such immense and intense longing for you and would really like to hear your beloved voice again.

And now, the call has taken place. I want to take the opportunity to express my joy over the excellent connection for our conversation. You cannot communicate all the love you carry within yourself on the telephone, but you feel so close all of a sudden, and contrary to what I have said before, I have to say that, despite the separation that came

97 Mr. Treger was the official in the German Embassy in London who was in charge of the renewal of passports and identification papers. Despite his apparent "decency," he had no compunction about confiscating Vera's passport to indicate her de-naturalization.

98 Mr. Cooper was the Home Office official acting on the couple's behalf, and Joan Stiebel the secretary to Otto Schiff.

much too soon, a feeling of deep happiness has remained on the inside that cannot be described, because words are too poor to express it.

The news you gave me is really astonishing. So they denaturalized my darling and me without cause—just because we are Jews. That should also mean that we will not be able to get my things out of that filthy country, unless my dear mother can take some part with her. I really do hope that she will soon get out of this realm of dehumanization. That vile country has stolen so enormously much from me without any justification. What the newspapers are reporting concerning spitefulness and brutality is almost incomprehensible, but fortunately, everything on Earth does find its revenge eventually. I guess that the extension of my British residence papers will now be more effortless, as you told me, and that is very satisfying to me.

By the way, I heard that the business has been sold.⁹⁹

It has become downright cold and windy here, although the sky glows deeply blue and is filled with stars tonight—one of the shortest nights of the year, it seems. I actually enjoyed my walk to the post office, because the color of the sky was—already being brightened by the returning sun in the East like a wonderfully gleaming Burma sapphire—of a rare beauty tonight.

Do you know that I have earned more in commissions this month than what my salary amounts to? I was not prepared for that and feel quite satisfied with it. Just imagine that I bought 21,100 white foxes single-handedly and inspected them piece by piece. Besides that, I bought some Persian lamb, ermine, Kohlinski deer¹⁰⁰ lining, etc., and took over several contracts. I am telling you about this with the expectation that you are a little interested in finding out a little about my work, in which my beloved can also participate, should she come here.

I have to go back to the warehouse, and that is why I have to close this letter definitively, and with most passionate kisses and tender caresses, just like the ones my dream showed me last night. I was with my beloved completely, and we were tightly entwined, until the telephone pulled me back to reality with its loud ringing, and I realized how alone I am, and my longing for you is still growing stronger, if that is even possible.

99 The Gebrüder Felsenstein in Leipzig was forcibly Aryanized at this time with minimal or no compensation.

100 Deer from the Kola Peninsula in the western part of the Soviet Union.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 26 June 1938

Finally I have time for my beloved! Yesterday evening, I could not write to you, because I had too much work to do and then could not stay away from the furrier table because of my colleagues, a table that had been set up in the hotel restaurant to celebrate Pod-Wychodnoi. Actually, I did not have the expected Wychodnoi today, because I had to work, and now, it is way past 11 p.m., and I was not able to send my telegrams until now or take up my most favorite occupation with leisure. Following your good example, I lay down for two hours earlier and slept rather well, so that I feel quite fresh now.

As I heard, it is best to make a statement concerning one's assets remaining in Germany, because otherwise everything will be seized irrevocably once and for all. I will ask at the local embassy that the appropriate paperwork be sent so I can fill it out and note down the numbers, as far as I can remember them. The matter has to be taken care of by the 30th, so that I have no time to lose. That gang of pigs!!

I embrace you and kiss you in your tent bed, which probably only has room for me in the imagination but would actually be much too small for both of us! You! Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

St. Anne's, near Blackpool, 26 June 1938

It is almost 4 o'clock and the first opportunity to write. Sundays are always very busy in camp, because the change of occupants takes place. The ones leaving have to clear the area by 11 a.m., but some of them leave very early in the morning, and the breakfast and everything else has to be ready for them (sandwiches for the trip, etc.). Then, beginning at 11 o'clock, the new ones arrive at all hours, because they come from different parts of England, some by bus and some by train; a few arrived as early as 8 a.m. today after they had driven through the night.

The location of the field here is a closed part of a former racecourse, and there are still some half decayed grandstands in the background. The ocean is not visible; it takes about fifteen to twenty minutes to get to the water, and before dinner, I went for a short swim with some of the girls; it was not warm enough to stay in the water any longer. Those who

accompanied me were the girls who will stay here for the two weeks and so already had a week of their stay behind them. As I already told you, the enthusiasm for swimming is not all that strong in the English girls, and only three of those who went into the water had a bathing suit with them, and only *one* actually went in with me and seemed to be an excellent swimmer.

The surroundings of the big field seem to consist of homes, a gas works, and Blackpool's entertainment/look-out tower in the background. It was the wish of many of the girls to come to Blackpool, but there seems to be very little in the surroundings that is attractive. Blackpool is an entertainment center for the masses par excellence. We are three pence per bus—far distant from the center, and I am very happy about that. The air is very pure and beautiful; until now, it has been very windy, and just a little while ago, it started to rain. Despite the weather, and although I have not even been here for 24 hours, I already have "camp color" in my face. The ocean wind causes that, and it will certainly get rid of all the London air in my lungs.

My co-supervisor whom I know only fleetingly does *not* have my complete approval. In my opinion, they made a mistake at the head office. She is a "*bl[oody] foreigner*" as well, and just for political reasons, they should not have sent two supervisors who suffer from the same condition, but of course, that is not her fault. She is probably a very well-educated girl, but she is lacking all the typical English attributes: *the absolute politeness, discretion, and lack of personality*, and it is these attributes that are so especially likable in camp. Although I am not all that enthused with my co-worker, I will get along with her and learn how *not* to do things.

My tent is very large and warm; I have more than enough wool blankets and hot water bottles at my disposal whenever I want them, and I slept through the first night like a sack, without waking up even once.

Thursday evening, there was a card for me from Walter Levy to let me know that a healthy baby girl had arrived in Genoa and that Hilde was doing well. I was really happy about that, and immediately sent our congratulation in the name of Hirsch and Felsenstein and also wrote to her parents in Frankfurt. I would be very pleased if you could find the time to write a few words as well, but only if time allows.¹⁰¹

101 Having escaped from Germany, Vera's closest friend from schooldays, Hilde, and her husband Walter Lewy, were still living in Genoa at the time of the birth of their daughter Renata.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 27 June 1938

You are really soooooo very sweet. Despite all of your work, you take the time to go to Mr. Treger during lunch in order to be of help to me, knowing that it is very important to me to find out about the final decision in this matter. It is really unbelievable how that band of vermin demands the passport papers back—seemingly without any kind of reason. I hope that they gave you or Muttilein the receipt for both of us. As long as that dirty mob has the right to make the rules there, I do not want to have anything else to do with them. Who knows what kinds of elephants they made of mosquitoes! Right now, I really do regret to have incurred all those expenses in order to send the merchandise to Palestine. I am not in the position to spend much more on it, but our chances at achieving British naturalization should have increased significantly because of this new turn of events, and I suggest to you that you should have Otto submit your application as soon as possible.

The British consulate here should be contacted as soon as possible concerning the extension of my papers. That has to happen from there—as far as I know—and I hope that I am not creating too much trouble for you again. In any case, I will also take steps here.

How is that for a love letter? No, that is not a love letter at all! But it was *meant* to be one! Instead, I talk about all kinds of business matters, but at least, I have the good fortune that my sweet little witch will see it as a love letter anyway, because she knows how filled with love for her I am, that there is an especially tender kiss in every single letter, even if the combinations sound completely different. Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 3 July 1938

My departure for Leningrad has been delayed until tomorrow, presumably, since I have been unable to get my papers, which will hopefully happen tomorrow, because the inspections will start on the 5th and with that, such an enormous amount of work, which will probably keep me from writing to my darling for several days.

This afternoon, Sojuspushnina arranged a picnic excursion in our honor. We left the hotel around 4 o'clock and drove to Chimki. Because

of the bright sun and the most beautiful weather, the colors of the landscape were quite striking, and we were not in a hurry to move on. On the terrace in the lower level with a view of the canal—as far as I know, it is 85 meters wide—a table had been set, and it could not have been set more decoratively and beautifully. They put a very grand dinner in front of us. There were exquisite hors d'oeuvres, caviar, of course, crabs—a local delicatessen suckling pig—halved Russian cucumbers, hollowed out like little ships and filled, tomatoes filled with something that tasted excellent, but I cannot define it, mushroom pastries, etc. They served fish Solianka¹⁰² as the soup, then poultry, and for the finale, frozen whipped cream with fresh strawberries. I have never before eaten such good ice cream and I am thirty-nine years and fourteen days old! And of course, everyone drank a lot. There was Vodka, and then, they served a very good white wine. When dinner was finished, we were taken to a boat, and went for a ride along the canal, and then along the Moskwa (river) to Moscow, which we reached around 11 o'clock. Between Chimki and Moscow, the canal has a gradient of 42 meters, which has to be counterbalanced by sluices. As far as they told us, such big sluices do not exist anywhere else. The usual gradient is between 6 and 8 meters. It is admirable from a technical point of view, with what precision these giant sluices function, and usually, they contain three or four ships at the same time.¹⁰³

The surroundings of the canal are partly wooded and flat land that makes a beautiful impression with its summer green and grazing animals. Then, we came closer to the city and moved past great factories and many new houses still being built, and also interesting older buildings, for example, a giant former cloister with its picturesque towers and walls. At the end of our outing, we walked through the park filled with people to the underground which took us home. All of us are highly satisfied with the undertaking which had been organized most excellently. My beloved will think that a dinner without mocha afterwards can hardly have satisfied her Mope. So I forgot to mention one very important point. The coffee was served—once again with a lot

102 A traditional Russian beef soup.

103 The Moscow Canal connects the Moskva and Volga Rivers. It was constructed between 1932 and 1937 by two hundred thousand Gulag prisoners, and was heralded as a showcase for the achievements of Soviet Communism.

of alcohol—on the boat, and I drank innumerable cups, because it was excellent and also neutralized the alcohol at the same time.

Today, I dressed in my beautiful white silk suit for the first time, with a blue shirt and the wonderfully matching tie that you bought for me in Venice, and I felt extraordinarily comfortable in it, despite its sensitivity to spots. Did I already tell you that there was a downright tropical heat wave in Moscow in the last few days? Today, it was 28 ° [Celsius] in my room at 7.30 in the morning. Because of that, my white suit was a real comfort.

There is nothing going on here concerning purchases at the moment. Aside from an insignificant batch of merchandise, I have not bought anything in July yet, and I am curious to get to the auction. Since a few days ago, the market is supposed to be much firmer, so that everyone is counting on good prices during the auction. The higher they are, the better that I bought before. In any case, I have been right so far in my economic prognosis, which stood in exact opposite to a client of mine who was expecting a Persian lamb downturn. However, that could still take place by the time October gets here. Then, the season is over.

The weather and the location outside Blackpool seem to have brought nothing but disappointment for my beloved little witch, and I feel really sad about it. Nevertheless, I do hope that you will have a good rest and can return to London much strengthened.

I enclose you in my heart. Lost is the little key. You will have to stay inside forever.

Totally and Utterly, Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

St. Anne's, near Blackpool, 6 July 1938

It is 7.45 in the evening, I am lying comfortably in a lawn chair on our meadow in front of my tent; the sun is shining on my nose (I am wearing the nice blue glasses from Venice, which serve their purpose excellently and which I could not be without now that we have such beautiful sunshine). The air is absolutely calm, and I had not known until now that such a thing as a lull was even possible in St. Anne's. I am feeling great and well-rested.

This morning I received an answer from Joan Stiebel. She wants to write a letter to Mr. Cooper immediately, although the receipts from

Mr. Treger have not arrived yet. Muttilein called him again and he said that he would send them very soon, that he had forgotten about it completely with all that had happened lately. I think he is quite proper! I answered Joan right away today and told her you had been informed that everything would have to be taken care of from here and immediately at that. She told me that she would let me know as soon as she had an answer, and I believe her and hope that the matter is in good hands. You write that you think that my chances at becoming naturalized are greater now. My love, don't you know that I am not counted at all where this is concerned, but only the husband, and that I as the wife am automatically the same nationality as you, at least that is how it is according to English law.

As soon as I get back, I will order the cigarettes for you—maybe Pepper can order them for me in the meantime.

I long for you, a great, great, great longing!!!! Your Lilongo

VERA TO MOPE

St. Anne's, near Blackpool, 9 July 1938

I have to quickly tell you about a small, but very good thing: I heard from Muttilein today that Mr. Treger sent her a receipt for both of us, which she passed along to Mrs. Stiebel immediately. Since I had informed her in detail yesterday—according to your instructions from Mr. Cooper's colleagues—as to where everything should be sent, I hope that the entire matter will be taken care of soon now. I was really relieved!

Today, one of my co-workers who is very nice, but a common girl who worked her way up from the counter to staff floorwalker asked me if I had been born here or *abroad*, and when I told her *abroad* (I did not say where), she asked me if I preferred to live in England or abroad. My most energetic answer was England, but that is not really true. It is any place where I can have my most beloved human beings with me and can make a living, and aside from that, I have actually only lived in two countries, so I cannot really judge if here or *abroad* is better, because the *abroad* we left is truly not a desirable place to stay.

Afterwards, I asked myself if it is not cowardly to tell people what they want to hear, but as I told you at the beginning, she grew up without having been taught to think, and I do not know if it would be right in such cases to say what one is actually thinking concerning such

"delicate issues." She told me immediately that she had never been abroad, but no matter what kind of well-paid position she were offered in a foreign country, there was only England for her! *And why should I hurt her feelings!!!* Would you think differently?

My love, despite the miserable weather—it stormed throughout the night and the rain poured down and it also rained during the day—I enjoyed being here for a second week and was really able to relax.

As an approximate limit, we can spend on the girls one shilling and nine pence a head per day here, and of course, it really does not matter if we spend a little more. Our average spending is, bread and jam and marmalade, an apple between breakfast and lunch. Meat and vegetables and a dessert for lunch, a high tea around 6 p.m., and between 9 and 11 p.m. sandwiches, soup, cocoa, and crackers, etc. The girls have all gained a few pounds in weight, and I am sure that I have as well.

Yesterday evening, there was dancing, playing ping-pong, and singing, and everyone seemed to be highly entertained. The rain was coming down in rivers against the tent, but inside, it was so loud that the noise of the weather could be ignored. Although it was very loud, such amusements never overstep the boundaries of a nice and polite tone, despite the fact that the majority of the participants are shopgirls at M&S, contrary to similar entertainments which I participated in with so-called educated people of the university in Germany. While I am writing this, it is storming again, so much so that one could think that someone is shaking out the tarpaulins. I have to close. This will be my last letter from St. Anne's.

I am looking forward to your first report from Leningrad, which I will hopefully receive on Monday. You calculated the mail transportation excellently, since there will be no mail delivery anyway tomorrow. Your little witch

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 10 July 1938

It is 2 o'clock at night, and there is still a lot of work I have to get done before morning, but after I only sent my darling a telegram on the day before yesterday and nothing at all yesterday, I cannot let another day pass by without telling you in writing something I repeat in my thoughts every single minute—and wish that it would get through all the way to

you—that I love you unspeakably, without limits, and with everything that I am. Yesterday, your dear letter from the 3rd reached me, and today the one from the 4th, and I am so happy, even when I just see one of those familiar envelopes in my key box, that all the exhaustion caused by the stressful work of the days seems to be gone in a second. We have to get through all the merchandise by tomorrow afternoon, because the banquet that opens the auction will start at 5 o'clock, and following that, a batch of ermine will be auctioned off.

On the day before yesterday, we were invited to a private dinner with the gentlemen of Sojuspushnina during which there was a lot of drinking, which is why I was not feeling well at all yesterday. It lasted from 7.30 p.m. until after 2.00 a.m. and I lost a lot of good work time. Yesterday, I worked until 4 o'clock, and it will probably be even later today. The catalogues for the customers just have to be prepared perfectly, and aside from that, there is a lot of work and a lot of time lost because of certain customers who order me to attend to them for the most trivial things. And during all of that, I have to constantly show a friendly face and ask if the gentlemen had a relaxing afternoon nap, a good night's rest, and something different to eat for dinner.

By the way, we went for a one hour walk today, beginning around 7.30 p.m. We drove to the local cultural park, a wonderful facility that is situated on one of the three islands near Leningrad. I was very glad that I let my colleagues talk me into it, because smelling merchandise all day long and having to breathe inside air becomes unbearable over time with this kind of exhausting work. Nevertheless, people keep complimenting me on looking well, and I do feel in excellent health—knock on wood!

Tomorrow, one of my London-based clients has offered to compose a letter to the Home Office asking for an extension of my papers. According to the papers, they are assuming that I am supposed to stay here until October. It would probably be best to ask Joan Stiebel about what should be written. The number on the paper is "F 4723"—it was issued on May 14 and is valid until August 13. If the extension does not reach the British Consulate in Moscow by June 25, I will have problems, because I would have to apply for my exit visa by then, if the extension does not come through, in order to leave the country on time. *Your Mope*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 10 July 1938

I had a very good trip from Blackpool and arrived here tanned and healthy, and I have been talking to Muttilein until just now—it is past midnight. Now, I am lying in a wonderful, fresh bed—that is a true pleasure after the camp cot. I feel very relaxed and well rested, and I am sure that I have gained a few pounds.

I received a very sweet letter from your dear mother who writes that Grete and Ketty will come to see her in Leipzig and will be there to spend the last few days with her, because she will leave from there permanently around the 15th of the month. I am extremely happy about receiving this news. She and Grete write some especially nice greetings and wishes for you. Ketty had not arrived in Leipzig yet, otherwise, she would also have written something. *Your Lilongo*

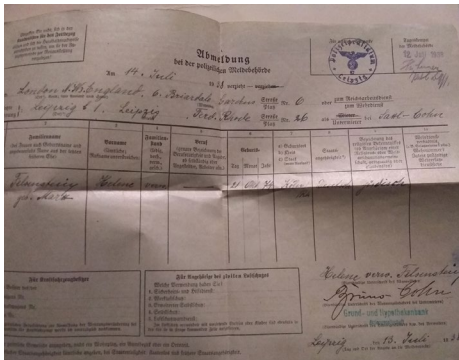


Fig. 81 Helene Felsenstein's "Abmeldung" (Exit Accreditation), Leipzig, 15 July 1938.

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 15 July 1938

While we are waiting here in the Leningrad harbor—in the Sojuspushnina warehouse—I will start to write these lines to my darling –and one of the people traveling home to England is supposed to take them. I did not write to you either yesterday or the day before yesterday. There was such an enormous amount of work that I did not even go to bed during the night from the day before yesterday to yesterday, but had to work through. Yesterday, it was 2 a.m. before I went to bed, but now the main thing is over and I intend to sleep a little more during the next few

nights. Tomorrow evening, we will travel back to Moscow and I think that my main customers will stay on for two more days before I can relax just a little.

I love you and long for you unbearably—you!!! Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 15 July 1938

Just a little while ago, I talked to your dear mother on the telephone. She arrived here safely and seemed to be in quite a good mood. She is staying with Ruth—as I already told you—and will leave in the car with Ruth and her husband for Sheringham¹⁰⁴ early Sunday to visit Hannalein who is on vacation there. Unfortunately, I will not be able to see her before she leaves. I had really hoped that I would be able to go and see her Sunday morning, but that is the time when she is leaving. Your dear mother told me that she had been issued an exit visa for a year, that she is doing very well. In Leipzig, they told her that your things were all free and *not* confiscated.¹⁰⁵ She sends you many loving greetings and wishes and is glad that she is finally here.

She told me that she was already becoming accustomed to being here and that she is very glad to be here and that *everything* had gone very smoothly. Now, she is hoping that all of her things will also arrive soon without any problems, just like it had been planned. Her main wish is to get Grete's and Ketty's families out as well.

I had written to her when she was still in Leipzig to ask if she would not like to stay with us—whilst Hannalein is away. That was Muttilein's wonderful idea and also that we could procure some plates, pots, etc., so that Oma Lenchen can supervise the kosher kitchen herself. I made the suggestion that I would like her to teach me how to cook like she does—as far as my free time allows, because I know that my beloved would be very happy about that. I had hoped in vain that she would perhaps come here!

My love, how indescribably difficult the inspection week with the writing of catalogues must have been, and the necessity of making polite conversation and playing host for the customers. I want to mail this letter

104 A seaside resort in Norfolk on the east coast of England.

105 Unfortunately, this turned out to be incorrect, though Oma Lenchen succeeded in retrieving some of Mope's personal items that had been stored in the warehouse at the Gebrüder Felsenstein prior to the confiscation of the business by the Nazis.

today and hope to hear my beloved on the telephone yet today, as soon as I have sent off this letter. Totally and completely, *Your* little witch

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 18 July 1938

I thank you for all your efforts concerning my papers and I am so relieved that everything is coming together and I can do without that gang of pigs who refuses to extend my earlier papers. I think that you can fill out the questionnaires the tax department sent in my name with the remark that the declarations were made from memory. I do not want that gang to be able to accuse me of failing to do something. By the way, I gave a copy of my long letter to a Leipzig "Aryan" who is quite influential there and was here for the auction. He will take the matter on and I am curious to see if that will lead to a more positive result. He has already helped several Jews, which has to be considered very decent coming from an "Aryan" in this day and age.

Now I have to talk about something that makes me a thousand times happier than the order brought to my paperwork and many other things—please forgive me—and that is the fact that my beloved mother got out of that hell healthy and happy. I cannot express in words what that means to me and I ask you to tell her in my name that I feel so much lighter now that that ton of weight, which bore me down, has been taken from me. Had she acted according to my wishes, her emigration would have taken place many years before under much more advantageous circumstances, but it is silly to repeat old news and thereby reduce my happiness which is great indeed.

I kiss you on all your sweet places, those with little nipples, little hairs, little clefts, with my lips and my tongue, until both of us swim in our juices and we fall asleep embracing in exhaustion. How I long *for that*, you sweet, beautiful beloved! Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 20 July 1938

The trains to and from Leningrad always leave at night so that no one loses any work hours. The trip took between twelve and thirteen

hours. Most likely, I will have to go again in a few days to take on more merchandise, but I will probably stay no longer than a day or two. The sad thing is that I will be unable to write to you while I am traveling, because usually I am not alone in the compartment. During the journey back to Moscow, there were *four* of us, and one of those was a farmer's wife who was surely eighty years old. When you travel, you absolutely *have* to travel first class on the trains, because then, there will be two per sleeping compartment instead of four.

I still have a lot of work to do. I took on another three and a half thousand white foxes yesterday. Rather unexpectedly, this article has become quite an important part of our business and I only hope that the customers will do well with it. Their handling takes an inordinate amount of time. Since I have been here, I have bought over £150,000 worth of merchandise, including the auction purchases. That means commission earnings of around £100—apart from my salary. I hope that my darling is satisfied with that.

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 23 July 1938

Today, I inserted into my schedule a very lazy day, and tomorrow is Wychodnoi so that I will be able to really rest for once. A year ago, on July 26, I left here to travel to my beloved sweet girl, to you—my wife. We were *very* good friends then and loved each other a lot, but neither one of us had any idea that this year of our marriage would bring us so much closer to each other and ignite our love into such a blaze. Our ability to feel has grown to such dimensions—formerly unknown to us—and because of the two of us, we, or at least, I have become a completely happy and satisfied human being because of my most beloved, sweetest, intelligent Veralein, and the only thing I long for now is to put an end to these unbearable periods of separation so I can feel all the happiness a human being can give to another.

These words will most likely reach you before August 1, maybe even on July 29, the anniversary of my arrival there a year ago, and I feel like thanking the pleasant gentleman at the registrar's office one more time for his help in letting me win my happiness. Do you remember when I was jokingly complaining that I was put in a taxi and "dragged" to the registrar's office? Your dear mother was quite offended at that remark.

What I would not give if I could be with you—at least during these days—and tell you about my love, my joy in you, and my happiness because of you in person, to take you in my arms and kiss you and forget about the difficult times of separation for just a little while.

My most heartfelt thanks for the greetings from my dear mother and I would like to ask you to return them with my love. She will probably arrive back in London around the same time as these words will reach you. So she has decided to move to Ruth's for the time being. Unfortunately, because of the distance, you will most likely not get to see her all that often. A short time ago, I wrote to Fred concerning a potential possibility for Grete and Ketty, but I have not received an answer yet. I would be very happy if we no longer had to deal with that gang of criminals.

Now, I want to go to bed and fall asleep thinking of my sweet darling so that my dreams will carry me to you and let me embrace you and kiss you most tenderly. How bitterly I miss you and all the sweet caresses that our togetherness always brings. I hunger and thirst for you like a desert wanderer. But *no* mirage can pretend to show me my oasis where I can and will slake my thirst. I love you unspeakably and more than anything, you, most beloved!!! *Your Mope*

VERA TO MOPE

London, 25 July 1938

I have quite an exhausting day behind me today. Earlier today I was in Hammersmith—I did not leave there until around 11 o'clock although I was supposed to be in Kilburn at that time. The main discussion centered on the new store in Ealing. They instructed me to hire another forty sales assistants by the end of August! Between now and September 2, I am supposed to go to Ealing as often as possible to interview staff there, to follow up on the establishment of the store, etc.

I was in Kilburn until around 7 o'clock where the entire staff greeted me and said hello in the most touching manner. I never thought it possible that a well-organized and smooth-running machine could become so completely off kilter. My successor, who was fired, left last week. Her successor might be intelligent and very eager and probably even suitable, but her education and training are inadequate, but they have *no one* else, and I tried to give her as much training as possible today, but what is an afternoon for an uncountable number of things!

None of my well-ordered files is there any longer; forms and paperwork are lying in heaps all over the desk, some from as far back as June and some from the beginning of this month, paperwork that has not been taken care of yet. Never has the personnel turn-over been as great as it has been in the last five months. Despite all of that, the store's proceeds have increased while they have gone down just a little in Hammersmith compared to last year's income, because the British Home Stores have become better known.¹⁰⁶

Just now, I wrote a letter to your dear mother and sent her a word for word copy of the passage in which you express your joy at her emigration. Warburg sent you a bank statement today. It is the itemization of your foreign assets and contains the remark that they have been blocked. Do you want me to send it to you?

I want to get these words to the post office tonight.

Completely and utterly and full of the gentlest love, Your Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Moscow, 27 July 1938

I am dead tired and cannot even think right any longer, but I do want to write a few words to you anyway. After I came back from the warehouse, I worked until about 1 a.m. The continuing heat here makes you feel a little exhausted, especially if you sleep little and very restlessly; otherwise, I would not be so tired at this hour of the night.

Tomorrow, I have to pack all my stuff again, because I am traveling to Leningrad. Before I leave, I will receive my extension which arrived at the embassy but will not reach the British consulate until tomorrow, because they have different buildings in different parts of town. I will probably stay in Leningrad for just a few days, so you should keep sending your mail here, because otherwise, I will not have mail in either place.

That is how far I got last night and then, I was unable to continue because my bed was actually screaming for me. Tonight, on the train, I will not be able to write to my darling, unfortunately, because I am sure that I will not be alone in the compartment, since a lot of people are traveling during the tourist season. Now I will close because there are still a few things to be taken care of today. I will try to send the letter by airmail and

106 British Home Stores, founded in 1928, became a rival to Marks & Spencer, though aiming at a less affluent clientele. It remained in business until 2016.

I am curious to find out if it will reach you sooner this way. I long for you terribly, because I love you unspeakably and for all eternity, Your Mope

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 29 July 1938

Another long day has gone by and I finally get around to my darling to whom I was unable to write yesterday—before the departure to here. After I had the visa in my hands around 4 p.m. yesterday, I went to see the consul who received me in a friendly manner and extended my papers until the end of the year. A large burden was lifted off my shoulders and I thank you, my beloved girl, from the bottom of my heart for all your efforts.

My trip here appears to be for nothing, unfortunately, because I cannot see how I will be able to come to a business deal. We, a few colleagues and I, arrived here around 10.00 this morning. The trip took place on one of those especially organized first class trains—for a “cruise” of Americans—on a German ship, no less—and it was quite comfortable. I shared the compartment with one of the colleagues and next door, there were two American women—we talked to them for a few hours before turning in for the night. In the end, I gave one of them your telephone number and address—she is going to London in a few days—so that she can pass along my most loving greetings to you.

Today, a young father from New York told me during dinner everything a woman should do during pregnancy and after the birth of the child, and I so wish to put my new knowledge to practical use with my beloved in the near future. Actually, I do not agree with his statement that a young mother should not breastfeed her baby. He claimed that—one of your prettiest decorations—the breast would be irreversibly enlarged. I think that that is not correct, and even if it is, we do know that it would be necessary for a very important reason, and I would not like you even *one iota less*. Additionally, he said that a woman should not gain any weight during pregnancy which is something I cannot judge at all. The child would not have to be heavier than six pounds and would have more room to move in the mother’s womb, room that would not be available for very heavy children. Here I am divulging all my wisdom much too early—wisdom I lack any kind of proof for—because I think that

you are interested as well, since you are the one who will experience all of that in person.

In my thoughts, I embrace you and kiss you with all my love and filled with boundless longing for my sweetest, most beloved being, my beautiful Lilongo. Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 29 July 1938

I had the afternoon off today and since I was dead-tired I lay down and rested for a little while. This morning, I trained five new girls and talked to them for about two and a half to three hours with the utmost concentration and drilled them, and beforehand and afterwards, I took care of a lot of things I deemed necessary. I only found *one* girl for Ealing and I am not all that sure of her yet. I am hoping to find two additional floor walkers who have already held that position for some time and would like a relocation and a raise. Enough shop!!!!

Today, after dinner, I called Fred at the office. He was getting ready to depart for Sheringham again for the bank holiday. He said that the court case concerning the Antwerp merchandise will begin after September 15, after the court recess is over.

Most heartfelt, passionate kisses, my friend and the only man I love, my husband. I am completely and utterly, body and soul, *your* Lilongo

MOPE TO VERA

Leningrad, 31 July 1938

I have already put all my words of love into my letters in the last few weeks and now, they are just repetitions but the feelings are so great and new every day and, if that was even possible, heightened daily in infinite love for you who are the substance of my life. I hope that all my love letters have reached you in time and give my beloved a little joyful feeling on this special day by what they would like to and are meant to express.

It is going to be 11 p.m. soon where you are and my golden girl will lie down in her lonely bed and think the way I do, that two people who love each other so boundlessly and completely should be able to lie

together on this day and give each other all the tenderness and love they feel. How my fingertips yearn for the voluptuous feeling of caressing your skin and come closer and closer to your sweetest Muschi and feel it become excited and swell, and how your entire body begins to yearn for the union with mine. How all the muscles loosen and everything prepares itself just for one thing, to receive the seed, just like the blooms in the field and on the meadow are waiting devotedly to be inseminated by the dust that will be brought to them. How my entire body and my entire soul is enlivened by the wish to be united with you in the highest delight, with you, feeling you with all my pores, to call out to you, "Come to me quickly, my beloved, and let us enjoy *this* day and the many that separated us, because they are now part of the past—and we can make up for lost time."¹⁰⁷

When these lines reach my beloved, there will still be a month between us, such a terribly long time when so much homesickness and such burning, smoldering longing has to be bridged. We have been married a year today and it seems to me as if we have been together for a lifetime and it seems like the day of our wedding was yesterday. What an infinite abundance of experiences lies between those two great days!! Do you really know *how* much I love you? You! Mine, MINE!!! Completely and utterly Your Mope

VERA TO MOPE

London, 31 July 1938

My beloved! One year ago today, we were together and celebrated our wedding. I was Mrs. Felsenstein already and the wedding celebration was still in front of us. Yesterday evening, when I arrived home around 9.45 p.m., I found a card telling me that flowers had been left there for me. I found a box with sixty carnations and each one prettier than the next. They glow and fill the small writing room in which I am putting these words on paper with their peculiar fragrance. They are dark red, pale pink, white, and violet and beautify my free days and liven up my loneliness.

107 Mope is very loosely echoing the lines from the biblical Song of Solomon, 2:10-14.