

# *Letters to Antwerp*

*Beginnings are always bitter, and there is much that you will find hard and even painful. Good intentions, however, along with necessity, that hard taskmaster, will build a bridge over all the difficulties.*

*T*HESE WORDS PENNED BY my father's older brother Arnold have stayed with me. Their imagery takes me by surprise, as does so much in that first letter dated April 2, 1939. The only description of Arnold that I recall my father using is *vernünftig*—*sensible*.

That terminology sat well with my own longing for an elder brother to smooth my path and with my concept of people drawn, as was Arnold, to the profession of engineering. Now, I discover the three-dimensional Arnold whose tenacious optimism is an outgrowth of a deep family connection.

*Today marks the eighth day since we took leave of each other, and still I have this terrible sadness in me that for the first time has grabbed me so deeply. You can imagine how happy we were when we learned of your safe arrival in Antwerp and how much lighter we all felt. In our thoughts, we accompany you every single day on your big journey and we talk about you constantly.*

*I am writing to you on my very first free day so that you will get my lines right after you arrive in Antwerp. I hope that greetings from the homeland will bring you some consolation in your new and unaccustomed surroundings. Gretl's sister Anny and her dear husband Ludwig will certainly do all they can to make the transition bearable for you, soften the circumstances, and spare you many an unpleasant encounter that they themselves were forced to undergo. For us, it is very reassuring and our strongest spiritual support to know that you are in an assured existence, for we are also building our future upon you.*

*In this connection, I beg you to write immediately to Bella regarding her promise of sending us an affidavit. It would certainly comfort Vera and me if we had any prospect of emigrating to America.*

*Yesterday afternoon we were at Elsa's. We were the only guests, so it was really quiet in contrast to last week. We talked a lot about you, and Emil reported on your letter. For your efforts regarding Tovona, please accept many thanks, dear Edi. Unfortunately, in the meantime we have had a negative answer because the regulations there will not allow the immigration of Jews.*

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A NEW HANDWRITING FOLLOWS, that of Arnold's wife Vera. As a doctor, Vera has eyes like a camera, and she captures the moment of our departure

*I still see you in front of my eyes as you looked out of the train window, especially the curly blond head of little Helen who was so*

*joyful and so cute and who laughed as if there were no such word as "farewell." I hope that the child with her unconscious optimism will be all right in the end.*

With gentle humour, Vera acknowledges that far from being an elegant cruise, our Atlantic crossing will be a time of seasickness and misery.

*We think and speak of you often, and will continue to do so during your days on the high seas. We will think of you with special empathy every time we see food.*

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WHERE ARNOLD AND VERA leave off, the elegant penmanship of my father's sister Else fills the page.

*My dear ones, it has been a week already since we said farewell to you and in the meantime, you have gone a considerable distance from us. We think of you every hour and our soul follows you every step of your journey. It is now Sunday afternoon, the first one without you. Any moment, I expect the door to open and you to come in. I will hear Helly say "Aunty Elsa, I want a piece of bread and goose fat."*

Aunty Elsa. *Tante* Else. I experimented in both English and German, rolling the words about on my tongue, but the words had no familiar feel. I found it difficult to imagine that I used to burst through the door regularly, calling out to this beloved aunt.

What was less surprising is that my insatiable appetite dates back even further than I had known. My mother had often told me the story of our Atlantic crossing. As she and my father lay below deck, retching in airless cabins crammed with bunk beds, I wandered the ship telling complete strangers that I was hungry. Even today, it is difficult for me not to head for the kitchen the moment I walk through my front door.

If my hunger has not changed, at least the food that calms it is different. Rendered goose fat is no longer a staple in my diet. In my mother's world, the hierarchy of treats was goose fat, duck fat, and chicken fat, in descending order. My mother loved to reach in with her hand to pull out the thick creamy white layer nestled beneath the skin of the bird. She'd render it slowly in a pan, perhaps adding a bit of onion for extra flavour. Only when it had cooled and resolidified was I allowed to spread it on a thick slab of rye bread.

*It has still not sunk into my consciousness that you really are gone. Still, we must all count our blessings that things went so quickly and so favourably because now it would be much harder and maybe impossible because they've stopped issuing exit visas.*

*Our Marianne has suddenly been seized by a great urge to go to England. However, I doubt if it will be possible for her because there is such a crowd wanting to go. My dear Emil had to spend several hours in line this week for her even to get a number and she won't hear anything further for at least two weeks. I cannot get used to the thought of letting her go abroad already, yet the sooner it were to happen, the better for her.*

*Sadly, this is now the lot of so many parents. I just keep hoping that we can all stay together for a few more years. Fate seems to be determining otherwise.*

Although she tries to conceal it, Else's sadness at the prospect of sending Marianne to England looms large. I picture my own daughters as they were in their early teens, fiercely independent yet needing support in order to grow straight and tall. How reluctant I would have been to entrust their care to others at that crucial stage of development!

Having always imagined that I would have the ferocity of a tiger when it came to defending my children, I have often wondered how bad things would have to be before I would send my children to another country to be parented by strangers. I have been unable to imagine it, that sending away of my children. Other horrors I can imagine easily, and these are seldom far

from my thoughts. The fear of persecution is with me always.

With the birth of each child, I bought gold coins that I planned to sew into the hem of their clothing should we ever need to flee. If my children risked being separated from me, I wanted whoever found them to have the means to provide food and shelter. Even today, each new world crisis fans the flames of my paranoia. Old fears may lie buried, but they do not vanish.

I still have the gold.

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THE NEXT FAMILY MEMBER who adds a few lines to the April 2 letter is Else's husband, Dr. Emil Urbach. He addresses his words only to my father, and they are a mixture of sensible advice and unvarnished facts.

*I was very pleased that things went relatively well en route, and I hope that you will also have good weather at sea. In your present situation, you need to consume a rich diet in order to build up strength for farming.*

Emil gives no indication of wanting to come to Canada, but he is arranging to send his daughter to safety in England.

*For us, nothing has changed. We intend to send Marianne to a family in England, and we have had her registered for this. On Friday the 14th of this month, we will find out whether and under what circumstances it may come to pass.*

It was Emil's wording that led me to think of *Kindertransport*, a word I vaguely remembered. Now, I looked up the specifics.

Between 1938 and 1940, Britain eased its immigration restrictions to allow at least 7500 Jewish children from Austria, Germany, and Czechoslovakia into the country. Although Britain's altruism was tempered by a hefty dose of practicality—private citizens or organizations had to guarantee to pay for not only the care and education of these children but also for their eventual emigration from Britain—Britain did reach out.

Canada and the U.S. opted instead to prevent such emigration to their shores. In 1940, the Canadian embassy in Washington informed the Prime Minister that the American government opposed the admission of Jewish children to Canada, fearing that these children might somehow slip across the border into the United States. However, even as it closed its doors to Jewish children, Canada granted both temporary and permanent residence to British-born children, and to children born in France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Scandinavia.<sup>1</sup> It shocked me deeply to discover that anti-Semitism had put down such strong roots both in both Canada and in the United States.

It was with thoughts of the Urbach letter still freshly in my mind that I watched *Nicolas Winton: The Power of Good*, a documentary film in the CBC-TV *Witness* series. The program features reporter Joseph Schlesinger spotlighting “Nicky,” a very modest Englishman who single-handedly saved over six hundred Czech children, including himself. On the off chance that he might have seen the program, I emailed my only Canadian relative, a cousin thrice removed on my mother’s side.

Now in his eighties, Cousin Herbert had indeed seen the program. More remarkably, he had been among the tearful Czech children peering from the train windows, waving a last farewell to their parents. I have kept Herbert’s email.

*Schlesinger is excellent and the film is almost a fairy tale come true. At one point, I was moved to sobbing. And of course, the moments of parting from my parents at our small town railway station are etched into my memory. The things said and swallowed, the thoughts held in check. ...*

Once again, I was tongue-tied by another’s pain. I could not ask Herbert to relive that departure from Prague. Seeking to know more, however, I attended a local workshop where “child survivors” told their story. Particularly moving was the saga of a man exactly my age. His parents had put him aboard a train to England, but the German invasion trapped that train in the Netherlands. A kind family opened its doors to a child from the train.

Just as I had forgotten ever knowing my relatives, he too quickly forgot the people of his earliest years. He never questioned the blond hair or blue eyes of his siblings. His memory of another family vanished. Shortly after war's end, there was a knock at the door. The young boy was greeted by a distraught stranger, a haggard, wild-eyed woman who claimed to be his mother. Decades later, his wounds are still fresh.

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FOLLOWING CLOSELY UPON Emil Urbach's words is the handwriting of my father's sister Martha. Her words carry a noticeable whiff of fear, perhaps wondering if the goodbyes were forever.

*We miss you terribly, yet you are "the chosen" for blessed are those who can move far away. May God grant that you arrive safely and well at your destination. As you step onto the new earth, we wish you every imaginable good thing. May the air of your new homeland give you the strength to regain a good foothold and may you earn your daily bread in peaceful work.*

There is an unexpected poetry and grandeur to Martha's words. Where did this village girl with minimum schooling acquire such language skills?

As if in counterbalance, Martha wraps herself in the love that binds the family together. She addresses us playfully, using terms of endearment. My mother is "Greterl," and my father is "Ederle." I am "Helly-child." To my surprise, I discover that I also had a name for Martha.

*I believe that little Helly-child will have it easiest. She will make herself at home and feel happy everywhere. Does she still remember Matie? I send her many thousands of kisses.*

I linger over the word "Matie." The childish nickname tells me that Aunt Martha was a beloved fixture in my life. How can I have no memory of her? I am taken aback to learn that before we left Europe, I could speak and

understand. I had never thought of myself as talking to this aunt, as running to embrace her, as smelling her perfume and feeling her arms around me. Through her letter, Martha moves from the abstract shadows to a concrete reality. For the first time, I realize that I was young but I was not unaware.

Matie. The word touches me deeply. Having no memory of Martha's presence, I am taken by surprise at the impact of her absence.

I am surprised too by the level of her anxiety. It is palpable. She makes no pretence of reassuring my father that all is well, and there is no escaping the directness of her words.

*Unfortunately, the situation is getting more serious with each passing day. We rack our brains day and night, and if possible, we would leave tomorrow. If we survive this new test of nerves, more trials await us. And yet, if one has no choice, one must, that is, if one can.*

*And going to Palestine? Well then, what happens to the children? You know the situation only too well! It's just that it's getting sadder by the day. It's totally impossible to get the blue cards now.*

*Dearest Ederle, I don't need to repeat to you our urgent plea, but nevertheless, should the matter be totally hopeless, then write to us as soon as possible, even though it would pain us terribly. Perhaps fate will still grant us some nice hours together. After all, we spent our youth together. Perhaps there will also be time together for us as adults?*

There is much in Martha's letter that begins to haunt me. I begin with her question about going to Palestine. Why is this not an obvious solution, and why does she seem to imply that this would be without the children? Once again, I head for the library, trying to understand the circumstances in 1939.

I knew that the state of Israel had not been founded until 1948, and that its creation had been an effort by the nations of the world to make amends. I knew that Israel had not been founded without a struggle, but the details had blurred. I wondered why the Fränkels did not simply board the next

ship heading across the Mediterranean to Palestine.

Now, I discovered that after World War I, the League of Nations had approved and signed the British Mandate giving Britain the power to rule Palestine. Between 1920 and 1948, Britain placed severe limits on Jewish emigration to Palestine. The greater the pressure from those seeking to escape the Nazis, the more strictly the British enforced the regulations.

To break the bottleneck, some Zionist groups organized illegal “transports,” mostly of able-bodied adults who could work the land and fight for freedom. This knowledge provided the answer to a translation problem I was having with a later part of the letter, a part where Martha’s husband uses the word *transport*, which is not a German word. The only time I ever heard my parents use the word was later, after the war, and only in reference to the trains that took Jews to the concentration camps. I was afraid that I had misunderstood.

I found my answer in the words of novelist Arthur Koestler who draws a parallel between the locked boxcars carrying Jews to their death and the ships headed for Palestine. He calls them “the little death ships.”

*The story of Palestine from May 1939 to the end of the war is essentially the story of Jews trying to save their skins, and of the effects of the Mandatory power to prevent this through an immigration blockade. ... It is essential... to bear in mind that the Jews in immediate danger of life were those in German-occupied territory; that precisely these people’s escape had been declared “illegal”. ...*

*The practical consequences of this policy were... that in Palestine, over half a million Jews waited with open arms for their tormented kin... while over the Mediterranean and Black Sea, unclean and unseaworthy little cargo boats... tossed about in open waters, waiting in vain for permission to discharge their crowded human cargoes. Hunger, thirst, disease and unspeakable living conditions reigned on those floating coffins.*

*In March and April 1939, three-refugee ships... packed with Jews reached Palestine and were refused permission to land.*

*In the British House of Commons, Mr. Noel-Baker asked what*

*would happen to these people. The Colonial Secretary, Mr Malcolm MacDonald said that they had been sent back to where they came from.*

*Mr. Noel-Baker: "Does that mean to concentration camps?"*

*Mr. MacDonald: "The responsibility rests with those responsible for organizing illegal immigration."<sup>2</sup>*

I did not know that Dachau and other concentration camps had been established even before the outbreak of war, and that the Allies had been aware of the existence of these camps. I thought the horror stories had only become known after the liberation. Perhaps that is what I needed to believe.



WHEN I CLOSED THE HISTORY books and returned again to Martha's letter, the narrowness of my father's escape leapt out at me.

*You know the situation only too well. It's just that it's getting worse by the day. It's totally impossible now to get the blue cards.*

I telephoned Mimi with new questions. She confirmed what I suspected. The blue cards were exit visas requiring authorization stamps from both the bank and the Gestapo. It must have been a blue card that my father took to the bank, along with his other documents, on the morning that a sleepy teller gave him the last exit visa to be issued in Prague.

Small wonder that Martha is overwhelmed by their plight. In begging my father for help, I note that twice she has underlined the words "urgent plea." She switches to other topics, but her pretence of a normal life is quickly shattered.

*Yesterday we visited our friend Wally. Wherever we go, people are talking about the same topic.*

Only when Martha is talking about her children do the shadows lift. The baby provides flickering glimpses of happiness.

*Our dear Dorothy is very cute, but for the last week, she has been getting up on her knees in the baby carriage. We have to strap her in so that she can't fall out. We are going to have to put up a little bed for her. Iserl is very good.*

The bed seems symbolic. If they put up a bed for her, it means that they will not be leaving just yet. The bed also leads me to another question. How and where is this family of four living? They must have left everything behind in Nazi-controlled Austria and made their way from their home in Linz to Prague, where Arnold and Vera would have reached out. I scan carefully, but this first letter offers no clues.

My eyes are drawn to the very short sentence, “*Iserl is very good.*” It is another bond between me and my nine-year old cousin, for I too was a good child. Raised in a country where self-assertion and rebellion against parental control seemed to be the norm, I wrestled with being so different from my peers. As an adult, I have learned that “goodness” is an issue for every child whose family has stared death in the face. How does one imagine Anne Frank misbehaving? When life and death are at stake, children learn quickly to “be good.”



MANY DAYS PASSED BEFORE I again picked up Martha's letter. I welcomed every excuse to procrastinate. She had touched a nerve, and I did not want to feel the intense emotions that her words evoked.

*... should the matter be totally hopeless, then write to us as soon as possible, even though it would pain us terribly. Perhaps fate will still grant us some nice hours together. After all, we spent our youth together. Perhaps there will also be time together for us as adults?*



Written on the back of this photo:  
To my dear Uncle Edi, a souvenir of my second birthday,  
January 23, 1933. Ilserl.

How heavy Martha's heart must have been when she penned those words. From my own childhood, I have retained the perspective that a heavy heart is the norm. My parents always seemed to be walking under a cloud, and their conversation always focused on problems. Equipment that malfunctioned. People who disappointed. Expenses. "*Life is not easy,*" my mother would often say with a sigh.

But my mother and father tried to make me happy. Although they did without themselves, they managed to buy a special gift for each of my birthdays. My first watch. A ring with a small green chip marketed as my birthstone. I knew that the gift was an expression of their love, and was supposed to make me happy.

In return, I tried to make my parents happy. I was always a good girl. I succeeded in making them proud of my achievements. School was an easy

route to that pride. I earned good grades while hiding my social struggles and the many ways in which I knew myself to be a major misfit. As a teenager lacking in Saturday night dates, this became a difficult challenge, but in the early years, my parents were easy to fool.

Their childhood in Europe had been so very different from my early years in Canada. My father had been part of a large, bustling family. My mother had lived with a sister almost her own age and a bevy of friends in a small town in Bavaria. I grew up as an only child on an isolated farm in Southern Ontario where I attended a one-room schoolhouse. My first years in school were so traumatic that I have almost completely erased them from conscious memory. My classmates made it clear that I would never attain social acceptance.

My first sin was that I spoke no English in a school where we were taught to sing “Rule Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!” My second sin was that I spoke German, the language of the enemy. My third sin was that I was a Jew when that was still a dirty word.

For years, I blamed myself for being a social outcast. After we left the farm, I did try to make Jewish friends, but the relationships never gelled. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the young Jews that I met seemed either materialistic or caught up in a pro-Israeli world of which I knew nothing. I was as baffled by those who sought to fight for a homeland far from Canadian shores as I was by those who thought only of what to wear to the next party.

For a while, I thought that if non-Jews got to know me first as a person, then the fact of my having been born Jewish would not matter. Life taught me otherwise. The girls in my high school formed a “sorority” from which I alone was excluded. The few boys who tried to date me backed out after their parents asked, “Helen who?” and heard my last name.

Slowly, I began to understand my parents a little, and to notice the deep scars left by a world that had totally rejected them. I spent much time trying to imagine what it had been like for them. How could they trust again, after their former classmates and the friends with whom they had once played soccer or hopscotch turned against them? What new meaning did they attach to the word “neighbour” after watching those who had always

lived next door hide behind drawn curtains and avert their eyes on the street? For my part, I became both reluctant to trust and eager to trust, knowing well that a diet of suspicion corrodes the soul.

As I think back, not once during those years on the farm or even during our time in the city did my parents connect with what they called “real” Canadians. All the visitors to our home who sat down for tea or a meal spoke with that same Germanic accent that set them apart, no matter what their degree of fluency.

I do not believe that my parents ever lost that sense of alienation, of “otherness” imposed by the outside world. They often mentioned being “foreigners” or “greenhorns,” and there were audible quotation marks around their use of these words. While my mother partly mastered the art of sour grapes, claiming not to want what she could not have, my father was more complex. It was difficult for me to grasp that he had once been a carefree soul who strummed the ukulele and played piano at family gatherings in Europe. I saw him as quiet, thoughtful, sensitive, and shadowed by loneliness.

Although he often thought aloud during our Sunday morning walks, seeming to forget that I was just a child, the concerns my father voiced were always about the present. About his adult years in Europe, he rarely spoke. Now, as I began reading the letters, I also began looking for the roots of that lingering sadness even my best efforts could not dissolve.

I found a clue to that sadness in Emil Fränkel’s first letter. His handwriting follows closely that of his wife Martha’s in that letter of April 2, 1939. Emil’s words seem to leave the page and reverberate in the silence of my morning.

*My dear ones,*

*Longingly we awaited your first news about your trip and your arrival in Antwerp.*

*I was just over visiting your parents at 11 o’clock in the morning when your letter arrived.*

*I opened the letter and Papa read it to us.*

*We were all overjoyed to have good news from you, and we all*

*have only one wish: that the dear Lord continue to accompany you to your destination. Whenever I'm so lonely for you, I comfort myself with the thought that at last, after such a long time, in a matter of days you will have reached your place of rest.*

*I visit your parents twice a day and do all their errands. Your furniture is now at Bush's where it sits next to Anny's things. Both will be shipped together, but please do tell Anny that it is totally impossible to send the additional items she has requested.*

*As dear Martha has just written, we are waiting for your report in order to get a picture of what our chances are of getting there. At the moment there is absolutely no possibility of being allowed to emigrate.*

*Liebreich and his family were supposed to leave this week for Palestine, but the transport has been delayed indefinitely. Uncle Fritz thinks we should all report for the next transport. Arnold would join us. And so my thoughts are working day and night, and I just don't know what to do next.*

Line by line, I pored over the letter, seeking to understand. Because Emil was the first to glimpse the shadows on the horizon and to encourage my father to go to Canada, I expected him to provide details that others had missed. Although many questions remain, his letter did not disappoint.

*Longingly we awaited your first news about your trip and your arrival in Antwerp.*

*Longingly. Sehnsüchtig.* The poetically positioned adverb is as strikingly out of place in German as it is in English. I must remind myself that these words were penned not by a poet, but by a practical, down-to-earth businessman. I double-check Martha's part of the letter, and note that she has added a postscript that she underlines. *Emil is VERY lonely for you.*

How seldom in my world today do I hear a man acknowledge being lonely, let alone for his brother-in-law? Martha's words are a testimonial to

the level of affection between these two men, and to the depth of my father's loss. Emil had been not just his brother-in-law, but also his confidant and best friend.

*I was just over visiting your parents at 11 o'clock in the morning when your letter arrived.*

Morning finds Emil at his daily post: visiting my mother's parents, Max and Resl. I knew that it was Emil's promise to look after them that had finally convinced my mother to leave for Canada. There has never been, and there still is no doubt in my mind that my mother firmly expected her parents to follow. Realities and potential complications would not have prevented her from believing whatever she needed to believe. Because Emil had assured her that he would look after Max and Resl and book their immediate passage to Canada, my mother left Europe convinced that she and her parents would soon be reunited.

*I visit Gretl's parents twice a day and do all their errands.*

I try to imagine the scene that greeted Emil every morning. My grandmother Resl would be sitting quietly in a chair, barely registering Emil's knock at the door. In a misguided attempt to cure my grandmother's menopausal symptoms, the medical experts of the early 1930s had destroyed her mind. Fearing the approach of her own menopausal symptoms, my mother had often told me the story. It had only been mid-day when my grandmother took off her apron for the last time. Bone-weary from cooking, cleaning, raising two children as well as daily bookkeeping and work in the shop that was my grandparents' livelihood, she had sunk into her chair and spoken the fatal words: "*I cannot. I am too tired. I just cannot do it anymore.*" They had sent her off to a sanatorium for electroshock treatment to regain her ability to work. Now she could barely function.

I try to picture my grandfather Max opening the door to admit Emil. Even on a weekday morning, Max would be formally attired in a three-piece suit befitting his self-image as *pater familias*. Although he would proffer

Emil a hearty welcome, there would not even be a cup of coffee waiting. If his wife could no longer serve him and his daughters had run off to foreign parts, then someone else would have to fill that breach.

Every detail leads me to another question. If my grandmother Resl was unable to function, who did the actual cooking? Surely not Emil, for men of his class and generation stayed out of the kitchen. Did Martha prepare extra food that Emil brought over? An unlikely scenario because my mother's father was among the very few observant German Jews who insisted on a strictly kosher diet. He would have refused food prepared in Martha's kitchen.

Beyond the family specifics, how did my grandfather and other observant Jews cope with having to violate dietary principles that had been among the very foundations of their life? Did such issues dwindle in importance compared to all else that was happening?

My grandparents Max and Resl were completely dependent on others. They had remained in Germany until 1937, when Anny had finally convinced them to come to Czechoslovakia. Their assets remained frozen in Germany, as did Emil's in Austria. How did Emil cope? In Prague only on a visitor's visa and denied gainful employment, he must have felt so superfluous. Not once but twice a day, he visits Max and Resl and does all their errands.

What were these errands and what was my grandfather doing while Emil did the errands? Max was only in his early fifties, and in the prime of life. Back home in Cham, Germany, he had been president of the town's Jewish congregation. For many years, he had also been a member of Cham's volunteer fire brigade, a responsibility that would only have been entrusted to a fit and healthy man.

When the Nazis first came to power in Germany in 1933, my mother had not yet married and was still living at home. As the new regulations came into effect, there had been a knock at the door. It was a neighbour, telling her father that a Jew could no longer be a fireman, not even as a volunteer. Silently, my grandmother had opened her sewing basket, taken out her best scissors, and cut the brass buttons from the jacket that Max would never wear again.

*I opened the letter and Papa read it to us.*

I note with interest that although Emil opens the letter, it is Papa Max who reads it aloud. The letter may be intended for the whole family, but Emil defers to the older man. Emil again stresses his personal loneliness.

*We were all overjoyed to have good news from you, and we all have only one wish: that the dear Lord continue to accompany you all the way to your destination. Whenever I'm so lonely for you, I comfort myself with the thought that at last, after such a long time, in a matter of days you will have reached your place of rest.*

Emil's list of additional responsibilities was long. Already in charge of my grandparents, he was now also being asked to ship both our belongings and those of my mother's sister Anny.

*Your furniture is packed up in a lift (a large shipping crate) next to Anny's things and the expediter will ship both lifts together. It is totally impossible to send Anny the extras she has requested.*

What were Emil's thoughts as such requests were made? With all his assets frozen in Austria, what was his source of food and rent? How did he make decisions when all about him the sands of reality were shifting?

*As dear Martha has just written, we are waiting for your report in order to get a picture of what our chances are of getting there. At the moment, there is absolutely no possibility of being allowed to emigrate.*

For a very long time, I sat unseeing with this letter in my lap. "At the moment there is absolutely no possibility of being allowed to emigrate." The words are so freezingly final. Only a week after our departure, the situation had become hopeless. How narrowly we had escaped!