

War Breaks Out

STRANGELY, I HAD NEVER GIVEN thought to the small, inevitable consequences of war. How, for example, did letters continue to arrive from Europe? Now I threw myself into the task of understanding what happened next.

From the notes she scribbled in the margins, I discovered that Cousin Hertha Bloch in New York had agreed to be the go-between for the continuing exchange of family letters. Because the United States did not enter the war until after Pearl Harbour on December 6, 1941, there was a window of time when letters could be forwarded via the U.S. Letters written to my father's brother Otto in Paris were also forwarded by Hertha and made their way into my father's box.

None of the letters directly mentions the war, although Martha does refer to "*this illness that is supposed to last a long time.*" Censorship must have begun almost immediately. It lingers like a bad smell in the form of pencil markings and mysterious numbers in strange handwriting superimposed upon the thin sheets of airmail paper. Each letter has two sets of four digit numbers boldly written across the top, reminders that censorship was real, and much more than the stuff of spy novels.

Nevertheless, each family member continued to write. Arnold is the first to send his reassurances that all is well. Despite having written twice in the previous week, on September 3, 1939, two days after Britain and France declare war on Germany, Arnold sends a letter to his brother Otto.

Arnold seems to accept that there is little point in worrying about things one cannot change. With the outbreak of war, his role shifts to reassuring everyone that there is no immediate cause for alarm. On September 3, he writes to Otto saying, "*With us, mercifully, nothing has changed.*" Still, there are numerous indicators that change is very much in the air. Arnold reveals that Vera's medical practice has virtually come to a halt, an oblique reference to the Nazi boycott of Jewish professionals. He also admits that my grandmother Fanny has come to Prague specifically to look for accommodations. While Arnold is looking forward to having his parents nearby, he acknowledges that it is not a matter of choice.

Dear Otto,

Mama surprised us with a visit whose purpose was to look for an apartment, since they have to leave the one in Budweis. Once again our family is almost complete and re-united.

I need not stress that we think of you especially often; indeed, you are now my greatest concern. We are already awaiting your next letter with impatience, even though we recently received your letters of August 23 and 26. I wrote to you at the old address on August 23 and 30.

With us, mercifully nothing has changed, and we are all in good health. Little Dorly is making special progress. She is already taking a few steps, she can stand up alone by leaning on a heavy object, and she is uncommonly cute.

Vera of course has almost nothing to do in her praxis during these times, but I certainly have plenty of work and we are just in the process of enlarging the factory.

We are calmly braced for the future, but of course we can have no clear picture of what it may bring. It goes without saying that

we must be prepared to face all kinds of sacrifices and deprivations, but God will surely continue to help.

Do write diligently, dear Otto, whenever you have a chance, even if it is only a few lines. You will also have to write more often to Edi so that he will not so deeply miss hearing from us. Our good wishes and our prayers accompany you along your paths. Best regards and kisses from your Arnold.

It is a tribute to my grandmother Fanny that in such uncertain times, the few lines that she adds to Arnold's letter indicate that she is more concerned with the welfare of her children than with her own fate.

Your words are like a ray of sunshine in a gloomy hut. With your last letter, you have calmed our heart. May the dear Lord just keep you in good health and may our present anxieties be unfounded. The times give us pause and much food for thought.

I would like to count on another letter soon, but there is some question about how the mail is going to function now. Don't you have some foreign stamps? In the event that it will not be possible for us to write to Edi in Canada, I ask that you do so more often and then report to us.

Puzzled by Fanny's reference to "foreign stamps" and the need to use both Otto and Hertha as direct recipients of mail, I did more research on wartime conditions in Prague. I learned that even writing to the United States was not a simple matter. Eventually, except for two hours in the afternoon at a single location, all post offices in Prague were declared off limits to Jews.

On that same Sunday that he wrote to Otto, Arnold tested the mail and wrote the first wartime letter to my parents. It is largely a repeat of his letter to Otto, but with an even stronger assurance that there is no cause for anxiety.

September 3, 1939

My Dear Ones,

We hope that you have received our last detailed letter of August 24 that included my professional credentials, and the birthday letter of August 31. We have been without news from you for quite a while. The last letter was July 27, but we did meanwhile read your letter to Gretl's parents. We constantly admire how quickly and how well you have adapted to your new situation and to all the hard work.

Mama is here in search of an apartment because they have to leave Budweis. In the meantime, things are going very well for us. Don't worry, everything will happen the way it will happen. Worrying doesn't help, and one must accept one's fate. All that you can do is bring us joy through your letters.

Be well and be hugged and kissed by your Arnold.

A month later, Arnold writes another letter that is reassuring in the extreme. He and Vera hear regularly from Cousin Hertha in New York and from Hertha's sister Emmy and her mother Jetty (Fanny's sister), both of whom are still in Prague. Arnold and Vera are now trying to gain entry to the United States.

I sincerely thank you, dear Hertha for your efforts to persuade Bella to send us an affidavit. I beg you to continue these efforts since our hope for the future rests upon getting a visa.

The name "Bella" remains a name totally unknown to me. I checked the Waldstein family tree but Bella does not appear on it. I acquired a Bloch-Vogel family tree, thinking she may be related on Fanny's side. No luck. I remain puzzled about the identity of this woman who promised Arnold and Vera an affidavit to the United States.

I am puzzled also that Arnold wrote that there were no major changes and absolutely no food shortages. Other sources indicate that so much was

sucked into the Nazi machine that, almost immediately after the outbreak of war, food was in short supply. In the end, I conclude that not only did Arnold and Vera want to minimize my parents' anxiety, they also wanted to avoid writing anything that the censor might hold against them when the promised affidavit to the U.S. arrived.

I can report to you that we are all well, that the whole large family is healthy and that life continues in its old accustomed tracks. The Fränkels and the Urbachs have set up housekeeping together and they live on their savings. Vera and I have our professions. We have enough to eat and there is absolutely no shortage of food here. For now, we even have our croissants for breakfast.

ATTACHED TO ARNOLD'S September missive is a lengthy letter from my grandmother Fanny. Like Arnold, she is reassuring, and her words must have greatly comforted my parents.

I am also astounded by her informed comments on farming life. She seems to know so much that my parents were only gradually learning. That cream must be just at the right temperature to be successfully churned into butter. That hay is grown and mown for feed, but that straw (to provide clean bedding for animals) is part of a longer, two-step process and is actually a by-product of the harvesting of wheat.

My Dear Children,

I happen to be in Prague for a few days and yesterday, I went to visit your dear parents Max and Resl. I found them both well, thank goodness. I must say that Papa has made a great recovery, and he seems well rested. Dear Mama is also doing quite well. Uncle Ignatz Grünhut was just there too.

Don't worry, children, Max and Resl are not lacking anything. They have some store of food supplies and they have taken my advice and bought extra in case there should come a time of

shortage. I also offered them anything of ours that they might need, but thank goodness, they still have all they need or have requested. We won't let them do without, you can be quite sure of that. Besides, dear Emil visits them daily. He tries so hard and I really admire him. All else we must leave to God. Who knows what still lies ahead? May we all stay in good health!

And now, to the point. I read your last letter, dear Gretl and Anny, and I am reassured to learn that you have completed the biggest task of all—the harvest. That is the real proof of a capable farmer, to even guess the weather, so that everything reaches the barn in a dry state. How much oats did you plant? Do both of the men now have to repay the neighbours in kind for their help?

I'm not very pleased with you for acquiring a bull. Why on earth are you doing that? It's a very dangerous experiment, and you could have acquired two cows for the price. I'd be very happy if the wild animal were off the premises again. You'd better look after your precious health! I beg you! Listen to me!

I hope that the work ahead won't cost you so much sweat, especially now that the summer heat is over. Are you already planting fall wheat? And how are the vegetables doing? Did you plant turnips? They are nourishing both for cattle and pigs. How is the milk separator working out? I suppose one of the men will have to churn the cream. It's very hard work and has to be done just so, as is the case with the temperature of the milk.

Splurge on a bit of cream for your elevenses, dear Anny and Gretl. I am sorry to read that you haven't gained any weight. You must do so by consuming good cream and butter. Helenchen will probably also enjoy some bread and butter. Gretl, try to put up some cottage cheese. It makes a nice change.

I forgot to send you congratulations on Helynka's birthday. May you all experience great joy from her. Now I close with the sincerest of greetings to you all. Stay well and be heartily hugged and kissed by your faithful Mother Fanny

Give lots of good kisses to Helynka from me.

No one has ever called me Helynka, and I seize the Czech diminutive as symbolic of my grandmother's love. In an orgy of self-centredness, my eyes scan the remaining letters from my grandmother in the fall of 1939, searching for my name.

My dear children,

How overjoyed we were to receive your photos! Please accept my sincerest thanks. I take them out several times a day to look at them. Really, I just can't get enough of looking at them. The pictures of each one of you are good, but I must confess that when I first saw you, I cried a lot. I thank the dear Lord to see you standing in front of your own home with a roof over your head, even if there is a long hard road ahead of you. And dear sweet Helynka, I like her in every way. I always give her photo lots of kisses.

In another letter, she calls me *Helimäderl* and says that I am cute enough to kiss. However, neither references to my cuteness nor distracting comments on farm life can hide the fact that things are no longer the same. My grandmother's birthday wishes for my father are a tacit acknowledgement of the momentous changes that have taken place.

Now I come to you, dear Edmund, in order to offer you my most heartfelt good wishes on the occasion of your birthday on September 15. May you always be healthy and strong.

May you meet your own expectations as a farmer and in an honest fashion so that we parents can take pride in you.

On September 15, 1938, my father would have celebrated his birthday in the family home surrounded by his parents, his siblings and in-laws, his nieces and nephews, and many friends with whom he had grown up in Strobnitz. Less than two weeks later, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain would fly to Munich and give Hitler the Sudetenland in return for "peace in our time." Leaving everything behind, my parents would flee to Prague, and less than six months later, when all of Czechoslovakia had become Nazi

territory, my parents and I would flee again, this time across the sea to Canada.

Fanny's words underscore the magnitude of all that has happened.

How much has changed in the course of a year! But you, dear children, all of you there, be of good cheer! You are the lucky ones. What sorrows there are here! I cannot begin to describe the suffering that people are experiencing.

Our own dear Martha is so worn down by the constant worries and upsets that she has positively turned gray. She is beside herself with anxiety. If only the Fränkels could come to you! That is our greatest worry. Now they are being asked for proof of origin of the parents on both sides of the family. The paperwork is taking forever.

Thankfully, your dear mother Resl is supposed to be doing very well, or so Emil informed us. He was here this week to meet Rudolf Ziegler. He has become quite slim as have we all, and he has asked me to send you his very best wishes. How gladly he'd help you with your work on the farm, if only it were possible! They want to send Erica to London.

My heart aches for these good people. Where are they all supposed to go? Leaving such a good way of life is painful.

In an undated letter also written in the fall of 1939, Fanny reports that among Else's many visitors, there are some who are trying to send their children to England. "How does one part with a child?" I ask myself again. "How does one know if the worst is yet to come?"

Today, as I watch my own toddler grandchildren seek shelter in their mother's arms, I cannot imagine the courageous parents who prematurely parted with their children.

Fanny's heart breaks for her daughter and for "all these good people" who are leaving. As she points out, they are not leaving in search of a better life but because their own peaceful existence has been shattered, much like the ultra-modern Bata shoe factory whose demise she describes.

My dear children,

I thank you very much for your kind and detailed letter and I am answering it right away so that we will soon be lucky enough to hear more news from you. How nice it is to read your letters, my dear children. I follow your lines while imagining everything in my mind.

Now the hay has been brought in. It was surely a more difficult undertaking than in than our little fields in Strobnitz, especially since you have so few wagons.

Here, the weather has been mostly bad. Sunday night we had such bad thunderstorms in the area between Iglau and Zlin (hailstones weighing $\frac{1}{4}$ kg.) that all crops were destroyed and the roofs of most houses were blown away or smashed. The Bata factory in Zlin was totally demolished. Its vaunted glass roof caved in and all the machines are unusable. Thousands of windowpanes have been reduced to a heap of shattered glass.

Now you will have finished unpacking the lift. Did everything arrive unbroken? Do you, dear Gretl, feel more comfortable in your new home? Is Helenka happy too to have her own things again? How many rooms are there in your house? And that reminds me, where do you get the wood for the stove? Do your woods produce some fuel? I have another idea. Could you create some kind of bathing facility in your little creek, even if it were only a Sitzbad? Could the water be dammed up?

Now I close with the sincerest of greetings and kisses to you, my dear Hellygirl and a request that you bring us pleasure soon again with your news. Your faithful mother Fanny.

I smile to be called *Helenchen* and at the idea of a Sitzbad in our mud-bottomed creek. From the house to the creek involved a good twenty-minute walk through the fields. Still, my grandmother's questions speak to me of a vibrant curiosity that reflects the depth of her caring.

To her son Otto in Paris, Fanny writes a similar letter, but with a paragraph underscoring the difficulties that others are experiencing.

Sorrows are rampant here. Like headless chickens, people are scattering in all directions, not knowing what tomorrow will bring. People from Strobnitz have had to leave their homes, and all Jews are supposed to move to Prague in stages. Young people under 35 will be first on the list, and many will try to leave the country. My sister Jetty has been interrogated, but there is some doubt about whether she will be allowed to emigrate. They are claiming that her taxes have not been paid. She and her family have suffered so much, and they did not put enough money aside. The little cash that they have is being eaten up. Like others, they dread the future, imagining themselves penniless in a foreign land. And now, we have this latest decree—moving to Prague where life will be much more expensive than here in Budweis.

DESPITE ALL THAT HAS happened, my grandfather Josef views himself as a lucky man. “*One of God’s favourites,*” he calls himself in his first post-war letter. He now accepts the fact that his entire family is planning to regroup in Canada. His joy is tempered only by his awareness of what is happening to the Jews in Europe.

Budweis, Sept. 26, 1939

With today’s letter we come to inquire about your well-being. We are in good health and hope the same is true of you all. Your last letter gave us great pleasure, as did the photos that we received this week. We are really impressed and everyone looks great, especially dear little Helly.

Still, when I look at you, dear Edi, my heart aches. How many rays of sun must burn down before a face becomes so blackened? But still, take a look at your magnificent achievements of the last few months. We are proud of what you own and of what you have accomplished.

I showed the pictures at F. P. today and everyone was full of enthusiasm. Mrs P. would gladly trade her whole house for what you have. Despite all your hard work, people here envy you. Here, there are young, strong Jews wandering about, unemployed. They would gladly work in return for a meal. Young Rosenberg goes to the brickyard every day to earn a handful of change for a whole week's work.

And now, dear Edi, for your birthday I wish you all the best, especially an iron constitution, and may all your wishes come true. I hope that with the hard work and the energy that you are expending, you will advance further than here in Strobnitz.

I like to imagine that I am one of God's favourites, and I pray that you will soon be well established. As soon as the Fränkels leave for Canada, half of us will be across the ocean.

It will be easier for Arnold and Vera. Be glad, dear Edi, that you have gotten so far ahead. When I look at your friends here, my heart aches. Everybody wants to emigrate, but nobody can. Nothing but problems.

I close for today, wishing you all the best again, my dear Edi. Regards to Gretl, Anny, Ludwig, and to my dear Helly-child. In my imagination, I still see her playing about in the garden in Strobnitz.

Your faithful Papa.

AS FALL TURNS TO WINTER, Fanny worries about her adult children. Has Otto thought to pack warm underwear? She assures her son that she and his father will survive the winter by keeping their heads down and not drawing attention to themselves.

I am able to decline with thanks your question about whether we need anything for the household. We get everything that we need

here using ration cards, and you can otherwise be assured that we don't lack anything. If we can receive good news from you children abroad, that is our joy.

My grandfather Josef's letter to Otto is brief but melancholy. His loved ones are scattered in all directions and there is little to break the monotony of his days.

We were very pleased when we got your last letter. You are always the old Otto, always in a good mood, even in these hard times.

Thank God, we are all in good health, we have enough to eat and we are satisfied. If only God would grant us the good fortune to all be together again as a family. Sadly, you are now scattered about in all directions. This is not something we ever thought would happen.

I don't know anything special for today. We had two letters from Edi via Prague. It is a delight to read these. He really hit the jackpot.

IN NOVEMBER, BOTH Fanny and Josef write again. Visitors from Strobnitz have brought the village news, mostly about young people who have left or married or joined the army. These visitors have also brought the name of the villager who "took" the store. Like any legitimate owner, he is now pocketing the profits.

Fanny's letter is her trademark blend of pertinent questions and worried motherly advice. Because our sows have failed to produce enough piglets, Fanny suggests that we not feed the brood sow so well, and that we give her "more slimy food, not too rich" so that she will produce more piglets. She advises us to plant "noble" trees in the orchard, like those bearing the winter apples that are shipped to Europe. Although she admits that plucking and gutting chickens is not a pleasant task, she suggests that it is easier in the long run and more profitable than transporting live chickens to market. In large measure, our life has become her life.

Believe me, dear children, I am running a farm in my thoughts and would dearly like to help you with yours.

Fanny seems obsessed by the issue of gathering fuel from the woods, and a variation of the same paragraph appears twice in her letter.

How are things with the fuel? Do your woods produce wood for burning? I beg you to be very careful, especially in chopping. You will remember well, dear Edi, the scare we had earlier.

My grandfather is less garrulous but clearly lonely for his family. He rues a way of life that now seems like a fairy tale. “Someday, we will tell you everything,” he promises my parents:

If at all possible, write us a letter again. A letter from you is a day of celebration for us. We do not hear much from Strobnitz. That was once upon a time.

*A thousand kisses to my dear Helly-child.
Your faithful Papa.*

Before forwarding the letter, Arnold and Vera add a few lines in the margins to reassure my parents that all is well.

We received your letter of October 9 addressed to Gretl’s parents. We ourselves have been without direct news from you for months. We are all doing well, and so far, everything is as it was. Do not worry. We are working and we have enough to eat.

MARTHA FRÄNKEL’S FIRST letter after the outbreak of war contrasts sharply with the comforting words penned by Arnold and by my grandparents. My father’s sister indicates that the Fränkels are coping but, as predicted, the

fall has not been pretty. Clearly, she is speaking of more than the colour of the autumn leaves.

Prague, Oct. 17, 1939

My dear ones,

How precious your recent lines addressed to Gretl's parents were for us! You can well imagine how happy we were to know that, thank God, you are all well. To be without news from you casts a shadow over our mood, especially since our thoughts always dwell with you.

In one of my last letters I wrote to you that the fall here was not going to be pretty, and it has not been. How nice it would have been if we had been with you in time for your harvest! But just as with Gretl's parents Max and Resl, everything is a matter of fate, and we are all in God's hands.

Your progress in the running the farm brings us great pleasure, and in our mind, we form nice pictures of everything. Dear Anny, I admire your business acumen. You are a woman of the times, and may Ludwig and everyone be happy with your ideas.

You, dear Gretelein, are probably already mistress within your sphere of expertise. With united strengths, you will soon create a nice agricultural enterprise. I keep seeing all of you in my mind. My dear little brother, how I'd love to give a few good kisses to you and to sweet Helly-child who is probably a very good little girl.

Sunday Max and Resl were here. I like them. They look well, thank God, but of course they would like most of all to be with you.

As Elsa has written, our little Dorly is walking already. She still wobbles a bit, but she is really cute in her ways. Ilserl can already speak Czech with her friends and Trude's cousin is giving her English lessons free of charge. Unfortunately, the school here in the district of Straschnitz where we are staying is unhealthy and primitive.

Emil has been working hard as an apprentice shoemaker and he's up to nine soles redone in a day. As of today he got a small job

as cashier at the emigration office of the NZO, the National Zionist Organization. Emil is delighted to have something to do. Besides, if there is no other way, then we will have to go to Palestine illegally if that becomes a possibility. When all is said and done, one is only human, and this illness is supposed to last a long time.

Trude wrote us a moving letter of farewell. She is on her way to N.Y. where her sister-in-law has opened a hat salon. They want to help us, but I can't imagine how. We were very happy to have news from our brother Otto. I had been thinking of him all the time. Alone in a foreign country, he must experience events even more sharply. Yesterday we received a little 5 gr. package that he sent. It was touching. For the moment, we have enough to eat. Arnold has also just received a package from Otto. Our own dear parents in Budweis are doing quite well, thank God. Unfortunately they have to cope with all the new conditions, as do we all.

Now I want to close with the best of wishes. Stay very, very well, all of you!! You are heartily hugged and kissed by your Martha.

The letter ends with greetings from my cousin Ilserl whose handwriting has improved greatly despite the lack of formal schooling. I linger longest over her simple words.

Best regards and kisses from your Ilse

Over each detail of Martha's letter, I reflect at length. With his usual foresight, Emil has taken on two jobs. Shoemaking, always a practical skill, was doubly so in 1939, given the reality that "every army marches on its feet." Emil's second job, his work at the office of the National Zionist Organization would provide a different advantage. It meant that Emil would be among the first to hear news of any opportunity for reaching Palestine safely.

Although it is too late for the Fränkels to come to Canada, Ilserl is being tutored in English. To me, it is an indicator that the Fränkels have not completely relinquished their dream of crossing the Atlantic.

Because Martha's letter is so filled with news and because Emil seems so enterprising, I am reassured. It is my research into historical events of 1939 that uncovers two deeply disturbing facts. On the Internet, I find the following:

Middle of September 1939: ESTABLISHMENT OF JEWS WITH POLISH NATIONALITY. By searching houses and flats in Prague, those Jews who formerly had held Polish nationality were found.

27 September 1939: REMOVAL OF POLISH NATIONALS. By Transportation.⁷

The words jump from my computer screen. Removal. Transportation. Former Polish Nationals. Emil was a former Polish National.

Anxiously, I scan the remaining 1939 letters for further news. How did the Fränkels manage, when other Jews with Polish nationality were being "removed by transportation"? These words were the standard euphemism for "shipped to a concentration camp."

Two letters from Else and Emil Urbach provide clues, but no clear answers. In a letter dated October 13, 1939, Else directs the focus to family news. She refers to changing conditions almost in passing, as if they do not really apply to the Urbachs. Others may be rushing to emigrate, but she is waiting for the storm to pass, painting a rather tranquil picture of daily life.

My Dear Ones,

It was a nice surprise for us all when, after a long pause, we again received a letter from you. We are very glad that you are in good health, and thank God I can report the same of our parents and of everyone here.

Our Marianne is in a French school now. She is also taking a sewing course so that she will be well prepared to help our brother Otto produce women's knitwear fashions in Paris. To our delight, we had pleasant news from him several times lately. He has probably also written to you several times.

Last week we visited Gretl's parents. They went to the synagogue during all the High Holidays and have adapted well to the circumstances. I can imagine how much you wish you already had them with you. You must not lose courage that it will come to pass, and when it does, your delight will be doubly great.

Helly will surely already be a big girl and bring lots of life to the house. She could play nicely now with Dorly, who is very cute and is toddling about, babbling continuously in her own language.

It is only Else's reference to problems experienced by "our people" in finding accommodation that strikes a jarring note:

Despite all the sorrows, time flies and before we noticed, the summer had passed. We are now in search of a suitable place to live since we must move within the next three months. Today we found out that there is an apartment in a large house across the street. We looked at it right away. It is quite modern, with central heating and balconies, but it is very expensive. We are to hear in three days whether they will rent it to us. These days, they do not like to rent to so many people and not everywhere to our people, so there is not much choice.

Strangely, toward the end of the letter, Else's handwritten words transition in mid-sentence to typed lines offering concrete suggestions that can only be from Emil Urbach.

I hope that the winter will pass well. It will certainly be quite severe where you are, and I hope that you have enough fuel from your woods and dry plants. Did you ever get the book on raising pigs and cattle? I also wanted to send you a book on gardening, but I was waiting to hear whether you received the other books. Dogs have risen very much in price recently and are used for a variety of purposes: fat, hides, hunting and tracking, guarding property, etc. I suppose you wouldn't have time to raise bees? Honey would be a

good item to sell, especially if you had honey-bearing plants in the fields.

Emil's final paragraph strikes a chilling note. Unlike my parents and the rest of the family, he harbours no dreams that "someday" we will all meet again.

We did not know what to do with your reference to "holding on to the thought of seeing one another again here at home." We still do not know how to take this comment. It is our opinion that every single person who is outside of Europe is to be considered fortunate. You are heartily greeted by the whole Urbach family.

What prompted Emil's words remains a mystery. The only logical possibility is that my parents had written a letter expressing their own loneliness, and wondering if someday, they would all be re-united back in Strobnitz, the place where they had experienced the simple joys of family and had known happiness.

Emil pours cold water upon that dream with his blunt reminder that anyone who has managed to leave Europe is indeed fortunate. Remarkably, in his last unsigned letter of 1939, Emil does not mention the Fränkels in the catalogue of family news.

Dec. 6, 1939

My dear ones,

We were very pleased the other day to have seen your lines to our dear parents in Budweis and to the other relatives. From them, we gather that you are doing well and that the state of your cattle and the marketing possibilities for butter have improved.

At the usual Sunday gatherings, you always occupy an important place on the program. We wrote to you a while ago, but the letter seems to have gotten lost. That is why your remark that you had not heard from us in two months rather surprised us.

One of us regularly visits your dear parents, Max and Resl Grünhut. They live quietly and modestly, lacking for nothing aside from their wish to leave, which unfortunately is still rather difficult. Your dear mother is in good health, gets distracted by your dear father from the everyday routine through visits, board games, etc. They often go for walks or visit relatives and acquaintances. They also go to the synagogue assiduously. Thus, they pass the time that they would like so much to be spending with you. Our dear parents in Budweis are living in a similar way

As of January, we will be living near Arnold. Else will be able to enjoy the city more, since she has been spending lots of time now on the acquisition of food because of the considerable distance from the stores. The children are still attending school. Marianne is learning French, and our Otto is completing the last year of Gymnasium. Time will teach us what they should do a year from now.

We get comforting reports from your brother Otto from time to time. Let us hope that they correspond to reality and that it will remain thus.

Many people from here are immigrating to Palestine now. Manni and his wife have already landed there. We do not lack food. Everything is very purposefully regulated, well organized.

Edi, did you ever receive the books? The one on raising cattle too? I still have a book on horticulture and a flyer and a chart on combating the Colorado beetle, but do not know if these would reach you. I will leave it for later times.

With best regards

