

On 5 January '39 a letter from dear Frau L. No news! She is worried too. The Nationalist Spanish troops are declaring victory after victory. They are now expecting Barcelona to fall.¹

On 24 January a letter from Frau L. Again no news. It makes one quite desperate. One thinks about it day and night and the question of "why" looms ever larger!

On 29 January Barcelona was taken by Franco. Now Madrid is under fire - ²

On 30 January a letter from Frau L. The news was from 4 / 1. They have more news about their friends in B which has made them happier and less anxious.³ It is hard for them at the moment but they are happy to be there in spite of everything, they love the country and its people and have close friends. They spent Christmas with these friends at their place. They ate the rooster, Emma, who was supposed to have been a hen, as a soup and a roast. It tasted so wonderful and was sooo tender!⁴ Unfortunately roosters don't lay eggs and so it was better to eat him than to keep feeding him. At New Year's we were at some good friends for a meal to which everyone contributed something and we two women cooked. There were lentils as well. So long as it's enough for us in the short term. We always had some at our place. They say whoever eats lentils will have a lot of money in the new year. Well, we didn't eat a lot we don't need a lot of money either. Just so long as there's enough for the two of us in the meantime. And there is, thank God! I'm always optimistic and I'm always making plans for our future. Franz is not so keen on that. He's right that the moment is demanding enough. But it costs nothing to make plans. I won't be sad if nothing comes of it. Then I'll just make new ones! It's quite cold here and we are delighted with all the lovely winter things. How we would freeze without them. In the evenings we get a small fire going for supper and to cook up food for the next day. It cooks overnight in the insulation cooker.⁵ We spent Christmas Day in the kitchen as well after our meal. I had shifted things around a bit for that reason. It was so nice that I've left things that way. Why should one freeze any more than is absolutely necessary? Now we've only got one more cold month in front of us. The beautiful sun already warms us nicely in February. We've been working hard in the garden but there's a real shortage of seed. I asked Gerharda for some. We're sowing carrots, onions, parsley. One tries to help oneself when one can, and every little bit is terribly important. At the moment I'm looking for tobacco seed, not for starting a plantation but for household consumption.⁶ We are waiting so expectantly for the parcels but anticipation is always worth something as well. I always imagine how well I'll be able to cook then, and that there'll be sugar at breakfast.

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¹ Barcelona finally fell to Nationalist forces on 26 January 1939.

² Madrid had been "under fire" since October 1936, but Republican resistance collapsed in March 1939 and the city was occupied by Franco's army on the 26th of that month.

³ The "friends in B" is possibly a coded reference to Franz's father, Max, who was in Berlin until 1939 when he was able to emigrate to Britain.

⁴ The voice from this point onwards is Marianne's.

⁵ Also known as a haybox. Food is cooked to boiling point and placed in a well-insulated chamber; residual heat then completes the cooking process over several hours.

⁶ There was a shortage of tobacco from the first days of the war in the Republican zone. Rafael Abella writes that the long queues that formed in front of tobacconists in 1936 were just the beginning of the "calvary" that awaited Republican smokers. (Abella, 41)

Don't blame life, seeing it as travail
And trash, and that's all!
If your eyes behold fairy tales
The world is but a miracle!

V. Blüthgen⁷

On 10 / 2 / 39 Frau B.⁸ wrote: 5 minutes ago good news arrived and I'm passing it on to you straight away because I hope it will lighten your hearts as it did ours, and all the weight of the past few months will be forgotten. On the 9th P⁹ was told by the Home Office that they'd both requested a visa for England. He'd immediately done everything to provide for their entry, taken responsibility for all the guarantees and hopes to see them again soon in good health. If only they were there already! Then all fears and anxieties would be over and we would see them once again. -

On 28 / 2 / 39 a lovely long letter from Frau L. arrived but without any news! She wrote: I haven't had any word from the young people. I'm very worried and hope for nothing more than that their plans are being realised and they are safe, because these final few days over there¹⁰ seem to have been extraordinarily hard ... What plans? Safe where? If that were so, Marianne would have told her. Does Moni have any idea how worried we are??

On 8 / 3 / 39 a quick card arrived from Frau L. Marianne was in Marseille, living there in a hotel.¹¹ She wanted to write straight away to learn more. May God grant that it's good news for once! Are they on their way to England? Are they able to remain there? Is she travelling alone? Our concern and anxiety are immense! -

⁷ Victor Blüthgen, a minor German poet (1844 – 1920).

⁸ The identity of Frau B is unknown, but she clearly lived outside Germany.

⁹ Given that this individual was already in Britain and was therefore able to assist Marianne and Franz with their entry requirements, "P" must be Franz's younger brother, Paul Bielschowsky (10 / 9 / 1905 – 13 / 12 / 1958). According to the 1939 England and Wales Register, he was living at 40 Foley Street, Marylebone in London. (The National Archives; Kew, London, England; *1939 Register*; Reference: *RG 101/458B*) The Aliens Registration Card for Paul Bielschowsky from October 1939 states that his employer was 'Elizabeth Gowns', of which he was a company director. (The National Archives; Kew, London, England; *HO 396 WW2 Internees (Aliens) Index Cards 1939-1947*; Reference Number: *HO 396/7*)

¹⁰ i.e., in Spain at the end of the war.

¹¹ According to the stamps in Marianne's emergency Spanish passport in the Hocken Collections, she and Franz arrived in Marseilles on 8 March 1939 (a handwritten number "6" has later been corrected to "8" with an official signature). If we take the date of this journal entry to refer to the date Frau L[aubmeyer]'s card was sent from the Netherlands (rather than when it was received by Charlotte in Germany), it may indicate that Marianne had been in touch with Frau Laubmeyer by telegram on the day of her arrival in France. Marianne would have been reluctant to communicate directly with her parents in Germany since this would have placed them at some risk.



The short stay visa for France in Marianne Angermann's passport, stamped on 8 [6] March 1939. Hocken Collections, MS-1493/001.

On the 10th a card from Frau L.:

Received news today that Marianne is on her way to England, to Paul.¹² I think you are as happy as we are. – We just don't understand any more. This uncertainty and the impossibility of writing will soon be unbearable.

On 11th a card from Frau L.:

I have just had quite a happy, touching letter from my young friend. What they've gone through and how happy they are to have this journey behind them. They want to go to Paris first, then Brussels.

On 12 / 3 another card from Frau L. arrived.

¹² i.e., Paul Bielschowsky.

On reading the letter through again she discovered that they had already departed for Paris and she has to wait for news until she can send her letter off with our address.¹³ Now we have to wait again for direct news. But now that we know that they are together and both safe, we are more at ease. -

On 14 / 3 Frau B. wrote in answer to my coded query whether Marianne was travelling alone: One still wishes to relax and enjoy oneself.¹⁴

On 17 / 3 Frau L. wrote: They were having hard times in Paris. Marianne was in bed with the 'flu. Frau L wants to go see her this coming Tuesday. At the moment she doesn't believe she would be able to come home!¹⁵ Strangely, she's going by her maiden name as is usual in Spain. And that's what's in her passport as well.¹⁶

On 18 / 3 after a gap of several months there was finally a letter from Marianne. Short, but a sign of life. Amongst other things she writes: because the last part of the journey was quite tiring we have taken a short break here, in Brussels. When you've seen so many new things, you've occasionally got to take time to digest them! I loved Africa.¹⁷ The temperature is wonderful at this time of year. Even during the crossing the weather was glorious, the sea like a mirror and brilliant sunshine. We were only in Paris briefly, it's such a beautiful city! What stories we have! Travelling is a very fine thing, very interesting, and one learns ever so much.

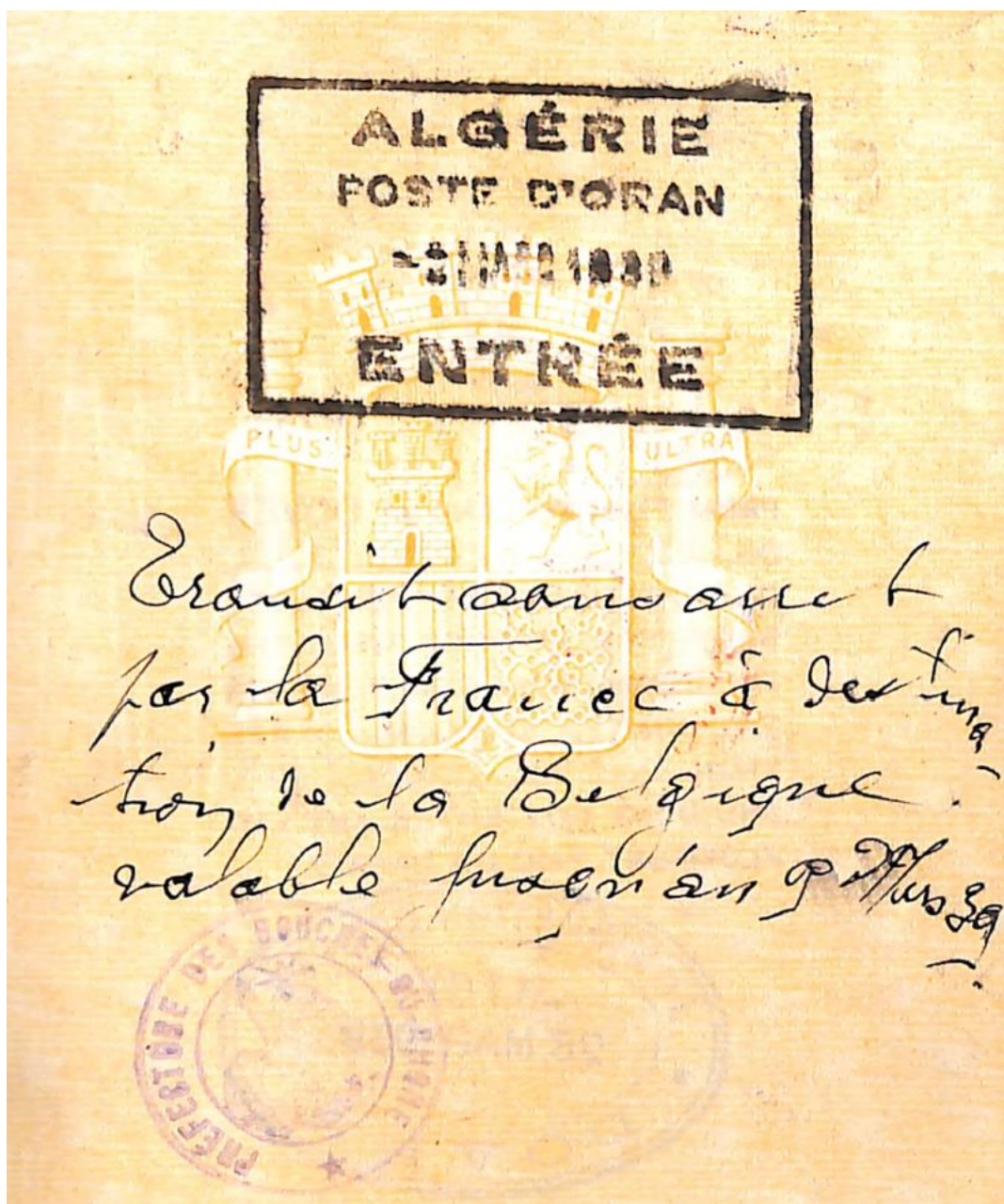
¹³ This remark seems to indicate that Marianne was not aware of her parents' Dresden address at Silberweg 1a.

¹⁴ Presumably this cryptic reference to relaxation and enjoyment indicated that Marianne was, in fact, not travelling alone.

¹⁵ A return to Germany would indeed have been next to impossible. Marianne's Spanish passport was a temporary travel document only and showed clearly that she was stateless ("carecer de nacionalidad"). The case of Erich Otto Mambrey, a native of Essen and member of the International Brigades, who returned to Germany with his Spanish wife and child in 1938, was an extreme example of the kind of fate that awaited returnees. Charged with membership of an anarchist organization (the FAI) and the plundering of German residences in Barcelona during the Civil War, Mambrey was sentenced to death and executed for high treason on January 14, 1941. (Van Norden, 35. See also: Fraenkel, Heinrich. *The Other Germany*. Drummond, 1942. p. 35.)

¹⁶ Charlotte was clearly well informed on this point. Marianne did indeed use her maiden name in her temporary Spanish passport even though her marital status was given as "married". The space for the signature of her husband was left blank. Franz and Marianne may have thought that masking her marriage to a German Jew would provide her with a degree of protection while travelling.

¹⁷ The sudden mention of a visit to Africa may appear outlandish, but it reflects the actual itinerary of Franz and Marianne's route out of Spain. They did not travel directly to France – French authorities did not allow direct entry from Spain – but sailed instead from Valencia to Oran, Algeria which at that time was a French département. From there they took a ship to Marseilles.



The entry visa for Algeria from Marianne Angermann's passport. Below is the stamp for Marseilles. The handwritten text reads: Transit through France without stopping en route to Belgium, valid until 9 March 39. Hocken Collections MS-1493/001

On 24 and 25 March we did actually meet Franz and Marianne in Brussels.¹⁸ After 3 years, 3 months, 3 days we saw Marianne again. Now that we are back quietly at home again it seems quite incredible! How much Brussels was in our thoughts when we found out! But where would we get the money for the journey? Then Dorothee¹⁹ rang on the Wednesday – go straight away [she said], I'll send you the money. Telegraphed Brussels, got everything ready for the trip, no answer – nothing on Wednesday, nothing on Thursday. Up early on Friday at 6 am, Father went to the Post Office at 6.30, nothing. Sadly we unpacked our suitcases, cleared everything away and set to work on the toughest of

¹⁸ Marianne had crossed the French border into Belgium at Fiegnies on 12 March 1939. She arrived in Britain, at Dover, on 28 March. The intervening sixteen days were spent in Brussels.

¹⁹ Marianne's younger sister, Helene Dorothee Schnabel née Angermann (1907 – 1969).

household cleaning chores, the bookcase. We were at the open window knocking dust off the books when the messenger arrived – they were expecting us in Brussels. At 9.30 in the morning. Books back on the shelves and doors closed, blinds down, bags packed, my own dressing gown procured, into town and off to Berlin at 1 pm. At 3.30 we arrived in Berlin at the Anhalter station.²⁰ Luggage transferred to the Potsdam station, into the Central European Travel Agency and bought tickets for a round-trip Berlin-Brussels. Too late, closed at 6, after 100 advance bookings. Paid the surcharge and were finally promised the tickets after endless requests – no more foreign exchange. Father waited in vain for the tickets, Mother²¹ went into the city, to Steglitz,²² because she knows the shops there. Into 4 shops for woollen jackets, nothing. Purchased: handbag, umbrella, slippers, dressing gown, stockings, underwear, socks for Franz, braces, garters, everything in the period from 5.30 to 7. Also Easter eggs for Peter which he was appalled at: Grandma, take them back straight away. They belong to the Easter bunny. You're only allowed to look at them, not take them away before Easter. But in the course of the evening he suggested to us that we could eat one, he wouldn't notice, the Easter bunny. But he gave that idea up when I argued that it would be just like stealing!! We had dinner at Dorothee's. And she'd bought a lot of things: a pullover, a nightshirt, knickers, underwear for Franz, sausages, cheese and so on. Then she paid for our taxi to the station and, fully packed, we set off for Brussels at midnight, Father with Franz's underwear over his own and I with Marianne's knickers over mine.²³ We still couldn't believe it! At around 4 in the morning we arrived at the border. Everybody had foreign exchange, just not us of course.²⁴ And people assured us, if we wanted any it would just be at 40 francs for 10 marks. But fortunately in Herbesthal²⁵ we got the last foreign currency: 110 francs for 10 marks; 204 francs for 18 marks. Even Herbesthal was offering a rate of 20 marks to 70 francs! At midday we arrived in Brussels and there they actually were, Franz and Marianne! – How long will we now have to live off the few hours we spent with the child. How dreadfully miserable she looked. Oh, if only we could have taken her home and looked after her! Now that we're at home again, what questions we could still have asked ... Time was too short, we were too stirred up inside: the unspeakable joy of seeing them again, the concern for their health, the feeling that they're happy, the approaching departure, and the unspeakable concern over an uncertain future, it was too much. But just seeing them again, being able to help them a little. Father's briefcase, his wallet were required.²⁶ If only we could have stayed, if only we had had money! At least they have the grandparents' wedding rings. When we left Brussels on Sunday night they were still standing on the platform – why, why – and what does the future hold for them?!

We were home again on the night of the 26th. And we found a picture of dear Marianne in the mail. Dear Frau Laubmeyer had had it done in Brussels, so faithful, as if she had spoken with us and how happy that makes us. It is sitting on my writing desk with its slim, silver frame and makes a new gift of itself every day. So often I think: why does

²⁰ The station from which Marianne departed to Spain in December 1935.

²¹ Charlotte refers to herself here in the third person.

²² A suburb in the southwest of Berlin.

²³ Wearing new clothing intended for others would have been a way of circumventing customs payments as well as being a practical way of transporting it.

²⁴ See FN 166 in the letter of 16 June 1936, Journal 1.

²⁵ A small town in eastern Belgium which was part of the German Reich until the end of the First World War. Herbesthal was an important communications hub for trains travelling between Germany and Belgium. Customs and currency exchange services were provided there.

²⁶ Konrad must have brought crucial documents (in his briefcase) and money (in his wallet) for the couple.

everything have to be this way? But as that's the way it is, and as that is your good fortune, we must remain silent!



Marianne Angermann, aged 34 in Brussels. This is the photo referred to in Charlotte's last entry for 1939. Hocken Collections, MS-1493/036/001.