

Finally, on 25 April '38 a letter arrived from Gerharda. She writes: on 11 April I received a letter from Marianne. She [i.e. Marianne] writes: my husband is delighted with the tea you sent me.¹ She is doing well, quite superbly. She has got married.² You [i.e. Charlotte] mustn't be worried any more. How amusing and clever she is. Many people would never have done what she is now doing. We ought to be pleased for her because her letters are so light and gay. The main thing is she is well and happy. They will soon be moving to a different place.³

On 29 April Frau Funke writes that I should immediately contact Frau L. She had had news directly from M. She wants, and is able, to help with everything!

On 6 May: from Frau L's lovely long letter, something concerning M.: Anitta, a correspondent who was in Madrid and has returned home, visited Frau L. ⁴ She [i.e. Anitta] saw a lot of them and said how happy they were. They were living in a beautifully organised little house that belonged to some Germans. – A shame that you [i.e. Charlotte] couldn't hear with what love she spoke of M. She is in good health. Her excellent attitude, her calm, kind cheerfulness makes her indispensable to everyone. She is needed everywhere. Both of them are totally busy during the day. They have been alleviating quite a few people's suffering through their selfless help. They were sharing everything with everyone! She is happy, well looked after, surrounded by a lot of love and loyalty. Only her longing for her parents and the uncertainty were tormenting her. I must tell you honestly that it is endlessly reassuring to us to know that she is under the protection of a man and so surrounded by faithful love. How I would like to have told you myself what Gerharda already has.

On 23 May Frau L wrote: You must have got my letter? (No)⁵ After endless trouble I now hope that M has received my letter. I've tried two routes now after I got no answer from 4 letters. Now success is virtually assured. Do you remember Frau Funke's comment? Every one of our children has his [fate], for better and worse. And I know perfectly well, that Marianne will once again have what she really wishes for. – Now she finally has the happiness she longed for but under such different conditions than those I had once hoped for. What infinite difficulties the dear child has had to fight through before reaching her goal. What will her path be like? What difficult paths both our children have had to walk. Why did it have to be this way? She is still ours!⁶

On 31 May Frau L. wrote: This morning I had so much lovely mail. On top I saw M's dear hand! Perhaps it was the proximity to all that water,⁷ my inner joy or the approach of old

¹ This sentence is written in Marianne's voice; the rest of the text is the report from Gerharda Grooters.

² This claim does not tally with dates on the official documents held by the Hocken Collections. See the entry for 1 August 1938.

³ This remark must signal their move from Calle de Orfila 8 to their final address in Madrid at Calle de Poniente 20 in the northern district of Chamartín.

⁴ Presumably this refers to a Dutch journalist since there were no representatives of the German press in the Republican controlled areas of the country. There is the slight possibility that 'Anitta' is Anita Brenner (born: Hanna Brenner) a Mexican-Jewish writer and intellectual who reported briefly from the Spanish Civil War.

⁵ The bracketed response is from Charlotte.

⁶ The text after the " – " seems to Charlotte's contribution.

⁷ Frau Laubmeyer lived in The Hague, on the Dutch coast.

age my eyes welled up. In any case I was and am overjoyed and answered straight away by air mail. The letter was from the 22nd! She writes so happily. But out of 4 letters she received only one and none of the 3 parcels! In all these months she has received only one single puzzling letter from Gerharda. They are living in a little house, 3 rooms on the ground floor, a bedroom and bathroom above. She's running the household with great pleasure and all on her own. She is sewing enthusiastically, cooking and mending. – Mother would find my household rather poor but very tidy.⁸ The little house is apparently modern and comfortable. They would be sorry to have to give it up if their friends returned. There's even a little garden attached in which they've planted vegetables [for soup].

The letter Frau L. sent on 31 May:⁹

My dears, today is dear Sunday! I'm only sorry that because of distance and other problems we can't spend the day together. Even if it were just for coffee in the afternoon! But you have to be happy that you're healthy, alive and kicking and just plain content. And I am that! I've become very domesticated, I sew, patch, mend and tomorrow I'm doing a big wash. In 4 hours all the ironing is in the cupboard. It's enjoyable. Tonight I'm going to cook at home, otherwise we mostly eat away from home. I hardly ever get around to writing, there's really nothing much to tell. In the evenings a dog comes to me, a sorry little yellow mutt. The poor thing looks to see if there's something to eat. After we had been away for a few days he leapt for joy into my face. I got such a fright because it was already dark in the garden and had quite forgotten him. There's not much work in the laboratory.¹⁰ I just wish you were happy and were making your life as pleasant as possible at the moment. That's always the cleverest thing to do. Time passes that way and the worries one has don't get at all better by adding unnecessary ones. A kiss to both of you.

From your Marianne.

On 29 June Frau L wrote me a lovely card on Marianne's birthday.

On 30 June Frau L. got a registered letter from Marianne and had the following to say:

The 3 little parcels arrived and caused endless delight. You can't imagine what a good use I can put everything to. Of course we tried the chocolate and hopjes¹¹ straight away. They did us such good. We hadn't seen anything like that for a long, long time. And this afternoon I baked a little cake with flour, butter and a little cocoa because Franz has work and he'll have a little something extra this evening in the hospital. My poor husband has got so terribly thin and so I'm giving him whatever I can. Mother – for whom I was always too fat – would be pleased that I've shrunk to a 70 cm waist. But I'm feeling good with it and I've discovered a new, trouble-free way of making my clothes tighter. I've washed them all carefully and it worked successfully: they fit. I saved on sewing thread as well, which has become very valuable. Etc. etc. – But I wouldn't want to swap with anyone. I always say: one cannot change one's destiny and one should never lose courage. I wish

⁸ This sentence would seem to have been extracted verbatim from Marianne's letter to Frau L.

⁹ Marianne's letter forwarded by Frau L.

¹⁰ Marianne was working by this time in the laboratory at Hospital No. 6.

¹¹ A type of Dutch sweet.

we could spend our whole lives here, quietly and industriously, working for others. We feel so happy and quite at home. We are living for each other since we no longer have a home.¹² Etc. etc. But because things generally don't go according to our wishes one has to settle for what has been determined for one. And as long as we are both together, everything is fine!

On 11 July Frau L. sent a letter from Marianne:

My dears, how overjoyed we were to get your letter. And I thank you warmly for all your birthday¹³ wishes. Yesterday we ate chocolate cake made at home with the help of a wonderful parcel from Frau L. Our little house in the suburbs is particularly delightful now in the summer. It's a great advantage that the journey to the clinic is only 10 minutes.¹⁴ We shut everything up early in the morning so that it stays cool until we get home at midday. We also have a little garden, very modest, but we have planted a few things. If I were to tell you every little thing we've done I'd run out of writing paper. I'm doing a lot of work at home. All the usual tasks get done early before I go to the clinic. At midday, when it's hot, there's sewing, and on Monday the washing. The big clean takes place on whichever day Franz is at work because otherwise he complains that it's too much work. But because we are people of modest means it just has to be done and I like that he doesn't get to see any of it. I've made some very nice underwear. Next up is a slip for me and a blouse of lovely crepe de chine, a birthday present. The only bad thing is that there are no suitable patterns for me. But I've almost learned how to make alterations. I enjoy all these things. For relaxation I'm doing hem-stitching by the score, but just how often I get around to it you can see from the fact that we bought the linen for it in January already. Our day usually finishes with a game of dominoes in which we win alternate games. All in all I have it so good that I wouldn't swap with anyone. That's enough for today. At some point I'll write again. One takes twice as much pleasure when it's a rarity! We are healthy and hope that you are too! Kisses from your Marianne.

On 1 August Frau L. wrote:

¹² Since it would have been impossible to retain their German citizenship had their actions become known to the Nazi authorities, Marianne was quite correct in stating that the couple was now without a home. According to the 'Gesetz über den Widerruf von Einbürgerungen und die Aberkennung der deutschen Staatsangehörigkeit' (Law on the Repeal of Naturalisation and Recognition of German Citizenship) enacted by the Nazis on 14 July 1933, any German citizen living abroad who was held to be "bringing the Reich into disrepute through actions counter to their duty of loyalty to the Reich and its people" or who failed to respond to a "request to return to their homeland" could have their citizenship revoked. Additional penalties such as stripping family members (e.g. spouses and children) of their citizenship could also be applied. (Lehmann, Hans Georg, „Einleitung“ in: Hepp, Michael, ed. *Die Ausbürgerung deutscher Staatsangehöriger 1933 - 45 nach den im Reichsanzeiger veröffentlichten Listen*. München: K.G. Sauer Verlag, 1985. ix – xxii. Here, xi.) Between August 1933 and April 1945, around 39 000 Germans were expatriated in this way. In 1941 the law was tightened further so that any German living outside the borders of the Reich (including those deported to death camps) were deprived of their citizenship, a measure which affected 250 000 – 280 000 German Jews. (<https://www.dnb.de/EN/Ueberuns/DEA/Nachrichten/content/ausbuengerung.html> [Accessed: 5th January 2022]) Loss of citizenship became legal once it was published in the Reichsanzeiger (Reich Gazette). Although neither Marianne's nor Franz's names appear in these lists (see Hepp above), their statelessness was de facto rather than de jure since they had fulfilled the conditions for expatriation and the Nazi bureaucracy could rectify the omission in its lists at any time.

¹³ Marianne turned 34 on 30 June.

¹⁴ It is little over one kilometre from the Bielschowskys' wartime house in Calle de Poniente 20 to what was the Hospital No. 6 in the Avenida de Burgos.

Marianne writes so happily and contentedly! She had an inflammation of the bowel, but is almost better again. If she were on her own she would have long since gone back to work. But her doctor had been so strict. He wouldn't allow her to work anymore. It had been really hot and tiring with the desert wind. Dusting was completely pointless. A fantastic reference had arrived for Franz from Boston.¹⁵ You [i.e. Marianne's parents] can be proud of him! Now I have some further information: they were married on 9 September 37.¹⁶ They were both converted to Catholicism before the wedding and became Spanish:¹⁷ so everything, everything is fine! Witnesses were a commandant and a doctor, both dear friends. The commandant was his patient and is extremely grateful to him. He is the uncle and spoils them greatly.¹⁸ Everything beautiful and new in their house that they own themselves was given to them by their uncle on any kind of occasion. They are having the heating looked at because last winter they froze dreadfully, they didn't have any coal! They didn't know that there was water in the heating system and when spring came it all thawed out (here too) and streams of water came rushing down the stairs. We could have gone for a little boat ride. And I had to make clear to my Franz that it's not outbursts of anger that help but lots of mopping up.¹⁹ She writes that she's enjoying cooking. In the evening they studied cookbooks together. They had constructed a *Küchenwunder*:²⁰ a wire lid, a piece of asbestos, the lid from a big biscuit tin and an aluminium pot to cover it over. It aroused doubt, mistrust and – after the meal – ceaseless admiration. They approach cooking like they do medicine and chemistry i.e with a great deal of thought that you can create one thing from another thing. She's still optimistic that my three parcels will arrive. I'm turning myself into a postal genius for the dear child!

With it, an insert from Marianne: It seems you didn't get my best wishes. You didn't celebrate alone. On that day I made us some coffee and baked a little cake. By the way, my birthday blouse turned out very nicely. We are having gloriously beautiful summer days. In the garden the cucumbers are growing at an unprecedented rate. On the other hand our salad radish crop wasn't successful, but the carrots and other radishes are flourishing. The onions have already been harvested. I would so like to have chickens but I'm afraid they'll get coryza like our two did that time. At the moment I have a great life: a very nice

¹⁵ This reference would have been from Franz's former supervisor at Freiburg University, Siegfried Thannhauser. In 1935 he had emigrated from Germany to the United States where he directed the Boston Dispensary, a forerunner of the New England Medical Center.

¹⁶ Here, there seems to be a misunderstanding concerning the date of Marianne and Franz's marriage which Charlotte obviously believes to have been 9 September 1937 (an error repeated again in the letter recorded on 25th October 1938). Original documents in the Hocken Collection show that they were, in fact, married on 12 July 1938 in the registry office of Chamartín de la Rosa, a district in the north of Madrid. If the couple had begun to share a house together from September 1937, they may have told people outside Spain that they had married in order to deflect any moral disapproval.

¹⁷ The claim that Franz and Marianne had converted to Catholicism must be regarded with some scepticism. The various political movements which made up the Spanish Republic were either indifferent to matters of religion (the bourgeois middle) or militantly atheistic (Communists and anarchists). In such an environment, and at such an advanced stage of the war, even a voluntary conversion to Catholicism would have been regarded with deep suspicion and mistrust by Republican authorities. It is certain that they were not awarded Spanish citizenship either. The special passports they were issued several months later in February 1939 state quite clearly that they were "sin nacionalidad" ("without nationality").

¹⁸ The term "tío" (uncle) is used in Spanish in the context of a respectful relationship with an older man who is not necessarily a family member.

¹⁹ These two sentences are in Marianne's voice.

²⁰ A versatile kitchen implement produced in Germany in the 1920s and used for baking, frying, steaming and boiling.

girl comes to do the washing every week and thoroughly clean the house. She is amazed and I am amazed because we always do the same thing differently / to Frau L²¹ / There are mosquitoes here, you simply have no idea. Today I covered the bedroom window with gauze and sprayed everything with Flitt.²² We'll see if these creatures let us sleep tonight. How good that I've got the cookbook. I study it so often. Cooking's fun, the more difficult the better. You're thinking I write such silly stuff. But what am I supposed to write. The best thing is that one loves one another and is healthy and doing well. And I am! I think about you so often and how much I'd like to be together with you. But one has to be grateful for all the good things one has and one shouldn't demand what is impossible. Farewell, I rejoice in every word I hear from you. I have a good life ...



Part of the marriage certificate for Marianne Angermann and Franz Bielschowsky. The date is 12 July 1938. Hocken Collections, MS-1493/002.

On 16 August Frau L. wrote:

Shortly after your letter I got a lovely letter from M. I had asked Prof. Br. at that time for the picture of M's friends in order to send it to them. I found it so nice and appealing. Now it's actually got there and they are so pleased! The parcel arrived as well. They are really worried about the cold because the frost from last winter is still in their hands and feet.

On 31 August Frau L. wrote:

... I've again sent off a parcel with woollen things, sugar, flour, coffee, tins with cuts of meat and fish, sewing yarn, Gillette blades, woollen tights, socks, briefs, under-blouse ... Let's hope it gets there. The last parcel has now been on its way for 10 weeks. Where is it lying around? Or who might have eaten it all?

²¹ The following lines in this paragraph are presumably from a letter to Frau Laubmeyer.

²² Correctly: FLIT. An insecticide widely used in the 1930s.

On 22 Sept. Frau L. wrote:

... a long break. I took your letter off to post and found notification of registered mail. It's so stupid that you have to pick it up yourself. I went straight there and immediately sat down on a bench to read it. Only good news. She was waiting a long time for mail as well and on 2 Sept. just like 1 – 2 – 3 she got a long one from her friend Lotte, one from Halma and one from Clara. She was terribly pleased! They are sad that Franz's father is doing so badly.²³ They really hope that he'll have better times, preferably together with them at home! But under these conditions it's not possible. Their household has increased by 16 cabbage plants and three chickens. They are very proud and still hope to come into the possession of a rabbit. We have even built a run for the chickens.²⁴ He's just gone into the city to buy a book about breeding small animals. Neither of us has any idea and we want to do it scientifically.²⁵ She was surprised at just how interested he is getting in all these things. But it's good that he is able to busy himself in the fresh air after all his hard work. For winter she has preserved 3 jars of pickled gherkins and a soup terrine of salted gherkins.²⁶ Gherkins (I wrote her the recipe) have caused delight amongst her friends. Even the cooking box²⁷ has been taken up by several households in various guises. She is so happy when she has something to show to people there. Everyone is adjusting so quickly. In the evenings they read the newspaper or listen to the radio even from abroad ... She is keeping all her letters and is reading them often, often. She is interested in everything, every detail. She says it is a way of living together. She would like a recipe for making sauerkraut, for homegrown cabbage, people there are not familiar with it. She is cooking dishes from all different countries. That's amusing. Today e.g. there is fish soup from stockfish tails with lots of paprika. It tastes superb. But unfortunately stockfish tails are not always available. They've long since decided what to do with the parcels that Frau L has told them about: for Christmas, for New Year, for birthdays. But she thinks when they arrive they'll be thoroughly sampled – she knows that story well! But he is so endlessly modest. His father would never believe how much green stuff he's now eating!

Letter 1 from 29 July, letter 2 from 17 July, letter 3 from 4 September all arrived at the same time on 19 September.

On 22 October G.L. sent a letter his mother had given him:

I received your lovely letter of the 22nd and thank you warmly for it. You will have had news from me in the meantime. There are a few more or less informative letters from me on their way. The parcel via Barcelona has still not arrived. They say it could take months,

²³ Franz's father, Max, was 69 years old in 1938 and still in Germany after earlier having lost his position at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research in Berlin. He was eventually able to emigrate to Britain.

²⁴ Again, there is a switch in perspective here, and this sentence is written from Marianne's point of view.

²⁵ It is not too flippant to suggest that Marianne's scientific approach to rabbit breeding may have laid the groundwork for her later interest in breeding mice for cancer research at the Otago Medical School.

²⁶ Marianne and Franz were by no means the exception in their drive for self-sufficiency. Hunger was so widespread in Madrid that every piece of land was given over to raising food of some kind: "A vocation for gardening awoke in city dwellers beset by a lack of food. Patios, small backyards and garden plots were sown with vegetables. Others were given over to poultry and rabbit-breeding, with hens and rabbits raised in cages stacked one on another. Everyone tried to solve their nutritional problems by growing fruit and vegetables, working over a little piece of land, and sacrificing the flora and fauna of their gardens." (Abella, 371 – 372)

²⁷ See letter of 15 August.

so there is still hope. We were overjoyed to hear everything you had to say. It is so much nicer to know how people one loves are living. One can then imagine everything so much better when one thinks of them. There's nothing new at our end. It is still very warm. But in another month we'll have to start thinking about sorting our winter things. We're still living in our little house, modestly, in order to get by until our situation has been clarified. It's cost us a lot of thought but we believe as long as we're standing on our own feet then that's best for us. Because we're people who have to live by the work of their hands,²⁸ we think we can't go imposing on people by asking them to guarantee quite substantial sums for us so long as there are alternatives. And we will both be happy to be able to remain in spite of this war not being child's play. But throughout all the difficulties we are experiencing here the people, city and country have become so dear to us. So that it would be very, very difficult to have to go away. And we don't have any more difficulties here than anyone else, and they are just caused by the extraordinary situation. But we can't thank you often enough for your suggestion which shows so much love.²⁹ We were recently invited to a children's home – my husband looks after the children there – there was a wonderful swimming pool there and I had such fun with the children for the whole afternoon. How they enjoy the water! And they're burnt brown! Even 4-year olds leap into the water with the help of a rope and they all want to be first! They're all war orphans. How nice that they can have a little bit of pleasure and that the shadow of this sad war is not being cast on the smallest. We both love children so much but what one can do is so pitifully little. And there are so, so many of them here!³⁰ It's remarkable how the care of these children – of which there was barely a trace before the war – has been expanded in these unspeakably difficult times. Of course there is still a lot to do and which would have been done already if the war hadn't made it impossible. But every time I go to the children's home I'm happy to see the beautiful bright rooms, the cleanliness, and the atmosphere of jollity despite the good discipline. When the dinner bell goes they all come running, they show the teacher at the door their freshly washed hands – and then they're at it! How many of these children would never had known water for washing before, would never have gone to school, but instead would have sold newspapers with their parents until 1 in the morning. They're so modest and hardly every quarrel, so the staff tell me. [End of letter]

²⁸ This remark can be taken as evidence of the proletarian consciousness engendered by the Republican state: scientists and physicians such as the Bielschowskys were proud to regard themselves as workers.

²⁹ See Charlotte's comments in her next entry concerning efforts made to allow the Bielschowskys to emigrate abroad.

³⁰ Large numbers of children roamed the streets of Madrid in the first days of the war: they were the orphans of parents who had been killed at the front or in the bombing of the city, children displaced by the fighting who had arrived in the city unaccompanied, or those who suddenly found themselves uncared for when church-run institutions were abandoned by priests and nuns who feared Republican violence. The Republican government quickly began a programme to encourage the evacuation of all children from the city and it is estimated that 90 000 – 100 000 children were transferred to safer locations between October 1936 and March 1937. (Marqués, Pierre "Ayuda humanitaria y evacuaciones de niños," in *El exilio de los niños*, ed.

Alted Vigil, Alicia, Roger González Martell and María José Millán. Madrid: Fundación Pablo Iglesias/Fundación P. Largo Caballero, 2003. p. 48.) As Karine Lepyre notes, however, many children refused to leave their families and remained in the city where they tended to be unsupervised by parents who were generally preoccupied by obtaining the necessities of life. (Lapeyre, Karine. "Los Niños De La Guerra. La Vida En La Zona Republicana (1936-1939) " *Cahiers de civilisation espagnole contemporaine* 6(2010). Web. 17th January 2022.)

The good Frau L. set everything in motion to get them both out of Madrid and to give them an opportunity to get them a secure, trouble-free future. Thanks to her extensive connections she managed, through the Honduran consul, to get Franz an offer from a university over there. They have a shortage of good doctors, especially in internal medicine. A guarantee of 6 000 guilders was required. Everything, everything was ready! I went to B.³¹ three times. Relatives in America generously provided every guarantee. Father met G.L.³² twice in Eisenach. Everything was discussed down to the smallest detail. But they said no! They don't know what things are like out there in the wide world, how dreadfully worried we are, and how soon no one will be in a position any more to lift so much as a finger for them!³³

On 25 [?] October Frau L. wrote:

When your lovely letter arrived this morning I said to my husband: just you wait, now one will come from Marianne, and sure thing, there it was in the evening. In it: she was ecstatic to get the sewing yarn now she can finally sew bedsheets etc. She was overjoyed about the marvellous things for winter. Now she's not worried about the winter any more. Last winter she had chillblains on her hands and feet, so bad that she couldn't get into her shoes! She unpacked everything and set up a birthday table for when her husband came home. He was happy about all the warm clothes. Together they opened a tin of sliced meats for lunch and then soaked the fatty paper in their soup. We haven't eaten sliced meat since the war began – how good it tasted!³⁴ I think you would have laughed at us. All our good resolutions to save it all up for the holidays disappeared. But actually today was a great big holiday for us! Flour, sugar, cocoa, chocolate – we could hardly believe it. It will be a tremendous help and the delicious little fish will be thriftily managed! Sardines and a piece of bread make a magnificent meal. I think that thanks to such times as these stomachs will be getting smaller. Anyway, I often think it would be impossible to have a normal meal without getting stomach aches afterwards. On the 9 we'd been married for a whole year. In the evening a young couple and our 'uncle' visited us. We had a nice few hours. We hope that the second year will be a little bit easier for us. It's not daily life that's difficult! Although I feel so dreadfully sorry every morning that my husband has to gulp

³¹ Probably Berlin.

³² G.L. is almost certainly Günther Laubmeyer, son of Charlotte's frequent correspondent, Frau Laubmeyer, and a childhood friend of Marianne. He appears to have had excellent connections to wealthy and influential people through his wife, Elisabeth, née Piepmeyer. Her father was the successful Kassel businessman, Johannes Wilhelm Piepmeyer (1852 – 1932), whose company, Piepmeyer & Co., produced geotechnical equipment. From 1920 to 1935, Piepmeyer owned the Villa Mummy, a palatial neo-Baroque residence, and the largest property in the Villenkolonie Mulang near the town of Kassel in Hesse. It was here that Günther Laubmeyer and Elisabeth Piepmeyer married in 1928. (See: <https://www.kassel-wilhelmshoehe.de/villen.html> [Accessed: 4th January 2022]) Günther was clearly involved in the family business: in 1929 he filed an application with the US Patents Office for "a method and apparatus for detecting the presence of profitable deposits in the earth." (United States Patent Office, *Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office*, Vol. 415. p. 209) He also represented Piepmeyer & Co. in the signing of a business partnership with Standard Oil in the United States in 1937 – property which was then confiscated by the US government at the end of the war under the Trading with the Enemy Act. (*Federal Register*. United States, Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration. Volume 10, Issues 193-202. 5th October 1945. p. 12570)

³³ Unfortunately, there is no mention of this possibility of emigrating from war-torn Spain to Honduras in the Bielschowskys' correspondence in the Hocken Collection.

³⁴ The text from here on is from Marianne.

down a slice of bread with his tea before he goes to work. And I have nothing else to give him. And that is just the trivial side of our situation. We are so worried about the future.

And an insert for us:

Many thanks for your newsy letter. Now I'm feeling a bit more up to date. Etc. There is not much to report. I'm being very domestic and don't even have any more unmended socks lying around. Instead I've finished a pullover I began two years ago. Isn't that an achievement? I received a marvellous winter parcel and am calmly contemplating the prospect of ice and snow. I'm fine in other ways as well. Sometimes I feel so sorry that you didn't go through with your plan for a little house in the suburbs. It is so nice. The little vegetable garden may just be in its beginnings but you have to learn these things. And the chickens still have to grow before they lay eggs. Hopefully they won't be roosters! Anyway, I've enjoyed this year we've spent living outside the city. If you want, you can travel in by train. But you get so used to being at home that you only do it if you absolutely have to attend to something.

In November there was no mail at all! How we are worried and how terribly the month drags by then.

On 3 December a letter arrived from Frau L. without news and full of worry for the future. She's really right – they don't know what the world looks like. She may be right – why on earth didn't they grasp the opportunity in the summer?

On 10 December another letter from Frau L. The good woman copied Moni's letter:

... many thanks for both your letters. There's not much time left before Christmas for my letter to make the long journey to you. I picture Mother doing her Christmas chores. And we have the most beautiful sunshine, even if it's decidedly cool in the evenings. We are delighted with the parcels. We certainly won't freeze now. No one can imagine just how many problems have been solved for us [with these parcels]. Time is going by so quickly. Many thanks for the recipes. I'm so happy when I can bring a bit more variety into my cooking. I've learned quite a few new things. People help me out of sheer friendship. Every 10 days an acquaintance comes and helps me with washing and cleaning. She also helps me with chores, sewing and whatever needs doing. I'm very happy about it, even though I could do it all on my own. But she was an indispensable aid with the winter stuff. She used to work in a tailor's workshop. I was able to learn a lot from her. I mend everything – but everything – myself. But sometimes I think, someone like old Schachan³⁵ would be useful right now, in spite of the dreadful cut of his trousers. But it's all fine. And one is quite happy if one again rescues a pair of trousers from inevitable decay. What else should I say about us? If you're healthy and content then everything is fine. Yesterday the kitchen oven was finally repaired. It was a dreadful mess, then we cooked together and were very satisfied that the fire burned properly. Now I have a cooking element that does good service and doesn't cost much electricity either. For the winter I thought it's good if you can warm the kitchen up a bit on bad days and dry your things out. That's what we missed terribly last year. / She had written to Frau L. that they had had no heating, that

³⁵ This may have been a tailor who once worked for the family.

it was minus 5 degrees in their rooms for weeks and that the windows were iced over the whole day.

The chicken breeding is going well, but the cheeky sparrows have eaten up our lovely lettuce, in spite of the bits of paper and all the other things I did to frighten them off. But the chrysanthemums are blooming beautifully. I've got them everywhere inside, near the family gallery in Aunt Ilse's Meißner vase! On the dining table, festively decorated in white with an old unpicked eiderdown cover, they are in a honey jar. I can see you shaking your head. But people have to help themselves, otherwise they're just harming themselves and others. I once lived in a room which was kitchen, pantry, laundry all in one. A sausage a generous man gave us for Christmas was stored in the sprung mattress to keep it away from mice. But that was 2 years ago, and actually it was quite nice. Especially when you look back. How grateful we are to our friends that they placed their house at our disposal, but how we would like to be in our own 4 walls! But at least I've made it look as though it were ours with a few blankets and this and that. Otherwise everything's unchanged. We are not acquiring anything because we don't know how things are going to turn out. Then we want to have everything very beautiful and practical. And the little house is such that one could imagine oneself to be its owner with a few personal touches.

No word at Christmas, no word at New Year! There's no bridge to friends any more, none! There is no correspondence now. It is terribly difficult. One is dreadfully alone -