

Witzenhausen, May 12th, 1939

Dear Wallach family!

You will be amazed at hearing from me. But with this letter I am going to fulfil my intention to contact you which I've wanted to do for a long time. Since we have lost our store we are very busy planning our emigration - no wonder, you might think. And the amount of correspondences that is to be undertaken only to get a rejection a few weeks later, as usual; no one but the affected persons can tell you a thing or two about it. I only wanted to express that for all these correspondences one is not able to get round to writing letters to friends.

First of all I hope you are fine and thank God we are healthy too. Sometimes we hear from you and the other people formerly from Witzenhausen, and we are always happy to get good news. Certainly you have already heard that our daughter Ruthchen came to Brüssel with a "Kindertransport" on Febr. 1st. She is in good hands with my brother-in-law and she feels very happy there. Not any homesickness at all, what you can recognise by the fact that she has put on three kilos and does write letters only once every four weeks. It is clear to us that this estrangement will perhaps create problems later on, but now we are glad that a start was made with this emigration via "Kindertransport", and if the worst comes to the worst, there will be a way for us too.

Apart from many other projects I concentrated hard on Palestine - by the 'special' route in fact, which you mentioned and hinted at in your last letter to uncle David. That's why I have been to Berlin twice, and when I was at the Palestine office for the first time the two most important men there made such specific verbal assurances that I returned home in the firm belief that my Aliya was only a question of a short time. In the meantime I found out that both men carried out their Aliya on the same way they promised me. And when I was in Berlin for the second time I had lots of problems with their successors, who did not know me. Because I could gain nothing that way personally, I started the 'battle' in writing, so I put into motion all sorts of authorities, no matter whether responsible for that or not. Admittedly the result of my struggle in writing ("Schreibschlacht") is poor so far, but at least I succeeded in convincing the leader of Keren Hajessod (*central fundraising organization for Israel*) - because of certain assurances in case of approval - to do his best for me. Fact is now that I expect a decisive statement within eight days. If this is positive we will say hello to you very soon, if not we are determined to go to our Ruthchen on a similar way within four weeks. I know well that this sort of emigration is not the perfect answer, but nowadays nobody asks where they can go and how, but they go. I have already sent the list to the "Devisenstelle" (office for foreign exchange) at the beginning of this week and I hope we can pack our cases within the next two or three weeks.

I suppose you are informed about all the interesting news from Witzenhausen, so I need not repeat them. Uncle David has been with relatives in Hannover for ten days and aunt Malchen went there this morning, too. They will stay there for the whole next week and "our" Rudolph and we ourselves stay in at home and look after the house as far as there are still things left worth looking after. Most of the furniture is already sold and so is the house, which shall pass to the new owner (Bäcker Hofmann) on July 1st.

Rudolph is tall and strong, he has strength like a horse and it's a pity that he cannot use it somewhere in a productive way. At the moment he is comforting himself by playing skat all the time, which seems to solve all the problems for him. Otherwise for all of the Jewish persons here (and most of them are still here) there is only one subject: Emigration. With this every conversation starts and ends no matter who you are talking to. But actually there are only a few families who have a something sound within reach. The Hermann Trepp family, for example, will most probably get a "Transitvisum" to Belgium before they can go to the USA. The only reason why they don't have it yet is a technical mistake. Furthermore there is a little hope for Karl Katz coming to Erez (Israel) soon and only a glimmer of hope for Paula K. At last the Stockh. (*Stockhausen* ?) family is to be mentioned, maybe they can get a permit to England on grounds of a guarantee from Otto. With all the other families things remain as before. We were too late to get started. I think either it is connected with our „Sitz“-samkeit or there were not enough pessimists. Especially the leading figures of our "K'hille" - men of vision - they did not leave and waver, and the other Jewish people joined them without racking their brains. The consequences you have to bear yourself, you cannot burden any other persons with it - if it is possible without resignation although in individual cases this is very hard.

For if the other countries close their borders in the same extent as here in Germany the need for emigration is growing, then this will be a very bad prospect. But only those of us who, carelessly, did not seize their former opportunities can reproach themselves of that; but naturally that does not change their situation.

In connection with my journey to Berlin I also visited your family in Leipzig together with my wife. As everybody they want to leave too. I heard that Gert is in England now and Mrs. Wallach is waiting impatiently for her parents-certificate. I was amazed at the will power and determination with which she looks forward to her emigration as if she were a 20 year old person who wants to "move mountains". But she is not alone with this, all of us want to be united again with our relatives abroad. I hope all of us will live to see that very soon.

Luckily the situation there seems to be better now, you hardly hear anything about disturbances anymore. It would be desirable that a renewed economy started with the result that more people would come to stay in the country, this would be good for both the individual and the community.

Do you know how our friend Otto is? Do you see him often or does he spend his time completely with his young wife? I always enjoyed his letters, but since he has married he does not contact me any longer. With the best will in the world I cannot hold it against him, but I would like to know if he is still in his honeymoon.

Really, this fellow has an enviable staying power! Please give my best regards to him and his wife, to all the other friends as well, like the families Trepp, Kleeberg and Salomon etc. and – last but not least – Rosel, Kurt, Erwin and Erika.

If we don't live to see our arrival in Erez Israel I want to take this opportunity today to say Adieu to all of you and to wish you all the best for the future.

Best wishes to all

Yours

Max Verständig

*Dear Wallach family!*

*I hope you are fine, thank God I can say this about us. At the moment we are very busy packing. I hope all will go well. I would be very happy to see you again soon; but I don't hold much hope of that. We slept for far too long.*

*Best wishes to everybody*

*Yours*

*Herta Verständig*

### **The further fate of the Verständig family**

All efforts to come to Israel were in vain, so Mr. and Mrs. Verständig fled to Belgium. After the invasion of neutral Belgium by German troops in May 1940, the Jews were no longer safe there. One day Max (Markus) and Herta Verständig were arrested by the GESTAPO together with their daughter Ruth, taken in the Mechelen transit camp and from there deported to Auschwitz on August 15, 1942.

In the book of remembrance (Bundesarchiv Koblenz, online version) you can learn:

#### **Verständig, Markus**

born Juni 05, 1901 in Sieniawa/Jaroslaw/Galizien, resident in Witzenhausen/Hessen

Emigration: June 15, 1939 to Belgium

Deported to Auschwitz 1942

#### **Verständig, Herta**

née Bachenheimer, born Nov. 24, 1905 in Kirchhain/Hessen, resident in Witzenhausen

Emigration: Belgium

Deported Mechelen (Malines) - August 18, 1942 to Auschwitz

#### **Verständig, Ruth**

born Oktober 18, 1929 in Witzenhausen, resident in Witzenhausen

Emigration: Belgium

Deported Mechelen (Malines) - August 18, 1942 to Auschwitz