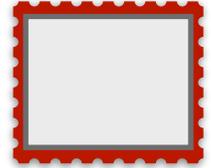


Sending for Help | Letter 2



This letter was posted five years after the Nazis come to power
... three days before Kristallnacht
... one year until the war begins in Europe.

Dear Cousin,

I am impatiently waiting for an answer to my last letters and in the meantime my situation has changed badly, indescribably.

As a result of a general campaign, my husband was involuntarily pushed out to Poland as a Pole and I stayed behind in Berlin with 2 small children without being cared for.

Dear cousin! You can't imagine my desperation, I stayed poor and helpless, abandoned by my good husband who always fed me.

Now it depends only on you and the other cousins that we stay alive, because I can only save my life as soon as I get the Affidavit in my hands[...].

A delay in the processing of the affidavit can become my abyss, since without my husband I have no way of supporting my 2 poor children. Have mercy on us and very much do not let an hour go by without working for Affidavits. I appreciate you dear cousin as a good and merciful person and trust in your human compassion and see you as the savior of 4 young people as soon as I will have the affidavit in my hands in a very short time.

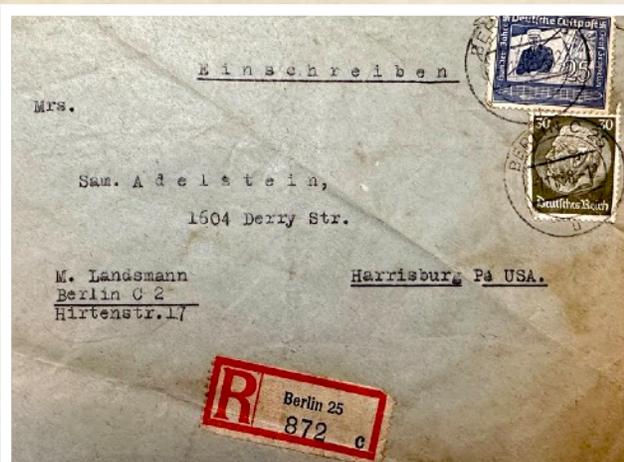
Tear open all the gates and save us as quickly as possible from our observing demise. Don't let the other cousins rest until you are sure that they have helped so that the affidavits are sufficient. Because with a good will you can achieve anything and help desperate relatives out of the greatest need.

As the rescuer of 4 people, read this letter to the other relatives so that these relatives also let their hearts soften and leave no stone unturned until you are able to send me a sufficient affidavit. Every hour is of unlimited importance. All possible ways must not be left unnoticed which should only lead to one goal. [...]

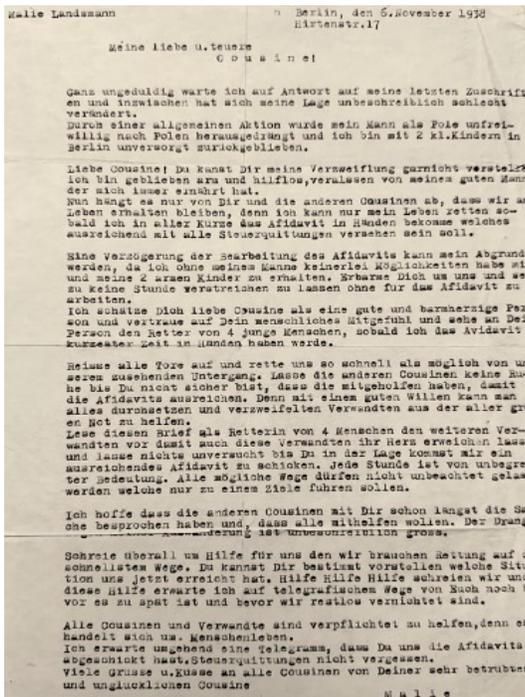
Scream everywhere for help for us who need rescue on the quickest way. You can certainly imagine what situation has reached us now. Help, help, help we scream, and I expect this help from you by telegram before it is too late and before we are completely destroyed. All cousins and relatives are obliged to help, because human lives are at stake.

I expect an immediate telegram that you have sent us the Affidavits. [...]

Many greetings and kisses to all cousins from your very sad and unhappy cousin.



Discussing the Letter



Malie's letter to Minnie, dated November 6, 1938

Malie writes this letter shortly after her husband's forced deportation to Poland. She does not know when she is writing this, but in three days, a wave of violence against the Jewish citizens of Germany will be unleashed in an event known as *Kristallnacht* or the November Pogrom. Minnie, on the other hand, will no doubt have heard about this by the time she receives the letter in America.

It is at this point that Minnie and the American cousins begin to double their efforts to get the Landsmanns safely out of Germany. Despite high travel and visa fees, the Twel and Baum families begin pooling their resources.

Minnie reaches out to several organizations, including the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America (HIAS) who tell her that they are unable to send for immigrants. On their recommendation, Minnie writes to her local senator who reaches out to the German Embassy on her behalf. Now, both women must wait for responses before pressing forward.

Key Themes:

Family, Relationships, Polenaktion, Migration, Affidavits, Sponsors, Law (American and German), Urgency



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Discussion Questions:

1. What has happened to Minnie's husband?
2. What was the Polenaktion? Who was affected by this and how?
3. What is an Affidavit and why might these be taking so long to arrive?
4. What is HIAS and what was this group attempting to accomplish at the time?
5. What does the tone of this letter reveal? What would it have been like for Minnie to receive such a letter?