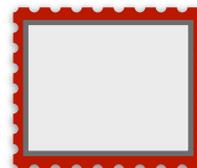


Sending for Help | Letter 4



This letter comes six years after the Nazis seize power in Germany
... it is three months after Kristallnacht
... and eight months until the outbreak of war.

Dearest cousin Minnie,

Thank you so much for your letter and I am so glad that you are doing so much to care for us, and that you have gotten in touch with the other relatives to send us an affidavit. I went to the offices of the American Consulate. Unfortunately, they would not even let me enter. Everything has to be done in writing these days. They won't talk to you. It has to be done in writing, whatever it is that you want or need.

They are giving us hope that we can emigrate in only three years. What should we do during those three years! I am unable to remain here. Most probably, I shall have to follow my husband, but my husband writes to me not to come to Poland with the children, because we shall starve there. Furthermore, they do not even want us over there. I really don't know what to do. I am at my wits' end. So, I am turning to you, my dear cousin, and hope that you can write to Washington, if it is not possible to rush that we can leave earlier.

We read that Mrs. Roosevelt is such a good-hearted person and that she is going out of her way to help Europeans. Perhaps she will even consider our case. I am so unhappy. If you write to her perhaps there is hope for us. It would be so much easier if one had accounts outside the country. It is also possible to wait in Cuba and emigrate from there. But what should we do, we have no money outside of the country. Perhaps the good Lord will do something and help us to get out of here. [...]

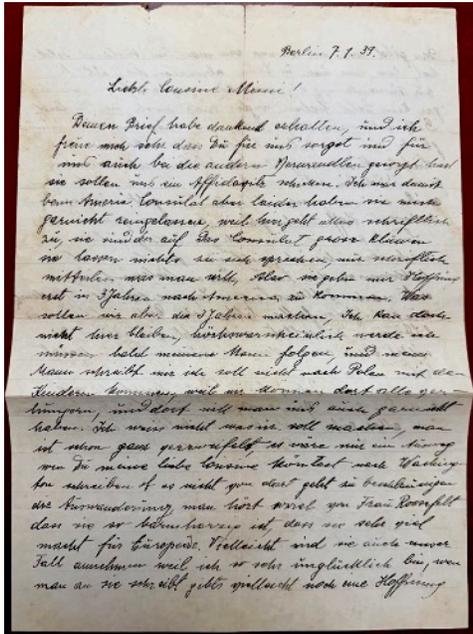
I really am unable to write anything positive until I hear from the consulate about our quota. That could take up to three months. Therefore, I beg you, my dear cousin, please do not forget us and please do whatever is in your power, your ability to help us.

I am sending you best regards, not just to you but to all our relatives and I [...] am looking for some good news from you soon.

Your Mali



Discussing the Letter



Malie's letter to Minnie, dated January
7, 1939

The situation in Germany gets worse every day for Malie and her two daughters. At this point, her husband and sole provider for the family has been in Poland for almost four months. Malie faces an impossible choice: stay in Berlin, which is becoming increasingly unsafe for Jews, or head to Poland, where her husband tells her the family may starve.

This is the first letter where a possible alternative migration route to the United States is proposed—Cuba. Malie believes that if she and her family were able to secure visas and passage, they could wait for their US quota number to be called. This was not an uncommon idea. In May 1939, the ship *St. Louis* attempted to dock in Cuba. Many of the passengers were Jewish and fleeing Germany, but were denied entry into Cuba. Eventually, the ship was forced to return with 908 of the original 937 passengers. While Britain accepted some of these refugees, 620 were taken in by nations on continental Europe. It is estimated that Nazi Germany murdered 365 of these individuals before war's end.

Key Themes:

*Quotas, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt,
Consulate, Cuba, Family Separation*



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Discussion Questions:

1. What does Malie expect Eleanor Roosevelt to do for her and her family?
2. Why might it take months to be assigned a quota number and what additional problems could this cause?
3. Why would Malie propose going to Cuba?
4. Would going to Cuba be any easier than coming to the United States?
5. If Malie and the children received quota numbers immediately, how likely would it be that they would be able to get Chaim back from Poland in time to travel?

Production credit — Grace Shaffer, Vernon Mosheim, and Chad Gibbs