

**On 19 November 1938 a father from Beuthen writes to his daughter living abroad
about events during the November pogrom¹**

Handwritten letter sent from Kattowitz,² unsigned, to the writer's daughter, dated 19 November 1938 (copy)³

My beloved Susel,

This letter is being sent from Poland, as it cannot be written this way from here. From here, every truth is an abomination, and then they are quick off the mark when it comes to draconian punishments. So, if I am able to write to you today, it is a piece of good luck and a blessing from God, if there still is one. But one really has to doubt that there is a God who allows such things. Is the world's conscience not stirred? Can the countries stand by impassively and see how hundreds of thousands are being bullied, tormented, and martyred? Is no finger lifted to take the poor Jews away from here? Does the world still not know that we have to leave here as quickly as possible, or else they will slaughter us all? At the least little thing the Jews must pay restitution. Whoever or whatever did something or whoever or whatever is said, the Jew is nabbed for it. Now, to the matter at hand: your last letter arrived, and I can only tell you that we were definitely in no position to write to you. It's better if I write things in chronological order. On 10 November I was planning to go on the road again early in the morning to earn at least a few pennies, illegally of course, for work of every kind is forbidden to Jews. On the way to the garage – I am not with the Silesia any more, I was given notice as of 1 October, I am with Martin Fröhlich,⁴ Ostlandstr., a Jew of course – somebody claps me on the shoulder; it was Josef Freund, a timber dealer, brother of Friedr[ich] Freund.⁵ Have you heard yet, he says, that the synagogues have been burning since last night? You can imagine that I was surprised and shaken. So what are you going to do, he asked; my answer was, I'm going out on the road. I wouldn't do that, he says; I say, for me it's a workday, I have to earn at least something so that we can live; why not come along with me, I'm driving out into the countryside. But he was not willing. At Fröhlich's, I ran into Schlesinger, ready-to-wear clothing for workers, Krakauerstr., who told me that in Heinz Badrian's⁶ apartment everything had been smashed to bits and the valuables and money had been stolen, whatever they could find. Again, attempts were made to stop me from setting out on my trip, but I went anyway; what I decide to do, I do. That was my good fortune. I worked until 1 p.m., but could not shake off an inner disquiet, so I turned around and drove back home, by a circuitous route. At 2:30 p.m. I drove into Fröhlich's courtyard and immediately saw shards of glass. Mr F. was just coming downstairs, white as a sheet; he had met with an accident and is using walking sticks. I asked him, and he said, the operation is probably not over yet. Immediately I got back in the car and drove around aimlessly. Finally I had to stop at some

1 YVA, O. 75/188. This document has been translated from German.

2 'Beuthen' was crossed out and replaced with 'Kattowitz'.

3 The original contains a comment: 'arrived on 3 Dec.!'

4 Martin Fröhlich (1882–1942), retailer; married to Flora Fröhlich, née Adler (1883–1942), housewife; deported to Auschwitz, where he died.

5 Josef Freund (b. 1881), timber dealer, and Friedrich Freund (b. 1888).

6 Probably Heinz Badrian (b. 1919).

point and risked everything, left the car near the Ring, and crept home along Langestr. When I was already on the third set of stairs and looked upwards, my heart almost stopped, but there was even worse to come. The windows in the door were smashed, the door was broken in, and an upended clothes locker had been propped against it to keep the door shut. I was ready to turn around at once, when I heard Mrs Krause calling to me from inside her home, in a low voice. At all events, I wanted to know where Mum and Mrs Friedländer, who is living with us, might be. Because no German is permitted to stand or speak with a Jew, she was naturally afraid, and I learned only that the two of them, also to their good fortune, had gone out. As I was just about to go downstairs, Ruth Marcus came up; she had also been arrested and locked up early in the day, but was released at 2 p.m. Then we both tried to get into the apartment, and with a great deal of effort we managed to get past the knee-high fragments and shreds. Susel, I thought I would have a stroke right there and then, and then I sobbed bitterly, like a little child. No one has ever seen anything like it before; they were not human beings, either; wild animals, beasts, are more rational, not even vandals would have done that. I could never understand that people called the Germans barbarians in the war⁷ and at the time I agonized over it, but now ... the term is too mild. The whole apartment was a heap of rubble. All the glass, porcelain, crystal, pictures, clocks, documents, blended into mush. The piano chopped up, the pump organ chopped up, my beautiful old violin smashed and trampled underfoot, the lamps pulled down. The sideboard broken open and chopped to pieces, the credenza too, all the chairs smashed to bits, etc., etc.; it is indescribable. Naturally, the few pieces of jewellery that we had were stolen. I had 160 marks on hand for the people who make my pictures, money I was supposed to send off on Saturday for my account, [and it was] stolen. Mum's last few bits of money, so that we have something to live on, stolen; it was 15 or 18 marks. Mrs Friedländer had 30 marks, provided by her brother, and was supposed to live all month on that, poor widow, stolen, naturally also little pieces of jewellery that she still had, everything gone. We are all beggars here and have no idea what is to become of us. RM⁸ took me into her apartment, and I hid there until yesterday. Mum and Mrs Friedländer were also brought there in the evening, and we all three spent the night there; it was impossible to stay in our apartment. You can imagine Mum, she sobbed heartbreakingly, and Mrs Friedländer too. Nobody can help us, because all the men and women have been arrested and locked up. The women and children were released in the evening; the men were sent to a concentration camp. The only ones who dodged arrest were those who chanced to have a bit of luck and didn't get nabbed while out and about. Every Christian who took pity on a Jew was arrested and taken away. There's no way the people could have done that, it had been planned for a long time; a great many people were in the know. It is estimated that approximately 30,000–40,000 men were taken away. In numerous cities there are virtually no men left. Erwin, of course, was among those who were taken away, probably both of Aunt Bertha's boys too. I will speak to her in Breslau in the next few days. Both synagogues and the building where the Totscheks⁹ were live-in managers,

7 In the First World War the war propaganda of France, Britain, and the USA depicted the Germans as barbaric, brutal, ugly, and militaristic.

8 Ruth Marcus.

9 Probably Herbert Toček (b. 1904) and Paula Toček, née Černik (b. 1901). Paula Toček was deported from Beuthen on 2 June 1942.

with all the contents, furniture, etc., have burned down. The T[otscheks] escaped by the skin of their teeth, and he was taken away; his wife was left standing outdoors in her nightgown and overcoat. The fire department took good care to ensure that everything was burning nicely and that no other buildings caught fire. Men and women, regardless of age, were beaten, especially old men and women. We know of a case of one old lady who was beaten and throttled almost to death. I could tell you an endless number of other stories, but I can't continue; I am overcome by my feelings every time I think about it. There is only one thing for us here, and that is to leave as quickly as possible. And now it is not just a favour but a most urgent duty for the uncles and Günther in America to take us in over there. In fact, it must happen very quickly, because we can't stand it much longer. There's not a day any more when we are safe; in fact we are considered fair game. We are no longer permitted to work and earn money so we can live; we are meant to starve to death or be imprisoned. There are already quite a number of Germans who are so noble and honourable that they will not sell to Jews any longer. Well, what else should I write; you can imagine it yourself. Send this letter to Günther; you can make a copy for yourself. I hope this letter reaches you safely, because otherwise, woe betide us, we are lost. Write to us *as soon as* you have received it, and let us know that it was this letter. We want to confer in Breslau and send a cablegram to America. I hope they will initiate and expedite everything as quickly as possible, because every day is valuable. Just get out of here, out of here, out of here. In such an environment, one dies 1,000 deaths every day, no one can have any idea what it's like. – If I don't write much today about you and everything else, you will understand why, but I wanted to put you in the picture and have the letter forwarded to Günther. Ruth has now received the papers from Argentina, and poor Erwin is jailed. Who knows whether the Argentines may have put a stop [to immigration]. All the South American countries are monsters if they fail to admit the poor Jews. Unless North America helps quickly, we are lost. It is all up to them now. If they are willing, everybody can be accommodated; later on there'll be time to recoup, first get everybody out, and fast. The world will no longer have any peace anyway, because of these people here. Nobody realizes that, not until it is too late. England and France had better beware. Your Lord Chamberlin¹⁰ has made a mess of everything; the English will come to deeply regret that they followed this man. If only they had left things to Eden and Churchill, Europe would have been saved. – But I'll close for now. Do everything the way I wrote, stay healthy, and warmest hugs and kisses from your loving and devoted Dad.

Beloved Susele! He has written to you about everything now; one could write volumes but lacks the courage to do so. You have no idea what it all is like. God willing, you will receive this letter. Send it to G. at once. For today, dear child, warmest hugs and kisses from your devoted Mum.

I'm just glad that you two are not here anymore.

10 Correctly: Chamberlain.