



Kindertransport

My dearest parents,

As I sit here on a train bound for England, my heart is sinking at what I am leaving behind. I hope you don't mind that I didn't look back towards you and wave when the train left the station, I couldn't bear the thought of seeing your tears reflected in my own. It is too sad a thing that we have had to do today. I shall miss you all terribly.

Everybody else on the train seems upbeat and excited for the adventures that lie ahead. Some of the older children are already telling us of the adventures that their friends - who went on before - have had. I can't help but have a sour taste though; hopefully, it will improve when we meet our new family. Jan is calm and chatty as always, I'm not sure he knows what is going on yet. I promise I will look after him, no matter what happens. I promised you that I would act as his mother and I shall, forever if needed.

We have already passed through the checkpoint and over the border into Holland. They didn't check my bags, which was lucky. If they'd found my copy of the Tanakh all heck would have broken out. Even though the others are so cheerful, they all seemed tense when we crossed. We stopped briefly in Oldenzaal where the train took on coal and we had a chance to eat and drink. They treated us so kindly Mama, you would hardly know there was a war on. All of the food was kosher, tell Papa not to worry!

The newspapers were there if you can you believe it? We were like celebrities! The station was decorated with bunting and the people cheered us on. One small boy raced over to me and handed me a wooden dog on a pull-along string. I think it might become my most prized possession. It has been like this at every station, they seem so happy for us. Maybe the world has heard what is going on after all? Maybe there is hope yet?

When we arrive in England, we will go first to a place called Harwich. Apparently, there is a large camp there where all of the German children are being looked after. The older children on the train are already discussing where they'd like to live in England. Some want to go to farms and others

into the big cities. I just want to go somewhere that I can live in peace and not have to worry about Herr Hitler. I hope I won't be there for long but I overheard one of the matrons talking to the conductor and she said Herr Hitler was in it for the long-haul. We'll be lucky if we're not at war for the rest of our lives, she said. I truly hope not. I miss you all already and I've only been gone a few hours. I can't even imagine what I'll be like after a month.

I apologise for the scruffiness of my handwriting, the train is being jolted around so much. Even though Holland is flat and seems to be covered in windmills, the train doesn't seem to spend more than a minute in a single straight line before bumping and bouncing on the track. Hopefully, when we board the boat to England it will smooth out and I'll be able to write again. I do hope I'm not sick; do you remember the time papa took me out in that little rowing boat on the lake and I spent the morning green as grass?

Please take as much care as you can, especially Oma and Opa, and write to me with any news of home. Even the most mundane stories will no doubt seem exotic once I have settled in as an English aristocrat!

Your loving daughter

Irma

RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Where is Irma headed?
2. Where have they already arrived?
3. What would have caused trouble if it had been found?
4. What toy is she given?
5. What might be one benefit of boarding the boat to England?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

Who do you think Jan is?

P

What religion do you think Irma might be? Why?

V

What does Irma mean when she says Hitler is in it for **the long haul**?

I

Why might her new toy be a prized possession?

S

Write a summary of Irma's feelings throughout the letter.

Answers:

1. England
2. Holland
3. Her Tanakh (Hebrew bible)
4. A wooden dog on a pull-along string
5. Her handwriting will improve

I: Her brother

P: Jewish. She has a Tanakh and is fleeing persecution. She refers to Kosher food

V: He's not about to give in or surrender. He's prepared to be at war for a long time

I: It was a sign of kindness in a scary time