



## The Abba Hillel Silver Digital Collection

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**MS-5492: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, Series IV, 1928-1993.**

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Correspondence, envelope, letter from Bella Reutlinger to Abba Hillel Silver, mailed from Haigerloch, Hohenzollern, Germany, with additional documentation, 1938.

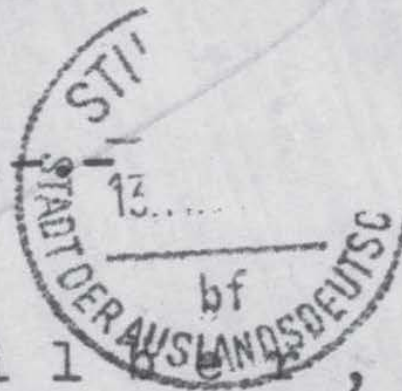
Express-Eilboten!  
Luftpost!

Mr. an Mrs.

Rabbiner Sil

try 10311 Lak Shore Blvd.  
Cleveland Ohio

U. S. A.



Claimed by One of First Address

Bella Reutlinger, Haigerloch  
Hohenzollern

*Handwritten:* 11-25-38



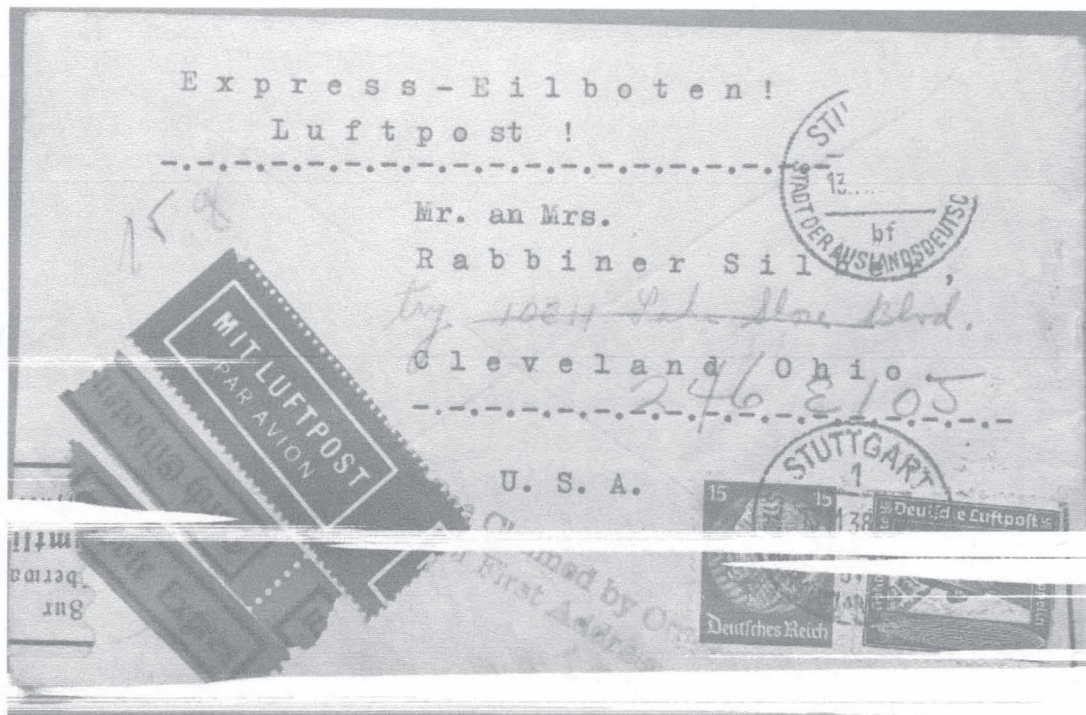
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Germany in 1938

Letter to ~~Rabbiner Silber~~ <sup>Rabbi Silver</sup> (translated to 'Rabbi Silver') Rabbi Abba Miller Silver of Cleveland Ohio. Letter is addressed simply:

Rabbiner Silber  
Cleveland Ohio, U.S.A.

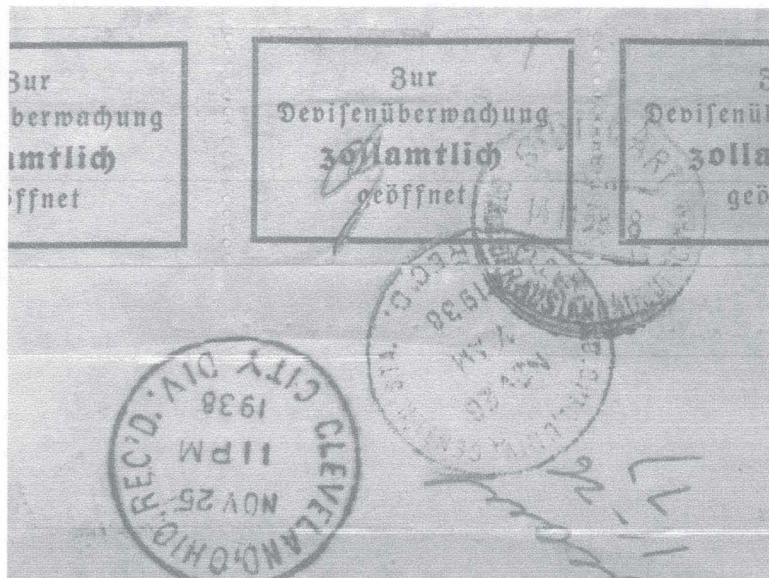
Dated: 11/13/1938 (4 days after Kristallnacht)

The letter was mailed 11/13/1938 from:

Bella Reutlinger, was 42 years old when she wrote to Rabbi Silver  
From Haigherloch, Hohenzollern, Germany  
(Bella's father: Rabbi Dr. Kroner had already passed away 8 years earlier in Stuttgart Germany at the time the letter was sent to Rabbi Silver)

Bella's father: Rabbi Dr. Hermann Kroner  
Birth: March 23, 1870, Died: July 30, 1930 (60)

Bella's Grandfather: Rabbi Dr. Theodor Kroner  
Birth: March 12, 1845,  
Died: October 06, 1923 (78) Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany  
Theodor Kroner, Chief Rabbi of Stuttgart; Rabbi 8\* H. Dansitfer(Alexandrov),



The letter was mailed from:

(Hohenzollern-Haigerloch which was a small county in southwestern Germany.

**11/14/1938** Stuttgart, Germany. The letter was opened and inspected by the Reich.

The labels on the back of the envelope are indication of this: 'Zur Devifenuberwachung Zollamtlich geoffnet'

Translates to: Customs office opened for deviating monitoring

**11/25/1938** Envelope arrives in Cleveland 11 p.m.

**11/26/1938** Envelope Cleveland stamp, 7 a.m.

Letter letter has an address written in pencil '10311 Lakeshore Blvd' most likely not by the sender but a postal worker that looked up Rabbi Silver, and delivered it to Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver



It would be interesting to find the corresponding letter. To understand what may have been in the contents, a letter to a prominent Rabbi in the US. It's important to imagine the desperation of the author of the letter by what was happening in Germany at the time.

What was the relationship between Della Reutlinger and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver?

On 11/14/1938, Della Reutlinger wrote a letter to Rabbi Silver that was her connection?



## **On October 5, 1938,**

What was happening in Germany around the time of Bella's letter

The Reich Ministry of the Interior invalidates all German passports held by Jews. Jews must surrender their old passports, which will become valid only after the letter "J" has been stamped on them.

The government required Jews to identify themselves in ways that would permanently separate them from the rest of the German population. In an August 1938 law, authorities decreed that by January 1, 1939, Jewish men and women bearing first names of "non-Jewish" origin had to add "Israel" and "Sara," respectively, to their given names. All German Jews were obliged to carry identity cards that indicated their heritage, and, in the autumn of 1938, all Jewish passports were stamped with an identifying red letter "J". As Nazi leaders quickened their war preparations, antisemitic legislation in Germany and Austria paved the way for more radical persecution of Jews.

## **NOVEMBER 9, 1938. (*Kristallnacht*)** *Bella's letter was dated November 13*

Nazi Party officials, members of the SA and the Hitler Youth carry out a wave of violent anti-Jewish pogroms throughout Greater Germany.

The rioters destroyed hundreds of synagogues, many of them burned in full view of firefighters and the German public and looted more than 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses and other commercial establishments.

Jewish cemeteries became a particular object of desecration in many regions. Almost 100 Jewish residents in Germany lost their lives in the violence. In the weeks that followed, the German government promulgated dozens of laws and decrees designed to deprive Jews of their property and of their means of livelihood even as the intensification of government persecution sought to force Jews from public life and force their emigration from the country.

After the pogroms, the implementation of German anti-Jewish policy was gradually concentrated in the hands of the SS. Thus, Kristallnacht figures as an essential turning point in Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews, which culminated in the Holocaust, the attempt to annihilate European Jews during the war.

## **NOVEMBER 12, 1938**

The German government issues the Decree on the Elimination of the Jews from Economic Life (*Verordnung zur Ausschaltung der Juden aus dem deutschen*

*Wirtschaftsleben*). The decree bars Jews from operating retail stores, sales agencies, and from carrying on a trade.

The law also forbids Jews from selling goods or services at an establishment of any kind.

During the first six years of Hitler's dictatorship, from 1933 until the outbreak of war in 1939, Jews felt the effects of more than 400 decrees and regulations that restricted all aspects of their public and private lives.

Many of these were national laws that had been issued by the German administration and affected all Jews. But state, regional, and municipal officials, acting on their own initiatives, also promulgated a barrage of exclusionary decrees in their own communities. Thus, hundreds of individuals in all levels of government throughout the country were involved in the persecution of Jews as they conceived, discussed, drafted, adopted, enforced, and supported anti-Jewish legislation. No corner of Germany was left untouched.

## NOVEMBER 13, 1938

Bella Reutlinger (42) writes a letter and mails it to Rabbi Silver in Cleveland, Ohio. The letter arrived 13 days later. We don't know the contents of the letter, if it was read by and responded to by Rabbi Silver.

## DECEMBER 2, 1938

In desperation, thousands of Jewish parents send their unaccompanied children abroad, hoping they would find refuge from Nazi persecution.

Kindertransport (Children's Transport) was the informal name of a series of rescue efforts (organized by Jewish communal groups in Germany and Austria) which brought thousands of refugee Jewish children to Great Britain between 1938 and 1940.

## June 1939

### **And then the horror of the Jewish refugees aboard the MS St Louis.**

As the M.S. St. Louis cruised off the coast of Miami in June 1939, its passengers could see the lights of the city glimmering. But the United States hadn't been on the ship's original itinerary, and its passengers didn't have permission to disembark in Florida. As the more than 900 Jewish passengers looked longingly at the twinkling lights, they hoped against hope that they could land.



It took two weeks for the St. Louis, which flew a Nazi flag, to reach Havana. But the voyage didn't end on Cuban soil. Rather, Cuban officials refused to let the passengers disembark. Though the majority of passengers had purchased Cuban visas in Germany, Cuba had decided to revoke all but 28.

When it became clear that Cuba was indifferent, if not hostile, to the refugees, the ship sailed toward the United States.

They didn't find sanctuary there, either. An attempt to land in Miami was rejected by immigration authorities, and a desperate cable to Roosevelt by some passengers was ignored. Though a U.S. diplomat had tried to negotiate with Cuba to admit the refugees, the U.S. itself was unwilling to open its doors. The passengers would have to abide by an existing quota system that allowed only about 27,000 people from Germany and Austria into the United States.

A State Department official telegraphed the passengers, telling them that they "must await their turns on the waiting list and qualify for and obtain immigration visas before they may be admissible into the United States." Though Roosevelt had considered a concerted push to rescue Jewish refugees the year before the St. Louis sailed, he eventually dropped the idea, both because he knew it would be politically unpopular and because of his increasing focus on the looming world war.



On June 6, twenty-four days after the St. Louis left Europe, it turned around to return



It was accompanied by a U.S. Coast Guard vessel, on the lookout for desperate passengers who might jump off the ship.

Back in Europe, some countries did offer to take some immigrants. The Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which had assisted with the Cuban negotiations, promised a cash guarantee for every refugee in exchange for 181 slots in Holland, 224 in France, 228 in Great Britain, and 214 in Belgium.

After the Holocaust, the St. Louis' survivors pushed for the remembrance of their ordeal. The United States changed its policy toward refugees in the wake of World War II, and began accepting more refugees than any other country in the world.

In 2012, the United States Department of State formally apologized to the survivors of the ship, and in 2018, Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau followed suit. But the memory of those who died is still a painful reminder of what a refusal to adjust immigration policies in light of persecution and migration crises can mean. "We were not wanted," St. Louis survivor Susan Schleger told a Miami Herald reporter in 1989. "Abandoned by the world."

