

Salvaged Pages: Klaus Langer

Klaus was a teenager in Gleiwitz, Germany. He began his diary after his Bar Mitzvah and recorded the unfolding discrimination against the Jews of his town in the 1930s. In these excerpts, he writes about their efforts to emigrate... (pages 22-32)

November 28, 1938

On November 23, Father came home and immediately began work on the emigration process. The only two countries to which Father's pension could be transferred were Chile and Palestine. By his calculation, his income would not be enough to make a living in Palestine and the question then arose whether he would be able to supplement his pension. There was also the question whether the Nazis would continue to send his pension abroad. As an amateur musician it was almost impossible to make a living in Palestine because of the many other Jewish musicians who had emigrated there. In Chile the situation was somewhat better and it would have been possible to live there on the pension... Father had to give up hope for emigrating to Argentina. He is now hoping to get a business license for Palestine. It would be best if we could all go to Palestine.

December 14, 1938

According to the new law, Jews are allowed to take only essentials with them when they emigrate. The new regulation requires rehabilitation to the German government for the destruction caused over Kristallnacht.

December 19, 1938

Regarding the emigration of my parents, I have the following to report. First came two refusals from Argentina for lack of letters of credit. The rich uncle in America is unable to assume such a financial responsibility. We don't have an affidavit for the U.S. India requires firm employment there, or a contract. Father is now trying to make connections in India to obtain a contract. He also wrote to Peru and he was told to go to the Uruguayan consulate. Allegedly the Dominican Republic would take ten thousand Jews and provide them with visas. However, nothing further is known about that. It probably makes no sense to turn to them. However, with a Dominican Republic visa it is possible to get a half-year visa for Palestine. Shanghai also accepts Jews, even without a visa, but it's questionable how one can live there. The mail also brought no news from Palestine. We had submitted a request for 'commercial certification.'

January 5, 1939

My parents had to all but give up hope for South America. However, India is still an open possibility. If they can get there it would be very good. Their chances for emigrating to the U.S. also are very slim because they have a very high waiting number, 25,000.

January 12, 1939

Regarding their emigration, my parents have not progressed one step. As of January 1, 1939, we are required to have an identity card. In providing personal information the official asked my father's hair color. My father is bald. I must really admire my parents. Despite having been rejected, disappointed, having suffered hardships and daily aggravations, they did not lose their good humor.

July 15, 1939

My parents finally have something that might work with regard to their emigration. A Chilean visa costs about seventy pounds, which my parents somehow obtained. Unfortunately, all the ships for Chile are booked until December. However, that still represents a possibility.

August 19, 1939

My parents are still trying to get papers for Chile. At the moment, it does not look good.

Klaus' parents and grandmother were not able to emigrate from Germany. His mother died of blood poisoning on Sept. 8, 1941, in Essen. His father was deported on April 21, 1942 to the Izbica Libélska camp in Poland. By the end of that year, the local Jews from Izbica and those who came there from other locations had been taken to the death camps at Belzec or Sobibor, or had been shot. Klaus' father was among them. His grandmother was sent to Terezin on July 15, 1942 and only a few months later was deported to Minsk, where she perished. Klaus emigrated to Palestine, arriving in January 1940.