

My mother's letter (170909) to my father in Brussels was of a very personal nature, reporting the wedding of her brother, Franz Bauer, and what she thought of his new wife. She reports her as being "Jewish, nice, clean and of good manners!" and immediately continues with a rumour that General Ludendorff would start peace negotiations in December 1917—"If only this were true!" Obviously, in the fourth year of war, life in Berlin must have become very difficult, and in September all thoughts were concentrated on the coming hard winter.

All my mother's letters contained detailed accounts of the progress and health of the young baby Kurt, born in August 1916. When I was naturalised in England in 1947, I changed my three Christian names, Kurt Otto Adolf, two after my Grandfathers Otto and Adolf. I became Anthony Rowland Michaelis by simple Deed Poll.

So for example in her letter of 170909 she reports to my father that Kurt has had 70 gm breast milk, that he loves grated apple and is starting to eat meat at an age of 1 year and 1 month. In an eight-page letter, four months later (180110), she writes that the baby is weighed every 14 days, gets 750 gm milk, 100 gm cheese, sufficient vegetables, potato and apple purée, buttered white bread and meat twice weekly. (Kurt's age was then 1 year and 3.5 months.) She goes on to say that Kurt is happy and playful, intentionally often left alone, and never cries when he falls down.

My mother must have carried on working as a sculptor, because in her next letter (180411) she tells my father that she has sold a small bronze sculpture for 350 Mark, received from him 600 M and had to take 2500 M from the Bank account to support her mother. She was delighted with the brown winter boots received from Brussels—"I would never get anything like that now in Berlin for any price". But the subject of food is constantly recurring and she mentions a visit to Sumt, the farm of relatives near Berlin, where she obtained a 15-pound ham and no doubt other essentials. She must have gone there by train, as neither my father nor my mother ever owned a car.

My father replied 3 days later (180414) describing his Sunday, starting with a bath and that there were only 3 towels in the house, one for each floor, but that he had extra ones from home. He went to a museum, enjoyed the Flemish paintings by Rubens and van Dyck, true pictures of life at the time—"a pity we could not enjoy them together". He ate with colleagues at the Hussen Restaurant, soup, omelette filled with kidneys, spinach and fried bread, and a sweet. Cost only 3.60 M, only 1 Mark more than in the Hospital.