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RUTH'S TRIP TO EUROPE

In 1948, after two years in Australia, Ruth decided that she wanted to visit her parents in Germany and take the children with her. Heinz's university commitments made it impossible for him to accompany her. Though three years had passed since the end of the war in Europe, it was still difficult for foreign civilians to travel to Germany. Private citizens generally were not permitted to visit the country, so it was uncertain whether Ruth would be allowed to do so. The annual quota of visitors was usually filled by businessmen, and even then, there was a sizeable waiting list. Heinz called on the assistance of the Labor parliamentarian Allan Fraser, who contacted John Burton, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, to see whether he could secure the necessary entry permits for Ruth.

In the application for a permit, Heinz explained that Ruth had left Germany as a political refugee in 1935—when only 20 years old—and had not seen her parents since then, except for one day in 1939, when they met her in London during a cruise. Her parents were now both over 60, neither was in good health and both were eager to see their daughter after so many years.

'It is for this reason,' Heinz wrote, 'that my wife was somewhat reluctant to come to Australia when I was offered my present appointment by Sydney University in 1946, and that, but for my acceptance of the appointment, she would now have the opportunity of inviting her parents to visit her in England.'

Burton worked through the Military Permit Office attached to the British Foreign Office and finally was able to obtain a permit for Ruth for a 30-day visit, valid for June–July 1949. It was fortunate that Cuxhaven, where her parents lived, was in the British Zone of West Germany.

Ruth had originally intended to leave Sydney in May 1949, but when she discovered she was pregnant again, the trip was brought forward. With three weeks' notice, she and the boys set sail for England on the *Esperance Bay* on 1 March. The plan was to spend some time in England completing formalities and visiting friends, and then to travel to Cuxhaven. Heinz had contacted his former Oxford friend, Tom Baily, who by this stage had taken up his post as Anglican cleric at Shap in England's northwest. He asked Baily whether Ruth might stay with him during the latter stages of her

of her confinement. Baily readily said yes. So from Germany, Ruth would travel back to England, have the baby and then return to Australia later in the year.

For more than six months, a stream of letters passed backward and forward between Australia and Europe. In his letters to Ruth, whom he invariably addressed 'Dear Darky', Heinz informed her with copious detail of his activities, whom he had met, conditions and events in Australia and, above all, how he was missing her and the children. Ruth, for her part, recorded the difficulties that she and the children experienced on the long sea voyages, the state of Europe, the joys and tribulations of meeting her family and various members of Heinz's family, meetings with friends and, eventually, the birth of Bettina.

Scarcely a fortnight had elapsed since Ruth's departure when Heinz wrote a letter to her, addressed to the ship at Fremantle, saying

All the time I think of things I would like to know about your life and experiences on board, but by the time you get this most of the questions will have become out of date. I wondered yesterday for example as I was crossing the Harbour Bridge whether you had seen Coogee on your way South, or was it already too dark? And did you have nice views of the land around the Australian coast? Also I want to know lots more about your Melbourne days. Perhaps you will have had some time to report between Melbourne and Fremantle. I also wonder whether you still go to bed with the children or whether you have begun to take any part in evening activities. Whether you have met any nice people, and so forth. You will probably answer anyhow in your letters. How is No. 3 getting on? I hope you have not been sick any more, whether because of No. 3 or seasickness. How is Nicky's eczema? And Chris's asthma? Do you have any trouble in stopping them falling overboard? (I confess I find it quite easy to think about that in wild day-nightmares.) How is the washing getting on—and drying? Do you send anything to the laundry—in fact, is there one to send things to? Have you so far had time for reading? And all the sewing you were going to do?

When he received Ruth's letter from Perth, informing him of the various illnesses that she and the children had experienced between Sydney and

Fremantle, and dreading the fact that the worst of the voyage was yet to come, Heinz responded as follows

Your long awaited letter from Perth came today—and I am rather depressed. You poor old Darky, what a terrible time you are having, and there is nothing I can do about it. I do hope things have got better since Fremantle. I wish you could quite frankly appeal for a little help to some of your fellow passengers, e.g. one or other of the girls you mention. Perhaps you got someone nice on board at Fremantle. I shall worry about you until I hear from you again from Colombo. And I am terribly sorry for the two boys if they are so unhappy.

It did not get any better as the *Esperance Bay* crossed the Indian Ocean and passed through the Suez Canal on its way to the Mediterranean and Europe. Ruth, exhausted and despondent, finally reached England on 14 April. In London, she had difficulty coping with the weather and was too tired to visit everyone she had planned to see. Happily, she was able to alter the conditions of her entry visa to Germany, arriving there on 1 May. She travelled across the North Sea on a small cargo boat carrying a dozen passengers and stayed with her family at Cuxhaven for just more than a month.

Of her trip to Germany, Ruth wrote to Heinz

As far as my family went, I think I can say that the joy and happiness which all showed made up for the complicated preparations for the journey and the trials of the trip. But to come home after 14 years was in many ways a great strain, especially as it meant coming back to such a small place where not much had changed and where the war had not affected the people unduly. ...I can only say that I was quite overcome with the general impression that things there are so much better than we had expected after looking at it all from so far away. But the same is true of things here in England. Everything here seems to have improved a lot since we left three years ago. It seems to show that one does get isolated in these far-off places, where news of the rest of the world is scarce and probably prejudiced.

Heinz, meanwhile, was keeping Ruth informed of his daily life in Sydney. Noel Butlin had won an ANU travelling scholarship to undertake a PhD at Harvard, and he and Joan were planning to visit Ruth in England on their way to Boston. After the Butlins' departure, Heinz's former student Alan Barnard had moved into the Arndts' half of the house with Heinz, while Alan's girlfriend, Pat, and a female friend of hers had moved into the Butlins' half. To his father, Heinz wrote: 'Our ménage continues to function very well and I am leading a remarkably untroubled and placid life.'

He told Ruth that he had inaugurated a series of monthly lectures sponsored by the Fabian Society, was undertaking a research project for the Commonwealth Treasury, had written up a lecture he had given the previous year in Melbourne for publication in a new Italian journal of international economics and had been elected president of the University Economic Society. Also, he had been appointed president of a local music club, replacing a Mr Perrin, who had been deposed for embezzling the club's funds. Heinz told Ruth that he hoped 'we shall leave Hurstville before long and provide a decent excuse for resigning that honourable office'. From time to time, he reported to Ruth that he had posted food parcels, including packets of jelly, chocolate and sweets, and soap.

For Ruth, things appeared to improve once she and the children arrived at Shap. She wrote to friends

Since the sea journey has receded into the background it has lost many of the horrors it has meant to me. I had known before we left that I would not enjoy the trip much, as I have never liked long journeys, but to have to face storms and cold weather when we were all very seasick, as well as extreme heat, and poor little Nicky was so sick that I sometimes thought he would not survive, was more than I had bargained for. There was nothing wrong with the boat, except that it was so slow, and that we mothers did not get any help from the crew in looking after the children. But the worst was that there was what I considered to be the most disgusting collection of Australians on the boat, and it all became more of a nightmare as the time went on.

At Shap, Ruth and the boys enjoyed the open spaces and the country air. They got on well with Tom Baily and his housekeeper; they met the

locals, who probably thought it strange that this fatherless family of two small boys and one pregnant mother, all of them Australian citizens but with German accents, were living with their vicar, himself a bachelor. While the villagers no doubt discussed among themselves this strange ménage, to Ruth and the boys they were friendly and exhibited no malice. Chris attended the local school and enjoyed it. It was natural, however, that Ruth should find the circumstances far from ideal: about to give birth to her third child within five years, a long way from home and without Heinz. Though she was always interested in Heinz's news and waited eagerly for his letters, she wrote on one occasion to friends: 'Heinz has used this period of grass-widowerhood to do a lot of work, catching up with his research, and also doing some of the outside things which I used to frown upon, as I always thought he had quite enough to do with his university duties. I would like to think that he will feel that family life has compensations, even if it means that he cannot sit down and write and read when he feels like it.'

Heinz waited eagerly for news from Ruth, her letters often containing short notes and drawings by Chris. As if to disabuse Ruth of any impression she might have had that his life lacked hardship and adversity, he wrote three letters in quick succession at the end of June. These informed her of the floods in the coal-producing region of the Hunter Valley and of the crippling coal strike, both events causing severe shortages of power and fuel in New South Wales more generally. From his letter of 26 June 1949

The fuel restrictions are really fantastic. All that one is allowed to use is two electric lights, cooking facilities in the morning and evening, and the electric jug three times a day: no radiators, no washing, except in cold water—(and it's much too cold for that); trains at hourly intervals; no electricity at all for industry, nor for public buildings such as the Public Library or the University. Hence no evening lectures... The immediate cause of all this is the floods which wrecked the railways from the northern coalfields around Maitland and Cessnock. But there is also the threat of the general coal strike which is due to begin tomorrow unless last minute negotiations can stop it. It looks as if we shall be with these difficulties, if not in quite this severe form, for the rest of the winter.

He added in a letter the next day

You can congratulate yourself that you are not having the baby here. The coal strike has really started today and things are getting a bit thick. The restrictions are all still on—no baths, no hot water supply of any sort; cooking for two meals a day, no radiators (and it is lousily cold—39 degrees [Fahrenheit; 3.8 degrees Celsius] yesterday and today), no coal to be had, transport severely restricted, and all industry shut down. There were no evening lectures tonight, but we had been given a lecture room or two in the engineering department where they generate their own electricity...Hospitals were shutting down except for emergency wards...I was living on a small stock of coal from last year; crouching around the fire. I'm sure you wouldn't like it much here right now. Neither would the children.

He informed Ruth on 30 June that

Things here meanwhile are going from bad to worse. The coal strike goes on (though the Government is taking quite unprecedented measures—unprecedented for a [Labor] Government—e.g. freezing union funds) and every day restrictions become more severe. Cooking periods have been further reduced; electric and gas hot water systems are to be cut off altogether (because the ban has not been adhered to properly), transport will be further cut, also street lighting; unemployment is increasing—already about 500,000 in NSW are affected. Our coal supplies are finished, but we are cutting up the wood behind the garage; there is still lots...The ban on the hot water is the worst business—no baths (I sneaked a tiny shower—the last one—on Tuesday) and no washing; I am wearing my last shirt but one; unless I get some washing done (the laundries are, of course, not functioning) I shall have to lecture in still white shirts next week! And even if I do get the washing done, we are not allowed to iron. I did manage to wash an accumulation of socks this afternoon and shall darn some of them tomorrow. But it's all rather complicated. Supplies of food are also getting short; no potatoes, little meat, milk supply cut (that was because of floods); no candles, little kerosene, and no

canned meat to be had; electric lights in homes are banned after 9pm. I managed to give some evening lectures this week, because we got a room in electrical engineering where they make their own electricity.

On 1 August, Ruth gave birth to Bettina. Before the baby was born, Ruth and Heinz, in their correspondence, often talked about possible names for the baby. Since both believed they were going to have another boy, much of the discussion centred on boys' names, though they did not discount completely the possibility that they might have a girl. Both of them desperately wanted a girl, and they agreed that if their latest child did turn out to be a girl, they would call her Bettina, after Heinz's sister. As soon as the baby arrived, Tom Baily sent Heinz a cable telling him the good news that Ruth and the baby were well.

Heinz could scarcely believe his good fortune. He cabled Ruth immediately, assuring her that he was delighted that they now had a daughter to complement the two boys. The day after the birth, Ruth felt able to write to Heinz, giving him all the details

It started on Sunday night, all day I had had enough of it. Mrs Houguez [Tom Baily's housekeeper] and I took the boys for a walk and she made me climb over a stone wall, and it did the trick. I just managed to bath the boys and put them to bed, but felt pretty sick all the time. I then went to bed, but there was still no pain. I went to sleep but woke up about 10.30 and we left about 11pm by car. Then a long business started. The baby did not come until 6 o'clock the next morning (1 August). Anyhow it is all finished and done with now...Baby has lots of dark hair, weight 8 lbs 7 ozs!!!

In a second letter she wrote the same day, Ruth provided Heinz with further information about the baby

It was really not so bad looking back on it, though I longed for some ether as they had in King George V!...Of course, the first surprise was that it was a girl. I wonder what your reaction was. I thought of you getting a cable read out to you over the phone

and felt so sorry for you being all alone, and I cried. But maybe you were very pleased with your family which will be very nice and just right as long as everyone does not spoil the little girl too much...She is very sweet, awfully comic at times, but quite pretty. Lots of black hair, much more than either of the boys and much darker, a round head and face, fat cheeks, beautiful skin and will probably have very dark eyes. I am very amused by her; she often looks as if she is laughing. Being fat, she is also lazy and snoozes away peacefully and really does not bother to eat, but as she is only one day old that does not matter. She knows what it is all about and can suck when she is bullied.

To Joan and Noel Butlin (who had arrived in London), Ruth wrote after Bettina's birth: 'Except for the fact that there are nappies in the Vicarage garden you would not know we have her. I am doing everything for the boys and her and it is surprising how little difference she makes to our life here. She...[has] dark skin and [looks] half Chinese and half Mexican, goodness knows what thriller I must have been reading at the time she decided to come along.'

The Butlins decided to travel up to Shap, to take a look at the new arrival for themselves. In one of his circular letters to family and friends, Noel wrote of their trip to Shap as follows

We had a very enjoyable time, seeing the inside of a village, a country inn and a vicarage. The vicarage was a gem, with a perfect Cold Comfort Farm touch down to an illegitimate housekeeper with an illegitimate daughter, a duck, dog, fowls, cats and pigeons in the kitchen, the house a great store barn with attached graveyard and a little stone church. The Arndt family was flourishing and well it might in that climate with stocks of food. We were able to go walking a bit with Tom Baily the vicar and were introduced to the general layout of the old Shap manor. In addition to this we went for a bus ride with Ruth, Christopher and Nicky to Kendal, almost 16 miles from Shap, and got some better idea of the general scenery on the edge of the [L]akes district.

After the Butlins left Shap, Joan Butlin wrote to Heinz: 'Bettina Mary's wonderfully well behaved and although she has not yet had time to

become beautiful she has distinct possibilities. She is very long, with long fingers. By the way, she can hold her head up surprisingly well for such a young baby.' Noel added, 'Ruth seems very well—much better than she was before she left. Certainly she picked the right spot in staying in Shap.'

Ruth was now preparing for the long return journey to Sydney. With the traumas of the voyage to Europe still indelibly imprinted on her mind, she was scarcely looking forward to the voyage back. She gathered some comfort, however, from the fact that Heinz was able to book her and the children on a new, and much faster, Orient liner, the *Otranto*, which was due to leave Tilbury on 20 October. There was also the possibility, at first, of Heinz joining the ship at Adelaide and accompanying Ruth and the children to Sydney. Inquiries were made about this, but it ultimately proved impossible.

There was something else for Ruth to look forward to. Heinz's colleague John La Nauze had been appointed Professor of Economic History at the University of Melbourne and would be leaving Sydney at the end of the year. Ruth did not want to continue living in Hurstville, with the Butlins away, and now with three children crammed into half a house that had been too small even with two children. She put pressure on Heinz to see whether the unexpired portion of the lease on La Nauze's house at Chatswood, in Sydney's north, could be transferred to them. He found that it could and, thus, the Arndts moved into the house early in the new year of 1950.

With a berth on the *Otranto*, and with good reason to believe that they would be moving to a better house and neighbourhood soon after she returned to Sydney, Ruth felt in better spirits. Noel Butlin, having returned to London from the journey to Shap, wrote to Heinz, hoping that Ruth 'gets through the trip [all right] and I should think she will be in much better shape to start this one. She looked much better than she did in Hurstville before she left.' Though Ruth now had three children to contend with, one of them not yet three months old, the return journey proved to be far less of a burden than the voyage to Europe had been. Even so, it was not without its difficulties, and Ruth eagerly awaited the *Otranto's* arrival in Sydney. Of course Heinz, too, looked forward with great expectation to that moment.