

STERN

7/14/99  
LRC

Misc. Docs  
not filed but  
loose in box  
in front  
(probably meant to be  
filed?)

*Let Riefler House*

May 6, 1948

Dear Admiral Strauss:

Dr. Oppenheimer has asked me to tell you that the Institute has bought Professor Riefler's house for \$42,500. There has been no decision as to what use the Institute will make of the house.

The 1947 taxes on the property were \$494.96; the assessment was \$14,000 for land and building.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs. John D. Leary)

Rear Admiral Lewis L. Strauss  
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission  
Washington, D. C.

Riefler:

1. Mr. Riefler obtained a leave of absence from the Institute to take a position in Washington
2. Dr. Oppenheimer advised that Institute would like house. *Per option?*
3. Riefler house placed on market.
4. Spoke to Riefler regarding sale and purchase price
5. Called Mr. Maass who advised that Institute should get an appraisal on this property
6. Had Mr. Edmund Cook, realtor, make an appraisal of house and property
7. Appraisal market value set at \$42,500.00
8. Mr. Maass called to say Institute would purchase the house for this figure.
9. Mr. Riefler advised that he would vacate the premises on July 1, 1948

The house and land cost a total of  
\$ 30,632.02 in which Riefler's signed note -  
mortgages. Also IAS paid architect's requisitions  
and bank interest chgs. thereon until 3/1/38  
as presented - (Treasury to Riefler 10/14/38.  
D. File Riefler House > Interest paid by <sup>WWII</sup> IAS by  
Cash  
By

May 23, 1956

Mr. Justin D. Kaplan  
The Inner Sanctum  
of Simon and Schuster  
630 Fifth Avenue  
New York 20, New York

Dear Mr. Kaplan:

Thank you for your letter of  
May 14, 1956.

Plans for the book are not yet  
complete, but your interest will be  
considered in their future development.

Very sincerely yours,

Beatrice M. Stern

BMS:jeb



THE INNER SANCTUM  
OF SIMON AND SCHUSTER  
PUBLISHERS • 630 FIFTH AVENUE  
ROCKEFELLER CENTER • NEW YORK 20

May 14, 1956

Dear Mrs. Stern:

Having heard that you are working on a book about The  
Institute for Advanced Study, I am taking the liberty of  
writing to you. I don't know what your plans for the book  
are, but should you care to show it to a general publisher  
I would like to to know that we would be extremely interested  
in seeing it and most grateful to you for the opportunity.

Sincerely yours,

*Justin D. Kaplan*

Justin D. Kaplan

Mrs. Max Stern  
5-B Maxwell Lane  
Princeton, New Jersey

JDK:mfc

Oswald Veblen at the Memorial Service for Hella, September 9, 1948.

The Weyls came to the Institute in its earliest days, and those of us who were old residents of Princeton looked forward to the advent of Mrs. Weyl almost as much as we did to that of her husband. For she was almost as celebrated for beauty, charm, and learning as he was for mathematical prowess. Nor were we disappointed, for the mother of two nearly grown-up sons was still the slender, well poised woman whose face sparkled in response to every new and interesting idea. We soon came to see that she was one of the most perfect flowers of the European culture. Now, as we tend more and more to think of that culture in the past tense, we see still more clearly how Hella Weyl personified its fragile beauty, its intellectual satisfactions and even its subtle defects. Perhaps it was just by so exquisitely personifying this old world culture that she made her greatest contribution to our young institute which was then struggling rather blindly to find its own true role.

The image of a plant in full bloom rudely removed from an old garden to a new one and miraculously putting out even brighter flowers, comes insistently to mind. But such a simile tells only part of the story. For Hella Weyl was a vigorous being and an active, even a redoubtable, element in any social group which she entered. One could admire her, as indeed we did, but one could also cross swords with her, provided one looked well to one's guard. I once tried to argue with her that Heine's poetry should be preferred to Goethe's!

Her literary gifts stood her in good stead in those first years while she was overcoming the difficulties of the English language. I remember well my admiration of the systematic way in which she and her hus-

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band first got a complete control of the mechanics of the language and then proceeded to absorb the inner logic of its idioms. They were thus able to produce quite new constructions which one had nevertheless to recognize as correct and even as true to the genius of the language.

But why say more about the evidences of Hella Weyl's extraordinary abilities? Let us rather recall how this woman with an independent career of her own devoted herself to the interests of her husband and his career. On the purely material side we have all seen the home and garden that they brought into being, but most of her friends did not see the prodigies of hard work that went into it. Let us recall also how freely she gave her time and energies to the simple, homely devices by which the wives of our faculty managed to create something like an Institute family. There is a long story which could be told on this subject, but not here and now. The Institute had no physical facilities. No one knew whether it would ever have land and buildings. It was just a collection of strangers lost in a not too friendly community. These women, our wives, managed somehow to draw these strangers together into a social group which some of the older members of the present time look back on with nostalgia and sometimes reproach us with having lost among our present abundant facilities. Hella Weyl played a quite unique role in this phase of our life, always adding a touch of artistry whether it was in bringing in the Christmas tree from the woods or rearranging the flowers.

This period of happy improvisation ended, I suppose, approximately with the outbreak of the recent war. Our Sunday morning walks, at any rate, have not been continued. But those of us who participated in them will never forget the girlish, athletic figure that so often took the lead both

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in striding along and in the conversation to which she lent a singular distinction.

In the last years, under the new conditions to which we are trying to adjust ourselves, I think that most of us will remember her chiefly as we saw her at luncheon at the Institute where she came with her husband and contrived in one way or another to get him home for his needed rest. But we frequently saw again the evidence of her eager study and appreciation of literature, philosophy, and art. And towards the end we began to understand the bravery that underlay it all.



*Weyl-*

Achim at the Memorial Service for Hella, September 9, 1948.

Dear Friends: We thank you that you have gathered in mourning to take leave of Hella. It has been my father's wish that on this occasion you be told in simple narrative of her life.

Hella, Friederike Bertha Helene Joseph, was born in 1893 in a two-story brick house, whose wide solid facade joins continuously onto those of its neighbors, in the small town of Ribnitz in Mecklenburg, near the Baltic Sea in what is now the Russian zone of Germany. Her father was a competent and highly respected country physician whose practice took him on visits near and far over the surrounding countryside and she often accompanied him in his coach or sled. Her mother was an ailing sensitively wrought woman whose precarious and later failing health always made the atmosphere at home somewhat subdued. A younger sister grew up beside her in the parental home and still lives in the house today as wife of a physician who carried on her father's practice. Although the town of Ribnitz as such was far from the main current of contemporary happenings, her father's indomitable mind, thoroughly grounded in the classical humanities, and his active participation in the politics of the province, made his house a gathering and stopping place for public leaders and other interesting people. The atmosphere which shaped her mind was both stimulating and exacting, providing and requiring widely ranging information, imbued with progressive ideas politically and an incisive positivism philosophically.

Hella's ability, apparent at an early age, decided her parents to make it possible for her to prepare herself for university studies. In Mecklenburg, then the most backward of the German provinces, this road was

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still closed to women. Thus she was sent at the age of 14 to a pension in Berlin, where she attended the gymnasium, one of just a few girls among swarms of boys. When 18 she received her diploma and was ready to enter a university. During her 4 years at Berlin she became enthralled with the theater. Many an hour she spent backstage, getting acquainted with most of the theatrical stars of that time, when instead she probably should have been studying or sleeping; - a preoccupation not without its dangers, but the young girl intent only on the drama and its presentation proved herself immune against all temptations of this milieu. Hella has always retained a lively interest for the theater, and has participated much later in the performances of the Community Players here at Princeton.

Her first semester of university work she did at Rostock, the university nearest her home town, taking courses in philology and history. At that time she came in contact with Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, a philosophy which at a stroke captivated her agile mind. Already the next semester found her enrolled as a philosophy student at Göttingen where Husserl was then teaching. Her minor was mathematics. At the house of a Göttingen professor, a friend of Hella's parents, she met a few month later a young Privatdozent, into whose classroom she had strayed at the beginning of the term in search of the meeting place of her calculus course, and to whom she had listened, even after discovering her mistake, for the entire hour with growing fascination. The two now saw each other frequently and were soon joined by a second couple; - Erich Hecke, then Hilbert's assistant, and Helga Unruh; -together they formed an inseparable four-leaf-clover. Hecke married Helga and Hermann Hella on the same day in the fall of 1913, 35 years ago.

Her marriage ended Hella's studies at Göttingen for she followed

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her husband to Zürich where he had just accepted a professorship at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule. A more beautiful city in which to begin one's married life can hardly be imagined. My parents, however, did not find it easy at first to adapt themselves to the new atmosphere and in a few respects the acclimatization was to take the better part of the seventeen years they lived in Zürich. It was not its basically democratic aspect which they soon learned to appreciate, but the patrician tradition within narrow confines which made the native Züricher society so inaccessible to newcomers. Yet they were a happy couple and in good time they succeeded in making close and lasting friends among the native Swiss as well as among the other foreigners. During her first year in Zürich, Hella must have had a very carefree life: Household worries were few for she had been provided from home with an excellent cook. The young couple shared all of their activities. Hella's first winter's skiing in the Alps proved an exhilarating, even if overwhelming experience. She continued taking courses in mathematics, but the arrival of her first son put an end to this. In the future she used to listen gladly when my father told her in general terms of the mathematical ideas occupying him or common friends, but would no longer ask for detailed mathematical explanations. She is to have said once that it was not nice to be reminded of a building which had been abandoned after barely rising from its fundamentals and which is now crumbling in wind and rain. It has remained up to the final months the only phase of Hella's life to which this saying could possibly apply.

My parents were vacationing in Göttingen when the outbreak of the first world war was imminent. They hurried back to Zürich, and in the next year, two months after my birth, my father was drafted into the German Army.



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Hella ultimately followed him to Saarbrücken where he was stationed until, in the spring of 1916, the Swiss Government obtained his release. It must have been an hour of unimaginable joy to my parents when they returned in May to the beautiful and peaceful town of Zürich, and took again their first walk along its shining lake.

Then, in the fall of the following year, my brother Michael was born.

Zürich was then a cosmopolitan city. Its theater life flourished. Hella herself took part in performance of a Euripides tragedy; it was during and after rehearsals that she became acquainted with Yvonne, then a student at the university, who in the course of the years has become the family's best and closest friend. Reunited with us after the turbulent years of the second world war, it was Yvonne who nursed her during the final difficult months. -- Hella, thus, gained access to a lively circle of actors, writers and other intellectuals who had sought temporary refuge in Switzerland; they were blown to the four winds at the end of the war. It was also in these years that Hella learned the joys of long hiking tours through the Swiss mountains. However, she did not take up real mountain climbing at that time: only much later, in the course of summers during the second world war, Hella took to mountaineering proper under the guidance of Reinhold Baer: but this was in the Rockies, not in the Alps.

The post-war years were hard ones also in Switzerland: Hella was not spared the experience of running her household on little money that would buy even less. But in the early twenties, conditions began to improve.

A new world was opened to Hella when in 1923 she went together with her husband for three months to Spain where he was to lecture at Barcelona and Madrid. The storm-tossed voyage on a small steamer from Hamburg to



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Malaga, -- the first impact of the glowing magic of the Mediterranean landscape, were unforgettable, often retold, experiences. And the connections which Hella made there turned out to be of decisive significance. She became so attached to Spain that she turned her back on mathematics for good and took up the study of romance languages, especially Spanish. She came to know the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset, and upon her return to Zürich, she began to translate a number of his books into German. She has made several more visits to Spain, a few times alone, and once more in 1934, together with her husband, after they had settled here in Princeton.

Although she later translated into German also books by Jeans and Eddington, her role as one of the interpreters of Ortega to the non-Spanish world is Hella's outstanding literary achievement. She was attracted not only by his philosophical thought, which is rooted in the same phenomenological school in which Hella received her early training, but even more by Ortega's brilliant style. She made it her task to find its match in German, retaining the elegance, the scintillating, wilful imagery, and even some of the characteristic Spanish flavor without doing violence to the German language in letter or in spirit. English translations had followed her German ones, especially of the 'Revolt of The Masses', which also in this country aroused interest in wider circles. Ortega's name was, therefore, no longer unknown here when Hella herself, after having come to Princeton, tackled the difficult task of translating into English a number of collections of essays which she had selected herself. That she succeeded also in this undertaking was due partly to her fine and schooled ear for languages, which was remarkable even in matters of this most recently acquired tongue, but also to her tireless and disciplined work habits.

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For five more years my father kept faith with Zürich, and they were certainly five years of contentment and happiness for Hella. Many of the lasting friendships which tied her to Zürich until the very end were fully established during this period; and the town, too, showed us its friendliest face as we saw it from the balcony of our apartment high on the southern slope of the Zürichberg overlooking town and lake with the distant mountains beyond. Also from this time come my first own impressions of Hella as my mother. It is true that on account of her manifold activities, we her children enjoyed less of her company than children of that age generally have of their mothers'. But Hella's children meant more and more to her as they grew up into independent and intelligent beings. From those last years in Zürich onward, Hella became to us a mother not easily matched again in spirit or personality, as well as in loving and tolerant understanding.

Hella was introduced to this country in the course of a year's stay at Princeton during the academic year of 1928-29, and many who became her friends then have remained it to this day. After the year in the United States, there followed one final year in Zürich. The onset of more turbulent times was felt also by my parents: they lost their small fortune accumulated during the years in Switzerland, and with it vanished Hella's dream of her own house on the Zürichberg.

She left Zürich in the fall of 1930, going again to Göttingen, where my father had accepted the then vacated chair of David Hilbert. This must certainly have been a kind of homecoming for Hella, and at first her life there was one of happy activity, socially as well as intellectually, for she had never quite given up believing that this was the atmosphere into which she belonged. But slowly this joy was turned to wormwood. Germany was then

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quivering on the brink of Nazism, which, besides its poignant menace to her very person, incorporated everything in its ideology which was anathema to her thinking, -- all the stupidity and vulgarity which throughout her life were the object of her scorn and intolerant contempt. The winter months 1932/33, during which it became apparent that my parents would have to leave Göttingen, were a deep crisis in Hella's life. Her mother died then, and she herself fell ill with a severe grippe, -- the last time she was to take to her bed before her final illness.

In the fall of 1933, Hella came with all of us to this country for good, and the next fifteen years were again very happy ones for her. Many of you will remember the zest and undaunted confidence with which she set about the difficult task of building a new life for herself and her family here in Princeton. She certainly felt that already after a year she had been accepted more fully here than after seventeen in the reserved atmosphere of Switzerland. In 1938, she built this, her house, and it will remain Hella's house to all of us as long as it stands. From her desk she maintained an extensive correspondence: she excelled as a letter writer. The exacting intellectual work of her translations was done there, too. Over house and garden she watched with indefatigable care, putting in many an hour of hard labor. Guests and visitors, whom she entertained, always found that she would turn smalltalk very soon into a conversation where what interested them most was being discussed intelligently and with lively understanding on Hella's part. It was characteristic of her who seemed forever young that she kept always in touch with youth, and among her personal friends were members of her children's generation whose lives she followed with interest and whose intellectual adventures she shared and deepened.



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After the serious operation which Hella had to undergo in the spring of last year and from which she outwardly recovered once more completely, it was granted her to spend one more summer in her beloved Zürich and in the Swiss mountains. Intensively she enjoyed the reunion with her old friends after the separation of the long war years, and with cheerful eagerness she began to mend again the far-flung web of her life. Yet for Hella it was to be a leavetaking. Her last illness overtook her in May of this year, and still in the final months she impressed those who saw her by the innate strength of her personality and the luminosity of her spirit, even as they were failing. It is fall again, the season which so often in Hella's life has brought an end and new beginning; up to this last one, which has broken through the bonds of individual existence. It may be presumption to say that her life was blessed by God, but it surely was a blessing for all of us, -- and many a one who met her has taken with him from such meeting some light, some joy and confidence to accompany him on his road.