Eva and Otto

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In her letter of November 5, Eva sought reassurance from Otto about the future. She began by describing their “Sunday late afternoons last winter” when they sat in their music corner listening to Beethoven, filled with happiness and gratitude as they anticipated the birth of their child. She then posed her question:

I wanted to talk to you about something that has been on my mind for quite a while. It concerns our future. I know, as things are, and with the little we know, it would be foolish to do any real planning. But I would like to be sure that you still feel as when you left: that we will both try, at the earliest possible moment after the war, to come back to each other, and if this moment is not years and years off, and conditions are just bearable, to have a child. It would make things easier for me if I knew that that is what you also want, or whether anything new has come up that made you change your mind.

Perhaps it is nonsense to bring this up. But in a way I have to. You see, I feel quite strongly that after the war there might be—I am sure that there will be—conditions that open innumerable tasks for every one of us, and that this may go on, from one task to the other, without ever coming to the moment where one might feel that now one had the right to stop for a little while.

And on the other hand, we have both come to a point, as far as age and strain are concerned, where we cannot postpone
indefinitely the fulfillment of our deepest desire, without acting irresponsibly towards the child. Or maybe, should we admit that it is already too late now, that we have let the moment pass when it was possible? I refuse to believe it, perhaps because it means so much to me and, I feel sure, to you, and because I am convinced that my love will be strong enough, and so will yours, to make it up to our child that we are not as young as we ought to be.

You don’t have to write much about this; just tell me that you feel the same way about our future as you did before. You know that is one of my great weaknesses—to need confirma-
tions once in a while.

In closing, Eva attached “a tiny little new leaf of our avocado that fell off,” noting that “the real ones are ten times its size, but you can see its texture and shape.”

The election of Franklin Roosevelt was the subject of Eva’s November 8 letter to Otto. She told him that she had spent the prior evening with Marie Juchacz and her husband Emil Kirschmann listening to the returns on the radio and that she was thinking of Otto all evening and deep into the night.¹ She reported that “the results this morning look even better than they did last night. It looks as if isolationism had received a thorough beating and, what may be more important, that Roosevelt now has a solid majority in Congress.” Eva then noted, “I must admit that only last night, when I looked at the Encyclopedia before the returns came in, I began to really understand the mechanics of it all.” She asked Otto, now an American citizen, “Did your vote get here in time?”

On that same day in Europe, Otto had just received Eva’s earlier letter about the death of her mother. He wrote:

Oh, Chérie, I feel how hard and bitter must be the loss of mother for you, how ardently you had hoped she would be able to see all her children again.

But if I fully understand when you say, “a door is closed, life ended, and one is sorry for every minute wasted that could have been used to give love,” I know better than anyone else how little time you ever wasted, how entirely you gave always your time to what you are so convinced to be your first duty.
Chérie, how intensely I would like to be with you in such hard moments, to hold your hands, to share your sorrow, to let you feel my own!

In Eva’s November 10 letter, she first expressed her joy at seeing the photos from Otto, including the one of him in the jeep. She told Otto that he looked cheerful “but tired, as if many hours of sleep were missing badly.” Eva then noted that the news about the death of Reine’s father was terrible and explained her difficulty in breaking the sad news to Reine. Responding to Otto’s request for funding for the Cantine Populaire, Eva informed him that she had given this information to her friend Samuel Estrin of the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC). She assured Otto that the JLC already had an application pending to transmit funds and that funds were available. She lamented, “3000 parentless children—and that is probably only part of all there are in France! What a terrible responsibility for mankind! Anyway, as far as financial help is concerned, they are going to get it, and soon now since new regulations concerning contact to France make it much simpler.”

In Eva’s letter to Otto on November 16, she quoted from her sister Ruth’s letter about their mother’s last days. Eva was grateful to learn that their mother did not suffer and “looked beautiful and peaceful when she died.” Eva ended the letter by alerting Otto that Eichler and Bertholet (using the pseudonyms “Vic” and “Roger”) had asked her whether she would give up her job and join them in their work in Europe. She told Otto that she would try to explain “the most important pros and cons” as she saw them in her next letter. She concluded: “In any event I do not intend to make any change without consulting with you—they know that, and I think they don’t object. So now you know that this is occupying my mind considerably, in addition to everything else.”

On November 19, Eva commented on the Allied offensive and asked, “Is this going to be the big push that will shorten the war? Will any help be forthcoming from forces within Germany? And what is it going to mean in terms of individual suffering?” Returning to the question about her future, she expressed concern about whether she should follow Eichler’s suggestion. She again told Otto that she preferred to write about it some other day and assured him that she would not decide anything without him. But she reminded him: “What I wrote you
some time ago about my deep, deep desire to be together with you as soon as possible after the war, and to have again a child, enters into my decision a great deal.”

In a V-mail message the next day, Eva noted that “the news is good—just listened to the radio, and keep my fingers crossed. There seems to be a real break-through towards the Rhine.” And the following day, Eva observed that “it must be unbelievably hard fighting, especially in the north which seems to be the most important part of the battle. How I am waiting for a sign of a real crack inside [Germany]! I am more and more convinced that unless such a thing happens, the prospects for the future are as dark as can be, I mean the political outlook.”

In her letter on November 25, Eva reported on news “that the First Army has come through the Hürtgen forest, after a 10 day ‘tree to tree’ fight. I realize, or at least try to, what that fight, in cold and humidity and mud, means in human terms, and the clippings from ‘Stars and Stripes’ which you sent helped to realize it better. Still, I am hopeful on the military part of it, not in the short term though, unless it breaks in Germany.”

Two days later she wrote, “Last night I went to a concert—Budapest String Quartet, Mozart, at Town Hall. It was beautiful, unearthly beautiful, but I missed you terribly. . . . One thing will make you glad: The Jewish Labor Committee has obtained a license, and has sent 7000 f. to la Cantine Populaire in Paris. Good? They, especially Estrin, send you warm regards.”

In a letter dated November 29, Eva turned back to the question about her future. She expressed her hope that she would hear from Otto soon about this and confessed that she was “more and more hesitant” about taking a new position in Europe. “I am afraid that the new position might entangle me still more with things that I don’t really agree to. And you know me well enough that once I have accepted a position, I feel responsible for it and a certain loyalty to the job, and am not free any longer. Well anyway, maybe the whole thing will not work out. As I told you before, one of the important considerations for me is not to do anything that would postpone our reunion. Alright?”

Eva then described a conversation she recently had with a friend of an ISK colleague, “a very nice, sad man, with intelligent, but deeply discouraged and hurt eyes.” She explained that after talking about the
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Eva also told Otto about a wonderful book she was reading that impressed her deeply. “It is the new one by Ernie Pyle, war correspondent, who does not describe the big battle, or the strategic plans, or the political rifts and currents, but very simply what war means in terms of human suffering, and human comradeship, and human suffering again and again.”

During these months of separation, Eva worked long hours on relief work with elderly refugees and with the Emergency Rescue Committee. On December 6, she apologized for not writing much that week. “It is just that I have too much to do these days, and when I get home late at night, I am rather tired, and not good to write a real letter anyway. You know, some weeks, things seem to pile up, and this is the third evening in a row where I will not get home before very late.”

In a letter on December 7, Otto also apologized. Acknowledging that Eva had been waiting a long time for a real letter, he explained: “I have been busy the last three weeks. A job to be done in limited time, with limited means and yet interesting enough to try to squeeze out every little bit of the offered possibilities.” He noted that he was now again “not far from Paname [Paris],” and while he was waiting for new directions he could “take some time out to look quietly” at her letters, her “wonderful, exciting letters, and try to answer all the little and big things.”

Otto’s writing was interrupted at this point, and he began writing again, in the same letter, two days later:
Dec. 9, I had to stop; Vic [Eichler] came in the door and with him Roger [Bertholet]. They just came from Roger’s place. Vic left yesterday, but R. is still here for some days. You imagine how happy we all were to see each other.

They told me of course about the project concerning you. And in this very moment I got your letter . . . with the note about the same question, and your promise to write more about it in your next letter. Now I am waiting intensely for this next letter. I know there are “pours et contres” [pros and cons].

But my first reaction was, and is still, that I would be foolishly happy if you could be on the same soil with me, on the same Continent, and that (who knows!) maybe some way or the other we could see each other, and maybe even work together for a while.

But I don’t want now to say more about that. I just want to get this in the box for you and hope I will soon get your next letter.

Along with updating Otto about her recent contacts with friends, Eva happily informed him in her letter of December 10 that she had been invited to attend the opening of an exhibit of drawings by their friend Theo Fried that would include his sketch of Otto playing the harmonica, “the sketch where you ride on the chair, and where the movement of your foot is so well caught that you hear it all, the music and the rhythm.” She also told Otto that she would be seeing Jef Rens the following Tuesday, noting that Rens was on his way back home and that she was looking forward to the visit.

The next day, Eva received a letter from her brother John who was “somewhere in France.” In a brief letter to Otto that day, she wrote:

[John] gives me Gaby’s and Mousy’s addresses, which made me very glad, and I sat down right away at my lunch hour and began to write to Gaby. In case you don’t have it, here it is: Gaby Cordier, 44 rue Curiol, Marseille. Mousy: Helene Perret, 52 rue Remesy, Toulouse (isn’t that the old address where Theo and Ansze lived?). I think you might want to write to Gaby—and if you hear from her before I can have an answer, do let me know.
how she is, and whether she has found some personal happiness—I wish it for her so very much.

Eva noted in a brief V-mail message to Otto on December 13 that she had seen Jef Rens the day before and they had a good long talk. She also told Otto about the exhibition of Theo’s drawings: “beautiful drawings, some of which you would have loved; and our ‘harmonica player,’ in a corner, is very much alright, from every point of view.”

In a brief V-mail message on December 16, Otto raised the question about Eva’s future. He told her, “I still am waiting for the letter in which you give your impression about the problem.” Noting the delays in delivery of mail, Otto explained that he was sending this by V-mail “because I think you will get it quicker than Air-mail and I am afraid you will get my Christmas wishes too late.”

That same day, December 16, 1944, the German Army launched a surprise attack to the west through the dense forests of the Ardennes in Belgium, France, and Luxembourg. This began the Battle of the Bulge that resulted in the highest number of American casualties of any operation during the war. In this last desperate military move, Hitler sought to take control of the Belgian port of Antwerp; split, encircle, and destroy four Allied armies; and force a favorable peace treaty. The battle would last until January 25, 1945.

Eva’s letter of December 18 addressed two critical subjects: the disturbing news of the Nazi offensive that she first heard the day before, and the question of her future work. She expressed her fears and worries about the offensive, telling Otto that she was glad to know he was back near Paris. But she added, “Of course how can I know where you are now?” She recognized that it was “certainly too early to say anything definite about [the offensive], and we know by far too little.”

The fact remains . . . that in spite of everything, they have been able to gather enough strength to launch such a thing, at a time when one does not understand how they can carry on at all. They are hard, bitter things that we are up against, and not only on the fighting fronts. And you certainly understand, Otto dearest, that tonight I cannot talk too much about what I feel, in this connection, nor very much about any other things close
to our heart. The thought, the possibility, that this terrible war might be prolonged, and before it is ended, the ground stones laid for the next one, takes every wit out of me.

Eva informed Otto about her receipt that morning of his letter that had been interrupted by the visit from Eichler and Bertholet, again referring to them by the pseudonyms “Vic” and “Roger.” She explained that his letter “made me so very happy, especially at the beginning, when it looks as if that were going to be the real letter. But then, of course, when you tell me who interrupted you, that was another surprise, which in a way made up for the letter not yet being the real one. I am so glad you could see Roger and Vic.” Eva wrote:

You must in the meantime have received my different letters about my work, and I am glad that Roger and Vic told you their side of it. I am still very hesitant about it, for many reasons, the main being that I know so very little about what I am expected to do in detail, about the degree of freedom etc. Of course, being geographically nearer you is a great point in favor of my accepting. But on the other hand, it might not be possible at all to get together, and our home-coming to each other might even be postponed—and that is one thing that, if humanly possible, I don’t want to happen.

And the general situation and trends don’t make me very enthusiastic about it all. What do Roger and Vic think about it? I regret very much that I did not hear much from them about it beyond their wish that I come and join them which is very vague. There is also the technical question of being able to go at all where again I have my doubts as to its possibility, and its price.

I wish we could talk about it all—by the way, after your talk with Vic and Roger you probably have more elements on hand to judge the pros and cons than I have at this time. And so I think I would say that if you advise me to go, I’ll do it. Or is that making things too easy for me and throwing too much of the responsibility into your lap? It’s all so difficult!

I’ll have to stop now—it is getting too late. I am thinking of you constantly, and am waiting to live with you again, with
all the strength that is in me. Keep well, my dearest, and let me hear from you as soon as you can and as often as possible. A real letter from you means life to me.

In a V-Mail message to Otto on December 20, Eva confided that she listened to the news “with so much anxiety.” “If I only knew where you were right now! I wish before Christmas is here, I will have a letter from you—these days are hard to take, with so much memory of things past and the present so dark, but I will not lose courage, not for you.”

Otto’s assignments with the OSS

The correspondence between Eva and Otto reveals little about Otto’s work for the OSS. Even apart from their correspondence, available details of his work remain sketchy. Secret OSS travel orders retained by Otto provide some information. A November 12 travel order states that Otto was “directed to proceed to the city of Antwerp, Belgium . . . for the purpose of delivering a highly confidential message to M. Camille Huysmans, the Mayor of Antwerp. He is to remain in Antwerp until M. Huysmans delivered to him a message to be delivered to this organization, and thereupon he is to return to his proper station.” A December 1 travel order directed Otto to proceed to Paris again on or about December 3, 1944, on temporary duty for approximately seven days “for the purpose of carrying out the instructions of the Commanding Officer.” No details on this Paris assignment were provided.

Otto’s next travel orders reveal his location during and after the Battle of the Bulge. Otto was ordered first “to proceed on or about 21 December 1944 on temporary duty for a period of seven (7) days to Headquarters, 9th Army.” He was then directed “to proceed on or about 8 January 1945 on temporary duty for a period of approximately seven (7) days to Field Analysis Unit, United States Army, 1-3 rue Belliard, Brussels, Belgium.” Both of these orders were “for the purpose of carrying out the instructions of the Commanding Officer.” Otto was then directed to proceed on or about January 21, 1945, and on or about February 4, 1945, for periods of approximately ten days each to another military location “for the purpose of special duty involving PW
[prisoner-of-war] interrogation and for the purpose of carrying out the instructions of the Commanding Officer.”

Otto later recalled that he went to Luxembourg following his first trip to Paris. “I drove by the field outside Kehlen where, four years earlier, I had sweated over my cover story, and where I had hidden my passport, under a heavy rock. I found the spot, but not the passport. The rock was gone.” He described the nature of his work in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge:

Next, we went to Belgium. During the Battle of the Bulge, I interrogated German prisoners of war in a stockade. Many of them were young; some still held stubbornly to their Nazi indoctrination. . . .

I was sent to Antwerp, where I was to interrogate Belgians who had been deported to Germany as forced labor. Every summer, they were allowed to return to their homeland to help with the harvest. Many had left Germany only a short while back when overtaken by the advancing Allies; and so they had fresh information about many things our organization [the OSS] needed to know.

They were sent to me by leaders of Belgian Labor organizations, and most of them were very eager to talk. Alone, I had a big “office” in an abandoned maternity hospital where, for weeks, from morning to evening, I asked my questions. I even learned to smoke at that time—offering a cigarette helped quickly to warm up the conversation.

The purpose of Otto’s interrogations was to obtain information that could assist OSS agents in their espionage and infiltration programs. Precise details were needed to allow agents to infiltrate German cities without detection. An OSS “Interrogation Guide” given to Otto contained the following Introduction:

[M]ake two assumptions: 1) that you are going to the place your informant comes from and that you have to supply yourself with all the general and special knowledge necessary to make you suspicion-proof; 2) that you know nothing about these
things at all and you must get everything necessary out of your informant—forget what you already know!

The “Interrogation Guide” provided a detailed outline of questions to be asked about the informant’s life: where he lived, what he ate, what he did in his spare time. The guide included questions about the informant’s city, the addresses and streets that had been bombed out, and details about all means of travel, number of foreign workers, and police controls. In the case of an informant whom the interrogator judged to be reliable and trustworthy, additional questions were to be asked about potential “safe addresses,” that is, “addresses of people who are anti-Nazi, decided and willing to work against the Nazis or at least give a hand in the fight against the Nazis, and who may be approached by us for help, information, or leads.”

A separate OSS document given to Otto, titled “Safe Addresses,” provided further instructions on the specific information to be obtained on this subject. The final paragraph required the interrogator to provide his “estimate of the informant”:

How did you contact him? What sort of recommendation were you given with respect to him? What has he done or what is he doing against the Nazis? Does he impress you as a man of intelligence and good judgment? Is the other information he has given you apparently reliable?

Note—you must answer these two questions: 1) Why do you consider the informant to be absolutely reliable and trustworthy? 2) If you were going on a mission would you be willing to go to this “safe address”?

The “Interrogation Guide” included questions to be asked of the informant about identity papers, travel, military status, and occupation, noting: “Get full details here, remembering always that your report may be used to build up a cover story.” The guide also included “subjects of particular interest,” such as details about the armed forces (discharge, deferment, and furlough process and papers), the Gestapo, Organization Todt, foreign workers, and “certain occupations about which we know little.”
Otto’s assignment in Belgium was not without danger. He recalled:

Regularly, I crossed a big, busy square right at noon (I always heard a carillon ring the noon hour) on my way to eat. That day, having an urgent report to finish, I went later. When I came
to the square, a horrible view opened up: dozens of dead and wounded on the pavement, hit by a buzz bomb right at noon! At that time, Antwerp was still hit regularly every day almost every hour.10

In a brief letter on December 21, Otto informed Eva that he had been writing to a number of colleagues and friends and hoped “to let them have a word for the New Year, but I am afraid there is not time enough.” He explained that he was now receiving mail by “special courier and he doesn't run so often.” He expressed his hope that “the mail will be in before Noël, that will be my loveliest Xmas gift.” He also hoped that Eva had received his packages with gifts for others in time.

Eva commented further on news of the Nazi offensive in a letter on December 22. “No matter what the outcome—the immediate result for the boys out in the field, and for the civilian population in those countries just liberated, is something hard to grasp in all its meaning. I can’t stop thinking of these civilians in Belgium, in Luxemburg, what they must feel, what this must mean to them.” She then shared some personal news: “In spite of all this, Christmas is nearing, and in spite of how I felt anyhow, and especially now after all the news, I did the things that one is supposed to do before Christmas, bought presents, wrote letters, cards, tried to pick out the right things for everyone, tried to create some joy.” After noting the titles of books she bought for close friends, Eva told Otto that she had sewn something special for Marie Juchacz “according to an old pattern of mother’s.”

I thought about it a while, and found out that I would not want to do that for anybody but [Marie]—somehow she reminds me of mother although she is entirely different. And her children are away, and she does not know whether they are still alive; and she almost never talks about it, is so courageous.

I often feel that of the love and care that I could not give to mother while she was still among us, and that her children cannot give to her, I want to make up a little to her. Do you understand me, Ottoli? She loves you so much.

After describing her gifts to others (including small gifts sent from Otto), Eva admitted, “I did keep for us the little vase which you did not say explicitly that you want to give away. I love it. The other day I had two
tender, small roses in it, and it looked very delicate and beautiful. Now I have a little branch of pine in it which makes it look like Christmas.”

Eva’s year-end letters

As always, the year-end holidays were a time of reflection for Eva—perhaps more so in 1944 than ever. In a letter to Otto about their challenging year, Eva wrote:

Now Christmas Eve has come. I am in our home, the home that we built together, and that we love. Your pictures are before me, some pines in vases, some candles on the bookcase. But you are not here. And my thoughts don’t even know where to look for you. But my heart knows that in these hours, if you are at all free to yourself, you are with me, and all that unites us, lives as strongly in you as it does in me.

There was no letter. But I know I am not the only one without mail these days. The hearts of many, many of our friends beat faster when we think of you. . . . And if I could give anything to help you, to be with you, that would be the greatest joy and comfort. But no, my only contribution at this time can be to remain courageous, not to lose myself in self-pity, not to forget for a moment the millions of others who are in similar situations, to remain strong for you, and to keep up hope.

You, dearest, you are the only one to whom I can say that there are moments in my life where I feel again that I can, and that I must, pray. Not in words. But for instance now, they are playing a Mozart piano concerto over the radio, and everything that is good for me becomes free and goes out, toward someone, something that created greatness and beauty without bounds. It is impossible to put in words what I feel; but you see, Ottoli, I am so sure that you understand me anyway—and that is probably the deeper reason why I love you as I have never loved anyone.

Eva assured Otto that she would not be alone this Christmas Eve. She would go with her brother Erich and his wife Herta to spend the evening
with Marie Juchacz and her husband Emil, and they would be joined by Samuel Estrin and Theo Fried. Eva confided:

I like them all, and sometimes am inclined to forget that every one of them has his pack to carry. Marie who never found the other being as you and I have found each other; who loves her children very deeply, and who does not know today whether one or the other are still alive. She never speaks about it, but I often feel what happens inside her. And Emil who will probably think of his companion who had to leave him so suddenly. And Herta and Erich—separated from their boy now for over five years.

I know all that, and my heart goes out with love to all of them, not in every instant but now. And still, what has struck us this last year does not become easier therefore. I cannot help but think, and feel again, every emotion of our Christmas last year, our deep silent happiness about our child growing in me, our being together, so one. We had sent a cable to mother so she may get it on the anniversary of father’s death. I, with our child coming, was closer to my mother than I had ever been before. And then our child had to go without my even taking her once in my arms. And mother had to go, and I was not there. And you are far away, and nobody can know, today less than ever before, when this war is going to be over, when and after how much endless suffering.

Eva then reflected about what they both had chosen to do in their lives together. She offered her own judgment:

Ottoli, it is all very, very hard. But the part that we could influence with our will—I would not want it differently. You have decided, and so have I, to go the hard way, to do what we think was our duty. And even though we realize only too well that our individual action does not change the course of things one way or the other (and we know it more painfully every day as the political situation develops), we did individually all we could. And we did it as one which makes us very, very rich. True, there were moments when I lost faith in my strength, when I
struggled against you and the right decision. But you held fast, held me fast, and so I came back to what I had always accepted.

I think, as a facet of this year, we can say, without being pretentious, that we do not have to be ashamed of ourselves. I am very proud of you, Ottoli, and I promise you that I will use these months where you are far from me so that I will become more worthy of you.

Eva then shared a fond memory:

I have been thinking so much these days and nights about how it all came about that we met, and about so many wondrous things that happened to us. One beautiful memory is connected with an evening late in Paris, in the Tuileries, when all of a sudden you began to recite our Rilke (translated from German):

We want, when it again becomes a moonlit night,
to forget the sadness of the large city
and go out and press against the fence
that divides us from the broken-down garden.

Who would know it now, who met it during the day:
with children, light clothing, summer hats,
who knows it so: alone with its blossoms,
the ponds open, lying without sleep.

Figures, that stand mute in the dark,
appear to rise up gently,
and stonier and stiller are the light figures at the entrance of the avenue.

The paths lie as untangled strands of hair
next to each other, quiet, of one purpose.
the moon is on the way to the meadow;
the fragrance flows off the flowers like tears.
Over the quiet fountains
still stand the cool traces of their play
in the night air.
Eva closed the letter, with the last sentence in French: “Ottoli, I love you because you taught me to love, to love the other’s soul and body, to embrace his entire being. Let us wish and pray to be permitted that I may give you all the happiness that you deserve. Je t’embrasse, mon Otto, mon aimi—et aussi que le jour ne soit pas trop loin ou je puisse te donner notre enfant—embrasse-moi, tiens-moi serre contre toi—je t’aime [I embrace you, my Otto, my love—and also hope that the day will not be too far off when I can give you our child—hug me, hold me tightly next to you. I love you].”

In her special New Year’s letter to Otto, Eva again reflected on the impact of the events of 1944:

This year that brought us so much sorrow to our hearts is now almost over. I have so often thought about it all these last days, and there is no getting around it—it has been so painful that one was asking oneself: how can life go on? But it did go on, again and again. And I must be true and, above all, “not exaggerate,” as you would say: there have been, besides the hard things, also the most happy, exalting moments last year where we were as close to each other as one can be.

Do you remember, the first three months, what we felt, we who had almost become three? When we decided that you had to leave, this feeling of being so completely in agreement with each other, with what we believed in? When you came home for your weekend passes, our quiet nights beside each other, the tremendous tenderness to each other, to our child? The wonderful moments when we heard the other’s voice over the telephone.

Then the night when through the rainy cold early morning the taxi brought us to the hospital. You held my hand. I felt peaceful, happy, not afraid. And then the next morning when you first came to me, kissed my hand, held it, your eyes so full of love, of fulfillment, of gratefulness—Ottoli, in spite of everything that came afterwards, these moments have become part of our life too, nothing can ever take that away from us.

Then the following months, with the terrible hopelessness and tiredness in my heart slowly, slowly melting away, only because of your love that held me up, that stood with me, by me, that did not let me down for a moment although you
Eva told Otto how much their correspondence meant to her and why they should remain grateful:

And even since you are away, there are moments of happiness that you give me. With your letters, with a word here and there that touches my heart deep, deep inside, with everything that comes from you to me, but also with everything that comes from me to you. When I can write you as I like to, when it flows out of me, when I feel a close communication with you—then also I am happy—So, let us not be ungrateful to the year that is coming to an end. If at all possible, it has brought us still closer to each other than we were before. Although far from each other, we know where we are at home, entirely at home, and peace. And that is so much more than many, many can call their own.

She then shared her most fervent hopes for their future and that of humanity:

I do wish and pray that the next year may bring us together again, may permit us to work and live together, may help us to fulfill the greatest desire of continuation of our lives. And may [it] let us construct, and not destroy, or defend against destruction. When speaking out these hopes that are in my heart, that I want to cry out, but cannot, they sound very much in the air, not at all down to earth.

As the world looks at this end of the year, it does not seem realistic at all to hope for more than a cessation of hostilities, to hope for the real foundations to be laid for a real peace which is of course impossible without economic justice. But if we could not hope, and work for it, everyone in his or her little way, to come true, life would really not be worth living.
Eva told Otto that for Christmas, Emil gave little “poems” to everyone along with his presents. The words he gave to Eva were in essence “Against my belief, life is stronger than death.” Eva pondered the meaning of these words:

I have thought about that much lately, whether or not it is so or the other way, and I think I slowly come to the conclusion that he is right. If that is so, then the good forces in man can be made stronger than the evil forces, and then a time can come where peace is stronger than war, construction stronger than destruction. I am quite sure that that is your fundamental belief too, Ottoli, and that is why you always carry on so cheerfully, confidently, although the present developments and surroundings would indicate the strongest possible trends to the contrary. Am I right?

Eva confessed that “although it sounds perhaps silly, this has become, since I started to write, a rather important, rather solemn hour which has made many things clearer in my mind than they had been before.” She concluded:

I think it is true when I say that I do believe in a future, that I believe in our future. You and your love and the deep security it gave me, brought that about. You know that, Ottoli, have known it all along. But in this hour I have to say it again. And because of this force in you, and because you made me see the world differently—because of this I feel it is right for us to have children.