



Between Two Homelands: Letters across the Borders of Nazi Germany

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In 1920, at the age of thirteen, Irmgard Gebensleben first traveled from Germany to The Netherlands on a "war-children transport." She would later marry a Dutch man and live and raise her family there while keeping close to her German family and friends through the frequent exchange of letters. Yet during this period geography was not all that separated them. Increasing divergence in political opinions and eventual war between their countries meant letters contained not only family news but personal perspectives on the individual, local, and national choices that would result in the most destructive war in history.

This important collection, first assembled by Irmgard Gebensleben's daughter Hedda Kalshoven, gives voice to ordinary Germans in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich and in the occupied Netherlands. The correspondence between Irmgard, her friends, and four generations of her family delve into their most intimate and candid thoughts and feelings about the rise of National Socialism. The responses to the German invasion and occupation of the Netherlands expose the deeply divided loyalties of the family and reveal their attempts to bridge them. Of particular value to historians, the letters evoke the writers' beliefs and their understanding of the events happening around them.

This first English translation of *Ik denk zoveel aan jullie: Een briefwisseling tussen Nederland en Duitsland 1920-1949*, has been edited, abridged, and annotated by Peter Fritzsche with the assent and collaboration of Hedda Kalshoven. After the book's original publication the diary of Irmgard's brother and loyal Wehrmacht soldier, Eberhard, was discovered and edited by Hedda Kalshoven. Fritzsche has drawn on this important additional source in his preface.

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Scott Lowe:

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