

JENNY RABENECK'S FLIGHT FROM RUSSIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR 24 JULY – 18 AUGUST 1915



Map of Europe in 1915

This memoir tells how Eugenie (Jenny) Loos, née Rabeneck, travelled with five of her seven children from Moscow to Dresden in 1915.¹ Jenny was the sister of Ludwig and Edouard Rabeneck. She left at a time when the Rabeneck factory's chemical plant was producing poison gas for the

¹ The five children were: Betty 1891-1977; Emma 1896-1974; Edith 1899-1982; Kurt 1900-1940; Jenny 1902-2006.

Russian war effort. She was repeating an earlier odyssey by her mother Betty Rabeneck, née Quack, in 1873, following the tragic death of her husband Arthur Rabeneck in November 1864, at the age of 28. Betty had taken her five children, including Jenny, to Dresden in 1873, where they were educated, the girls by tutors and the boys sent to boarding school in Cologne. Their story is told in Eduard Rabeneck's memoir of family remembrances, found at <https://livesretold.co.uk/edouard-rabeneck>

This travel diary was originally written up by Jenny's daughter, Emma Loos, in 1916. Then, in 2005 her sister, also Jenny, passed the manuscript to her nephew, Wolfgang Loos, who in turn transcribed and distributed it, including to myself, Andrew Rabeneck.

Jenny's itinerary with the children was organised for her by the American Red Cross in Moscow. Although they first went to Dresden, because Jenny knew it from her schooldays, they would be allowed to return to Russia only from a neutral country, so they continued to Zurich with three others German families they had met along the way. The family ended up living for six years in Zurich, where the children also went to school. They later all moved to Kassel, because Jenny's eldest son, Fritz Loos, found a job there.



Jenny and Friedrich Loos with their seven children


**Die Ausreise der Familie Loos aus Russland im 1. Weltkrieg vom
24. Juli [12. Juli nach russischem Kalender] bis zum 2. August 1915
Reiseplan von Emma Loos**

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Es wird Englisch, Französisch, Russisch und Polnisch gesprochen.

		<u>1915.</u>			
	An			Den	
					Ab.
Moskau				11. Juli	8. ³⁰ / _{ab.}
Kiebs	12 Juli	6 ³⁰ / _{ab.}		12 Juli	7 ¹⁰ / _{ab.}
Pajgowtschna	13 Juli	8 ⁰ / _{m.}		13 Juli	8 ¹⁰ / _{m.}
Ljenu	13 Juli	3 ³⁰ / _{m.}	(Schwarzmann)	15 Juli	6 ¹⁵ / _{ab.}
Ljenu Pjyl	28 Juli	6 ¹⁰ / _{ab.}		28 Juli	6 ⁴⁵ / _{ab.}
Leue	28 Juli	8 ¹⁵ / _{ab.}		28 Juli	8 ²⁰ / _{ab.}
Tosauca	29 Juli	11 ⁰ / _{m.}		29 Juli	11 ⁴⁵ / _{m.}
'	29 Juli 29 Juli	11 ⁴⁵ / _{m.}		29 Juli	1 ⁰ / _{nächst.}
Madefalva	29 Juli	2 ²⁰ / _{nächst.}		29 Juli	6 ¹⁵ / _{ab.}
Kronstadt	29 Juli	10 ⁰ / _{ab.}	(auf Fischen)	30 Juli	6 ³⁰ / _{m.}
Budapest	31 Juli	10 ³⁰ / _{m.}	(44. gefahren)	31 Juli	12 ³⁰ / _{m.}
Wien	31 Juli	9 ³⁰ / _{ab.}		1 Aug.	7 ³⁰ / _{m.}
Prag	1 Aug.	6 ⁴⁵ / _{ab.}		1 Aug.	8 ¹⁰ / _{ab.}
Fetschen	2 Aug.	1 ³⁰ / _{nächst.}	(auf d. Boden)	2 Aug.	8 ⁴⁵ / _{m.}
Dresden	2 Aug.	10 ⁴⁸ / _{m.}			

Emma Loos own record of the journey from Moscow to Dresden, on Hotel Regina stationery. Document provided by Wolfgang Loos. A transcription is given at the end of this document

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF EMMA LOOS, FROM MOSCOW TO ZURICH, 1915

After a lot of running around and trouble we managed to get permission to travel to a foreign country. We left Moscow on the 11/24. July [Russian/western calendar]; we had through tickets to Hungary and we were hoping to travel there very comfortably in a sleeping car.

But the discomfort of the journey began the next day in Kiev, from where we were supposed to have had seat reservations. Despite terribly crowded conditions we could only just squeeze into a carriage going only as far as Ungheni in Romania. Finding places to sit for six people and nine pieces of hand baggage was very difficult as there were nine of us in a compartment meant for no more than six.

By asking the conductor and by promising tips we finally got installed in a third class compartment around midnight using our reserved tickets, as the train got under way; we had to change places again in the middle of the night, all six of us with our nine pieces luggage. We settled down with our blankets and cushions on the hard benches, and were more or less able to get some sleep. At eight in the morning we had to change trains again arriving at Ungheni without further obstacles at three 'o clock on the following afternoon, still quite tired from our sleepless night.

When we asked after our luggage we found that it had unfortunately not arrived and we had to stay in Ungheni overnight, a small Russian-Jewish-Romanian border town. The station porters recommended us to Mrs. Schwarzmann, who would be able to put us up. We found her house on a small muddy road; the rooms were very simple, but quite nice and we were very pleased to be able to sleep in beds again. After our arduous journey we were in bed by seven in the evening.

We managed a good night's sleep, although Mummy often woke up thinking that someone could rob us, since the Jews didn't look very trustworthy. The next morning we went straight to the station to inquire about our passports but were once again disappointed! The suitcases were there but the passports were not, so we had to spend another night at Mrs Schwartzmann's.

I should mention that since leaving we'd been eating only the food we had brought from Moscow. And we were particularly grateful for what we had because Mrs. Schwarzmann's kitchen looked decidedly unappetizing.

Since our stay was not particularly enjoyable, we were pleased to be able to get away the next day; our passports had been found and so our luggage could be examined. The inspection was not very strict, and it seemed the guards were sorry for us German Muscovites. Then we had an unpleasant surprise; we were shown into a third class compartment. But when we asked the guard if we could change to another carriage he said we could do that when we got back to our precious Germany.

So we ended up with nine of us plus 15 pieces of luggage squeezed into one compartment without luggage racks, some sitting on boxes etc. nevertheless we were very much diverted, because three of our earlier fellow-travellers had joined us, which made things quite merry. Unfortunately some of our luggage straps burst and spilled the contents over everyone and that too kept everyone amused. And so, snacking away on our provisions, that's how we travelled all the way to Jánd in Hungary.

Soon we had to change trains again, but we did not have to worry about the hand baggage, because the other train was already there only a step away and all we had to do was get on it. We had no time to look for seats and had to rush to secure places, there being about fifty of us trying to get into two narrow Romanian coaches.

When we had settled in, two gentlemen came through from the German Red Cross dressed all in white, most anxious about infection but very friendly, introducing themselves and offering to help. Those without money did not have to pay for the journey from Romania, and for those who could it was only a small charge of nine Romanian Lei for six persons. In addition sisters of the first-aid service brought us tea and bread free of charge, because we weren't allowed into the restaurant car.

The night was not very comfortable, with the children placed on two narrow benches and a third in the hall; two of us sat up the whole night, and the two others lay on the floor of the compartment. A guard rode with us, assigned to look after us since the trains are often robbed.

It was an uncomfortable feeling; Mummy's idea was that one could be robbed through the open window of the train. We hardly believed it, but we were soon proved wrong; the two young girls (Betty and Ms Hasperg) had lain down and were barely asleep when they saw a hand, coming through the window actually trying to pull a piece of handbaggage out through the window. One is surprised, that such a thing can occur, because the train goes so fast and soldiers and the conductor sit on the running boards. Could the thief have been a soldier? Mummy and I were unable to

sleep the whole night until, as it became light we were able to admire the beautiful Romanian countryside.

The next morning once again the German Red Cross men brought us milk and bread, because we were not allowed to leave the coach at all. Then we went all the way to the Hungarian border and once again we had only a small fare to pay.

The countryside in Hungary is delightful, but many parts of it can hardly be described as beautiful. We noticed several Hungarians wearing their very pretty costumes of colourful knitwear. Eventually we reached the border station, where once again the hand luggage was inspected in a rather casual way supervised by some Hungarian soldiers.

From the border the train went to Madéfalva, where we had to get the luggage out once more and wait around for four hours. At least we were able to fortify ourselves with a hot meal and we were allowed to walk about, but no further than the end of the platform.

Our train arrived very late and we got on board. Two junior officers had to supervise our carriage continually moving back and forth to keep an eye on us. We were determined not to let this spoil our mood and we spent the evening singing German songs led by Mrs Archenhold and Miss Michel. We got to Brasov at eleven in the evening. We were left in the second-class waiting room but rolls and coffee were served by the Green Cross. We weren't allowed to leave the waiting room and all fifty of us, men and women slept the night there on tables, chairs, benches and in the hall. The next day at six we were served free coffee and rolls and before getting into the third class carriages, although some suggested that we go second class.

From there on we got ourselves a guard with a real sense of humour who made us laugh a lot. The carriage was, however, terrible and we still had to endure a whole day and night in it. At midday we were given soldier's rations in small tins: rice with a very peppery goulash; in the evening we had coffee with one thick piece of bread and some bacon, which tasted horrible; both meals were distributed by soldiers under the eye of our guard.

Then everyone tried to get comfortable for the night, some lying on hand baggage, others half sitting or just lying on the bare floor. One could hardly go through the railroad car, for fear of treading on legs or arms. Throughout the night there was more laughter than sleeping because people were happy

just to be getting away. The train pulled into Budapest at ten in the morning, still with our kind guard on board.

After we had freshened up a bit with a wash and a meal our friendly guard offered to show us around Budapest. But we could only do so under his supervision, so we set off on a tour of the city in four cars with a sergeant sitting in the first and last cars. Budapest with its beautiful buildings made a great impression on us, the castle beautifully positioned on its hill, but unfortunately we didn't have enough time to visit everywhere thoroughly.

After two more hours on the train we arrived at nine in the evening in Vienna, where our guard handed us over to the Red Cross, and it seemed as if we would at last be free people. However that turned out not to be true because we were still not allowed to use the restaurant cars and we were confined to the sleeper cars where the soldiers brought us some food, a murky soup with bits of meat, sauerkraut and sausage. Fortunately we didn't eat it because it looked so unappetizing, but those who did were quite sick. Next morning, however we were finally allowed to take our coffee in the restaurant car, after which we went on our way to Prague unaccompanied.

For the rest of the day we couldn't get anything to eat so it was lucky that our provisions from Moscow were not completely finished. We still had sausage, bread, biscuits and chocolate, which in our hunger tasted wonderful! We got to Prague only in the evening, and managed to get in touch with Mr. Jansens who took the trouble to take us out for a very welcome warm dinner.

From Prague we went on to Tetschen, where we arrived around half past twelve at night. We were bundled into a quarantine tent, which was the absolute limit. We were given grey blankets which we had to spread on the ground to make not very comfortable beds! The one consolation was that there was a large iron stove that kept us warm. In the morning we were woken up at half past six by a soldier repeatedly shouting reveille "Time to get up! "

When we'd tidied away the blankets and pillows we were taken off to a doctor for a health check. They were also looking for fleas but fortunately didn't find any on us; those who did have them had to go through a disinfection chamber. That was the last indignity we had to suffer.

From Tetschen we travelled through the beautiful countryside of Saxon Switzerland to Dresden, where we were finally released, after our passports had been checked, hugely relieved to have reached our goal. For three nights we needed to catch up on our sleep, and we ate so much that the hotel-keeper was amazed at our gluttony, probably caused by the change of air!

We stayed in Dresden for a fortnight and we liked it very much. We visited many sights of the city, but we were unable to get any news from Russia, so we decided to go on to Switzerland, and particularly to Zurich. At the German-Swiss border we were again thoroughly searched for political papers, but of course there was nothing to find and we went on to beautiful Lake Constance at Rohrschach via Lindau, and from there to Zurich. Along the way we greatly admired the beautiful masses of fruit trees.

In Zurich we struggled to find furnished apartments or rooms, but we finally found three sunny rooms in a pension at Tiefenau. We were overjoyed to finally have found something appropriate and to be able to unpack our bags which had been made up for three months!

Emma Loos

Jenny's Itinerary Moscow-Zürich in terms of times and distances

City	Country	Arrive	Depart	Duration	km
Moscow	RU		24/07 20:30		
Kiev	RU	25/07 18:20	25/07 19:10	21:50	800
Ra . . .	RU	26/07 08:00	26/07 08:10	12:50	500
Ungeny	RU/RO	26/07 15:20		2:30	
<i>between stations</i>			28/07 18:45		
<i>Moldova</i>	RO	28/07 20:12	28/07 20:30	1:27	
	RO	29/07 11:00	29/07 13:00	14:30	
Madefalva	RO	29/07 14:30	29/07 18:17	1:30	
Kronstadt*	RO	29/07 22:00	30/07 06:30	3:30	500
Budapest	H	31/07 10:30	31/07 12:30	28:00	600
Vienna	A	31/07 20:30	01/08 7:30	8:00	250
Prague	CZ	01/08 18:45	01/08 20:10	11:15	300
Tetschen**	CZ/D	02/08 01:20	02/08 08:45	5:10	
Dresden	D	02/08 10:48		2:03	150
			16/08 11:11		
Munich	D	16/08 21:30	17/08 12:30	10:19	450
Lindau	D	17/08 16:50	18/08 07:30	4:20	150
Zürich	CH	18/08 12:30		5:00	100
Total	9 days travel for a total of 132 hours				380

*Now Brasov

**Now Decin

