

**WTC023.** Typed Letter from Alice Schwitzer in Budapest to MKS in London. Forwarded by Zigmund Deutsch in Portugal whose postscript is dated 23-5-1943. The letter itself appears to be dated 24-5-1943, but on closer inspection it seems it was originally dated 14-5-1943 and amended [to avoid suspicion it was forwarded]. Deutsch writes he'll emigrate to Argentina after the end of July.

Alice is desperate for news from her children MKS and Jean. She misses them terribly and longs to be able to spend time with them again. Her only goal is to see MKS and Jean again.

Alice describes her flat [Benczur utca 28, Budapest] and surroundings in a leafy Budapest suburb. Ernő Weisz [Alice's partner] had a stomach problem and needs a special diet. She implies it is due to his unemployment, but says there is no chance of him getting a job. She keeps herself busy, she goes to church and trusts in God.

[Her father] Simon Szilard [in Hlohovec] is now frail. Anny lives with Pali and his mother in a nice flat [in Hlohovec]. They are exempted from some decrees, but life is difficult and she is stressed. Anny is unable to get authorisation to visit her mother in Budapest. She occasionally has fainting spells. Pali is busy working, his boss comes often to Budapest.

Alice gives news of other friends, but many have left. Boris & Pista Polgar are OK, their son George Polgar is finishing his medical studies but will not be able to work.

Alice sometimes goes into the nearby hills where she has friends. She wants to return in June to the spa where she was before, but "you can't make plans far ahead".

Date changed from 14.V.1943 in Alice's mauve ink  
to 24.V.1943 in Zigmund Deutsch's navy ink

My dear Matyi.

I am writing a letter to you once again in the hope that it may reach you, just as I continue to hope to receive word from you although none has come for a long time. Despite it all I continue to wait for word and every morning when I hear the postman come my heart stops for a second as I wonder if today may yet be the day he brings a letter from you all. And so the months and years go by, and still nothing comes. But I have not given up expecting something because if I were to do that, I would lose all of my strength. And that is something which I would like to delay for as long as possible. The last word I had was your short [red cross] message in October and since then even these short messages have stopped and so the only thing left for me to do is to pass day after day dreaming of you [plural] which makes the anticipation even more miserable. But even that is better than nothing.

And so it is that my thoughts turn to you all the time and I spend hours talking to you. And I have even convinced myself that I understand your answers or at least I make believe that I know what it is you would have answered to my questions and what your opinions would be about the problems and anxieties which beset me. I make believe that I can guess what you would say because I hope that I still recognise and know you and that you have not changed so much, that you have remained in your feelings and thoughts the same person.

I would like to ask you so many things about yourself, about your life, your wellbeing. Are you happy with your job and with your prospects? Are you eagerly engaged with what you do and are you meeting with success and that it that you are enjoying it. And above all, do you have good friends, male and female and if there is anyone special that you have found who is close to your heart and who could end up in my prayers because she is good and loving to you and makes your life happy and worth living. Since I don't know if I will get any answer to my questions, I won't even start with the questions. You know, my dear and good Matyi, what preoccupies me the most and what I most want to know. You surely must remember the good old days when we battled and argued and even so understood each other so well. Will we ever be able to return to that? I truly must use the remaining time well as during these terrible long years of separation I have realised how much we let by and how much was left unsaid that should have been said. And the same is true with Mucki [Jean Bolton]. She was a baby when I last saw her and must surely have become a fully rounded person. If God grants me the chance to see you again, I do not even know if I will have time enough left in my life to say all of the things that need to be said and to catch up on the lost time.

As far as concerns us all, I can say that everything is fine. We have a small but charming furnished flat in a pretty and quiet part of town in a building surrounded by chestnut trees that are flowering at the moment. There is no tram line on the street and children play in the street. We have a very good maid who does all the heavy work and who is very attached to us. The landlord from whom we rent are pleasant and take care of us well. The husband was a congressman and we live all together like a family. Uncle [Ernö Weisz] had a problem with his stomach in winter and was bedbound but is now better although he has to keep a strict diet of mashed food cooked in butter. He is OK as long as he can continue to get this. Of course the best medicine for him would be to get a proper job

as without work he just hangs around restlessly and it is terrible for him. But there is little chance of that. I am all the more busy: I use and enjoy every opportunity the big city affords me. I go to every available university lecture, seminars and scientific excursions. I read a lot and do work at my art.

So these are the things that allow me even in present times to forget, if only for a few hours, the problems, uncertainties and aching sadness that I carry around with me all the time. I do everything, leaving no effort spared, to keep my head above water and to save my strength. Save my strength towards my only goal and my only hope which is to see you both again in happy and untroubled circumstances; and I pray that I may be granted a few more years so as to enjoy your company and to be able to spend time loving you. I go often to church and I hope that God will not leave my prayers unanswered: he has up until now protected us and we must now and in the future place our trust in him.

Grandfather [her father Simon Szilard] has, I hear, become very old, weak and fragile. It pains me a lot that I am unable to visit him. Mici lives near him and he still has his old housekeeper. Anny [MKS's sister] lives in the same town [Hlohovec] and, so I hear, have a nice little flat and are, God be thanked, exempted from some of the various decrees. Despite this, her life is difficult and full of stress since she never knows what the next day may bring. Anny's deepest wish would be to come even if only for a few weeks to me and just to escape from there a little. Unfortunately we are in no position to get the authorisation. It is a great sadness for me that I know of her situation there and can do nothing to help despite the fact that she is so close and that I have not seen her for a year and a half. Pali is bearing all this more easily in that he has a lot of work. His boss, who is often here, is a very good person and likes both of them very much which is very good for them. Jenö and his wife also live there and they are also well: pass that on whenever possible to Juci. But many of our old circle have left and we get no news from them. Sari and family are there and doing well and Kato's mother is here. I correspond with Franci, but it is getting fainter because our main connection was always you and lately I have sadly had nothing new to report to him. They are prospering. Since Lajosko died the boys are running the business themselves and are selling their produce widely all over the region. Boris [Alice's sister] and Pista [Polgar] are doing well and living peacefully in their old flat. Gyuri

[George Polgar, their son] has nearly finished his doctorate [medicine] but will not get a position afterwards. Pali's mother lives with them and runs the house and also cooks for them making Anny's life comfortable which is no bad thing as she often feels unwell. Her fainting spells are rare but do still happen. But it seems she does look wonderful. If only she could come here. Of course I cannot allow my such wishes in your case as I know that it is impossible. But the holidays are particularly hard to bear as they are so full of memories of you. Not to mention your birthdays: it is such an agony to celebrate them without you.

On Sundays and holidays I generally go into the nearby hills where I know many people who have small apartments and where I am able to enjoy the beauty of nature despite all the evils of man. If nothing stops me, then I would like in June to go back to the spa where I can take the mineral baths which are good for my heart. But these days one cannot make plans so far ahead.

May God protect you, my dear Matyi, and Mucki [Jean Bolton] and John [Bolton] and I may my prayers and heartfelt wishes be with you. Please send news if you are able as I am so worried for you all.

Many kisses and hugs from your ever loving

[signed in her characteristic mauve ink] *Alice*

[postscript by Zigmund Deutsch in Portugal]

I take this opportunity to add my very best wishes. We are staying in Portugal until the end of July and are then going to Argentina. I wrote to you many months ago at an address I got from the Czechoslovak Mission in London (13, Gordon Street S.W.1 [correct address is W.C.1]) but you did not answer. I hope to hear from you soon.

[signed in navy ink]

*Zigmund Deutsch*

Caldas da Rainha (Portugal) Hotel Central on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1943.