

WTC043. Typed Letter from Pali Adler in Bratislava, Slovakia to Jean Bolton in England. Pali comments on John Bolton, Jean's husband, having returned [from the Far East]. Pali has collected Alice and Ernö's things from Budapest [they probably had to leave quietly with few possessions]. Much of the letter is about Alice and Ernö's jewellery, which they believe was left in a Swiss bank. Pali plays up the possibility that Ernö's family, who are hard up, might get some of this jewellery. Pali asks Jean for bank documents to allow withdrawal of the jewellery. Pali says he will now get round to registering the deaths. He should soon get his passport, and will apply for an English visa, in order to come to England in 4-5 weeks time. Pali asks Jean to send cigarettes and chocolate.

Bratislava, 23.IV.1946.

Bratislava, 23rd April 1946

Meine liebe Susi!

My dear Susi!

Mit Freude habe ich Deinen Brief bekommen und gratuliere Dir herzlich, dass Du endlich Deinen John zu Hause hast. Hoffentlich bleibt er recht lange bei Dir und Ihr werdet jetzt glückliche schöne Tage haben.

I was delighted to receive your letter and I congratulate you heartily on finally having your John at home. Hopefully he will stay with you for a long time and you will now have happy and beautiful days.

Deine Aufregung bezüglich der schweizerischen Sachen ist zwar begründet, jedoch musst Du Dir keine Sorge machen. Die Sache steht folgend. Noch im Winter war ich zusammen mit Ernös Neffen, Jancsi Wollner, der mit seiner Mutter gerettet wurde. Ich habe mit ihm auch in Budapest zusammen die dort befindlichen Sachen von Mutter und Ernö übernommen. Er hat lange gesucht auch die Schmucksachen von Ernö, seine Mutter glaubte aber, dass diese zusammen mit Mutters Sachen in der Schweiz sind. Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, dass tatsächlich einige Stücke Ernö gehörten.

Your excitement about the Swiss things is justified, but you don't have to worry. The matter is as follows. In winter I was with Ernö's nephew, Jancsi Wollner, who was saved with his mother. I also got Mother's and Ernö's things from Budapest with him. He also looked for a long time for Ernö's jewellery, but his mother thought that these were in Switzerland, along with (your) mother's belongings. It cannot be ruled out that some pieces actually belong to Ernö.

Sie wussten aber nicht bestimmt, ob die Sachen separat gepackt sind, oder in einem Paket. Jedenfalls gab ich ihnen die Schweizer Adresse, und hat sich jetzt Jancsi Wollner wahrscheinlich direkt an die Bank gewendet. Eines steht fest, dass sie keinesfalls Sachen die nicht Ernö gehörten sich aneignen wollen. Ernös Schwester, Frau Wollner lebt heute in Košice, Krmanova 16 / Ján Wollner / in ziemlich schlechten materiellen Verhältnissen. ~~Eventuel~~ Eventuel könntest Du ihnen direkt schreiben um die Angelegenheit zu bereinigen.

But one doesn't know for sure whether the things were packed separately or in one package. In any case, I gave them the Swiss address, and Jancsi Wollner has probably now contacted the bank directly. One thing is certain that they do not want to acquire anything that did not belong to Ernö. Ernö's sister, Mrs. Wollner, now lives in Košice, at Krmanova 16 / Ján Wollner / in rather poor material circumstances. Maybe you could write to them directly to clear up the matter.

In Deinem Brief schreibst Du, dass die Bank einige Dokumente verlangt. Bitte schreibe mir postwendend, ob ich hier nicht einige besorgen könnte. Ich glaube, dass ich nicht endlich entschliessen werden müssen die amtliche Todeserklärung zu verlangen. Dies dauert hier ca. 6-8 Wochen. Bisher habe ich nichts unternommen da mir diese traurige Akt nicht dringend war.

In your letter you write that the bank requires some documents. Please write to me by return mail if I could have them here. I believe that I will finally have to make up my mind to request the death declaration. This takes about 6-8 weeks here. So far I have not done anything because this sad act was not urgent for me.

Diese Woche bekomme ich meinen Reisepass und werde sogleich das engl[isch] Visum ansuchen. Wenn keine neue Schwierigkeiten eintreten hoffe ich in 4-5 Wochen noch dort fahren zu können. Es wird ein trauriges Wiedersehen sein!

This week I'll get my passport and will apply for an English visa straightaway. If no new difficulties arise, I hope to be able to drive there in 4-5 weeks. It will be a sad reunion!

Jetzt habe ich an Dich Susilein eine grosse Bitte. Du weisst ich bin ein grosser Raucher, nur Cigaretten haben wir sehr wenig. Ich bitte Dich daher mir per Postpaket 200-300 Cigaretten zu schicken, und ich werde Dir dann persönlich meine Schuld begleichen.- /für Schokolade möchte ich auch dankbar sein. Für meine kleine Nichte die jetzt 3 Jahre alt war/

Now I have a big request for you, Susilein. You know I'm a big smoker, [but] we only have got very few cigarettes. I therefore ask you to send me 200-300 cigarettes by post, and I will pay you the debt personally. I would also like to be grateful for chocolate.- /For my little niece who was now 3 years old./

Ich lasse John, Patricia und Matyko herzlichstes grüssen und erwarte Deine Rückantwort.

I send my warmest regards to John, Patricia and Matyko and await your reply.

Dein
Yours
(signed) Pali

WPS notes 24/2/2021

Susi is Jean Bolton, MKS's sister, who forwarded this letter to MKS (see her letter 045).

Swiss things. This is a reference to Alice Schwitzer's safe deposit box in a Swiss bank.

Got Mother's and Ernö's things from Budapest. Alice and Ernö left Budapest (their last address was Benczur utca 28) to travel illegally to Hlohovec, Slovakia in June or July 1944, so could not attract attention in any way. Presumably they travelled light and might not have even have told their landlord. In any event, Pali indicates he went to Budapest to collect their belongings. It is possible that some items of correspondence to Alice in this archive were among these items.

Jancsi Wollner. Under the cover of the possibility that some of the jewellery might be Ernö's (based only perhaps on Alice herself writing in 106 that "Ernö should have what he wants or needs"), it seems Ernö's nephew is also trying to get his hands on Alice and Ernö's safe deposit box.

It cannot be ruled out that some pieces belong to Ernö. Pali is spinning here, playing up the idea that some item's were Ernö's. But Alice is clear in her testament (letter 106) that the items are for MKS, Anni and Jean, subject only to "giving Ernö what he wants or needs" (a condition which, whilst vague, surely lapses with Ernö's death). Pali builds further confusion with "one doesn't know whether the things were packed separately or in one package", and feigns reassurance with "Ernö's family do not want to acquire anything that did not belong to Ernö", when clearly they do.

Clear up the matter. Pali suggests Jean write to Ernö's family to "clear up the matter", knowing there was little to clear up, other than by reading Alice's testament more carefully and applying it more faithfully. But in writing this, Pali pushes responsibility away from himself for who might get what, pushing it on Jean (and noticeably not on MKS), whilst simultaneously pretending Ernö's family had some sort of claim (the band of claimants seems to grow with every sentence).

English visa. Pali says he is planning to come to England "in 4-5 weeks", which means it would then make sense for him to collect the contents of the safe deposit box on the way. But he only "hopes to be able to drive there", and only "if no new difficulties arise". These qualified statements indicate to me he never had any intention of coming.

Susilein is a German affectionate form of Susi.

Cigarettes and Chocolate. The economy of post-war Czechoslovakia was in tilt. The offer to pay the debt personally seems a classic con-man's promise, said by someone who had decided he wasn't coming, in the safety of never having to pay.

Matyko. This slovak form is more diminutive than affectionate for MKS' first name, which I have not seen used by anyone else. I believe it is used for children. It's difficult to know what exactly was the relationship between MKS and Pali, but by writing only to Jean, and in using this form, Pali seems to push MKS to one side as far as dealing with the matters in the letter, whereas - at that time - one would have expected MKS, as first born son, to have taken the lead.

John refers to John Bolton, Jean's husband.

Patricia refers to Patricia Sargant, Jean's new-born baby, and WPS's first cousin.