My Beloved, this year 20 years have passed, if my memory serves me right, since you left Lwow, and also since we last said goodbye. I remember so well those last weeks you spent in Lwow and our conversations and my own sorrow and sadness. Today, my hair is turning gray, and I smile at my remembrances of you, my dear, faraway friend. I have no hope that we will meet again—it’s good that from time to time I can find out something about you and that I can also write you a couple of words about myself—it’s good to know that you’re alive and that you are. These things give me certainty in life… I’m glad that the books brought you much pleasure. Kaleidoscope comes in a nice edition and I think that it will interest you not only because of your sentiments toward the author. Why did I send you Brandys’s novella? He’s a young postwar author. I especially like The Red Hat. The book is from the period of the “thaw”—a period that took place roughly two years ago—when our literature began to free itself from “directives” and “commands”, when a freer critique of the status quo began, when we began to write openly about what’s happening, about what we think, without pink glasses. If Brandys doesn’t seem different to you—he actually is different. After the war we learned to use words and turns of phrase unknown 20 years ago. My dear friend, I could spend weeks talking to you, in telling you about everything that’s so hard to describe in writing, and I would explain how very much things have changed, and how we have to be different than we were before the war. I’d tell you about our own “October Revolution”, about the “Polish October” of ’56, I’m sure you’ve read and heard something about it—it coincided with your own elections which you followed with such lively interest. These times are long past—the intense pressure, anticipation, hope—happiness and uncertainty. We’d spend hours by the radio, we read all the newspapers, magazines, weeklies. We had time for nothing else. You know, it was a bit like as if suddenly a window was thrown open in a big room that had been suffocating you—and you breathed in the fresh mountain air that intoxicated you like wine. Never before did I write about current events to you. The correspondence with you and yours itself was, in a way, an act of courage; I had to weigh each word, so that the letter would reach the addressee and would not elicit unpleasant consequences for the sender. The fact that I’m recalling this to you now, freely, and without fear means for me, for us, a lot. We are a poor, decimated country and I

1 Or, “that you exist.”
2 The rest of the sentence is illegible.
3 The statement is most likely a reference to the beginning of the intellectual “thaw”.
4 Censors had great power and could punish rebellion against the regime with jail terms, death sentences, or time in Siberia.
don’t anticipate that we will quickly enrich ourselves. At the same
time I know well that my own modest living conditions cannot change for
the better—but there is... hope. I can’t stand an atmosphere of
lying and compulsion and I hope that things won’t go back to that but it’s not easy and a host of new problems are popping up...
Despite all of this, I have always been an optimist, I believe that we’ve entered a better path.
I am ... and I’m dreaming of a vacation, which I’d like to spend,
again, in the mountains. For now things are not yet coming together
favorably. I would like to leave, as always, in June. In my office at work a lot has changed. For the longest time I had very little work and that greatly irritated me—if there were the possibility, I’d willingly change jobs.
But it’s not easy to get positions in offices here, so I keep quiet. I have to think about my retirement! At home things are so-so. Mom had an accident last winter and spent a few weeks nursing her broken ribs. She is very weak and... She needs a lot of care and attention, like a child. My sister keeps going just like in the old days, she even got a promotion recently. Wanda my friend with whom we lived has worked as the directory/secretary of a scientific quarterly for the Hirschfeld Institute. As I’ve already mentioned, we live very modestly...
Winter was mild and warm—without snow; we had enough coal. But spring was so ... that I’m still burning coal in the furnace. My frequent trips to Warsaw have stopped—I haven’t been there in 8 months. I recently visited Gosia’s mother. She is gravely sick and I’m worried about her, because she’s so...
My brother is going through some struggles. During his stay, February this year, he had a heart attack, and he spent two weeks with us. It was a very hard period for me. But you know, despite this, our lives are peaceful. Constantly, on a daily basis, there is something going on, and then you find yourself wondering why you don’t have time for anything, for example, to write to you. But health-wise I feel well. This despite the fact that I still haven’t touched the B12 Vitamins you sent me. You asked me to tell you if I need you to send me anything. I’m only doing this, because you asked, because, to tell you the truth, I don’t really need anything. And you’ve done so much for me already, that I’ll never be able to repay you. It seems to me Willy that you’d have the least trouble sending me money through "Polska Kasa Opieki SA"—and I’d pick from their warehouses whatever I might need. Specifically, I need a sweater for
winter—wool is expensive and hard to find. I have no idea what’s reasonable for you, if this turns out to be too much, for $5 I could purchase a half kilo of yarn. The address of the bank (Polska Kasa Opieki) PEKAO Trading Corporation, 25 Broad Street Room 443, New York, New York. Coffee we can now purchase here, we drink it seldom, and so, for Mom’s needs, we still have enough. The tariffs here are generally lower than they were before. However, it seems to me that PEKAO will be the most convenient for you.

I’m glad that everything is going well with you guys, that’s what counts, that you’re all healthy. All of your pictures bring a smile to my face—I haven’t seen you guys in such a long time.

I still have a lot to tell you about and I have many questions, but this letter is already quite long, and it’s getting late—I have to finally wrap up. I frequently think of you—if you’ve changed, if it would take us long to acclimate ourselves if, by some miracle, we’d meet. It’s strange that we knew each other for such a short time—a year, maybe two?—but our bond will probably never break. Stay healthy, my dear, faraway best friend. Shower Hilde with kisses and the kids and send them my greetings. I’ll send you another book, maybe some pictures of the Tatra Mountains—you always did like the mountains.

Stay healthy and write again sometime.

To Ala

The most sincere greetings from my mother, sister and Wanda.

We got a another dog, a little one, black—a little “mutt”—she’s a very nice little “lady”.