

Breslau 17.IX.1946

[1/1] Dear Wolf¹—I last wrote you from [1/2] when I was still in Warsaw and in the meantime came [1/3] many considerable changes in my life. [1/4] I waited for all of it to partially [1/5] fall into place. In my thoughts I have often had conversations [1/6] with you and I've thought about your answers [1/7] and reactions to my storytelling. [1/8] Wolf, my beloved, far-off friend— [1/9] Why is it so terribly sad everywhere? [1/10] I've looked everywhere and searched for [1/11] happy people—there are none. Write [1/12] and tell me that at least you're doing well—my [1/13] optimism died a tragic death [1/14] now I don't know how to be happy anymore [1/15-16] and I don't have anything to wait for in life. [1/17] I've been in Breslau² for the past two weeks. [1/18] It seems that it endured not much less [1/19] destruction than Warsaw³—what that means [1/20] you could only imagine with much effort. [1/21] But the city is big [1/22] the river is nice—there is lots of vegetation— [1/23] one can get used to it. [1/24] After spending time in Warsaw the mood here seems a bit provincial, [1/25] the people, mostly repatriates from [1/26] many different countries—all grey, filled with worries— [1/27] they are just now beginning to build their existences— [1/28] and surrogates for their lost family homes.

[2/1] I work in the Government Textile Center. [2/2] My title is “sub-referent of the sales [2/3] division.” I am on the 8th position on the work pension ladder [2/4] and it amounts to about 9000 zlotys [2/5] plus food ration cards and dinner in the work cafeteria [2/6] (good and free). Work for now is strictly doing [2/7] bills—overseeing [2/8] outgoing bills. I do my computations [2/9] on various kinds of apparatus⁴. [2/10] All things considered, this [2/11] would suit me in my current [2/12] spiritual state—the mood in the office is pleasant [2/13] even cultured. There is one “but”, [2/14] the fact that I don't know if after the trial month [2/15] they'll lay me off. For two days in a row [2/16] I don't have anything to work on—I get [2/17] bored sitting by a tiny desk and it's really [2/18] depressing me—By the way, I'm writing [2/19] this letter in the office.⁵ [2/20] Eva works for the “Odra Fleet” in the [2/21] financial department. That institution is also [2/22] government run and her pay is similar to mine. [2/23] If I end up keeping this position [2/24] we'll have enough to live and pay for mother [2/25] and after a few months I could even pay off [2/26] some bills and complete (in the most [2/27] modest meaning of the word) my wardrobe [2/28] for the winter. Our apartment [2/29] for now is very spare. We have a room

¹ Dr. Birnbaum's nickname, explained elsewhere.

² Breslau was given to Poland after the Second World War. All of its German residents were deported to the newly divided Germany. Many ethnic Poles from territories now occupied by other countries were moved to Breslau. The city changed its name to Wrocław.

³ Warsaw was almost totally razed to the ground by first its German then Russian occupants.

⁴ The machines are listed, however their names are illegible.

⁵ After several decades of Communism singing company time for one's purposes became an art-form in Poland. It was the subject of many jokes.

[3/1] with a kitchen on the 4th floor under a roof that has holes [3/2] and right by the attic. The most essential [3/3] furniture (left here by the Germans) is there. We also have [3/4] a possibility of getting a nice 2-room apartment [3/5] with a bathroom!!! But the couple that live [3/6] there are still undecided [3/7] when they will leave and it's possible we'll [3/8] have to endure the winter in our little [3/9] place. Anyway, our current place feels [3/10] just fine to Eva and I. It's worse with mother, she [3/11] has a serious heart condition and for her [3/12] living on the 4th floor is very harmful.

[3/13] You know how it's here in Breslau—it's very sad! [3/14] I know a few people here—all are [3/15] distant acquaintances from Lwow...⁶ [3/16] I was glad that in Warsaw that there was someone [3/17] familiar and sincere. How good they [3/18] were to us, Mary and Frank⁷, it's hard [3/19] to describe. After all, we came to them straight from [3/20] Siberia, naked, dirty and hungry. [3/21] Now after 3 months we've left for [3/22] Breslau, like totally changed people. [3/23] They gave me everything they had [3/24] at their disposition and they sent me off so sincerely [3/25] while giving me the possibility to come back [3/26] to Warsaw at any time if things might not pan out over here. [3/27] It means so much—and cannot be fully understood [3/28] by someone who did not share our "beggar's" lot. [3/29] I recently spent two days in Lodz at a [3/30] cousin's place and I felt there as if [3/31] I were in paradise and for a moment I totally forgot about the whole [3/32] world—even though the people I met there were [3/33] also sad and unhappy.

Recently, I got [4/1] a letter from Danka (...⁸) from Tel-Aviv [4/2] her marriage with ...⁹ is terrible, actually, [4/3] she's pretty much alone (after losing her [4/4] whole family)—and she knows of nothing to live for. It's almost the same for all of us here. [4/5] We are "condemned to live". [4/6] She also writes me about Seweryn¹⁰ [4/7] when she saw him last year. Everyone [4/8] thinks that I should be happy with such [4/9] a resolution to my marriage—actually [4/10] I know it myself—but everything is empty and [4/11] black—and I don't know if I'll ever know how to [4/12] love someone, if I'll ever be able to trust someone. [4/13] Everywhere you see ruins—of homes, [4/14] and people, and fates. [4/15] I'm ashamed for writing all of this to you. [4/16] but sometimes it's necessary. You are a fragment of an old [4/17] prehistoric fairy tale. For me you are both Jozia [4/18] and Wisio¹¹ and all of my friends put together. [4/19] I don't have to pretend with you. But maybe, [4/20] maybe things will actually get better! [4/21] My Dearest Wolf your birthday is in October, [4/22] the 18th of October, right? I want you to know [4/23] that throughout all of these years, not [4/24] once did I forget it and always on that [4/25] day I reminisced about you with great [4/26] feeling, even in 1943 when I was a prisoner [4/27] in a camp. My

⁶ Illegible

⁷ These friends are mentioned in another translated letter from Ala Manelska.

⁸ Danka's last name is illegible

⁹ Name is illegible

¹⁰ Seweryn, husband of Ala, was imprisoned during the war, and it appears that they never reunited.

¹¹ Jozia and Wisio Sternbach, their fate at the hands of the Germans is mentioned by Ala Manelska in one of the translated documents from the collection.

beloved friend, now again I can write you that [4/28] I have no wishes for you other than health, [4/29] peace, and warmth—inner warmth, which [4/30] will connect you to all of life, life...¹² [4/31] and will give you a glow.

[4/32] On the envelope I gave you the address of the apartment that [4/33] we'll probably get. The apartment is [4/34] by Dworowa St. 12, apt. # 9.

¹² Illegible