



## Letter from Anny van der Sluys to Hans Jolowicz, July 19, 1945

Sluys, Anny Van der. "Letter from Anny Van Der Sluys to Hans Jolowicz, July 19, 1945." Hague, Netherlands, July 19, 1945. Papers of Georg and Max Bredig, Box 9, Folder 20. Science History Institute. Philadelphia.

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Translated by Jocelyn R. McDaniel

### English Translation

#### Image 1

ANNY VAN DER SLUYS  
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THE HAGUE  
TELEPHONE: 770.817

THE HAUGUE, July 19, 1945

Dear Mr. Jolowicz,

I am sorry that you and your parents had to hear the tragic news about Alfred and Eva through a telegram. I would have gladly spared you that, but my friend Cilia Loots had already sent the telegram. Maybe she was right to do so, because I personally did not know about their fate for more than seven months and I know how that feels. So that you have some idea about my relationship with your sister and Alfred, I must tell you that I met Eva when she came to Holland with the Liebenthal family, with whom I was very good friends.

When she got married in Riouwstr., I used to visit her often. However, a close friendship between us only developed when they had to leave The Hague in 1940. They didn't have any time to pack their belongings and I packed everything and sent it to them. I also visited them often in Amersfoort. Maybe they told you about it. Because I assume that you are interested in what has happened here in recent years, I want to tell you exactly what I told Alfred's brother in Santiago.

It must have been in early 1942 when I arrived in Amersfoort for a visit that Alfred and Eva had already packed to be transported to Westerbork and Poland respectively. I was so shocked that I couldn't say a word at first. In the evening, I earnestly spoke to Alfred and persuaded him to defend himself against forces that ultimately wanted to end their lives. Yet he and Eva believed that they had no right to consider themselves better than others and that they also had to bear their lot and go where so many went. I can't tell you how I felt about that. I knew the Germans and German conditions inside out and I couldn't believe that they wouldn't see the future as clearly as I did. I also suspected that something else was influencing their attitude. Their financial situation was bad and I knew it because I had helped them out a few times back in 1940-1942. I also knew how reluctant they were to be helped by friends. However, when I made it clear to them that their lives were at risk here and that they shouldn't be ashamed of accepting help from a good friend, we finally accomplished something, and I promised to help them until the end of the war. A place to stay in Amersfoort was quickly found, because the people were all very helpful. Hence, we obsessively packed for the second time within a few days. They could only stay there with the family temporarily because these people

## Image 2

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had five children, which could become too dangerous in the long run. Yet the man was very clever and after a few months, he found a new home for them on a farm in Olderbroek. He was later arrested for illegal work and was sent to Dachau, from where he recently returned home very ill. The farmer's wife, Mrs. Blaaw, and her unmarried son Jan, were very good to Alfred and Eva. The woman really cared for them like a mother. Of course, they had to help out at the farm so as not to arouse suspicion. That wasn't always easy, especially for Eva. This transition is very difficult for us. On the other hand, they had many advantages during this time, which many of their fellow sufferers lacked. They were able to be together all the time when many were housed separately. They had fresh air and were able to move about freely because it was so remote. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Liebenthal lived in a small attic room for three years and practically could not move. Last but not least, they always had very

good food while we were nearly starving in western Holland. In the area where they were, not far from Zwolle, many young people, who did not want to be dragged to Germany as part of the work assignment, went into hiding. Among them, Alfred and Eva made many good friends. I gave one of them, a theology student, your address upon request. He will certainly tell you about this time. During the time in Olderbroek, I visited Alfred and Eva and often brought them what they needed. These visits from the normal world were a celebration for the three of us. In the times that we experienced, you become much closer than in normal times. I was last in Olderbroek in September 1944. On September 17th, the landings were at Arnhem. The train workers also went on strike, so I could no longer go there. At the end of September, they sent me another packet of butter (because we couldn't get anything.) Alfred wrote on the packet, "See you again soon." We were really looking forward to the end of the war, which seemed to be near. I then heard nothing more until the beginning of November because the postal service had stopped running. Afterwards, someone from Amersfoort brought me a letter from my friend Ms. Loots with the awful news of Alfred and Eva's arrest. I immediately alerted all my connections. I even asked a friend who worked illegally for a German agency to call Westerbork to see if they were there. Telephoning was only possible through the Germans because everything else was closed down. However, they didn't even want to give the office any information. A well-known Dutch lawyer, who usually had a lot of success with such matters and could've helped us, also went into hiding like everyone else. Since I had also hidden a Jewish family with four people in The Hague, who were completely dependent on me and were also doing other types of illegal work, I could no longer

### **Image 3**

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risk anything and could only pray and wait. This terrible time lasted until May 5, 1945 when the Fortress of Holland finally capitulated. My first task when the postal service was running was to write to Westerbork and Zwolle. According to people from Olderbroek, they were taken there together with three non-Jews. The farmer's son was also imprisoned for a few weeks. (They didn't burn down the farm as originally intended, but they took everything the woman owned). After a few weeks, on June 10th of all days, Alfred's birthday, the dreadful news arrived that a mass grave had been found near Westerbork with six people in it, in which my friends could have been. I didn't want to believe it and decided to travel there to see for myself. A few days later (I first had to get a travel certificate based on a letter from the prison director in Zwolle, because you are still not allowed to travel from here to eastern Holland without permission), an officer from the P.O.D (Political Investigation Service) came

to me for information. None of the six people had papers. Only one of the young people had a picture of his bride with her name on it. Through an appeal in the newspapers (this all happened in eastern Holland, because we didn't even have newspapers yet), the lady was found, and she told the police at what time her husband had left. By asking in Oldbroek, Mrs. Blaaw and I were found. On behalf of the P.O.D., I then traveled to Zwolle and Westerbork, always "getting a ride" because trains aren't running yet. After a week of searching and asking, I discovered the following information:

1. They were not registered at the prison in Zwolle, i.e. they were not there as prisoners.
2. According to a statement from a S.D. man, who is in prison at the S.D in Zwolle, and whom I asked, they hadn't been there.
3. When they were found. they were still wearing the clothes they were wearing when they were arrested.
4. When they were arrested, their suitcases and everything they had with Mrs. Blaaw (except for one suitcase, which is now with me), were confiscated and distributed shortly thereafter by the Nazis in Zwolle.

They must have been murdered right after their arrest near Zwolle and probably by the squad that organized the raids. It was not determined how. All six of them were buried in a small forest on the IJssel River. On February 6th, they were found there by O.T. workers who were supposed to build reinforcements. Dr. Bos, a doctor from Zwolle, whom I also visited, was summoned by the people but could no longer determine their cause of death. Once the Nazi security service found out what had happened, the bodies were confiscated and taken away and no one knew where. The grave was found for the second time on May 15, 1945. Jews who have lived in Westerbork for many years

## **Image 4**

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said that six coffins disappeared from the crematorium there. Thus, it can be assumed that they wanted to erase all traces of the murders through cremation. Lack of fuel prevented them from doing so and as a result, they dug a grave near the camp. They are now buried in the peaceful and beautiful Westerbork Cemetery. I was there too and felt indescribably forlorn! This happened after I spent the whole afternoon at the Dutch P.O.D. Office and the Field Security Service, Zwolle Division.

I am extremely sorry, dear Mr. Jolowicz, that I have to describe all this to you in writing, especially since I cannot find any words of comfort for this grievous loss. Alfred and Eva

were like a brother and sister to me and I therefore fully share your grief

It is a consolation for me, as it should also be for you and your parents, that they stayed together until the very end and were not tormented like millions of others for months or years. Alfred said to Ms. Blaaw as they were leaving: "Pray for us, Ms. Blaaw, that when we meet our tragic fate, it will come quickly."

I have written to you in great detail so that you know that Alfred and Eva were not alone in their anguish. They had made many friends here who all mourn for them because they understand what they have also lost. Their life was an example for all of us. It is also a consolation to know that they always cared for each other.

I also wrote to Mr. Schnell in Santiago, and I am telling you the same thing that I told him. If I can do or arrange anything for you, I'll be happy to do so. Mr. and Mrs. Liebenthal will also write to your parents. They even wanted to take it upon themselves to share this sad news with you, but I knew they couldn't bear it. You had already given me your address in 1940. Unfortunately, I lost it when our neighborhood was bombed on March 3, 1945. Hence, Mr. Bredig in New York telegraphed it to me upon request.

I hope to hear from you soon and until then, I would like to send my best wishes and kind regards.

Yours,

Anny van der Sluys