

Case No. 29

Letter to the relatives of a soldier located in the camp in Luckenwalde,¹
liberated by units of the Red Army in 1945.

25.IV.-1945

1 page

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25.IV.-45

Writing on trophy paper.²

Dear, sweet, lovely wife,³ daughter, grandmother, and friends!

In taking the city of Luckenwalde on 22.IV of this year, units of the valiant Red Army liberated our international prisoner of war camp. In one go Red fighters ripped 17,000 people from the claws of the fascists, and from the rightless, the dispossessed, and the hungry we again became full-fledged people. It is impossible to write about all the horrors of being a prisoner of war seeing as there won't be enough time or paper for this. Know that this was a total evil nightmare which one could speak about for entire years. A huge amount of people died prisoners of war. No cholera, typhus or plague killed so many people as the evil Germano-Hitlerite regime. We were not considered people, and were called "untemenschen"⁴ and livestock.

I became a prisoner of war on 4.X.41 near the village of Leonovo, Yelninsky raion Smolensk oblast.⁵

On 2.X the enemy crashed upon us with all his weight. On 4.X I was wounded three times and got two concussions. I was unconscious. I came to in a cowshed, in the manure along with some other wounded soldiers. After long ordeals and sufferings, I together with the others were delivered to Vilno.⁶ Worms were teeming in my wound. In addition to all my horrors I also got sick with typhus. Altogether I stayed in the hospital until 20.V.-42. From Vilno they took me along with the others to Kovno,⁷ where I stayed in a quarantine camp until 2.VI. On 6.VI our party of prisoners was brought to this cursed city Luckenwalde. If there is a hell, then it is being a prisoner of war and it is

¹ Throughout the name for Luckenwalde is written in Russian as "Люкенвальде" though it is currently officially spelled "Луккенвальде."

² Indicating that this paper was a war trophy taken by Red Army personnel somewhere in Germany or German-occupied territory.

³ The Ukrainian word for wife is used here and the other time "wife" is used in this letter. It could also be a (most likely south Russian) regional word, not necessarily Ukrainian per se.

⁴ A misspelling of *Untermenschen*, leaving out the r.

⁵ This was in the course of the German drive to Moscow in Fall of 1941, which came partially through Smolensk Oblast. Leonovo and the Yelninsky raion area were captured by the Germans specifically in the course of the Viazma-Bryansk battles and double encirclement of October 1941.

⁶ Currently the capital of independent Lithuania, Vilnius. The "Vilno" variation of the name is closest to the Polish name for the city, Wilno..

⁷ Currently a city in independent Lithuania, Kaunas. The "Kovno" variation of the name is closest to the Polish name for the city, Kowno, and the old Russian name for it, Kovno.

located in Luckenwalde. Now we will soon see each other and will live peacefully and well as we used to. The end of the war is not far away. Our dear Red Army is thrashing the enemy so badly that he cannot resist anywhere. He runs and, panicking, does not know where to fortify himself.

When you look at our fighters, you think your heart will burst from joy, and the rush of happiness calls forth tears of joy. It only hurts that I was not able to fight among their ranks but was a prisoner of war. Now I will once again take a rifle and go finish off this bastard. When we finish with him, we will all return home to peaceful labor restoring all of the national economy.

Dear wife and daughter! There was not a day, hour or minute that I did not think of you. When it was hard for me, I turned to you. When they were beating me, I asked you for protection. The connection of our souls saved me and I can once again be with you. Where are my brothers and are they alive? Where are you? I want to see you with but one eye, for one second, and press you to my heart.

Greetings to my factory. May they work even better for the glory of our pride, comrade Stalin.

Many kisses

Gennady.

Do not write to this address. In time I will send the real and permanent one.