

Diary of Walter Meyer

Translated by Andreas Suchi (with the help of Deepl)

Part 5

May 12, 1946 continued

I'm happy with the food, it's typical of Kommiss and the stock is fine too.
Food during the week:

In the morning: Milk soup with oatmeal, baked fruit or raisins Bread, or bread, jam, tea

Lunch: Stew, vegetables or pulses with meat

Evening: bread, margarine, sausage (tin) cheese or egg, bacon, tea

Sundays:

In the morning: cake, cookies, jam, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, goulash, pudding, beet

Evening: as during the week

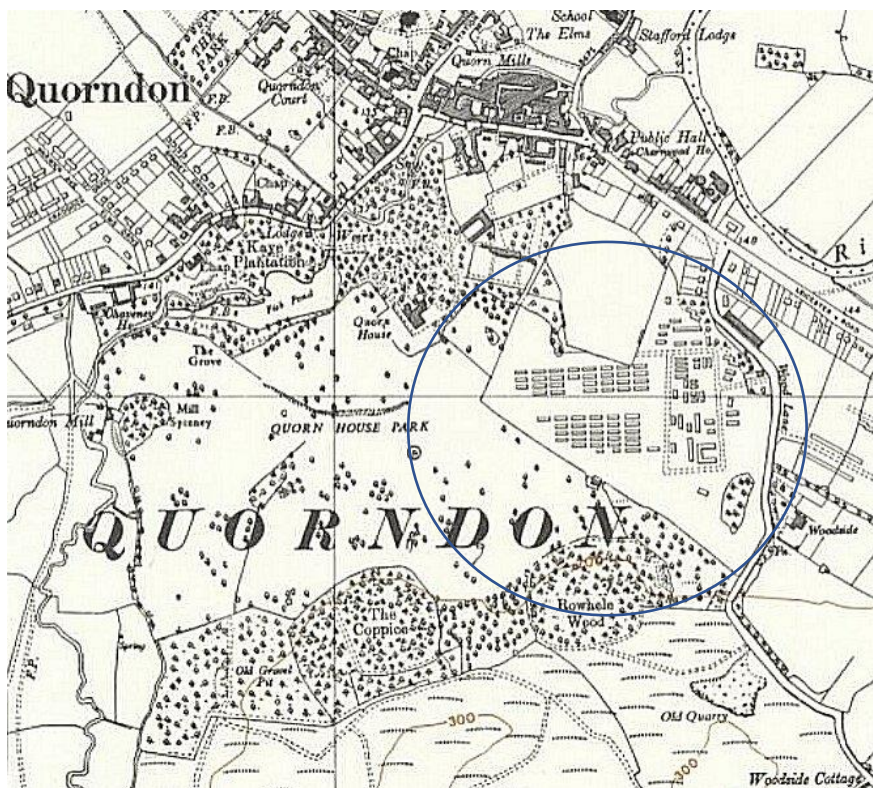
I hope that time will pass here too and that we will see each other again soon in good health.

May 18, 1946

It is now almost a fortnight since my arrival at the 183rd camp in England. Several hundred comrades have already been sent back to sub-camp. I will probably be there too next week. I am currently undergoing medical treatment for my ears, which are once again being thoroughly overhauled. I've had tendonitis in my right foot since yesterday. They wanted to put me in the station. They didn't because of lack of space. Now I'm supposed to spend a week in the barracks. Hopefully it will pass soon.

On May 16, 1946, I wrote the first postcard to you, my dear, and now I am eagerly awaiting the first sign of life from you after the end of the war.

Note: here is a map of Camp 183 in Quorndon, not far from Birmingham



Interestingly, the traces of the camp can still be seen in today's aerial photographs:



May 23, 1946

We hear German lutes and German music on the radio from home. Things are back to normal in Germany and we are sitting here in England, now a year after the end of the war. We listen intently to the news, which occasionally brings us something. So we continue to wait, wait and grow old, gray and decrepit. You don't feel like doing anything anymore and are content to be left alone.

Camp 183 (transit camp) is now behind me again. With 140 men, almost all new faces, I arrived at labor camp 239 (G) on May 21, 1946. It was another few hours by train into the country towards London. London was the

destination. We criss-crossed the city in a truck until we ended up in a camp outside the city again. The first camp without barbed wire, fences without lighting and without guard houses at the corners. A small low fence surrounds the camp, four of our men are on police duty and there are two Englishmen in the camp. Now we want to wait and see what work we will be called upon to do. For the time being, we will set up the camp. We are now 380 men. We're on the edge of a forest, very scenic. Everything is terribly dirty because Ital. PW lay here in front of us.

Note: Camp 239 was in Banstead, Surrey, south of London

Yesterday I wrote a letter to you and a card to my parents. Hopefully I will receive a message from you soon.

Food is always the most important thing for us. In America, we were always very well looked after. There were large kitchens and spacious dining rooms. Even though there wasn't much meat last year, we still got fish, eggs, Halberstadt and sausage. There was soup, potatoes, vegetables and fruit every day. There was plenty of bread. We never had stew. The food on the ship was terrible. In the morning: baked fruit, bread, hash, coffee, dried milk. In the evening: pasta or vegetables, hash or bacon, bread, coffee. In any case, it was miserable. Here in England it's a lot different. You are really reminded of the commissary era. The kitchens are nowhere near as good as in America. The accommodation also leaves a lot to be desired. In America, nice beds with a sprung bottom, a good mattress, a pillow (feathers) and white bedding, a quilt and another blanket. Here there are old wooden frames, a straw sack, a head wedge (straw filling) and now four blankets. We were spoiled in A. Good barracks, good toilets, washing and shower rooms etc. Everything is much simpler here, it's commissary again. What kind of work will there be now?

June 2, 1946

The first week of work is behind me again. We got back the work clothes that we were so happy to part with in America. Now we're back on the road to London every day at around half past eight. Our workplace is in the large Hyde Park in London. It's not hard work, you just putter around for the day. As it seems to be raining a lot here, judging by the last week, there are lots

of breaks. The pay for us is really bad. We get about a shilling a day. Ten cigarettes alone cost £1.1. For 2 ½ working days you can just buy the weekly ration of cigarettes (20). Luckily I brought some cigarettes (1200) and tobacco (2 lb) with me from over there. So at least I still have some time to smoke. So we are directly in London. As far as I have been able to ascertain on the daily journey (1 hour) and otherwise, London is not as damaged as Berlin. There is little rubble, but there are still many burnt-out houses and broken windows. Otherwise, however, the city traffic is flooding in - streetcars, buses, both double-decker, cars, etc. It's just big city traffic. People go for walks, sit in the park and you meet lots of German speakers. When you observe life on a daily basis like this, you long for freedom again and again, and the desire to be able to go for a walk with the family in a nice civilian suit becomes stronger and stronger. When will that day come for us? We are now running a Russian language course in the camp. I've joined in, but will I be able to keep up? We've become so uninterested. I'm desperately waiting for a sign of life from home, maybe that will give me strength again.

June 9, 1946 - Pentecost

Rain is followed by sunshine, so the weather here changes daily. Even though it's June, you can't really talk about nice days. Our whole life is dark. We used to look forward to the beautiful Whitsun festival so that we could take our new spring wardrobe out into the countryside at 6am. I can't even think about the beautiful time around Whitsun in Schwedt or Königsberg. Everything is so far away. Last year I thought about being able to be with you again this year. It was nothing again. Now we have to wait again. You become so despondent and uninterested over time. You live like that, from one day to the next. It's still lucky that we're working, otherwise time wouldn't pass at all. Maybe I'll get more courage again when I know how you're doing at home and how you've arranged your life now. How much this war and the whole period after 1933 has torn us apart. Will the world be calm again and will we be able to go about our work in peace and quiet and think about a comfortable family life?

There was a lot of work for us in London's large Hyde Park last week. London made preparations for the big victory celebration, which took place on June 8. Large grandstands were built, houses were decorated and flags were

hoisted over flags. It was a great time in the city. When we returned to the camp in the evening, there was a wonderful calm. This tranquillity will be matched by these "holidays", which in England are again two days. This afternoon there will be a colorful afternoon with tea and cake. I haven't had any coffee here yet.

Now I want to write a card to Heimanns in the hope that one of them will send me something from home soon. That is my greatest wish at the moment.

June 19, 1946

It's Wednesday today. It's raining again, of course. I've yet to experience a really nice warm summer's day here. It's always cold and damp. A sweater would serve me well right now, but unfortunately I don't have one. I've been out of work since Monday because the commandos change more often and not everyone in the camp is busy at the moment.

I'm now taking part in a Russian course so that I can understand something about the language. You can keep yourself busy if you feel like it, but that's usually the problem. Maybe I'll get more zest for life again once I've heard something from you. It's already been over a year since I received any news from you, my dear. In one of your last letters you mentioned that Baartz had taken care of you. I only wish that he had continued to do so and that you had someone you could rely on. Hopefully I will hear something soon so that I can get an idea of how you have been and how you are living now. I am also curious to know how Hans has fared and where he has been taken. I wish I knew how long it would go on like this. I'm so fed up with this camp and, above all, the communal life. You finally want to live the way you like it again and not always have to be considerate. But it's not really any different for you. It's a communal life for you too and you have to be considerate, but you're free. Surely the parents and Irmi can't go back to K. and I wonder if Ilse is back in Berlin. Yes, one question follows another, which I would like to have answered.

June 24, 1946

A trip into the "blue"?

On June 23, 1946, I had the pleasure of taking a trip into the blue with another 84 men.

A glorious Sunday morning. When I stepped out of the barracks at around 7 a.m. after waking up to go to the washroom, the sun was shining brightly. In contrast to other days, the view of the surrounding area is sweeping and the green, blooming landscape is a real treat for the eyes. The towns are lively. Dressed for Sunday, people go for a walk, young and old, and everyone enjoys life. That's when reality set in for me. Of course, we went out into the open, but as prisoners from one camp to another. Couldn't I also roam the beautiful countryside with you today, my loved ones, arm in arm? Couldn't I also enjoy the beautiful summer day as a free man? Now we are separated and to this day I don't even know if you are still alive, let alone how you are.

The journey continues. Around 1 o'clock we stop at a large camp for lunch. We eat our sandwiches and exchange thoughts and words about daily life with other comrades. We continued at 2 o'clock. The area now had a completely different face. We passed through flat land and approached the coast, as Dover on the Channel was our destination. We now passed fields of grain and turnips, large orchards. We now encountered green areas with grazing cows, sheep and horses. Around 5 o'clock, this beautiful journey came to an end. Our camp is now hidden in the valley between large old trees, surrounded by beautiful lawns. Massive old stone houses, apparently a former large manor house, and individual barracks are scattered across large green areas. The castle has large, bright, high-ceilinged rooms and I think I will feel quite at home in the large oriel room (with 12 men). We work on farms and I just hope that I get a good job. We soon made contact with our new comrades who had not yet left England. We all have just one wish, to return home to our relatives as soon as possible, be it to our father, mother or siblings, or to our own family, wife and child. For the time being, however, I hope that the postal traffic will settle down and that I will hear from you again. I have written four postcards and two letters for the month of June (the maximum number) and now I have to wait. Hopefully I won't be transferred again so soon.

Note: Wooton Court in Wooton, Kent was part of Camp 412 Langdon Barracks in Dover, Kent

July 1, 1946

A Sunday afternoon nap is something wonderful. I used to despise it, but now I almost need it. Even though I get enough sleep during the week, from 10 o'clock in the evening to 6 o'clock in the morning, and until 8 o'clock on Sunday morning, it's still a good idea to sleep in between. After all, I worked hard last week. Even though I had to work in America, I've been really lazing around since April 1st. That was quite good for once. But here we have to earn money. In America we got 80 cents a day (20 cigarettes cost 13 cents), here we get 1 ½ pence an hour, a maximum of 6 shillings a week (20 cigarettes cost 2.2 shillings here) (100 cents - 1 dollar, 12 pence - 1 shilling, 20 shillings - 1 pound) So if you want to have smoking goods, the large quantity of 25 cigarettes a week, you have to work.

Our entire camp (currently 185 men) is employed on farms here. From Tuesday, I will also be working with 5 men on a farmer's farm. He has four hundred acres¹, but a lot of it is meadows, because he has over twenty dairy cows. But if you think I can drink enough milk now, then you're wrong. There's nothing, but we'll manage. Three young girls take care of the whole dairy business. Milking, looking after the cattle, cleaning the stables, washing and rinsing milk bottles and cans. Preparing the milk for bottling, filling bottles and taking them to town to sell. The girls certainly have to work hard. We have nothing to do with the milk business. We've been driving manure all week, a job I've never done before. My back always hurt a lot in the evening and I'm glad that this work will be finished on Monday. The afternoon nap on Sunday was therefore particularly good for me. Whereas we used to be driven to work by car, from Monday we'll be going by bike. We'll be cycling around the area without a post. We really do have a nice location here. I'm happy with the living room on the second floor. It's a high, bright room with three large windows and a view of a large lawn with old trees. We have enough fresh, clean air. But none of that can excite me at the moment. I'm now very worried about your fate. While almost all my comrades who have come over from America with me have already received some of them, I am still waiting in vain. I have written to you, to the parents, to Heimanns, even to Prehm and still there is no news. That's why I don't

¹ Presumably "acre" is meant, approx. 4000m² or 0.4 ha

feel like doing anything at the moment and I lack any joy. If only this imprisonment would end soon. Next week - July 4th - it will already be two years that I have been a prisoner, two and a half years that I have not seen you, my loved ones. How much longer will it last? I keep consoling myself with the fact that I'm not the only one. Many thousands of people feel the same way, some of whom have been trapped for five to six years. Who knows what this will all be good for again.

July 6, 1946

Yesterday I received the first sign of life from you in a year and yet, to be honest, I was disappointed. The letter was quite short, why? I want to know so much and I hope that the next messages will be longer. But I am happy to know that you have your home and that you are healthy. At any rate, I am rid of one big worry. Now the correspondence will slowly settle down again.

Last week was quite hot. Firstly, the weather was glorious all week and secondly, it was quite warm working on the meadow in the hay or chopping potatoes. There's a different job almost every day, so it's not as monotonous as in the factories in America. I have also drunk several liters of milk and I have a nice fresh brown color. Only my ears are not all right again and my medical treatment is bad. Now I want to answer your letter and then it's the weekend. Tomorrow will be another boring Sunday, because there's no variety here, be it a movie or a good book. But I will be lazing around and that's nice for once.

July 7, 1946

It's another glorious Sunday. The perfect day to go for a nice walk through the forest and then have a nice cup of coffee somewhere. I would love to have a cup of coffee and a slice of cherry or strawberry tart right now. But I'm sure you don't have anything like that either. We can always buy cake here on Friday (a kind of king cake with raisins) a pound for ten pence, but it doesn't last until Sunday and tastes good on Friday evening or Saturday afternoon. Now there must be blueberries again soon and later chanterelles. Will you get plenty of them to eat and preserve? Or is there no sugar? I would really like to know more about how you live. How is it with the food, the heating and how is life in general. What kind of income do you have etc.

Hopefully your next letters will tell me more. If only I could finally be home again.

July 14, 1946

I received two letters last week telling me about home again. I am so glad that you have your home and are healthy. Let's just hope that we stay healthy. Fat Pim is missing, where might he be? I got on quite well with him, but you didn't like him. He's lost his position, maybe he doesn't need one anymore. Freese and Kleemann have also been dismissed. I wonder if I'll get my job back under Prehm's management. I hear something about Neuruppin again from your letters. In the course of time I will probably learn more from you personally, because here in solitude one is so inquisitive. We don't have any variety here, apart from sport. But for me, work is sport enough and Sunday is a day of rest. Several times we've worked until 9 o'clock in the evening on my command (5 men) and yesterday's free Saturday afternoon was lost again because the hay had to be brought in. What do you think the farmer offers us for supper? Apart from the national drink, tea with milk and sugar, we were given five thin slices of bread spread very thinly with butter and jam or topped with a little cheese. But he has twenty-five dairy cows. He sells the milk for free, churns his own butter and also has a nice poultry farm, so he also has eggs. He doesn't feed pigs. But we now get milk every day if we want it, fresh from the cow when it's still warm. Yes, if only this time were over and I could finally be with you again.

July 21, 1946

It's Sunday once again. I've just washed my laundry again and put it on the drying rack to dry. It's always something I hate to do, but putting on a fresh shirt at the weekend after a shower is a relief. It's now ½ 12 o'clock and it won't be long before I'm whistled out for lunch. Last week I received three more letters from you, my dear, and the first card from my parents. Some of the news is not good and you also write that a lot has changed. I have your dear letter from June 16, 1946 with the shamrock in front of me. I hope it brings me luck and a speedy journey home. A lot has changed. Else has lost her possessions and now has to struggle with her children as Max has been killed in action. My parents don't have it easy in their old age. Hopefully there will be a sign of life from Erwin, because they say that Russian

prisoners are only allowed to return twice a year. Prisoners are only allowed to write to their relatives twice a year. So let's be satisfied with our lot and wish that we stay healthy and hope to see each other again soon. My "little" girl will probably have changed the most. I'm pleased that she's hardworking and learning well and that her health is reasonably up to scratch. She should always receive a greeting card from me in the near future. - Last week we worked hard in the cabbage, and that will probably continue next week. The greatest joy of the week is always a greeting from home, now I'm taking part in your life again and can put myself in your current situation better. I'm sure I'll be receiving mail from you all the time and we can exchange our thoughts.

July 27, 1946

I received two letters from you and one from Gitti, that was the week's mail. I also received a longer letter from Prehm, which was very interesting. I hope I can work with him again. - It's always the same here. We go to our farmer by bike at 7 o'clock in the morning and are back home at 6 o'clock in the evening. There are always little things to do on the farm. For two days we worked in the hay again, drove manure again, put in gates and so one day goes by like the next. When the post arrives in the evening, the joy is great. Friday is always a special day of joy, there is cake (1 lb) and some extra food is always nice. I can say that my appetite is always good. I wonder if it has something to do with being out in the fresh air. Sometimes I do find it quite hard to work, but it doesn't help, it has to be done. The rest day on Sunday is always very pleasant.

August 3, 1946

Today I received a four-page letter from my parents telling me a lot about Potsdam. The last days before the end of the war were quite hard due to the stupidity of the last city commander. A lot of things were destroyed that could have been avoided, because in this case the useless defense could have saved a lot of things. Max also lost his life as a result of this madness. My father writes that you, my dear, have a rather indispensable position, I wonder if that is true? But the main thing is that you're getting by, because you probably won't have any other income than your earnings. I only feel

sorry for the parents on both sides, who are now deprived of a peaceful retirement, but it can't be helped.

We've been in the middle of the harvest here for a few days now. We've been putting up oat almonds for three days now. It's an easy job in itself, but you're on your feet all day and you're dog-tired in the evening. From Monday, we don't leave the warehouse until eight o'clock in the morning, but we work until half past eight in the evening. Almost twelve hours with one and a half hour breaks during the day. And we are supposed to get extra food. Incidentally, bread has been rationed in England for some time now, which wasn't even the case during the war.

There is a lot of talk in the newspapers about sending the prisoners of war home. I was almost home once, so I don't even dare to think about going home a second time in the foreseeable future. The disappointment was too great, so we let ourselves be surprised the second time and I hope that we really will go home. We are now divided into three classes: anti-Nazis, Nazis and indifferents. A civil commission was here a few (days) ago and made its findings after brief interrogations. I hope that we will still go home this year.

I didn't receive any greetings from you this week, are you writing properly? Next week I'm sure I'll receive several letters at once again. I really miss the greetings from you to cheer me up, because it's sometimes exasperating. Stubbornly the same thing every day and no variety in the dull monotony.

August 8, 1946

Two years ago today, it was time to leave for America. At the time, I had resigned myself to the fact that I could probably count on two years before I saw my homeland again. Now those two years have passed. I have since left America again and landed back in England. When will the day come when I leave England to go home? It must be wonderful to make this journey, but for now it's work and more work. I'll be forty-one tomorrow. I'm already an old man and I'm sitting here waiting and waiting. Life really does become more and more unbearable in a camp like this. You're just a workhorse, a slave, you get minimal food and there's nothing but work. It's terribly monotonous, you've become so stubborn and the longer it goes on, the longer you stay away from your family, the more stubborn you become.

August 10, 1946

A rainy day is always "favorable" for farm work. So we have often been lucky enough not to be allowed to work in the last week. Today, too, we were already in camp at 10 a.m. after spending an hour on the farm. So I had an early weekend today. After a healthy midday nap, which makes the cabbage stew easier to digest, a strong cup of coffee is steaming in front of me. Do you know what a cup of coffee tastes like, my dear? The smell of coffee in your nose is already something wonderful. Of course, there's also a slice of cake and you'll say that we're living quite well. I don't want to say that I live badly here, but I always have coal fumes because all the food isn't strong enough. In America it was something completely different. - I spent my third birthday yesterday in captivity, hopefully it really was the last one behind barbed wire. In the morning there was a cake on my seat in the dining room as a special treat from the kitchen. It was a small wreath cake with the number 41 in the middle. Yes, I am indeed an old man and my head is already quite gray, but otherwise I still feel young among young buddies. The afternoon is over again - six o'clock - the whistle is about to blow for the count, followed by dinner and then we have the evening ahead of us until 11 o'clock.

For dinner today I had coffee, ½ bread, margarine and sausage. Now I want to write a letter to you, my dear, and send birthday greetings to Ilse and my father. Apart from one card, I haven't received any post this week either. Things are still quite irregular. Sometimes I get three or four letters at once and then it's a break again. - It hasn't been very wild at work in the last week. We've been rummaging around the farmer's yard and killing time. We have twenty-two hours, as it rained a lot.

August 17, 1946

Rainy day! National holiday! Another rainy week lies behind me. A rainy day is always a holiday, because nothing can be done in rainy weather during the harvest. We therefore have a rest day, the second one this week, and the harvest is therefore in a bad way. But there's nothing we can do about it, the rest day is always very pleasant for us, we sleep and sleep again. It has also become very chilly, so we could do with a heated room. However, the steam heating will probably not be put into operation any time soon.

I had a bad time with the post again this week. I received a card dated June 30, 1946 yesterday, while I received a card dated July 15, 1946 eight days ago. Well, another wait until next week and so time passes and before we know it we'll have winter again and the year will soon be over.

August 25, 1946

Yesterday afternoon we returned home from work with the "good" news that we have to work the other day, which is today, Sunday. Due to the many rainy days in recent weeks, the harvest is pressing and every nice, dry day becomes a working day. We leave the camp by bike at eight o'clock in the morning and work until half past eight in the evening. Our farmer is so decent that he brings us tea and sandwiches with butter, cheese and jam at five o'clock for our break. It's a small snack for us. The farmer is not obliged to give us anything. We always get a cup of fresh milk in the morning. Yes, you have to do something for your health. So a fresh egg is not to be sneezed at either. I actually enjoy working in the fields. We've been planting barley and rye over the last few days and will continue to do so for the next few days. Yes, we didn't work today, it looked like rain and now in the afternoon we had a heavy thunderstorm. What do you think you'll be doing on Sunday? Gitti will certainly be romping around outside, which is good, and you, my dear, will be happy to have a day off. You're always on your feet during the week to entertain your "family". Do you think you can manage with the money, or do you have to cut back a lot, you don't write to me about it, don't you want to bother me with your worries? I do have my thoughts after all. If only I could relieve you of these worries, if only I could be at home again and work for you. I imagine it would be wonderful to be home again. How happy I would be to surprise you so suddenly. There is a lot of talk about sending prisoners home again and a lot is written about it in the newspapers. But I myself am not yet so convinced that I will be home this year. Perhaps it will be a nice Christmas present for us if I am with you for this holiday. Let's hope for the best, dear reader. Sunday will soon be over again. The whistle is about to blow for the count and then it's dinnertime. Mealtimes, the best times of the day. So, bon appétit!

August 31, 1946

It's bloody awful weather all the time, cold and wet, sunshine and then rain again. Yesterday and today we pulled beets and you can't get rid of the cold feet at all. I didn't get any post yesterday either, so I'm not at all satisfied with this week, it's now back to waiting until next Friday and that's another long working week. I have now learned to wait, because we wait every day for the day to come that will finally bring us home and make us free people again. A lot is written about us in the newspapers here and it will be no different for you in the Reich. Regarding our release, a motion has been submitted to Parliament (House of Commons). We are divided into three groups and I estimate that it will be months before the day of our release arrives. In the meantime, it's summer again and we're bringing in another harvest. It's horrible to think about it, so turn off the brain. The letters from home are always the best diversion and you learn something again, because here there are only House slogans.

September 1, 1946

It's now September again and it will be four months in the next few days that I spend in England. As nice as a rest day is for us, it's also boring. There's no variety in the camp. Should I start playing soccer now, the only diversion for athletes. But as I've never been particularly interested in this sport, that's not going to happen either. There are enough boys around. I've just had another nice cup of coffee and eaten my slice of cake. Now you should have a card greeting. Smoking is very bad now. During the whole of my P.o.W. time I always had plenty to smoke. In America we were given plenty, if not always cigarettes, at least tobacco in sufficient quantities. I brought one thousand two hundred cigarettes and two pounds of tobacco back from over there, where did they go? Now I have to make do with twenty-five cigarettes a week, and of course that's not enough. Boredom, nothing to smoke, it's to grow out of. When will there be a normal life again?

Sept. 7, 1946

It's Saturday again. I've been looking forward to this day all week, because on Friday evening or Saturday there's post and cake. Although I didn't get any post last week, I only received one letter yesterday. I have to admit that

I'm a little disappointed. Does my wife have so little time to write? Working until seven o'clock in the evening is also quite a long time, is there so much to do? Are there not enough workers, or what is so charming about the office, well, who knows. It would be nice if I didn't have to think all the time, but my thoughts are always at home, with you my darling and my dear little stump with the sty. It will have healed by now and I want to focus my thoughts more on work. I have to have another sip of coffee and eat some cake and postpone writing the letter until tomorrow because I don't think it will turn out well today. Even if I can't give you any other pleasure, I will try with the few lines I can write. Who knows how long it will go on like this.

Last week was another quiet week for our team. It rained every day again, so I only have thirty working hours, whereas normally we would have to work up to ten hours a day, especially now with the increased harvest. The "earnings" are after that, but it's still enough to buy the twenty-five cigarettes and the cake every week. I hope that you don't have any money worries either, you haven't written anything about it yet. It's lucky that I don't have to buy toiletries because I'm still covered in them from America. Toilet water, soap, toothpaste, shampoo and the like were intended for you, because you certainly don't have any good soap. But I won't be able to give you this pleasure either, because I think I will need everything myself or it will be taken away, as has already happened many times. It doesn't matter, we are slaves and have to pay for what others have done. Everything is up to my neck.

Today I was able to watch a calf being born for the first time. Quickly and painlessly within a few minutes and after an hour the little buck was already standing on its wobbly legs and staring stupidly at the world - so now I've washed everything off my liver again and that's a good thing. You can't discuss everything with your buddies and there's no point in eating yourself. - I want to boil two more eggs now, because it's not far to dinner.

September 15, 1946

My dear, you had intended to send me the letter of August 9th on September 12th, and I received it on that very day. Yes, ten years ago we had more beautiful days and I hope we will be granted many more beautiful days together. According to information from the British government, the

return of the P.O.W. is to begin in October, with an average of 15,000 men per month. With four hundred thousand men, it should be quite a while before the last P.O.W. has left England.

At the same time I received your lines from August 18, 1946, so I can be satisfied with the mail this week. For my birthday you had brought a beautiful bouquet of flowers and baked a cake to "celebrate" the day. I did have a small cake here, but otherwise the day went pretty smoothly. There was a lot of work to do last week. The weather has held up reasonably well and I didn't get into camp before eight o'clock in the evening. We brought in oats and wheat and my arms are aching from forking.

Otherwise your letters brought me lots of news. The fact that Gitti was in hospital just s. It wasn't exactly pleasant for you that Gitti was in hospital just before the end of the war and I can understand your worries. You also write that my colleagues envy me. For what, that I am a prisoner here? I can imagine that freedom is probably preferable to imprisonment. So I can't quite explain your words. Will I be allowed to start as a worker again, as I was in 1933 when the Nazis threw me out of my job? The prospects are wonderful. Incidentally, I'm glad that you're alone in your apartment again, apart from your parents, and have your peace and quiet. I hope you're also making enough money. I can't help you.

Sept. 22, 1946

Now the time has come once again for P.O.W. to be sent home. The first ten men left the camp last Friday to be transported home. When will that day come for me? Yes, it must be nice to be home again. I think we have enough to talk about for the first eight days. A lot has happened in the last few years and you can't say everything in letters or cards. I believe that the separation period was a lesson for many people and perhaps it was also quite good for us. But now it's been long enough. You wrote in one of your last letters that we want or need to start again from the beginning. I don't quite know what you mean, but I'll see. I should be happy if I'm not too disappointed back home. Will I be able to work in my profession? Prehm wrote at the time that I should come home soon, because I'm needed. Now the whistle is blowing for dinner. We had jacket potatoes, mutton goulash and pudding for lunch today, the tribe was too lazy to peel potatoes again.

The weather is really bad here. On Friday we had a storm like I've never experienced before. In the morning, the telephone line was down in our area and there were lots of fallen trees. Today the sun is shining again and tempting us out for a walk. Where are we going for coffee today? Soon it will be winter again and the evenings here will be quite boring. The year will pass, Christmas will come, the third time in captivity, and then another new year will begin. Before you know it, you'll be back in the harvest and still working as a P.O.W. in England for England. You get old and lose all desire and pleasure in life. And life is so short.

September 29, 1946

Yesterday, I had a delicious cup of pure milk cocoa with my cake for a long time. It was a delicious drink. I brought the milk from the farm (1 liter) and the cocoa was available in the canteen. Today for lunch we had chocolate pudding with our goulash and boiled potatoes, which tasted delicious. Sometimes you really crave sweets. Now it's almost three o'clock again and I want to brew myself another cup of coffee.

In your last letter, you wrote to me that you were getting old and that I might no longer like you. It won't be that bad and I've grown old too, so I think we'll manage. I am happy that my little daughter is becoming a pretty girl, hopefully we can still give her beautiful days and a sunny youth.

October 5, 1946

Friday is always a wonderful day. That's when the weekly canteen goods arrive for us. Among other things, there's cake, 1 pound per man and 25 cigarettes, our weekly ration. The cigarettes last until Monday and then we have to fast again until Friday, unless we can get a cigarette from the farmer, which doesn't happen often with our current farmer. It was a different story in America. You went to the canteen and got a carton of cigarettes (200). If they ran out, you bought new ones. If there were no cigarettes, you got plenty of tobacco. It's a bit of a problem here with all the canteen goods. There's not much, not even toilet soap and other toiletries, and yet you can't buy even that little on the low wages. What a lot there was in America, even in the days when there was still beer and chocolate. You couldn't get rid of

your money despite the large selection and had to save, hence the bank account of 126 dollars. I wonder if I'll get that money again.

It's already quite chilly today, you can tell it's autumn and how long before it's Christmas again. The third Christmas in captivity and the fourth in a foreign country and not at home, where you belong.

October 12, 1946

Another busy week lies behind me. We brought in the last of the barley today and I say thank goodness, because picking up and unloading is quite exhausting. I was always quite tired in the evening and my appetite is really big. We had a feast roast last week. We found a wild rabbit and put it in the pot. Five of us made a meal of it and I can say that we enjoyed it and it was something different again. This afternoon we're having potato pancakes. With three men, we saved our margarine for a few days and now we want to enjoy it.

October 27, 1946

We're having uncomfortable weather today and I'm glad it's not a working day. I've been with the same farmer - Mr. Cooke, Hanton/Canterbury - since the end of June, with a week's break, so I'm through all the farm work. The latest news is that we have now threshed wheat and oats for eight days. I had the task of building the straw heap and I can say today that I've been reasonably successful. I've learned so much from working in the fields. Now it's pretty uncomfortable outside, but the potatoes and turnips still have to be harvested. So out we go. Last Sunday we even worked voluntarily. It was another beautiful day and the clover that had been mown for the second time was still to be gathered. I thought that we would get a decent lunch, but no such luck. Apart from twenty cigarettes, we only got a few slices topped with butter and corned beef. I was very disappointed that our voluntary act didn't bring in more. Since September 28, 1946, we have been paid a sum for good work, which must be confirmed by the farmer every week, and which will be paid out to us later. Apart from three shillings, the amount we regularly "earn" - up to six shillings a week - is credited once again every week. Well, I'm curious to see how much I'll get when I add the dollars I've saved. - I wish the whole thing would end soon, but what awaits

us at home, new forced labor, etc.? - I haven't received any mail this week either. Things have been pretty slow again lately. Now the ugly, wet and cold winter is coming again. Hopefully you won't have to freeze. Christmas is not far off and once again I won't be able to be with you, it can't be helped.

November 3, 1946

It's just after midday - boiled potatoes, mutton goulash, prunes - and the building is wonderfully quiet. I'm now sitting in one of our dining rooms where I recently enjoyed a delicious lunch. We've had some delicious meals in the last few days, including herring, which I haven't seen for years. On Friday evening we each had two fried herrings and last night we had two sour herrings for a cold supper. You can imagine that we enjoyed these fish. Tonight we have a special treat of herring smoked by us in the kitchen, and of course they will taste good too. Yes, food is the main thing with us.

In front of me are the lovely lines from my daughter dated October 6, which I received on October 31:

31/10. 46

Neuruppin. d. 6. 10. 46

Lieber Vati.

Nun schreibe ich auch mal wieder an Dich. Ich habe mich sehr über die Karte vom 15. 9. gefreut. Wir haben jetzt wieder Ferien bis zum 14. Oktober. Ich bin jetzt schon im vierten Schuljahr und gehe immer gerne zur Schule. Ich würde mich ja sehr freuen wenn Du bald nach Hause kommst. Mutti sagt immer daß ich dann antiger sein müßte. - Heute gehe ich mit Mutti ins Kino. Ich schreibe bald wieder an Dich. Heute sende ich Dir recht herzliche Grüße
Deine Gitti.

I can't really imagine my daughter, who can now read and write, like this and I fear that we will feel like strangers when I am with you again. But for now I am happy that she brings you joy, my dear, that she is healthy and promises to be a bright little girl. Yes, my little daughter, I too would be happy if I could be with you. But I don't have any hope that it will happen this year. But you will have to celebrate Christmas alone with your mother, alone again and now for the fourth time, but it won't help.

Last night we were shown another nice American movie for a change, "That certain age" (1938), a little baked fish story with singing. After the dirty work of the week, it was something different in the wet fields. Even if the work in the fields is usually quite pleasant, it is all the more unpleasant now in the fall and winter. Your feet don't get warm all day and in the evening you're glad to find a warm room where your feet are warm again. I think of you so often now, because you can't stand winter with its ice and snow and bitter cold. But rain is followed by sunshine and winter is followed by spring, which will hopefully bring us together again. Now it's time to stop, because now I have to make my Sunday bean coffee and that's something wonderful. I always look forward to this hour on Sunday all week.

November 17, 1946

Flower greeting in the letter dated October 19, 1946



The first five men from the Russian zone leave our camp the following week. They are people with the polit. Group A. I have B - and can still wait, - It's "wonderful" - my writing mood is great and that's why it's over.

December 4, 1946

Here we are again in the Christmas month. It's now the third Christmas that I've had to spend behind barbed wire. While there was still a little Advent

and Christmas spirit in the two previous years, this is completely absent today. For us, one day is like the next. We are glad that we can work because, firstly, it is extremely boring in the camp and, secondly, we need the low "earnings" to at least be able to buy the twenty-five cigarettes and cake we are entitled to every week. The climate is much milder here. The trees have only really become bare in the last few days. There are still turnips of all kinds in the fields and we are now harvesting them.

December 14, 1946

In front of me are the lovely Christmas greetings from my older daughter. Even though I was told not to open the Christmas letters beforehand, I couldn't resist the temptation. There is a little picture in the letter and that made me curious. I also assume that my little daughter is not angry with me. I was quite surprised at my pretty stocking, because the girl really is pretty. I hope that I will still have a lot of fun with her. Now I'm looking forward to the second letter with a picture, the Christmas greeting from you, my dear. I wonder if it's a picture of you?

What's going on here? No Christmas spirit, no Christmas joys, just stubborn buddies, no talk of joys of any kind. A lot of things were different in America. There was a completely different camaraderie over there. There wasn't much going on with the English mates, by that I mean those who weren't in American camps. It all has to do with the conditions here. We are spoiled.

It's not even Christmas weather yet. There's thick fog outside and it's wet and cold. I haven't worked for a few days and my earnings have been pretty low. If this continues, I won't even be able to buy my weekly ration of cigarettes and cake and Christmas is just around the corner.

The usual meal during the week:

In the morning: Regularly $\frac{1}{4}$ bread, jam, coffee or hot tea with milk powder

Lunch: $\frac{1}{2}$ bread, margarine, sausage or corned beef, cheese, fish paste, tea or coffee

Evening: Two to three stews, vegetables or pulses, milk soup.

Jacket or boiled potatoes, goulash or liver

Sundays: Pudding

The 1946 Christmas dinner

December 24 In the evening 6 o'clock: potato salad, sausage

In the evening 8 o'clock: 1 gr. Stolle, coffee, sugar

December 25 In the morning: 1 large slice of crumble cake, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, roast mutton, gravy, sour cabbage, pudding with fruit juice.

Evening: ½ bread, margarine, 2 slices of raw ham, 1 slice of cooked ham, 6 slices of corned beef, 1 slice of cheese, mixpickle, coffee

December 26 In the morning: ¼ bread, jam, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, mutton, gravy, pudding with fruit juice

Evening: ½ bread, margarine, cooked beans, Churchel sausage, coffee

Christmas 1946

Letter from Gitti

9/12. 46

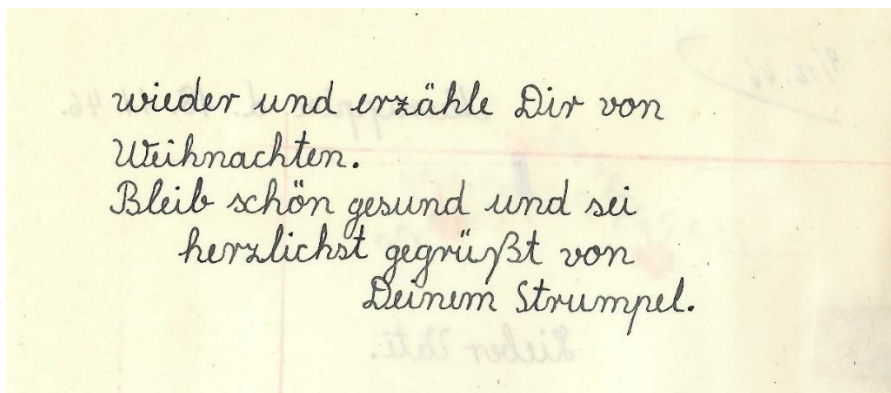
Kuruppin. d. 18. 11. 46.



Lieber Vati.

Ich wünsche Dir ^{ein} frohes und
gesundes Weihnachtsfest. Es
wäre viel schöner wenn Du
in diesem Jahr bei uns
sein könntest. Damit Du
auch eine Freude hast, schicke
ich Dir hier ein Bildchen mit.
Eins habe ich schon vor eini-
gen Tagen abgeschickt. Freust
Du Dich darüber?

Mir geht es gut. Ich bin schon
neugierig was mir der Weih-
nachtsmann bringt. Mutti hat
bestimmt wieder was für mich
bestellt. Ich schreibe Dir dann



The first Christmas in England. I emphasize the "first" in particular, because after all, it is to be expected that there will be a second Christmas for most of us in English captivity. On Christmas Eve, as a "Christmas surprise", we were presented with a notice stating that the P.O.W. who had been taken prisoner by May 1943 could expect to be released by June 1947, and the rest of us, the great mass of Normandy fighters? I am also curious as to how the question of the P.O.W. will be dealt with at the peace conference in Moscow on March 10, 1947.

(Note: Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference 1947)

The fifth conference of foreign ministers began on March 10, 1947, when US Secretary of State George C. Marshall presented the Marshall Plan, named after him, for the economic unification of the four occupation zones. This included a cross-zone currency reform in Germany and a unified administration. During the conference, the American President Harry S. Truman demanded financial aid from the American Congress for Greece and Turkey, which were threatening to collapse, in order to prevent the introduction of a totalitarian communist system of government there. This Moscow conference lasted six weeks and was a complete failure. The positions between the USA and Great Britain on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, which mainly concerned Eastern Europe but also the Mediterranean, the Middle East and China, were irreconcilable. With regard to Germany, a division was on the horizon. Another issue was the repatriation of prisoners of war. On April 23, 1947, it was decided to repatriate all German prisoners of war by the end of 1948.

Source: Wikipedia)

Those were my Christmas thoughts and the whole Christmas mood was like that. Even the fact that we now have permission to move up to five miles outside the camp during our free time couldn't change that.

The time before Christmas used to be a wonderful time for me. You always lived in anticipation of things to come. The joy of the festivities was in everyone's bones and thoughts were focused on bringing joy. I thought a lot about you, my loved ones. I couldn't give you any joy and yet you gave me so much joy with the pictures of Gitti. But I am glad that I have news from you.

Eight days before Christmas we had a real winter here with snow and ice and today, on the second national holiday, the sun is shining, the snow is gone again and the meadows and fields are green. We're due for another short walk this afternoon.

I didn't work much before Christmas. "Our" farmer, where I worked all summer, now only employs three men. I'm not one of them. So I earned very little money and was worried that I wouldn't even be able to buy my cigarettes and cake for Christmas. But I was lucky again. Ten days before Christmas, I went with six men to a farmer, where we "dusted", i.e. we got a lot. Every day there were twenty cigarettes per man, tea at 10 o'clock in the morning and for coffee, tea, sandwiches and cake. On December 23, our commando presented the farmer with a colorful Christmas card, which made him very happy. At lunchtime he gave us butter and a tin of corned beef in return and for coffee a large plate of sandwiches and cake, as well as a large chocolate cake. We were surprised and delighted. We worked until midday on Christmas Eve and I was looking forward to the holidays, as we had worked really hard. Two big piles of barley were threshed outside and it was quite cold outside. On the 24th at 12 o'clock at the end of the day, we had another surprise. A large pot of hot tea and a big plate of cakes and cookies awaited us and we were delighted that for once we had a farmer who rewarded our work in this way. We were also given a large Christmas cake, two mandarins each and forty cigarettes. We took this cake back to camp with us. There was no communal celebration at camp that year. Of course, there was a Christmas tree in our vestibule and the candles were lit.

At 8 a.m. we had a coffee party without a sound. Everyone was given a Stolle. We then spent the evening in my booth and sang a few Christmas carols by candlelight. We had made a Christmas tree out of twigs and of course there were candles. I had a cigarette and cake for the holidays. But I would rather have done without everything and had nothing if I could have been with you.

Now comes the first public holiday. It used to be the general big "food" day, but it was no different here. Even in the morning I couldn't finish the big slice of crumble cake and at lunchtime I had a lot of potatoes and cabbage left over. I went for an hour's walk in the afternoon. But it was wet and rainy and I quickly went back home to the cozy coffee table. In my mind's eye, I sat at the table with you over coffee and cake. The afternoon also passed very quickly and we had dinner again. I still have a ham sandwich and a corned beef sandwich from the evening meal and they will taste good today. We played Rommee until 11 o'clock - curfew - and then the first holiday was over. As we lay in our "feathers", straw sacks and four blankets, one of us played Christmas carols on the mandolin, another set fire to the candles on the tree and at this contemplative hour, one candle after the other went out, the first holiday, Christmas 1946 in English captivity, faded away.

December 31, 1946

I ended 1945 with the hope that 1946 would bring me freedom. The year 1946 will be over in a few hours, and I'm still behind barbed wire. Even if there is no barbed wire fence, we are still prisoners and how much longer will it last?

It's your birthday today, my dear, and I wish you all the best for this day. Stay healthy and happy. It's a boring evening tonight. We've got a 1 o'clock curfew and tomorrow we'll be back at work at 7 o'clock, because there's no New Year's holiday in England. Different countries, different customs. Today we also worked until ½ 5 o'clock. I've just darned a few stockings, now I want to read and dream a bit, and the last hours of the year will pass by.

1947

January 10, 1947

The first entries this year. I'm quite disgruntled today because I haven't received a single letter all week. The Christmas period must have slowed things down a bit. I also have a bad cold. The weather is also quite unstable. One day snow and ice, the next day fog and rain, and on the third day it's pure spring again. It's the real cold weather. Today we were photographed in groups of ten and I'm curious about the picture. I hope I can send it to you. Now I want to write a letter to you, my dear, and to the parents and then my weekly paperwork is done again. - It's always business as usual here. Last Saturday we had a nice German movie "Karneval der Liebe" with Heesters and the main hit "Das Karussell, das dreht sich immer rund um" has been stuck in my head all week. On Sunday evening there was an interesting lecture by Dr. v. Waldheim about future issues in Germany. Tomorrow morning is another movie and this Sunday will pass again. Three Africans arrived yesterday for discharge and when will my day come?

Neuruppin von heute

Drei Bahnstunden von Berlin entfernt liegt das malerische Städtchen Neuruppin. Diese in einer landschaftlich sehr schönen Umgebung liegende Kleinstadt hat verhältnismäßig gut den Zerstörungen des Krieges widerstanden. Bei einem Gang durch die Straßen von Neuruppin fällt es besonders auf, daß keines der kleinen Häuser eine Spur des Krieges trägt. Die vielen Geschäfte in den Hauptstraßen zeugen von dem jetzt schon wieder guten Stand der Wirtschaft in der Stadt.

Im Arbeitszimmer des Bürgermeisters sitzt Frau Gertrud Marx, die schon seit Monaten dieses schwere und verantwortungsvolle Amt betreut. „Meine größte Sorge ist die Quartierfrage in der Stadt“, erklärte uns Frau Marx. „In Neuruppin wohnen jetzt 27 000 Einwohner gegenüber 18 000 vor dem Kriege, da sehr viele Flüchtlinge und Evakuierte in der Stadt untergebracht werden mußten. Wirtschaftlich ist unsere Stadt auf der Höhe. Denn wir sind in erster Linie Versorgungssektor für Berlin, indem wir Kartoffeln, Gemüse und andere Lebensmittel teils mit der Bahn oder per Frachtkahn nach Berlin schicken. Besonders große Mengen von Zuckerrüben werden in Frachtkähnen verladen, um so in die Zuckerfabriken zu gelangen. Die Lebensmittelversorgung in der Stadt ist auf das beste geregelt, und auch finanziell stehen wir sehr gut da. Eine Stärkefabrik arbeitet

bereits wieder, ferner ein Werk, das die Minimax-Schaumlöcher herstellt, die jedoch erst an wichtige Betriebe verkauft werden können und sonst zu Reparaturzwecken verwendet werden.

Besonders fühlbar ist der Mangel an männlichen Arbeitskräften, denn wir könnten gut 5000 Arbeiter in die Betriebe, besonders in unsere Gas- und Wasserwerke, einstellen, wenn wir genügend Wohnraum hätten. Es sind bereits Pläne zum Bau einer Stadtrand siedlung entworfen worden, und auch in der Stadt sollen dreistöckige Mietshäuser aufgeführt wer-

den. Zur Unterhaltung und Entspannung der werktätigen Bevölkerung stehen zwei Kinos und ein Stadttheater zur Verfügung. Unsere Schulkinder werden in 7 Schulen und einem Gymnasium unterrichtet, und auch die Musikfreunde haben sich ebenfalls durchgesetzt und in unserer Stadt mehrere Konzertvereinigungen gegründet.

Der Fremdenverkehr, der einst in hoher Blüte stand, da die Umgebung der Stadt als „Ruppiner Schweiz“ weit bekannt war, kann vorläufig noch nicht wieder aufgenommen werden. Wir wollen jedoch hoffen, daß auch hier bald eine Abhilfe geschaffen werden kann.“ Gr.

January 23, 1947

I have another day off. Major Friend's lovely command has come to an end. We had quite a job, tearing down anti-tank barriers and building fences, driving manure and straw in between, in short, it was a great few days. I miss the daily cigarettes and tea with cake or meat pies at the end of the day. Well, everything has to come to an end, even imprisonment. Last year I sat in Sodus Point, U.S.A. and waited. Then came the "journey home" to here, and now it's time to wait again.

It's another beautiful winter's day. It snowed overnight and it's still snowing now. After lunch, I'm going for another walk. When I get back, I hope to find some post. If only you at home knew how eagerly everyone here waits for mail. When you come home from work in the evening, the first thing you always look at is your bed to see if there's a letter there. I don't receive mail very well now either. The letters all take at least four weeks, and sometimes even longer. They also write so miserably from home. If you didn't hear anything at all from home, it would be desperate. After all, imprisonment is a terrible time. Anyone who hasn't experienced it is lucky. Now it's whistling for lunch and I want to enjoy my bread with some margarine and sausage. And in the afternoon I'm off to the White House.

February 3, 1947

Snow, and more snow, it's been like this all week and it doesn't look like it's going to change. It's been snowing all day today. But it's not cold at all and it's going to be nice slushy weather. According to radio reports, it's up to 20° in Germany and I just want to wish that you, my dears, don't have to suffer too much from the cold. You are much more likely to freeze now because of the low-fat diet. I have never frozen as much as here in England, and it was much colder in America. The whole camp hasn't worked for two weeks now. One day last week I shoveled snow and that will probably be our occupation for the coming week. When you're in camp like this for days on end, there's always something going on, but there's no peace and quiet. One person whistles from morning till night, another learns to play the mandolin, another sings and there's lots of hooting and hollering and laughing and you have to join in. If you look at the boys, and sometimes they really are boys, then you have to shake your head at all the "farmers" out there. - What do we eat is always the slogan, because you can always eat. But I think we here can be satisfied with that too. Did you have half a loaf of bread and margarine, a slice of ham, scraped meat and cheese for two slices each for dinner last Sunday? There is cocoa in the canteen, but unfortunately no sugar. But cocoa is still needed. Cocoa is mixed into the milk soup with noodles, sweet of course, resulting in chocolate soup. Cocoa is mixed into the yellow pudding for Sunday, resulting in chocolate pudding. Our cake, which I always eat on Saturday afternoons and Sunday afternoons, is spread with cocoa paste because it is very sweet (with raisins). Doesn't that make

you jealous? But I've already put aside a tin of cocoa and a tin of coffee for you. I always have to smile when my father writes that he hopes I'll be on one of the next trips home. According to our newspaper:



around sixty thousand men were home by December 1946, i.e. in four months. However, three hundred and fifty thousand men were still in England at the beginning of the year. With the quota of fifteen thousand a month, it is easy to calculate when the last man will leave England, unless the quota is increased. Let's hope so. Group A is probably home by now, and Group B, the bulk of the P.O.W., is about the length of P.O.W. time. In our camp, the men who were taken prisoner in 1943 have not yet left. It's sad, but it can't be helped

17.42

4.2.42

Inwieweit
my Bild

17.42



Mein lieber Vati.

Heute will ich mich für Deine
liebe Karte bedanken. Ich erhielt
sie am. 31. 12. 46. Ich habe mich
sehr darüber gefreut. Zu Weih-
nachten habe ich viel Geschenke
bekommen. Mutti hat es Dir

ja sicher schon geschrieben. Am
meisten habe ich mich über
den Nähkasten und über die
Puppenwiege gefreut. Eine neue
Puppe bekam ich auch. Mit der
Puppe spiele ich sehr viel. Ich
möchte ihr immer schöne Sachen.
Mutti habe ich eine Brosche
und zwei kleine Deckchen ge-
schenkt. Ich bin am Heilig-
abend in der Kirche gewesen.
Als ich nach Hause kam,
kam der Weihnachtsmann.
Ich mußte ihm ein Gedicht

aufzagen. Ich glaube es war Frau
Scheel.

Muttis Geburtstag haben wir
auch schön verlebt.

Am Freitag fängt nun wie-
der die Schule an. Hoffentlich
ist es da nicht mehr so kalt.

Brunhilde ist jetzt meine
Freundin. Sie kommt jeden
Tag zu mir und wir spielen
zusammen.

Nun sei herzlichst begrüßt
von Deiner Gitti.

February 9, 1947

It's Sunday afternoon. Two o'clock. I filled my belly again for lunch (potatoes, gravy, mutton and chocolate pudding) and lay on my bearskin (i.e. straw sack) and dozed until just now. It's been another lazy week. I didn't work and my money was just enough to buy cigarettes and cake. These are lazy days. It snowed heavily again during the night, but now it's thawing during the day, so there's probably a chance that I'll be back at work next week. I received two letters from you this week and one from my daughter. When I read these lines from you, or from my parents, I often feel very sad. At home,

things are going more or less as normal again. Maybe this or that has changed, or this or that is still missing, but things are going well. You can go to the cinema or the theater, you can take part in small celebrations or organize them yourself, etc. I'm not jealous and I certainly don't begrudge you this or that nice party. After all, it's also a reckoning for you when you're alone. I get to sit here in England and don't know when it will finally end and you will finally be your own boss. Yes, but gloomy thoughts are useless, they don't change the fact. So cheer up!

February 23, 1947

It's Erwin's birthday today and I no longer believe that he's still alive, otherwise I would have sent him a message. I also wrote to Jutta once last Sunday. Today I'm sorry that I still don't know her at all. - I've been strolling around for two weeks now, because we've got a lot of snow again. It's been snowing almost non-stop since Friday. The post is so sparse and I wait for it every day. Today I want to write to Miss Berndt, because I can write two letters again.

March 8, 1947

It's another birthday today. My little daughter is ten years old today. I would like to congratulate her and wish her all the best, especially good health. Another fourteen days have already passed. I only worked another half day today. There is still ice and snow and no sign of spring yet. I also worked two days on Monday and Tuesday. In the heavy frost, we picked turnips with a hoe for two days. Do we have anything like that here? They were two days I will remember. - I don't have any post this week. There's a movie again tonight.

Easter 1947

April 6 Morning: 1 large slice of sheet cake filled with raisins and apricots, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, gravy, roast mutton, large peas & carrots, vanilla pudding (mixed with cocoa: chocolate pudding)

Evening: ½ loaf of bread, 1 piece of rolled ham, 1 piece of canned sausage. tinned sausage, margarine, onions, coffee

April 7 In the morning: ¼ bread, jam, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, mutton goulash, raisins with milk powder

Evening: ½ bread, margarine, 1 slice of canned liver sausage, 1 slice of corned beef, tea / sweet

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March 23, 1947

It's probably spring now. The snow and ice have disappeared and the sun is already feeling pretty good. You also have more courage to face life again and no longer see everything as so gray when it's green and blooming outside again. Your letters, my dear, also reflect the depressed mood. I hope that things will get better again when your work situation is resolved and Grandma is back at work. I got through the winter well again this year. I spent a lot of time in camp and still earned my money doing camp work. (Keeping the dining halls tidy, clearing snow etc.) Now it's probably time to get back to work and I actually quite enjoy working outdoors. Last week I spent a few days threshing again. Sometimes it goes pretty quickly, but there are also breaks. The main thing is that time passes. You get older and older, but it's getting closer to the day of discharge. Last year I hoped to be home by the summer. But now I want to assume that it will actually happen this year. Three years of imprisonment will probably still be full. But hopefully there will then be years of peace and tranquillity for us and quiet domestic happiness. - I received a picture of my father yesterday. He is now 69 years old, but he has really slumped. I wonder if the difference will be very noticeable when we meet again for the first time. What do you think you'll say about your picture compared to mine? Today, Sunday, will soon be over again. It's a beautiful day. When I've done my laundry (a horrible job) right after breakfast at 8am (1/2 8am wake-up call), I have the day to myself. I daydream, write in these sheets and do my mail. If I can read a good book, I'm happy. Then during the week I wait again for kind lines from home and then it's Sunday again, a day of rest. I don't actually make much use of the permission to go out. You have fresh air throughout the week and on Sundays a short walk around the camp is enough. I'm also happy with the food on Sundays:

In the morning: 1 large piece of sheet cake with sugar, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, gravy, mutton, pudding (chocolate pudding for me)

In the evening: ½ bread, margarine, cheese, ham / ham tin, coffee or tea

It is bearable. Yesterday we watched another beautiful German movie "Der laufende Berg" based on a novel by Ganghofer. It was home again, and that's what I miss. I'm drawn home, to you, my dear, to my little daughter. Hopefully it won't be long now.

April 7, 1947

It's Easter once again. I've just come back from a little walk and now have a nice cup of strong coffee in front of me. Of course, I also have a piece of cake. This coffee hour is always the best part of the week for me. While my colleagues usually devour the cake on Friday, the day it's served, I always have something for Sunday afternoon. We also get cake for our morning coffee every Sunday now.

I received your Easter greetings eight days ago. Grandma's letter Since I received Gitti's letter from March 9 on April 1, I was actually expecting a few more lines from you, my dear, before Easter. But nothing came. Gitti and you too will be surprised that Gitti now receives so many letters from me. Perhaps she is learning to write a letter and, above all, has more desire to do so. But it's also the case that I don't receive any other mail and have nothing to answer. My parents don't write much. Every Sunday I can write a letter and a card, sometimes even two letters. So I have to write to you and I believe that I am bringing you joy. Gitti wrote that my picture has arrived, what will my "Ollekin" have to say about it?

A year ago, I was in the "Pine Camp" release camp from April 1 just over Easter and hoped to be with you in the course of the summer. Now Easter is over again and at the beginning of May I will have been in England for a year. It will be summer again and on July 4th I will have been a "Prisoner of War" for three years. I was expecting two years three years ago. According to the latest announcements, the July prisoners are to be repatriated by October 31, 1947 at the latest. I hope that I will be able to spend my birthday with you, my loved ones.

April 20, 1947

There's not really much new to report from here. It's the same thing day after day. A movie once a fortnight, like last night's "The Kreutzer Sonata" with Lil Dagover. That's the only change. I don't make much use of the permission to go out, now until 9:30 in the evening, because you're out in the fresh air all week from 7 in the morning until 6 in the evening, including the commute. The peace and quiet on Sundays is very good for me, and I'm not enthusiastic about permitted "moonlighting" during my free time. Even though I really enjoy smoking, I make sure I get by with the cigarettes I'm allowed from the canteen (25 a week). I was lucky again this week. I got a total of eighty cigarettes from farmers. That's enough again and I can enjoy my free time. I planted early potatoes for three days this week and this work was really unusual. My back still hurts today. Well, it'll pass. We were given ten cigarettes a day (cigarette makers) and that doesn't happen often. At lunchtime we had a pot of boiled potatoes. What did I get with it? Nothing! But they were eaten. From Thursday to Saturday, Saturday even until four o'clock, I threshed again. Even if it's not exactly hard work, it's still pretty quick. The only unpleasant thing is the dust, but even that goes away. With the big farmers, who have several hundred acres, there's usually nothing to dust. We spent three days with small farmers and were given tea and sandwiches (butter, cheese, jam) every day at ten o'clock, meat pies at twelve o'clock and cake and cigarettes at three o'clock. Farmers like that were a pleasure to work for. But most of the time there was nothing. On a threshing crew, where you usually change farmers every day, you get to know people. Most of the time we know what's going on beforehand, because the farmers here in our area (up to 1 hour by car) are well known. That's it! The whistle blows for dinner.

April 26, 1947

A year ago, I was still in America. We were waiting to go home. Then came the big disappointment and now another year has passed. A year as an agricultural worker is already behind me and I hope it was the longest time. I had Saturday off again today and that was really good for me. I was pretty exhausted yesterday. On Monday I was spreading manure and from Tuesday to Friday I was threshing. I spent the days standing on top of the machine

cutting up the sheaves. The constant bending down is really exhausting, plus the sun and the dust and dirt from the machine.

I had a great pleasure the day before yesterday. I received your picture, my dear.

You're actually quite narrow in the face. But I like it, and I don't like myself with big cheeks either. When I look at your lovely face, I'm actually quite sad that I still have to sit here in England and can't be with you. Sometimes I really long for you, to stroke your sweet face and hear your voice. It all seems so far away and sometimes it's really hard not to despair. These moods also pass and I tell myself it will be okay somehow. I want to be happy when I know you, my love, are healthy and when I can look at your lovely face more often now. Let's hope that we get through the coming months well and that we can face each other again in the fall. I just want to wish that I can get reasonably good jobs again this summer. Some farmers are very decent, but unfortunately very few of them are. We are P.O.Ws. and that can't be changed. - Maybe I'm worrying too much about the future. How will I be able to feed you again, etc. I often have to stop thinking, it just doesn't always work. I often envy the young guys who survived the war well and still have their lives ahead of them. But I wouldn't want to miss you, my dear girls, and my greatest wish is to be able to lead a happy family life. So come time, come advice, things will work out. First of all, home to my Ollekin, to my blond stocking.

May 18, 1947

I have another picture of you, my dear, and my joy is great, so I want to write down a few lines again quickly. Four o'clock in the afternoon. Coffee time, and the good bean coffee tasted great again. I hope I can serve you a nice cup soon too. I was quite tired today. After our good Sunday dinner, I slept for almost two hours. That hasn't happened often so far. Threshing is really exhausting. The last three days we've had a pretty good farmer again. At lunchtime each man had two boiled eggs, boiled potatoes and a meat pie and yesterday we finished off with twenty cigarettes. We're happy, and tomorrow we're off to another farmer. Next Sunday is Whitsun again. The weather is glorious now. The chestnuts are in full bloom and it's lovely outside again. I have a nice brown color and I like that. Food and drink are

tasty and that's the main thing. If some of my mates aren't here for lunch on Sunday, the portions are promptly eaten. What will the food be like at home? Will there be chocolate pudding on Sunday?

May 1947

May 25, 1947

Today I wrote the first closed, now authorized letter (once a month) to you my dear. Were you happy about it?

May 25, 1947 Whitsun

In the morning: coffee, cake (a kind of cake with icing and cocoa filling.

Lunch: boiled potatoes, gravy, roast mutton, green peas, vanilla pudding

Evening: ½ bread, margarine, tinned sausage, tinned rolled ham, coffee.

May 26, 1947

In the morning: 1/5 bread, jam, coffee

Lunch: boiled potatoes, mutton goulash, leek vegetables

Evening: ½ bread, margarine, corned beef, coffee

I went for a nice walk yesterday. It rained heavily during the night, but the sun is shining again today. It will be another day to laze around and that's good. Who knows what work awaits us next week, so it's time to make the most of the rest days.

July 2, 1947

It's been a few weeks since my last entry. Maybe I was too lazy to write something down, or maybe it was because I was too tired in the evening after work. On July 4, I will have been in captivity for three years. It is now two years since the end of the war. There is still no peace and quiet. It looks more like another war, and what will happen to us here? You can't even think about it.

There is now a heavenly peace on my pad, which I share with the camp leader. I've been part of the tribe since June 30. I've taken over the canteen and am deputy camp leader. In America, I was offered the position of camp leader once before. I turned it down back then. But now I've accepted it and I feel quite comfortable with it. The hard work is over for me now.

In the last few weeks I still had quite good commands. I spent eight days with three men on a field detachment. We tidied up a major's garden and spent some nice days eating good food. We were together with eight comrades who worked in the army kitchen. Then there were a few days in the hay, one day threshing and then hay again. The last farmer gave us ten cigarettes a day and on the last day even thirty. At lunchtime we had to eat in the kitchen and were given potatoes fried with fat, scrambled eggs or bacon and slices of bread toasted in fat. That was something different.

But now I'm sitting in the typing pool and feeling really good. Hopefully I can stay here until I'm discharged.

Now I just want to wish that the dark clouds in the sky will disappear again and that there will finally be peace and quiet and an orderly life for us at home.

Your saying, my dear:

"Golden hours, don't cry that they're over, smile that they've been"

I like it, but I wish for many more golden hours with you and my little daughter.

My saying:

"Who knows what everything is good for, and it will turn out all right somehow."

My wish is to see you again soon and to live with you, even if we have to starve a little. We don't have it that lavish here either.

July 13, 1947

I've settled in well at my new post and I feel quite comfortable. I sent the first parcel home today. I hope it arrives safely and that I have made you, my

loved ones, happy. I've been working in the garden of a nice English family for a few hours on the side and earned a few cigarettes. We started receiving English money yesterday, so we can now buy things outside.

August 4, 1947

Bank Holiday - Perhaps the biggest holiday in England. I haven't yet realized what it actually means. - The days go by very quickly and yet too slowly. I like life in the camp. When all the commandos have gone in the morning it's wonderfully quiet and it's like that all day. The work in the office is done quickly and it only gets stormy again in the evening. Then this one has something and that one has something and it goes on like that all evening. Friday is a big day in the canteen. New goods arrive and, above all, the cake. A 7-8 lb cake is divided among 8 men and with 160 men I have a long time to do it. But I like the work, it's not as hard as outside. Apart from that, I wish I could go home soon, sometimes I'm worried about how things will go at home. The biggest worry is employment. Will I get my regular job back?

August 13, 1947

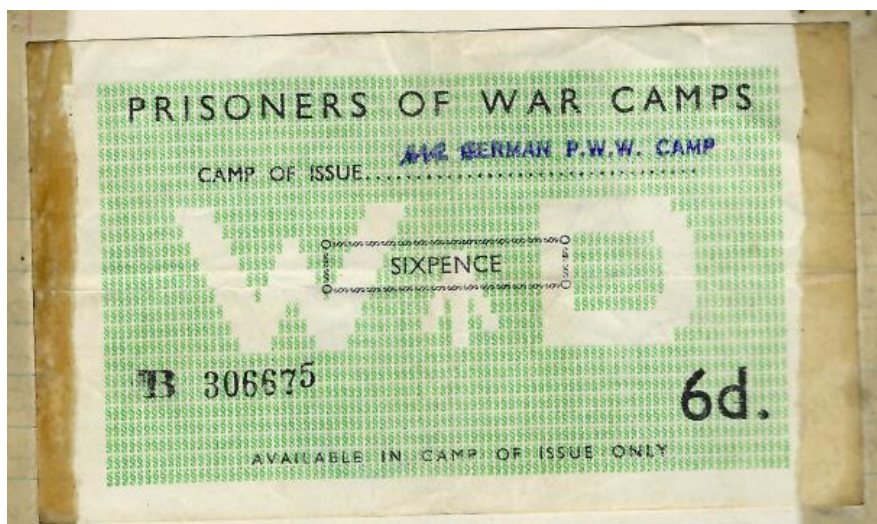
Unfortunately, a trip to London that was supposed to take place on August 10 has come to nothing. I probably won't be in touch again, as the trip is quite expensive by our standards. (14 shillings) Instead, I made a trip to Folkestone on Monday, August 11, 1947. Folkestone is a town with an estimated population of 50 to 70,000 and lies directly on the canal. On a clear day you can see the coast of France. I set off on the bus with a friend at around 1 o'clock and we were in Folkestone by 2:00. After spending some time on the beach and watching the beach life, we strolled through the streets and admired the window displays. The stores are full of goods. Clothes, shoes and sometimes even food are only available for points. Otherwise, however, there is a hive of activity. There is an abundance of fruit and vegetables. We also ate 1 lb of plums and of course ice cream. We paid a visit to Woolworth's and my only regret was that I had so little money, because there was plenty to buy. We were back at camp at around 7 o'clock. It was something different again.

September 21, 1947

I've actually become quite lazy now, because I've neglected this little book. It's actually always the same. On Monday you wait for Sunday. The days just fly by. Today, Sunday, was a busy day for us. People keep saying that this hostel is to be closed down and they're sending us fifty new people today. Of course that created a lot of work. But now everyone is settled again and the building is quiet again. It's another beautiful Sunday and most of the staff have flown out, especially as they were paid yesterday. I'm feeling a bit insecure today because I haven't had any mail from you since September 5th, I wonder what's going on again. Things have actually been going quite well with the post lately, so I'm quite worried today. Hopefully everything will arrive next week. It's been a long time since the kitchen has had the opportunity to bake cake on a Sunday. Last Sunday we had a lovely apple pie and today we had cake. It really tasted great. A normal cake for eight people. I couldn't manage the piece for coffee and saved a piece for the afternoon coffee. However, I had already eaten a large slice on Saturday evening (perk of the camp tour!) and drank a few cups of coffee with it. I also had a nice egg I... you have to see where you are. Incidentally, my appetite is no longer so strong. Perhaps I miss the physical work outdoors. But I'm happy with my work in the camp and only wish that I won't be transferred again before I'm released. For next week, however, I hope to hear some good news from you, my dear.

October 17, 1947

The last few days in Wootton. I've had to wait a long time to get home. Now the time has come. On October 15, 1947, I was informed by telephone that I was being repatriated. On October 21, I went to Dover to the main camp, stayed there for two days, then on to the shipping camp. It's a wonderful feeling to finally be this far. What can I expect back home? Well, let's hope for the best.



Camp money in the camp in England

November 2, 1947

It's Sunday, and probably the last one I'll spend in England. I'm now on my way home and I still can't believe that the time has come. I've become too accustomed to community life and it's time for it to be over.

On October 21, 1947, I left the Wootton Hostel, where I had been living for over a year. I arrived at Dover main camp. A final medical examination, payment of the last of my money and other formalities were soon completed. I left Camp Dover on October 23, 1947. This camp was situated high up on a mountain and had a wonderful view of the harbor and the Channel. In good weather you could see the coast of France. - The train took us to London in a few hours. There was another stop here. We changed to the subway and left Liverpool Street station for here, Camp 186 (Fornham, Suffolk), the last camp in England.

The days are terribly boring here. No work and you spend the whole day loafing around. I heard some good lectures, there was cinema and even theater. The theater buddies did some nice things, and the ladies' roles were

also well performed. The days of waiting will soon be over. On November 5, 1947, we boarded the ship.

November 10, 1947

Now I'm in Germany and once again I have to wait until the transport to the Russian zone is assembled, or until a thousand men are together. A transport of around a thousand men leaves England every day.

On November 5, 1947, the time had come for me too. We left the last camp in England at around 10 o'clock in the morning. It was an hour's walk to Burg H. Edmond station². The large luggage had already been loaded the day before. We arrived at the port - Hull³ - at around 12 noon. A small ship was waiting for us. As we had lovely calm weather, I was expecting a good crossing, which should take about nine hours. But the journey was anything but pleasant. I also got seasick and felt quite miserable. We didn't have as many seasick people as on this short trip, not even on the big crossings. But this trip also passed. We arrived in Holland at around 9 p.m. and by the time we got off the ship, the seasickness was over and my stomach was completely empty from the "turning around". Our train was already waiting, German railroad cars, some without seats. The luggage was quickly loaded again and then we were served a good hot meal. It tasted great again. The journey through Holland started at around 2 o'clock in the morning. Dark carriages, nothing to see, and soon everything was lying on the ground somewhere in the corner, asleep.

November 6, 1947

We arrived at the German border - Bentheim⁴ - at around 8 o'clock in the morning. Large loudspeakers welcomed the returnees home. We were given refreshments again and after an hour we continued on into Germany. By midday we were in Minden/Westphalia, where a hot meal was waiting for us. We continued via Hanover to Munster-Lager⁵. Arrival in the evening around 9 pm. The luggage was loaded into trucks and we marched into the

² Bury Saint Edmunds, Suffolk

³ Kingston upon Hull

⁴ *Bad Bentheim, Lower Saxony*

⁵ *Munster, Lower Saxony*

first German camp. We were divided into barracks. We were given blankets and food and it was one o'clock in the morning again before we got to sleep.

On November 7, 1947, the processing went very quickly again. Payment of our bonus money - RM 268 - and issue of the discharge papers. November 7, 1947 is now the official day of release. Around 2 o'clock in the afternoon we went to the B camp and here we had to wait again for transportation. We will probably continue on November 12, 1947. Let's hope for the best. The stay in these transit camps is terrible. The barracks without light, no heating and the food? Yes, we are at home and we are happy with everything. These weeks will also pass and hopefully I will soon be able to put my full duffel bag in the living room for you, my dears.

I went to the movies last night and the day before yesterday and I'm going again today. Movies: "I ask for power of attorney", "Die Feuerzangenbowle". So these days will also pass.

November 19, 1947

The journey continued on November 12, 1947. We had bad luck in the morning. We left the camp on foot in the pouring rain and marched ½ hour to the station. We then stood outside at the station for over an hour waiting for the train. Even though the coat kept out the rain, our shoes and socks were soaked and of course we still had a cold and a sore throat. I haven't quite got over it yet today. The train again had no light and no seats. We set off at around 10 o'clock in the morning and arrived in Friedland⁶ (border station of the English zone) at around 6 o'clock in the evening. Here we had a hot meal and heated barracks. We spent the night on wooden plank beds. On November 13, we were taken to the border by bus in the morning. We crossed the so-called border at 10 o'clock in the morning with 1000 men. From the English border post to the Russian border post is about 100 meters of so-called no man's land. Just behind the Russian border tree, hundreds of handcarts were waiting to transport our luggage. Another ½ hour or so and we were back at the camp, but now on the Russian side. Arenshausen is the name of the border town. Again we had hot food and later rations for the march. After registering, the whole transport went to the relevant

⁶ Friedland, Lower Saxony - Friedland border transit camp

quarantine camp. The Brandenburgers, about 100 men, traveled to Glöwen / Westprignitz. On the same day at around 5 p.m. we continued our journey and arrived in Glöwen at around 8 a.m. on November 15, 1947. A train journey of over 30 hours lay behind us.

Now it's time to wait again. My quarantine period ends on November 28, 1947, and now, my dears, we look forward to seeing you again soon.

Captivity

July 4, 1944 to November 7, 1947

$181 + 365 + 365 + 311 = 1222 \text{ days} = 3 \text{ years } 127 \text{ days}$