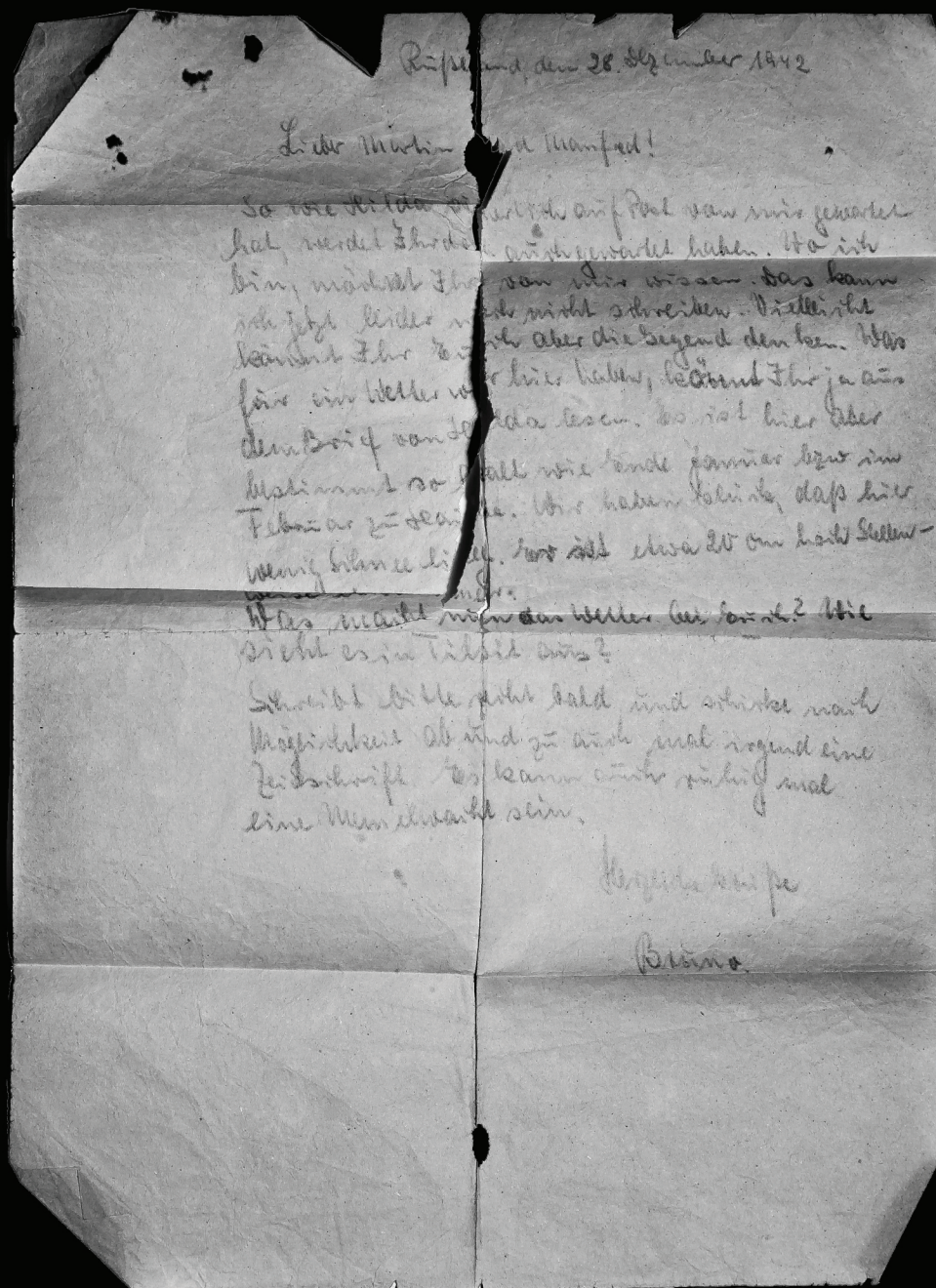


Englische Original-Letters Briefe aus Stalingrad



Ralf Yusuf Gawlick

Herzliche Grüße Bruno – Briefe aus Stalingrad (Best regards Bruno – Letters from Stalingrad) is an electro-acoustic work conceived from the last letters written by my young uncle before being listed as missing in action in Stalingrad in late December 1942. Although there will forever be tragically unanswered questions as to Bruno's exact fate, there is much we do know from the time he was sent to Stalingrad in August 1942. First there are biographical details of his service information provided by the *Deutsche Dienststelle*¹ and the *Deutsches Rotes Kreuz* (German Red Cross).

Following family inquiries concerning Bruno's fate, the *Deutsche Dienststelle* replied: "Our records indicate that your uncle Bruno Gawlick, born on 08.01.1923 in Argeloten, Schlossberg district, as member of the 8th Company Panzer Grenadier Regiment, went missing since 12.30.1942 near Stalingrad. He was carrier of the identification tag: 136-2./S. E. B. (mot) 413 (= 2. Company Rifle-Replacement Battalion (motorized) 413).² Investigations by the German Red Cross revealed the following: "The result of all inquiries led to the conclusion that Bruno G a w l i c k was almost certainly killed in the cauldron of Stalingrad or soon after being captured."³

Bruno and his family lived near Tilsit in East Prussia before and well into WWII. He was enlisted into the *Wehrmacht* in 1942 at the age of 18 and sent to Stalingrad to join the 6th Army under field marshal Friedrich Paulus; *Feldpostnummer* 32266 (postcode used for items sent by either mail or airmail). The 6th Army advanced on Stalingrad in early August 1942, the attack proper began on August 23; Paulus' forces were encircled by the Red Army on Nov. 19 and capitulated on February 2, 1943. At the time of capitulation, 90,000 men remained of the original 300,000 combat strength of the 6th Army as recorded in late November. Of those 90,000, nearly half died in spring 1943 during death marches to Soviet labor camps; of the remaining 45,000 men, only 6,000 returned after 1955 back to Germany (all numbers are approximate). My uncle is among the dead or missing at Stalingrad (his body was never recovered). He remains among those people who have disappeared, whose fate is unexplained. Bruno's name, one of over 120,000 German dead or missing listed on large granite cubes and a wall of plaques, is engraved in granite cube 21, plate 2, at the *Rossoschka* War Graves Cemetery, west of Volgograd (formerly Stalingrad).

This composition preserves Bruno's memory. His death, one of millions and millions, embodies, in the words of the poet Wilfred Owen, the tragedy of "war and the pity of war." Bruno signed his letters *Herzliche Grüße Bruno* – in German, these words can also be used as an address, a greeting. The last words spoken in the piece - „*Herzliche Grüße Bruno*” – represent the first conscious words spoken by my father, Dieter Gawlick, to his older brother. The words in my dedication, addressed directly to my uncle Bruno, are: *Nie gekannt, doch nie vergessen*. (Never known, but never forgotten)

-Ralf Yusuf Gawlick

¹A German government agency based in Berlin which maintains records of members of the former German Armed Forces who were killed in action, as well as official military records of all military personnel during the Second World War (ca. 18 million), naval military records since 1871 and other war-related records.

² *Deutsche Dienststelle* for the notification of the relatives of those killed of the former German Wehrmacht, *Deutsche Dienststelle* (WASSt), 13400 Berlin

³ German Red Cross (General Secretariat) in the Federal Republic of Germany ~ Search Service Munich

Texts / Audiosources⁴

(presented in order of appearance in the work)

- I. **„Best regards, Bruno“ (spoken by Hilde, Bruno’s younger sister, b.1925)**
- II. **Hitler: Speech in the Munich Löwenbräukeller, November 8, 1942; Commemoration of the march on the Munich Feldherrnhalle, 1923 (German Radio Archive – Excerpts):**

“I am so calm towards any German who is fighting in the East today and who now returns. (...) I say it slowly. I should say that for our enemies, and not your soldiers, for the speed at which our soldiers have now traversed territory is gigantic! And what has been covered this past year is vast and historically unique. Now, I do not always do things just as others want them done – yes, I consider what the others probably believe and then do the opposite on principle. So, if Mr. Stalin expected that we attack in the center – I did not want to attack in the center. Not only because Mr. Stalin probably believed I would do so, but because I didn’t care about it at all. Instead I wanted to come to the Volga, to a specific place, to a specific city. It happens to carry Stalin’s name, but don’t believe that’s why I marched there – it could have had another name. But only because there is a very important point (...) there was a gigantic terminal. I wanted to take it, and – as you know – we are modest, for we have it now! Only a few small pockets of resistance are left. Some would say: ‘Why not fight onwards?’ Because I don’t want a second Verdun! I would rather do it with small combat patrols! Time is of no significance, no ships are coming up the Volga! That is the key! [Strong applause] (...) For we are standing there, that finally cannot be denied, that is a fact. If, of course, there is no other way, then it is also said this is a mistake. Then suddenly one turns around again and says it is a mistake at all that the Germans have gone to Kirkenes, or that they have gone to Narvik, or that they are now going to Stalingrad... What do they want in Stalingrad, particularly Stalingrad. A capital mistake that... A strategic mistake. Let’s wait and see if that was a strategic mistake (...) Whether it was such a big mistake (...) Whether it really was such a big mistake (...) Whether this was all really so faulty, we will see. (...) I am so calm towards any German (...) No one has yet returned.”

III. About Bruno (spoken by Hilde)

„Bruno Gawlick, my brother, born on August 1st,1923, in Argeloten, Schlossberg district, East Prussia, missing since December 30th, 1942, in Stalingrad. Soldier in the 8th Company, Staff Battalion II, Panzer Grenadier Regiment 26 of the 24th Panzer Division, 4th Panzer Army, postcode number 32266; carrier of the identification tag 136-2., 2nd Company Rifle- Replacement Battalion, motorized, 413.“

⁴ Present during work: Original recorded battle/sound recordings (German Radio Archive) & a heart beat every 19 seconds ...

IV. Richard Tauber sings “Alone, alone again... There stands a sentry on the Volga Bank from Lehár’s *Der Zarewitsch*, February 25, 1927. (entrance overlaps with Hilde)

“Alone, alone again! Lonely as always! Youth rushes past in long, anxious loneliness.
My heart is heavy and dull my mind, I’m sitting inside the golden cage.
There stands a sentry on the Volga banks
keeping watch for his fatherland.
Alone in the distant, dark night,
no moon or star lights his way.
The steppes are motionless and silent,
and a tear comes to his eye!
And he feels the gnawing at his heart,
Which comes when a man is left alone,
and he asks and he complains:
Have you up above forgotten me?
My heart also yearns for love.
You have many angels in Heaven with you,
send me also one down here!”

V. (Baritone)

“Have you up above forgotten me?
My heart also yearns for love.
You have many angels in Heaven with you,
send me also one down here!” (Lehár)

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.” (Luke 6:21)

“He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

VI. Simulcast Christmas message from all fronts of the Third Reich, December 24, 1942. (German Radio Archive – Excerpts):

“Speaker: ‘Attention! Attention! Under the profound impression of these last hours, all our comrades at the transmitting stations in East and West, in North and South are to report once more, and testify by their voices once more of the immense space over which our broadcast spans. (...) Attention! I call again Stalingrad! Here is Stalingrad, here is the front on the Volga. (...) Attention Zakopane! From the Shepherd convalescence home in the Tatras, the wounded greet their comrades on the fronts. Attention, once again Crete! Here is Crete, guard on the Mediterranean Sea. Attention once again the Black Sea port! Here is once again the Black Sea port on the Crimean peninsula. We ask you comrades to join in the beautiful old German Christmas carol, ‘Silent Night’.⁵ This spontaneous wish of our comrades, far away, here and

⁵ At this point, while the speaker continues, soldiers sing “Silent Night, Holy Night”:

“Silent night, holy night! / All is calm, all is bright / Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child / Holy Infant so tender and mild / Sleep in heavenly peace / Sleep in heavenly peace.”

there, over the Black Sea, is now joined by all stations. Now they are already singing at the Arctic Ocean and in Finland! And now they are singing in the battle ground of Rzhev! And now we tune in all the other stations. Leningrad, Stalingrad. And now France joins. Catania joins and Africa sings. And now everyone sing, sing together with all of us in this minute the old German folk song.”

VII. (Baritone)

“Blessed are those who gain ground to the rear” (spoken by German soldiers in Stalingrad).
“And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, every one over his iniquity.” (Ezekiel 7:16)

VIII. Bruno Gawlick: The penultimate, handwritten letter (spoken by Hilde & Ralf)

“Russia, the 28th of December 1942

Dear Martin and Manfred!

Just as Hilda has surely waited for mail from me, so you too will have waited. Where I am, you would like to know from me. That I can unfortunately not yet write at this time. Perhaps however you can guess the area. What weather we have here, you can read from the letter to Hilda. But it is surely as cold here as end of January or February at home. We are lucky, that there is little snow. It’s about 20 cm high, in places a bit more. How is the weather at home? How does Tilsit look? Please write soon, and if possible send me any magazine occasionally. It can even be a *Memelwacht*.⁶

Best regards, Bruno”

IX. Bruno Gawlick: The last, typed letter⁷ (spoken by Hilde)

“Dear Parents, dear Siblings

I write in the basement of a house without light. Forgive me that I write with a typewriter but we are only allowed to light candles. We have nothing to eat, only frozen horse meat without salt. On a dung heap I found a bone which still had some meat on it. You wouldn’t believe how delicious it was. We are surrounded and are afraid. All around you can hear cannon thunder and shooting, and it is very cold.

Best regards, Bruno”

⁶ *Memelwacht* (Memel Guardian), a general newspaper from Tilsit

⁷ Hilde recalls: “Memories from a letter written in December near or in Stalingrad by my brother Bruno. Unfortunately, it is no longer to be found and I, his sister, can only reproduce what has stuck in my mind. It was a very short letter to our parents and maybe to the siblings.”

X. (Baritone)

“Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.” (Luke 6:21)

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth.” (Revelation 14:13)

XI. Göring: Speech (also known as the Nibelungen speech) in the Berlin Ministry of Aviation, January 30, 1943; Address before Wehrmacht members on the 10th anniversary of the seizure of power (German Radio Archive – Excerpts):

“And among all these giant battles, there wages now, like an enormous, monumental structure, Stalingrad, the battle for Stalingrad. That there our infantrymen, pioneers, gunners, antiaircraft artillerists (...) and whoever else is in the city now (...) to the last man, who is fighting against huge superior forces for every block, for every stone, for every hole, for every trench, who keeps fighting, tired, exhausted. We know of a powerful, heroic song of an incomparable battle called ‘The Battle of the Nibelungs.’ They also stood in a blazing hall of fire and quenched their thirst with their own blood but fought and fought until the end. Such a struggle is raging there today, for a people that can fight in such a manner must win. (...) There have always been bold men who have sacrificed themselves to achieve something greater for the others. (...) German resistance is organized, could be organized, new lines solidified, but could only be solidified because out there in the ruins of this city, heroes fought and still fight, and even if there remain but a few, as long as a German stands, the Russian knows there will be a fight. (...) My soldiers, most of you will have heard of a similar example from the great and mighty history of Europe. (...) If you think that thousands of years have passed; and before these millennia there stood in a small gorge in Greece an infinitely brave and bold man with 300 of his men, Leonidas with 300 Spartans – from a tribe known for its bravery and boldness. And an overwhelming majority attacked and attacked again and again. (...) Even back then it was an onrush from the Asian East, which broke here against the northern man. Huge numbers of fighters were available to Xerxes, but the 300 men did not falter nor stagger, they fought and fought a hopeless struggle – hopeless except in its significance. And then the last man fell. And in that narrow pass, a sentence is written: ‘Stranger, if you come to Sparta, report thither that you saw us lying here, as the law commanded.’ There were 300 men, my comrades, thousands of years have passed, and today that battle, that sacrifice there, still stands so heroic, as an example of the greatest soldiery. And it will also once be said that when ‘you come to Germany, you will have seen us lying in Stalingrad, as the law, that is, the law of the safety of our people ordered it.’ (...) “We do not want to lie...”⁸

XII. Wilhelm Furtwängler conducts the Adagio from Bruckner’s 7th Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic, April 1, 1942. (Excerpt)

⁸ Last sentence from Hitler’s speech on February 10, 1933, from the Berlin Sportpalast.

XIII. Bruno Gawlick: The last, typed letter (spoken by Hilde)

“Dear Parents, dear Siblings

I write in the basement of a house without light. Forgive me that I write with a typewriter but we are only allowed to light candles. We have nothing to eat, only frozen horse meat without salt. On a dung heap I found a bone which still had some meat on it. You wouldn't believe how delicious it was. We are surrounded and are afraid. All around you can hear cannon thunder and shooting, and it is very cold.

Best regards, Bruno”

XIV. Bruno's Letters (Combined fragments) (spoken by Ralf)

“Russia 1942 ... where I am ... where am I ... you would like to know from me ... where I am end of January ... you wouldn't believe ... where I am ...end of January ... at home ... that I can unfortunately not yet write at this time ... where I am ... am at home ... a house without light ...am at home end of January in Tilsit, Tilsit, Tilsit ... am in the basement ... with the typewriter ... writing ... without light ... we have nothing to eat ... horse meat ... dung heap ... bone ... you wouldn't believe how delicious it was ...where I am ... dear parents, dear siblings ... where I am ... we are surrounded ... all around** ... cannon thunder ... shooting ...it is very cold ... are surrounded and are afraid ... and shooting, shooting, shooting ...”

****Hilde joins:** *“You wouldn't believe how delicious it was. We are surrounded and are afraid. All around you can hear cannon thunder and shooting, and it is very cold. Best regards, Bruno”*

Ralf: “Dear Parents, dear Siblings ... Russia ...”

Ralf & Max: “Forgive me ...’

XV. Bruno Gawlick: The last, typed letter (spoken by Max)

“Forgive me that I write with a typewriter but we are only allowed to light candles. We have nothing to eat, only frozen horse meat without salt. On a dung heap I found a bone which still had some meat on it. You wouldn't believe how delicious it was. We are surrounded and are afraid. All around you can hear cannon thunder and shooting, and it is very cold.

Best regards, Bruno”

XVI. “Herzliche Grüße Bruno” (spoken by Dieter, Bruno's youngest brother, my father)