

F. W. von Lindeiner.

Hermannstein über Wetzlar. (16).
Wetzlarer Strasse 194.
Germany.
American Zone.
31st of July 1948.

Colonel Air Corps Delmar T. Spivey.
Headquarters Air University.
Maxwell Field, Alabama.
U. S. A.

Dear Mr. Spivey :

I wrote to you on the 22nd of June from Hohe Mark near Oberursel some days before my return to Hermannstein. After my arrival there, I had to meet with many difficulties resulting from the devaluation of our currency. So today only I can give you the report about my adventures after the escape of 76 RAF officers of Stalag Luft 3 on March the 25th 1944.

In the meantime I received a very kind letter from Major General William S. Hall from the CMCUS at Berlin. In consequence of your kind recommendation he offered me his valuable assistance. On the 16th of this month I made free to submit him my situation and the steps, by which he possibly could help me. So I have to thank you once more for all your goodness in aiding myself and my family.

Regarding the big escape of March 25th 1944 I can assure you that we knew weeks before that some big action was planned in the North Compound. In spite of all our precautions the tunnel No. 100 succeeded by the coincidence of several events, unluckily for us. The escape was discovered at 4.25 a.m. and within some minutes I arrived on the spot. Thanks to the wellknown manipulations of the POW's it became about 11 a.m. before quantity and names of the escapees could be established. In the afternoon arrived representatives of the " Air Ministry " and of the " General-Inspektion für das Kriegsgefangenen-Wesen " as well as of Himmler's " Reichssicherheits Hauptamt. " I had to do only with the two firstnamed. After a laborious night these two officers reported to their superiors by wire, that I was absolutely guiltless. Then they left Sagan. I did not speak to the representatives of Himmler that day, their presence in the camp only took some hours.

On the 26th of March there arrived 3 representatives of the Luftgau III Berlin (my superiors in administration affairs) with an order, that I was dispensed, that a court-martial was opened against me and that I was not allowed to leave the camp. Lt. Col. Cordes had to take my place. On the same day arrived the famous Kriminal-Kommissar Dr. Absalon in the camp with two assistants, to begin with his investigations. Everybody was interrogated except myself. Some days later a considerable number of our officers was transferred as having been too compliant to the POW's in contrast to the ruling orders. Only the removal of Major Simoleit was cancelled later on, as otherwise the lack of experienced officers would have had serious consequences.

Lt. Col. Cordes in contrast to my military superiors did his best, to make my life as torturous as possible, he and Stabszahlmeister Schmidt supplied Dr. Absalon with slanderous and absolutely untrue material against me. Eleven weeks passed before my first interrogation took place, for the first of them I had to stay in the camp Sagan, lateron I was permitted to live in my wife's residence in the countryside of Sagan. - After this one interrogation the examining magistrate moved the annulment of my prosecution, but he was ordered to deliver

all the documents to the " Reichsmilitär - Gerichtshof ". A further & enervating seventeen weeks passed, before I got any news about my & destiny.

Since that time I think it is the hardest test for a living man of honour, to be prosecuted without information about his crime. Nearly all the members of my Sagan staff and many known and unknown friends in higher offices did their best, to keep me informed about the steps taken against me. So I knew, that Dr. Absalon composed a report about me, which contained no less than 122 pages of type-writing. The indignation about my treatment caused already in March very heavy cramps of my heart, but the will to fight for my honorable name against arbitrariness and falsehood gave me new force.

Finally - on the 2nd of October - I was confidentially informed, that only three days later the court-martial against me should take place at Guben (halfway between Berlin and Sagan.) A great number of witnesses, experts and auditors was summoned, but I myself had not received either an accusation nor a citation. My friends advised me not to go to Guben, but I wished to avoid a condemnation " in contumaciam " and to go personally before a court-martial which dared to accuse me.

So the 5th of October 1944 I sat in the dock at Guben, together with the Captains Broili and Pieber. They too were accused of having trespassed against the orders for the treatment of POWs with the consequence, that by this the " German Reich " had suffered heavy disadvantages in wartime. Furthermore I met in Guben some German soldiers, who had betrayed us by selling forbidden things to the POWs.

On the 8th of October the public prosecutor moved a punishment against me of two years of imprisonment and degradation. The sentence was pronounced the following day with one year of confinement in a fortress. By lack of time it had been impossible for me, to procure a barrister, but the general opinion was, that I had pleaded my cause better than any barrister could have done.

In wartime any appeal against a sentence was suspended. The sentence was delivered to the condemned, who, in his turn, was permitted to hand in his view. After that the highest resort had to approve the sentence or to cancel it. In the latter case a new court was ordered. At that time it happened often, that sentences were cancelled twice or three times, till they were in accordance with the wishes of the highest resort.

In my case everybody knew very soon, that my light punishment made Himmler furious so that he protested against it. During October nightly visitors advised me to flee as soon as possible, as I risked to be liquidated in one way or the other, when remaining in Himmler's reach. Notwithstanding all propositions I remained home, as in the case of my disappearance my wife would have been arrested. Furthermore I wished to fight for my right. - Finally my friends came with a psychiatrist, who ordered my transportation to a neurotic establishment. So on the 30th of October I was brought to Görlitz in a hospital, whose leading surgeon was in the plot. There I remained till January the 27th 1945, when the hospital was evacuated under the pressure of the Russian advance.

In the meantime my Wehrmacht-Superiors did their best, to help me. The dispatch of my sentence was postponed till the last days of December 1944 and then I got a further four weeks for my answer. At that time I had left Görlitz and had returned to my wife's residence near Sagan. My discharge from the military service, which had been ordered earlier for the 28th of February 1945, was repealed, as Himmler often arrested officers he disliked, the day of their discharge from the military service. At that moment they were in his power and could be brought to one of his camps.

Few days after my arrival at Sagan the Russians stood before the town. My wife succeeded to leave with one of the last trains. I

myself - still being a soldier - had to stay. I was wounded and escaped with a damaged light tank on the last open road to Leipzig. There I remained in hospital from February the 13th till April the 5th, when I was transported to an other hospital at Blankenburg am Harz. This place was taken by the USA. Forces on the 20th of April and so I became a POW. On the 21st of May 1945 I was brought to the big POW-camp Immendorf near Brunswick, which some time later was taken over by the British. Some POW divisions were formed and with one of them I was dislodged to a village near Wolsenbüttel.

It was on the 7th of August 1945, that I was brought on Transport with unknown destination by a British officer and two Sergeants. On the first day we reached the concentration camp Steinhöhle near Paderborn. There I was lodged in a special compound for the worst criminals, without blankets, dinner-service and so on. After three days my transport was pursued till Ostende, this time manacled. On the 12th of August 1945 I arrived in London and well in the interrogation centre Kensington Gdns. The chief officer of the War Crimes Unit, Lt. Col. Al. Scotland, did his utmost to make my stay there as endurable as possible, I shall always be grateful to him for it. He tried to get me repatriated but in vain. So I was transported to the POW camp No. 13 at Shap Wells (Cumberland). On the 31st of October 1946 this small camp was closed and with the other POW's I came to camp No. 18, Featherstone Park near Haltwhistle (Northumberland). The British and the German surgeons some times proposed my repatriation, but in consequence of the ruling embargo on senior officers I had to stay till the repeal of this order on May 1947.

On the 17th of June 1947 I left the camp No. 18 for repatriation and arrived at the first place of my destination in the British Zone on the 10th of July 1947. My treatment in the two British camps was worthy, I shall gratefully remember my three commanding officers there.

Herewith my long report comes to an end and I hope, it did not bore you too much. Today again I wish to renew the assurance of my everlasting thanks. Please to give my wife's and my best compliments to Mrs. Spivey and

Believe me,

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

