

CARL GÄRTING, 1922-1999
2007.72

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Appendix A. Translations

The following translations are housed in the donor files of the United State Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Letter sent by Carl Gärtig from the House of Corrections in Kassel-Wehlheiden on 27 July 1938 to his mother.

Dearest mother and everybody at home,

What I have been dreading and told you about in my last letter became reality: The Gestapo has requested me. The demand for my preventive imprisonment has not arrived yet; they'll probably send it after me to Halle, so at least there is still a glimmer of hope left. Please don't worry unnecessarily, we have to accept the unavoidable. So then, on Friday, August 1 at 4 pm my sentence is over. I'll be picked up at 2 pm already. At least I don't have to hang around here any longer than I already have. I'll be put on a transport till Erfurt, on Saturday on to Halle. The arrival time in Halle I was not informed about.

If you want to visit me in Halle, you have to ask for a visitor's petition. Address: State Police, Halle. In the upper left hand corner, you have to put my case number: IID 8499/38 G. 1796. As for a permit for all those who want to visit me (not too many for the first time). You have to do this immediately so that you will have the document in your hands by the time I get there. Please don't forget to add the money for the return mail. If you need help, ask Hermann Schwager or B. Walter, they know about these things.

Did Roy and Henry arrive? They promised to visit me; I am really looking forward to seeing them after 6 years. I hope they'll like it here. If Franz and Selena have the time they should also come along in the car. Did Franz get my letter? I have not heard from him; or maybe he does not want to do me the favor I asked him for? He should at least answer. Maybe he will come to Halle? You too make me wait so long for mail. We know that Frieda does not write, but somebody else could. I also heard that my friend Fritz wanted to mail a package, did you ever get it? My things all arrived on July 4. I want to thank you again for everything you have done for me. I always seem to be the taker and cannot be the giver. Only my limitless love for you, you, who have stood by me during the most difficult period of my life, I want to show you my gratitude!

Emil Backowsky and Lutz Brühl are also going home on the 28th. Thanks again for everything! So much love for everybody!

Karl

Letter from Carl Gärtig written on 2 October 1938 from Buchenwald.

Dear mother and everybody at home,

I received your letter from 9/17, thank you so much, and I also send my regards to everybody. Everything here is the way I told you in my first letter. I can only write once every three months, that's because I have been in a lager before. No questions or requests can be made to the lager administration. Please include the cost of your return mail. I am in good health and hope that you are too. That you talk so highly about my boy makes me very happy and proud. When you write to me, he should please add a few lines.

In advance, mother, I wish you a very happy birthday and future and I hope I'll be able to embrace you all in the near future. Don't worry about me, I am fine and send you my most affectionate regards.

Yours, Karl

Finished this letter on 10/24

One memorial message written by Carl Gärtig in memory of Paul Schneider, a priest who was murdered by the SS. A summary:

No words, not even Goethe's, could possibly describe the conditions under which human beings had to live in the so-called "Kleine Lager." This was a few square blocks within the Lager Buchenwald; there were former horse stables surrounded by barbed wire. The endless amount of daily new arrivals were unloaded there, and stayed until they were eventually distributed to other sections. French, Dutch, Romanians, Russians, Greeks, Belgians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews of every nationality, Gypsies, highly educated people, mentally ill people, cripples, criminals, old people, children, all mixed together. Each block contained an average of 1000 prisoners. These were horse stables, there were no windows and absolutely no conveniences for human beings. There was filth, lice, and an incredible stench. People had large wounds full of pus, swellings of the extremities due to lack of food and filthy surroundings. Their clothes were rags in which they also slept. They searched for anything to eat among the discarded trash. People from respectable backgrounds and lifestyles thus became animals and got to a point where they stole the fodder for the pigs and devoured it.

In Feb-March 1945, 10 to 12 prisoners were called aside, apart from the rest. They were shot with rifles, but causing only superficial wounds and then taken to Block No. 46, where the time between their receiving the wounds and the time of their death was precisely followed and documented. As far as I can remember, the first one died after 3-5 minutes.

This poisoned ammunition probably was weapon no. 3, with which the criminal Hitler regime promised victory to the German people. This happened in Buchenwald in the 20th century, and there were lagers that were even worse than this one.

I do not remember exactly when Minister Schneider arrived in Buchenwald, and neither do I remember when I heard his voice for the first time in this inferno. Sunday mornings in 1938-1939, 20,000 people would stand at attention in the gigantic appel square, facing the entrance and the reception-arrest building. The block leaders had counted and reported us. One of the lager leaders would take the microphone and in a brutal voice scream "take off your caps!" After some terrible static noise, suddenly a clear and decisive voice was heard: the Reverend Schneider was talking to his comrades. I do not recall the words from the Bible he greeted us with, but from his voice, we understood that here was a human being who suffered along with us, who held in contempt the daily deathly danger we were in, and who also was our brother. He was allowed to say just a few words, when in extreme fury, lager leader Sommer, a well-known sadist among this group of criminals, entered Minister Schneider's cell and the marvelous voice from an invincible world came to an end and the cracking whip was heard instead, punishing this brave man.

As Minister, servant of the Evangelical Church, Schneider was, up to a certain point, in the car and protection of the "World Public Opinion." His fortitude and stubbornness must have been a nightmare for the lager leader Koch. He could not ignore this case, as was the case with all the others; it was not that easy with Minister Schneider. Koch would have very much liked to release Pastor Schneider, there was just a small formality that made it impossible to do so, and it was offered to him many times: to promise to be loyal to the Nazi cause in the future and to never tell anybody about the horrors he had seen and experienced in the lager. Also, if he had heard anything against the state, to report it immediately to the Gestapo. Under those conditions, he would have been released the same day. Can you imagine what this means? Home—wife, children, away from the terror and this indescribable inferno? Just one little signature! The Rev.

Schneider did not sign. His answer was: "You can release me, any rock or curb will become my pulpit from which I will proclaim your unspeakable crimes!"

And so the torture started again. Standing up from 3-5 days, hanging from the arms, tied to the heating unit. The suffering must have been unimaginable. The continuous standing, tied to the wall was a terrible torture, very few could survive it in their weakened physical condition. In addition, 25 whips and blows, always on the same spot made the victims unconscious after the first few. The pain in the raw flesh is so unbearable that madness sets in. This along with the previously mentioned tortures and injections of strophantin was what killed the Reverend Schneider and this fighter entered the dark gates of death a hero!

Then something most unexpected happened: They permitted his wife to come and view him for the last time. He was put on a bier, his body completely covered with flowers and her husband's murderers expressed to Mrs. Schneider their most deeply felt sympathy. "The medical science tried their best to save his valuable life," and did not blush saying this horrendous lie.