

Dear Karl

I don't know when I will be able to send this letter to you, but it's been so long since I've had a chance to write. Not since Christmas! Oh, those happy times! Yes, happy. I may have been wounded in Kiev, but at least I was warm in my bed. The hospitals here may not be very clean, but they keep out the cold, far better than these pathetic slav villages we've been slogging through. I've included a photograph from those happier days — I almost put myself back in the bed with that slip! But the war for lebensraum must go on, and I've long since been back at the front. And I tell you now, Karl, that the cold was better than this mud. Glad though I was to be back with my men, since returning to 2 Panzer Abteilung my world has been nothing but mud, mud, mud!



Rasputitsia, the peasants call it. The Russian spring thaw. Everything that was ice and frozen earth is now a sea of mud past your knees, with nothing but sickly grass and rocks for cover. We've been coated in mud for so long, many of the men have started calling our force, "Kampfgruppe Rasputitsia," when the officers aren't around. Nothing on wheels can move in this awful mess. The mortar platoon was forced to abandon their trucks three weeks ago and have been walking ever since. Our halftracks can still move, though, and our company has become the spear head of the whole battalion. The Heavy Weapons platoon are our constant companions, especially the gunners. They are almost members of the platoons they've been attached to, and the boys treat each other like brothers.

The men need this comradeship. We've been lurking around a piss put village named Soborotka for over a week. The men's spirits were lifted yesterday, when the company linked up with a platoon of Panther tanks, but I fear their arrival can only mean one thing — the summer offensive is about to begin. I only hope that our leaders will wait until the ground firms up, maybe even as long as June. You can't fight a war in mud like this! If we have more luck than we've earned, we may even be resupplied by then. Our equipment has seen better days. Some of my men still march in the boots they wore to Nuremberg! Ah, but I go on! There is more to this world than mud and toil. Tell me, how are you coming in school? I'm sure it is exciting to study between watches at the flak battery. I wish I had your brains, Karl. You'd think of a way to move our men in this sloshy muck. Watch out for little Greta, I don't trust those dirty French foreign workers around her. And be sure to take care of Mother, I worry about her with father and I both away. And if you happen to see Elsa, please ask her to write me. It has been so long since I last heard from her, and I worry that... well, I can't worry about that now, can I? There's a war on! For the Father Land.

Your loving brother,  
Hans