



Two Letters from the Ukraine



Introduction: The following translation of a letter we received is supposed to give the reader an idea of the sufferings of the forced laborers, both during the war and today.

There are many thousands like Mrs. Rigaeva whose time is ticking away relentlessly. They've got no lobby in the western world, because they are no pressure group and cannot afford expensive lawyers or consultants. For this reason everybody is entitled to do something in favor of these people.

Letter of February 15, 2000, to **RIJO**:

I am Feodosija Miheevna Rigaeva, born on June 22, 1922 in the city of Tortshin, Chmelnikskij rayon, Winnizkaja oblast, from where I had been deported against my will to Germany in June 1942. I hid, but I was forced to go. They came to my parents and said if I didn't go they were going to burn down our house. So I had to go. I thought that I'd rather die than my entire family.

They took us from the city of Chmelnik to Kalinovka and from there directly to Germany. We were delivered to the transportation point.

There Mr. Soldan picked us up. We were transported to his sweets factory in Nuremberg at Herderstrasse 7. They put us into a basement. In the stories above there was a fabrication of bullets and projectiles. We lived in this basement for more than a year. After that we moved to a hostel because in the basement it had been terrible.

The nutrition wasn't too good, but tolerable. We were young and we survived. For clothing they gave each of us an overall and wooden shoes. When we were moved from there, they took everything away. First we worked in the sweets production, then they gave us different work.

I remember that I was taken to a factory building, where spare parts for airplanes were produced. I made a little mistake there and was beaten up terribly. I felt badly, I spat blood, then they took me to the medical department. It lasted for two weeks, it didn't stop and I thought I would die. But God spared me. They said they will send me home, but they shipped me to the hospital. The other girls brought my dresses and I was taken to the death camp [*presumably the "Arbeitserziehungslager" Langenzenn*]. It was approx. 30 km from Nuremberg, but I do not remember the number of this particular camp and this wasn't important for me at that time either. There were woods on one side and a housing area on the other. Also there was a railroad in the proximity. The guards were everywhere. Both at the sweets factory and in the camp there were high barbed-wire fences. At the camp we received coffee in the morning without anything else, during the day one beet with corn or dirty not sifted grain, in the evening coffee again with a slice of wheat bread.

We managed to survive like this: The men who carried the dead bodies outside to bury them in the village, brought us flour, butter and other food from the town folks who knew where the men came from. Those of the dead who had gold, rings or earrings, were buried in a grave of their own. At that time so many people died, it's terrible to remember this. Some survived, it is like a miracle.

We were liberated in 1945 by American troops. They took us to a transit camp. We were held back there again. We sold our last belongings to return home alive.

I was very ill in Germany, I had an abscess on my breast and until now the cough did not go away. I had another abscess on the ear, which deafened me to this very day. I have got an ulcer. The medications are very expensive. My pension doesn't suffice to buy bread. I receive 40 Griwna [7.20 \$] a month, one bread costs 1 Griwna. If you send help for my suffering, I would be very grateful.

[...]

My husband, Ivan Semjonovitsch Rigaev, has died 12 years ago. I am almost alone since then. I have children but they don't have any work now. I live with my daughter and my two grandchildren. Life is very difficult for us.

I have a special request to you. If it is possible, send me medication to treat my coughing or any recipe, please. I would like to live for some time, or otherwise I might not be alive when this help [*German compensation*] arrives. I ask you, please help me.

Thank you in advance.

Faithfully,

Feodosija Miheevna Rigaeva

Letter of April 28, 2000, to **RIJO**

I thank you very much for your assistance. Really, I do not know, how to thank you enough. I got the money, straight in time. I was ill and much of the amount was spent on the medicine.

My health is very, very bad. For each day I live I thank God.

What happened to us in wartime Germany is not your guilt. Responsible for that were the fascist regime and all those, who supported it. Many of your innocent compatriots lost very much in these terrible years.

The past is gone and will not return. All that suffering is already behind us. Now one should live for the moment and thank God for every day which passed in peace.

Thus I end my short letter. Again I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support. I will pray for you and your children and for the salvation of all souls.

Faithfully,

Feodosija Miheevna Rigaeva

[text] = remark

Mrs. Feodosija Miheevna Rigaeva died March 29, 2001. Every eleven minutes one former forced laborer is dying.
