

Buenos Aires, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1939

Dear Brother!

Everything has been settled for now. I haven't been able to inform you about recent developments. The aim I pursued was to destroy the ship and above all to rescue the crew. It's done. I wrote in similar vain to Ruth, to Mama and to the children, without adding to their grief or getting them enmeshed. Wherever you are with your unit you will grasp what I am writing to you. You were always the shrewder of us.

Dear Reinhard, I would like to consider some of the matters that I can't disclose to others. I am aghast about allegations that a highranking member of our embassy in Buenos Aires has confronted me face to face. I do not deserve being subject of any allegations neither as 'Kommandant of Graf Spee', nor because of my conduct. You as my brother know me better than anyone else. That's why I'm not going to disclose details of these allegations here, but I yearn for empathy and understanding and no one is a better fit for this once you receive this letter safely.

My dear Reinhard, as you will know, I am not so worried about public opinion in Germany than about the safety of my crew members, my loyal officers and my family. If Papa was still with us now! How much he was right about these mean people.

I am writing to you that I am really at peace with my conscience. I have provided for the prosperity of our beloved country, my crew members and honour and for our family - for you and me. I also want to confirm to you that I can't regret that I could not handle some recent situations optimally at the end of my career. It depended neither on me nor on our government that things didn't turn out the way we had expected it would. The way we have been raised and how we got prepared for this war has some importance. I am not blaming anyone. I am only stating the facts and talking about the series of fateful events that we have lived through since the memorable start of our mission on August 21<sup>st</sup> in Wilhelmshaven to this point. Beloved brother: you know me better than anyone. I'm not spiteful or violent like some men in Berlin and Buenos Aires are. Our father taught us to be aware that 'God directs and guides'.

There can be no responsibility for me or my crew that our ship has not been completely destroyed. Nor is it in your ill fated brother's responsibility that some of the few shells that hit the ship damaged the kitchen and the drinking water treatment unit and soaked the ammunition in the bunker. Not even after that the battle there was no safe port in reach to be considered. I have been trained for battle, but we are all in God's hands even in battle.

If some criticise me in Berlin, that's alright. But that I am responsible for the ambiguity of the battle and for the bloody diplomacy afterwards – there is no way! Nobody can reproach fate without taking responsibility for their own actions. Dear Reinhard, I am the only one responsible for my decisions and this tragedy. I grieve for my dead members of the crew who fell in the battle; for you and my family and for my dear home country Germany. We will leave this difficult situation behind us so that I can embrace you again.

If something will happen to me, I know that you will take care of Ruth, Inge and Jochen in your custody. And that you will do this with strong support of Annelise.

*But don't rush, I and my security are being looked after well. I'm getting pestered at the embassy – Mr. Thermann is the only one, besides the captains Kragenhagen and Niebuhr, who are men of honourable conduct. I can't say this about the civilian gentlemen who are accompanying him. Mr. Von Thermann does everything to make me feel allright in this distant country with good people. This I want you to know. You must know these things. I must not and don't want to say goodbye to you, brother. I only described all this to you because you should know about it for nobody can predict fate.*

*With a brotherly hug.*

*Eho!Eho!Surely you will remember.*

*Be careful brother!*

*Hans*

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