

Weißensee – Twice Convicted

NARRATOR

In early 1940, Wilhelmine Krauslach lived with her husband and their four children on a manor estate near Kranichborn. She worked in agriculture.

Polish prisoners of war were also deployed for forced labor on the estate where Krauslach worked.

One of them was named Stanislaus Kuschinoga. Wilhelmine Krauslach described his arrival at the manor estate:

WILHELMINE KRAUSLACH

This winter, Polish prisoners arrived at the estate. They would come to the stable to join us for breakfast. (...) One of them spoke German well. He told us he would have liked to have a shirt, because it was terribly cold (...).

So I said to my husband, "Let's give him an old one." Then I gave the Pole various things—and the guard reported it.

NARRATOR

Wilhelmine Krauslach provided the freezing Pole with clothing and was observed doing so. The guard she spoke of was the carpenter Otto Theil. Theil was a Wehrmacht squad leader and was responsible for guarding the Polish prisoners of war.

GUARDSMAN THEIL

Before long, I noticed Mrs. Krauslach's behavior toward the Polish prisoner of war, Stanislaus Kuschinoga. Mrs. Krauslach did not miss any opportunity to get close to the prisoner, Kuschinoga.

Between 11:00 PM and midnight, Mrs. Krauslach stood at the window and handed the prisoner, Kuschinoga, a shirt and a bottle of milk through the barred opening. During this exchange, the two talked about love. I

immediately reported the incident and received instructions to report Mrs. Kraußlach to the local police.

NARRATOR

It remains unclear what really transpired between Krauslach and Kuschinoga. In any case, Otto Theil alleged that the two were in a romantic relationship—an accusation which entailed severe punishment for both of them.

Theil approached the head of the community and demanded that he file a formal complaint against Wilhelmine Krauslach. The official, however, decided against doing so out of consideration for Krauslach's children, though he did **order the family to** move away. In the spring of 1940, the Krauslachs left the manor estate. Their new place of employment was another estate: Weißenburg, located near Weißensee, just a few kilometers away.

Shortly after the move, Wilhelmine Krauslach sent a letter to Stanislaus Kuschinoga, who remained behind at the manor estate. She dictated the letter to another prisoner of war, who translated it into Polish for her. The exact reason for this particular approach is unclear. Along with the letter, Krauslach sent a few eggs.

Otto Theil discovered the letter while searching Kuschinoga's quarters.

GUARDSMAN THEIL

After inspecting the handwriting on the paper in which each individual egg was wrapped, I was able to establish that they were pages from a school notebook belonging to Mrs. Krauslach's daughter (...). Indeed, even the date indicated on the letter—Weißenburg, April 16—was sufficient to reveal who had sent the letter.

NARRATOR

Otto Theil filed a complaint against Wilhelmine Krauslach.

On July 1, 1940, the public prosecutor brought charges before the Special Court in Weimar.

INDICTMENT

I charge her with having continuously and willfully maintained relations with a prisoner of war in Kranichborn during February and March 1940, in a manner that grossly offends the healthy moral sensibilities of the people.

The accused denies having engaged in prohibited relations with the Pole. In particular, she claims not to have maintained any intimate relations with him. Even though the latter cannot be proven, it is nonetheless established—based on her own statements—that she repeatedly sought the proximity of the accused and gave him gifts. Through her conduct, she has undoubtedly sullied the honor of German womanhood and thereby grossly offended the healthy moral sensibilities of the people.

NARRATOR

The intimate relationship could not be proven. Wilhelmine Krauslach was sentenced to one year of imprisonment. She began serving her sentence at the Leipzig-Kleinmeusdorf prison. At this time, she was already pregnant with her fifth child.

After four months—presumably due to her pregnancy—her imprisonment was temporarily suspended. Back in Weißensee, Krauslach wrote several petitions for clemency.

WILHELMINE KRAUSLACH

The four months I have served have left us in a state akin to having lost everything in a fire. All of our laundry is so torn and filthy that it seems utterly beyond repair. Should no one take pity on me—since only my punishment is being alleviated—I would nonetheless beg that someone be assigned to me to look after my family and keep my children in order. My children are my pride, and I do not wish for any further harm to befall them while they remain without supervision.

Had I not already been forced to endure so much hardship in my life, I would not be facing this punishment now; for I acted solely out of compassion.

As a child, I lost my parents; later, I married into a farming life, where one struggles to scrape by, making one's way in the world on a few pennies.

Today, a great misfortune has befallen me under which my family must suffer deeply.

I repent of my crime with all my heart and promise never again to come into conflict with the law. For these reasons, I once more implore you—in my hour of greatest distress—to kindly give my petition your favorable consideration.

NARRATOR

Since her husband had been conscripted into the Wehrmacht by this time, Wilhelmine Krauslach was not required to return to the penal institution following the birth of her child.

Four years later, in 1944, Wilhelmine Krauslach was denounced once again. She was accused of having conversed with an unidentified French prisoner of war. She allegedly drank coffee and exchanged jokes with him. The indictment stated:

INDICTMENT

She has thus willfully maintained relations with a prisoner of war in a manner that grossly offends the healthy moral sensibilities of the people.

NARRATOR

Wilhelmine Krauslach was sentenced to four months in prison. She was once again incarcerated in Leipzig-Kleinmeusdorf. The fate of the French prisoner of war cannot be reconstructed; that of Stanislaus Kuschinogas also remains unknown.