

# **THE FATE OF SOVIET SOLDIERS IN GERMAN CAPTIVITY**

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On September 25, 1941, about three months after the beginning of the war between the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, a twenty-seven-year-old lieutenant in the Red Army, Aleksej Wassiljewitsch Schurawljos, was captured unhurt near the small town of Borislav. He was unmarried, a fitter by profession, of Russian nationality, born near Moscow. For some weeks he stayed in the prisoner-of-war camp (Stalag) 360 Rowno in western Ukraine, from where he was transferred to Stalag 365 Wladimir-Wolynsk near the former Polish border. There he was registered with a so-called personal card, issued an identity disk with a special number, and photographed. From Wladimir-Wolynsk he was taken to Czestochowa in the Generalgouvernement and then, on August 4, 1942, to a special Soviet Officer-Camp at Hammelburg, north of Würzburg in Germany. Because of hard work and prolonged insufficient nourishment, the five-foot-four Schurawljos arrived at Hammelburg weighing ninety-five pounds. His emaciated condition may have caused him to contract incurable tuberculosis of the lungs. In the camp hospital he died on March 28, 1943, and was buried in grave number 518 in the camp cemetery. Schurawljos's fate is typical for an ordinary Soviet officer in German captivity,<sup>1</sup> but as far as his relatives are concerned, he is still listed as missing.

## **A New Important Source: The Card Index of the Soviet POWs**

Only a few years ago historians said it would be impossible to discover the fate of any Soviet POW in this precise way. Because of the racial—Nazis considered Slavs an inferior race—and anticommunist war against the Soviet Union, Germans treated these captured soldiers much worse than those of other countries.<sup>2</sup> The Germans justified such treatment with the argument that the Soviet Union had not signed the Geneva Convention of 1929. This convention demanded, among other things, registering each POW's basic military and personal data. Registration meant some legal security because all the names were posted to the International Red Cross and from there to the home country, so it constituted a kind of responsibility toward those who had been captured. But in the case of the Soviet POWs, the German Army did without registration because the Germans were not interested, historians said, in the fate of "communists," and if many of them died, it would not be the Germans' problem.

The example of Aleksej Schurawl'jow shows that this opinion is incorrect. As far as the bureaucracy was concerned, he was treated in nearly the same way as any American or British soldier in German captivity. He was registered in the second camp he came to, and his death was registered as well. And it was just normal procedure for the Hammelburg camp administration to forward his file cards later to Berlin to the Wehrmachtauskunftsstelle (WASSt), which officially collected all information on German soldiers as well as on POWs (e.g., transfers to other camps, hospitalization, or death).

Because of the increased bombing in 1943, all these POW files of the WASSt were taken to Meiningen (Thuringia), where they were discovered by American troops in April 1945. Four months later they handed over the card index of the Soviet POWs to the Red Army. And from that moment on, the files vanished. Their absence, and the lack of bureaucratic sources on Red Army soldiers in the German archives at all, seemed to substantiate the opinion of those historians mentioned above.

But in fact the cards of the confirmed dead were brought to what is called today the Central Archive of the Russian Ministry of Defense (CAMO), at Podolsk.<sup>3</sup> The cards of Soviet soldiers thought to be still alive were checked by the secret service, the NKVD, and afterward kept in its archive for the oblast in which they lived. And all these indexes are still in the possession of its successors in the Belorussian KGB Archives of Minsk, Brest, Witebsk, and the other oblast capitals as well as in that of the Russian secret service (FSB) in Moscow.<sup>4</sup>

In 1997 my fellow historian Rolf Keller and I were invited by the Russian General Staff to see the WASSt files in Podolsk. After our return we published a paper on our results and in which we publicly asked that these files be completely opened for scientific and humanitarian reasons, and for the work of the memorials in all the countries German troops had run POW camps. Supported by institutions such as the German Bundesarchiv and the Red Cross in Germany, Russia, and Belarus, a combined German-Russian project was launched in September 2000 (Belarus took part in 2002). It included opening up the card index of some 50,000 captured Soviet officers. The work at Podolsk and Moscow was finished at the end of 2002, and as a result the personal card of Aleksej Schurawl'jow can be seen. After that the project started to work on noncommissioned officers and enlisted men, and in the end their names will be released, too—more than 400,000 in total.<sup>5</sup> This number will be doubled by all the files that lie—still unrevealed—in the archives of the various secret services. The following

short survey on the fate of the Soviet POWs is based mostly on the Podolsk and KGB material and on that of the German Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv.

### **The Annihilation of the Soviet Ideology**

“The fate of the Soviet POWs is a tragedy of the greatest extent,” said Alfred Rosenberg, the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, in March 1942.<sup>6</sup> He was right. More than two million had died up to then, and there were still three years of captivity left.<sup>7</sup> About three million people were to die by May 1945, that is, fifty percent of all Soviet POWs, compared with one percent of captured Americans.

The war against the Soviet Union was a war of annihilation. Nazi Germany wanted to extinguish the “evil of communism” and those who were looked upon as supporters of that ideology. From the beginning, hatred was concentrated on the political officers of the Red Army, the commissars and *politruks* (captains). More than two weeks before the invasion, the German High Command laid down in the infamous commissar order that “political commissars of all kinds, who are the real bearers of resistance, can be expected to mete out treatment to our prisoners that is full of hate, cruel and inhuman.” Consequently, they were, “as a matter of principle, to be finished off immediately with a weapon,”<sup>8</sup> that is, at the point of capture but also in the first camp they came to. Without these political officers and the fear of them, there would be no resistance by the regular Red Army soldier, the Germans thought. The commissars were regarded as the personification of Bolshevism, and Bolshevism and Jewishness were the same. So the commissar was the Jew and the Jew the commissar. “Slay all commissars and Jews! They are your disaster, your ruin,”<sup>9</sup> reads a German flier for the Red Army.

In German eyes, officers and politics were mutually exclusive, and therefore each political commissar was an irregular, not a regular, soldier and therefore could not be a POW and be treated as such. So officers of the Wehrmacht had an ideological and a formal argument for having commissars killed either by their own troops or by the commands of the security police.

But how could a commissar be recognized? He had certain badges on his uniform, but he might pull them off and appear as a normal POW, and maybe be transported to Germany and work there. That was a dangerous ideological situation in Nazi eyes: such men might poison their surroundings and even the German people. Therefore in July 1941 Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the security police and the SD

(secret service of the NSDAP), ordered in coordination with the German High Command all Gestapo authorities to send so-called Einsatzkommandos (task forces) to the POW camps in their sphere of responsibility to check that all Soviet soldiers were ideologically “tolerable.”<sup>10</sup> But commissars were not the only “intolerable” ones. That group also included all important Soviet functionaries, leading persons of the authorities and the economy, Jews, “communist fanatics,” intellectuals, and “professional revolutionaries.”

Supported by military intelligence in the camps and by other POWs, three or four policemen decided after some minutes of interrogation the fate of each prisoner examined. “Guilty” meant discharge from captivity, being sent to a concentration camp, and being killed there. In Eastern Europe the execution often happened just outside the camp. In a brief report the policemen listed the reasons why the suspicious person had to be executed.

In the case of Grigorij Efimowitsch Ladyk, a thirty-six-year-old chief politruk, the three-sentence record reads as follows: “I made false statements about my personal data at that time because I was afraid of being recognized as a political leader and of being shot afterwards. In the hospital I was betrayed by a comrade of my former unit. Now I am giving you my correct personal data.” It was April 15, 1942, in POW Stalag 308 Neuhammer, in Lower Silesia. Only one day later he was shot and cremated at Gross Rosen Concentration Camp.<sup>11</sup> In just one camp, Stalag 326 Senne, in eastern Westphalia, 4,556 men were handed over to the Einsatzkommando up to March 1, 1945, and most were sent to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. At least 1,000 of them were shot before August 1942, and later the others were forced into slave labor or murdered.<sup>12</sup> Rudolf Höß, commander of Auschwitz, conducted his first gas-chamber “experiments” at the beginning of September 1941: about 600 Soviet POWs were taken there from the Neuhammer camp and murdered some hours later. Here perhaps was the beginning of the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup>

Like Ladyk, at least 40,000 men were executed in POW camps in Germany itself until the summer of 1942. So far there have not been exact figures concerning Eastern Europe, and nothing about the remaining three years of war—but now, with the material available in the archives of the former Soviet Union, we can analyze personal cards in the project mentioned above and determine the fate of many missing persons handed over to the Gestapo.

### **The Living Conditions**

As for those accepted as “tolerable,” they were not assured of survival. Christian Streit and Karel Berkhoff describe very precisely the dreadful travel conditions in the East and most particularly from the eastern theater to Germany. Marching for long distances, with hardly any water or food, and traveling in unheated box cars in winter claimed thousands of victims. The camps the Red Army soldiers were brought to in 1941–42 were not at all prepared for them. At first they had to live in the open air without shelter. The earth caves they then built would often collapse, suffocating the inmates. And barracks they built in winter became overcrowded.<sup>14</sup> From the spring of 1942 onward, accommodations improved, but the housing of Soviet POWs was normally simpler and at the same time more overcrowded than that for other POWs.

As a result of this situation, diseases were already breaking out in August 1941. First it was dysentery, followed by spotted fever (typhus) in the autumn, and finally tuberculosis from 1942 until the end of the war. In the Senne camp, for example, about 600 people died of dysentery in the second half of 1941, and nearly seventy percent of those 1,600 dead (of an estimated 15,000 people buried there) already known today by the project and prior research were killed by tuberculosis by 1945.<sup>15</sup>

Nazi Germany justified these casualties by citing the huge number of Soviet soldiers. There had been far more than they had expected, many German officers said after the war. So there were not enough railroad cars available to transfer them to Germany, and the camps were not finished because of a lack of materials. These were justifiable reasons in wartime and might have been a part of the problem, but some facts undermine this defense. The German Army service regulation for building new POW camps stipulated that they should be ready within ninety days, and the first conferences concerning Soviet POW questions started in March 1941, three months before the first transports arrived in Germany. And there are many examples of transportation units that refused to transport Soviet soldiers because of fear of lice or simply because it was so-called Russians being shipped to the West.

But in the areas of nutrition and treatment by military personnel, the German High Command, the National Socialist Party, and representatives of big business did officially announce that Soviet POWs should be handled in a way quite different from the provisions of the Geneva Convention.

After the experiences of World War I, it was a main principle of the German government that its own people and its own troops should not go without food. Soviet

soldiers were thought to be communists, and their home state had refused to sign the Geneva Convention. So there were two reasons to give them smaller rations than all other POWs, and these rations gradually decreased up until the winter of 1941–42. Orders were issued in each camp administration: nonworking and weakened soldiers, meaning those who still had to recover, received the smallest rations. And the camp administrations followed that order. After a tour of inspection, a district POW commander in Belorussia wrote about the army's Michailowski POW collecting point on December 1, 1941, reporting that it held more than 10,000 Red Army soldiers at that time. The previous night 144 of them had died. Nutrition was completely insufficient. Working POWs officially got 200 grams of bread, one kilogram of potatoes, and 200 grams of cabbage, nonworking prisoners about half of that quantity, but in fact it was less.<sup>16</sup> Quartermaster General Wagner described it with one short sentence: "Non-working POWs in the camps must starve."<sup>17</sup> And so they did—in the Occupied Eastern Territories as well as in Germany. Guards in various camps took pictures, horrific testimonies of inhumanity.

At the end of 1941 the German government recognized that in the future it would urgently need the Soviet POWs as workers in its economy. Therefore on December 18 the High Command ordered measures to restore the working power of the Red Army soldiers. But it did not put forth humanitarian reasons for this. The measures were tied to a specific purpose (i.e., workers were needed) and would not change the ideological attitude toward the Soviets, German officials said. But at that moment it was impossible to increase rations, they added, and so the camps should try to give them two warm meals instead of one—with the same quantity.

And so for the men concerned nothing changed. They still had to endure constant hunger that forced them to eat anything that seemed to be edible. Witnesses talk of cannibalism in some camps, and there are not only witnesses; terrifying photos exist, some of which are in my personal possession, and there were orders to execute those found guilty of this. Years later a camp doctor remembered having seen completely undernourished prisoners who could not be restored to working power even by normal rations. American, British, or French POWs were able to receive parcels from their families, containing cigarettes, chocolate, and coffee, so that their standard of living was often higher than that of their guards, while Soviet POWs begging for food were part of everyday life in wartime Germany. Germans who were children in those days always remember the meager figures of half-starving Soviet soldiers

staggering to their workplaces. Giving them bread meant being threatened with imprisonment. Their casualties were often caused by “exhaustion,” “cardiac insufficiency,” or “wasting away,” which may certainly be true in many cases, but which surely does not explain the many deaths of normal males ages eighteen to forty.

The reason for this bad treatment was the designation of all Soviet human beings as subhuman creatures. As officially decreed by the Nazi government, their survival did not matter.<sup>18</sup> An incident at Krupp Steel in February 1942 serves well as an example. The head of the boiler construction department urged additional food rations for undernourished Russian POWs working for him. They received 300 grams of bread in the early morning and the next ration after 6 p.m. At first, he was successful and got extra food, but then the head of the German Arbeitsfront accused him of having pity on Bolsheviks. The former answered that the POWs were sent as workers in the first place, not as communists, and undernourished people would not be able to produce locomotives. The latter replied that those who work were not more useful than those who did not. Bolsheviks were soulless people; if the first 100,000 perished, then another 100,000 would come to replace them.<sup>19</sup>

From the beginning the Nazi leaders demanded such an attitude. To the German soldiers the Soviet POW was no comrade, Hitler said in March 1941. Consideration would be wrong, even dangerous, because the Soviet POW would use any opportunity to harm the German people. And therefore the utmost caution was advised. On September 8, 1941, the High Command published an order for all guarding Red Army soldiers; the document was headed: “Bolshevism is the sworn enemy of National Socialist Germany.” There were six points, and the first one read as follows: “Ruthless measures have to be taken at the least signs of insubordination and disobedience. To break resistance use weapons without mercy. Fleeing POWs are to be shot at once without a warning and with the real intention of hitting.” The fourth read: “Softness even toward POWs who are willing to work and be obedient is wrong. He will interpret that as weakness and draw his own conclusions.”<sup>20</sup>

The guards followed the instructions rigorously. The first death list of Stalag Bergen-Belsen from August 7 to October 10, 1941, contains 380 people; thirty-six of them, nearly ten percent, were shot reportedly attempting to escape or resisting.<sup>21</sup> In case of doubt, divergent behavior was to be interpreted as resistance and dealt with accordingly. In Bad Vöslau in Austria the POWs of a working unit got their ration at noon on October 26, 1941. The guards told their leader, a sergeant, that one Soviet was

not obeying, and that his mess gear was dirty. His ration was halved immediately. At the moment he got his soup he suddenly tipped his gear and spilled it on the sergeant. The latter took his pistol and shot the POW at once, in the head. The medical report gives the impression of normal proceedings.<sup>22</sup> Many other examples exist.<sup>23</sup> The personal cards also reveal how common this brutal treatment was: the camp administrations often wrote on the cards, “shot because of escape” or “shot because of resistance.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Soviet POWs: Victims of Two Dictatorships**

Finally, however, in spring 1945 or earlier in the Occupied Eastern Territories, liberation came. But liberation did not mean the end of pain, and, most of all, it did not mean freedom. Many of the weakened men died in the first weeks after the arrival of the Allied troops because of the consequences of years of malnutrition and exploitation. The American, British, and Soviet authorities forced the survivors to go back to the USSR, although many of them refused to do so, for they knew what would happen to them. They knew the Stalin order of August 16, 1941, in which he called each POW a traitor to the Soviet Union because he had not fought to the death.<sup>25</sup> Many of the former POWs committed suicide, some even in the United States or in Great Britain.<sup>26</sup>

The NKVD established so-called filtration camps where those being repatriated were asked what they had done during German captivity. All the documents they had were confiscated so that they would have no chance to prove that they put up anything like resistance. Their secret service file included many documents that stemmed from German captivity, too, and would accompany them for the rest of their lives. About 1,800,000 Soviet POWs were liberated and returned to the Soviet Union, a considerable number were forced into slave labor or sentenced to ten to twenty-five years imprisonment in Siberian or Arctic camps. Many of them died there.

All repatriated POWs, even those who returned unpunished, became second-class people. After their return they were obliged to move to a given town or village not necessarily their own. There they had to register within one month. Later, they had great difficulties finding a job, let alone having any career prospects or pursuing higher education. Travel to foreign countries was hardly permitted, and there were a lot of setbacks in everyday life.<sup>27</sup> Not until the dissolution of the USSR did the few survivors begin to talk about their past and to point out the injustices done to them. Even within

their own families they had often kept silent, not wanting to reveal the shame it meant to have been a POW.<sup>28</sup>

According to international law, the former POWs have no particular entitlement to compensation, but perhaps they do in a moral respect. These people—victims of two dictatorships—suffered from, in some cases, more than sixty years of injustice and adversity, longer than any other group did, and they should not remain anonymous. Some memorials such as Senne, Bergen-Belsen, or Zeithain, in Germany, and the German-Russian-Belorussian project, are attempting to bring the POWs' fates into the wider public eye. This is a responsibility toward those whose lives were destroyed by German captivity.

## NOTES

1. For more examples, see Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, ed., *Gedenkbuch verstorbener sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener* (Kassel: Friedhof Hammelburg Bayern, 2002).
2. The only exception is that of the so-called Italian Military Internees. Italy left the Rome-Berlin axis in summer 1943. Italian soldiers were disarmed afterward by German troops and treated as traitors. Because of that, they also got the status of internees, not POWs. See Gerhard Schreiber, *Die italienischen Militärinternierten im deutschen Machtbereich, 1943 bis 1945: Verraten, verachtet, vergessen* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990).
3. There they are part of two departments of the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation; both deal with “irrevocable losses,” those who did not come back to the USSR. Department 11 contains the personal files of officers; department 9, those of noncommissioned officers and enlisted men. See Sergej A. Il’enkow, “Concerning the Registration of Soviet Armed Forces’ Wartime Irrevocable Losses, 1941–1945,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 9:2 (1996), pp. 440–42.
4. Some one thousand cards are also to be found in the Deutsche Dienststelle Berlin, successor of the WAST.
5. Rolf Keller and Reinhard Otto, “Das Massensterben der sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen und die Wehrmachtbürokratie: Unterlagen zur Registrierung der sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941–1945 in deutschen und russischen Institutionen: Ein Forschungsbericht,” *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 1 (1998), pp. 149–80.
6. Nuremberg-document PS-081, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München.
7. The numbers differ considerably. See Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen, 1941–1945* (Bonn, 1997), pp. 128–90, 244–49 (3.3 million dead POWs); Alfred Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im “Fall Barbarossa”* (Heidelberg: Müller, 1981), pp. 224–48 (2.53 million dead POWs). For a summary, see Manfred Zeidler and Ute Schmidt, eds., *Gefangene in deutschem und sowjetischem Gewahrsam 1941–1956: Dimensionen und Definitionen*, in *Berichte und Studien*, no. 23 (Dresden: Hannah-Arendt-Institut Dresden, 1999). It is an important aim of the project to arrive at correct numbers because they were often misused in the political discussion. For Soviet statistics, see G. F. Krivoseev, *Russland und die USSR in den Kriegen des 20. Jahrhunderts: Verluste der bewaffneten Kräfte* (Moscow: Statistische Forschungen, 2001), pp. 235–40.
8. 6 June 1941, RH 2/v.2082, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv Freiburg.
9. Cf. Streit, *Keine Kameraden*, p. 86.

10. Einsatzbefehl Nr. 8 vom 17.7.1941, valid for East Prussia and the Generalgouvernement (Nuremberg-document NO 3414); Einsatzbefehl Nr. 9 vom 21.7.1941, valid for camps with Soviet POWs in Germany (NO 3415); Ergänzende Richtlinien vom 27.8.1941, valid for all camps and working commands in Germany (NO 3448)—all at Institut für Zeitgeschichte München.
11. Personal cards and record in the Minsk KGB-Archive, file 9932/11, p. 102. There was an incorrect interpretation of Ladyk's card and many others with the remark "Gestapo" by the Soviet secret service. They thought these people were collaborators with the Germans and therefore the files do not belong to those of the dead but to those of the survivors, often with the remark "to observe until 1970 or 1980," although these persons had been dead for years.
12. Monthly statistical report, 1 March 1945, 7021-105-7, GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation) Moscow.
13. For the complex of the so-called Aussonderungen, see Reinhard Otto, *Wehrmacht, Gestapo und sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im deutschen Reichsgebiet 1941/42* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998).
14. See Nuremberg-document USSR 422 (1): 17.10.1941, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, barracks for about 80 POWs should be changed in a way they could shelter some 300 ones, Order of the Chef Heeresrüstung und Chef des Ersatzheeres 17.10.1941.
15. For more information on the Senne camp, see Karl Hueser and Reinhard Otto, *Das Stammlager 326 (VI K) Senne 1941–1945: Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene als Opfer des Nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauungskrieges* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1992). On the cemetery of that camp, see Reinhard Otto, "Die Rekonstruktion von Gefangenenfriedhöfen am Beispiel des Lagerfriedhofes des Stalag 326 (VI K) Senne in Ostwestfalen," in *Für die Lebenden—der Toten gedenken* (Dresden: Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten, 2003), pp. 104–19.
16. RH 22/251, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv Freiburg.
17. Nuremberg-document NOKW-1535, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München.
18. For example, there was the Sauckel's program, April 20, 1942, for employing foreign workers and POWs in German war industries. See Nuremberg Document 016-PS, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München. See also the commissar-order.
19. Nuremberg-document 361-D, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München.

20. Nuremberg-document 1519-PS, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München.
21. CAMO (Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation) Podolsk, Dep. 9, 977532-110 (2-110/1959).
22. RH 53-17/181, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv Freiburg.
23. See an order of the commander of the military district VIII Breslau in Silesia from 7 November 1941. Cases in which the guards shot Soviet POWs because of petty reasons were increasing. But the high number of dead POWs showed that sometimes they were so weak that they could not follow an order, which should not be interpreted as resistance (GARF Moscow 7021/148/214).
24. The CAMO database contains the cards of at least 301 officers with the remark “shot while trying to escape.”
25. See Bernd Bonwetsch, “Die Geschichte des Krieges ist noch nicht geschrieben: Die Repression, das Militär und der Große Vaterländische Krieg,” *Osteuropa* 39:11–12 (1989), pp. 1021–38.
26. In the Deutsche Dienststelle Berlin there are files of about 30,000 former Soviet POWs who had been captured by the U.S. Army, some 30,000 by British troops, most with the remark “transferred to Russia” or “repatriated.” Some of them definitely said they did not want to go back because they were sure to be shot by the NKVD. See a list of former officers in the file of Feliks Sbotow, who committed suicide with two others.
27. On repatriation and the number of repatriated persons, see Pavel Polian, *Deportiert nach Hause: Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im “Dritten Reich” und ihre Repatriierung* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001); Vladimir Naumow and Leonid Reschin, “Repressionen gegen sowjetische Kriegsgefangene und zivile Repatrianten in der USSR 1941 bis 1956,” in *Die Tragödie der Gefangenschaft in Deutschland und der Sowjetunion, 1941–1956*, ed. Klaus-Dieter Müller, Konstantin Nikischkin, and Günther Wagenlehner (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1998), pp. 335–64; Ulrike Göken, “Von der Kooperation zur Konfrontation: Die sowjetischen Repatriierungsoffiziere in den westlichen Besatzungszonen,” in Müller, Nikischkin, and Wagenlehner, *Tragödie der Gefangenschaft*, pp. 315–34.
28. Because the Soviet authorities were not familiar with the bureaucracy of the German Army, but maybe because of political reasons as well, the families of missing persons seldom got information about their relatives. Most often, the officials wrote only “missing in Germany,” although it was possible in many cases to inform the family about the cemetery or even the grave—see the example of Aleksej Schurawlow. That means that, in a certain way, the families of the dead were discriminated against, too.