

Dear Messerle,

I am very sad to have to tell you today of the death of our mutual friend.

At the moment I am too moved by the immediate circumstances of this event and so busy with various things that I will limit myself this time to a brief notification and tell you the most important things - without any more details about time or place. When I get your answer to this letter, confirming the old postal address or giving a new one, I will write to you in more detail.

Just like every year, I went with my family to the shore for a three-week vacation. And "Uncle," as we called him, and that is just what he was to our children, spent the last days of his life with us there.

While bathing in the sea one evening he suffered a stroke while swimming and, apparently paralysed on one side, he could only make a few helpless movements with one arm. He was at quite a distance from me and closer to my family, who were hurrying back to shore, since there was a strong current pulling out to sea. Our 12-year old boy shouted: "Uncle, come out further, the sea is pulling! Then he was puzzled by "Uncle's" strange movements since he was usually an excellent swimmer. He told my wife and she shouted to me: "Take care of Uncle, he doesn't seem able to get out!" Then she made sure the children came out safely.

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2B  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2000 2006

I swam to him as fast as I could, grabbed him under the armpits and tried to take him to shore. It was very difficult because I was out of my depth at that point and I was fighting against the current.

My wife and our 14-year-old daughter had run for help in the meantime. But meanwhile I had dragged the now unconscious man into hip-deep water and my son and a boy sent by my daughter approached and pulled him on to the beach. My daughter had hurriedly asked a group of people sitting on the beach for a surf board. The man happened to be a doctor and when he heard we were trying to rescue a drowning man he came running up with her. He immediately began to administer artificial respiration and massage the heart. My wife and daughter ran to the nearby beach restaurant and called the rescue people, who came driving up very soon, but it was all in vain and too late.

Heroically fighting up to his very last breath, just as he had done throughout a long tumultuous life, our friend left us for ever on a subtropical beach.

I will only mention other matters in brief here. Since I was sent to the first aid center, treated by a doctor and sent to bed, the responsibility and worry for everything else fell to my wife. Police pick-up, final release of the corpse in the night, transport to the next town, to the morgue, etc. All of that with innumerable obstacles and dangers which arose from the large age difference. During a severe storm, which made the driver of the police car afraid that they would be hit by a falling tree, she did not get back to the small village until 5 o'clock in the morning, was so agitated that she

could not sleep, and had to go and get a death certificate at 0800 when the office opened. Since we were neither of us in any fit state to drive a car she took a bus back into town, where she made all necessary arrangements at a funeral home. Deceased people are usually buried here within one day.

In spite of all her attempts to do so, she did not manage to fulfill the wish expressed recently by Uncle - to be cremated. In this predominantly Catholic country there are still strict rules about this. If there is no written, notarized request from the deceased person, only a close relative, with the consent of the other relatives, can get permission.

When Lange last visited us, he suggested that, if Uncle died, he should be buried in a double grave at the side of Lange's mother (whom he knew) in a little village nearby. In order to avoid bureaucratic problems he had already told the cemetery administrator that an elderly, sick relative might....This man's good memory for people and names almost ruined everything. It is customary here to remove the lid of the cover one more time before the burial in order to take one's leave of the deceased. When the administrator read the death certificate he said: "Well, that's life, he notified me of someone else and now he's lying here himself!" And then he wanted to open the coffin to see him one more time.

Anyone who has some idea of all that we have been through will be able to understand that my wife's attack of hysteria, which prevented the opening of the coffin, was only half pretense. Enough! Our friend was buried properly and with dignity in a beautiful coffin decorated with flowers. Since

the help of Lange's children might be needed in future for a transfer to another grave, a cremation or transportation, I would advise you to maintain a casual and friendly relationship with them. Remittance of a bridge assistance [loan?] through my mother-in-law, which was suggested by Uncle, might be useful. We just heard from her. Even though she is handicapped by rheumatism she is ready and willing to take over the arrangement [procurement?] for Uncle, whom she esteems and of whose fate she has been informed. And so there is no reason why you could not visit her (if you should consider it necessary). An unfriendly daughter who lives with her does not know anything!

We have just taken care of Uncle's belongings. All the papers, documents, books - every little scrap of paper and all easily moved items have been moved to our home and locked up. At the moment we do not have the time to look through it; when we do, a large part of it will have to be discarded and burned. This will all take a long time. I myself, and probably you too, would like to burn it all immediately. But I am aware of my responsibility. This is so remarkable a fate that there should be something to pass on to his descendants, even if the present generation does not consider this necessary. At the moment, for your part, there is little you can do to help. He burned the letters he received, and there are copies of his. The rest is a muddle of notebooks, hard-to-read but brief diaries, unfortunately all too little literary material and everything mixed up with unimportant bills, newspaper cuttings, household notes, etc. We will have to work through it very carefully to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Since I am more or less informed about all private matters and largely share the deceased's political views, you can leave me to take care of it for

the time being. I will do my utmost to make sure that nothing remains which could be interpreted somehow in a negative way.

Today we met with Ge and Gi at the house and discussed dissolving the household. We decided to wait for you to answer this letter before any final decisions are made about ownership. At the moment they are not doing badly, since their sons make a good living and they want to buy a bigger house. At any rate, they would not want to live in Uncle's house. They are prepared to sell it and send you the proceeds. Value about US \$ 15,000. I know from experience that this will be a long-drawn-out process with additional fees, for since we [words missing--end of page] to prevent "intrusos" from taking possession, people who cannot be gotten rid of. Besides, an abandoned house is immediately demolished and destroyed by criminal types. The only thing left to do is to keep on the housekeeper for the time being - she is quite expensive - and continue to pay her and be happy that she is staying on.

Television, phonograph, etc., have already been brought to my house, a decision still has to be made about them, and also about the old furniture, clothes, household items, etc. I might be able to use some of the furniture, the rest would have to be given away. Please let us know your decision soon.

The rest of Uncle's dollar reserves, his brother's gold watch, are still in storage in our bank safe. If one of you should happen to come over we would hand over everything with a statement of expenses. I can imagine that R. might want to spend a vacation with us some time and walk on the paths near the beach where Uncle went with us on his last day. I want to emphasize that at the moment there is no point in any of you traveling over here.

We believe that we are all unanimous in wanting to continue to maintain the secrecy as before. Not only in order to avoid personal difficulties, but also to let the other side continue to waste time and money on something that is already obsolete.

It might be possible to try to make the mail traffic easier. I am thinking of a suggestion that you made to Uncle a year ago concerning a man living nearby who also receives letters from overseas. Something like that.

Should you want to get in touch with me quickly, or discuss something with me, we now have a telephone in our house, the number is 531 6197, and my wife is usually at home from 1400 on (1800 your time). If you find out the area code for country and town, we could talk comfortably from house to house, or you could call us from a neutral telephone box. When Lange died my wife simply dialed a number (which we got from Eino and which is no longer good) and was able to speak immediately with his children.

I think I have remembered to mention everything of importance and want to close now. We convey our sympathy to all the family and our old bonds remain. With best wishes, especially to you, but also from our house to yours,

Yours

Mu's.