

## ”After All, I Have Only Saved Human Beings” – The Farewell Letter of a German Wehrmacht Sergeant Sentenced to Death for Saving Jews

Anton Schmid was a German Wehrmacht sergeant sentenced to death and executed by the Nazis for saving Jews. Yad Vashem recognized him posthumously as a "Righteous Among the Nations" and planted a tree in his name in the Avenue of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Memorial, Jerusalem. Below are Anton's farewell letter to his wife and a letter from an army priest concerning his execution.

The Letter From The Military Authorities Informing Mrs Schmid of Her Husband's  
Trial  
Office,  
Field post office no. 12546 A,

III

Concerning sergeant Anton Schmid  
Criminal matter  
O.U. 25 March 1942  
Mrs Steffani Schmid ,  
Vienna XX ,  
Klosterneuburger street 78.

Referring to your letter of 16 March 1942, this is to inform you that a law suit is being conducted against your husband at the local military field law court. Since the case is not yet concluded, no further information can be given to you at this point.

Captain and commander.

## Anton Schmid`s Letter

My dear Steffi,

Thinking of you in joy and in sorrow, I am informing you, my dearest, that my verdict has been announced today and that I must part from this world, am sentenced to death. Please remain strong and trust in our dear God who decides the fate of each one of us.

I could not change anything any more, otherwise I would have spared you and Gerta all this. Please forgive me, therefore, I did not want to cause you this pain, but unfortunately it cannot be changed any more. I am ready to die since this is the will of God and His will be done. You must resign yourself to this. I ask you again, please forget the pain which I inflicted upon you, my dear ones, and keep quiet about it. After all, I have only saved human beings, even if they were Jews, and this was my death. Just as I have always done everything for other people, I have also sacrificed everything for other people. Everything else you will hear, because a comrade will visit you and he will tell you how the court judges. Please do read the letters 1-4 which you are sure to receive, you will understand from them that I had intended it differently, but I considered you, my dear ones.

My dear ones, I beg you again, please forget me, it had to be this way, fate has willed it like that. I am concluding these last lines which I am still writing to you and I send many greetings and kisses to the two of you and to you my dearest one in this world and in the other world where I shall be soon in God's hand and I remain your ever loving.

Toni

## The Military Priest`s Letter

Catholic Military Priest

Fritz Kropp

Field post number 38937

Dear Mrs Schmid,

I am herewith fulfilling the sad duty in transmitting to you the last lines which your dear husband has written. On Monday 13 April he had to say goodbye to this world. I was with him during the last hours in order to give him pastoral support. He received once more the holy sacraments and strengthened himself in prayer and in God's word and remained strong to the last moment. His last words were the Lord's Prayer, which I prayed together with him. His last request and his last wish was that you also should remain strong and that you should comfort yourself. I join in this wish, hoping that you find comfort and that there will be a meeting in God and that you continue your hard path in life in strength and courage and in confidence in God's providence.

Your dear husband's grave is in the soldiers' cemetery 1914-1918, in the Wilna part of the city Antotol.

With the most devoted greetings,

Fritz Kropp

War Priest

**Source: Kleinman, Yehudit and Dafni, Reuven (Eds.), *Final Letters – From the Yad Vashem Archive*, London 1991, pp. 102-104.**