

## ”THIS IS OUR HOTEL“

### MAIL OF RUSSIAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN NORWAY IN WW I

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In the spring of 1916 Denmark, Norway, and Sweden started negotiations about internment of sick and wounded Prisoners of War (so called semi-invalid POWs) from Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. This article will cover the Russian POWs in Norway. A total of 600 prisoners were interned in Norway. In general the postage for POW mail between Norway and their home country was free of charge, but it is unknown if the mail inside Norway or other countries was free. The Russian POWs were located in 10 places. These were Espen, Fossegården, Grytting, Heggerud, Holmgaard, Hunder, Konnerudkollen, Losnaos, Myre, and Ring Pensionat. Mail correspondence from all these camps is rare [1]. This article will present letters from Konnerudkollen, Ring Pension, and Espen and the typical signs of recognition.

#### Konnerudkollen

This was a recreation resort (“sanatorium”) before the war. It was located approximately 6 kilometers outside of Drammen. According to Thiesen [1] at one time there were 89 Russians here. Figure 1 shows one of the covers sent from Konnerudkollen. It is cancelled Drammen on 26. September 1917 and shows in addition a censor cancel (“Kontrollert I B”) from the censor office in Kristiania (nowadays called Oslo). The area of Konnerud was almost void at that time and without a post office (it did get one temporarily for half a year in 1946, permanently in 1951). So the closest post office was in Drammen. All the internees asked for political asylum and were accepted when the October revolution broke out.



Fig. 1: Cover from Konnerudkollen to Aspedammen, postmarked 26.9.1917 in Drammen

#### Ring

Ring is located approximately 2 km from Moelv. Until now there has been little information about Russian interned POWs. In John Thiesen's book [1] it is stated: "... a number of Russian semi-invalids was interned. There were no internees here on 2nd of July 1917, but in October there were again 35 Russians interned in Ring."



Fig. 2: Postcard depicting the Ring pension (Parti af Rings Meieri og Landhandleri), postmarked in Kristiania and sent via Petrograd to Tver; franked with 5 Øre

Few mail correspondences are known from this place. One of the known postcards is of special interest regarding its text. The translation from the Russian original is: Front (Fig. 2, top): "This is our hotel". The text on the back reads in the English translation (Fig. 2, bottom): "Sending you, dear Onka, the view of our hotel. The window to our room is hidden by the balcony (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor). On the postcard it looks more boring and worse than it is. Have you got my letters yet? Greetings to all. Strong, strong kisses to you, Yours V." The card is cancelled in Kristiania with an unclear date postmark, censored there and in Petrograd, before an arrival cancel was applied in Tver on 20. November 1917 (Russian calendar).

The next postcard from the same interned POW of the Ring camp (Fig. 3) is machine cancelled at an unknown place (Kristiania again?). The Norwegian and Russian censorship is similar to that on the postcard in figure 2. It was also sent to Tver where it arrived at 11. December 1917 (Russian calendar). It has a cancel "Service des prisonniers de guerre" and "Franc de port". In spite of this it bears a 10 Øre stamp. The text says in Russian: "6.XI.1917 Yesterday I travelled, dear Onka, to the (small) town of Lillehammer (as you can see on the other side) and there I bought something; used all my money, even though I borrowed 10 Kroner. So that I had here something (with me) I bought a not to bad dress (like a sport dress) for 83 Kroner, (it) fitted well, but it looks like I will not use it for very long, so that (I) wait for a package from you, with a dark dress and autumn coat. In one way or another (I will be) photographed in the suit and send you the picture, wait (for the picture)! My old coat became useless, you may not believe it! (continued)".



Fig. 3: Postcard depicting Lillehammer, postmarked in Kristiania and sent via Petrograd to Tver; franked with 10 Øre

The text continues on the third card (Fig. 4) and reads: "6 XI 1917 (continuation) This (small) town is 25 km north of us; with the railroad it is almost a hour. Very clean, beautiful and good shops, because many tourists are here. I like very much the Norwegian girls (in private, most of them with small and beautiful mouths!). I'm afraid that I will fall in love here! Three English officers have already married here and a Russian shall also do it. My health is better. The weather is getting worse. Yours V.". Similar to card number 2, but this time franked with 5 Øre.



Fig. 4: Postcard postmarked with an illisible mark and sent via Kristiania and Petrograd to Tver; franked with 5 Øre

Finally is the fourth and last card (Fig. 5): "10.XI.1917 Dear Onka! I'm now sitting in the canteen in this house in the second floor and eat lunch. From here to the train, then to the hotel. How do you live? Have you received my letters? Regards to Mum, and all friends. Kissing you V.". The postcard is franked with 10 Øre and cancelled "Lillehammer 11.XI.17". Additional cancels show again Petrograd 11.11.17 and Tver 2.12.17 (Russian calendar). The postcard was sent right before the Russian October revolution, but arrived right after the revolution. It has been censored in Petrograd.

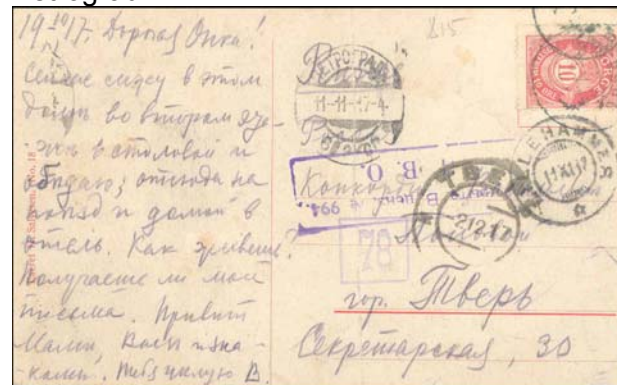


Fig. 5: Postcard depicting a street in Lillehammer, postmarked in Lillehammer and sent via Petrograd to Tver; franked with 10 Øre

Another interesting postcard has also turned up. It shows some of the Russian POWs that were interned at Ring (Fig. 6). You can easily see that the picture was taken in front of the building that is depicted in figure 2.



Fig. 6: Picture postcard depicting the interned POWs in front of the Ring Pension

### **References:**

- [1] Thiesen, John; Prisoners of War and Internees in Norway in World War I 1914-1919; Oslo, Norway 2006, 120 pages
- [2] Koop, Burkhard; Interniert in Norwegen während des Ersten Weltkrieges

### **Espen**

Espen is located approximately 8 km from Strandlykja to the east of lake Mjøsa. In July 1917 73 semi-invalids were interned there [1,2]. Figure 7 shows the standard POW cards used on 4. April 1918 in Espen. It has a postage free cancel “Krigsfangepost, Norge” (meaning “Prisoners of war, Norway”), and an oval censor cancel used in Kristiania.



Fig. 7: POW formular postcard from Espen with censor cancel from Kristiania