

Letter from Squadron Leader Jack V Hay
(revised later, as Wing Commander)
to his daughter Sheila.

Jack Hay had been in the Air Force in the
First World War — not ~~sure~~ whether in RFC
or earliest official RAF days.

Same address.

15th June, 1940.

My dear Speaker,

I'd be obliged if you did not address me in the language of the most particular care of British courage not to be found still living today! I've been writing an effort to answer yours of 16th May - a flight morning - which did not reach me till 1st June! (I think date I had 25 letters, for first time since 14/5/40). And not one single letter has reached me since! I'm so damn tired that this will probably be completed tomorrow. But make any mistakes about those parashute troops being fury, as will appear from your ignorant ignorance. Some of our files mention two hops, or American marks or something. They were shot on spot. Others have dropped as mess, a brother been ~~severed~~ similarly dealt with, & I have furnished myself the pleasure of putting a bullet through the head of any parashute I may look if he is dressed in any uniform other than his own! ~~but~~ in old black without any confusion. pity all our delightful refugee army aliens were to show up at the start. They are geniuses. We are not - we have lots of information about Hitler he only had one battle - in the Atlantic about 3 weeks ago. Yes, we made a considerable one of Hamburg - Bremen, also of Ruhleben, British take Berlin, Berlin - Magdeburg, & other places. Since you wrote, we've done lots more, & now here we have a colossal repetition with the French, military & civil. There will shortly be a raid starting at - about 20 min. It doesn't matter mentioning it as it will all be over by time you get this, & there is nothing left to comment to - a raid. Well, this your letter arrived, a go now for history. Writing small as running short of paper - 2 sheets & 1 envelope left. You have probably heard of my engagement on morning of 10th May by now from other sources. Anyways, I was off flying to Paris, I did do it all again! Then at 15th up to 0200 daily a sort with my troops & then parashute fitted. On 15th, till managing Director I'd got someone else out for a change, & was not getting up till 0730. At 0200, mid-Morn, dug me out full of apologies, but would I please arise, collect me 30 min. hurry, put on board a coach, & nine men, seven hit, also myself with all hit, a present from an Olympe girl friend. By 0415 I'd packed, got ready, over a return of 2 hrs a boat reported ready to leave. At 0430, I got the off. At 0730 the plane got bombed! After I'd gone

But nothing changed. I trudged west, and north - hardly weather. As it is now very all rainy, I breakfasted in Neuve, then refugees told their tales. Of night in the open - of roads given by them except during day. So on to Souilly, there held up by enormous tank barriers. Of long roads, found them tanks (only don't know) had got right through to forest of Coniféres where they were being rammed up. Finally after long delay, got through (or round by another line) on to other side of barrier, a tamed sort of forest with battle boulders a laurel grove. Incidentally, forest of Cernonville is full of willow trees & the valley is vast proportion. I trudged on to Amiens, - then to Chaville for orders. (You will appreciate I am only certain place names now as information would be useless to them) At the latter place I was staying, but ordered to go 17 km. out to form a new Hqrs. There found it was improv. so dug in an spot a road I could move when given order where to go - which I never got. In the pub (known by a number, ten) I found the same old disbarred, one with over 70, & 25 years ago, who remembered me. I also found another kindly-looking inhabitant, who told me my Little Paulette had married an English! Even had two offspring (at nine!) a revisited the town whiles. And lots more don't tell I know. Opposite was an armorer, a being down to 10 rounds for my special gun (having discharged 20 at them on 10th May) I managed to buy up the side stock of 80 rounds. Next door a cafe, kept by aluminum but amazing female of 35 or so. When we could always get drinks at 4 hours. I shall refer to her later. On the Sunday I buried with the local country court judge & the public prosecutor a in his fine. At 2300, I was addressing, very early for bed, then I got a call from a reliable source that it would be well to get out. I wouldn't, but suddenly got a hand letter, packed kit, & left about 0030, going out to woods near aerodrome there. I'd left my truck 6 km. at. To go back, also it had to wait on Sunday I met a French Colonel (tirely) whom I'd last seen at Châlons weeks before. With him a truck general. Neither had washed, shaved or eaten properly for 5 days. He general himself told me of a road he'd run, for about 2½ miles just me

jumbled mass of dead civilian — mostly of course, with that morning selective accuracy of the Huns, women & children. All civilian gassed from the air till none left alive. The Hun does it with relish — but hates a Hurricane as a trout! However, over 3000 of the bestards have been shot down since 10 May — pity they didn't all come in flames a long time ago. And so we road 1 took, 17 Km. took 2 hours, choked with refugees by all stages, mostly pathetic sights, a bad to well the hot & Km. distance traffic & got it cleared. Clear'd we did — the poor b.f.'s could hardly think for themselves. To return, at 0030 I got to work, a walked about till 0300, then a waiting refugee, fought a camp bed on which lay till 0500 when sound troops. (N.B. They also fought half a battle & Black died, think I removed from Hun temptation!) At 0620 I heard tanks roar off back of Abbeville. At 0625, didn't it morning darkness, six cracked off an aerodrome! Not a good. I waited till 0900, then gave orders to take. Knowing the coast road would be fully choked with refugees, infinitely worse than in 1914, & also knowing some of them in the 1st early training area, I took by roads all way. The other alternative I'd turned down was gained a one village on way, bombed. So just by luck got out again & right time a truly right road. At Dieppe the army were rather unhelpful, no hospital for PoWen. There found one of the biggest b.f. town major I've struck. He told me I ought to be back there next, N.E. of Abbeville. I told him whatever curious idea the Army might hold, it was as fast & an R.A.F. officer's duty to allow himself, trooper, a trumpet to be captured if he could avoid same. He didn't like me at all! We ran out to stay at a little pub at Villeneuve, which you may know, for the night, a most delightful spot a full moon — all most peaceful, a excellent dinner by proprietor. Half way through a signed note, he added in to say his belle-voeux had just returned from 10 Km. out (we just hear on border going off to Italy) & was a refugee from Abbeville, which shocked me more than somewhat. This was the owner of the self previously referred to. When she got in she was a bit shattered. The town had been bombed for 5 hours by day, up to 30 aircraft, H.B. a incendiary. Her wife had been burnt over her head, including her two dogs shot up in kitchen, while they were in cellar. The streets, full of refugees

had been turned into a shambles, a short a third of town burnt out. And the first thing I could get out was "Mon Dieu, what R.A.F. sort nevertheless?" During a lull they had come up to see what was on, a found two fighters close together so started a going on zig-zag away & then fight did they shoot down between them. This reminds me of another rather frightening episode in her café's night before. We were sitting one side having our nightcap, she - French woman, sitting t'other side reading quietly to herself, with two small kids, suddenly rushed across to us, said she was a French, at Belgian refugee, she'd killed English officer & Ame; she had nowhere to lay her head that night or for the kids to sleep (about 7 & 5) & that the French could do nothing about it although the French authorities could do nothing, she was sure English officers could. And for me I was too shattered to say I wasn't English! However, she got her bed that night. And we help appreciate this when her next morning. I'm getting too damn tired to continue - to be included in an int'l of the 16th 16/6/40. Having dinner, a short space before I go out from 2200 till just midnight. From there not by telephone or to another place which probably shall not be mentioned, expecting there to get news to my Hypo. which I expected to be several hundred miles away. Instead of this, I found myself journeying south for the moment, for they were there! We'd been pulled out to rest at after a few days. I got sent off of the line again on a special job, which mostly meant walking it over the place & getting back towards midnight. But then we were night have been a theme resort - when in, we kind alongside river and down pretty fast; back at for time, but never had the chance, being too damn tired if we did get back in time. After a few days of that, back to where I was from, by air this time, both trips being over one of the famous touring localities of France. We went off seeing the country. Again though more bombing by it being there doesn't happen. Finally we got orders to trek. I'd hoped to via train by road, but had to accompany the managing director by air. Got up at 0300 to help ready troops take camp, then left at 0630. We were quite up in how late getting off, in brilliant away hot weather. Come when was

not direct, & in ascent it was so hot that I had to remove coat before we'd make into Sivola. And that at much after 8pm! The only cool sight in the top of the Pyrennes covered in snow, down we slumped course. The heat of the Mediterranean would appear to be no more than the heat of Peccay on a fine day! There's no to our bush destination, a no heating, the heat simply got at a bit you in the eye. The country there I now am in is a bit extraordinary — rocks, limestone hills, crevices & cliffs, flat acid plains, stones, ligurian, olive & almond groves, dense & overhanging vine about 10ft. per h., pebbles in orchards just rags — hedges of red japonica, quaint villages, & until 2 days ago, blast of wild heat, which nearly flattened even me the other morning. I just got to a shady café & outside some cold beer, in time to feel present going right out. Bought a topee that day, a dark green essential. Then we had couple of thunderstorms which cleared the air, a last night the wind started blowing, following thunder, & has been blasting all day. We are in an exceedingly pleasant & relaxed spot here, & the hand we absolutely got at to do anything for us. One old crew dashed up to us the other day a sail. "Merriam, mes flâtières! We blindly sailed just day?" "Peccay c'est vous qui sort les voiles sauveurs de la France — flâtière que l'armée, flâtière que personne!" If you want trouble, buy Sicily! We are still entirely cut off from all exterior mail, & I can see any real prospect of getting any at all at present which is damned annoying. By the way, here's a true story of an unusual Spitfire, the "best of" an Ity (or ayeetic) broken the other day, & so frightened the Bravo italians that, petrified with fear, he dove into the sea in frantic haste to get away! And a single Savoia attacked ten Wolf bombers — the one he picked out first he didn't hit, but all the crew stepped out in parachutes, very quickly.

The only thing I hope is that both those wretched little Mursi brats get what they
inflame a burn quite slowly. One, though, is very safely staying in S. America —
it's safer there, in the R.A.F. are more dangerous than Abyssinian. Well, it's
time for me to go at the date.

Best love,

Dolly

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