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Inspection of German concentra-
tion camp for political prisoners
located at Buckenwald on the north
edge of Weimar. made by Brig. Gen.
Eric F. Wood. Lt. Col. Chas. H. Ott.
and CWO. S.M. Dye, on the morning
of 16th April 1945.

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P.W. & D.P. Division
U.S. Group Control Council, A.P.O. 742

*My personal
file Mr. BA.*

Annex No. To Rcn. Report of 21st April, 1945.

INSPECTION OF GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMP FOR POLITICAL
PRISONERS LOCATED AT BUCKENWALD ON THE NORTH EDGE OF
WEIMAR.

Made by Brig. Gen. Eric F. Wood, Lt. Col. Chas. H. Ott, and CWO. SM. Dye,
on the morning of 16th April, 1945.

1. In addition to an American Officer guide, the party was also accompanied by Commandant Rene L'Hopital (former ADC to Marshal Foch, DSM, Officer of the Legion of Honor, MVO, etc.; a personal friend of many Americans including Brig. Gen. Hanford McKider, the late Theodore Roosevelt Jr, Maj.Gen. Frank Parker, Franklin D'Olier, Adm. Byrd), who had been a prisoner in the camp during the two months prior to its capture. He weighed 95 lbs. as against a normal weight of 175 lbs. (See photo No. 2); but was in far better physical condition than the average of his fellow prisoners (due to his having been in this camp only 2 months).



2. History of the Camp: It was founded when the Nazi Party first came into power in 1933, and has been in continuous operation ever since - although its largest populations date from the beginning of the present war. U.S. armor over-ran the general area in which the camp is located on 12th April. Its S.S. guards had decamped by the evening of 11th April. Some U.S. Admin. personnel and supplies reached the camp on "Friday the 13th" of April - a red-letter day for the surviving inmates.

3. Surviving population: numerically, by nationality, as of 16th April, 1945:-

French	2,900
Polish	3,800
Hungarians	1,240
Jugoslavs	570
Russians	4,380
Dutch	324
Belgians	622
Austrians	550
Italians	242
Czechs	2,105
Germans	1,800
Dutch	260
Anti-Franco Spanish & Miscellaneous	1,207
	<u>20,000</u>

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21 APR.

4. Character of Surviving Population: Males only, including 1,000 boys under 14 years old. Intelligentsia and "leadership" personnel from all of Europe; anyone and everyone of outstanding intellectual or moral qualifications, or of "democratic" or anti-Nazi inclinations OR THEIR RELATIVES. For instance, as to the French inmates, they included 4 anti-Vichy members of parliament; professors of Pasteur Institute, Univ. of Paris, Univ. of Caen, etc.; 8 high-ranking anti-Vichy French generals (including Gen. Vermeau who was at one time C. of S.), and the son of one of them; and French engineers, lawyers, editors and other professional men of the higher brackets. A particular inclination for incarcerating prominent Jews was manifest, there being 4,000 of them among the 20,000 survivors (these are inclusive in the nationalities listed in the preceding paragraph). Jews were given even worse treatment than the others. For instance, no Jew was ever "promoted" from the "Little Camp" (see below). A few inmates were from time to time ransomed by their families by personal payments to S.S. officers and liberated to spread the word, among other leadership or intellectual anti-Nazi personnel throughout Europe, as to the penalties (internment in this camp and similar ones) for anti-Nazism.

5. Mission of the Camp: An extermination factory. Mere death was not bad enough for anti-Nazis. Means of extermination: starvation; complicated by hard work, abuse, beatings and tortures, incredibly crowded sleeping conditions (see below), and sickness (for instance, typhus rampant in the camp; and many inmates tubercular). By these means many tens of thousands of the best leadership personnel of Europe (including German democrats and anti-Nazis) have been exterminated. For instance, 6 of the 8 French generals originally committed to the camp, and the son of the one of them had died there (and the 2 surviving French generals appear to be beyond rehabilitation). The recent death rate was about 200 a day. 5,700 had died or been killed in February; 5,900 in March, and about 2,000 in the first 10 days of April.

The main elements of the installation included the "Little Camp", the "Regular Barracks", "The Hospital", the Medical Experimentation Building, the Body Disposal Plant, and an Ammunition Factory immediately adjacent to the camp and separated from it only by a wire fence.

6. The "Little Camp". Prisoners here slept on triple-decked shelves, each shelf about 12' x 12', 16 prisoners to a shelf, the clearance height between shelves being a little over 2'. Cubage figured out to about 35 cu. ft. per man; as against the minimum for health of 600 cu. ft. prescribed by US Army Regulations. All arriving new prisoners were initiated by spending at least 6 weeks here before being "graduated to the 'Regular Barracks'". During this initiation prisoners were expected to lose about 40 per cent. in weight. Jews, however, seldom if ever graduated to the Regular Barracks. Camp disciplinary measures included transferring recalcitrant prisoners back to the "Little Camp". As persons became too feeble to work, they were also sent back to this camp, or to the "Hospital". Rations were less than at Regular Camps, and death rate was very high here; recently 2 per cent. to 4 per cent. a day. (For appearance of surviving prisoners see Photograph No. 4).

7. The Regular Barracks: The dormitory rooms were approximately 42' x 23', about 10' high; or a content of less than 9500 cu. ft. In such a room there were installed, triple-deck, 38 stacks of 3 cots each; or a total of 114 cots, each cot 30" x 72" outside measurement. Most of these cots were double (i.e. 2 parallel cots occupying a space 60" x 72"). Aisles were too narrow (less than 24") to permit movement except with the body edgewise. 114 cots into 9500 makes less than 85 cu. ft. per person. But since the war 250 persons have been made to sleep in each such room (5 persons on each 60" x 72" double cot, and 2 persons on each 30" by 72" single cot); or less than 40 cu. ft. per person. There were less than one blanket per prisoner. Blankets were thin and shoddy, and under-size. There was no heat in these dormitories.

8. The "Hospital". A building where moribund persons were sent to die. No medicines being available, hence no therapy was possible. Typhus and tuberculosis rampant in the camp. About half the wards in the "Hospital" were about 15' deep with one window at the outside end, by 5½' wide. From 6 to 9 "patients" occupied such a ward, lying cross-wise on the floor, shoulder to shoulder. Room too narrow for most of them to extend their legs. Death rate in the "Hospital" 5 per cent. to 20 per cent. a day.

9. Medical Experiment Building. Block 41 was used for medical experiments and vivisections, with prisoners as "guinea pigs". Medical scientists came

from Berlin periodically to reinforce the experimental staff. In particular, new toxins and anti-toxins were tried out on prisoners. Few prisoners who entered this experimental building ever emerged alive.

10. The Body Disposal Plant. The design of this installation was a striking example of "German industrial efficiency". It had a maximum disposal capacity of about 400 bodies per 10-hour day. All bodies were reduced to boneash, thus destroying all "evidence". All gold or gold-filled teeth were extracted from bodies before incineration. This plant was entirely enclosed within a high board fence. No one except the small operating force of SS personnel was allowed even to look inside this fence, and no prisoner who passed within it (as a member of a fatigue party, or for any other reason) ever came out alive. Inside this fence was (a) a large front yard on the left, (b) a small back yard on the right, and (c) the incinerator building centrally located between the two yards. This building was of substantial brick construction with cement floors, one story, with a full-size 12" high basement beneath. The main floor contained an Admin. office at the front end, a locker and washroom for SS personnel at the far end, and the incinerator room in the center. The latter contained, in line, 2 batteries of 3 fire-brick incinerators each, each incinerator having a capacity of 3 bodies; or a total charge of 18 bodies. 15 to 20 minutes were required for the incineration of a charge. The floor of each incinerator consisted of a coarse grate through which the boneash fell into an ashpit about 16" deep, having a separate front door through which the day's accumulation of boneash was extracted at the end of operation. The fire came from a furnace-room occupying the rear two-thirds of the basement, the flames being deflected downwards onto the bodies by baffleplates in the roofs of the furnaces. The front end of the basement was occupied by the Strangulation Room.

The method of collecting bodies was as follows. Roll-call was held every evening, outdoors outside the dormitory buildings. Internees were required to strip, and bring to roll-call, the naked bodies of all comrades who had died during the previous 24 hours. After roll-call a motor truck drove around the camp, picked up the bodies, and was driven into the front-yard of the incinerator plant to await the next day's operation. But this was not the only source of bodies. Emaciated prisoners who "had been around long enough", who committed infractions of discipline, or who "knew too much", or who refused to be broken in mind, were arbitrarily condemned to death. For instance, in the

Camp" where prisoners slept 16 on a shelf, an infraction of discipline (and particularly an attempt to escape) not infrequently resulted in all 16 being condemned. Such persons were immediately marched on foot to a small door into the fence of the back yard, at a point immediately adjacent to the right-hand front corner of the incinerator building. This door opened inwards until it hit a door-stop which held it in a position parallel to the building's wall, - thus creating a corridor about 4' wide and 3' deep. At the far end was an opening about 4' x 4' flush with the ground, the head of a concrete shaft about 13' deep, the bottom floor of which was a continuation of the concrete floor of the room at the front end of the basement. The condemned prisoners, on being hurried and pushed through the door in the fence, inevitably fell into this shaft and crashed 13' down to the cement cellar floor. This room, on the floor at one end of which they now found themselves, was The Strangling Room. As they hit the floor they were garroted, with a short double-ended noose, by big SS guards; and hung on hooks along the side wall, about 6½' above the floor, the row of hooks being 45 in number. When a consignment had been all hung up, any who were still struggling were stunned with a wooden mallet (See photo No. 2) the mallet and a noose are being held by Commandant L'Hopital). The bodies were left on the hooks until called for by the incinerator crew. An electric elevator, with an estimated capacity of 18 bodies, ran up to the incinerator room, which was directly above The Strangling Room. The day's quota of approximately 200 bodies were made up from 120 to 140 prisoners who had died (mostly in the "Hospital", the "Medical Experiment Building", or the "Little Camp"), and of from 60 to 80 supplied by The Strangling Room.



For a period of about ten days in March the coal supply for the incinerator ran out. Awaiting the arrival of a new supply, bodies to the number of about 1800 were allowed to collect in the front yard, stacked up like cord-wood. To the annoyance of the SS this over-crowded the yard with undisposed-of "evidence"; and a spell of warm weather created a sanitary problem. Moreover, burial was a good deal more troublesome than incineration; and was out of the customary routine. But something had to be done. So a truck detachment, and a fatigue detail of internees, was organized. The bodies were loaded in the trucks and hauled out of camp. The fatigue detail dug one huge burial pit, threw the bodies into it filling it except for one end, and covered the bodies. Then the SS shot all the members of the fatigue detail, threw their bodies into the vacant end, and covered them up.

Shortly afterwards a new supply of coal having been received, the process of incineration was resumed. This process was so abruptly interrupted by the arrival of U.S. Armor in the area that the SS had no time to "tidy up", so that the cycle of operation could be plainly examined and understood. The previous day's quota of upwards of 120 corpses of prisoners who had died in camp were parked in a truck in the front yard (See Photo #1). The incinerator furnace grates had not yet been cleared of un-consumed hip-bone joints and parts of skulls. In addition, the bodies of about 40 inmates who had died since U.S. arrival, in spite of prompt medical and ration attention, were stacked up like cord-wood against the wall of the yard (See Photo #3). American surgeons stated that the adult corpses weighed only 60 to 80 lbs, having in practically all cases lost 50% to 60% of their normal weight, and also having shrunken in height.

10. Miscellaneous:

a. Rations: 600 to 700 calories per day for the Regular Camp, 500 for the "Little Camp", both of an unbalanced ration, as against 3000 to 3600 calories required for adult health. Black bread, potatoes twice a week and beet-root twice a week served as weak soup, soy bean (or other vegetable) "sausage", jam twice a week, margarine about once a week. Never any greens or fresh vegetables. Heavy deficiency in animal fats and vitamins. No meats. Red Cross packages almost entirely appropriated by SS Camp Commander, and distributed to suit himself to SS personnel, to citizens of Weimar, even to Nordic German Camp prisoners. In two months Commander L'Hopital received



1/10, 1/14 and 1/7 of a one-person, weekly French Red Cross parcel.

Meals were prepared and "served" by prisoner personnel under SS supervision.

b. Attempted evacuation. As American Army approached, the SS attempted to evacuate some of the more "valuable" prisoners. A column of 2,000 was formed on 8th April, and another similar one on 10th April. (SS guards fled precipitously on the 11th, because American armor was heard firing in the area). All prisoners of these columns who fell out were shot by the roadside. It is alleged, by the US personnel now operating the camp, that about 3,000 were killed in this manner. The remainder escaped and are being rounded up. Commandant l'Hopital stated that orders had been given to kill all remaining persons in the camp on 11 April 45, when further evacuation became impossible, but that this big job was left undone, and the remaining prisoners saved when the nearby presence of American tanks stampeded the SS personnel.

c. Tattooing. The 20 April Paris edition of the Stars and Stripes carried on page 2 a story regarding the use, by the SS officers of the camp, of tattooed human skin for souvenirs. This story is true in every respect. Commandant l'Hopital stated that the wife of one of the SS officers started the fad; that any prisoner who happened to have extensive tattooing of any sort on his body was brought to her; that if she found the tattooing satisfactory the prisoner was killed and skinned; that the skin with the tattooing was then tanned and made into souvenirs such as lamp shades, wall pictures, book ends, etc; that about 40 examples of this artistry were found in SS offices and quarters in the camp. This statement was confirmed by 1st Lieut. Walter F. Emmons. And we ourselves saw 6 examples at Camp HQ, including a lampshade.

d. This concentration camp was by no means unique, nor were its methods different from similar camps which were (or are still) operated at Dachau (near Berlin). Kleine Glattbach (E of Karlsruhe), and at other points.

When the French 1st Army over-ran Kl. Glattbach o/a 10th April 1945 they found only 700 emaciated survivors, 80% of whom are beyond rehabilitation and about half of whom are in advanced stages of tuberculosis of various types according to the considered opinion of the Army Surgeon. o/a 10th March the camp's incinerator plant ran out of coal. A long trench was thereupon dug, with a unit of mechanical equipment; and then, starting at one end, the daily quota of dead were stacked into it progressively down



the length of the Trench. The number thus interred during approximately one month was 1200. This information was supplied by General of Army de Lattre de Tassigny, Commandant William Bullitt, and the Army Surgeon; all of whom had inspected the camp. The strategical implications of the above procedure appear to be far-reaching. Namely that Continental Europe (including Germany) has been systematically deprived of hundreds of thousands of its best liberal or democratic leadership personnel.

