

ARONEANU

INSIDE THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Eyewitness
Accounts
of Life
in Hitler's
Death Camps

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and the authorities, all authorities, keep quiet without exception, just as long as they are not held accountable for the smooth running of the operation.

"It is an organized, state-supported bloodbath that takes place in broad daylight under the very eyes of a horrified humanity," said Professor Trainine.

Orders were given only once, and they were carried out, not, as one might think, because they should be, but because they could be. From the German lawmakers, civil servants, and high government officials down to the ordinary hangmen, to the government, the army, the party, the SS, the Gestapo—all the machinery of the Third Reich—everyone was ready and willing. The iniquitous civil system did exactly what was required of it.

By means of ordinances and various public or secret decrees, this civil system resulted in National Socialist legislation that deprived four categories of people—who had in no way violated the criminal law—of their rights and declared them guilty of something that would be futile, not to mention degrading, to deny: namely, the fact that they were members of a particular race or citizens of a particular country or held a particular religious or political view. As a result, it was not possible either to defend or punish people according to the normal penal code, and this exception was used to the disadvantage of certain classes of people. This bypassing of the penal code was perpetrated by the same authority that is supposed to guarantee its validity: by the state, which is the ultimate expression of national sovereignty.

So, for reasons of race, religion, politics, or nationality, human beings were deprived of the protection society had forged over the course of centuries: the penal code.

Committing a murder is without a doubt a violation of the penal code. To ignore this code and deny to an entire group the protection that every civilized society grants the innocent is a violation of the basic principles on which a society rests. It is just as Judge Jackson expressed it at the Nuremberg trials: "The real plaintiff at this bar of justice is civilization."

The same authority that circumvented the penal code to the disadvantage of certain categories of victims went even one step further when it actually sanctioned the perpetrating of crimes. The executioners were officially recognized by the state, and their power was unlimited. The Nazi state put at the disposal of its executioners the means by which their authority could be increased a hundred- or a thousand-fold, depending on how efficiently they could execute victims. The primary violator of the common law was the Nazi state itself in its moral, judicial, spiritual, and material embodiment of all those who contributed in one way or another to the formation of this

state and carried out its orders.

The collective character of the criminal finds a counterpart in the collective character of the victim. This collective character derives not from the fact that the victims were murdered "collectively," but that they were accused collectively. They were condemned only because of what they were, not for anything they had done.

The determining "intent" in the case of crimes against humanity is totally different from that in the case of crimes against common law because in the first case the victim is judged not as an individual but only as a member of one of the pertinent categories: race, nationality, politics, religion. When the victim can prove that he does not belong to any of these categories, then he avoids his fate and the hangman doesn't carry out the execution. He ignores his "individual" victim and considers him only as belonging to the group of victims who are being considered. The blood that touches the hand of the hangman is impersonal blood; it is the blood of an abstract "person," not that of a certain individual. The hangman only fulfills an unpleasant duty conscientiously. One cannot talk to him about guilt in this case. The ultimate responsibility rests on those who have imposed this duty on him and who have made a regular target out of the collective "person."

✓ The real source of the evil lies in the Nazi teachings, the agenda of the Nazi party, in everything, in fact, that led to the formation of the Nazi state. At this moment, when the accused in Nuremberg use as their defense the democratic methods by which Hitler had come to power as well as the voluntary concurrence of so many German voters for the Nazi program, at this moment when Germany would again enjoy its democratic freedom, it is essential to focus one's attention on conscientious Germans, and in particular on the seriousness of the election, because it was this kind of election back then that was the reason Germany embarked on the road to inhumanity. It is just as necessary, however, to point to the spirit that the whole civilized world wishes would rule in Germany in future years.

In compiling these eyewitness accounts of crimes against humanity, we have proceeded exactly the way an examining judge would proceed. The statements of 100 sworn witnesses and 25 official reports form the basis of this report. We have used only those sources that provide new information and contribute to the understanding of the whole. The number cited at the end of each entry identifies either the witness testifying or the report from which the statement was taken. This document, then, represents the experiences of hundreds of victims whose individual stories corroborate each other, especially in details and particulars. Thus, by means of these many witnesses, the individual speaks, and the voice of the "human person" is heard.

Chapter 2

Deportation

DEPARTURE

"The trainload of prisoners carried between 1,000 and 1,200 persons—men, women, children, old people—of all classes and nationalities." (93)

"Among them were mothers carrying newborn babies, frail old people on stretchers, seriously wounded people, small children. An SS guard, who had been dispatched by car to an orphanage to bring back the children, returned without them saying that he just couldn't bring himself to do it. So the company commander sent another bus to get the children, and this one, after several trips, eventually brought back 350 orphans for deportation. Although the children were given thermos bottles, condensed milk, and bottled water at the beginning of the trip, most of them died along the way." (6)

✓ ["The SS stripped us completely naked and squeezed 140 persons into one boxcar. These were the famous WWI boxcars they said could hold 40 men or 8 horses. It was sheer hell." (51)] ✓

"The boxcars were thoroughly sealed." (20)

"We couldn't sit, we couldn't even crouch." (7)

"What I ended up doing was spending the night on one leg, since there wasn't enough room to stand on both." (69)

"In the middle of the car was a bucket that served as a chamber pot; in a few hours it was full to overflowing and gave off a terrible odor. After that, people had no choice but to relieve themselves directly on the floor, and that meant that we spent the trip enveloped in a poisonous stench.

"During the trip there were numerous attempts to escape. . . . These attempts were extremely dangerous and were not possible in most cars. We couldn't try anything because our car was next to that of the SS and

was constantly under surveillance. The main escape attempt took place during the second night while we were still in France. Someone managed to get a door open while someone else broke a window and pried loose the iron bars. When the SS discovered the attempt, the train was stopped and the hunt began, with help from search lights on nearby towers and from machine guns located at each end of the train. The SS poured forth from their cars in pursuit of the escapees and fired at them.

✓ "The last car of the train, which had remained empty, was reserved for corpses. It contained not only the dead but also the wounded who were thrown in together with the dead. I saw this car again at Buchenwald and heard the moaning and groaning of the wounded. I know with absolute certainty that all of them were killed and thrown in the ovens along with those already dead." (7)

"These attempts to escape were cruelly suppressed." (50)

"In the cars from which the escape attempts took place, the prisoners were stripped naked and a great many of them were shot like criminals on the spot." (78)

"I witnessed executions being performed in a bomb crater just outside the boxcar." (30)

"A few young people were hastily selected. . . . We saw five of them approaching from among the first to be chosen; each was accompanied by a German policeman carrying a handgun. The moment they reached the ditch, a policeman would grab hold of a prisoner, stand him against the wall, and shoot him in the head." (69)

"Before they moved on, the comrades of those just killed would cover the bodies with a few shovelfuls of earth." (30)

"The trip took 8 to 10 days, during which we were given soup and bread only twice." (55)

"It took 10 days and 9 nights to complete the trip from Cherbourg to Hazebrouck (near the Belgian border)." (4)

"All of us were racked with thirst. I saw some of my comrades pushed to the point of drinking their own urine, others to licking the sweat off the backs of fellow prisoners, while still others tried to catch the occasional drops of water that condensed on the walls of the boxcar." (54)

"At the terminal in Bremen we were denied water by the German Red Cross, who told us that there was no water for us." (29)

✓ "We were half dead from thirst. In Breslau we begged the nurses of the German Red Cross for water, but they remained deaf to our pleas. No water, stifling heat, no air (the vents were blocked)." (10)

"At every stop you could hear voices from the boxcars begging for air. Without fail a German officer would reply: 'You have everything you deserve.' At every station those who managed to open a window and

beg the guards for help got either a bullet from a revolver or a burst from a machine gun for an answer." (92)

"Two comrades died of suffocation. I myself was busy until dawn taking care of my friend P. who had heart trouble." (69)

"By five o'clock we counted about 100 who had suffocated; after that the number mounted rapidly from minute to minute." (92)

"From every car there were reports of outbreaks of madness. Some of the prisoners had no choice but to silence others who had become either crazed or dangerous." (78)

"In one car there were horrifying cases of mass insanity in which the prisoners killed each other with excessive brutality." (92)

"I saw with my own eyes a shipment of prisoners who had all gone totally mad." (69)

"In one shipment 64 deportees arrived dead. They had all died of suffocation." (54)

"In my boxcar there were 82 dead out of 126 alive at departure. I have no doubt that similar conditions existed in other boxcars." (51)

"By the time we got to the camp, we counted 896 dead." (92)

"Of 1,200 French deportees, only 500 arrived alive." (51)

"My shipment, which started out with 2,500 prisoners, lost 912 along the way because of conditions that ranged from unspeakable to unbearable." (37)

ARRIVAL

"We arrived in the middle of a pitch black night. Visions of horror. Visions of terror. The most tormented hours of my imprisonment. Cries of wild animals, unholy howling. What was it all about? The reception by the jailers, accompanied by their huge, well-trained wolfhounds. We were so afraid our legs buckled. We knew we would never leave this place." (120)

"The boxcars were forced open and the SS guards stormed in. Shouting wildly, they prodded us with rifle butts and bayonets and beat us with clubs, then set the dogs loose on us. Those who fell and could not get up were ripped apart. I was wearing a large cape which the dogs sank their teeth into, forcing me to submit." (7)

"We had to unload the boxcars not just of the suitcases but also of the dead and the dying. The dead—and that included anybody who could not stand up—were tossed onto a pile. The suitcases and packages were gathered up and the boxcars were scrubbed down so that no trace remained of their hideous contents." (104)

"Right there by the train the SS killed most of the children. M. W. saw both of his little boys collapse at his side." (123)

"The French were shot down on the arrival platform by the SS." (71)

"I saw one SS guard grab a child by the feet and throw it into the air while a cohort fired his pistol at this living target. Another SS guard yanked a baby from its mother's arms and tore it apart by putting his foot on one leg and pulling on the other." (23)

"An officer strode forward and announced an inspection. Everybody was ordered to undress, and then he asked for an accounting of the 'refuse.' By 'refuse' he meant the dead. There were 954." (20)

"One shipment included 800 corpses out of 2,500 deportees. To begin with, the deportees had had to cover nearly 80 kilometers on foot. Then they had been put into open trucks in which they traveled for eight days." (30)

"The most gruesome spectacle I witnessed was the arrival of shipment after shipment of prisoners, especially the one that came from Großkoyn. There were 3,000 prisoners, at the outset, and they had been made to travel 60 kilometers on foot without a break, all the while deprived of food, and constantly beaten. Then they were loaded onto open trucks, 100 to a vehicle, and forced to crouch down in a huddle. The first to stand up got shot. They traveled this way for seven days and seven nights. They arrived with 700 dead and 700 so sick they died soon thereafter. The rest climbed down out of the train, and those who couldn't make it to the camp were shot." (31)

"The largest shipments of French deportees arrived at the camps in June and July of 1944. It was then I saw corpses I will never forget. The Nazi monsters had squeezed 100 to 140 people into each boxcar. I remember in my own case, where there were only 50 to a car, that we still could neither breathe nor move, and I wondered how people could survive under these circumstances. The people I now saw arriving had all died of asphyxiation. Their faces had turned black, and their lips were horribly swollen. There were several truckloads of corpses in this condition. To perform any burial rites was, of course, out of the question; these bodies had to be hauled to the ovens without delay. Sadly, they still had their civilian clothes on and were carrying photographs of their families with them. That was in July 1944, and the ovens were working night and day." (90)

"They separated the women, the children, and the old people from the rest of the deportees, and that was the last we ever heard of them. I think that my wife, who was among them, went with them to the gas chamber." (55)

"The prisoners filed past an SS guard who pointed out the direction they were to take: to the left, men between 20 and 45 and young women—in short, those who could work; to the right, the rest of the prisoners, older women, children, the elderly, the sick, the 'unusable'—the 'wasteful mouths.'" (20)

Massed
together

"A certain number of Jews were retained in the camp for the use of the Kapos; the homosexual Kapos used them to gratify their lust and therefore protected them." (86)

RELIGION

"No kind of spiritual or moral support was allowed for the followers of any religion." (92)

"The presence of a priest would have done us much good, but it was strictly forbidden under threat of death for a priest to perform his office." (57)

"In all concentration camps every religious practice was forbidden under penalty of death.

"The overriding principle was to suppress anything that could remotely provoke thoughts of God; so under the pretext of disinfecting us, they confiscated our rosaries, which they threw in the trash, and also our holy pictures and medallions, many of which were keepsakes. Breviaries, missals, and other holy books were used for toilet paper." (90)

"I wanted to save a small holy picture, but one of the prisoners advised me not to try. He said it wasn't worth it, that they would only make fun of you and, in the end, take it away from you anyway." (104)

"I was accosted by a group of SS men who tore my soutane, broke my rosary, and with scornful sneers stomped on my breviary." (40)

"In our group were nuns whose clothes the Germans had gleefully thrown in the dirt." (85)

"Priestly clothes and accessories were turned into clothes for the prostitutes in the brothels.

"Since I was a priest and an Englishman, I was given additional work to do which consisted of scooping water out of a hole with a pail. I never succeeded in emptying the hole because it kept filling up again. I endured some bad moments. However, I was spared beatings and the hardest work, excavation.

"To find out if the faithful were saying their prayers, the SS relied on the Kapos. A professor of Oriental languages (Hebrew, Armenian, and Arabic) was killed by an orderly who heard him praying.

"One day several priests arrived at Auschwitz without registration numbers. They were disinfected and then quarantined. The next day, still wearing their soutanes, they were sent out to work at the railway station under the command of the head Kapo, who killed them before nightfall.

"In the summer of 1944 I did a postmortem on the leading Patriarch of the Orthodox Synod of Paris. Through the intercession of the Interna-

tional Red Cross, Stalin had allowed him to return to reorganize the orthodox church. Because of his rank and according to international law, this Patriarch, just like the Catholic Cardinals, had the right to move about freely and should never have been interned in the first place. When the Germans found out about Stalin's invitation, they apprehended the Patriarch and sent him to Buchenwald where he suffered severe stomach cramps. He had previously been operated on twice. He asked for a third operation and was turned down, but later they relented. As a result of this operation, he died a few days later." (90)

"We had a priest among us who was horribly mistreated. He was forced to kneel down, a brick in either hand, and say that Jesus Christ did not exist, that Hitler alone was Lord God Almighty. He didn't want to say it. Day in and day out he was kicked and beaten, even shot at, until finally he died." (50)

DAILY SCENES

"It was bitter cold. An SS guard told us (me and one of my comrades) to come into his barracks. He asked us if we were cold. We assured him we were. He told us he would warm us, and proceeded to knock our heads together. Then he asked us if we were still cold. We said no; and this time he spun us around, kicked us in the behind, and threw us out." (30)

"Once, after an SS guard had counted the prisoners in the cellblock, he cried: 'Fall out and wash up!' Nobody knew where to go, since no one had told us where the washrooms were. The first ones out ran in front of the barracks and were promptly greeted by two SS guards brandishing clubs. A lot of confusion ensued, what with those who were first out trying to get back in, while the others were trying to get out. (All of this was happening, by the way, in double-time.) Since we didn't know where we should go, our cellblock was in total chaos. We had barely got back inside when other SS guards drove us out with sharp kicks and blows from their clubs. Our guard, Z., stood in the middle of the passageway and, as the prisoners passed by, he struck them on their bare backs with a cane. Luckily we found the washroom. But scarcely had we started to wash up when we were ordered to fall out. Z. still stood in the passageway with his cane and tried, with a diabolical laugh, to strike each man who passed by. I remember only too well how a Belgian prisoner, who was 58 years old and severely weakened from two years confinement, received an especially severe blow. His red and blue welts were visible for a long time after that.

"When I arrived, the prisoners were in the process of building brick

begin to count in a loud voice. He would count to 10, and by then you had to be out again. If you couldn't make it in that time, you risked being hit on the head with a blow intended to be fatal. Every day many of my friends died as a result of a visit to the latrine." (101)

"The head Kapo at the train station at Auschwitz had killed 30,000 prisoners in order to attain his freedom and be accepted into Hitler's Life Guards." (90)

"Women suffered the same fate. They were beaten and abused. The mortality rate was higher for them than it was for men." (104)

"M. planned to carry out the sentence of 25 blows with a rubber truncheon on three Jewish women who had been caught eating raw turnips while unloading a freight car. The carrying out of this punishment was horrible: the women cried out, it was unbearable. M. ordered his soldiers to pick up the ones who had fallen to the ground and hit them again.

"Another time the women had been laughing and singing on their way back from the factory. M. ordered them to stand for an hour and a half in snow up to their knees and with an icy wind blowing.

"And yet another time, when the women had laughed, he put them in two rows, grabbed a whip made of five or six knotted ropes, and hit them across the face with it. For the slightest infraction we were deprived of food for two whole days." (55)

"B. came to the camp on a bicycle. Along the way he knocked the prisoners about, went out of his way to pick on the the elderly, and boxed ears on the slightest provocation." (53)

"I saw SS matrons beat a friend of mine senseless with a leather belt." (61)

"There was one SS matron, a common criminal (she had murdered her husband), who was especially brutal. She kicked and beat many of the female prisoners mercilessly, and once, when I turned around to look at a friend of mine, she gave me a vicious blow to the head and kicked me in the stomach." (97)

"We called her the 'green mare' because of her protruding teeth. She knew only too well how to belt you in the mouth hard enough to knock your teeth out or break your jaw. One day the 'green mare' struck me with her fist because my shoelaces were untied.

"There was another SS matron who was constantly threatening us with her revolver; we called her the 'animal trainer.' Another we called the 'boar.' All these women were products of the Hitler Youth and had been thoroughly indoctrinated. They themselves had been woefully abused." (28)

"Often the SS matrons would amuse themselves by displays of appalling brutality in their dealings with the female internees. One evening they summoned an internee to their 'studio' and an SS matron

knocked her down the minute she got there. Then another, who was short, climbed up on a table so that she could reach the internee's breast with her feet and gave them a powerful kick." (72)

"The one we called 'Lageracerca' was a scrawny, repulsive old battle-ax. She stood out because of her sadism and her sexual perversity; she was half crazy. At either the morning or the evening roll call she would search among the exhausted and emaciated women for the prettiest, those who more or less still looked human, and would whack them on the hands for no reason whatsoever. If the victims collapsed, the 'Lageracerca' would go for their legs, first with her whip, then with her spiked boots. Usually her victims left a bloody trail behind them, and after one or two such mistreatments would soon turn sick and die." (110)

"One woman was sentenced to death after she was denounced by a German internee for giving water to a Jewish woman." (77)

"When we first got to the camp, there were 120 of us women. A month later 30 were dead." (61)

"Many times the Block leader was ordered to kill a certain number of women. These women were beaten until they passed out. I myself saw the camp strewn with bodies; they looked like white seagulls lying prostrate in the snow." (103)

ROLL CALL

"Whether it rained, or snowed, or stormed—in fog or in sunshine—all prisoners had to fall out for roll call every morning." (74)

"They woke us up at 3:30 in the morning." (116)

"If you happened to stretch out in bed for even another minute, you'd be rousted out with a billy club and doused with cold water." (120)

"Sick women were not excused from this 'martyrdom' called roll call; I say 'martyrdom,' because I saw many women pass out from the cold, from standing in the snow with an icy wind blowing. Since you had to have a temperature of over 100 degrees to be admitted to the hospital, you can well imagine what an unbearable wait that meant for a prisoner who had only a 99-degree temperature and who had been brutally torn from, if not a warm bed, then at least a lukewarm one. The female guards, 'lady soldiers,' who were inhumane to us, admitted without shame that the purpose of such treatment was to hasten our extermination. Once I fainted from weakness and by sheer accident came to again without any help." (42)

"Often I even had to assist comrades to roll call who had passed out or were suffering an epileptic fit. We had to lay them next to us on the ground and were not allowed to take care of them. I got a lot of blows

from fists and clubs from the German or Polish policewomen or female guards because I tried to help women who were writhing in the dirt in an epileptic fit." (67)

"At the first roll call a friend of mine was sick. Naively, I went up to our 'Blockova' and said: 'Excuse me for bothering you, but a friend of mine is very sick, can she be excused from roll call?' She answered: 'Here even the dying come to roll call.'" (28)

"As a matter of fact, not only the dying but those who had died that day had to attend roll call so that the figures jibed. They were laid out on a bench that was carried by two prisoners." (64)

"Three times I had to prop up dead bodies at roll call. Finally, I told an SS guard that this didn't make any sense. His answer was: 'Dead or alive, everybody has to be there.' Then he added: 'Roll call is roll call.'" (54)

"Every morning the dead and the dying were dragged to roll call." (60)

"There was a child with us about six months old. This child had to come with us to roll call, but of course it had to be carried in someone's arms, and that ruined the symmetry of the lineup. An SS guard decided, therefore, that the child should be 'posted' to a brothel. 'Posted' ordinarily referred to those deportees who were distributed among the various inner circles of the camp. They enjoyed preferential treatment and excused them from roll call on account of their work. The SS guard added that the child would be taken care of in a more motherly fashion. I asked why the child was being taken into custody and was told: 'For the good of the Greater Reich.'

"If a comrade did not show up for roll call, we had to stay there as long as the search for him lasted." (54)

"In Mauthausen I saw the way one Russian comrade, who was five minutes late for roll call, was kicked in the head by twelve SS guards." (39)

"Rabbi E., who suffered from dysentery, met a tragic end one day when he was a few minutes late for roll call. The squad leader grabbed hold of him and plunged his head into the toilet and poured cold water on him; then he took out a revolver and shot him." (104)

"We stood roll call for up to five and a half hours, while the weak were stretched out on the ground in front of the 'lady officers.' Speaking was forbidden unless you wanted a bucket of water over your head, and the mornings were cold." (116)

"The Kapo of our unit killed a friend of mine because he was not standing up straight. He hit him on the jaw with his fist, and when my friend had fallen to the ground, he choked him by pressing his foot down on his throat." (33)

"Evening roll call often lasted so long that the poor prisoners had to

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endure the harsh Polish climate for hours on end." (60)

"Ravensbrück concentration camp was built on a drained swamp. The earth there was so acidic that it caused bad burns. Many had their legs half eaten away. Out in the open country, the acid in the air clawed at your face and caused the skin to fester. Women who had been there for a long time had horrible sores. I couldn't bear to look at them." (76)

"After 12 hours' work and a roll call at 6 p.m., the whole camp would sometimes be called out to the parade ground for another roll call at midnight, a particularly unpleasant experience on bitterly cold winter nights.

✓ ["During snowstorms there were seemingly endless roll calls day and night. We had to stand there for three, sometimes four, even six hours." (63)

["At the time of the German defeat at Stalingrad, we had an especially long roll call. It took place during a snowstorm and lasted all day long. The next day the roll call continued." (14)

["1,200 standing in formation, motionless and numb with cold." (63)

"The first shock I received at a night roll call was hearing a passing SS guard ask the squad leader: 'How many dead?' 'Ten,' answered the squad leader. To which the guard responded: 'What, so few?'" (35)

"As a matter of fact, most of the prisoners died at roll call." (103)

"Many of my comrades perished at the morning roll call. I saw least one die each day, and frequently as many as three." (74)

"If you were unconscious and could not respond at roll call, your name was put on a list of the dead and you would be clubbed to death." (111)

"Sometimes six or seven people would drop dead at roll call, in addition to countless other prisoners who had to be taken to the infirmary, which was filled with the dying. Often ten would fall dead, but you didn't dare move them. That was forbidden." (63)

"People collapsed. Sometimes the dogs were turned loose on them to make sure they were dead." (14)

"The SS guards, armed with rubber truncheons, overwhelmed them with blows and kicks to make them stand up, which was impossible, since they were already dead." (74)

"A Belgian minister died during a roll call that took place in extraordinarily cold weather." (62)

PUNISHMENT AND TORTURE

"Routine punishments were: 25 lashes on the buttocks with a cane or a whip; several hours standing motionless in the summer sun or half naked in freezing temperatures; 2 or 3 days of starvation; running for half an hour carrying a 40 pound stone past a line of guards who took

examinations—had to be taken care of in the 9 or 10 hours not claimed by the work details." (108)

"In addition, they used us for all sorts of camp duties: taking food to the SS guards, unloading incoming food deliveries, cleaning and sweeping various parts of the camp. For these jobs they always preferred French workers." (87)

"They were completely worn out by the miserable workday and all the grueling labor. They were all dirty and in a state of appalling despondency." (125)

"After a debilitating day in the quarries, all the internees still had to stand at attention for a two-hour roll call." (113)

"Which could sometimes last from midnight until 7 a.m." (117)

"No relaxation was ever scheduled for the prisoners. It was expressly forbidden for them either to stand or sit in the courtyard between working hours." (113)

"Sometimes, to amuse themselves, the SS guards would have us play a sport that would tire us out more in half an hour than a whole week of work." (23)

"In the barracks there were two reasons why it was impossible to get any rest: the lights that burned continuously, and the commotion of people constantly coming and going." (7)

"17 hours work, 2 hours sleep." (117)

"One of the main reasons for exhaustion was the change of shifts. When we changed, we had to work 24 hours without a break. The supervision by the SS guards was terrible then, for the prisoners fell asleep everywhere and that provided an opportunity to mete out new punishments. This change of shifts took place either every week or every other week." (7)

"One time we were made to wait around from 4 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock that evening on the pretext of having our pictures taken, and then we were to be sent to the factory until 6 the next morning. Because we did not get photographed that day, we were assembled again at 6 a.m. and made to wait until 1 o'clock in the afternoon, supposedly to be photographed. Altogether we stood for 33 hours straight." (79)

"No rest on Sunday." (66)

"We had one Sunday a month free when we didn't have to go to work in squads, and this Sunday was ruined because we had to work in the camp where we were beaten." (100)

"Sometimes we spent the whole day at roll call." (33)

✓ "The food was just sufficient to keep you from starving to death but not at all enough to enable you to accomplish any meaningful work." (83) ✓

"We had only half an hour to eat. The soup was served in a barracks

Compare
with WW II

with room for 150 people. There were 1,500 of us. We were so packed in that the newcomers failed to eat because they could not grasp what sort of gymnastics were required to obtain the soup and to eat it in such cramped quarters. Since so many people had to enter, eat, and leave in that scant half hour, they had to be processed rapidly, and this processing was accelerated by a 'green' (a common German criminal who wore a green insignia and had complete say over the life and death of the prisoners), who would stand on a barrel, wielding a huge club which he used on those who passed beneath him. He usually managed to get 10 to 15 victims." (207)

"Sometimes we had only 15 minutes for the soup, and usually we had to bow down to get it." (103)

"There were days when people would work all day long without rest or food. They would then return at four in the afternoon to the camp they had left that morning at three." (125)

"With such rations, the ability of a normal person to work lasted an average of six months. People who were not strong might last no more than two months. First, they used up their fat, then their muscles, and they would lose 30 to 35 percent of their weight." (93)

"It is only natural that many of them collapsed from total exhaustion. For these unfortunate ones it meant the end was near." (96)

"As many as 50 deportees might go to work in the morning under the supervision of a Kapo. There would also be 50 rations allotted. If the Kapo brought back only 40 or 45 deportees in the evening, the leftover rations belonged to him." (89)

"By the same token, if a guard brought back 15 dead, he got 15 days of vacation." (103)

"One day I heard the following conversation between two Germans, a Kapo and an SS guard:

'How many today?' asked the guard.

'Five,' answered the Kapo.

'That's not very many,' said the guard.

'I'll try to make it ten tomorrow,' said the Kapo. It had to do with the killing of prisoners." (86)

"I saw a Kapo hold the head of a deportee under water until he died." (89)

"I saw how an American of Italian ancestry, called C. L., born in August 1901 in New York, was abused and killed. He had frostbitten feet and was forced to work in spite of his condition. They bound his feet with paper and sent him back to work in the snow. He held out for 12 days before he died." (17)

"Some prisoners had the dangerous job of loading unslaked lime into a wagon. Since they had no shovels, they were forced to handle the

front of you who collapsed, you had to step over him, or it meant your death." (43)

"If a person inadvertently slowed down and was taken by surprise, he would be punished. This punishment could take the form of anything from a few lashes with a whip to a long, grueling gymnastics session. Each poor performance was punished with a thrashing, usually 25 lashes on the buttocks. The victim, whose pants had been removed, would be held by two prisoners chosen by the SS guards, and ordered to count out loud as he received the lashes." (7)

"Those identified as Jews were singled out for particularly cruel abuse." (75)

"No matter what physical condition he was in, a Jew could not survive more than two weeks. For example, a Jew who was so efficient that he could do his work twice as fast (say, pushing a heavily laden wheelbarrow) would obviously not be able to keep up this pace. When at last he showed signs of slackening, he was sure to be struck dead by a blow from a shovel or a pickaxe." (104)

"Work in the stone quarries was real chain-gang labor." (121)

"At that time all Jews had to work in a field unit, climbing up and down the slope of a gravel pit in double time. Up above, SS guards and Kapos supervised their work and monitored the pace of their performance. If they thought that one of workers was 'dragging his feet,' they would wait until he was climbing upward and then simply give him a push and watch him slide with his loaded wheelbarrow all the way back down the slope. For the guards this was a favorite way of passing the time." (104)

"In the quarries there were almost no tools. The unfortunate workers had to transport huge stones on their backs. The exhausted internees had to do their work going up and down a staircase consisting of 108 steps that had been carved into the rocks of the quarry. As their strength gave out, they would very often stumble under their burdens, collapse, and end up crushed at the bottom of the pit. This happened when stones were being transported, some of which could weigh a couple hundred pounds. Four to six internees carried these on their backs and the least false step on the part of any of them and all was lost. This sort of accident, if one could call it that, occurred daily. I saw it happen twice myself." (121)

"In one shipment there were two of these unfortunate Jews, one of whom was a fourth-year medical student. These two friends were put together with the 20 Jews who were already there. They had to sleep under the bed where they were kicked and beaten with a bullwhip. They were assigned to a special squad of 'camp builders' who were involved in the construction of a clinic. The leader of this squad was a common criminal known by the name 'Jim the Frightful.' He is to thank

work

personally for the death of all the Jews who were brought to the camp up until July 1943, at which time he went into the SS.

"One after the other, the Jewish internees were notified eight days before of the date of their death. If, in the meantime, the beatings were too severe, they would be suspended for a few days so that the victims would not die before their time. C. died, if I remember correctly, toward the end of June 1943.

"R., who had greater resistance and a marvelous inner strength, held out until the end of July, beginning of August. I visited him one evening after returning from work. Two days before his death he told me that the Kapos had told him that he was to be killed the day after tomorrow. The last two days became for him a true martyrdom. He refused to walk alone to the line beyond which one was shot. He was led there by the Kapo, and the guard fired the gun. The second bullet killed him. I saw myself how they treated his body. The camp registry bore the citation: 'Shot trying to escape.'

"Others were killed in the following way: They were forced to carry 200 pound stones down into a hole and then carry them back up a ladder, and after a day or two of such work they were given a rope to hang themselves with. If the prisoners refused to hang themselves, the Kapo would gladly give them a hand." (75)

"Almost every week there were executions for various reasons, from stealing a liter of soup to so-called sabotage. (Sabotage was impossible in the tunnel; every screw was inspected twice by Luftwaffe specialists.)

"There were numerous hangings, but what impressed us most by its gruesomeness was the simultaneous hanging of 32 prisoners, accused of sabotage, by means of an electric hoisting device. We were made to stand there and watch. The Kapos and the foremen would hit us if we stopped watching. The condemned went to their deaths with wooden gags in their mouths. The next day 56 more prisoners were hanged for reasons unknown to us." (91)

"I worked 14 months in a weapons factory during which time an act of sabotage occurred in the making of explosives. The Poles who worked there were hanged." (94)

"If you were exhausted some day because of overwork and the SS guard for some reason was not satisfied, you would be sent that evening to the gallows, then to the ovens." (51)

"In the evening we had to march back. If a man was dying, he still had to march. It was in this way that the brother of the publisher of an American newspaper died. We carried the dead comrades home. Each corpse was carried by four prisoners." (86)

"During my time in the quarry—i.e., until June 1944—not a day

passed that the prisoners did not return to the camp carrying the dead, who numbered anywhere from 2 to 10." (75)

"Because of abuse by either the SS guards or the Kapos, the internees often died of their injuries." (60)

"200 internees would leave for work and only 120 would return. If there were 150 of them in the evening, that was 30 too many. The Kapo ordered an internee to pick a number. If, for example, the number was 10, then, as the SS guard counted them off, every tenth man had to step forward. For each this meant death." (43)

"The director of a squad that was building an underground factory boasted he could kill off his workers in less than six weeks. Lack of sleep and food, enervating work, everything happening in double time. Those who fell behind were butchered on the spot. The few survivors were taken back to the so-called 'extermination block' of the camp where they died of exhaustion." (109)

"Inmates died like flies. They were piled up like sacks and waited a day or two until a special team with wheelbarrows came from outside to collect them." (7)

"The death rate was so high that in our group of 200 men, 30 to 35 died daily. Quite a few of them owed their death entirely to the beatings that the foremen and the Kapos administered for no reason whatsoever. The ensuing gaps in our own ranks were filled daily with other prisoners." (96)

"The highest death rate occurred among the squads that worked outside the camp. On January 2, 1945, Squad S III contained 3,000 men. On February 22, we learned that 1,500 sick deportees from this camp had been sent back to rest up. By the time they arrived at the train station, 200 of them were already dead. Between the station and the camp, another 160 died. At the end there were only 50 men left. In another squad, out of 4,000 Jews there were 3,600 dead." (84)

"Out of 1,800 prisoners, 600 died in 6 weeks. Elsewhere, in the course of three weeks, only 280 out of 1,800 remained alive." (117)

"Within 2 or 3 months the percentage of dead was between 70 and 80 percent." (63)

"The Jews accounted for 80 percent of the dead in the camp." (84)

"In reality, we were all sentenced to death. Only the interest the Germans had in our work gave us a stay of execution. All of us awaited the day when we would die of total exhaustion or suffocation in a boxcar or gas chamber or by some other means of extermination." (31)

WOMEN AT WORK

"It was a regular slave market. If the manager of a factory, for ex-

ample, needed 500 women, he would come to the camp and announce that he needed 500 women by a certain date. The whole Block would then be assembled immediately and we would line up in rows of five." (12)

"One after the other we had to file past a review board whose director acted like some kind of slave trader. He examined our eyes, our hands, even the way we walked, and then handed us a mysterious little piece of paper with the letters 'K.W.' and a number on it. This little piece of paper contained our work assignment." (45)

"In addition to the various kinds of camp labor they had to perform, women also staffed the offices." (28)

"Work that was too hard for the men was not unusual for the women. They laid rails, pushed small trucks, pulled rollers." (72)

"They were pipe layers and roofers; they repaired the laundry facilities." (28)

"They chopped wood, felled trees, unloaded ships, built roads, drained swamps, pulled rollers. I myself, together with 19 comrades, pulled a roller." (41)

"Many women were put to work mixing cement, or unloading sacks of concrete from freight cars, or shoveling coal." (125)

"In Hanover we worked for 'Continental,' in the department that made gas masks." (48)

"There were also weaving and sewing studios in the camp for making military uniforms and uniforms for prisoners and also for mending used uniforms, for the dead were stripped and their clothes recycled." (53)

"A lot of women were put to work ripping apart the uniforms of fallen German soldiers. They would have to work on these soiled items of clothing and then eat their soup with dirty hands." (109)

"Our plant made the left wings for Messerschmidts." (12)

"Many women worked in the Siemens factory (electrical appliances)." (67)

"My job consisted of drilling 8-millimeter holes in steel or aluminum with a 15-pound steam hammer. I had to hold this steam hammer in my hands the whole workday, which was 12 hours long." (12)

"All the women who did men's work, as well as those who did women's work—like, for example, weaving—were pushed so hard to work at peak performance that they were not allowed to raise their heads from their work for even one second." (41)

"It was assembly-line work, the pace of which was being constantly accelerated. If at the beginning the conveyor belt came full circle every three hours, at the end it was coming around every 40 minutes, which of course did not give us one free moment." (12)

"Often three or four SS guards would dress up as doctors and give the appearance of a medical commission. Once some Russians were dragged in and ordered to undress and be examined. Then their heads were pushed under a measuring device that was connected to a trigger. When the measuring stick fell, it depressed the trigger and the victim would be killed by a bullet in the back of the head. The body would then be taken away and the next victim would be brought in. In this way they liquidated between 50 and 100 people who, one by one, entered this room, the walls and floor of which were stained with blood." (71)

"From the window of my squad room, I watched the shooting of a dozen Polish partisans. The SS matrons who were guarding us ordered us not to talk about what we had seen." (61)

"In August 1940, 1,100 new Poles arrived. From the first day on, they were taken in groups to the quarry and shot. After five months, only 300 of them were still alive." (105)

"There was a firing range near the camp exit. One day some Russian prisoners-of-war were led across the camp and brought to this range. A few minutes later you could hear the chatter of machine guns. No one saw the Russian POW's again." (107)

"In another camp, before the ovens had been installed, executions took place in a birch forest and the bodies were burned in ditches. Later, however, executions took place in a large, specially equipped annex of the crematory." (104)

Out of one group of more than 2,000 Russian POW's, only 80 survived. The others had been either shot or tortured to death. In the winter of 1942, the Germans killed approximately 5,000 Russian POW's. They were taken by truck from the barracks to an abandoned quarry, now a grave, where they were shot and buried. In 1943, 200 Soviet officers arrived at the camp, including two colonels and four majors; the rest were captains and lieutenants. All the officers were shot.

"In 1942, scores of convicts and civilians who had been brought in from outside were shot. Once the SS brought in 88 trucks full of people of all nationalities and ages—men, women, and children—and unloaded them in Krempetz Forest. The victims' clothes and valuables were taken from them and they were shot in front of already dug graves. Mass executions in Krempetz Forest were repeated regularly throughout 1942.

"On one particular spring day of 1942, 6,600 people arrived all at once at the camp. Two days later they were shot. On November 3, 1943, 18,000 were shot, including 8,000 camp inmates and 10,000 people brought in from other camps. Three days before this mass murder occurred, huge ditches had been dug in the open country behind the crematory.

"According to one eyewitness to the mass murder of the Polish population, there were days when 200 to 300 persons or even more were shot.

"A Russian POW by the name of Kneunikow witnessed the execution of 40 women and small children in July 1943. Early in the morning their bodies were taken to the crematory to be burned.

"A witness by the name of Krassovskaya reported to the Polish-Russian Commission that in April 1943, 300 women who had been transported from Greece were shot." (111)

✓ { "A low, mucky canal ran through the camp. One cold winter day, a group of Israelis were led in. They were completely naked, women and children, grown-ups and old people. The condemned waded into the water, which came up to their hips. The SS guards gathered at the edge of the canal, sneering at the victims who were trembling with fear and cold. Then they ordered them to dance and sing and jump up and down. They had to sing a specially composed song:

'We are the damned Jews who are destroying the world.'

"They continued to dance and sing for a long time, some for more than two hours, while their bodies sank ever deeper into the muck, but sometimes the Block leaders changed the program. Before the victims sank completely, they would order another group of Israelis to come and pull the dead and dying out of the muck and then carry them away on their shoulders. The newcomers thought they were rescuing some of their fellow-believers, and saving themselves in the process. Weighted down with their burdens, they would back away from the canal. But instead of returning to the barracks, they had to take the bodies to ovens where, quite literally, the living went to their graves with the dead and dying on their shoulders. This pastime lasted as long as it amused the Block leaders and the other SS guards." (104)

"One day hordes of people were led to the slaughterhouse. The SS said they were Jews and scoundrels and ordered us to beat them with rifle butts. Few of us obeyed this order, for even the meanest could see that these were mostly women and old people.

"Behind the barracks, in the direction of Zutowice, was a big stretch of hilly land. By blasting into a hillside, they carved out a big cave, and the massacre began. The people were lined up in rows of ten. The SS Sergeant who performed the executions wrote down the names, or acted as if he did, and told them that they were receiving the death penalty for sabotage. All were stripped, men and women, and then led to the cave in the side of the hill. A few heavy machine guns were placed in front of them, a few salvos were fired, and the people collapsed. Then the next ones were lined up, and when the area was too full of the dead and wounded, they dynamited the hillside, burying both. Afterwards, the butchers climbed all over this new hill to make sure that no one was left alive.

"I was posted as a guard at the edge of the area. Today my ears still ring with the cries of those unfortunate people, the young women with their children in their arms and the young girls, so full of life, who were murdered by these bloodthirsty brutes, their eyes bulging under the influence of the vodka that let them forget their crimes." (5)

"In this camp there was a room 40 feet long and 20 feet wide where people were strangled. The condemned were never allowed the mercy of a noose, which would simply have broken their necks. Instead, they hung suspended from a metal cable, which slowly strangled them. If, after 20 minutes, they were still alive, they would be beaten with a club." (56)

"Under the ovens there was a large room that served as a morgue and could hold as many as 500 bodies. It was also used for hangings. On the walls of this room were 52 hooks from which victims were suspended. The equipment was quite primitive, and prisoners died more often from suffocation than from strangulation. The executions were performed by two common German criminals in the presence of several SS guards who were present to confirm the deaths.

"The conduct of the prisoners who died in the morgue left no doubt that they knew what they were dying for, and this certainty gave meaning to their lives and to their deaths. I saw a Russian soldier go bravely to his death knowing he had fulfilled his military duty. A Frenchman called out, 'Vive la France'; an Englishman, 'May England live forever'; a Russian, 'Long live the Soviet fatherland.'" (90)

"Finally the 'ideal' room. Those condemned to death were taken immediately to a little door at the far end of the wall where it joined the crematory. This door opened inward until it came in contact with an electrical switch (the kind used to hold a door open) and thus created a corridor 4 feet wide and 3 feet high. At the other end was a 4-foot by 4-foot opening in the floor directly above a concrete shaft 12 feet deep that emptied into the strangulation room. The condemned prisoners were pushed into this shaft where they dropped the 12 feet to the concrete floor below. The moment they hit the floor, the victims were gagged by the SS guards and hung up on hooks along the wall about six feet above the floor.

"There were 45 hooks. When a load of prisoners was to be hanged, those who tried to protect themselves were beaten with a club. (The club and the noose were in the custody of the head of the hospital.) The bodies remained on the hooks until the cremation squad came and got them. An electric elevator, with a capacity of 18 bodies, would rise to the cremation chamber, which was directly above the strangulation chamber. The daily contingent of 200 bodies was made up of approximately 120 prisoners who had died in the infirmary, in the medical

experimentation building, or in the so-called 'mini-camp' [Kleinlager], plus the 60 to 80 bodies supplied from the strangulation chamber." (106)

"The gallows were used so often that they became a familiar sight to us. A prisoner could be hanged for an incautious remark, for careless work that was viewed as sabotage, for socializing that was seen as conspiracy, for taking bread from the storeroom, etc. The SS guards turned the executions into a party." (31)

"The condemned were hanged by SS guards in the presence of the mayor of the village, the police, and the members of their squad, while other SS personnel armed with machine pistols stood guard." (105)

✓ "You could hear the camp music celebrating the glory of the Reich as the last victim in a row of 30 was executed.

"In the tunnel the procedure was given a particularly spectacular twist: 20 condemned prisoners were tied by the neck to an electric hoist. At the push of a button, the 20 victims arose simultaneously into the air high over the floor, under the eyes of all the assembled workers in the tunnel. Immediately afterwards the workers were made to file past their hanged comrades and were told not to avert their eyes if they didn't want to receive a severe beating." (31)

"Three days before my arrival the SS guards ordered a German prisoner, a common criminal, to hang a young Polish prisoner. It was a public hanging. The German kicked him and he fell, but the rope was so long that his feet touched the earth. No one moved to help him. The procedure was repeated until he finally died." (21)

"In retaliation for unspecified incidents that had taken place outside the camp, Poles were again singled out to be hanged for all to see. Once they hanged 21 at the same time." (105)

"I was also present at the hanging of six prisoners, all Communists (four Germans and two Poles) who, at the moment of hanging, put up considerable resistance. One kicked a certain SS liaison officer, the meanest one in the camp. Just before they died, they cried out: 'Down with Hitler's Germany!' 'Hail Soviet Russia!' 'Down with SS barbarianism!' 'Long live Poland!'" (86)

"In August 1944, a number of Allied paratroopers arrived at the camp. The method of processing them was always the same: Their names would be called out upon arrival, they would be locked up for the night, and the next day they would be taken to the crematory where they would first be hanged. The paratroopers were English, American, and French. The Kapo who was in charge of the internees had to be able to provide an exact count." (38)

"34 English and Canadian pilots were hanged at the beginning of September 1944." (105)

"One day 37 English and French members of the Intelligence Service arrived at the camp and were assigned to Block 7. They were not put to

"During the month of June 1944, 40,000 men, women, and children were sent to the gas chamber.

"Since the basic purpose of this camp was to exterminate as many people as possible as fast as possible, it was aptly called 'Extermination Camp.'" (66)

GASSING AND BURNING

"When they arrived at the place of execution, which was surrounded by a double barbed-wire fence, the men, women, and children had to take all their clothes off, after which each was given a towel and a piece of soap. Then they were led into the building until it was completely full." (104)

"On one occasion the women refused to undress. One of them, an Italian Jewish girl, lunged at one of the SS officers, snatched his revolver, and shot him dead and wounded another right there in the gas chamber." (35)

Quot.
"Of the many episodes I witnessed, one especially sticks in my mind. I had been in the camp two or three weeks when a group of about 200 Belgian Israelis appeared. They were taken immediately to the gas chambers. Among them was one young Israeli girl of exceptional beauty who was holding a child of about three in her arms. (The SS guard picked her over and said: 'Come with me to the barracks and I will postpone your fate a few hours.' Instead of an answer, the young woman pointed to the child in her arms. 'That's not what I have in mind,' cried the guard, and he tore the child out of the mother's arms. The child began to laugh, thinking that the officer wanted to play, and leaned forward, apparently intending to give the German a kiss. Without a moment's hesitation, the SS guard swung the child in a wide arc and smashed its head against the concrete wall. The child didn't even have time to cry out. In a rage, the young mother snatched the revolver from the holster on the German's belt and managed to shoot him and several other SS officers before they finally overpowered her and tortured her to death in the anteroom of the gas chamber." (101)

"When the chambers were full, SS executioners decided to throw the children in with the grown-ups." (57)

"In one shipment of Jewish women, a mother got separated from her seven-month-old baby just as she was about to enter the gas chamber. Noticing that the child had been left behind, an SS guard took it by one leg and smashed its head against the wall." (39)

"A section leader once made this speech to the internees who were about to be locked in the gas chamber: 'Gentlemen, because you robbed the world, you have been brought to Birkenau. Here each person must

work at his profession: doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc. So pull yourselves together, take off your clothes, and pile them up neatly so that you can find them again on the way out. Help us to disinfect you thoroughly, for you come from countries where epidemics are rampant. Move in closer to each other so that we don't have to repeat the process.' The prisoners obeyed. The last ones to be shoved into the chamber that time were the doctors. Before the door of the gas chamber was closed, the section leader called to them with a diabolical grin: 'And now you will die like cattle.'

"The established procedure for the proper utilization of the gas chambers mandated that men and women, now naked, were to be squeezed so tightly together they could not move. The SS men would then seize the children by the arms and legs and smash their heads against a rock. Their bodies would then be tossed in over the heads of their parents and the door shut." (123)

"Oh! My God, what an apocalyptic vision: The cries of mothers pleading for pity for their children who were either in the same chamber or an adjoining one. The children crying for their parents or for their brothers and sisters, begging God for mercy even though they were already on the threshold of death. The shrieks, the cries of desperation, the scratching of fingernails on the walls of these ghastly chambers—I will never forget it." (57)

"When finally all doors had been hermetically sealed, the air was pumped out in order to reduce the oxygen content and speed up the asphyxiation." (86)

"Through an opening in the ceiling the Germans dropped canisters into one of the wire-mesh enclosed columns in the middle of the room. The canisters contained pellets of Zyklon B saturated in prussic acid." (111)

"Each canister had four holes through which the gas escaped. The wire mesh columns prevented the prisoners from getting close enough to a canister to touch it with their hands; so the gas poured forth freely and asphyxiated them." (86)

"Fans were set in motion that accelerated the distribution of the gas around the room." (93)

"The building, which was several stories high, was constructed of sturdy bricks with a cement floor and a 12-foot-deep underground vault the entire length of the building. The main floor contained an administrative office toward the front, a closet and a washroom for the SS personnel, which lay at the other end of the building, and finally the chamber with the ovens in the middle. Inside this chamber there were two enclosures, both of which contained three ovens, each with its own brick hearth. Each oven could hold three corpses for a total capacity of

18 bodies.

"The floor of each oven consisted of a simple grill by means of which the ashes were removed every day at the end of the operation. The fire came from a fire chamber which covered the back two-thirds of the floor. The flames were directed at the bodies from above by means of special devices fastened inside the fire chamber. The forward section of the underground vault contained the strangulation chamber." (106)

"At first, cremation lasted 20 to 25 minutes. In one hour 36 bodies could be cremated. Then the cremations were speeded up. Instead of burning coke, they began using a fuel called 'naphtha.' The heat was further intensified by means of a special motor for regulating the air supply. The temperature in these ovens could reach as high as 1,500 degrees centigrade." (111)

"When three bodies were burned together, naturally there was no question of separating the ashes that were not emptied anyway before each new loading, and usually not until the end of the operation." (90)

"Every oven could hold two to three people each, depending on their height and weight." (86)

"Four bodies could be accommodated at the same time if their limbs were severed. In order to get as many of them in an oven as possible, the bodies were dismembered as a matter of course. The huge ovens were made of brick and iron; they were crematories with great performance capability." (111)

"I saw nine technically perfect ovens. Up to 15 bodies could be accommodated in one single oven." (90)

"The cremations were abruptly interrupted by the arrival of American tank troops in the area, so abruptly, in fact, that the SS did not have time to 'get their act together.' Thus, the various stages of torture (the sequence of operations) were there to be thoroughly examined and understood. The bodies of that morning's victims, including 120 prisoners who had died in the camp, were still heaped on a truck in the main courtyard. And the ovens had not yet been cleaned of their grisly skeletal remains, their fragments of pelvic bone and pieces of skull." (106)

"The prisoners nearest to the wire mesh column died in six or seven minutes; those farther away succumbed in eight to twelve minutes. To ensure the success of the procedure, the chamber was not opened until 15 to 20 minutes afterward." (86)

"The observation window was reserved for the SS and the Gestapo for whom it provided lurid entertainment." (93)

"After the work was done, the door of the chamber was opened. Then a ventilator dispersed the gas, and a team, called the 'special squad,' carried the bodies away." (86)

"The dead all had terrible scratches on them. In their wild desperation and frantic battle with death, they gouged out their own eyes and

lacerated their own flesh." (20)

"The bodies were intertwined with each other, so tightly were they squeezed together. It was next to impossible to untangle them, so they used a sort of rod with pincers to extricate the bodies and pull them out of the chamber. One after another the bodies were removed and taken to the elevator. Before they were loaded in, a so-called 'collection team' removed false teeth and teeth made of precious metals from their mouths, and rings from their fingers. It is hard to understand why the predatory spirit is so deeply ingrained, and yet it's true.

"There was also a team of four dental specialists whose job it was to extract gold fillings from the mouths of the dead." (93)

"From the gas chambers the bodies were taken straight to the crematory for burning." (111)

"I often saw the trucks and trailers going back and forth between the gas chamber and the crematory. On the way from the gas chamber they were loaded with bodies; on the way back they were empty." (111)

"The women's hair was also cut off before they were cremated." (86)

"The bodies were taken up by elevator to the higher floors where there were six ovens which turned 36 bodies to ashes in 20 minutes; i.e., 108 bodies per hour—2,592 in 24 hours, for they cremated without interruption." (57)

"The floor of many gas chambers contained a trapdoor which opened directly onto huge crematory ovens." (120)

"The Germans went to great lengths to make sure that this part of their activities was kept absolutely secret. The interns were never allowed to get anywhere near the chambers or the ovens. Those who were assigned to work in those facilities (transporting bodies, pulverizing bones after cremation, etc.), who made up the 'special squad,' lived apart from the others. Any contact with them was forbidden. As a way of exercising extreme caution, the personnel of the special squads was frequently 'renewed.' Thus a team of 250 Russian POW's that had only been assembled in July 1942 was totally eliminated in August and replaced by 250 Jews who were executed before the year was out." (102)

"After that the squads assigned to the crematory were made up entirely of Jews who worked under the supervision of SS men. The fact that the Jews who were sent there were not allowed to leave accounted for the frequent turnover of personnel. These prisoners lived at their workplace; they were completely separated from their comrades. The members of the special squads were well fed." (101)

"Every member of these squads received the following additional rations daily: 500 grams of bread, 60 grams of marmalade, 45 grams of butter, and 50 grams of sausage." (60)

"This work was not hard; the dead were as light as a feather." (67)

Chapter 13

Number of Dead

PERCENTAGE - BALANCE SHEET

"I can draw up the following small balance sheet: At the time I arrived, there were approximately 17,000 Russian officers and soldiers in the camp. In the course of two months, between 12,000 and 13,000 of them had disappeared." (101)

"In all about 9,000 French prisoners arrived at Mauthausen of whom about 4,400 were still alive on April 30, 1945." (118)

"The French Jews were treated no better. There was no distinction made. The Polish Jews were exterminated the moment they arrived at the camp, the French Jews a short time afterward." (94)

"Out of 80,000 Jewish deportees from Saloniki, Greece, about 100 arrived. Of the 120,000 people deported from France, only about 5 percent returned. An estimate is difficult." (22)

"A comparison of the statistics on the number of Aryans and non-Aryans who died in this camp reveals that the percentage of Aryans who died was 3 to 5 percent while the percentage of non-Aryans was 95 to 96 percent. That means that if you accept a figure of 4 million killed in Auschwitz, 250,000 of them were Aryans and the rest were Jews. If you put the figure of those killed at 3 million, the number of 50,000 for the Aryans stays the same while the number of Jews changes accordingly." (86)

"The number of women who were brought to Auschwitz at this time was approximately 93,000. When these same women left Auschwitz to work at Lothringen, the number had dropped to around 12,000. This means that over 80,000 women had died in two years.

The death tally in the men's camp was even higher." (102)

"It has been proved that in the course of three months—May, June, and July 1944—the Germans cremated up to 600,000 prisoners either in

ovens or on funeral pyres. During my stay, 20,000 Hungarian Jews were cremated in one day. The highest total number of cremations for one day was 36,000." (23)

"A total of 1,341,000 victims in a little less than three months." (123)

"To determinè the number of dead, they requisitioned the registers of the shipments arriving at the Auschwitz railway station, which were at that time in the hands of the Russian investigative committee. In these registers the number of shipments was recorded as they passed through the station on the way to the Auschwitz camp. If you multiply the number of shipments by 1,000 (1,000 prisoners was a minimum figure for one shipment; many shipments contained up to 3,000 prisoners), you arrive at a figure of 4.5 million dead by the time that camp was liberated." (86)

"To all this mass murdering, must be added the thousands upon thousands who slowly wasted away from work, torture, hunger, and sickness." (121)

"It is hard to estimate just how many prisoners actually arrived at the camp. For example, when new shipments of Russian POW's arrived, they would be given the numbers of Russians who had already died, thus making the total look much smaller than it really was." (104)

"In all, at least 7 million people were killed in Auschwitz alone. (Those who were cremated upon arrival were not entered in the register. Those who died in the camp were noted as having died by accident or from natural causes.)" (23)

"The figure of 8 million people annihilated in this camp seems in no way to be an exaggeration." (118)

"Three million for Maidanek, the camp at Lublin." (20)

"The number of surviving deportees before 1942 is extremely small, maybe one percent, maybe even less." (100)

"90 percent of our comrades died. It was a total extermination. Aryan or non-Aryan, scarcely 10 percent came back." (94)

"The number of 26 million represents approximately the total number of people, POW's and political prisoners (men, women, children, of all ages and nationalities), whom the Germans caused to die from hunger, cold, sickness, torture, medical experiments, and other means of extermination, in all the camps in Germany and in occupied territories." (118)

"Moreover, the European continent including Germany has been systematically robbed of hundreds of thousands of leading personalities of the free, democratic world." (106)



A rare, sunny day mocks the mire and filth, not to mention the monotony and menace of daily life in the camps

One spigot often had to serve thousands of prisoners





Prisoners were frequently forced to stand roll call naked for hours on end, in all kinds of weather

Inside the Concentration Camps