

GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMPS
(Folder 1 of 2)

000305

GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMPS

1. ORIGINAL REPORTS RECEIVED FROM McCLELLAND
2. MAP AND DESCRIPTION OF AUSCHWITZ RECEIVED FROM MANN
3. MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF AUSCHWITZ
4. MEMORANDUM ON POSSIBLE USE OF REPORTS
5. LETTER TO HARRY SHERMAN, PRESIDENT OF THE
"BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB", 11/3/44
6. CORRESPONDENCE WITH WAR DEPARTMENT CONCERNING
BOMBING OF EXTERMINATION CENTERS
7. YANK MAGAZINE
8. LETTER FROM WAR DEPARTMENT, 11/23/44
(Clearance from a security standpoint)
9. DISCUSSIONS WITH ELMER DAVIS (OWI)
10. THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD RELEASE
11. CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST
12. CORRESPONDENCE WITH IRA HIRSCHMANN
13. CORRESPONDENCE WITH WAR DEPARTMENT CONCERNING
OSWALD F. SCHUETTE'S INQUIRY TO SECL STIMSON
14. EXCERPTS FROM REPORT OF POLISH MAJOR, RE:
DISCUSSION WITH JOHN CREDER - NY TIMES
15. MEMORANDUM 12/15/44 TO MR. PEHLE FROM MRS. MANNON
RE: AUTHENTICITY OF ATROCITY REPORTS
16. REPORT ON PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTION TO WAR REFUGEE BOARD
RELEASE OF ACCOUNTS OF AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU
17. LETTER FROM HARRY SHERMAN, "BOOK OF THE MONTH CLUB", 12/13/44
AND WRB REPLY FROM MR. PEHLE, 12/19/44
18. LETTER TO WRB FROM JOHN J. McCLOY, ENCLOSING COPY OF LET.
12/18/44 FROM OSWALD F. SCHUETTE TO MR. STIMSON
19. Memorandum to Secretary Morgenthau from Mr. Pehle, 12/30/44
Enclosing copies of Correspondence between McCloy, Stimson
WRB, and Schuette, re Atrocity Report
20. Cable #12, 1/13/45 to Amer. Legation, Dublin
21. Cable #192 (WRB Bern 360), 1/13/45 to Amer. Leg., Bern
22. Cable #9, 1/17/45 from Amer. Legation, Dublin, in Reply
to our #12, above
23. Cable #368, 1/22/45 to Bern
24. Cable #416, 1/20/45 from Bern
25. Cable #134, 1/22/45 to Moscow
26. Cable #520 from Bern (reply to 368 above) 1/25/45

000306

GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMPS

27. Cable #20 from State to Amer. Legation, Dublin, 1/22/45
28. Cable #19, 1/29/45 from Dublin to State
29. Cable #238 (copy), 1/26/45 from Moscow to State
30. Cable #26, 2/6/45 from Dublin
31. Cable #342, 2/6/45 from Moscow
32. Copy of Cable #715, 1/20/45 from London
33. Cable #6818, 10/12/44 from Bern
34. Cable #911, 2/9/45 from Bern
35. Cable #378, 2/9/45 from Moscow
36. Cable #451, 2/17/45 from Moscow
37. Letter to WRB from WJC re Rumor of Germans Further Extermination of Jews in Oswiecim & Birkenau
38. Cable #744, 2/2/45 from Bern
39. Cable #1601 (WRB 508), to Bern

000307

This document has been declassified
by the Department of State.

By telephone to Miss
Drewry, 2/7/64

100308

LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Bern, October 22, 1944.

~~Confidential~~

Mr. John Pehle,
Director, War Refugee Board,
Washington.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

DECLASSIFIED by State

Dept. per telephone to Director,
FDRL, 2-7-64.

Sir:

Subject: Transmitting two reports on the German concentration and extermination camps for Jews and political prisoners of AUSCHWITZ (Oswieçim) and BIRKENAU (Rajsko) in Upper Silesia previously referred to in the Legation's 4291 and 4295 of July 6, 1944.

I have the honor to send to the War Refugee Board, enclosed herewith, three copies each of two reports dealing with the German SS-controlled concentration and extermination camps for Jews and political prisoners from various occupied countries in Europe located at Auschwitz (Germanization of the Polish name of Oswieçim) and Birkenau (the name of the Polish village was Rajsko) in Upper Silesia. The enclosed reports constitute, in English translation, the full texts, a condensation of which was cabled to the War Refugee Board in the Legation's telegrams Nos. 4291 and 4295 of July 6, 1944.

These reports reached Switzerland during June 1944 from Bratislava, having been forwarded through Czech underground channels. They were delivered to Dr. Jean Kopecky, Representative of the Czechoslovak Government in Geneva, although that written by the two young Slovak Jews was addressed to Mr. Nathan Schwalb, Representative in Switzerland of the Hechalutz Organization (the left labor wing of the Zionists).

While it is of course impossible to directly vouch for their complete authenticity, I have every reason to believe that they are, unfortunately, a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps.

In

000309

In the case of the first report by the two young Slovak Jews I had occasion to speak here in Bern with a member of the Bratislava Papal Nunciature who had personally interviewed these two young men and declared the impression they created in telling their story to be thoroughly convincing. I further understand that responsible members of the Bratislava Jewish community closely cross-examined the authors of this report so that the material finally incorporated into it includes only that about which there was no uncertainty or equivocation in their minds or in the minds of their examiners.

The report of the Polish Major (No. 2) was composed quite independently of the story of the two young Jews and was communicated to the Czech Resistance Movement in Slovakia, which in turn forwarded it to Dr. Kopecky. Dr. Kopecky vouches for the reliability of the man who composed it and for its authenticity. It arrived originally in Polish from which a German translation was first made. I in turn carefully corrected the translation from German into English enclosed herewith.

The figures concerning the size of the Jewish convoys arriving and the numbers of men and women admitted to the two camps are declared by the authors to be no more than reliable approximations. A precise statistical record of the numbers of persons murdered at Auschwitz and Birkenau, however, would not detract in any appreciable degree from the value of these reports as testimony to the enormity of the crime perpetrated there.

The indications given concerning the periods of arrival and countries of origin of Jewish convoys check very closely with information possessed by various reliable Jewish and non-Jewish organizations in Switzerland regarding the departure of such deportees from various European countries. I myself, for example, was in southern France during the deportation of large convoys of foreign Jews from such internment camps as Ivesaltes, Gurs, Les Milles and Récébédou, in August and September of 1942, and have considerable first-hand information with respect to their composition, number and dates of departure.

The episode of the postcards written by members of the first Theresienstadt convoy, which had to be dated March 23 and 25, 1943, recounted in the report of the two young Jews, is, to cite another small example, fully confirmed by the fact that a number of these cards were received here in Switzerland.

numerous

000310

Numerous other similar examples could be given if one were to go into this question at length.

Although, in the main, I personally feel that the handling of such material as the enclosed reports cannot be considered as a positive contribution to real relief or rescue activities, it does constitute a tragic side of the whole problem, an awareness of which plays a necessary role in developing and implementing programs destined to bring whatever aid possible to these people. I therefore submit them to the War Refugee Board for its own and for the information of whatever other agencies the Board deems advisable.

Respectfully yours,

Roswell D. McClelland

Roswell D. McClelland,
Special Assistant to
the American Minister.

Enclosure:

Two reports.

RDM/mjb
In triplicate to War Refugee Board.

000311

THE EXTERMINATION CAMPS OF AUSCHWITZ (Oswiecim)

and BIRKENAU

in Upper Silesia.

-++++-

000312

F O R W A R D .

-++++-

Two young Slovak Jews - whose names will not be disclosed for the time being in the interest of their own safety - have been fortunate enough to escape after spending two years in the concentration camps of BIRKENAU, AUSCHWITZ and LUBLIN-MAJDANEK, where they had been deported in 1942 from SLOVAKIA:

One of them was sent on April 13, 1942 from the assembly camp of SERED directly to AUSCHWITZ and then to BIRKENAU, while the other was sent from the camp of NOVAKY to LUBLIN on June 14, 1942 and after a short stay there, transferred to AUSCHWITZ and, later, BIRKENAU.

The following report does not contain everything these two men experienced during their captivity, but only what the one or both together underwent, heard or experienced at first hand. No individual impressions or judgments are recorded and nothing passed on from hear-say.

The report starts with the story of the young Jew who was removed from SERED. The account of his experiences in BIRKENAU begins at the time the second Jew arrived there and is therefore based on the statements of both. Then follows the individual narrative of the second Jew who was sent from NOVAKY to LUBLIN and from there to AUSCHWITZ.

The declarations tally with all the trustworthy yet fragmentary reports hitherto received and the dates given with regard to transports to various camps agree with the official records. These statements can therefore be considered as entirely credible.

000313

On the 13th April 1942 our group, consisting of 1,000 men, was loaded into railroad cars at the assembly camp of SERED. The doors were shut so that nothing would reveal the direction of the journey and when they were open after a long while we realized that we had crossed the Slovak frontier and were in ZWARDON. The train had until then been guarded by Hlinka men but was now taken over by SS. guards. After a few of the cars had been uncoupled from our convoy we continued on our way arriving at night at AUSCHWITZ, where we stopped on a side-track. The reason the other cars were left behind was apparently the lack of room at AUSCHWITZ. They joined us, however, a few days later. Upon arrival we were placed in rows of five and counted. There were 643 of us. After a walk of about 20 minutes with our heavy packs (we had left Slovakia well equipped) we reached the concentration camp of AUSCHWITZ.

We were at once led into a huge barrack where on the one side we had to deposit all our luggage and on the other side completely undress, leaving our clothes and valuables behind. Naked, we then proceeded to an adjoining barrack where our heads and bodies were shaved and disinfected with lysol. At the exit every man was given a number which began with 28,600 in consecutive order. With this number in hand we were then herded to a third barrack where so-called registration took place. This consisted of tattooing the numbers we had received in the second barrack on the left side of our chest. The extreme brutality with which this was effected made many of us faint. The particulars of our identity were also recorded. Then we were led in groups of a hundred into a cellar, and later to a barrack where we were issued striped prisoners clothes and wooden clogs. This lasted until 10 a.m. In the afternoon our prisoner's outfit was taken away from us again and replaced by the ragged and dirty remains of Russian uniforms. Thus equipped we were marched off to BIRKENAU.

AUSCHWITZ is a concentration camp for political prisoners under so-called "protective custody". At the time of my arrival, that is in April of 1942, there were about 15,000 prisoners in the camp, the majority of whom were Poles, Germans and civilian Russians under protective custody. A small number of prisoners came under the categories of criminals and "work-shirkers".

AUSCHWITZ camp headquarters controls at the same time the work-camp of BIRKENAU as well as the farm labor camp of HARMENSE. All the prisoners arrive first at AUSCHWITZ where they are provided with a prisoner's immatriculation number and then are either kept there, sent to BIRKENAU or, in very small numbers, to HARMENSE. The prisoners receive consecutive numbers upon arrival. Every number is only used once so that the last number always corresponds to

000314

the number of prisoners actually in the camp. At the time of our escape, that is to say at the beginning of April 1944, the number had risen up to 180,000. At the outset the numbers were tattooed on the left breast, but later, due to their becoming blurred, on the left forearm.

All prisoners, irrespective of category or nationality, are treated the same. However, to facilitate identification, they are distinguished by various coloured triangles sewed on the clothing on the left breast under the immatriculation number. The first letter indicates the nationality of the prisoner. This letter (for instance "P" for Poles) appears in the middle of the triangle. The coloured triangles have the following meaning :

- red triangle political prisoners under protective custody.
- green " professional criminals.
- black " "dodgers" (labor slackers), "anti-socials" (mostly Russians).
- pink " homosexuals.
- violet " Members of the religious sect of "Bibelforscher".

The Jewish prisoners differ from the Aryan prisoners in that their triangle (which in the majority of cases is red) is turned into a David's star by adding yellow points.

Within the enclosure of the camp of AUSCHWITZ there are several factories : a war production plant, Deutscher Aufüstungswerk (DAW), a factory belonging to the KRUPP works and one to the SIEMENS concern. Outside the boundary of the camp is a tremendous plant covering several square kilometers named "BUNA". The prisoners work in all the aforementioned factories.

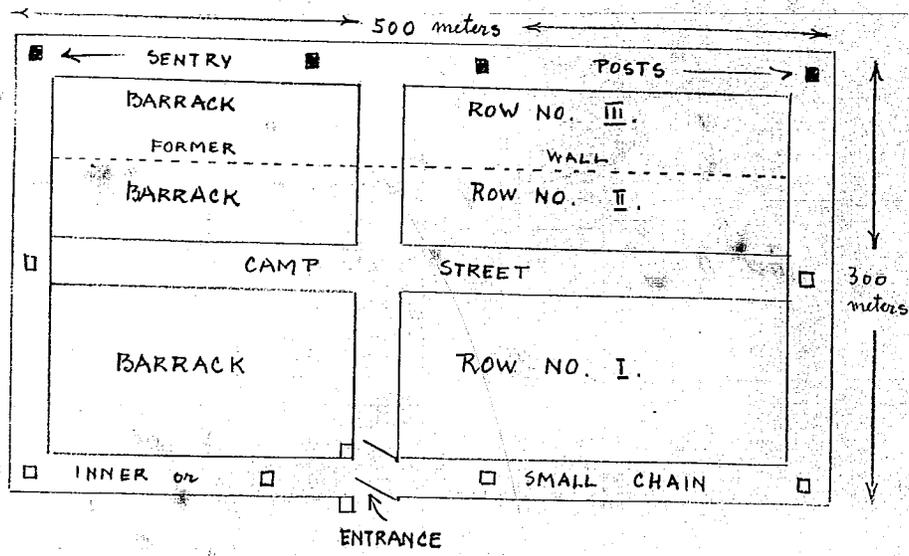
The prisoners' actual living quarters, if such a term may at all be used, inside the camp proper cover an area of approximately 500 by 300 meters surrounded by a double row of concrete posts about 3 meters high which are connected (both inside and outside) to one another by a dense netting of high-tension wires fixed into the posts by insulators. Between these two rows of posts, at intervals of 150 meters, there are 5 meters high watch-towers, equipped with machine-guns and searchlights. In front of the inner high-tension circle there is further an ordinary wire fence. Merely touching this fence is answered by a stream of bullets from the watch-towers. This system is called "the small or inner chain of sentry posts". The camp itself is composed of three rows of houses. Between the first and second row is the camp street and between the second and third there used to be a wall. The Jewish girls deported from Slovakia in March and April 1942, over 7,000 of them, lived in the houses separated by this wall up to the middle

000315

of August 1943. After these girls had been removed to BIRKENAU the wall between the second and third row of houses was removed. The camp entry road cuts across the row of houses while over the entrance gate, which is of course always heavily guarded, stands the ironic inscription : "work brings freedom".

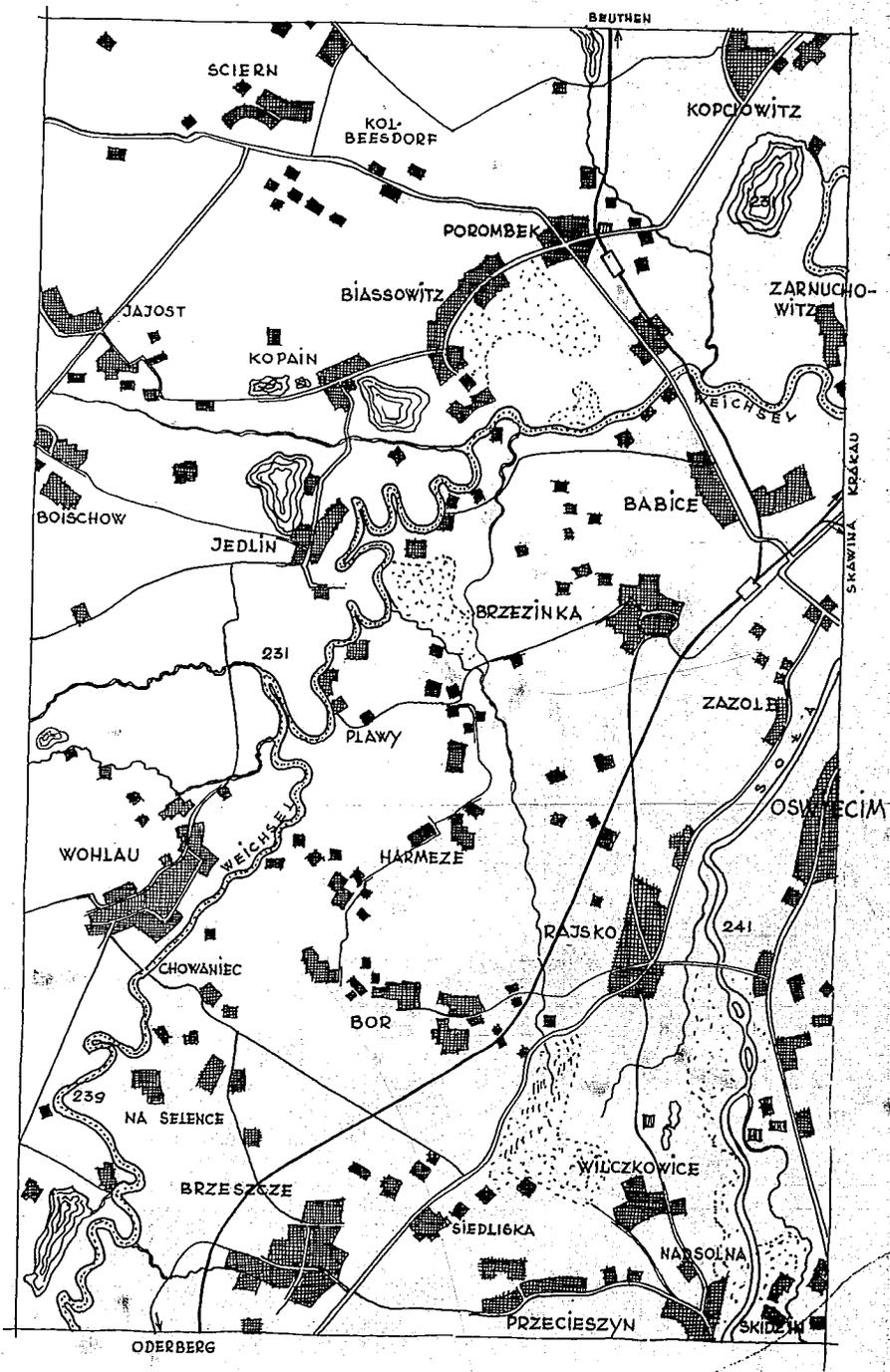
At a radius of some 2,000 meters the whole camp is encircled by a second line called "The big or outer chain of sentry posts" also with watch-towers every 150 meters. Between the inner and outer chain of sentry posts are the factories and other workshops. The towers of the inner chain are only manned at night when the high-tension current is switched into the double row of wires. During day-time the garrison of the inner chain of sentry posts is withdrawn, and the men take up duty in the outer chain. Escape through these sentry posts - and many attempts have been made - is practically impossible. Getting through the inner circle of posts at night is completely impossible, and the towers of the outer chain are so close to one another (one every 150 meters, i.e. giving each tower a sector with a 75 meters radius to watch), that approaching unnoticed is out of the question. The guards shoot without warning. The garrison of the outer chain is withdrawn at twilight, but only after it has been ascertained that all the prisoners are within the inner circle. If the roll-call reveals that a prisoner is missing, sirens immediately sound the alarm.

ROUGH GROUND PLAN OF AUSCHWITZ



000316

SCALE 1/50,000
KILOMETRES



000317

- 4 -

The men in the outer chain remain in their towers on the look-out, the inner chain is maned, and a systematic search is begun by hundreds of SS guards and bloodhounds. The siren brings the whole surrounding countryside to a state of alarm so that if by miracle the escapee has been successful in getting through the outer chain he is nearly certain to be caught by one of the numerous German police and SS. patrols. The escapee is furthermore handicapped by his clean-shaven head, his striped prisoner's outfit or red patches sewn on his clothing, and the passiveness of the thoroughly intimidated inhabitants. The mere fact of neglecting to give information on the whereabouts of a prisoner, not to speak of extending help, is punished by death. Provided that the prisoner has not been caught sooner, the garrison of the outer chain of sentry posts remains on the watch for three days and nights after which delay it is presumed that the escapee has succeeded in breaking through the double circle. The following night the outer guard is withdrawn. If the escapee is caught alive he is hanged in the presence of the whole camp but if he is found dead, his body - wherever it may have been located - is brought back to camp (it is easy to identify the corpse by means of the tattooed number) and seated at the entrance gate, a small notice clasped in his hands, reading: "Here I am". During our two years imprisonment many attempts to escape were made by prisoners but, with the exception of two or three, all were brought back dead or alive. It is not known whether the 2 or 3 escapees who were not caught actually managed to get away. It can however be asserted that among the Jews who were deported from SLOVAKIA to AUSCHWITZ or BIRKENAU, we are the only two who were lucky enough to save ourselves.

As stated previously, we were transferred from AUSCHWITZ to BIRKENAU on the day of our arrival.

Actually there is no such district as BIRKENAU. Even the word BIRKENAU is new in that it has been "adopted" from the nearby birch forest (BREZINSKY). The district now called BIRKENAU was and is still called "RAJSKA" by the local population. The existing camp center of BIRKENAU lies 4 kilometers distant from AUSCHWITZ. The outer control zones of both BIRKENAU and AUSCHWITZ meet and are merely separated by a railway track. We never found anything out about NEW-BERUN, probably about 30 to 40 kilometers away which, oddly enough, we had to indicate as postal district for BIRKENAU.

At the time of our arrival in BIRKENAU we found there only one huge kitchen for 15,000 people and three stone buildings, two of which were completed and one under construction. The buildings were surrounded by an ordinary barbed wire fence. The prisoners were housed in these buildings and in others later constructed. All are built according to a standard model. Each house is about 30 meters long and 8 to 10 meters wide. Whereas the height

100318

of the walls hardly exceeds 2 meters the roof is disproportionately high - about 5 meters -, so that the house gives the impression of a stable surmounted by a large hay-loft. There is no inner ceiling, so that the room reaches a height of 7 meters in the center; in other words the pointed roofing rests directly on the four walls. The room is divided in two by a partition running its whole length down the middle and fitted with an opening to enable communication between the two parts thus separated. Along both side-walls as well as along the middle partition, two parallel floors, some 80 centimeters apart, have been built which are in turn divided into small cells by vertical partitions. Thus there are 3 floors : the ground floor and the two built in the side-walls. Normally 3 people live in each cubicle. As can be judged from the dimensions indicated, these cubicles are too narrow for a man to lie stretched out and not high enough for him to sit upright. There is no question of having enough space to stand upright. In this way some 4 to 500 people are accommodated in one house or "Block", as they are also called.

The present camp of BIRKENAU covers an area of some 1600 by 500 meters which is surrounded - similar to AUSCHWITZ - by a so-called small or inner chain of sentry posts. Work is now proceeding on a still larger compound which is to be added later on to the already existing camp. The purpose if this extensive planning is not known to us.

Within a radius of 2 kilometers as with AUSCHWITZ, BIRKENAU, is also surrounded by an outer chain of sentry posts with the same type of watch system as at AUSCHWITZ.

The buildings we found on our arrival had been erected by 12,000 Russian prisoners of war brought there in December 1941. In severe winter weather they had to work under inhuman conditions as a result of which most of them, with the exception of a small number employed in the kitchen, died of exposure. They were numbered from 1 to 12,000 in a series which had no connection with the ordinary camp numbering system previously described. Whenever fresh convoys of Russian prisoners arrived, they were not issued the current AUSCHWITZ prisoner numbers, but received those of deceased Russians in the 1 to 12,000 series. It is therefore difficult to estimate how many prisoners of this category passed through the camp. Apparently Russians were transferred to AUSCHWITZ or BIRKENAU on disciplinary grounds from regular prisoner of war camps. We found what remained of the Russians in a terrible state of destitution and neglect living in the unfinished building without the slightest protection against cold or rain. They died "en masse". Hundreds and thousands of their bodies were buried superficially, spreading a stench of pestilence. Later we had to exhume and burn the corpses.

A week before our arrival in AUSCHWITZ, the first group of Jews reached the camp : (the women were dealt with separately and received numbers parallel to those of the men; the Slovak women received serial numbers from 1 to 8,000) 1,320 naturalized French Jews from Paris. They were numbered from 27,800 onwards. It is clear, therefore, that between this French group and our convoy, no other men arrived in AUSCHWITZ, since we have already pointed out that our numbers started with 28,800. We found the 700 French Jews who were still alive in terrible condition, the missing 600 having died within a week after their arrival.

The following categories were housed in the three completed buildings :

I. The so-called "prominencia" : professional criminals and older Polish political prisoners who were in charge of the administration of the camp.

II. The remainder of the French Jews, namely some 700.

III. The 643 original Slovak Jews to whom were added a few days later those who had been left at ZWARDON.

IV. Those Russians who were still alive and housed in the unfinished building as well as in the open air and whose numbers diminished so rapidly that as a group they are scarcely worth mentioning.

Together with the remaining Russian prisoners the Slovak Jews worked at the construction of buildings, whereas the French Jews had to do spade work. After 3 days, I was ordered, together with 200 other Slovak Jews, to work in the German armament factories at AUSCHWITZ but we continued to be housed in BIRKENAU. We left early in the morning returning at night and worked in the carpentry shop as well as on road construction. Our food consisted of 1 litre of turnip-soup at midday and 300 grams of bad bread in the evening. Working conditions were inconceivably hard, so that the majority of us, weakened by starvation and the inedible food, could not stand it. The mortality was so high that every day our group of 200 had 30 to 35 dead. Many were simply beaten to death by the overseers - the "Capos" - during work, without the slightest provocation. The gaps in our ranks caused by these deaths were replaced daily by prisoners from BIRKENAU. Our return at night was extremely painful and dangerous, as we had to drag along over a distance of 5 kilometers our tools, fire wood, heavy cauldrons and the bodies of those who had died or had been killed during the working day. With these heavy loads we were forced to maintain a brisk pace and anyone incurring the displeasure of one of the "Capos" was cruelly knocked down, if not beaten to death. Until the arrival of the second group of Slovak men some 14 days later, our original number had dwindled to 150. At night we were counted, the bodies of the dead were piled up on flat, narrow-gauge cars

000320

or in a truck and brought to the birch forest (BREZINSKY) where they were hnt in a trench several meters deep and about 15 meters long. Every day on our way to work we met a working party of 300 Jewish girls from Slovakia who were employed on ground work in the vicinity. They were dressed in old Russian uniform rags and wore wooden clogs. Their heads were shaven and unfortunately we could not speak to them.

Until the middle of May 1942, a total of 4 convoys of male Jews from Slovakia, arrived at BIRKENAU and all received similar treatment to ours.

From the 1st and 2nd transports 120 men were chosen (including myself) and placed at the disposal of the administration of the camp of AUSCHWITZ which was in need of doctors, dentists, intellectuals and clerks. This group consisted of 80 Slovak and 30 French Jews. As I had in the meantime managed to work my way up to a good position in BIRKENAU - being in command of a group of 50 men, which had brought me considerable advantage - I at first felt reluctant to leave for AUSCHWITZ. However, I was finally persuaded to go and left. After 8 days, 18 doctors and attendants as well as three further persons were selected from this group of 120 intellectuals. The doctors were used in the "sick building" or "hospital" at AUSCHWITZ, while we three were sent back to BIRKENAU. My 2 comrades, Ladislav Braun from Trnava and Gross from Vrbové (?), both of whom have since died, were sent to the Slovak block while I was ordered to the French section where we were employed at collecting "personal data" and at "nursing the sick". The remaining 99 persons were sent to work in the gravel pit where they all died within a short time.

Shortly thereafter a so-called "sick-building" (Krankenbau) was set up. It was destined to become the much dreaded "Block 7" where at first I was chief attendant and later administrator. The chief of this "infirmary" was a Pole named Viktor Mordarki, prisoner No. 3550. Actually this building was nothing else than an assembly centre for death candidates. All prisoners incapable of working were sent there. There was no question of any medical attention or care. We had some 150 dead daily and their bodies were sent for cremation to AUSCHWITZ.

At the same time the so-called "selections" were introduced. Twice weekly, Mondays and Thursdays, the camp doctor indicated the number of prisoners who were to be gassed and then burned. These "selectees" were loaded into trucks and brought to the Birch Forest. Those still alive upon arrival were gassed in a big barrack erected near the trench used for burning the bodies. The weekly "draft" in dead from "Block 7" was about 2,000, of whom 1,200 died of natural "death" and about 800 through "selection". For those who had not been "selected" a death

000321

certificate was issued and sent to the central administration at ORANINBURG, whereas for the "selectees" a special register was kept with the indication "S.B." ("Sonderbehandelt" - special treatment). Until January 15, 1943, up to which time I was administrator of "Block 7" and therefore in a position to directly observe happenings, some 50,000 prisoners died of "natural death" or by "selection".

As previously described, the prisoners were numbered consecutively so that we are able to reconstruct fairly clearly their order of succession and the fate which befell each separate convoy on arrival.

The first male Jewish transport reaching AUSCHWITZ for BIRKENAU, was composed, as mentioned, of 1,320 naturalized French Jews bearing approximately the following numbers:

- 27,400 - 28,600
- 28,600 - 29,600 In April 1942, the first convoy of Slovak Jews (our convoy).
- 29,600 - 29,700 100 men (Aryans) from various concentration camps.
- 29,700 - 32,700 3 complete convoys of Slovak Jews.
- 32,700 - 33,100 400 professional criminals (Aryans) from Warsaw prisons.
- 33,100 - 35,000 1900 Jews from Cracow.
- 35,000 - 36,000 1000 Poles (Aryans) - political prisoners.
- 36,000 - 37,300 In May 1942 - 1300 Slovak Jews from LUBLIN-MAJDANEK.
- 37,300 - 37,900 800 Poles (Aryans) from RADOM, amongst them a few Jews.
- 37,900 - 38,000 100 Poles from the concentration camp of DACHAU.
- 38,000 - 38,400 400 French naturalized Jews who arrived with their families.

This whole convoy consisted of about 1,600 individuals of whom approximately 200 girls and 400 men were admitted to the camp, while the remaining 1,000 persons (women, old people, children as well as men) were sent without further procedure from the railroad siding directly to the Birch forest, and there gassed and burnt. From this moment on all Jewish convoys were dealt with in the same manner. Approximately 10% of the men and 5% of the women were allotted to the camps and the remaining members were immediately gassed. This process of extermination had already been applied earlier to the Polish Jews. During long months, without interruption, trucks brought thousands of Jews from the various "ghettos" direct to the pit in the "Birkenwald".

- 38,400 - 38,300 800 naturalized French Jews, the remainder of the convoy was - as previously described - gassed.

000322

39,200 - 40,000 800 Poles (Aryans), political prisoners.

40,000 - 40,150 150 Slovak Jews with their families.

Outside of a group of 50 girls sent to the women's camp, all other members were gassed in the Birch forest. Among the 150 men who came to camp there was a certain Zucker (Christian name unknown) and Sonnenschein, Viliam, both from Eastern Slovakia.

40,150 - 43,800 approx. 4,000 French naturalized Jews, almost all intellectuals. 1,000 women were directed to the women's camp, while the balance of about 3,000 persons were gassed in the usual manner.

43,800 - 44,200 400 Slovak Jews from LUBLIN, including Matej Klein and No. 43820, Melloch Laufer from Eastern Slovakia. This convoy arrived on June 30, 1942.

44,200 - 45,000 200 Slovak Jews. The convoy consisted of 1,000 persons. A number of women were sent to the women's camp, the rest gassed in the Birch wood. Among the prisoners sent to camp were : Jozef Zelmanovic, Snina - Adolf Kahan, Bratislava - Walter Reichmann, Sucany - Esther Kahan, Bratislava. I had the opportunity to speak to the latter on April 30, 1944. She is the "Block eldest" in the women's camp.

45,000 - 47,000 2,000 Frenchmen (Aryans), communists and other political prisoners, among whom were the brother of Thorez and the young brother of Léon Blum. The latter was atrociously tortured, then gassed and burned.

47,000 - 47,500 500 Jews from Holland, in the majority German emigrants. The rest of the convoy, about 2,500 persons, gassed.

47,500 - 47,800 About 300 so-called Russians under protective custody.

48,300 - 48,620 320 Jews from Slovakia. About 70 girls were transferred to the women's camp, the remainder, some 650 people, gassed in the Birch wood. This convoy included about 80 people who had been handed over by the Hungarian police to the camp of SERED. Others from this convoy were : Dr. Zoltan Mandel (since deceased) - Holz (Christian name unknown), butcher from PITSTANY, later sent to WARSAW - Miklos Engel, Zilina - Chaim Katz, Snina, now employed in the "mortuary" (his wife and 6 children were gassed).

49,000 - 64,800 15,000 naturalized French, Belgian and Dutch Jews. This figure certainly represents less than 10 % of the total convoy. This was between July 1st and September 15, 1942. Large family convoys arrived from various European countries and were at once directed to the Birch wood. The special squad ("Sonderkommando") employed for gassing and burning worked in day and night shifts. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were gassed during this period.

000323

64,800 - 65,000 300 Slovak Jews. Out of this transport about 100 women were admitted to the camp, the rest of them gassed and burnt. Among the newly arrived were : Ludwig Katz, Zilina - Avri Burger, Bratislava - Poprad (wife dead) - Mikulas Steiner, Povazska Bystrica - Juraj Fried, Trencin - Buchwald - Josef Rosenwasser, Eastern Slovakia - Julius Neuman, Bardejov - Sandor Wertheimer, Vrbove - Misi Wertheimer, Vrbove - Bela Blau, Zilina.

65,000 - 68,000 Naturalized French, Belgian and Dutch Jews. Not more than 1,000 women were selected and sent to the camp. The others, at the lowest estimate 30,000, were gassed.

71,000 - 80,000 Naturalized French, Belgian and Dutch Jews. The prisoners brought to the camp, hardly represent 10 % of the total transport. A conservative estimate would be that approx. 65 to 70,000 persons were gassed.

On December 17, 1942, the 200 young Slovak Jews, the so-called "special squad" employed in gassing and burning the condemned, were in turn executed at BIRKENAU. They were executed for having planned to mutiny and escape. A Jew betrayed their preparations. This frightful job had to be taken over by a group of 200 Polish Jews who had just arrived at camp from MAKOW. Among those executed were : Alexander Weiss, Fero Wagner, Oskar Scheiner, Dezider Wetzler, Aladar Spitzer, and Vojtech Weiss, all from Trnava.

The change thus effected in the "special squad" deprived us of a valuable contact which soon had a detrimental effect on our "private supplies". In spite of having all their luggage confiscated at AUSCHWITZ, these "death convoys" brought with them considerable sums in foreign currency, especially paper and gold dollars, large quantities of gold jewelry and valuable stones as well as foodstuffs. Although all valuables naturally had to be surrendered it was unavoidable that articles found in searching the clothing of the deceased (especially gold dollars) disappeared into the pockets of our boys. In this way they brought considerable means into the camp, not to speak of foodstuffs. Officially nothing could be bought with this money in the camp but one could do considerable "trading" with S.S. guards or other civilian workmen employed as specialists on various jobs in the camp who had the opportunity to bring with them food and cigarettes. The prices were naturally in relation to the abnormal circumstances. For a few 100 cigarettes one had to produce a 20 dollar gold coin. Bartering also flourished. The increase in price had no effect on us as we had money enough. Through the "special squad" we were also able to exchange our rags for the better clothing of the gassed. The coat I am still wearing to-day belonged to a Dutch Jew and on the lining one can still see the label of an Amsterdam tailor.

000324

The men belonging to the "special squad" lived separately. On account of the dreadful smell spread by them people had but little contact with them. Besides they were always filthy, destitute, half wild and extraordinarily brutal and ruthless. It was not uncommon to see one of them kill another. This was considered by the others a sensation, a change. One simply recorded that number so-and-so had died.

Once I was an eye-witness when a young Polish Jew named Jossel demonstrated "scientific" murder on a Jew in the presence of an SS. guard. He used no weapon, merely his bare hands, to kill his victim.

No. 80,000 marks the beginning of the systematic extermination of the Polish ghettos.

80,000 - 85,000 approx. 5,000 Jews from various ghettos in MLJAWA - MAKOW - ZICHENOW - LONZA - GRODNO - BIALOSTOK.

For fully 30 days truck-convoys arrived without interruption. Only 5,000 persons were sent to the concentration camp, all the others were gassed at once. The "special squad" worked in two shifts, 24 hours daily and was scarcely able to cope with the gassing and burning. Without exaggerating it may be said that out of these convoys some 80 to 90,000 received "special treatment". These transports also brought in a considerable amount of money, valuables and precious stones.

85,000 - 92,000 6,000 Jews from GRODNO, BIALOSTOK and CRACOW as well as 1,000 Aryan Poles. The majority of the Jewish convoys were directly gassed and daily about 4,000 Jews were driven into the gas chambers.

During mid-January 1943 3 convoys of 2,000 persons each from THERESIENSTADT arrived. They bore the designations "CU" "CR" and "R". (The meaning of these signs is unknown to us). These markings were also stamped on their luggage. Out of these 6,000 persons only 600 men and 300 women were admitted to the camp. The remainder was gassed.

99,000 - 100,000 End of January 1943 large convoys of French and Dutch Jews arrived: only a small proportion of them reached the camp.

100,000 - 102,000 In February 1943, 2,000 Aryan Poles, mostly intellectuals.

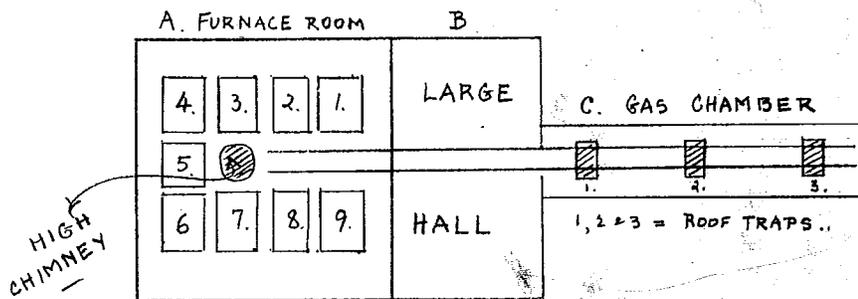
102,000 - 103,000 700 Czech Aryans. Later, those still alive were sent to BUCHENWALD.

103,000 - 108,000 3,000 French and Dutch Jews and 1,000 Poles (Aryans).

000325

During the month of February 1943, 2 contingents arrived daily. They included Polish, French and Dutch Jews who, in the main, were sent to the gas chambers. The number gassed during this month can well be estimated at 90,000.

At the end of February 1943 a new modern crematorium and gassing plant was inaugurated at BIRKENAU. The gassing and burning of the bodies in the Birch forest was discontinued, the whole job being taken over by the four specially built crematoria. The large ditch was filled in, the ground levelled and the ashes used as before for fertilizer at the farm labour camp of HERMENSE, so that to-day it is almost impossible to find traces of the dreadful mass murder which took place here.



ROUGH GROUND PLAN OF
CREMATORIA: TYPES I & II IN BIRKENAU

At present there are four crematoria in operation at BIRKENAU, two large ones, I and II, and two smaller ones, III and IV. Those of type I and II consist of 3 parts, i.e. : a) the furnace room; b) the large hall; and c) the gas chamber. A huge chimney rises from the furnace room around which are grouped nine furnaces, each having four openings. Each opening can take three normal corpses at once and after an hour and a half the bodies are completely burnt. This corresponds to a daily capacity of about 3,000 bodies. Next to this is a large "reception hall" which is arranged so as to give the impression of the anti-chamber of a bathing establishment. It holds 2,000 people and apparently there is a similar waiting room on the floor below. From there a door and a few steps lead down into the very long and narrow gas chamber. The walls of this chamber are also camouflaged with simulated entries to shower rooms in order to mislead the victims. The roof is fitted with 3 traps which can be hermetically closed from the outside. A track leads from the gas chamber towards the furnace room. The gassing takes place as follows: the unfortunate victims are brought into hall (b) where they are told to undress. To complete the fiction that they are going to bathe, each person receives a towel and a small piece of soap issued by two men clad in white coats.

000326

Then they are crowded into the gas chamber (c) in such numbers that there is of course only standing room. To compress this crowd into the narrow space shots are often fired to induce those already at the far end to huddle still closer together. When everybody is inside the heavy doors are closed. Then there is a short pause, presumably to allow the room temperature to rise to a certain level, after which SS. men with gas masks climb on the roof, open the traps and shake down a preparation in powder form out of tin cans labelled "CYKLON" "For use against vermin" which are manufactured by a Hamburg concern. It is presumed that this is a "CYANIDE" mixture of some sort which turns into gas at a certain temperature. After 3 minutes everyone in the chamber is dead. No one is known to have survived this ordeal, although it was not uncommon to discover signs of life after the primitive measures employed in the Birch wood. The chamber is then opened, aired and the "special squad" carts the bodies on flat trucks to the furnace rooms where the burning takes place. Crematoria III and IV work on nearly the same principle but their capacity is only half as large. Thus the total capacity of the four cremating and gassing plants at BIRKENAU amounts to about 6,000 daily.

On principle only Jews are gassed; Aryans very seldom, as they are usually given "special treatment" by shooting. Before the crematoria were put into service, the shooting took place in the Birch wood and the bodies were burnt in the long trench; later, however, executions took place in the large hall of one of the crematoria which has been provided with a special installation for this purpose.

Prominent guests from Berlin were present at the inauguration of the first crematorium in March 1943. The "program" consisted of the gassing and burning of 8,000 Cracow Jews. The guests, both officers and civilians, were extremely satisfied with the results and the special peep-hole fitted into the door of the gas chamber was in constant use. They were lavish in their praise of this newly erected installation.

109,000 - 119,000 At the beginning of March 1943, 45,000 Jews arrived from Saloniki. 10,000 of them came to the camp including a small percentage of the women; some 30,000 however went straight to the cremating establishment. Of the 10,000 nearly all died a short time later from a contagious illness resembling malaria. They also died of typhus due to the general conditions prevailing in the camp.

Malaria among the Jews and typhus took such toll among the prisoners in general that the "selections" were

100327

temporarily suspended. The contaminated Greek Jews were ordered to present themselves and in spite of our repeated warnings many of them did. They were all killed by intracardial Phenol injections administered by a lance-corporal of the medical corps assisted by imprisoned Czech doctors. The latter : Dr. Honsa Cespira, of Prague (previously in BUCHENWALD) and Dr. Zdenik STICH, also from Prague via BUCHENWALD, did their utmost to alleviate the sufferings of these victims.

Out of the 10,000 Greek Jews, some 1,000 men remained alive and were later sent, together with 500 other Jews, to do fortification work in Warsaw. A few weeks later several hundred came back in a pitiful state and were immediately gassed. The remainder presumably died in Warsaw. 400 Greek Jews suffering from malaria were sent for "further treatment" to LUBLIN after the Phenol injections had been stopped and it appears that they actually arrived. Their fate is not known to us, but it can be taken for granted that out of the original number of 10,000 Jews not one eventually remained in the camp.

Simultaneously with the stopping of the "selections" the murdering of prisoners was forbidden. Prominent murderers such as :

the Reich German professional criminals Alexander Neumann, Zimmer, Albert Haemmerle, Rudi Osteringer, Rudi Bechert, and the political prisoners Alfred Kien and Alois Stahler, were punished for repeated murder and had to make written declaration that they had killed so and so many prisoners.

At the beginning of 1943 the political section of AUSCHWITZ received 500,000 discharge certificates and we thought with ill-concealed joy, that at least a few of us would be liberated. But the forms were simply filled out with the names of those gassed and filed away in the archives.

119,000 - 120,000	1,000 Poles (Aryans) from the PAWIAK penitentiary in Warsaw.
120,000 - 123,000	3,000 Greek Jews part of whom were sent to replace their comrades in Warsaw. The remainder quickly died off.
123,000 - 124,000	1,000 Poles (Aryans) from RADOM and TARNOW.
124,000 - 126,000	2,000 from mixed Aryan convoys.

In the meantime ceaseless convoys of Polish and a few French and Belgian Jews arrived and without exception were dispatched to the gas chambers. Among them was a transport of 1,000 Polish Jews from MAJDANEK which included three Slovaks, one of whom was a certain Spira from Stropkow or Vranov.

000328

The flow of convoys abruptly ceased at the end of July 1943 and there was a short breathing space. The crematoria were thoroughly cleaned, the installations repaired and prepared for further use. On August 3rd, the killing machine again went into operation. The first convoys consisted of Jews from BENZBURG and BOSNOWITZ and others followed during the whole month of August.

132,000 - 136,000 only 4,000 men and a very small number of women were brought to the camp. Over 35,000 were gassed. Of the aforementioned 4,000 men, many died as a result of bad treatment, hunger or illness; some were even murdered. The main responsibility for these tragedies lies with the criminal TYN (a Reich German) from the concentration camp of SAOHSENHAUSEN and the Polish political prisoner No. 8516, Mieczyslaw KATERZINSKI, from Warsaw.

The "selections" were introduced again and this time to a murderous extent, especially in the women's camp. The camp doctor, an SS. "Hauptsturmführer" and the son or nephew of the police president of Berlin (we forget his name) outdid all the others in brutality. The selection system has been continued ever since, until our escape.

137,000 - 138,000 At the end of August 1,000 Poles came from the PAWIAK prison and 80 Jews from Greece.

138,000 - 141,000 3,000 men from various Aryan transports.

142,000 - 145,000 At the beginning of September 1943, 3,000 Jews arrived from Polish working camps and Russian prisoners of war.

148,000 - 152,000 During the week following September 7, 1943, family transports of Jews arrived from THERESIENSTADT. They enjoyed quite an exceptional status which was incomprehensible to us. The families were not separated and not a single one of them received the customary and "normal" gas treatment. Their heads were not even shaven, they were able to keep their luggage and were lodged in a separate section of the camp, men, women and children together. The men were not forced to work and a school was even set up for the children under the direction of Fredy HIRSCH (Makabi, Prague). They were allowed to correspond freely. The worst they had to undergo was mistreatment at the hands of their camp eldest, a certain professional criminal by the name of Arno BOHM, prisoner No. 8. Our astonishment increased when we learned of the official indication given to this special transport :

"SB" - transport of Czech Jews with
6 months quarantine -

We very well knew what "SB" meant ("Sonderbehandlung") but could not understand the long period of 6 months quarantine and the generally clement treatment this group received. The longest quarantine period we had witnessed

000329

so far was only three weeks. Towards the end of the six months' period, however, we became convinced that the fate of these Jews would be the same as that of most of the others - the gas chamber. We tried to get in touch with the leader of this group and explain their lot and what they had to expect. Some of them declared (especially Fredy HIRSCH who seemed to enjoy the full confidence of his companions) that if our fears took shape they would organize resistance. The members of the "special squad" also swore that they would join the movement. Thus, some of them hoped to instigate a general revolt in the camp. On March 6, 1944 we heard that the crematoria were being prepared to receive the Czech Jews. I hastened to inform Fredy HIRSCH and begged him to take immediate action as they had nothing to lose. He replied that he recognized his duty. Before night-fall I again crept over to the Czech camp where I learned that Fredy HIRSCH was dying; he had poisoned himself with luminal. The next day, March 7, 1944, he was taken, unconscious, along with his 3,791 comrades who had arrived at BIRKENAU on September 7, 1943, on trucks, to the crematoria and gassed. The young people went to their death singing, but to our great disappointment nobody revolted. The men of the "special squad", ready to join, waited in vain. Some 500 elderly people had died during quarantine. Of all these Jews only 11 twins were left alive. They are being subjected to various medical tests at AUSCHWITZ, and when we left BIRKENAU, they were still alive. Among the gassed was Rozqi FURST, from SERED. A week before the gassing, that is to say on March 1st., 1944, everyone in the Czech group in the camp had been asked to inform his relatives about his well being. The letters had to be dated March 23 to 25, 1944 and they were requested to ask for food parcels.

- 153,000 - 154,000 1,000 Polish aryans from the PAVIAK penitentiary.
- 155,000 - 159,000 During October and November 1943, 4,000 persons from various prisons and smaller transports of Jews from BENZBURG and vicinity who had been driven out of their hiding places; also a group of Russians under protective custody from the MINSK and VITEBSK regions. Some more Russian prisoners of war arrived and as stated they as usual received numbers between 1 and 12,000.
- 160,000 - 165,000 In December 1943, 5,000 men originating from Dutch, French, Belgian transports and, for the first time, Italian Jews from FIUME, TRIESTE and ROME. Of these at least 30,000 were immediately gassed. The mortality among these Jews was very high and in addition the "selection" system was still decimating all ranks. The bestiality of the whole procedure reached its culminating point between January 10th and 24th, 1944 when even young and healthy persons irrespective of profession or working classification - with the exception of doctors - were ruthlessly "selected".

000330

Every single prisoner was called up, a strict control was established to see that all were present and the "selection" proceeded under the supervision of the same camp doctor (son or nephew of the Police President of Berlin) and of the Commandant of BIRKENAU, SS "Untersturmführer" SCHWARZHUBER. The "infirmary" had in the meantime been transferred from "Block 7" to a separate section of the camp where conditions had become quite bearable. Its inmates, nevertheless, were gassed to the last man. Apart from this group, this general action cost some 2,500 men and over 6,000 women their lives.

165,000 - 168,000 On December 30, 1943 a further group of 3,000 Jews arrived from THERESIENSTADT. The convoy was listed under the same category as the one which had reached the camp on September 7, i.e. "SB" - transport, Czech Jews with 6 months quarantine". On their arrival, men, women and children all joined the September group. They enjoyed the same privileges as their predecessors. 24 hours before the gassing of the first group took place, the latest arrivals were separated from the rest and placed in another part of the camp where they still are at present. Since they know what their fate is to be, they are already planning organized resistance, under the leadership of Ruzenka LAUFSCHEIDER and Hugo LANGSFELD, both from Prague. They are gradually collecting benzine and other combustible goods and intend to set the blocks of their section on fire when the crucial moment comes. Their quarantine ends on June 20, 1944.

169,000 - 170,000 1,000 people in small groups, Jews, Poles and Russians under protective custody.

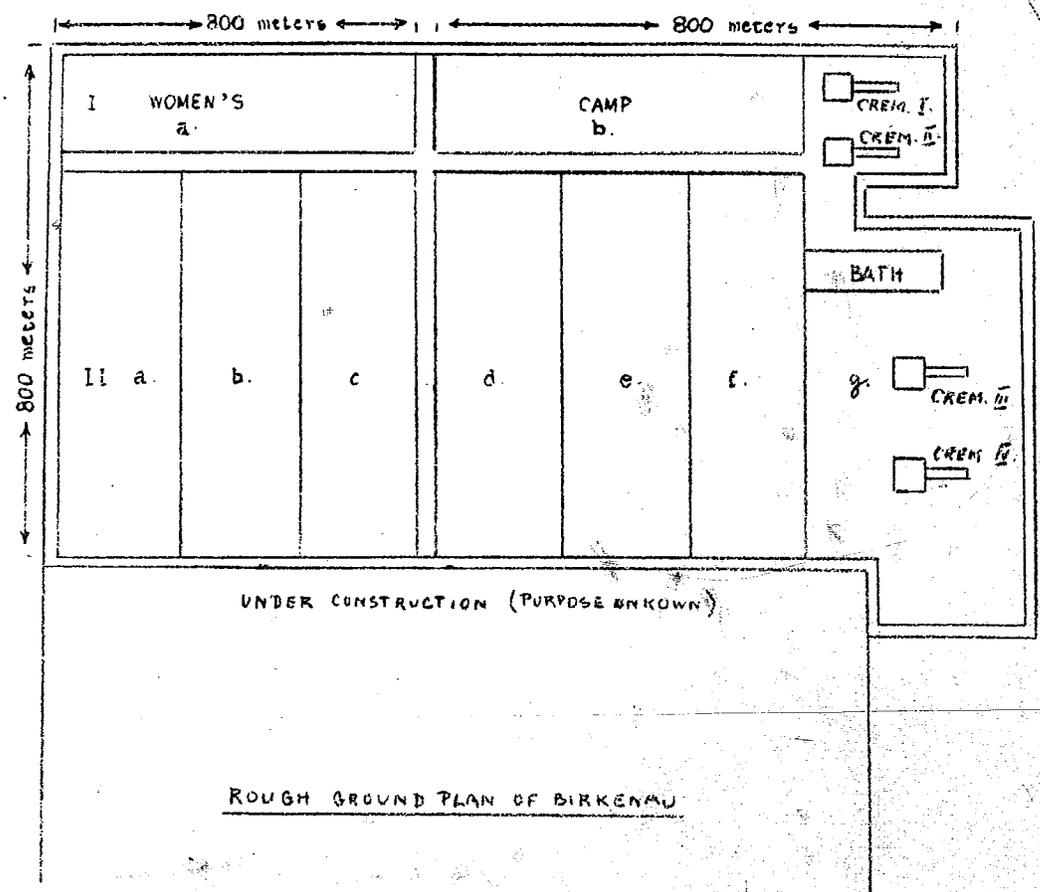
170,000 - 171,000 1,000 Poles and Russians and a number of Yugoslaves.

171,000 - 174,000 At the end of February and beginning of March, 3,000 Jews from Holland, Belgium and for the first time long established French Jews (not naturalized) from VICHY, in France. The greater part of this transport was gassed immediately upon arrival.

Small groups of BENZBURGER and SOSNOWITZER Jews who had been dragged from hiding arrived in the middle of March. One of them told me that many Polish Jews were crossing over to Slovakia and from there to Hungary and that the Slovak Jews helped them on their way through.

After the gassing of the THERESIENSTADT transport there were no further arrivals until March 15, 1944. The effective strength of the camp rapidly diminished and men of later incoming transports, especially Dutch Jews, were directed to the camp. When we left on April 7, 1944 we heard that large convoys of Greek Jews were expected.

000331



The camp of BIRKENAU consists of three building areas. At present only sections I and II are guarded by the inner chain of sentry posts whereas section III is still under construction and uninhabited. At the time of our departure from the camp (the beginning of April 1944), the following categories of prisoners were in BIRKENAU :

000332

Section I. (Women's concentration camp).

	Slov. Jews.	Other Jews.	Aryans.	Remarks.
I a and I b	app. 300	app. 7,000	app. 6,000	In addition to the 300 Slovak Jewish girls, app. 100 are employed in the administration building of AUSCHWITZ.

Section II.

I Ia Quarantine camp.	2	" 300	" 800	One of the 2 Slovak Jews is Dr. Andreas MULLER from Podolinec, (block eldest).
I Ib Jews from THERESIENSTADT.	-	" 3,500	-	With a 6 months quarantine.
I Ic At present uninhabited.	-	-	-	
I Id "Stammlager"	58	" 4,000	" 6,000	
I Ie Gipsy camp.	-	-	" 4,500	This is the remainder of some 16,000 gipsies. They are not used for work and die off rapidly.
I If Infirmary.	6	" 1,000	" 500	The 6 Slovak Jews are all employees of the building, namely

- No. 38832 Walter SPITZER, block eldest from NEMSOVA, came to LUBLIN from BIRKENAU.
- " 28867 Jozef NEUMANN ("overseer of the "corpse crew") from SNINA.
- " 44989 Josef ZELMANOVIC, "staff" from SNINA.
- " - Cham KATZ, "staff" from SNINA.
- " 30048 Ludwig SOLMANN, "clerk" from KESMAREK.
- " 32407 Ludwig EISENSTÄDTER, tattooist from KREMPACHY.

The internal administration of the camp of BIRKENAU is run by specially selected prisoners. The "blocks" are not inhabited according to nationalities but rather according to

000333

working categories. Each block is supervised by a staff of 5, i.e.

a block eldest,
a block recorder,
a male nurse, and
two attendants.

The block eldest.

He wears an arm band with the number of his block, and is responsible for order there. He has power over life and death. Until February 1944, nearly 50 % of the block eldests were Jews but this was stopped by order of BERLIN. They all had to resign with the exception of three Slovak Jews who in spite of this order were able to keep their posts. They are :

Arnost ROSIM (Hacek), ZILINA - Block eldest of Block 34, head of the clearing squad and artisan from BENZBURG.

Dr. Andreas MULLER, PODOLINEC - Block eldest of Block 15, the quarantine camp.

Walter SPITZER, NEMSOVA - Block eldest in Block 14, the "Infirmary".

The Block-recorder.

He is the block eldest's right hand, does all the clerical work keeping the index cards and records. His work is of great responsibility and he has to keep his ledgers with painful exactitude as the index cards only indicate the number and not the name of the prisoners; and errors are fatal. For instance, if the recorder has noted down a death by mistake - and this often occurs with the unusually high mortality - the discrepancy is simply straightened out by killing the bearer of the corresponding number. Corrections are not admitted. The block recorder occupies a key post which is often misused.

Nursing and "room" duties.

They consist in keeping the inside of the barracks clean and carrying out small manual jobs in and around the block. Of course there is no question of really taking care of the sick.

The camp eldest supervises the whole camp; he is also a prisoner. This post is at present held by :

Franz DANISCH, Number 11,183, a political prisoner, from KONIGSHUTTE, Upper Silesia. He is undisputed master of the whole camp and has power to nominate or dismiss block-eldests and block-recorders, hand out jobs, etc.. He is impartial, cannot be bribed and is correct towards the Jews.

100334

Further we have a "chief recorder" whose position is undoubtedly one of the most powerful in the camp. He is in direct contact with camp head-quarters, receiving their orders and reporting on all matters. All camp-recorders are directly subordinated to him and have to submit all their reports to him. The chief recorder of BIRKENAU is :

Kasimir GORK, Number 31,039, a Pole from WARSAW, a former bank clerk. Although an antisemite, he has never directly harmed the Jews.

The supreme control over the blocks lies in the hands of 6 to 8 "Block leaders", all SS men. Every night they hold roll-call, the result of which is communicated to :

The Camp Leader, "Untersturmführer" SCHWARZHUBER, from the Tyrol. This individual is an alcoholic and a sadist. Over him is the camp commander who also controls AUSCHWITZ where there is a second subordinate camp leader. The camp commander's name is :

HOESS.

The Chief of a work squad or group is called the "Capo".

During work the "Capo" has full authority over his group of prisoners and not infrequently one of these "Capos" kills a man working under him. In larger squads there may be several "Capos" who are then under the orders of a "Capo in chief". At first there were many Jewish "Capos" but an order from BERLIN prohibited their being employed. One Jew, however, has been able to keep his post; he is :

ROTH, from MICHALOVCE, a fitter by profession.

Supreme control over work is carried out by German specialists.

II.

MAJ DANEK.

On June 14, 1942, we left NOVAKY, passed through ZILINA and arrived at ZWARDON toward 5 o'clock in the evening. We were assembled, counted and SS men took over our convoy. One of these guards voiced his surprise at the fact we had made the journey without water by shouting: "Those Slovak barbarians, give them no water!". The journey continued and we reached LUBLIN two days later. Here the following order was issued: "Those fit for work aged between 15 and 50 are to leave the cars. Children and old people remain". We struggled out of the freight car and discovered that the station was surrounded by Lithuanians in SS uniforms all armed with automatic pistols. The cars containing the children and old people were immediately closed and the train moved on. We do not know where they went and what happened to them.

000335

The SS. troop leader in command informed us that we had a long way ahead of us but that whoever wanted to take his luggage with him could do so. Those who preferred to put it on a truck would certainly receive it later. So some of us dragged along our luggage whereas others loaded it on the truck.

Behind the town stood a clothing factory called the "Bekleidungswerke". In the courtyard, waiting for their noon meal some 1,000 prisoners in dirty striped clothing, obviously Jews, were lined up and the sight of them was none too encouraging. Arriving on a small hill we suddenly sighted the vast barrack camp of MAJDANEK surrounded by a 3 meter high barbed-wire fence. No sooner had we gone through the entrance gate than I met Maco WINKLER from TRNAVA who warned me that all our personal belongings would be taken away. Around us stood Slovak Jews in a wretched condition, their heads shaven, in dirty prison clothes and wooden clogs or simply bare-footed, many of them having swollen feet. They begged us for food and we gave them what we could spare, knowing very well that everything would be confiscated anyway. We were then conducted to the stock room where we had to leave everything we possessed. At double time we were herded into another barrack where we had to undress, were shaved and given a shower. After this we were issued a convict outfit, wooden clogs and a cap.

I was assigned to "working section No. 2" as the whole camp was divided into 3 such sections separated by wire fences. Section No. 2 was occupied by a number of Slovak and Czech Jews. For two full days we were taught how to remove and put on our caps when we met a German. Then, in the pouring rain, we practiced roll-calling for hours.

The barrack accommodations were quite original to say the least. Three long tables (nearly as long as the barrack itself) had been placed one on top of the other. These comprised our "bunks" (4 floors of them, that is ground floor plus the three tables). A small passage was kept open along the walls.

Our food consisted of a fairly thick "soup" early in the morning which had to be eaten with the hands. We got the same soup again at lunch. The evening meal consisted of a brew called "tea", 300 grams of bad bread and some 20 to 30 grams of marmelade or artificial fat of the worst quality.

Great importance was attributed during the first few days to the learning of the "camp song". For hours we stood singing :

From the whole of Europe came
We Jews to Lublin
Much work has to be done
And this is the beginning.

To manage this duty
Forget all about the past
For in fulfillment of duty
There is community.

000336

Therefore on to work with vigour
Let everyone play his part
Together we want to work
At the same pace and rhythm.

Not all will understand
Why we stand here in rows
Those must we soon force
To understand its meaning.

Modern times must teach us
Teach us all along
That it is to work
And only to work we belong.

Therefore on to work with vigour
Let everyone play his part
Together we want to work
At the same pace and rhythm.

(This is a literal translation of
the song).

Working section No.	I	was occupied by	Slovak Jews
"	"	"	II " " " Slovak and Czech Jews
"	"	"	III " " " Partisans
"	"	IV & V	was being built by the Jews of Sectors I & II.

The Partisans in section III were locked up in their barracks without having to work and their food was thrown at them as if they had been dogs. They died in great numbers in their overcrowded barracks and were shot at the slightest excuse by the guards who did not dare venture too near them.

The "Capos" were Reich Germans and Czechs; whereas the Germans were brutal, the Czechs helped wherever they could. The camp eldest was a gipsy from HOLIC by the name of GALBAY. His adjutant, a Jew from SERED called MITTLER, certainly owed his post to his brutal actions. He took full advantage of the power conferred upon him to torment the Jews who, as it was, already had their full share of hardships. The evening roll-call brought us more brutal treatment from the SS. men and for hours we had to stand in the open after a hard day's work and sing "the camp song". A Jewish orchestra leader was forced to conduct from the roof of one of the barracks. This was the occasion of much hilarity among the SS. men.

During these "concert parties" the SS. guards were very generous with blows and physical punishment. A tragic end befell Rabbi ECKSTEIN from SERED who was suffering from dysentery and once came a few minutes too late for the roll-call. The group leader had him seized and dipped head first into one of the latrines, then poured cold water over him, drew his revolver and shot him.

The crematorium was located between working sections I and II and all the bodies were burned there. With an effective strength of 8 to 8,000 men per working section, the mortality was about 30 a day. This figure later increased five and sixfold. In other instances 10 to 20 inmates were removed from the sick room, brought to the crematorium and burned after having been put to death in a manner which I have not been able to find out. This crematorium was electrically heated and the attendants were Russians.

Illnesses increased as a result of the bad food and intolerable living conditions. Serious stomach troubles and a seemingly incurable foot disease spread throughout the camp. The feet of the victims swelled up to the point where they could not walk. More and more of the sick were now being taken to the crematorium and when on June 26, 1942 the number thus treated rose to 70, I decided to take an opportunity which was offered to me and applied for a transfer to AUSCHWITZ.

On June 27, 1942 I discarded my prisoner's outfit and travelled to AUSCHWITZ in civilian clothes.

After a journey of 48 hours during which we were cooped up in freight cars without food or water, we arrived at AUSCHWITZ half dead. At the entrance gate the huge poster "Work brings freedom" greeted us. As the courtyard was clean and well kept and the brick buildings made a good impression after the dirty and primitive barracks of LUBLIN, we thought that the change was for the best. We were taken to a cellar and received tea and bread. Next day, however, our civilian clothes were taken away, our heads were shaved, and our number was tattooed on our forearm in the usual way. Finally we were issued a set of prisoner's clothes similar to those we had worn in LUBLIN and were enrolled as "political prisoners" in the concentration camp of AUSCHWITZ.

We were billeted in "Block 17" and slept on the floor. In a adjoining row of buildings, separated from ours by a high wall, the Jewish girls from Slovakia, who had been brought there in March and April of 1942, were quartered. We worked in the huge "BUNA" plant to which we were herded every morning about 3 a.m. At midday our food consisted of potato or turnip soup and in the evening we received some bread. During work we were terribly mistreated. As our working place was situated outside the large chain of sentry posts it was divided into small sectors of 10 X 10 meters, each guarded by an S.S. man. Whoever stepped outside these squares during working hours was immediately shot without warning for having "attempted to escape". Often it happened that out of pure spite an SS. man would order a prisoner to fetch some given object outside his square. If he followed the order he was shot for having left his assigned place. The work was extremely hard and there were no rest periods. The way to and from work had to be covered at a brisk military trot; anyone falling out

100338

of line was shot. On my arrival about 3,000 people, of whom 2,000 were Slovak Jews, were working on this emplacement. Very few could bear the strain and although escape seemed hopeless, attempts were made every day. The result was several hangings a week.

After a number of weeks of painful work at the "BUNA" plant a terrible typhus epidemic broke out. The weaker prisoners died in hundreds. A immediate quarantine was ordered and work at the "BUNA" stopped. Those still alive were sent, at the end of July 1942, to the gravel pit but there work was even still more strenuous. We were in such a state of weakness that, even in trying to do our best, we could not satisfy the overseers. Most of us got swollen feet. Due to our inability to perform the heavy work demanded of us our squad was accused of being lazy and disorderly. Soon after a medical commission inspected all of us; they carried out their job very thoroughly. Anyone with swollen feet or particularly weak was separated from the rest. Although I was in great pain, I controlled myself and stood erect in front of the commission who passed me as physically fit. Out of 300 persons examined, 300 were found to be unfit and immediately sent to BIRKENAU and gassed. I was then detailed for work at the DAW (Deutsche Aufrüstungswerke) where we had to paint skis. The prescribed minimum to be painted each day was 120. Anyone unable to paint this many was thoroughly flogged in the evening. It meant working very hard to avoid this punishment. Another group was employed at making cases for hand-grenades. At one time 15,000 had been completed but it was found that they were a few centimeters too small. As punishment several Jews (one of whom was a certain ERDELYI who is said to have relatives in BANOVCE) were shot for sabotage.

Somewhere around the middle of August 1942 all the Jewish girls from Slovakia who lived next to our quarters, on the other side of the wall, were transferred to BIRKENAU. I had the opportunity to talk to them and was able to see how weak and half-starved all of them were. They were dressed in old Russian uniform rags and wore wooden clogs. Their heads were shaven clean. The same day we again had to undergo a strict examination and those suspected of having typhus were removed to the Birch wood. The remainder was shaved afresh, bathed, issued with a new set of clothes and finally billeted in the barracks the girls had just left. By chance I learned that there was an opening in the "clearance squad" and I handed in my application. I was detailed to this task.

This squad consisted of about a hundred Jewish prisoners. We were sent to a far corner of the camp, away from all our comrades. Here we found huge sheds full of knapsacks, suitcases and other luggage. We had to open each piece of baggage and sort the contents into large cases specially prepared for each category of goods, i.e. combs, mirrors, sugar, canned food, chocolate, medicines, etc. The cases were then stored away. Underwear, shirts and clothes of all kinds went to a special barrack, where they were sorted out and packed by Jewish girls. Old and worn clothes

000339

were addressed to the "TEXTILE FACTORY" at MEMEL where-
as the usable garments were dispatched to a collecting
center in BERLIN. Gold, money, bank notes and precious
stones had to be handed over to the political section.
Many of these objects were however stolen by the S.S.
guards or by prisoners. The head of this department was
Albert DAVIDOVIC from SPISSKA NOVA VES. He still holds
this post and has become quite an expert in the matter.
A brutal and vile individual who often struck the women
is commander of this squad. He is SS. "Scharführer"
WYKLEFF.

Every day the girls who came to their work from
BIRKENAU described to us the terrible conditions prevail-
ing there. They were beaten and brutalized and their
mortality was much higher than among the men. Twice a
week "selections" took place and every day new girls re-
placed those who had disappeared.

During a night shift I was able to witness for the
first time how incoming convoys were handled. The trans-
port I saw contained Polish Jews. They had received no
water for days and when the doors of the freight cars were
opened we were ordered to chase them out with loud shouts.
They were utterly exhausted and about a hundred of them
had died during the journey. The living were lined up in
rows of five. Our job was to remove the dead, dying and
the luggage from the cars. The dead, and this included any-
one unable to stand on his feet, were piled in a heap.
Luggage and parcels were collected and stacked up. Then
the railroad cars had to be thoroughly cleaned so that no
trace of their frightful load was left behind. A commission
from the political department proceeded with the selection
of approximately 10 % of the men and 5 % of the woman and
had them transferred to the camps. The remainder were
loaded on trucks, sent to BIRKENAU and gassed while the dead
and dying were taken directly to the furnaces. It often
happened that small children were thrown alive into the
trucks along with the dead. Parcels and luggage were taken
to the warehouses and sorted out in the previously described
manner.

Between July and September 1942 a typhus epidemic had
raged in AUSCHWITZ, especially in the woman's camp of BIR-
KENAU. None of the sick received medical attention and in
the first stages of the epidemic a great many were killed
by phenol injections, and later on others were gassed whole-
sale. Some 15 to 20,000, mostly Jews, died during these
two months. The girl's camp suffered the most as it was not
fitted with sanitary installations and the poor wretches
were covered with lice. Every week large "selections" took
place and the girls had to present themselves naked to the
"selection committee" regardless of weather conditions. They
waited in deadly fear whether they would be chosen or given
another week's grace. Suicides were frequent and were most-
ly committed by throwing oneself against the high-tension
wires of the inner fence. This went on until they had
dwindled to 5 % of their original number. Now there are only

400 of these girls left and most of them have been able to secure some sort of clerical post in the women's camp. One of them, KATJA by christian name (family name unknown), from POVAZSKA BYSTRICA, (where she has relatives by the name of LANGEELDER) has risen to the important post of chief recorder. About 100 girls hold jobs at the staff building in AUSCHWITZ where they do all the clerical work connected with the administration of the two camps. Thanks to their knowledge of languages they are also used as interpreters. Others are employed in the main kitchen and laundry. Of late these girls have been able to dress themselves quite well as they have had opportunities to complete their wardrobes which, in some cases, even include silk stockings. Generally speaking they are reasonably well off and are even allowed to let their hair grow. Of course this can not be said of the other Jewish inmates of the women's camp. It just so happens that these Slovak Jewish girls have been in the camp the longest of all. But if today they enjoy certain privileges they have previously undergone frightful sufferings.

I was not to hold this comparatively good job with the "clearance squad" for long. Shortly afterwards I was transferred to BIRKENAU on disciplinary grounds and remained there over a year and a half. On April 7, 1944 I managed to escape with my companion.

000341

Careful estimate of the number of Jews gassed
in BIRKENAU between April 1943 and April 1944 (according
to countries of origin).

Poland (transported by truck)	approximately	300,000
" " " train	"	800,000
Holland	"	100,000
Greece	"	45,000
France	"	150,000
Belgium	"	50,000
Germany	"	80,000
Yugoslavia, Italy and Norway	"	50,000
Lithuania	"	50,000
Bohemia, Moravia and Austria	"	30,000
Slovakia	"	30,000
Various camps for foreign Jews in Poland	"	300,000
		<hr/>
		approximately 1,765,000

III.

On August 6, 1944, a report was received in Switzerland covering the happenings in Birkenau during the period between April 7 and May 27. This second report was drawn up by two other young Jews who succeeded in escaping from this camp and reaching Slovakia. Their declarations complete the first report, particularly as regards the arrival of the Hungarian Jews in Birkenau, as well as adding certain new details not contained in the previous accounts. It has not been possible, however, to check the origin of this "second report" as closely as it was the first.

After the flight of the two Slovak Jews from Birkenau on April 7, 1944 great excitement reigned in the camp. The "Political Division" of the Gestapo instituted a thoroughgoing investigation, and the friends and superiors of the two escapees were closely questioned, although in vain. Since the two had held posts as "Block Recorders" all Jews exercising such functions, by way of punishment and also as

a precautionary measure, were removed and, as the Gestapo (justifiably) suspected that they had succeeded in escaping through building No. 3, the outer chain of sentry posts was considerably shortened so that now it cuts through the middle of Building No. 3.

At the beginning of the month of April, a transport of Greek Jews arrived, of whom about 200 were admitted to the camp. The remainder of circa 1,500 were immediately gassed.

Between the 10th and 15th of April some 5,000 "Aryans" arrived in Birkenau, mainly Poles, some 2,000 to 3,000 women among them being from the abandoned camp of Lublin-Majdanek. They were given numbers running from approximately :

178,000 to 181,000 Among the women were about 300 Jewish girls from Poland. The greater part of the new arrivals were ill, weak and very run down. According to their information the healthy ones had been sent from Lublin to German concentration camps. Concerning the fate of the Jews held in the camp of Lublin-Majdanek, we learned from them, especially from the Jewish girls, that on November 3, 1943 all Jews in this camp, that is some 11,000 men and 8,000 women were killed.

We recalled that about this time the SS. in Birkenau had reported that Lublin had been attacked by partisans and in order to fight against the latter a number of the SS. personnel from Birkenau had been temporarily transferred to Lublin. It was now clear to us for what purpose our SS. had gone to Lublin.

Apparently the Jews had been compelled to dig a long, deep grave in Field V of the camp of Majdanek and on November 3, they were brought out in groups of 2 to 300, shot and thrown into the grave. Within 24 hours everything was over. During the execution loud music was played to drown out the shots.

Three hundred girls who were active in Lublin on the "clearing-up Commando" and as Recorders were left alive. Three days after their arrival in Birkenau they were all gassed and burned on special order of Berlin. Through an error on the part of the "Recorder" two of the girls were not sent to the gas chamber. This was discovered, however, the next day, and the girls were immediately shot and the Recorder replaced.

The fate of the Lublin Jews caused great depression among the Jews in the camp of Birkenau who became afraid that one day the whole of Birkenau would suddenly be

000343

"liquidated" in the same way.

Approximately No. 182,000 Toward the end of April more Greek Jews were brought to Birkenau. Some 200 were admitted to the camp and about 3,000 exterminated.

183,000 to 185,000 At the beginning of May 1944 smaller transports of Dutch, French, Belgian and Greek Jews arrived, as well as Polish "Aryans". Most of them were put to work in the Buna plant.

On May 10, 1944, the first transport of Hungarian Jews arrived in Birkenau. They were principally from the prisons of Budapest, including those who had been arrested in the streets and railroad stations of the city. Among the women with whom we spoke were :

Ruth Lorant from Zilina,
Mici Lorant " " (her sister),
Ruth Quasztler from Bratislava,
Irene Roth from Michalovce and later from Krialy-
helmeo,
Frau Dr. Barna Fuchs from Michalovce.

The transport was received in Auschwitz and Birkenau according to the well-known procedure (heads shaved, numbers tattooed, etc..) The men were given numbers beginning with 185,000 and the women were placed in the women's camp. About 600 men, of whom some 150 were between the ages of 45 and 60, were brought to Birkenau where they were divided up among various work detachments. The remainder stayed in Auschwitz where they worked in the Buna plant.

The members of the transport were all left alive, and none of them, as had been customary, were sent directly to the crematoria. In the postcards which they were allowed to write, they had to give "Waldsee" as return address.

On May 15, mass transports from Hungary began to arrive in Birkenau. 14 to 15,000 Jews arrived daily. The spur railroad track which ran into the camp to the crematoria was completed in great haste, the crews working night and day, so that the transports could be brought directly to the crematoria. Only about 10% of these transports were admitted to the camp; the balance was immediately gassed and burned. Never had so many Jews been gassed since the establishment of Birkenau. The "Special Commando" had to be increased to 600 men, and after 2 or 3 days to 800 (people being recruited from among the Hungarian Jews who had arrived first). The size of the "Clearing Commando" was stepped up from 150 to 700 men. Three crematoria worked day and night (the 4th was being repaired at that time), and since the capacity of the crematoria was not enough, great pits 30 meters long and 15 wide were once more dug in the "Birkenwald" (as in the time before the crematoria) where corpses were burned day and night. Thus the "exterminating capacity" became almost unlimited.

100344

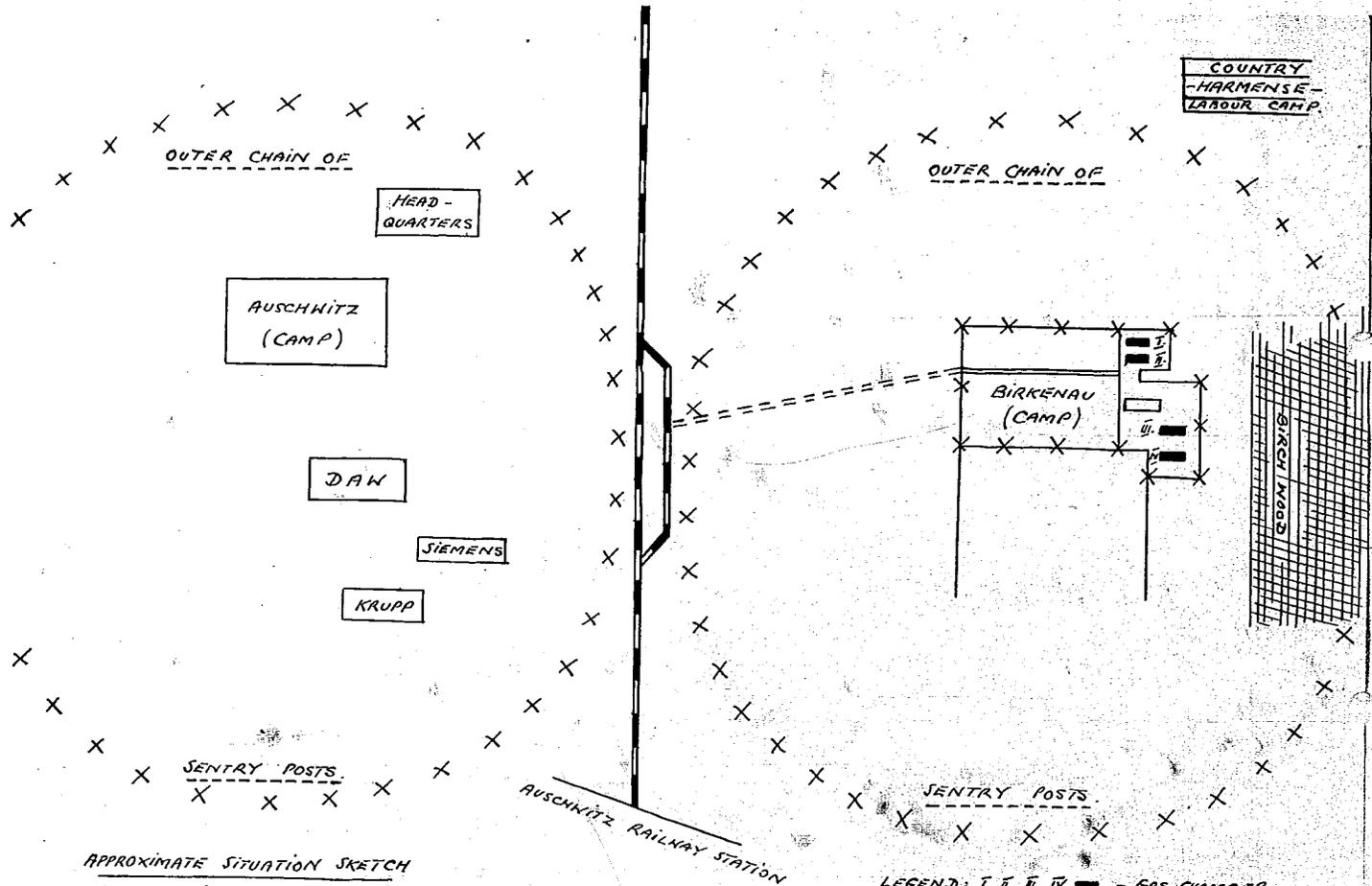
According to the statement of a Jew from the "Special Commando", "Reichsführer" Himmler was said to have visited Birkenau on the 15th or 16th of May. On one of these days I myself saw 3 automobiles and 5 men in civilian clothing drive toward the crematoria. The Jew who made this statement declared that he, as well as others, recognized Himmler, who had visited crematorium No. 1 and after a stay of about half an hour had again driven off with those accompanying him. On the day after there was an account in the Silesian newspapers of Himmler's visit to Cracow, so that this report could be true.

One other happening should not be forgotten which was told to us by the men of the "Special Commando". In the late summer of 1943 a commission of 4 Dutch Jews - distinguished looking men - came to Auschwitz. Their visit had already apparently been announced to the camp Commander, for the Dutch Jews in Auschwitz received better clothes, as well as regular eating equipment (plates, spoons, etc.) and better food. The commission of 4 were very politely received and were shown over the camp buildings and particularly those portions which were clean and made a good impression. Dutch Jews from the camp were brought to them who reported that only a portion of the Dutch Jews were in this camp, the others being in other similar camps. In this manner the 4 men were satisfied and signed a statement according to which the commission had found everything in good order in Auschwitz. After the signing the 4 Dutch Jews expressed a desire to see the camp of Birkenau and particularly the crematoria about which they had heard some stories. The camp authorities declared themselves quite willing to show them both Birkenau and the crematoria, the latter being used, they said, to cremate those who died in the camp. The commission was then taken to Birkenau, accompanied by the camp leader, Aumayer, and immediately to crematoria No. 1. Here they were shot from behind. A telegram was supposedly sent to Holland reporting that after leaving Auschwitz the four men had been victims of an unfortunate automobile accident.

There is a biological laboratory in Auschwitz where SS., civilian and internee doctors are occupied. The women and girls on whom experiments are performed are housed in Block 10. For a long time the "block eldest" there was Magda Hellinger from Michalovce and a girl named Rozsi (family name unknown) from Hummené. Experiments were carried out only on Jewish girls and women, although to date no Slovakian girls have been used. Experiments were also performed on men but the latter were not housed separately. A great many died as a result of these experiments. Often gypsies were used. Block 10 where the "subjects" of the experiments are housed is completely isolated, and even the window openings are walled up. No one whatsoever had admission to it.

The Commandants of Auschwitz and Birkenau have been to date the following: Aumayer, Schwarzhuber, Weiss, Hartenstein, Höss, and Kramer.

000246



APPROXIMATE SITUATION SKETCH
 OF AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU -
 CAMP DISTRICTS.

LEGEND: I, II, III, IV. ■ = GAS CHAMBER
 AND CREMATORIUM.
 DISTINCTIVE SIGNS: HIGH CHIMNEYS.

000347

No. 2.

I.

T R A N S P O R T

(The Polish Major's Report).

000348

TRANSPORT.

On March 24, 1943 we were gathered together in special "assembling cell" No. 2 of the Montelupich prison in Cracow. We knew that our group consisting of 80 men was to be sent to the concentration camp of OSWIECIM (AUSCHWITZ). At 8 o'clock the next morning, two SS guards appeared with lists and started counting those present. We had to undress and wait. Finally the doors were opened and we caught sight of two columns of SS guards and policemen with fixed bayonets. In the courtyard two trucks were parked in each of which 30 men had to take their places. These trucks were quite small and the space on the inside was divided in two by a chain running across the middle. The first to enter had to stand with bent heads whereas the others crouched down between the legs of the standing men. In this way it was possible to fill up the very small space with 30 men. We were loaded in with blows from rifle-butts, shouts and kicks. In the second separated section of the truck, two SS men stood guard with machine-guns. We departed. Behind us, at a certain distance, followed motor-cyclists with machine-guns. Our trucks were hermetically closed so that there was no possibility of seeing where we were going. Our journey lasted 1 1/2 hours with several short stops. Our limbs grew stiff as there was no possibility of changing one's position and one of our men who was up against the chain became unconscious. He was brought back to his senses by blows from the guards. At last we arrived, staggered to the ground and found ourselves standing in front of a gate over which we could read: "Work brings freedom". Inside an orchestra was playing. This was AUSCHWITZ and it appeared that we were expected.

We were lined up in columns of five (a system applied on every conceivable occasion in the camp) and the names of the "newcomers" were once more read out. The man called up had to immediately run over to the one reading the roll and place himself in a line with those already summoned after having received his number from the hands of an assistant. From this moment on, names were replaced by numbers. This system of "reception" was maintained until the summer of 1943. Later, all the prisoners (with the exception of Germans) had their number tattooed on their upper forearm, which had been the practice in the case of the Jews from the beginning. This whole numbering system was apparently applied to lessen the possibility of escape and to make it easier to identify the bodies. These numbers were handed to us by the "Block leader" named STUBA, after which we went bare headed and accompanied by the orchestra, into the camp itself. The clock stood at 11 a.m. After a short visit to the "stock" room we were shut up in a barrack until 5 p.m. There we were visited by a number of old inmates who earnestly begged us to give them our watches, rings, lighters, and

000349

cigarettes to avoid their being confiscated. Any food brought with us should be eaten at once as it would be taken away as well. In return, the prisoners promised us bread, soup etc.. once we were officially incorporated into their ranks. At last the CAPO (a sort of camp overseer) arrived and delivered a short talk in which he stressed that a prisoner could not exist in this camp for more than two months without the help of his comrades; and this was to be confirmed later on by numerous examples. Out of the 80 originally in my group I was to be the only survivor. At 5 p.m. we were herded out into the corridor. There we had to undress and pack our clothes into a bundle provided with our respective number. We stood there naked. All we were allowed to keep was a belt and two handkerchiefs. I wanted to keep a small holy picture but one of the prisoners who acted as assistant in these operations dissuaded me, saying: "It isn't worth while you will merely be laughed at and it will finally be taken anyway." First our hair was cut short and then our heads shaved, after which we were given a bath. The water was very warm. All these preparations prior to being admitted as an inmate to the camp took place in "Block 27". Next, although it was snowing we had to run to "Block 28" where the clothing room was located. There we were issued our prisoner's outfit which consisted of a shirt, underpants, shoes, socks, a warm jacket, trousers, vest, cap and blanket. Everything was filthy, patched and practically worn out. My jacket, for instance, could be buttoned up in front but the back and sleeves merely consisted of black strips of cloth patched together. Finally this operation came to an end and we were again lined up in rows of five and taken to one of the "Blocks". There we were awaited by the "Block leader" (most of them were Poles from Upper Silesia) who initiated us into the mysteries of barrack duties. We were instructed in sweeping and cleaning the dormitories, in taking off one's cap when commanded and how to keep in line and step. Orders were given in German and when badly carried out the block leader grew furious and struck people right and left. The evening roll-call finally put an end to these exercises. The block leader then assembled his people in front of their respective block and in turn all the block leaders presented their figures to the chief recorder or clerk. If the number of prisoners tallied with the records, the roll-call was over; actually the whole tiring ceremony was nothing else but one of the numerous ways in which the prisoners were mistreated. During 1940, 1941 and 1942 the roll-call was usually expected to last at least an hour in all weather conditions - frost, rain or snow - the prisoners having to wait patiently with bare heads. If an escape was reported, which resulted in a "manco" at evening roll-call, all those assembled had to wait outside until the result of the search was known. The search parties usually returned 3 or 4 hours later and with disastrous consequences for all the prisoners' health. In 1940 for example, one escape cost the lives of a hundred inmates. It was during severe winter weather and the prisoners were forced to stand out of doors from 3.30 in the afternoon until 11 o'clock the next morning, as a result of which a hundred totally or half-frozen men were counted.

000350

After the roll-call we returned to our block where we were allotted a "room;" we slept three to a bed. Old-timers told us that the best thing to do was to use our clothing as a pillow otherwise something was bound to be stolen. So we lay down without having had the slightest bit of food the whole day. The "reception" had been so strenuous and exhausting that all of us immediately fell asleep.

At 4 a.m. we were awakened by a gong and frightful confusion ensued. About 100 people were compressed into the small hall space and in a wild stampede each one first tried to tidy up his bed (the block leader would not tolerate the smallest wrinkle in the bedding) and dress himself. There was no question of washing. Ten minutes after the gong had sounded the "room eldest" arrived and kicked everyone out into the corridor as the "rooms" had to be cleaned. The corridor was thronged with people who flocked together from all over the block. Most of them had managed to get dressed. There was really scarcely room to move in this crowd and one was pushed against walls and squashed into corners and often kicked or hit for no apparent reason. After having been in the camp for over 24 hours we finally received some cold, unsweetened coffee, after which there was a further wait of one and a half hours until roll-call; then all the prisoners were taken to work. The newcomers were at first told to fill in questionnaires in which they had to indicate an address where they desired their letters to be sent. It was strictly forbidden not to give an address or not to write as "they" obviously needed an address to which the death of a prisoners could be reported when the need arose.

We were issued a piece of cloth with a triangle and our number painted on it, which we were instructed to sew on our tunics. Prisoners were numbered from No. 1 onwards, and in November 1943 the last consecutive serial number had reached 170,000. The triangles in question were of different colors, each representing a category of criminal or prisoner. The "Aryan" triangle was red, the red corresponding to a political prisoner, green to professional criminals, black to "work-shirkers," pink to homosexuals (according to paragraph 175) and violet to members of the "Bibelforscher" religious sect. In addition, a large letter indicated the nationality of the prisoner, such as "P" for the Poles, etc. For Jews the insignia was composed of a yellow triangle on which was sewn a second triangle whose color corresponded to the "crime," the whole forming a Jewish star. From this marking system one could therefore rapidly pick out, for instance, a Polish Jewish political prisoner or a Jewish "work-slacker," etc.

When we had finished sewing on our triangles and numbers, we were herded over to the "Infirmary" where we were to be "examined" by a German doctor regarding our physical aptness for work. Again we had to undress and stand in a chilly corridor for almost three hours, shivering, as the weather was still very cold even at the end of March. We met old acquaintances who were working in the infirmary and their first concern was to have news of their relatives. Upon the doctor's arrival we had to present ourselves in groups standing stiffly at attention.

000351

All that was required of us was to stretch out an arm, move the fingers, turn around and march off. The examination consisted of nothing more and all of us were of course considered fit for work. Hadn't we come here for this very purpose and besides, didn't "Work bring freedom"? We knew only too well what it meant to be considered unfit for work: being taken away and condemned to "liquidation" by gas. At last we received our first warm nourishment in 36 hours. The camp food consisted of coffee or cold tea (made from acorn leaves etc.) in the morning and soup thick or thin, as the case might be, at midday. From the time of our arrival at the camp we had soup made from water and turnips during fully 5 months. After evening roll-call we received 300 grams of bread, although its weight was usually considerably diminished by the time it reached the prisoner. On Mondays and Saturdays, 300 to 400 grams of cheese were distributed. It was some sort of a crude home-made, peasant cheese which often contained more worms than cheese. Rations further included 1/2 kilo of margarine for twelve persons distributed every Tuesday, Thursday or Friday and blood sausage or red sausage on Wednesdays and Mondays. These rations represented approximately 300 to 400 grams. In addition to margarine on Tuesdays and Fridays we also received a spoonful of marmelade per person. Since the barrel however, bore a label stating that the marmelade was destined for the camp its quality was correspondingly bad. Theoretically the above are the rations each inmate received but practically a good part of them were stolen before they were actually distributed. In the evening, tea or coffee were distributed with the bread. The soup had to be licked up as most of the prisoners did not possess spoons. I forgot to mention that we had to eat our food squatting on our haunches as a punishment by the room eldest to us newcomers for having crowded around the soup kettle during distribution.

After our meal we were sent to the identification service where photographs from three different angles were taken. So on that day the camp picture gallery was increased by 60 more criminals! One by one we were called up and I noticed that my comrades came out of the photographer's room looking frightened. Beware! It was my turn. I was seated on a chair and photographed. When I tried to get up the floor started moving and, losing my balance I was thrown against the wall. It was a practical joke played by the photographers, (all of whom are Poles) in setting the revolving platform in motion when one got up. It was not surprising that one sometimes had to have some kind of amusement even at the expense of one's camp comrades. We then returned to our quarters and by that time the roll-call was again due. So ended our second day in camp; and the next morning we were to be marched off to work with all the other inmates.

All the prisoners had to work except the sick, those in "quarantine" and those confined to their cells. The total camp strength was divided into camp commandos or squads which were each headed by a "Capo" or leader and several foremen.

000352

At the head of large working units was a "Chief Capo" who was assisted by several "Capos" and foremen. The size of one of these squads varied from one to several hundred men. Although the Capo was really in charge, a foreman often took over a group of ten, twenty or thirty workmen. The head of the labor administration chose the "Capos," with the consent of the "Chief Capo," the prisoners being assigned to squads by the central administration. Work started after the morning roll-call, i.e. in summer from 5 a.m. to 12 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., in winter from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. without interruption. There were workshops for craftsmen, farmers, industrial workers and various technical trades. Many, particularly those in favor, worked in the camp administration. The camp was provided with an "infirmary," a "canteen," a laundry, a bakery and a slaughter house. Thus prisoners with certain technical training could, in principle, work in their own trade. Intellectuals, liberal professional men, shop keepers or office workers were the worst off and they represented fully 70% of the total number of prisoners. The latter were all employed as unskilled labor in the worst and hardest jobs, such as the coal and gravel pits. The mortality among them was frightfully high. But it seemed to be the aim of the camp administration to kill them off as rapidly as possible.

II. MY FIRST DAYS IN CAMP - THE "INFIRMARY."

My first job was with a demolition squad. Since the area surrounding the camp of AUSCHWITZ had been evacuated for a radius of almost a 100 kilometers, all buildings, unless taken over by the camp, had to be torn down. Even new buildings were demolished. Our work consisted in tearing down such houses and was exceedingly strenuous, particularly since we were expected to work at top speed. A squad consisting of 50 men was supposed to demolish a large building within three to four days; and we were instructed to salvage all building material. The roof of a house, for instance, had to be carefully taken down and all planks, beams, tiles, etc. stacked away. Nothing was to be broken; in fact the slightest damage to anything resulted in an immediate and severe beating with a shovel or pick handle. The walls had to be broken down literally by hand, brick by brick, the cement sticking to each brick being afterwards removed and the bricks piled neatly up. Even the foundations had to be torn out and the ground afterwards levelled to that no trace of the house remained. Many men died at this work; not only from exposure and the strain, but from falling walls and beams - especially those who were elderly or slow. From the 50 who set out in the morning seldom more than 40 returned on their own legs. The remainder was either brought as corpses or in a state of complete collapse in wheel-barrows or on boards. These poor souls still were expected to appear at evening roll-call, after which they were taken to the infirmary. From my working comrades who went there I never saw one alive again.

My work with this squad lasted over a month. I was then transferred to the ditch digging squad. Trenches of from

000353

2 1/2 to 3 meters deep had to be dug, and for the last 50 centimeters we worked standing in water. We were, of course, not allowed to leave the trench during work and this job was considered as one of the hardest in the camp. Many died at it daily. Some time later I was shifted to the "concrete squad" where I had to heave heavy posts and sacks of cement; but after the arrival of new prisoners I was detailed to the making of concrete brieks. This had the advantage of at least being work under a roof, which was very important inasmuch as work went on regardless of the weather. In addition the prisoners were continually mistreated and struck by commando leaders, "capos," and foremen. In general, anyone holding a commanding position in the camp liked to give special emphasis to his position of superiority. Naturally the character of the person concerned played a considerable role; but the fundamental rule was the direct responsibility of the superior for his inferiors, each individual being in turn responsible to the collectivity. These circumstances fostered the "stool pigeon" system. For example, one day a working comrade discovered a few pieces of turnip which he carefully hid. He continued his work, but from time to time, took surreptitious bites off his treasure. Another prisoner having "squealed" on him, the "capo" arrived a few minutes later. It must be remembered that the capo is absolute master of his commando and that everybody tries to get into his good graces. Unfortunately this favor often had to be attained to the detriment of the well-being or sometimes even of the lives of other prisoners. The capo proceeded to search our comrade and finding the pieces of turnip knocked the weakened man to the ground, hitting him brutally about the head and face and in the stomach. He then ordered him to sit up, hands out-stretched in front of him on the ground with a weight of bricks on each hand; the pieces of turnip were stuck in his mouth. All the men were then assembled and informed that the unfortunate man was to stay in this position for a whole hour. We were warned that this punishment would befall any member of the commando who committed a similar "offence." The condemned man underwent this ordeal guarded by one of the foremen, very eager to fulfill his task to the satisfaction of the capo, so that he hit our friend every time he tried to shift his position slightly. After 15 to 20 minutes the man became unconscious, but a bucket of water was poured over him and he was again forced into his original position. After he had slumped over senseless for a second time his body was thrown aside and nobody was allowed to pay further attention to him. After roll-call that evening he was taken to the "infirmary" where he died two days later. Or another example: on Easter Monday 1942 the weather was extremely bad with a heavy snowfall. We were sitting in the mud scraping cement off bricks, frozen half stiff. Suddenly the commando chief appeared and barked the following order: "Discard caps, coats and jackets! Sick with fear for what might follow, we obeyed and continued working in our shirt-sleeves. The capo sneered at us: "You dirty Poles, now you can celebrate!" A young prisoner, not more than 16 years old, had hidden in a trench. He was terribly thin and so trembling with the cold that he evidently did not hear the order. Or perhaps he didn't care whether he heard it or not. The capo, however, had meanwhile staggered off (he was half drunk) since he didn't intend to remain out-of-doors in this wretched weather. As a matter of fact, he cared very little about

000054

the prisoners, the sooner they died, the better. The snow had stopped falling, but in the cold wind we froze in our shirt sleeves; certain death awaited us. Nobody knew when the Capo might come back, perhaps in a moment, perhaps in a week, or in a month. While we waited the snow started to fall again. A few foremen came running in our direction from a stove around which they had been sitting, to see how we are getting on with our work. One of them discovered the hidden youngster and shouted: "All your clothes off, at once, you swine". As the kid did not react, the foreman pounced on him and started beating him: "Undress or I will beat the life out of you, or better still I will report you to the chief". At that moment the Capo arrived. A sharp blow of a whistle: "Fall in!" We formed our columns and knew that it meant "sticking together". We were led into an open space where we sank ankle-deep in mud. Now the "sport" started. "Down! up! quick march! etc." We literally rolled in the mud. Flatten out! Jump! Run! Hands out front! We were covered with mud from head to foot and scarcely able to stand. The "exercise" had now been going on for about half an hour. To finish we had to do "push up" exercises, alternately laying down flat and supporting our body on our hands. "Up, down, up, down". The chief of the commando inspected the rows and saw an old man who was unable to continue. Immediately an SS guard threw himself upon him and kicked him in the head and face with heavy hob nailed boots. When at last the poor old man gave no further sign of life he was left alone. We were then allowed to stand up and continue with our work. The badly injured man was carried over to a dry spot among piles of bricks. He opened his eyes, tried to say something but couldn't utter a word; and we had to leave him as in the meantime the order was given to resume work. The result was that at the end of the day we carried home another corpse. But we had grown used to it. We marched and sang jolly German songs, as the Capo wanted it to be so. The commando chief walked alongside the group; he grinned: "You do sing well!"

During my work in the "concrete squad" I caught pneumonia (as was found out later). At the beginning I avoided the "infirmary" and hoped I would get over it. I knew too well what happened there and that seldom one left the place alive. But I became so weak that I could hardly move and finally had to give in. I became completely indifferent. In one way I was lucky that my friends in the "Infirmary" took care of me so that I was then able to enjoy "privileged" conditions. When I entered the "Krankenbau" it was composed of three different buildings: Block 28 - internal illnesses -, Block 20 - infectious illnesses-, Block 21 - surgery -. Later on three new "Blocks" (Blocks 19, 9 and 10) were attached to the "infirmary". They composed the so-called "Hygiene Institute". Here, sterilizing by X-ray treatment, artificial insemination of women as well as experiments on blood transfusions were carried on. Male and female prisoners especially Jews served as "guinea pigs" for these experiments. This "Block" was completely

100355

isolated from the rest of the camp so that news from it reached us only very seldom.

It was not easy to be admitted to the "infirmary" as the "minimum" symptom was a fever of from 38,6 to 39 degrees (C). Light cases of fever were not admitted. All applications for transfer to the "Infirmary" had to be submitted to the chief of one's own Block, who had the right to reject any such request. Then the sick person had to wait for hours in the courtyard of the "infirmary" before being called in for preliminary examination. If the doctor (a prisoner) considered him worth treating, he had to undress and usually take a cold bath before being presented to the German doctor, after further long hours of waiting. The sick were classified into two groups, "Aryans" and Jews. These groups were again subdivided into further groups, of which the first included the sick who were to remain in hospital being considered "curable". The second consisted of extremely run down patients, chronic cases, and the half-starving or mutilated whose recovery could only be effected by a long stay in the hospital. This group was practically condemned to death by Phenol injections in the heart region. Racial considerations played an important role. An "Aryan" really had to be seriously ill to be condemned to death by injection, whereas 80 to 90 % of the Jews "hospitalized" there were "eliminated" in this manner. Many of them knew about this method and applied for admission as so-called "suicide candidates", not having the courage to throw themselves on to the high tension wires. This situation lasted during the whole of 1942 until the time the mass extermination of interned Jews at AUSCHWITZ began. Danger of death by injection did not only threaten the newly arrived hospital cases or casualties. From time to time (usually once a month) the German doctor used to effect a minute control of all the sick. In each ward an attendant (usually a doctor) had to "present" each patient and give full account of his illness. If the patient's stay happened to have exceeded a month or if he was very weak, he was listed. The German doctor always kept the sick records of the condemned so as to avoid any attempt at interference on the part of the prisoners themselves. Each such special check-up by the German doctor usually resulted in a list of 200 to 400 men condemned to death, while the "normal" death list of the daily routine inspection varied from 20 to 80. The injections were given on the same day. The new patients who were booked for the "syringe" (as it was called in the camp jargon) received no clothes and had to remain waiting in the corridor - naked -. They were then led from Block 28 to Block 20 where the "operation" took place in a special room. An SS man by the name of KLER, a shoemaker by profession, gave the injections. He had taken up this post in the hospital as a simple SS private but was later promoted to SS "group leader", although practically a moron. He also received supplementary food rations and was awarded the Iron Cross. There were days when this psychopath picked out victims from the wards on his own initiative, without instructions from the German doctor, on whom to practice his "technique". He was a complete sadist, torturing his victims with animal-like brutality before putting them to death. Later it was decided that his nerves had been strained

000356

by "overwork" so an "assistant" was recruited, a Polish volunteer, by the name of PANSZCZYK, No. 607 from Cracow, who was transferred to Germany during the winter of 1943 where he presumably died. The injections were then sporadically administered by "Sanitätsdienstgehilfen" - or given by the chief of the "infirmary". For a certain time, another Pole named JERZY SZYMKOWIAK, No. 15490, "functioned" voluntarily; he died in the summer of 1943.

The injections were not only administered to the weak and ill, but also to prisoners in the political section who were condemned to death. Apart from this, on one occasion, two groups (the first composed of 40, the second of 80 prisoners) of young and strong youths between the ages of 13 and 16 years were put to death, on the grounds that they were "orphans" and could not be considered in the camp as full-fledged workers.

In the autumn of 1942 came the massacre of the LUBLIN transports which caused great unrest in the camp. One of the sanitary service attendants refused to administer injections, stating that he he was an SS man and not a murderer of children. Another attendant had to be summoned to carry out the job. This affair caused a lot of talk and stir as at least 15 to 20,000 people lost their lives and even BERLIN asked for an explanation of the high mortality rate in the hospital. The head-doctor, WIRTZ, disclaimed all knowledge of such events and laid the blame on the camp doctor whose name was ENTREST, a German from the POSEN district. A mock inquiry was held at which witnesses from the hospital administration had to testify and the lists of the "deceased" were checked. As "punishment" the camp doctor was simply transferred in the same capacity to the "BUNA". As a result of all this, murdering by means of injections stopped for a while although it was resumed on a smaller scale soon afterwards for hopelessly sick cases. Many of those condemned to the "syringe" were used as experimental material in the "Hygiene Institute" (Block 10). The injections doubtlessly frightened the prisoners from asking to be admitted to the hospital. Another major danger in the camp was "delousing", as it was euphemistically called.

The whole camp obviously was covered with lice and fleas and large disinfection programs were carried out. However, the results were never apparent and our "washing" always came back almost as full of lice. Actually the "delousing" was designed to combat typhus epidemics which had become a real plague at the camp. During these actions everybody was examined and those with bad complexions or in weakened bodily condition were, according to the camp doctor's mood, destined to be gassed. They were simply led to the "infirmary" from where 40 to 50 % were "evacuated". A "delousing" action which took a particularly large toll in victims was conducted in July 1942. During the course of this "purge" the weak, those ill with typhus or in post-typhus quarantine were all sent to BRZINZKI without exception. This method was considered the most radical for eliminating

000357

typhus. The way in which those condemned to the gas chambers were transferred to their doom was exceptionally brutal and inhuman. Serious cases from the surgical ward who still had their bandages on and a procession of exhausted and horribly emaciated patients, even convalescents on the road to recovery were loaded on to trucks. They were all naked and the spectacle was dreadful in the extreme. The trucks pulled up at the entrance of the block and the unfortunate victims were simply thrown or piled on by the attendants (I frequently witnessed such tragic transports). A hundred people were often jammed into a small truck. They all knew exactly what their fate was to be. The large majority remained completely apathetic while others, mostly patients from the surgery with bloody and gaping wounds or frightful sores, struggled frantically. All around the trucks, SS men milled about like madmen, beating back the howling crowd trying to lean out. Every time it was a terrible experience to have to drag our friends to the truck. Most of them were quiet, and bid us farewell, but never forgot to remind us: "Do not forget revenge." Under such conditions men's hearts turn to stone. Imagine a prisoner killing his brother in one of the wards so as to avoid his having to undergo the dreadful trip by truck. (I happen to know the names and immatriculation numbers of these two particular prisoners). It can well be imagined that we just shrugged our shoulders when told the German fairy-tales regarding the KATYN incident.

III. THE JEWS.

Originally, the camp of AUSCHWITZ was intended only for Poles. It was guarded by a group of Germans (no more than thirty at the beginning) who had been transferred from a German concentration camp. They were prisoners as well but "camp veterans", if such an expression may be used. Most of them had been imprisoned as far back as 1934 and were all more or less professional criminals. But as time went on AUSCHWITZ became more and more of an international camp and the first Jews started to arrive in 1941. They were immediately separated from the "Aryans" and quartered in special "Blocks". Although, at the time, systematic executions were not an established rule it can be stated that as a result of bad treatment by SS men, Capos and foremen (the majority of German origin but often Poles who were enlisted by force), a Jew - irrespective of his physical condition - could not last more than 2 weeks. A young Jew, for instance, who was robust enough to be able to do his work "on the double" (for example, pushing a heavily laden wheel barrow) will most probably be unable to keep it up in the long run. If he should show signs of holding out, he would inevitably be killed sooner or later by such mistreatment, as being beaten with a shovel or pick handle.

In those days all the Jews had to work in the "quarry squad". At a trot they had to bring gravel on wheel barrows

000358

from a pit about 15 to 20 meters deep up a steep slope. At the top, SS men and Capos checked their work and the speed at which it was carried out and anyone considered as "loafing" was simply pushed over, backwards when he arrived at the top so that he crashed back down the incline with his fully laden barrow. This was one of the guards' favourite pastimes. Such treatment of Jewish prisoners prevailed from the time the first Jews arrived at the camp until Spring of 1942, when the first large transports of Jews (tens of thousands) began to arrive and the extermination campaign was getting underway. At first there were few Jews at the camp, most of them of Polish origin, who had been sent there along with other Poles. They were immediately separated from the latter. They had been arrested not as a consequence of their being Jewish but for offences directed against "the security of the German State". Only from Spring 1942 on were they rounded up and exterminated "en masse" on racial grounds. Certain large scale preparations had to be made to receive these mass transports and a special concentration camp was opened at BIRKENAU (the Polish name of the village is RAJSKO). Administered by Germans and Poles, the camp was guarded by SS detachments. Conditions were appalling. The camp had no water, no drainage system and not even the most elementary hygienic installations. The Jews remained in civilian clothes which were marked with red paint. Food was supposed to be distributed to them on a basis similar to that prevailing in AUSCHWITZ but abuse was flagrant. It often happened that the inmates received nothing to eat for days and then only a small part of the rations they should have had. Altogether they were inhumanly treated. The slightest complaint was punishable by death.

The first large convoys arrived from France and Slovakia. Physically able men and women - those without children or the mothers of grown-up children - were sent to the camp of BIRKENAU. The remainder, i.e. old or weak men, women with small children and all those unfit for labour were taken to the Birch wood (BRZEZINKI) and killed by means of hydrocyanic gas. For this purpose special gassing barracks had been built there. These consisted of large halls, airtight, provided with ventilators which could be opened or closed according to the need. Inside they were equipped so as to create the impression of bathing establishments. This was done to deceive the victims and make them more manageable. The executions took place as follows: each death convoy consisted of some 8 to 10 trucks packed with the "selectees"; the convoy was unguarded as the whole frightful drama took place on camp territory. A private car containing the camp doctor followed each truck convoy since it was compulsory for him to be present at these mass executions. On their arrival at the gassing establishment, which was surrounded by a double barbed wire fence, men, women and children had to completely undress. Each of them was given a towel and a piece of soap. Then they were driven into the barrack until it was completely filled up. Everything was hermetically closed and specially trained SS units threw hydrocyanic

000359

bombs through the ventilation openings. After about 10 minutes the doors were opened and a special squad composed exclusively of Jews, had to clear away the bodies and prepare for a new group of "selectees". The crematoria had not yet been constructed, although there was a small one at AUSCHWITZ which however was not employed for burning these bodies. Mass graves were dug at that time into which the corpses were simply thrown. This continued into the autumn of 1942. By this time extermination by gas was being intensified and there was no more time even for such summary burial. Row upon row of bodies of murdered Jews, covered only by a thin layer of earth were widely dispersed in the surrounding fields, causing the soil to become almost marshy through the putrefaction of the bodies. The smell emanating from these fields became intolerable. In the autumn of 1942 all that remained of the bodies had to be exhumed, the bones collected and burnt in the crematoria (by that time four had been completed). An alternative was to gather the remains of the unfortunate victims into heaps, pour gasoline over them and leave it to the flames to finish the tragedy. The immense quantity of human ashes thus collected was carted away in every direction to be scattered over the fields where these martyrs had found their last rest.

In the meantime the crematoria had been finished and the number of arrivals was steadily increasing. Gassing and burning were carried out at record speed but the supply of corpses became so large that occasionally they had to resort to the old method of open air cremation. It is estimated that approximately 1 1/2 million Jews were exterminated in this manner. With the exception of the Polish Jews, the other Jews had no idea what was in store for them at AUSCHWITZ. We were told by Dutch and French Jews that the Germans had informed them that they were leaving their country to be transferred to Poland where everyone would be able to continue work in his own profession or still better, where for each shop, concern or factory seized by the Germans an equivalent source of livelihood would be put at their disposal. They were to take their whole fortune with them and liquid cash for at least 6 weeks. This resulted in considerable amounts of money and valuables being brought to AUSCHWITZ (most of them by Dutch bankers and diamond merchants) most of which was stolen by the camp staff, SS men and prisoners. The condemned Jews generally faced their fate calmly, although those arriving in 1943 had a clearer idea of what awaited them. The sporadic attempts at rebellion and mass escape when the freight cars were unloaded upon arrival were bloodily repelled. The special railway siding reserved for the convoys was surrounded by searchlight and machine-gun posts. On one occasion these unfortunate people scored a small success. It must have been during September or October 1943, after a transport of women had arrived. The accompanying SS men had ordered them to undress and were about to drive them into the gas chamber. This moment was always used by the guards as a good opportunity for looting; and rings and wrist watches were torn off women's fingers and arms. In the confusion resulting from one such attack,

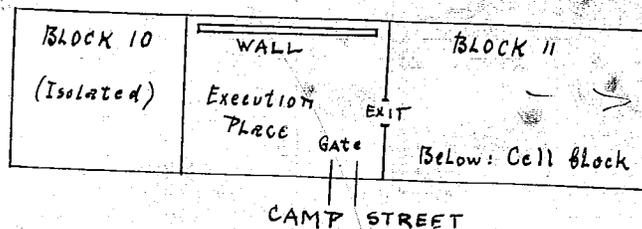
000360

one woman managed to snatch the pistol of SS Group leader SCHILLINGER and fire three shots at him. He was seriously wounded and died the next day. This gave the signal for the others to attack the executioners and their henchmen. One SS man had his nose torn off, another was scalped, but unfortunately none of the women were able to escape. Although an attempt was made to keep this incident secret, it resulted in an order being issued whereby SS men were not allowed to remain in camp after 8 p.m.

The extermination of Jews continued relentlessly although in the camp, tension relaxed to a certain extent. The fate of those Jews admitted to the camp has been described in the sections of my report dealing with the gassing and killing of the ill by means of injections.

IV. EXECUTIONS.

Until the Summer of 1941 AUSCHWITZ was mainly a concentration camp in which no executions had taken place so far. The first executions came as a surprise for the majority of the camp inmates. They began in the Summer of 1941 when one evening after roll-call, various numbers were called up (I well remember, there were 18 men from Oracow alone). The men whose numbers had been called were ordered to the stock room, where they had to give up their clothes and were given old rags (a shirt and pants) in exchange. Then they were taken to the gravel pit and shot with pistols at point blank range. The other prisoners were not allowed to be present at the shooting but the execution was so arranged that practically the whole camp could witness the proceedings. After the execution a special commando was designated to bury the bodies. This incident caused a great deal of unrest within the camp as we had assumed until then that deportation to a concentration camp excluded the death penalty for offences against the security of the German State. From this day on executions were carried out at more or less regular intervals, the victims being called up on Tuesdays and Fridays. Later a special place of execution was set up within the camp's boundary, an open space between "Blocks" 10 and 11 where executions took place generally in the morning.



The index cards of the condemned men were sent from the chief clerk's office to the respective "Blocks" and in the morning, immediately after roll-call the numbers of the

000361

prisoners were called up by "the Block recorder". If the index card bore the inscription "to report immediately after roll-call" and the signature of the "recording clerk" it meant that the prisoner called up was to be shot. The "block recorder" assembled the victims and brought them over to the chief clerk's office. There the numbers, names and dates of birth were checked again. Ordered into rows of five by the camp eldest and the block eldest (also prisoners) they were then marched to the place of execution. If the shooting was only to take place a few hours later, the men were locked up in cells. If the execution, however, was to be carried out at once they were taken first to the washhouse. They undressed and their number was marked on their thigh with indelible pencil. After these preparations, they were again lined up in fives and then sent out to the execution wall (first four men and then two at a time). The men were led out by the Block eldest of "Block 11" or then by the Capo of the cell-block (a Jew), who took hold of the hands of the condemned and dragged them out to the wall where he stood between the two. In the beginning the condemned were forced to kneel and bend their heads forward, but later they were usually shot standing. The executioners shot their victims in the back of the head with a short barreled rifle which made a muffled report. After the execution, the "body-bearers" went into action and removed the corpses to a nearby stable where they were thrown on a heap of straw. The blood stains were removed and the emplacement prepared for the execution of two further victims. After the whole group had been liquidated, the bodies were kept in "Block 28" until the evening. At dusk all the bodies, including those of other prisoners deceased during the same day were piled on to a big cart and pulled to the crematoria. Later, the corpses were also removed from the place of execution in coffins and if a considerable number was involved a truck was used for this purpose. These "death transports" always took place during hours of curfew as the camp authorities wished to keep the executions as secret as possible, in which they were, however, not particularly successful. As mentioned before, such executions started during the Summer of 1941 and reached a peak in 1942 with the transfer of "disciplinary companies" from AUSCHWITZ to RAJSKO (BIRKENAU) towards the end of May 1942. Together with a large group of "Muselmänner" ("Muselmann" was a term applied in camp jargon to convicts utterly exhausted by starvation or over work) many young and sturdy men were selected and drafted into these "disciplinary companies". They were all marked with a large red dot as in these special groups the inmates were differentiated by red dots on their chests and backs for offences committed in civil life and by black circles for "crimes" committed in the camp itself. Such "companies" were made up of about 500 men of whom, every second day, 10 to 15 were shot. The rest of them had to work extremely hard and await their turn. At the same time, mass executions started in AUSCHWITZ (middle of May 1942). Once, twice or three times a week, 40 to 60 men were simply picked out and shot. Restlessness increased in the camp when, by middle of June the situation had not changed, to a point approaching open rebellion, especially after one mass executions which cost the

000362

lives of 120 prisoners. The camp administration apparently got wind of this and during a roll-call sometime in June it was announced that executions would cease and the death penalty would be abolished. It was true that the prisoners reacted with deep distrust but on the whole the news had a quieting effect on everybody. And in fact there was a pause of 1 to 1 1/2 months after which executions began again although less often and only in small groups. This state of affairs continued until October 1942 when one of the largest mass executions ever held took 247 victims, all Poles from the LUBLIN and PODHALA districts. Terror broke out in the camp as a result although again many reacted with complete apathy. This ended a ghastly series of executions of prisoners who, upon arrival in the camp, were already condemned to death. But some of them had been in camp over a year without knowing that their fate was already sealed. It often happened for instance that a prisoner selected for execution would be lying ill in the hospital, but as the sentence had to be carried out he received a deadly injection in his bed. The famous Polish actor Witold ZACHAREWICZ was murdered in this way. All this of course did not mean that October 1942 saw the end of the execution of prisoners brought to AUSCHWITZ with death warrants already signed.

Only the method underwent certain changes. In the early days for instance, the Aryan prisoners had always been given numbers and then incorporated into the camp. Later a new method was evolved consisting in immediately dividing the newcomers into two groups: those condemned to death and those who were to remain as regular inmates. The first group was not allotted serial numbers but directly transferred from the "Block leader's" central office to the cells in "Block 11". The executions took place there and the arrivals were either shot at once or a few days later. This procedure was adopted in an attempt to keep the whole matter secret and executions were only carried out late at night. In addition the camp inmates were led to believe that only "civilians" were submitted to this radical treatment (it must be stated that only a permanent camp inmate was considered a "prisoner", whereas newcomers, without numbers and who had not yet joined the ranks were still designated as "civilians"). So as long as only "civilians" were executed the regular inmates were not particularly upset. Executions of "prisoners", however, did not cease altogether. The camp administration was extremely severe regarding discipline and respect of camp rules. For the slightest omission one was marched off to the execution cells and of course never returned. Things became even worse when the political section (meaning the camp Gestapo) decided to take charge of the punishment of petty internal offences. The frequent result was that they decided questions of life and death according to their own judgment. Bribery became the order of the day. Among the "offences" for being locked up in the execution cells were: being "politically suspect" on the grounds of having contacted "civilians" in the camp, spreading political news or commenting on the German High Command's communiqués, drunkenness, theft (foodstuffs, gold, precious stones), premeditated escape, etc. The death cells

000363

were always overcrowded and every now and then they had to be "evacuated". This took place as follows: the camp leader, chief of the political section, GRABNER by name dashed in, accompanied by a number of SS men as drunk as himself. They went from cell to cell, taking down the particulars of each occupant's case, the reason for his punishment etc.. If the camp leader had a list of those condemned to death in hand, the prisoners could consider themselves lucky inasmuch as it might not yet be their turn. But usually no notice was taken of such a list. What decided the individual prisoner's fate was mainly the impression he made on this gang of drunkards and the mood in which the camp leader happened to be. There was no question of considering the actual penalty. If the impression he made was not too unfavourable the prisoner remained in his cell to await his execution at a later date unless he went to his death voluntarily. The whole inspection was accompanied by a great deal of vile language and brutal treatment. Usually 85 to 90% of the death cell occupants were "evacuated" and shot in front of the wall so that space was again available for new arrivals. The camp in general was of course never informed of this secret justice nor who were its victims. It is true that the relatives of the victims were duly informed but the cause of death was always given as being "natural". An incredible amount of paper was wasted compiling fake records of illnesses, fever charts etc.. destined to justify each single death. Death announcements were telegraphed never more than at the rate of two a day so as not to arouse suspicion on the "outside". From the beginning, the executions were carried out by a single man. First by "Oberscharführer" PALITSCH who was later sent to an officers' training center and then by "Scharführer" STIWETZ who still performs these duties. Executions of women were reported from AUSCHWITZ, but in small numbers. On the other hand great numbers of people were shot after having been brought in by truck straight from freedom or from prisons. In two instances whole families were executed, parents together with their children. In one case, an infant a few months old ended his short life in the arms of his mother before the execution wall.

100364

AIR MAIL

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

- WASHINGTON-25

London



November 7, 1944

Dear John:

There ^{is} ~~are~~ enclosed a map of the famous death camp in Auschwitz, together with a short description concerning details of life inside the camp and explanations concerning the map.

As stated in my cable concerning these documents, notwithstanding that I have requested this map from the Poles on four separate occasions since sending my cable No. 8133 of September 29, I was successful in receiving it only today. After I received your cable of November 4, 1944 (WRB 20), I went to an official of the Polish Foreign Office, Dr. Manfred Lachs, and told him that he would have to get the maps immediately. Much to my surprise he produced, whereas his colleagues had given many promises but never produced any maps. Dr. Lachs has promised to furnish me on Thursday with more maps of the area in which the camp is located. However, I am sending the map I now have and will send the others as soon as they are received. I am extremely sorry that I have been delayed in getting these.

Please keep me advised concerning any plans regarding the project in question. I shall try to write you another long letter in a few days bringing my activities up to date.

Sincerely yours,

Jim
James H. Mann,
Special Representative,
War Refugee Board.

Mr. John W. Pehle,
Executive Director,
War Refugee Board,
Treasury Building,
Washington 25, D. C.

Encl.

000365

CONCENTRATION CAMP AT OSWIECIM AUSCHWITZ/

Explanations to the attached plan:

1. Towers, sentries with machine guns /12/
- 1a. Sentry, road gate
2. Amunition damp
3. Canteen
4. Room of the block commander with his little tower for a sentry.
- Block no.1. - rooms for internees
- Block No.2. - " " " and washrooms
- Block no.3,4,5, -rooms for internees
- block no.6. museum
- block no.7,8,9,10 -- lodgings
- blocks no. 11. -- penal company
- block no.12 -- lodgings and arrest /bunkers/
- block no13 - 19 -- lodgings
- block no20. special lodging for weak persons and persons unable to work
- block no22-24, -- lodgings; no.24 ground floor office
- block no.25. -- lodgings; on the first floor - store-room.
- block no.26. -- safe and magazine
- block no.27. clothing dept. and baths
- block no.28. -- general hospital

5. kitchen
6. lodgings for S.S. N.C.O's
- 6a. " " " " " and political dept.
7. lodgings for commandant of the camp.
8. crematorium
9. administrative buildings
10. slaughter house
11. dairy
12. joinery
13. concrete work shop
14. machine laundry
15. administrative buildings
16. timber warehouse
17. building materials warehouse
18. camp for civilian workers who are not interned at the camp
19. military workshops
20. stores of belongings taken away from the prisoners
21. stores of the S.S.
22. barrack rooms for the S.S.
23. offices
24. S.S. barrack rooms, stores on the ground floor
25. S.S. kitchen
26. stores
27. dwelling houses for officers
28. stables

000366

The concentration camp at ^Uswiecim /cont/.

2.

- 29. unloading square /for transportation to Brzezinski/
- 30. S.S. barracks, square, kennels.
- a. and b. concentration camp for women
- c. gas chambers in a wood west of Brzezinski/Birkenau/
- d. crematorium, in a wood probably west of the barracks.

000367

DEATH CAMP AT OSWICIM

Accommodation.

Detainees were quartered in uniform barracks modelled on the military barracks dating from the Polish pre-war camp on the site of which the concentration camp is situated.

At first only four of the twenty constructed barracks were two storey buildings, namely, barracks No. 3, 9, 13, and 20. /Refer to Map No. 1./ In the winter of 1940/41 the Germans began to add second storeys to all the other buildings and in March, 1943, all twenty five barracks had a 1st. floor. The barrack or "block" stands approximately 60m x 10m. at an angle of 90° to the river Sola. The ground floor is divided into two by a corridor running the length of the building there being 3-5 Stuben to each side of the corridor. In the centre is the staircase shaft and W.C's. The 1st. floor is divided into two large halls and one separate room for the Blockälteste. Each hall is divided by imaginary lines into groups of 12 beds, each group constituting a Stube.

In the summer of 1941 the first beds were installed in Oświęcim. Hitherto the men slept on mattresses on the floor. Each man had two rugs. The beds consisted of three tiers of bunks. Occasionally the beds are grouped together when accommodation is short and several men have to lie side by side across the joined beds. In the daytime sheets are spread over the beds but they are folded at night and never used. The ground floor Stuben are each partitioned off by walls and have one exit into the corridor. The average complement of one Stube is 60 - 80 men.

000368

Deaths.

Executions: Many of these were carried out either outside the camp to the right of the entrance on the site of the wash house under construction or else near the S.S. canteen. For instance, around the summer 1941, 400 men from the Lubelskie area were shot as a reprisal for the derailment by partisans of a train in their home district.

Strafkompanie S.K./. Jews were automatically sent here and usually succumbed after three months or so. Men in the S.K. worked in separate kommando outside the camp on the regulation of the river Sola, having to stand in water which was ice cold, in winter.

On the turn of 1941/42 over 1,000 Soviet P.o.W's, and a large number of ailing men from the hospital /Krankenbau/ were gassed in the S.K.Bunker and their bodies covertly carted away by night, probably to the crematorium. According to informant this was the only occasion on which the Bunker was used for gassing.

Gas Chambers. These were called "Brzezinka" and were situated some 500 yards on the other side of Birkenau.

Autumn 1941. The first transport went to the gas chambers consisting of weak and ailing men. This was just a trial.

From 1942 onwards transports of 500 or 600 men went to the gas chambers, both from Oświęcim and from Birkenau regularly once per week and sometimes twice per week. The victims were usually taken from the Krankenbau or Schonungsblock where they were kept in isolation since they were too weak to work.

Besides the regular inmates of Oświęcim, huge transports of Poles, Czechs and even Germans but mainly Jews, arrived from the outside.

world and went direct to the gas chamber.

Informant remembers the arrival of transports of old men, women and children, these being Poles unfit for heavy labour who had been expropriated and intended for deportation, mainly from the Lubelskie district.

It was apparently estimated in the spring of 1943 ~~of~~ that the total number of victims who met their death in the gas chambers amounted to 800,000.

O ś w i ę c i m c r e m a t o r i u m .

This is on the site of the powder magazine of the old Polish military camp. The chimney was constructed ~~was~~ in December 1940/ January 1941, being visible from the camp as it rises to a height of 15 - 20 metres. The crematorium is underground and just outside the camp to the left of the entrance.

In the autumn of 1941 informant recollects witnessing the arrival of two transports of Soviet P.O.s. amounting to about 1,000 men who were marched naked from the trucks halted outside the camp, direct to the crematorium where they were gassed.

In 1942/43 a number of Jews who had been quartered at Birkenau whilst working in the Sonderkommando, manning the Brzezinka gas chambers, were brought to the Oświęcim crematorium and there gassed. Krankenbau The Lageralteste attached here was named Bock. There was one SS. doctor whilst his subordinates known as Pfleger dressed in white uniforms were all detainees, some of them, German. They occasionally nursed sick men back to health but were often ordered to

kill their patients by giving them injections - a so called "Spritze".

C a m p d e f e n c e s .

1. The first deterrent from the inside of Oświęcim camp was a wire running around the camp supported by sticks 10 cms. high. On top of each was a tablet with a skull and "Halt" inscribed upon it.

Detainees were not supposed to venture beyond this line.

2. 3 metres further was the first barbed wire obstacle constructed in the autumn 1940. 3 metre concrete posts inclined inwards at the top were set 4 metres apart supporting numerous strands of barbed wire /4-6" apart/ attached with porcelain insulators. The barbed wire was electrically charged at night only from evening until the morning roll call.

There were frequent cases of detainees dashing themselves against the ~~xxx~~ electric wire and informant claims that he saw many such cases. The Germans made no effort to check these suicides. The electric current was probably controlled from the Blockführer's Stube.

3. 21/2 metres beyond was a second barbed wire obstacle identical with the first and also electrically charged. It was constructed in the spring or summer of 1941.

4. The side of the camp parallel to the river Sola and the adjacent side, to the right, were further guarded by a concrete wall 4 metres by 5 metres constructed in 1941. On the former side of the camp the wall was at a distance of 15 metres from the second electric wire and on the latter side, at a distance of some 2 metres.

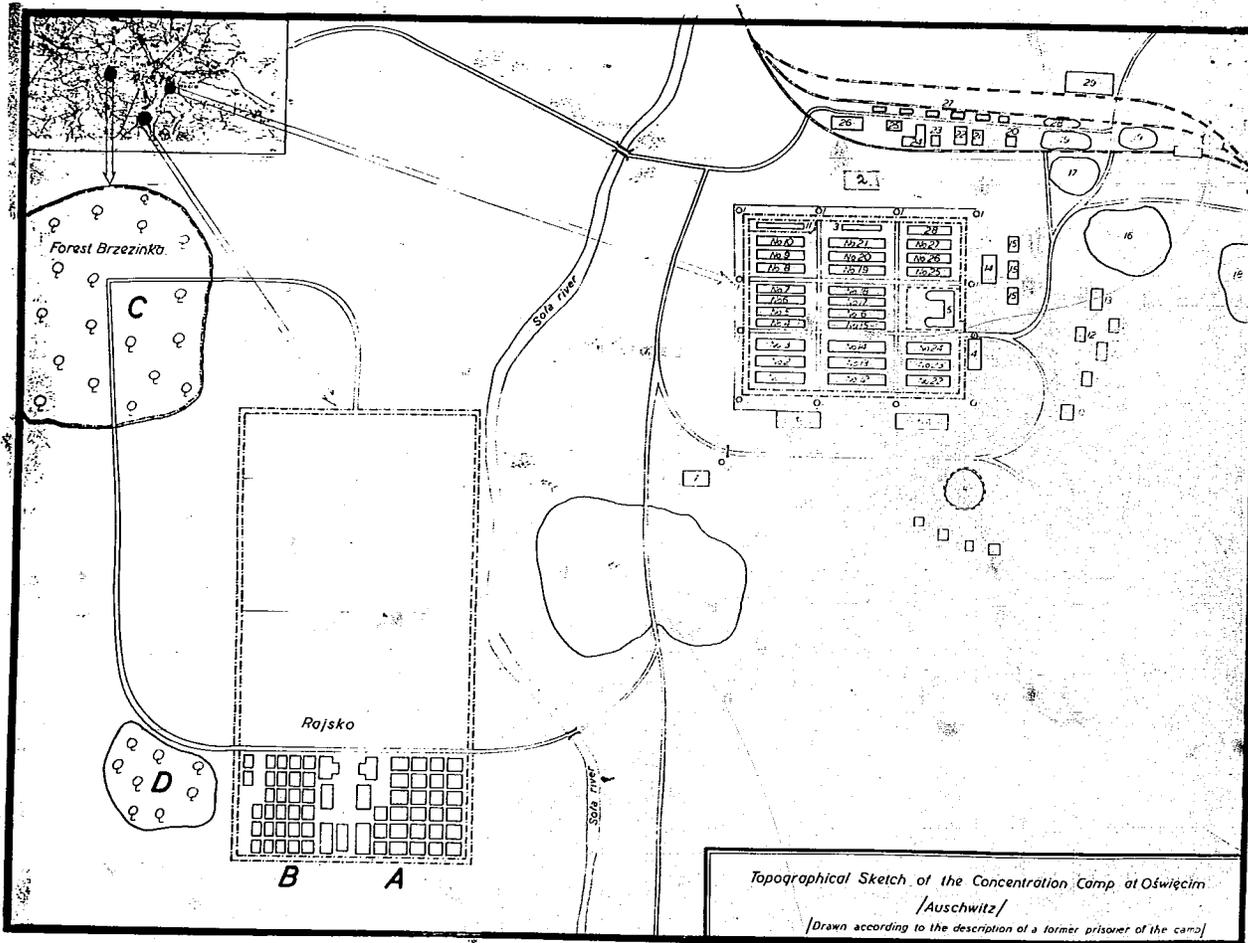
Twelve turrets were stationed in commanding positions outside the second electric wire but within the concrete walls. For location refer to the second map.

Each turret consisted of a platform raised some 5 metres aloft on four poles. Access was gained by a ladder, originally there was a hut on each platform but around 1941/42 these were dismantled leaving only boarding up to the waist so that the sentinels should not fall asleep. The towers were manned only at night time, there being one S.S. guard on duty normally ^{and} two during roll call on each turret. The guard was issued with a rifle and sub-machine gun. The guards reported to the Blockführerstube where beds were provided for them. Each guard had a powerful searchlight which he could switch on at will.

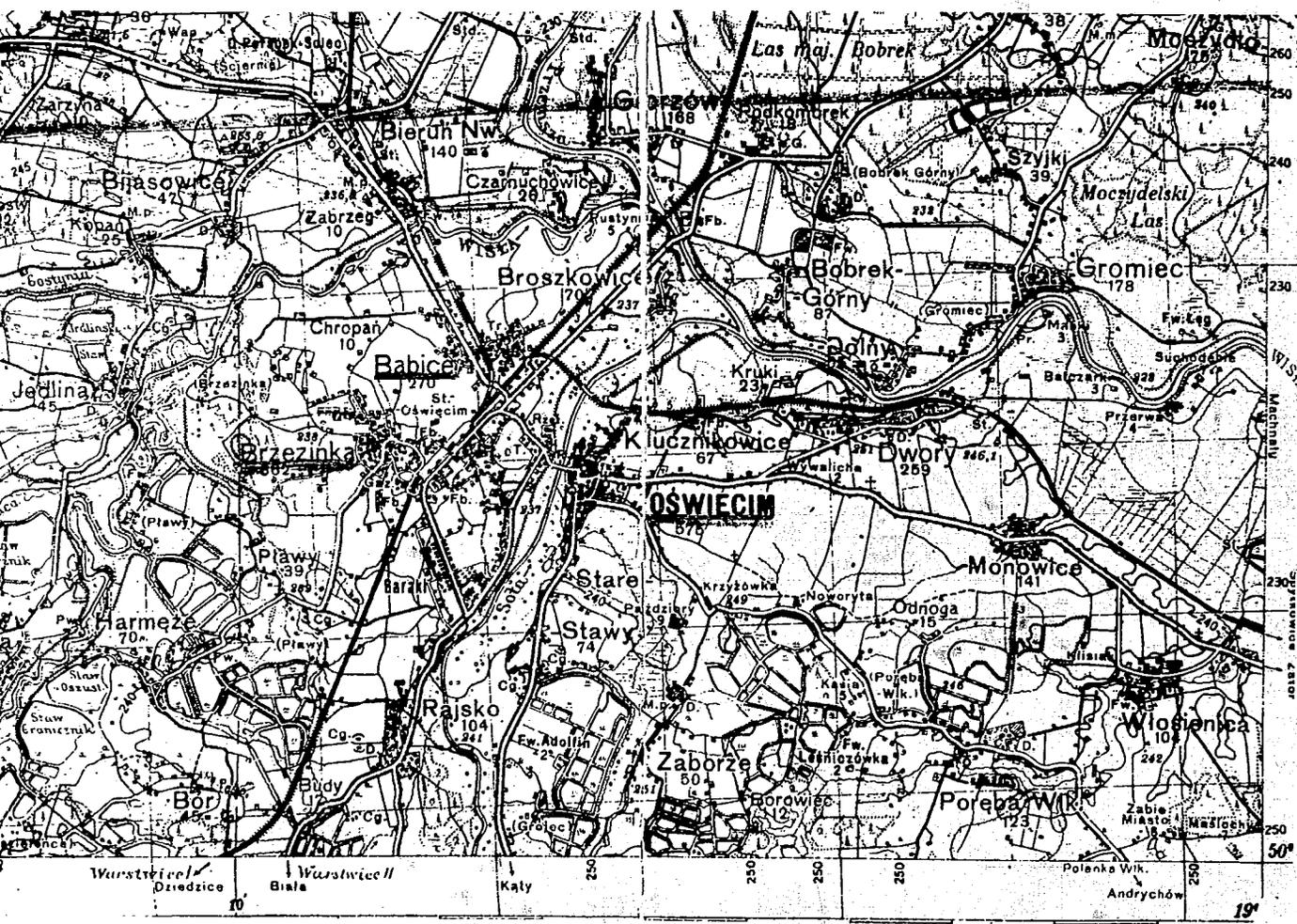
Lighting. On every third or fourth post on the outer electric wire was fixed a lantern which lit the approach to the wire all through the night.

Camp Entrance. Over the single camp entrance was the placard proclaiming "Arbeitmachtfrei". Besides the above precautions there was a so-called Postenkette or chain of turrets manned by S.S. guards which encircle a considerable area outside the camp itself including the Industrehof, the H.W.L., D.A.W. etc. This was intended for the supervision of labour gangs in the day time.

An area of 30.000 hectares around the camp was cleared of all forms of civilian life, local dwellers being expropriated and deported. ~~This~~ This expropriation was carried out in two stages, the first in 1940 and the second in 1941. No civilians were allowed to work inside Oświęcim camp although there were cases in Birkenau.

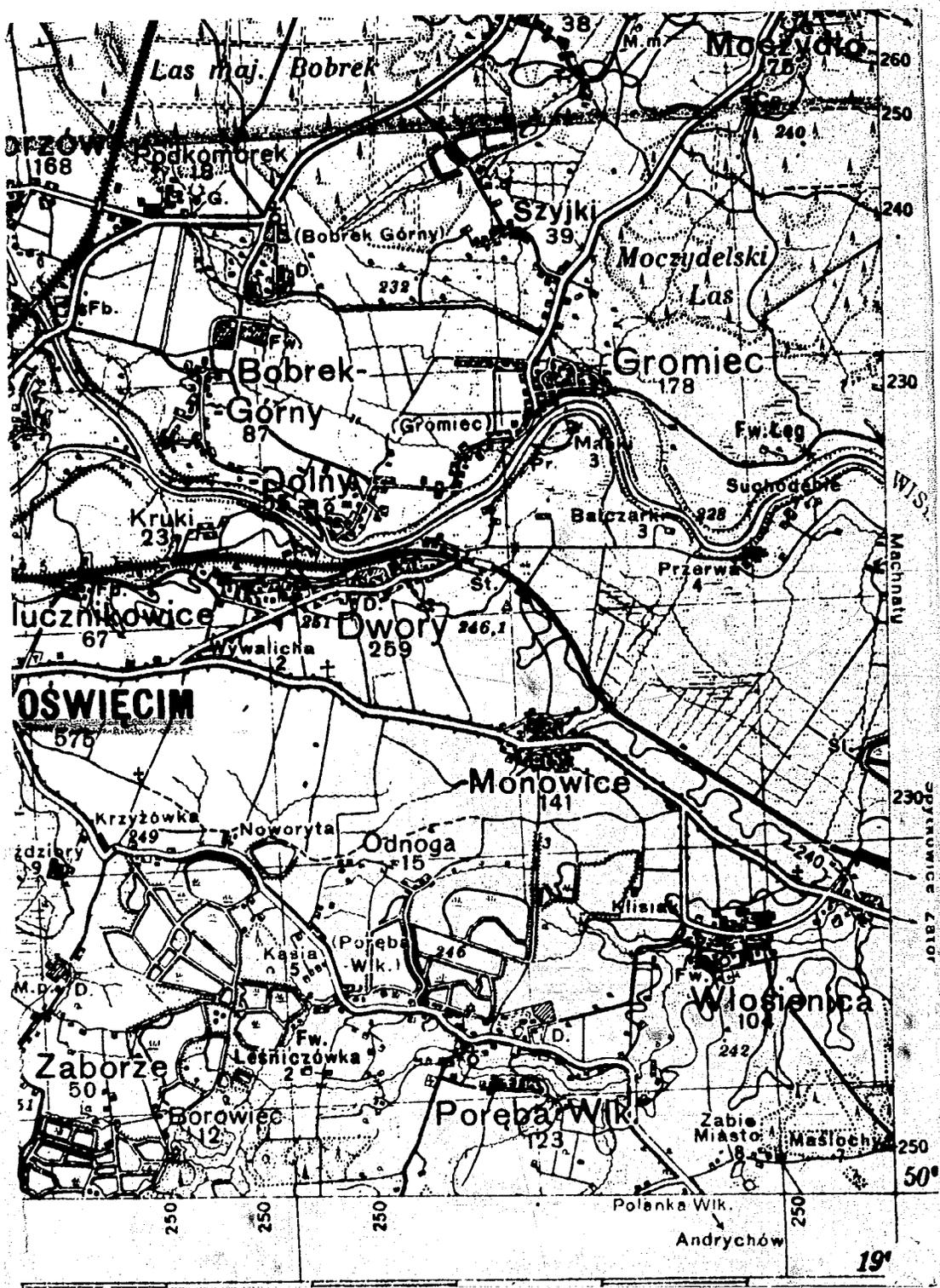


100373



BEST AVAILABLE COPY

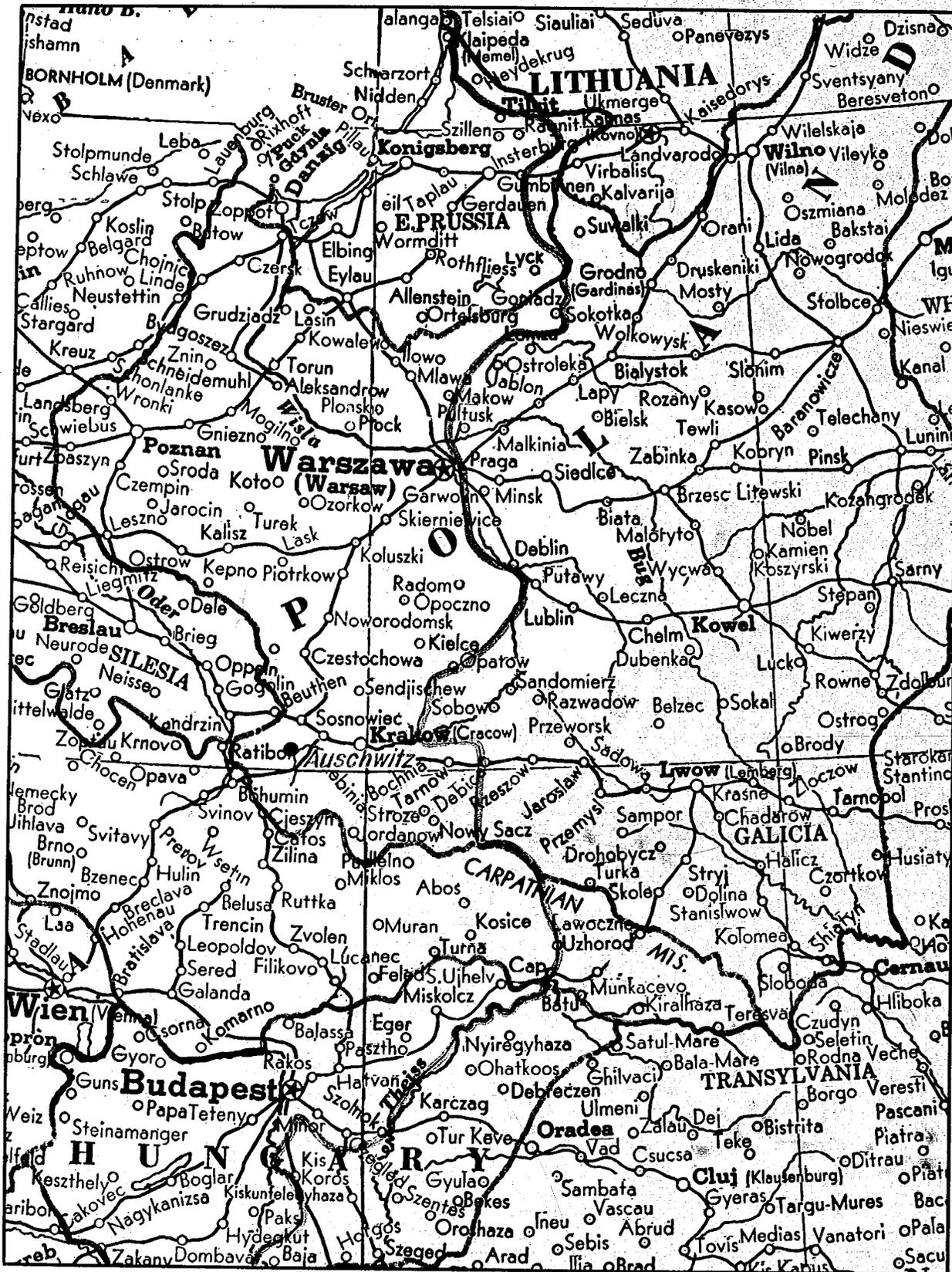
000374



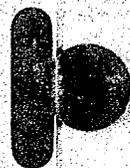
000376



000377



Pre-1939 Borders
 Eastern Front, Nov. 3, 1944



000379

November 2, 1944

MEMORANDUM

Re: Use of Reports on Oswiecim and Birkenau Forwarded
by McClelland.

1. Public release by War Refugee Board after clearance with McClelland;
2. Publication and distribution by some publisher without profit;
3. Use by Army in the form of a manual to be distributed to troops going into Germany;
4. To support proposal to War Department to bomb the two concentration camps;
5. For psychological warfare purposes. Copies of reports in pamphlet form to be dropped by planes over Germany. McClelland has reported that many Germans have only limited ideas of organization of these camps and treatment meted out in them.

F. Hodel

FH:lab 11/2/44

000380

November 2, 1944

MEMORANDUM

Re: Use of Reports on Oswiecim and Birkenau Forwarded
by McClelland.

1. Public release by War Refugee Board after clearance with McClelland;
2. Publication and distribution by some publisher without profit;
3. Use by Army in the form of a manual to be distributed to troops going into Germany;
4. To support proposal to War Department to bomb the two concentration camps;
5. For psychological warfare purposes. Copies of reports in pamphlet form to be dropped by planes over Germany. McClelland has reported that many Germans have only limited ideas of organization of these camps and treatment meted out in them.

F. Hodel

FH:lab 11/2/44

*authentic copies
sent on 11/2/44*

000381

DEC 22 1944

Dear Mr. McClelland:

In connection with the release to the public of the reports on Auschwitz and Birkenau which you forwarded to the Board under date of October 12, 1944, you may be interested in the attached memorandum on press and public reaction to the accounts.

Very truly yours,

~~(Signed)~~ J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. Roswell D. McClelland,
Special Representative,
American Legation,
Bern, Switzerland.

Enclosure.

Copy to Simon Thiel

FHshd 12/22/44 *JW*

000382



000383

November 3, 1944.

Dear Mr. Sherman:

Pursuant to our telephone conversation this morning I am sending to you herewith a photostat of a report received from Roswell D. McClelland, War Refugee Board representative in Bern, Switzerland, transmitting the reports referred to therein.

I shall appreciate very much your help and suggestions with regard to this material.

Please regard this matter as confidential for the time being.

Very truly yours,

(Signed J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director.

Mr. Harry Sherman,
Book-of-the Month Club,
385 Madison Avenue,
New York, New York.

Enclosure

JWP JWPehle:1hh 11-3-44

100384

000385

WAR DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C.

18 November 1944

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

DECLASSIFIED

EO 12812-2 (9/27/88)

Mr. John W. Pehle, Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department Building, Rm. 3414
Washington 25, D. C.

Date- 10-12-65

Dear Mr. Pehle:

I refer to your letter of November 8th, in which you forwarded the report of two eye-witnesses on the notorious German concentration and extermination camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau in Upper Silesia.

The Operations Staff of the War Department has given careful consideration to your suggestion that the bombing of these camps be undertaken. In consideration of this proposal the following points were brought out:

a. Positive destruction of these camps would necessitate precision bombing, employing heavy or medium bombardment, or attack by low flying or dive bombing aircraft, preferably the latter.

b. The target is beyond the maximum range of medium bombardment, dive bombers and fighter bombers located in United Kingdom, France, or Italy.

c. Use of heavy bombardment from United Kingdom bases would necessitate a hazardous round trip flight unescorted of approximately 2000 miles over enemy territory.

d. At the present critical stage of the war in Europe, our strategic air forces are engaged in the destruction of industrial target systems vital to the dwindling war potential of the enemy, from which they should not be diverted. The positive solution to this problem is the earliest possible victory over Germany, to which end we should exert our entire means.

e. This case does not at all parallel the Amiens mission because of the location of the concentration and extermination camps and the resulting difficulties encountered in attempting to carry out the proposed bombing.

000386

[REDACTED]

John W. Pehle

- 2 -

18 November 1944

Based on the above, as well as the most uncertain, if not dangerous effect such a bombing would have on the object to be attained, the War Department has felt that it should not, at least for the present, undertake these operations.

I know that you have been reluctant to press this activity on the War Department. We have been pressed strongly from other quarters, however, and have taken the best military opinion on its feasibility, and we believe the above conclusion is a sound one.

Sincerely,


JOHN J. McCLOY
Assistant Secretary of War

Inc.
Report of two eye-witnesses.

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
DECLASSIFIED
EOD DIR. 5200.9 (9/27/88)

Date- 10-12-65

Signature- CFS

[REDACTED]

000387

NOV 8 1944

Dear Mr. McGloy:

I send you herewith copies of two eye-witness descriptions of the notorious German concentration and extermination camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau in Upper Silesia, which have just been received from the Board's Special Representative in Bern, Switzerland, Roswell McClelland whom we have borrowed from the American Friends Service Committee. No report of Nazi atrocities received by the Board has quite caught the gruesome brutality of what is taking place in these camps of horror as have these sober, factual accounts of conditions in Auschwitz and Birkenau. I earnestly hope that you will read these reports.

The destruction of large numbers of people apparently is not a simple process. The Germans have been forced to devote considerable technological ingenuity and administrative know-how in order to carry out murder on a mass production basis, as the attached reports will testify. If the elaborate murder installations at Birkenau were destroyed, it seems clear that the Germans could not reconstruct them for some time.

Until now, despite pressure from many sources, I have been hesitant to urge the destruction of these camps by direct, military action. But I am convinced that the point has now been reached where such action is justifiable if it is deemed feasible by competent military authorities. I strongly recommend that the War Department give serious consideration to the possibility of destroying the execution chambers and crematories in Birkenau through direct bombing action. It may be observed that there would be other advantages of a military nature to such an attack. The Krupp and Siemens factories, where among other things cases for handgrenades are made, and a Buna plant, all within Auschwitz, would be destroyed. The destruction of the German barracks and guardhouses and the killing of German soldiers in the area would also be accomplished. The morale of underground groups might be considerably strengthened by such a dramatic exhibition of Allied air support and a number of the people confined in Auschwitz and Birkenau might be liberated in the confusion resulting from the bombing. That the effecting of a prison break by such methods is not without precedent is indicated by the description in the enclosed copy of a recent New York Times article of the liberation from Amiens prison of 100 French patriots by the RAF.

000388

Obviously, the War Refugee Board is in no position to determine whether the foregoing proposal is feasible from a military standpoint. Nevertheless in view of the urgency of the situation, we feel justified in making the suggestion. I would appreciate having the views of the War Department as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Honorable John J. McCloy,
Assistant Secretary of War.

Enclosures.

MM:Phd
MM:Phd 11/7/44

000389

NOV 8 1944

Dear Mr. McGloy:

I send you herewith copies of two eye-witness descriptions of the notorious German concentration and extermination camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau in Upper Silesia, which have just been received from the Board's Special Representative in Bern, Switzerland, Roswell McClelland whom we have borrowed from the American Friends Service Committee. No report of Nazi atrocities received by the Board has quite caught the gruesome brutality of what is taking place in these camps of horror as have these sober, factual accounts of conditions in Auschwitz and Birkenau. I earnestly hope that you will read these reports.

The destruction of large numbers of people apparently is not a simple process. The Germans have been forced to devote considerable technological ingenuity and administrative know-how in order to carry out murder on a mass production basis, as the attached reports will testify. If the elaborate murder installations at Birkenau were destroyed, it seems clear that the Germans could not reconstruct them for some time.

Until now, despite pressure from many sources, I have been hesitant to urge the destruction of these camps by direct, military action. But I am convinced that the point has now been reached where such action is justifiable if it is deemed feasible by competent military authorities. I strongly recommend that the War Department give serious consideration to the possibility of destroying the execution chambers and crematories in Birkenau through direct bombing action. It may be observed that there would be other advantages of a military nature to such an attack. The Krupp and Siemens factories, where among other things cases for handgrenades are made, and a Buna plant, all within Auschwitz, would be destroyed. The destruction of the German barracks and guard-houses and the killing of German soldiers in the area would also be accomplished. The morale of underground groups might be considerably strengthened by such a dramatic exhibition of Allied air support and a number of the people confined in Auschwitz and Birkenau might be liberated in the confusion resulting from the bombing. That the effecting of a prison break by such methods is not without precedent is indicated by the description in the enclosed copy of a recent New York Times article of the liberation from Amiens prison of 100 French patriots by the RAF.

000390

Obviously, the War Refugee Board is in no position to determine whether the foregoing proposal is feasible from a military standpoint. Nevertheless in view of the urgency of the situation, we feel justified in making the suggestion. I would appreciate having the views of the War Department as soon as possible.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Honorable John J. McGloy,
Assistant Secretary of War.

Enclosures.

MJM:PH:hd 11/7/44

000391

THE NEW YORK TIMES - Sunday, October 29, 1944
(Section I, Page 7, Columns 1-3)

PRISON BREAK DONE BY RAF AT AMIENS

Bomb Freeing of Doomed French, in Which Capt. P. O. Pickard Was
Killed, Revealed

by
Sydney Gruson

"London, Oct. 28 - Last Feb. 18 a picked group of nineteen pinpoint Mosquito bombers of the Royal Air Force, led by Group Capt. P. O. Pickard, broke down the walls of Amiens Prison, shattered the Germans' guard houses and enabled most of one hundred French patriots awaiting probable death to escape.

"The British Air Ministry released tonight the story of this unique exploit, one of the most difficult ever accomplished by the RAF, and announced that it was during this operation that Captain Pickard, the famous F for Freddie pilot of the film 'Target for Tonight' and ranked as the RAF's finest bomber pilot, was killed.

"At the briefing just before they took off Captain Pickard told his men: 'It's a death-or-glory job, boys.' It meant death for Captain Pickard and his observer and the crews of a second Mosquito and two fighter escorts that failed to return.

"Three squadrons of Mosquito bombers escorted by Spitfires were sent to do the job -- the only time an air force has been used to unlock a jail. The prison was a cruciform building in a courtyard surrounded by a wall twenty feet high and three feet thick. The walls had to be breached and the German quarters destroyed, the latter with as little explosive as possible to keep casualties to a minimum among the Frenchmen in the adjoining prison.

"A model of the prison was carefully studied by all the airmen. Taking off from a snow-covered airfield, the three squadrons got to Amiens dead on time and found a break in the clouds over the area.

"A New Zealand squadron went in first and breached the wall on its northeast and northwest perimeter. The second wave of six bombers, flown by Australians, divided and slit open the jail by smashing the guard's annexes at both ends. The third squadron held in reserve, never had to be used, so exactly and thoroughly did the New Zealanders and Australians do the job.

000392

"The Mosquitos used delayed-action bombs and skimmed the walls going in and out. A photographic plane made three runs over the prison and brought back film showing the prisoners running out through the breaches in the building and walls, Germans lying dead on the ground and patriots disappearing across the snow on a field outside the prison.

"Although some of the Frenchmen were killed by the machine-guns of the Nazi guards, the Air Ministry learned that the majority of them got away, joining up with members of the underground awaiting them in a near-by woods..

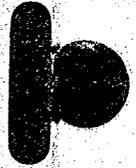
"After Amiens was liberated, the French told how Captain Pickard died. He had detached his plane from the main force and protecting fighters to direct and observe the assault. When one Mosquito was hit by German flak, he flew low, apparently to investigate the fate of the crew.

"Two Focke-Wulf 190's attacked his plane and shot it down a few miles from Amiens. He and his crewman were buried by the Germans in a cemetery alongside the prison.

"The feeling of the men in our squadron, and it was the same with the others, was that this was a job where it did not matter if we were all killed," said one of the Australian pilots.

"It was the sort of operation that gave you a feeling that, if you did nothing else in this war, you had done something."

000393



000394

FROM: MR. SHAEFFER'S OFFICE

TO: MR. PEHLE

Dick Paul called to say that the situation with Mank is unchanged; the reports are "being held for possible future use."

V. M. M.

000395

TREASURY DEPARTMENT

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE November 16, 1944

TO Mr. Pehle

FROM Virginia M. Mannon

Regarding: Yank Magazine and the German atrocity reports

On Monday, October 30, Sgt. Richard Paul telephoned me and asked if we dealt in German atrocity stories. He said Yank Magazine, for which he is a reporter, had given him an assignment to write a German atrocity story to show our soldiers the nature of their enemy. They wanted a story that could be stamped as "official," -- that is, one which came from an official source.

I suggested an interview with Mr. Pehle and, with Mr. Pehle's consent, arranged for Sgt. Paul to see Mr. Pehle on Thursday, November 2.

On November 1 there had arrived for the War Refugee Board from Mr. McClelland in Switzerland two reports from prisoners who had escaped from the notorious extermination camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau. Mr. Pehle agreed to let Sgt. Paul take a photostatic copy of the reports to New York where the head offices of Yank are located. This Sgt. Paul did and returned to tell us that Yank was planning to use excerpts of the reports probably in the December 1 issue which comes off the presses November 17 and that he now wished to have a brief interview with Mr. Pehle to run at the head of the story. This interview took place November 7 in Mr. Pehle's office. Sgt. Paul was told by Mr. Pehle that we should like to see the excerpts which Yank decided upon so that we might check the few deletions of names which we were making from the reports. Sgt. Paul told me he was instructing the New York office to mail the excerpts directly to me. He wrote up the interview and sent it over to Mr. Pehle to check. The excerpts from New York have never come.

Meantime, the War Refugee Board decided to issue the reports to the press. We decided that if Yank published the reports in the December 1 issue, we should have to get the reports out to the newspapers the same week. We, therefore, began to process the reports.

About November 10 Sgt. Paul telephoned me to say that he was very much discouraged about the progress of his story, that the New York editors had come to the conclusion that our reports were too Semitic and they had asked him to get a story from other sources. He asked me what other sources there were for such stories, aside from newspaper reports. I told him that I knew of no other sources than the Jewish organizations and suggested that inasmuch as the whole Nazi extermination program was more than 90 percent Jewish, it was most unlikely that he could get any

200396

stories that did not deal principally with Jews. Sgt. Paul also told me he had gone to the Pentagon Building to get clearance on the story for overseas publication and there he had been sent from one officer to another in quick order and had found a very negative attitude. The consensus in the Pentagon Building was that it was "a hell of a hot story" and would have to move through the highest military channels for approval. Sgt. Paul told me he was quite sure Yank would not publish the stories in the December 1 issue. And I told him that we had decided to release them November 26 to papers all over the country.

A few days ago Sgt. Paul called me again to tell me that New York again had asked him to try to get a less Jewish story and again I told him I was sorry but I could not help him. I told him that I was quite sure that Mr. Pehle had sent a copy of the reports to Mr. McCloy.

Today Sgt. Paul telephoned me again to say that the story was being held. He said he had written a long memorandum to New York giving all the arguments for using the reports and telling them that the War Refugee Board was releasing them to the press. In reply to his memorandum he was told to try to get other material. The Acting Managing Editor said that because of latent anti-Semitism in the Army, he ought, if possible, to get something with a less Semitic slant. He is going to New York again tomorrow.

Fehle Interview
YANK's Washington Bureau
7 November 1944

"Any civilian naturally hesitates to try ~~and~~ to tell a soldier the nature of the enemy which he is fighting. But I happen to be in a spot where I can see a side of the Germans that soldiers don't often get a chance to see."

John W. Fehle, Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, was explaining to us the nature of the documents which are printed below. A Treasury career ~~man~~ since 1934, Mr. Fehle was Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury and Director of Foreign Funds Control when the President appointed him Director of the War Refugee Board in ^{February} March of this year. The Board, consisting of the Secretaries of War, State, and Treasury, was set up by a Presidential Executive Order on 22 January 1944.

"The War Refugee Board was set up by President Roosevelt to act for this Government in rescuing and aiding victims of Nazi persecution. To obtain the facts on these refugees and to facilitate its work, the Board has representatives in key spots such as Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, and Turkey. These representatives have tested contacts throughout occupied Europe and keep the Board fully advised of the German treatment of persecuted persons.

"Into the War Refugee Board flow cables and reports from vantage spots throughout Europe telling of the Nazi program of persecution and extermination. These reports give facts which some of us want to believe and which Americans naturally refuse to believe until ^{have been} overwhelming evidence has been presented. We on the War Refugee Board were very sceptical.

100398

pehle
2222

We remembered too well the atrocity stories of the last war, many of which apparently were untrue.

"But Hitler's program of extermination has ^{now been} clearly ~~been~~ substantiated. Not only have the Nazis boasted of what they are doing, but in retreating the Germans have left behind tragic evidence of their bestial actions. Only recently Averell Harriman, American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, stated that the 'character of the German atrocities on the eastern front have not been and cannot be exaggerated.'

"Recently a War Refugee Board representative in Switzerland received from reliable and ~~well~~ corroborated sources these two eye witness accounts of events which occurred in a notorious extermination camp established by the Germans. The Board is confident that these reports present a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps."

"Any decent person who reads these stories inevitably asks the question, 'Why?'. We cannot hope completely to understand, ^{But we do know that} because through propa-
ganda and false teaching and lies the Germans have been scarred and brutalized. ^{And} But we do know that one of Hitler's purposes is to dominate Europe for generations to come, whether he wins or loses the military phases of this war, and that to accomplish this he has no hesitation to wipe out ^{millions} ~~hundreds of thousands~~ of innocent people. As seen out by these reports, ~~one of his purposes is to eliminate from countries such as Poland all those who might constitute leaders - intellectual and professional people and anyone qualified for leadership.~~

"The War Refugee Board is making the reports public in the firm conviction that they should be read and understood by all Americans." 20

100399

Pehle Interview
YANK's Washington Bureau
7 November 1944

"Any civilian naturally hesitates to try to tell a soldier the nature of the enemy which he is fighting. But I happen to be in a spot where I can see a side of the Germans that soldiers don't often get a chance to see."

John W. Pehle, Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, was explaining to us the nature of the documents which are printed below. A Treasury career man since 1934, Mr. Pehle was Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury and Director of Foreign Funds Control when the President appointed him Director of the War Refugee Board in February of this year. The Board, consisting of the Secretaries of War, State, and Treasury, was set up by a Presidential Executive Order on 22 January 1944.

"The War Refugee Board was set up by President Roosevelt to act for this Government in rescuing and aiding victims of Nazi persecution. To obtain the facts on these refugees and to facilitate its work, the Board has representatives in key spots such as Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, and Turkey. These representatives have tested contacts throughout occupied Europe and keep the Board fully advised of the German treatment of persecuted persons.

"Into the War Refugee Board flow cables and reports from vantage spots throughout Europe telling of the Nazi program of persecution and extermination. These reports give facts which none of us want to believe and which Americans naturally refuse to believe until overwhelming evidence has been presented. We on the War Refugee Board have been very sceptical.

000400

Pehle
22222

We remembered too well the atrocity stories of the last war, many of which apparently were untrue.

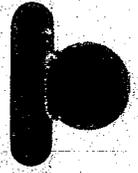
"But Hitler's program of extermination has now been clearly substantiated. Not only have the Nazis boasted of what they are doing, but in retreating the Germans have left behind tragic evidence of their bestial actions. Only recently Averell Harriman, American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, stated that the 'character of the German atrocities on the eastern front have not been and cannot be exaggerated.'

"Recently a War Refugee Board representative in Switzerland received from reliable and corroborated sources these two eye witness accounts of events which occurred in notorious extermination camps established by the Germans. The Board is confident that these reports present a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps.

"Any decent person who reads these stories inevitably asks the question, 'Why?'. We cannot hope completely to understand. But we do know that through propaganda and false teaching and lies the Germans have been coarsened and brutalized. And we do know that one of Hitler's purposes is to dominate Europe for generations to come, whether he wins or loses the military phases of this war, and that to accomplish this he has no hesitation to wipe out millions of innocent people.

"The War Refugee Board is making the reports public in the firm conviction that they should be read and understood by all Americans." 30

000401



000402



THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF WAR
WASHINGTON

23 November 1944

File
JAT

Mr. John Fehle
War Refugee Board
Executive Office of the President
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Fehle:

Inspection of the attached release "German Extermination Camps -- Auschwitz and Birkenau" indicates that there is no military security involved and therefore, there is no reason why the War Department should object to its release.

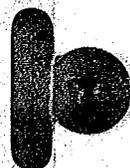
Sincerely,



HARRISON A. GERHARDT
Colonel, General Staff Corps
Executive to Ass't Secretary of War

Enc.

000403



000404

November 22, 1944

Memorandum to Files:

From: Virginia M. Mannon *JMM*

Regarding: Mr. Elmer Davis' questioning of War Refugee Board's release of German atrocity stories.

At Mr. Davis' request Mr. Pehle went to see Mr. Davis in his office at the Social Security Building at 2:30 p. m. today. Accompanying Mr. Pehle were Mr. Friedman and Mrs. Mannon.

Mr. Davis had with him the following members of his staff: Mr. Dalton, Mr. Dood, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Herrick, Admiral McCullough and Captain Drake.

Over the telephone Mr. Davis had raised some objections to the War Refugee Board's issuing a press release on the German atrocity stories which had been mailed to the press Saturday, November 18 for release Sunday, November 26. He had asked Mr. Pehle to come to his office to discuss the subject further.

Background: A summary of the reports had been sent to the Board in July by Roswell McClelland, Board representative in Switzerland. The full reports had been sent to the Board by Mr. McClelland in October via diplomatic pouch. The Board decided to release the reports to the press and did so without clearing them with OWI. Failure to clear with OWI was unintentional; the Board was unaware that in 1942 Mr. Davis had issued an order saying that news releases "relating significantly to the war effort" must be cleared and issued by OWI. Mr. Pinkus of the Foreign News Desk of OWI had been informed on Thursday, November 16, that the Board was preparing the reports for release and at that time arranged to send for 12 copies to go by courier to New York on Saturday, November 18. The first 12 copies duplicated were given to Mr. Pinkus, about 2 p. m. November 18. Before releasing the reports members of Mr. Pehle's staff had together gone over them page by page, deleting the names of people who might still be alive and might possibly be harmed by publicity. They had also carefully considered the advisability of deleting references to Jews inflicting cruelty upon other Jews but had decided not to edit the original text.

Discussion in Mr. Davis' Office: Mr. Davis led off by asking Mr. Pehle the source of the reports. Mr. Pehle read excerpts of Mr. McClelland's covering letter vouching for their authenticity. Mr. Davis' staff unanimously viewed with alarm the War Refugee Board's release of the reports. Their reasons were various. Mr. Davis called on each of his staff members to express himself. They thought there would be a bad reaction overseas. They pointed out that they would have to give the stories some

100405

overseas play, since the press associations here would undoubtedly carry them. They brought up the question of the stories being concerned with a multiplicity of "mean little things," the idea of seeming to condemn war criminals by issuing a release with a heading "Executive Office of the President," the Army and Navy's decision not to issue Jap atrocity stories because of reprisals on American prisoners, the question of whether the reports had not been planted by anti-Semites (because of the reference to Jews being cruel to Jews), the inadvisability of timing such a release one week after the opening of the Sixth War Loan, etc. Mr. Dood asked Mr. Pehle what his purpose was in releasing the reports. Then Mr. Davis read a news item from Reuters off the ticker which, apparently, was a piece of German propaganda saying that American Jewish officers were treating German prisoners of war in much the manner Jewish refugees were treated by the Germans. They all expressed fear of the reaction to the reports, but when asked by Mr. Pehle if they expected a bad press reaction, said no. In fact, Mr. Dood admitted he expected favorable editorials and they would use them overseas.

The whole meeting was pretty futile, since the release was a fait accompli. Mr. Davis said Army, State and OSS had refused to clear the reports because they were already released. Mr. Davis asked what distribution had been made and said another order had been flouted when he was told that the stories were sent to editors all over the country. He said the releases should have gone only to Washington bureaus. The enormity of the crimes which the WRB had perpetrated against the OWI was so great that Mr. Davis admitted there was practically nothing to be done at this late date. He suggested the possibility of the Board's issuing an additional statement to all recipients of the release pointing out that the reports came via an agent of the WRB who had taken precautions to ensure their authenticity. Mr. Pehle said he would consider it.

Mr. Pehle demolished their objections one by one, explaining that he had talked with Congressman Celler, representatives of Jewish organizations in New York and Secretary Morgenthau, that none of them had felt any fears such as those voiced by OWI. He reminded them that OWI had widely publicized the President's statement of March 24, the statements of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the statement by Archbishop Spellman which had the same purpose as these reports. He also pointed out that there was considerable doubt in many people's minds as to whether anything actually was going to be done about war criminals. When asked if this were the WRB's first atrocity report, Mr. Pehle said yes, and it would doubtless be the last.

At least three times Mr. Davis said the head of his Polish desk had read the reports carefully and had stated that the events in the reports might well have happened.

100406

OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION
WASHINGTON



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

November 23, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle, Executive Director
War Refugee Board

Dear Mr. Pehle:

I should state for the record what I am sure you understood at the close of our conference yesterday afternoon—that the story from the Auschwitz and Birkenau concentration camps has not been cleared by this Office; nor by the State Department, War Department, or any other interested agency. It was our feeling and theirs that when it had already received such wide distribution, it would be inexpedient to attempt to recall it for amendment which, in the nature of things, could not take the form of questioning of specific details, but must deal with the tone and general approach.

However, I believe that the supplementary statement you propose to issue should be given not merely to correspondents in Washington, but sent to every paper which received the original release; inasmuch as the wire services might not carry it all over the country. This story should, as we said yesterday, include your statement that you are satisfied with the reliability of the channels through which it reached you—naming both your representative in Switzerland and the Czech diplomat from whom he received the story; but should add that its validity rests in the end on the credibility of the men who originally wrote it—with, of course, such corroboration as may be drawn from the fact that we know that incidents similar to those herein described have taken place.

This precaution appears the more necessary since my attention has been called (subsequent to yesterday's meeting) to the fact that the two Slovak refugees quoted had been block recorders at Birkenau; which suggests the possibility that their escape might have been arranged or facilitated by the German authorities. Such a suspicion may be quite unjust; but the fact remains that several readers in this office felt that the story would create contempt for the inmates (whether Jewish or Aryan) of concentration camps; and it would not be beyond the German Propaganda Ministry to try to create that impression, even at the cost of including materials about atrocities committed by Germans. They know that their own record is well known here, and might feel that the best they can do is to try to smear other nationalities on the same count.

I note with pleasure your assurance that hereafter all materials proposed for release by your Board will be cleared through OWI, as required by Paragraphs 5 and 7 of Executive Order 9182, and by our Regulation No. 1 issued in pursuance to Paragraph 5 of that Order. Distribution direct to

000407

Mr. Pehle

- 2 -

11/23/44

newspapers is also a violation of our Regulations No. 3 and No. 5, which prohibit such distribution except on specific request, or when selective lists have been established in response to such requests. Such lists are valid only for the department or agency which compiles them; they may not be promiscuously used. I shall rely on you to see that your staff complies with these rulings hereafter.

Cordially,

Elmer Davis

Elmer Davis
Director

000408

November 27, 1944

Memorandum to Files

From: Virginia M. Mannon

Mr. Pehle, Mr. Friedman and I discussed Mr. Elmer Davis' letter of November 23 (attached) in Mr. Pehle's office. We are positive that Mr. Davis is incorrect in referring to "the supplementary statement you (the War Refugee Board) propose to issue." Mr. Davis, himself, proposed that the Board issue such a statement at the conference in his office November 22 which Messrs. Pehle and Friedman and Mrs. Mannon attended. At that time Mr. Pehle said he would consider issuing such a statement. (See Mrs. Mannon's memorandum covering this conference.)

Mr. Pehle, Mr. Friedman and Mrs. Mannon today decided not to reply to Mr. Davis' letter.

000409

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Not sent

Dear Mr. Davis:

Thank you for your letter of November 23, 1944 concerning the story of the Auschwitz and Birkenau extermination camps.

At our recent meeting I indicated that we would consider your suggestion that a supplementary statement be issued indicating the names and connections of the individuals through whom the reports were made available to us. After careful consideration I have concluded that the explanatory statement which we attached to all copies of the reports adequately describes their source and our view as to their credibility.

Enclosed herewith is a copy of a letter from the War Department which indicates that it has no objection to the publication of these reports.

Very truly yours,

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director.

Mr. Elmer Davis,
Director,
Office of War Information,
Washington, D. C.

Enclosure

100410

Dear Mr. Davis:

Thank you for your letter of November 23, 1944 concerning the story of the Auschwitz and Birkenau extermination camps.

At our recent meeting I indicated that we would consider your suggestion that a supplementary statement be issued indicating the names and connections of the individuals through whom the reports were made available to us. After careful consideration I have concluded that the explanatory statement which we attached to all copies of the reports adequately describes their source and our view as to their credibility.

Enclosed herewith is a copy of a letter from the War Department which indicates that it has no objection to the publication of these reports.

Very truly yours,

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director.

Mr. Elmer Davis,
Director,
Office of War Information,
Washington, D. C.

Enclosure

JW JBFriedman:lh 11-25-44

000411



000412

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1944.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

WAR REFUGEE BOARD

WASHINGTON, D. C.

GERMAN EXTERMINATION CAMPS — AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU

It is a fact beyond denial that the Germans have deliberately and systematically murdered millions of innocent civilians — Jews and Christians alike — all over Europe. This campaign of terror and brutality, which is unprecedented in all history and which even now continues unabated, is part of the German plan to subjugate the free peoples of the world.

So revolting and diabolical are the German atrocities that the minds of civilized people find it difficult to believe that they have actually taken place. But the governments of the United States and of other countries have evidence which clearly substantiates the facts.

The War Refugee Board is engaged in a desperate effort to save as many as possible of Hitler's intended victims. To facilitate its work the Board has representatives in key spots in Europe. These representatives have tested contacts throughout Europe and keep the Board fully advised concerning the German campaign of extermination and torture.

Recently the Board received from a representative close to the scene two eye-witness accounts of events which occurred in notorious extermination camps established by the Germans. The first report is based upon the experiences of two young Slovakian Jews who escaped in April, 1944 after spending two years in the Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau in southwestern Poland. The second report is made by a non-Jewish Polish major, the only survivor of one group imprisoned at Auschwitz.

The two reports were prepared independently and are reproduced exactly in the form they were received by the War Refugee Board, except for a few deletions necessary for the protection of persons who may still be alive. The figures concerning the size of the Jewish convoys and the numbers of men and women admitted to the two camps cannot be taken as mathematically exact; and, in fact, are declared by the authors to be no more than reliable approximations. They are accepted as such by the Board.

The Board has every reason to believe that these reports present a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps. It is making the reports public in the firm conviction that they should be read and understood by all Americans.

November, 1944

000413

No. 1

THE EXTERMINATION CAMPS OF AUSCHWITZ (Oswiecim)

and BIRKENAU

in Upper Silesia.

000414

FOREWORD

Two young Slovak Jews - whose names will not be disclosed for the time being in the interest of their own safety - have been fortunate enough to escape after spending two years in the concentration camps of BIRKENAU, AUSCHWITZ and LUBLIN-MAJDANEK, where they had been deported in 1942 from SLOVAKIA.

One of them was sent on April 13, 1942 from the assembly camp of SERED directly to AUSCHWITZ and then to BIRKENAU, while the other was sent from the camp of NOVAKY to LUBLIN on June 14, 1942 and, after a short stay there, transferred to AUSCHWITZ and, later, to BIRKENAU.

The following report does not contain everything these two men experienced during their captivity, but only what one or both together underwent, heard, or experienced at first hand. No individual impressions or judgments are recorded and nothing passed on from hearsay.

The report starts with the story of the young Jew who was removed from SERED. The account of his experiences in BIRKENAU begins at the time the second Jew arrived there and is, therefore, based on the statements of both. Then follows the individual narrative of the second Jew who was sent from NOVAKY to LUBLIN and from there to AUSCHWITZ.

The declarations tally with all the trustworthy yet fragmentary reports hitherto received, and the dates given with regard to transports to various camps agree with the official records. These statements can, therefore, be considered as entirely credible.

000415

I. AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU

On the 13th April, 1942 our group, consisting of 1,000 men, was loaded into railroad cars at the assembly camp of SERED. The doors were shut so that nothing would reveal the direction of the journey, and when they were opened after a long while we realized that we had crossed the Slovak frontier and were in ZWARDON. The train had until then been guarded by Hlinka men, but was now taken over by SS guards. After a few of the cars had been uncoupled from our convoy, we continued on our way arriving at night at AUSCHWITZ, where we stopped on a sidetrack. The reason the other cars were left behind was apparently the lack of room at AUSCHWITZ. They joined us, however, a few days later. Upon arrival we were placed in rows of five and counted. There were 643 of us. After a walk of about 20 minutes with our heavy packs (we had left Slovakia well equipped), we reached the concentration camp of AUSCHWITZ.

We were at once led into a huge barrack where on the one side we had to deposit all our luggage and on the other side completely undress, leaving our clothes and valuables behind. Naked, we then proceeded to an adjoining barrack where our heads and bodies were shaved and disinfected with lysol. At the exit every man was given a number which began with 28,600 in consecutive order. With this number in hand we were then herded to a third barrack where so-called registration took place. This consisted of tattooing the numbers we had received in the second barrack on the left side of our chests. The extreme brutality with which this was effected made many of us faint. The particulars of our identity were also recorded. Then we were led in groups of a hundred into a cellar, and later to a barrack where we were issued striped prisoners' clothes and wooden clogs. This lasted until 10 a.m. In the afternoon our prisoners' outfits were taken away from us again and replaced by the ragged and dirty remains of Russian uniforms. Thus equipped we were marched off to BIRKENAU.

AUSCHWITZ is a concentration camp for political prisoners under so-called "protective custody." At the time of my arrival, that is in April of 1942, there were about 15,000 prisoners in the camp, the majority of whom were Poles, Germans, and civilian Russians under protective custody. A small number of prisoners came under the categories of criminals and "work-shirkers."

AUSCHWITZ camp headquarters controls at the same time the work-camp of BIRKENAU as well as the farm labor camp of HARMENSE. All the prisoners arrive first at AUSCHWITZ where they are provided with prisoners' immatriculation numbers and then are either kept there, sent to BIRKENAU or, in very small numbers, to HARMENSE. The prisoners receive consecutive numbers upon arrival. Every number is only used once so that the last number

000416

always corresponds to the number of prisoners actually in the camp. At the time of our escape, that is to say at the beginning of April, 1944, the number had risen up to 180,000. At the outset the numbers were tattooed on the left breast, but later, due to their becoming blurred, on the left forearm.

All prisoners, irrespective of category or nationality, are treated the same. However, to facilitate identification, they are distinguished by various coloured triangles sewed on the clothing on the left breast under the immatriculation number. The first letter indicates the nationality of the prisoner. This letter (for instance "P" for Poles) appears in the middle of the triangle. The coloured triangles have the following meaning:

red triangle	political prisoners under protective custody
green "	professional criminals
black "	"dodgers" (labor slackers), "anti-socials" (mostly Russians)
pink "	homosexuals
violet "	members of the religious sect of "Bibelforscher"

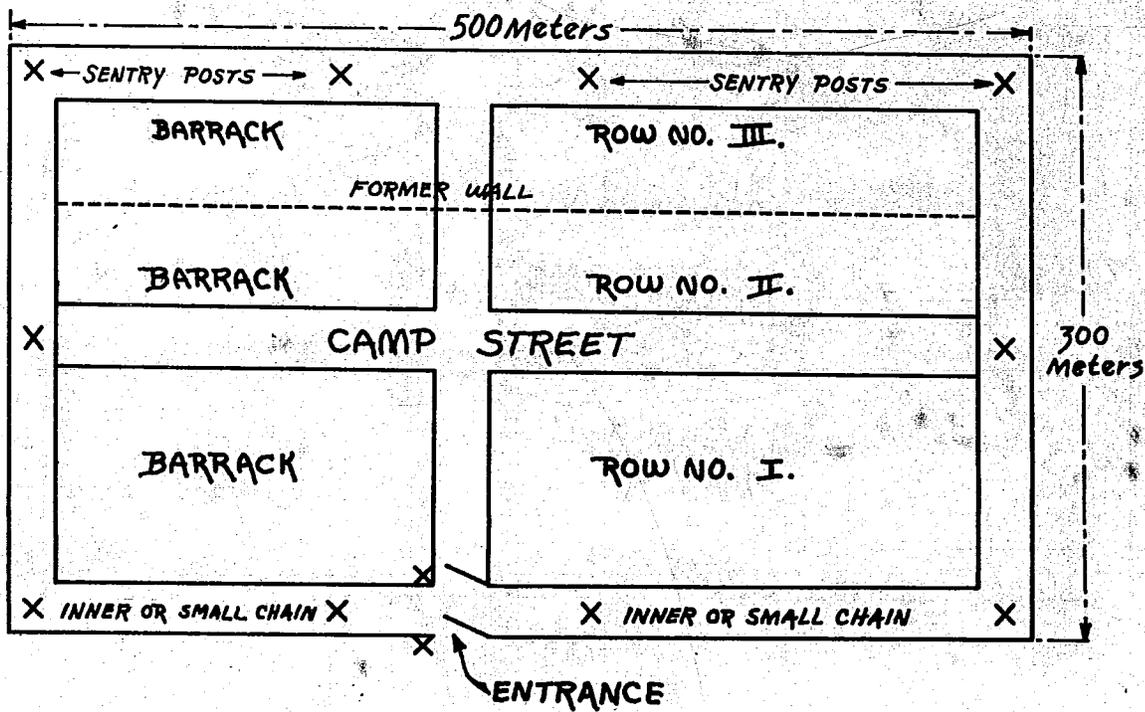
The Jewish prisoners differ from the Aryan prisoners in that their triangle (which in the majority of cases is red) is turned into a David's star by adding yellow points.

Within the enclosure of the camp of AUSCHWITZ there are several factories: a war production plant, Deutscher Aufrüstungswerk (DAW), a factory belonging to the KTHPP works and one to the SIEMENS concern. Outside the boundary of the camp is a tremendous plant covering several square kilometers named "BUNA." The prisoners work in all the aforementioned factories.

The prisoners' actual living quarters, if such a term may at all be used, inside the camp proper cover an area of approximately 500 by 300 meters surrounded by a double row of concrete posts about 3 meters high which are connected (both inside and outside) with one another by a dense netting of high-tension wires fixed into the posts by insulators. Between these two rows of posts, at intervals of 150 meters, there are 5 meters high watchtowers, equipped with machine guns and searchlights. In front of the inner high-tension circle there is further an ordinary wire fence. Merely touching this fence is answered by a stream of bullets from the watchtowers. This system is called "the small or inner chain of sentry posts." The camp itself is composed of three rows of houses. Between the first and second

000417

ROUGH GROUND PLAN OF AUSCHWITZ



- 3 -

000418

row is the camp street, and between the second and third there used to be a wall. The Jewish girls deported from Slovakia in March and April, 1942, over 7,000 of them, lived in the houses separated by this wall up to the middle of August, 1942. After these girls had been removed to BIRKENAU, the wall between the second and third row of houses was removed. The camp entry road cuts across the row of houses, while over the entrance gate, which is of course always heavily guarded, stands the ironic inscription: "Work brings freedom."

At a radius of some 2,000 meters the whole camp is encircled by a second line called "the big or outer chain of sentry posts" also with watchtowers every 150 meters. Between the inner and outer chain of sentry posts are the factories and other workshops. The towers of the inner chain are only manned at night when the high-tension current is switched into the double row of wires. During daytime the garrison of the inner chain of sentry posts is withdrawn, and the men take up duty in the outer chain. Escape through these sentry posts - and many attempts have been made - is practically impossible. Getting through the inner circle of posts at night is completely impossible, and the towers of the outer chain are so close to one another (one every 150 meters, i.e. giving each tower a sector with a 75-meter radius to watch) that approaching unnoticed is out of the question. The guards shoot without warning. The garrison of the outer chain is withdrawn at twilight, but only after it has been ascertained that all the prisoners are within the inner circle. If the roll call reveals that a prisoner is missing, sirens immediately sound the alarm.

The men in the outer chain remain in their towers on the lookout, the inner chain is manned, and a systematic search is begun by hundreds of SS guards and bloodhounds. The siren brings the whole surrounding countryside to a state of alarm, so that if by miracle the escapee has been successful in getting through the outer chain he is nearly certain to be caught by one of the numerous German police and SS patrols. The escapee is furthermore handicapped by his clean-shaven head, his striped prisoner's outfit or red patches sewn on his clothing, and the passiveness of the thoroughly intimidated inhabitants. The mere fact of neglecting to give information on the whereabouts of a prisoner, not to speak of extending help, is punished by death. Provided that the prisoner has not been caught sooner, the garrison of the outer chain of sentry posts remains on the watch for three days and nights after which delay it is presumed that the escapee has succeeded in breaking through the double circle. The following night the outer guard is withdrawn. If the escapee is caught alive, he is hanged in the presence of the whole camp; but if he is found dead, his body - wherever it may have been located - is

000420

brought back to camp (it is easy to identify the corpse by means of the tattooed number) and seated at the entrance gate, a small notice clasped in his hands, reading: "Here I am." During our two years' imprisonment many attempts to escape were made by prisoners but, with the exception of two or three, all were brought back dead or alive. It is not known whether the two or three escapees who were not caught actually managed to get away. It can, however, be asserted that among the Jews who were deported from SLOVAKIA to AUSCHWITZ or BIRKENAU we are the only two who were lucky enough to save ourselves.

As stated previously, we were transferred from AUSCHWITZ to BIRKENAU on the day of our arrival.

Actually there is no such district as BIRKENAU. Even the word BIRKENAU is new in that it has been "adopted" from the nearby Birch Forest (BREZINSKY). The district now called BIRKENAU was, and is still, called "RAJSKA" by the local population. The existing camp center of BIRKENAU lies 4 kilometers distant from AUSCHWITZ. The outer control zones of both BIRKENAU and AUSCHWITZ meet and are merely separated by a railway track. We never found anything out about NEW-BERUN, probably about 30 to 40 kilometers away which, oddly enough, we had to indicate as postal district for BIRKENAU.

At the time of our arrival in BIRKENAU we found there only one huge kitchen for 15,000 people and three stone buildings, two of which were completed and one under construction. The buildings were surrounded by an ordinary barbed wire fence. The prisoners were housed in these buildings and in others later constructed. All are built according to a standard model. Each house is about 30 meters long and 8 to 10 meters wide. Whereas the height of the walls hardly exceeds 2 meters, the roof is disproportionately high - about 5 meters - so that the house gives the impression of a stable surmounted by a large hayloft. There is no inner ceiling, so that the room reaches a height of 7 meters in the center; in other words the pointed roofing rests directly on the four walls. The room is divided in two by a partition running its whole length down the middle and fitted with an opening to enable communication between the two parts thus separated. Along both side walls, as well as along the middle partition, two parallel floors, some 80 centimeters apart, have been built which are in turn divided into small cells by vertical partitions. Thus there are three floors: the ground floor and the two built in the side walls. Normally three people live in each cubicle. As can be judged from the dimensions indicated, these cubicles are too narrow for a man to lie stretched out and not high enough for him to sit upright.

000421

There is no question of having enough space to stand upright. In this way some 400 to 500 people are accommodated in one house or "block," as they are also called.

The present camp of BIRKENAU covers an area of some 1,600 by 500 meters which is surrounded - similar to AUSCHWITZ - by a so-called small or inner chain of sentry posts. Work is now proceeding on a still larger compound which is to be added later on to the already existing camp. The purpose of this extensive planning is not known to us.

Within a radius of 2 kilometers, as with AUSCHWITZ, BIRKENAU is also surrounded by an outer chain of sentry posts with the same type of watch system as at AUSCHWITZ.

The buildings we found on our arrival had been erected by 12,000 Russian prisoners of war brought there in December, 1941. In severe winter weather they had to work under inhuman conditions as a result of which most of them, with the exception of a small number employed in the kitchen, died of exposure. They were numbered from 1 to 12,000 in a series which had no connection with the ordinary camp numbering system previously described. Whenever fresh convoys of Russian prisoners arrived, they were not issued the current AUSCHWITZ prisoner numbers, but received those of deceased Russians in the 1 to 12,000 series. It is, therefore, difficult to estimate how many prisoners of this category passed through the camp. Apparently Russians were transferred to AUSCHWITZ or BIRKENAU on disciplinary grounds from regular prisoner-of-war camps. We found what remained of the Russians in a terrible state of destitution and neglect living in the unfinished building without the slightest protection against cold or rain. They died "en masse." Hundreds and thousands of their bodies were buried superficially, spreading a stench of pestilence. Later we had to exhume and burn the corpses.

A week before our arrival in AUSCHWITZ the first group of Jews reached the camp: (the women were dealt with separately and received numbers parallel to those of the men; the Slovak women received serial numbers from 1 to 8,000) 1,320 naturalized French Jews from Paris. They were numbered from 27,500 onwards. It is clear, therefore, that between this French group and our convoy no other men arrived in AUSCHWITZ, since we have already pointed out that our numbers started with 28,600. We found the 700 French Jews who were still alive in terrible condition, the missing 600 having died within a week after their arrival.

The following categories were housed in the three completed buildings:

100422

I. The so-called "prominencia": professional criminals and older Polish political prisoners who were in charge of the administration of the camp.

II. The remainder of the French Jews, namely some 700.

III. The 643 original Slovak Jews to whom were added a few days later those who had been left at ZWARDON.

IV. Those Russians who were still alive and housed in the unfinished building as well as in the open air and whose numbers diminished so rapidly that as a group they are scarcely worth mentioning.

Together with the remaining Russian prisoners the Slovak Jews worked at the construction of buildings, whereas the French Jews had to do spade work. After three days I was ordered, together with 200 other Slovak Jews, to work in the German armament factories at AUSCHWITZ, but we continued to be housed in BIRKENAU. We left early in the morning returning at night and worked in the carpentry shop as well as on road construction. Our food consisted of one litre of turnip soup at midday and 300 grams of bad bread in the evening. Working conditions were inconceivably hard, so that the majority of us, weakened by starvation and the inedible food, could not stand it. The mortality was so high that every day our group of 200 had 30 to 35 dead. Many were simply beaten to death by the overseers - the "Capos" - during work, without the slightest provocation. The gaps in our ranks caused by these deaths were replaced daily by prisoners from BIRKENAU. Our return at night was extremely painful and dangerous, as we had to drag along over a distance of 5 kilometers our tools, fire wood, heavy caldrons, and the bodies of those who had died or had been killed during the working day. With these heavy loads we were forced to maintain a brisk pace, and anyone incurring the displeasure of one of the "Capos" was cruelly knocked down, if not beaten to death. Until the arrival of the second group of Slovak men some 14 days later, our original number had dwindled to 150. At night we were counted, the bodies of the dead were piled up on flat, narrow-gauge cars or in a truck and brought to the Birch Forest (BREZINSKY) where they were burned in a trench several meters deep and about 15 meters long. Every day on our way to work we met a working party of 300 Jewish girls from Slovakia who were employed on ground work in the vicinity. They were dressed in old Russian uniform rags and wore wooden clogs. Their heads were shaven and, unfortunately, we could not speak to them.

Until the middle of May, 1942, a total of four convoys of male Jews from Slovakia arrived at BIRKENAU and all received similar treatment to ours.

From the first and second transports 120 men were chosen (including myself) and placed at the disposal of the administration of the camp of AUSCHWITZ, which was in need of doctors, dentists, intellectuals, and clerks. This group consisted of 90 Slovak and 30 French Jews. As I had in the meantime managed to work my way up to a good position in BIRKENAU - being in command of a group of 50 men, which had brought me considerable advantage - I at first felt reluctant to leave for AUSCHWITZ. However, I was finally persuaded to go and left. After eight days, 18 doctors and attendants as well as three further persons were selected from this group of 120 intellectuals. The doctors were used in the "sick building" or "hospital" at AUSCHWITZ, while we three were sent back to BIRKENAU. My two comrades, Ladislav Braun from Trnava and Gross from Vrbové (?), both of whom have since died, were sent to the Slovak block while I was ordered to the French section where we were employed at collecting "personal data" and at "nursing the sick." The remaining 99 persons were sent to work in the gravel pit where they all died within a short time.

Shortly thereafter a so-called "sick-building" (Krankenbau) was set up. It was destined to become the much dreaded "Block 7" where at first I was chief attendant and later administrator. The chief of this "infirmary" was a Pole. Actually this building was nothing else than an assembly centre for death candidates. All prisoners incapable of working were sent there. There was no question of any medical attention or care. We had some 150 dead daily and their bodies were sent for cremation to AUSCHWITZ.

At the same time the so-called "selections" were introduced. Twice weekly, Mondays and Thursdays, the camp doctor indicated the number of prisoners who were to be gassed and then burned. These "selectees" were loaded into trucks and brought to the Birch Forest. Those still alive upon arrival were gassed in a big barrack erected near the trench used for burning the bodies. The weekly "draft" in dead from "Block 7" was about 2,000, of whom 1,200 died of "natural death" and about 800 through "selection." For those who had not been "selected" a death certificate was issued and sent to the central administration at ORANENBURG, whereas for the "selectees" a special register was kept with the indication "S.B." ("Sonderbehandelt" - special treatment). Until January 15, 1943, up to which time I was administrator of "Block 7" and therefore in a position to directly observe happenings, some 50,000 prisoners died of "natural death" or by "selection."

000424

As previously described, the prisoners were numbered consecutively so that we are able to reconstruct fairly clearly their order of succession and the fate which befell each separate convoy on arrival.

The first male Jewish transport reaching AUSCHWITZ for BIRKENAU was composed, as mentioned, of 1,320 naturalized French Jews bearing approximately the following numbers:

- 27,400 - 28,600
28,600 - 29,600 In April, 1942 the first convoy of Slovak Jews (our convoy).
29,600 - 29,700 100 men (Aryans) from various concentration camps.
29,700 - 32,700 3 complete convoys of Slovak Jews.
32,700 - 33,100 400 professional criminals (Aryans) from Warsaw prisons.
33,100 - 35,000 1,900 Jews from Cracow.
35,000 - 36,000 1,000 Poles (Aryans) - political prisoners.
36,000 - 37,300 In May, 1942 - 1,300 Slovak Jews from LUBLIN-MAJIANEK.
37,300 - 37,900 600 Poles (Aryans) from RADOM, amongst them a few Jews.
37,900 - 38,000 100 Poles from the concentration camp of DACHAU.
38,000 - 38,400 400 French naturalized Jews who arrived with their families.

This whole convoy consisted of about 1,600 individuals of whom approximately 200 girls and 400 men were admitted to the camp, while the remaining 1,000 persons (women, old people, children as well as men) were sent without further procedure from the railroad siding directly to the Birch Forest, and there gassed and burned. From this moment on all Jewish convoys were dealt with in the same manner. Approximately 10 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women were allotted to the camps and the remaining members were immediately gassed. This process of extermination had already been applied earlier to the Polish Jews. During long months, without interruption, trucks brought thousands of Jews from the various "ghettos" direct to the pit in the "Birkenwald."

000425

- 38,400 - 39,200 800 naturalized French Jews, the remainder of the convoy was - as previously described - gassed.
- 39,200 - 40,000 800 Poles (Aryans), political prisoners.
- 40,000 - 40,150 150 Slovak Jews with their families.
- Outside of a group of 50 girls sent to the women's camp, all other members were gassed in the Birch Forest. Among the 150 men who came to camp there were a certain Zucker (Christian name unknown) and Sonnenschein, Viliam, both from Eastern Slovakia.
- 40,150 - 43,800 Approximately 4,000 French naturalized Jews, almost all intellectuals; 1,000 women were directed to the women's camp, while the balance of about 3,000 persons were gassed in the usual manner.
- 43,800 - 44,200 400 Slovak Jews from LUBLIN, including Matej Klein and No. 43820, Melloch Laufer from Eastern Slovakia. This convoy arrived on June 30, 1942.
- 44,200 - 45,000 200 Slovak Jews. The convoy consisted of 1,000 persons. A number of women were sent to the women's camp, the rest gassed in the Birch Wood. Among the prisoners sent to camp were: Jozef Zelmanovic, Snina - Adolf Kahan, Bratislava - Walter Reichmann, Sucany - Esther Kahan, Bratislava.
- 45,000 - 47,000 2,000 Frenchmen (Aryans), communists and other political prisoners, among whom were the brother of Thorez and the young brother of Léon Blum. The latter was atrociously tortured, then gassed and burned.
- 47,000 - 47,500 500 Jews from Holland, in the majority German emigrants. The rest of the convoy, about 2,500 persons, gassed.
- 47,500 - 47,800 About 300 so-called Russiens under protective custody.

- 48,300 - 48,620 320 Jews from Slovakia. About 70 girls were transferred to the women's camp, the remainder, some 650 people, gassed in the Birch Wood. This convoy included about 80 people who had been handed over by the Hungarian police to the camp of SERED. Others from this convoy were:
Dr. Zoltan Mandel (since deceased) - Holz (Christian name unknown), butcher from Plestany, Miklos Engel, Zilina - Chaim Katz, Snina, (his wife and 6 children were gassed).
- 49,000 - 64,800 15,000 naturalized French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. This figure certainly represents less than 10 percent of the total convoy. This was between July 1 and September 15, 1942. Large family convoys arrived from various European countries and were at once directed to the Birch Wood. The special squad ("Sonderkommando") employed for gassing and burning worked in day and night shifts. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were gassed during this period.
- 64,800 - 65,000 200 Slovak Jews. Out of this transport about 100 women were admitted to the camp, the rest of them gassed and burned. Among the newly arrived were: Ludwig Katz, Zilina - Avri Burger, Bratislava - Poprad (wife dead) - Mikulas Steiner, Povazska Bystrica - Juraj Fried, Trencin - Buchwald - Josef Rosenwasser, Eastern Slovakia - Julius Neuman, Bardejov - Sandor Wertheimer, Vrbove - Misi Wertheimer, Vrbove - Bela Blau, Zilina.
- 65,000 - 68,000 Naturalized French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. Not more than 1,000 women were "selected" and sent to the camp. The others, at the lowest estimate 30,000, were gassed.
- 71,000 - 80,000 Naturalized French, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. The prisoners brought to the camp hardly represent 10 percent of the total transport. A conservative estimate would be that approximately 65,000 to 70,000 persons were gassed.

On December 17, 1942, the 200 young Slovak Jews, the so-called "special squad" employed in gassing and burning the condemned, were in turn executed at BIRKENAU. They were executed for having planned to mutiny and escape. A Jew betrayed their preparations. This frightful job had to be taken over by a group of 200 Polish Jews who had just arrived at camp from MAKOW.

The men belonging to the "special squad" lived separately. On account of the dreadful smell spread by them, people had but little contact with them. Besides they were always filthy, destitute, half wild and extraordinarily brutal and ruthless. It was not uncommon to see one of them kill another. This was considered by the others a sensation, a change. One simply recorded that number so-and-so had died.

Once I was an eye-witness when a young Polish Jew named Jossel demonstrated "scientific" murder on a Jew in the presence of an SS guard. He used no weapon, merely his bare hands, to kill his victim.

No. 80,000 marks the beginning of the systematic extermination of the Polish ghettos.

80,000 - 85,000 Approximately 5,000 Jews from various ghettos in MLJAWA - MAKOW - ZICHENOW - LOMZA - GRODNO - BIALOSTOK.

For fully 30 days truck-convoys arrived without interruption. Only 5,000 persons were sent to the concentration camp; all the others were gassed at once. The "special squad" worked in two shifts, 24 hours daily and was scarcely able to cope with the gassing and burning. Without exaggerating it may be said that out of these convoys some 80,000 to 90,000 received "special treatment." These transports also brought in a considerable amount of money, valuables, and precious stones.

85,000 - 92,000 6,000 Jews from GRODNO, BIALOSTOK and CRACOW as well as 1,000 Aryan Poles. The majority of the Jewish convoys were directly gassed and daily about 4,000 Jews were driven into the gas chambers.

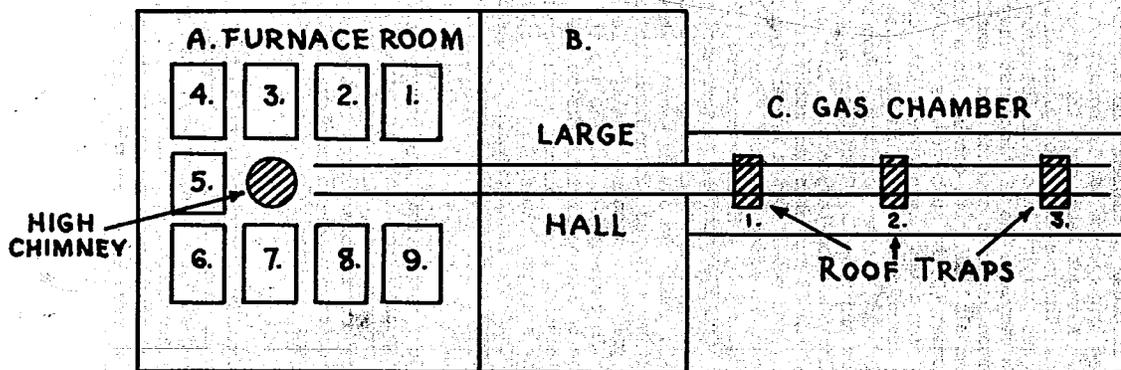
During mid-January, 1943 three convoys of 2,000 persons each from THERESIENSTADT arrived. They bore the designations "CU" "CR" and "R." (The meaning of these signs is unknown to us). These markings were also stamped on their luggage. Out of these 6,000 persons only 600 men and 300 women were admitted to the camp. The remainder were gassed.

- 99,000 - 100,000 End of January, 1943 large convoys of French and Dutch Jews arrived; only a small proportion of them reached the camp.
- 100,000 - 102,000 In February, 1943, 2,000 Aryan Poles, mostly intellectuals.
- 102,000 - 103,000 700 Czech Aryans. Later, those still alive were sent to BUCHENWALD.
- 103,000 - 108,000 3,000 French and Dutch Jews and 2,000 Poles (Aryans).

During the month of February, 1943, two contingents arrived daily. They included Polish, French, and Dutch Jews who, in the main, were sent to the gas chambers. The number gassed during this month can well be estimated at 90,000.

At the end of February, 1943 a new modern crematorium and gassing plant was inaugurated at BIRKENAU. The gassing and burning of the bodies in the Birch Forest was discontinued, the whole job being taken over by the four specially built crematoria. The large ditch was filled in, the ground levelled, and the ashes used as before for fertilizer at the farm labour camp of HERMENSE, so that today it is almost impossible to find traces of the dreadful mass murder which took place here.

At present there are four crematoria in operation at BIRKENAU, two large ones, I and II, and two smaller ones, III and IV. Those of type I and II consist of 3 parts, i.e.: (A) the furnace room; (B) the large hall; and (C) the gas chamber. A huge chimney rises from the furnace room around which are grouped nine furnaces, each having four openings. Each opening can take three normal corpses at once and after an hour and a half the bodies are completely burned. This corresponds to a daily capacity of about 2,000 bodies. Next to this is a large "reception hall" which is arranged so as to give the impression of the antechamber of a bathing establishment. It holds 2,000 people and apparently there is a similar



ROUGH GROUND PLAN OF
CREMATORIA: TYPES I & II IN BIRKENAU

000430

waiting room on the floor below. From there a door and a few steps lead down into the very long and narrow gas chamber. The walls of this chamber are also camouflaged with simulated entries to shower rooms in order to mislead the victims. The roof is fitted with three traps which can be hermetically closed from the outside. A track leads from the gas chamber towards the furnace room. The gassing takes place as follows: the unfortunate victims are brought into hall (B) where they are told to undress. To complete the fiction that they are going to bathe, each person receives a towel and a small piece of soap issued by two men clad in white coats. Then they are crowded into the gas chamber (C) in such numbers that there is, of course, only standing room. To compress this crowd into the narrow space, shots are often fired to induce those already at the far end to huddle still closer together. When everybody is inside, the heavy doors are closed. Then there is a short pause, presumably to allow the room temperature to rise to a certain level, after which SS men with gas masks climb on the roof, open the traps, and shake down a preparation in powder form out of tin cans labelled "CYKLON" "For use against vermin," which is manufactured by a Hamburg concern. It is presumed that this is a "CYANIDE" mixture of some sort which turns into gas at a certain temperature. After three minutes everyone in the chamber is dead. No one is known to have survived this ordeal, although it was not uncommon to discover signs of life after the primitive measures employed in the Birch Wood. The chamber is then opened, aired, and the "special squad" carts the bodies on flat trucks to the furnace rooms where the burning takes place. Crematoria III and IV work on nearly the same principle, but their capacity is only half as large. Thus the total capacity of the four cremating and gassing plants at BIRKENAU amounts to about 6,000 daily.

On principle only Jews are gassed; Aryans very seldom, as they are usually given "special treatment" by shooting. Before the crematoria were put into service, the shooting took place in the Birch Wood and the bodies were burned in the long trench; later, however, executions took place in the large hall of one of the crematoria which has been provided with a special installation for this purpose.

Prominent guests from BERLIN were present at the inauguration of the first crematorium in March, 1943. The "program" consisted of the gassing and burning of 8,000 Cracow Jews. The guests, both officers and civilians, were extremely satisfied with the results and the special peephole fitted into the door of the gas chamber was in constant use. They were lavish in their praise of this newly erected installation.

000431

109,000 - 119,000 At the beginning of March, 1943, 45,000 Jews arrived from Saloniki. 10,000 of them came to the camp, including a small percentage of the women; some 30,000 however went straight to the cremating establishment. Of the 10,000 nearly all died a short time later from a contagious illness resembling malaria. They also died of typhus due to the general conditions prevailing in the camp.

Malaria among the Jews and typhus took such toll among the prisoners in general that the "selections" were temporarily suspended. The contaminated Greek Jews were ordered to present themselves and in spite of our repeated warnings many of them did. They were all killed by intracardial phenol injections administered by a lance-corporal of the medical corps.

Out of the 10,000 Greek Jews, some 1,000 men remained alive and were later sent, together with 500 other Jews, to do fortification work in Warsaw. A few weeks later several hundred came back in a pitiful state and were immediately gassed. The remainder presumably died in Warsaw. Four hundred Greek Jews suffering from malaria were sent for "further treatment" to LUBLIN after the phenol injections had been stopped, and it appears that they actually arrived. Their fate is not known to us, but it can be taken for granted that out of the original number of 10,000 Jews not one eventually remained in the camp.

Simultaneously with the stopping of the "selections" the murdering of prisoners was forbidden. Prominent murderers such as: the Reich German professional criminals Alexander Neumann, Zimmer, Albert Haemmerle, Rudi Osteringer, Rudi Bechert, and the political prisoners Alfred Kien and Alois Stahler, were punished for repeated murder and had to make written declaration that they had killed so and so many prisoners.

At the beginning of 1943 the political section of AUSCHWITZ received 500,000 discharge certificates and we thought with ill-concealed joy, that at least a few of us would be liberated. But the forms were simply filled out with the names of those gassed and filed away in the archives.

119,000 - 120,000 1,000 Poles (Aryans) from the PAWIAK penitentiary in Warsaw.

120,000 - 123,000 3,000 Greek Jews, part of whom were sent to replace their comrades in Warsaw. The remainder quickly died off.

123,000 - 124,000 1,000 Poles (Aryans) from RADOM and TARNOW.

124,000 - 126,000 2,000 from mixed Aryan convoys.

In the meantime, ceaseless convoys of Polish and a few French and Belgian Jews arrived and, without exception, were dispatched to the gas chambers. Among them was a transport of 1,000 Polish Jews from MAJDANEK which included three Slovaks, one of whom was a certain Spira from Stropkow or Vranov.

The flow of convoys abruptly ceased at the end of July, 1943 and there was a short breathing space. The crematoria were thoroughly cleaned, the installations repaired and prepared for further use. On August 3 the killing machine again went into operation. The first convoys consisted of Jews from BENZBURG and SOSNOWITZ and others followed during the whole month of August.

132,000 - 136,000 Only 4,000 men and a very small number of women were brought to the camp. Over 35,000 were gassed. Of the aforementioned 4,000 men, many died as a result of bad treatment, hunger or illness; some were even murdered. The main responsibility for these tragedies lies with the criminal TYN (a Reich German) from the concentration camp of SACHSENHAUSEN and the Polish political prisoner No. 8516, Mieczislav KATERZINSKI, from Warsaw.

The "selections" were introduced again and this time to a murderous extent, especially in the women's camp. The camp doctor, an SS "Hauptsturmführer" and the son or nephew of the police president of Berlin (we forget his name) outdid all the others in brutality. The selection system has been continued ever since, until our escape.

137,000 - 138,000 At the end of August 1,000 Poles came from the PAWIAK prison and 80 Jews from Greece.

138,000 - 141,000 3,000 men from various Aryan transports.

142,000 - 145,000 At the beginning of September, 1943, 3,000 Jews arrived from Polish working camps and Russian prisoners of war.

000433

148,000 - 152,000 During the week following September 7, 1943 family transports of Jews arrived from THERESIENSTADT. They enjoyed quite an exceptional status which was incomprehensible to us. The families were not separated and not a single one of them received the customary and "normal" gas treatment. Their heads were not even shaven, they were able to keep their luggage, and were lodged in a separate section of the camp, men, women and children together. The men were not forced to work and a school was even set up for the children under the direction of Fredy HIRSCH (Makabi, Prague). They were allowed to correspond freely. The worst they had to undergo was mistreatment at the hands of their "camp eldest," a certain professional criminal by the name of Arno BOM, prisoner No. 8. Our astonishment increased when we learned of the official indication given to this special transport:

"SB" - transport of Czech Jews with six months' quarantine -

We very well knew what "SB" meant ("Sonderbehandlung"), but could not understand the long period of six months' quarantine and the generally clement treatment this group received. The longest quarantine period we had witnessed so far was only three weeks. Towards the end of the six months' period, however, we became convinced that the fate of these Jews would be the same as that of most of the others - the gas chamber. We tried to get in touch with the leader of this group and explain their lot and what they had to expect. Some of them declared (especially Fredy HIRSCH who seemed to enjoy the full confidence of his companions) that if our fears took shape they would organize resistance. Thus, some of them hoped to instigate a general revolt in the camp. On March 6, 1944 we heard that the crematoria were being prepared to receive the Czech Jews.

100434

I hastened to inform Fredy HIRSCH and begged him to take immediate action as they had nothing to lose. He replied that he recognized his duty. Before nightfall I again crept over to the Czech camp where I learned that Fredy HIRSCH was dying; he had poisoned himself with luminol. The next day, March 7, 1944, he was taken, unconscious, along with his 3,791 comrades who had arrived at BIRKENAU on September 7, 1943 on trucks, to the crematoria and gassed. The young people went to their death singing, but to our great disappointment nobody revolted. Some 500 elderly people had died during quarantine. Of all these Jews only 11 twins were left alive. They are being subjected to various medical tests at AUSCHWITZ, and when we left BIRKENAU they were still alive. Among the gassed was Rozsi FURST, from SERED. A week before the gassing, that is to say on March 1, 1944, everyone in the Czech group in the camp had been asked to inform his relatives about his well being. The letters had to be dated March 23 to 25, 1944 and they were requested to ask for food parcels.

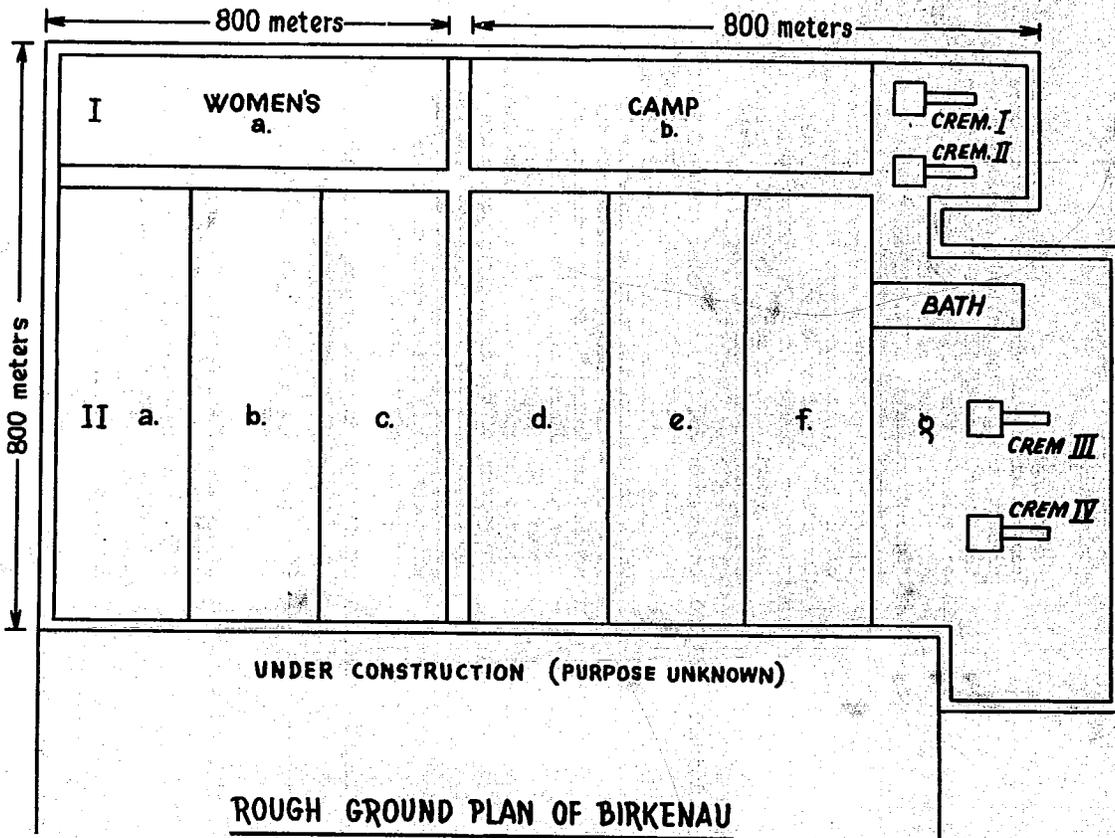
- 153,000 - 154,000 1,000 Polish Aryans from the PAVIAK penitentiary.
- 155,000 - 159,000 During October and November, 1943, 4,000 persons from various prisons and smaller transports of Jews from BENZBURG and vicinity, who had been driven out of their hiding places; also a group of Russians under protective custody from the MINSK and VITERSK regions. Some more Russian prisoners of war arrived and, as stated, they as usual received numbers between 1 and 12,000.
- 160,000 - 165,000 In December, 1943, 5,000 men originating from Dutch, French, Belgian transports and, for the first time, Italian Jews from FIUME, TRIESTE and ROME. Of these at least 30,000 were immediately gassed. The mortality among these Jews was very high and, in addition, the "selection" system was still decimating all ranks. The bestiality of the whole procedure reached its

000435

culminating point between January 10 and 24, 1944 when even young and healthy persons irrespective of profession or working classification - with the exception of doctors - were ruthlessly "selected."

Every single prisoner was called up, a strict control was established to see that all were present, and the "selection" proceeded under the supervision of the same camp doctor (son or nephew of the Police President of Berlin) and of the Commandant of BIRKENAU, SS "Untersturmführer" SCHWARZHUBER. The "infirmary" had in the meantime been transferred from "Block 7" to a separate section of the camp where conditions had become quite bearable. Its inmates, nevertheless, were gassed to the last man. Apart from this group, this general action cost some 2,500 men and over 6,000 women their lives.

- 165,000 - 168,000 On December 20, 1943 a further group of 3,000 Jews arrived from THERESIENSTADT. The convoy was listed under the same category as the one which had reached the camp on September 7, i.e. "SB" - transport, Czech Jews with six months' quarantine." On their arrival, men, women and children all joined the September group. They enjoyed the same privileges as their predecessors. Twenty-four hours before the gassing of the first group took place, the latest arrivals were separated from the rest and placed in another part of the camp where they still are at present. Their quarantine ends on June 20, 1944.
- 169,000 - 170,000 1,000 people in small groups, Jews, Poles, and Russians under protective custody.
- 170,000 - 171,000 1,000 Poles and Russians and a number of Yugoslavs.
- 171,000 - 174,000 At the end of February and beginning of March, 3,000 Jews from Holland, Belgium, and for the first time long-established French Jews (not naturalized) from VICHY, in France. The greater part of this transport was gassed immediately upon arrival.



000437

Small groups of BENZBURGER and SOSNOWITZER Jews, who had been dragged from hiding, arrived in the middle of March. One of them told me that many Polish Jews were crossing over to Slovakia and from there to Hungary and that the Slovak Jews helped them on their way through.

After the gassing of the THERESIENSTADT transport there were no further arrivals until March 15, 1944. The effective strength of the camp rapidly diminished and men of later incoming transports, especially Dutch Jews, were directed to the camp. When we left on April 7, 1944 we heard that large convoys of Greek Jews were expected.

The camp of BIRKENAU consists of three building areas. At present only sections I and II are guarded by the inner chain of sentry posts, whereas section III is still under construction and uninhabited. At the time of our departure from the camp (the beginning of April, 1944), the following categories of prisoners were in BIRKENAU:

Section I (Women's concentration camp)

	<u>Slov. Jews</u>	<u>Other Jews</u>	<u>Aryans</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Ia and Ib	app. 300	app. 7,000	app. 6,000	In addition to the 300 Slovak Jewish girls, app. 100 are employed in the administration building of AUSCHWITZ.

Section II (Women's Concentration Camp)

	Slov. Jews	Other Jews	Aryans	Remarks
I Ia Quarantine camp	2	app. 200	app. 800	One of the two Slovak Jews is Dr. Andreas MULLER from Podolinec (block eldest).
I Ib Jews from THERESIENSTADT	-	" 3,500	-	With a six months' quarantine.
I Ic At present uninhabited	-	-	-	
I Id "Stammlager"	58	" 4,000	" 6,000	
I Ie Gypsy camp	-	-	" 4,500	This is the remainder of some 16,000 gypsies. They are not used for work and die off rapidly.
I If Infirmary	6	" 1,000	" 500	The six Slovak Jews are all employees of the building, namely:

- No. 36,832 Walter SPITZER, block eldest from NEMSOVA, came to LUBLIN from BIRKENAU.
- " 29,867 Jozef NEUMANN, ("overseer" of the "corpse crew") from SNINA.
- " 44,989 Josef ZELMANOVIC, "staff" from SNINA.
- Cham KATZ, "staff" from SNINA.
- " 30,049 Ludwig SOLMANN, "clerk" from KESMAREK.
- " 32,407 Ludwig EISENSTADTER, tattooist from KREMPACHY.

000439

The internal administration of the camp of BIRKENAU is run by specially selected prisoners. The "blocks" are not inhabited according to nationalities but rather according to working categories. Each block is supervised by a staff of five, i.e., a block eldest, a block recorder, a male nurse, and two attendants.

The block eldest

He wears an arm band with the number of his block, and is responsible for order there. He has power over life and death. Until February, 1944 nearly 50 percent of the block eldests were Jews but this was stopped by order of BERLIN. They all had to resign with the exception of three Jews who, in spite of this order, were able to keep their posts.

The block recorder

He is the block eldest's right hand, does all the clerical work, keeping the index cards and records. His work is of great responsibility and he has to keep his ledgers with painful exactitude as the index cards only indicate the number and not the name of the prisoners; errors are fatal. For instance, if the recorder has noted down a death by mistake - and this often occurs with the unusually high mortality - the discrepancy is simply straightened out by killing the bearer of the corresponding number. Corrections are not admitted. The block recorder occupies a key post which is often misused.

Nursing and "room" duties

They consist in keeping the inside of the barracks clean and carrying out small manual jobs in and around the block. Of course there is no question of really taking care of the sick.

The camp eldest supervises the whole camp; he is also a prisoner. This post is at present held by:

Franz DANISCH, No. 11,182, a political prisoner, from KONIGSHÜTTE, Upper Silesia. He is undisputed master of the whole camp and has power to nominate or dismiss block eldests and block-recorders, hand out jobs, etc.

Further we have a "chief recorder" whose position is undoubtedly one of the most powerful in the camp. He is in direct contact with camp headquarters, receiving their orders and reporting on all matters. All camp recorders are directly subordinated to him and have to submit all their reports to him. The chief recorder of BIRKENAU is:

000440

Kasimir GORK, No. 31,029, a Pole from WARSAW, a former bank clerk.

The supreme control over the blocks lies in the hands of six to eight "block leaders," all SS men. Every night they hold roll call, the result of which is communicated to:

The Camp Leader, "Untersturmführer" SCHWARZHUBER, from the Tyrol. This individual is an alcoholic and a sadist. Over him is the camp commander who also controls AUSCHWITZ where there is a second subordinate camp leader. The camp commander's name is: HOESS.

The Chief of a work squad or group is called the "Capo."

During work the "Capo" has full authority over his group of prisoners and not infrequently one of these "Capos" kills a man working under him. In larger squads there may be several "Capos" who are then under the orders of a "Capo-in-chief." At first there were many Jewish "Capos," but an order from BERLIN prohibited their being employed.

Supreme control over work is carried out by German specialists.

II. MAJDANEK

On June 14, 1942 we left NOVAKY, passed through ZILINA and arrived at ZWARDON toward 5 o'clock in the evening. We were assembled, counted, and SS men took over our convoy. One of these guards voiced his surprise at the fact we had made the journey without water by shouting: "Those Slovak barbarians, give them no water!" The journey continued and we reached LUBLIN two days later. Here the following order was issued: "Those fit for work aged between 15 and 50 are to leave the cars. Children and old people remain." We struggled out of the freight car and discovered that the station was surrounded by Lithuanians in SS uniforms, all armed with automatic pistols. The cars containing the children and old people were immediately closed and the train moved on. We do not know where they went and what happened to them.

The SS troop leader in command informed us that we had a long way ahead of us, but that whoever wanted to take his luggage with him could do so. Those who preferred to put it on a truck would certainly receive it later. So some of us dragged along our luggage, whereas others loaded it on the truck.

000441

Behind the town stood a clothing factory called the "Bekleidungswerke." In the courtyard waiting for their noon meal some 1,000 prisoners in dirty striped clothing, obviously Jews, were lined up and the sight of them was none too encouraging. Arriving on a small hill we suddenly sighted the vast barrack camp of MAJDANEK surrounded by a 3-meter-high barbed-wire fence. No sooner had we gone through the entrance gate than I met a prisoner who warned me that all our personal belongings would be taken away. Around us stood Slovak Jews in a wretched condition, their heads shaven, in dirty prison clothes and wooden clogs or simply bare-footed, many of them having swollen feet. They begged us for food and we gave them what we could spare, knowing very well that everything would be confiscated anyway. We were then conducted to the stock room where we had to leave everything we possessed. At double time we were herded into another barrack where we had to undress, were shaved, and given a shower. After this we were issued convict outfits, wooden clogs and caps.

I was assigned to "working section No. 2" as the whole camp was divided into three such sections separated by wire fences. Section No. 2 was occupied by a number of Slovak and Czech Jews. For two full days we were taught how to remove and put on our caps when we met a German. Then in the pouring rain we practiced roll calling for hours.

The barrack accommodations were quite original to say the least. Three long tables (nearly as long as the barrack itself) had been placed one on top of the other. These comprised our "bunks" (4 floors of them, that is ground floor plus the three tables). A small passage was kept open along the walls.

Our food consisted of a fairly thick "soup" early in the morning which had to be eaten with the hands. We got the same soup again at lunch. The evening meal consisted of a brew called "tea," 300 grams of bad bread and some 20 to 30 grams of marmalade or artificial fat of the worst quality.

Great importance was attributed during the first few days to the learning of the "camp song." For hours we stood singing:

From the whole of Europe came
We Jews to Lublin
Much work has to be done
And this is the beginning.

To manage this duty
Forget all about the past
For in fulfillment of duty
There is community.

000442

Therefore on to work with vigour
Let everyone play his part
Together we want to work
At the same pace and rhythm.

Not all will understand
Why we stand here in rows
Those must we soon force
To understand its meaning.

Modern times must teach us
Teach us all along
That it is to work
And only to work we belong.

Therefore on to work with vigour
Let everyone play his part
Together we want to work
At the same pace and rhythm.

(This is a literal translation of the song).

Working section No.	I	was occupied by	Slovak Jews
"	"	"	II " " " Slovak and Czech Jews
"	"	"	III " " " Partisans
"	"	IV & V	was being built by the Jews of Sectors I & II

The Partisans in section III were locked up in their barracks without having to work and their food was thrown at them as if they had been dogs. They died in great numbers in their overcrowded barracks and were shot at the slightest excuse by the guards who did not dare venture too near them.

The "Capos" were Reich Germans and Czechs; whereas the Germans were brutal, the Czechs helped wherever they could. The camp eldest was a gypsy from HOLLIC by the name of GALBANY. His adjutant, a Jew from SERED called MITTLER, certainly owed his post to his brutal actions. He took full advantage of the power conferred upon him to torment the Jews who, as it was, already had their full share of hardships. The evening roll call brought us more brutal treatment from the SS men and for hours we had to stand in the open after a hard day's work and sing the "camp song." A Jewish orchestra leader was forced to conduct from the roof of one of the barracks. This was the occasion of much hilarity among the SS men.

During these "concert parties" the SS guards were very generous with blows and physical punishment. A tragic end befell Rabbi ECKSTEIN from SERED who was suffering from dysentery and once came a few minutes too late for the roll call. The group leader had him seized and dipped head first into one of the latrines, then poured cold water over him, drew his revolver and shot him.

The crematorium was located between working sections I and II and all the bodies were burned there. With an effective strength of 6,000 to 8,000 men per working section, the mortality was about 30 a day. This figure later increased five and sixfold. In other instances 10 to 20 inmates were removed from the sick room, brought to the crematorium and burned, after having been put to death in a manner which I have not been able to find out. This crematorium was electrically heated and the attendants were Russians.

Illnesses increased as a result of the bad food and intolerable living conditions. Serious stomach troubles and a seemingly incurable foot disease spread throughout the camp. The feet of the victims swelled up to the point where they could not walk. More and more of the sick were now being taken to the crematorium and when on June 26, 1942 the number thus treated rose to 70, I decided to take an opportunity which was offered to me and applied for a transfer to AUSCHWITZ.

On June 27, 1942 I discarded my prisoner's outfit and travelled to AUSCHWITZ in civilian clothes.

After a journey of 48 hours during which we were couped up in freight cars without food or water, we arrived at AUSCHWITZ half dead. At the entrance gate the huge poster, "Work brings freedom," greeted us. As the courtyard was clean and well kept, and the brick buildings made a good impression after the dirty and primitive barracks of LUBLIN, we thought that the change was for the best. We were taken to a cellar and received tea and bread. Next day, however, our civilian clothes were taken away, our heads were shaved, and our numbers were tattooed on our forearms in the usual way. Finally, we were issued a set of prisoner's clothes similar to those we had worn in LUBLIN and were enrolled as "political prisoners" in the concentration camp of AUSCHWITZ.

000444

We were billeted in "Block 17" and slept on the floor. In an adjoining row of buildings separated from ours by a high wall, the Jewish girls from Slovakia, who had been brought there in March and April of 1942, were quartered. We worked in the huge "BUNA" plant to which we were herded every morning about 3 a.m. At midday our food consisted of potato or turnip soup and in the evening we received some bread. During work we were terribly mistreated. As our working place was situated outside the large chain of sentry posts, it was divided into small sectors of 10 x 10 meters, each guarded by an SS man. Whoever stepped outside these squares during working hours was immediately shot without warning for having "attempted to escape." Often it happened that out of pure spite an SS man would order a prisoner to fetch some given object outside his square. If he followed the order, he was shot for having left his assigned place. The work was extremely hard and there were no rest periods. The way to and from work had to be covered at a brisk military trot; anyone falling out of line was shot. On my arrival about 3,000 people, of whom 2,000 were Slovak Jews, were working on this emplacement. Very few could bear the strain and although escape seemed hopeless, attempts were made every day. The result was several hangings a week.

After a number of weeks of painful work at the "BUNA" plant a terrible typhus epidemic broke out. The weaker prisoners died in hundreds. An immediate quarantine was ordered and work at the "BUNA" stopped. Those still alive were sent, at the end of July, 1942, to the gravel pit but there work was even still more strenuous. We were in such a state of weakness that, even in trying to do our best, we could not satisfy the overseers. Most of us got swollen feet. Due to our inability to perform the heavy work demanded of us our squad was accused of being lazy and disorderly. Soon after a medical commission inspected all of us; they carried out their job very thoroughly. Anyone with swollen feet or particularly weak was separated from the rest. Although I was in great pain, I controlled myself and stood erect in front of the commission who passed me as physically fit. Out of 300 persons examined, 200 were found to be unfit and immediately sent to BIRKENAU and gassed. I was then detailed for work at the DAW (Deutsche Aufrüstungswerke) where we had to paint skis. The prescribed minimum to be painted each day was 120. Anyone unable to paint this many was thoroughly flogged in the evening. It meant working very hard to avoid this punishment. Another group was employed at making cases for hand grenades. At one time 15,000 had been completed but it was found that they were a few centimeters too small. As punishment several Jews were shot for sabotage.

Somewhere around the middle of August, 1942 all the Jewish girls from Slovakia who lived next to our quarters, on the other side of the wall, were transferred to BIRKENAU. I had the opportunity to talk to them and was able to see how weak and half-starved

000445

all of them were. They were dressed in old Russian uniform rags and wore wooden clogs. Their heads were shaven clean. The same day we again had to undergo a strict examination and those suspected of having typhus were removed to the Birch Wood. The remainder were shaved afresh, bathed, issued a new set of clothes and finally billeted in the barracks the girls had just left. By chance I learned that there was an opening in the "clearance squad" and I handed in my application. I was detailed to this task.

This squad consisted of about a hundred Jewish prisoners. We were sent to a far corner of the camp, away from all our comrades. Here we found huge sheds full of knapsacks, suitcases, and other luggage. We had to open each piece of baggage and sort the contents into large cases specially prepared for each category of goods, i.e. combs, mirrors, sugar, canned food, chocolate, medicines, etc. The cases were then stored away. Underwear, shirts and clothes of all kinds went to a special barrack, where they were sorted out and packed by Jewish girls. Old and worn clothes were addressed to the "TEXTILE FACTORY" at MEMEL, whereas the usable garments were dispatched to a collecting center in BERLIN. Gold, money, bank notes, and precious stones had to be handed over to the political section. Many of these objects were, however, stolen by the SS guards or by prisoners. A brutal and vile individual who often struck the women is commander of this squad. He is SS "Scharführer" WYKLEFF.

Every day the girls who came to their work from BIRKENAU described to us the terrible conditions prevailing there. They were beaten and brutalized and their mortality was much higher than among the men. Twice a week "selections" took place, and every day new girls replaced those who had disappeared.

During a night shift I was able to witness for the first time how incoming convoys were handled. The transport I saw contained Polish Jews. They had received no water for days and when the doors of the freight cars were open we were ordered to chase them out with loud shouts. They were utterly exhausted and about a hundred of them had died during the journey. The living were lined up in rows of five. Our job was to remove the dead, dying, and the luggage from the cars. The dead, and this included anyone unable to stand on his feet, were piled in a heap. Luggage and parcels were collected and stacked up. Then the railroad cars had to be thoroughly cleaned so that no trace of their frightful load was left behind. A commission from the political department proceeded with the "selection" of approximately 10 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women and had them transferred to the camps. The remainder were loaded on trucks, sent to BIRKENAU,

000446

and gassed while the dead and dying were taken directly to the furnaces. It often happened that small children were thrown alive into the trucks along with the dead. Parcels and luggage were taken to the warehouses and sorted out in the previously described manner.

Between July and September, 1942 a typhus epidemic had raged in AUSCHWITZ, especially in the women's camp of BIRKENAU. None of the sick received medical attention and in the first stages of the epidemic a great many were killed by phenol injections, and later on others were gassed wholesale. Some 15,000 to 20,000, mostly Jews, died during these two months. The girls' camp suffered the most, as it was not fitted with sanitary installations, and the poor wretches were covered with lice. Every week large "selections" took place and the girls had to present themselves naked to the "selection committee," regardless of weather conditions. They waited in deadly fear whether they would be chosen or given another week's grace. Suicides were frequent and were mostly committed by throwing one's self against the high tension wires of the inner fence. This went on until they had dwindled to 5 percent of their original number. Now there are only 400 of these girls left and most of them have been able to secure some sort of clerical post in the women's camp. About 100 girls hold jobs at the staff building in AUSCHWITZ where they do all the clerical work connected with the administration of the two camps. Thanks to their knowledge of languages they are also used as interpreters. Others are employed in the main kitchen and laundry. Of late these girls have been able to dress themselves quite well as they have had opportunities to complete their wardrobes which, in some cases, even include silk stockings. Generally speaking they are reasonably well off and are even allowed to let their hair grow. Of course this cannot be said of the other Jewish inmates of the women's camp. It just so happens that these Slovak Jewish girls have been in the camp the longest of all. But if today they enjoy certain privileges, they have previously undergone frightful sufferings.

I was not to hold this comparatively good job with the "clearance squad" for long. Shortly afterwards I was transferred to BIRKENAU on disciplinary grounds and remained there over a year and a half. On April 7, 1944 I managed to escape with my companion.

000447

Careful estimate of the number of Jews gassed
in BIRKENAU between April, 1942 and April, 1944
(according to countries of origin).

Poland (transported by truck)	approximately 300,000
" " " train	" 600,000
Holland	" 100,000
Greece	" 45,000
France	" 150,000
Belgium	" 50,000
Germany	" 60,000
Yugoslavia, Italy and Norway	" 50,000
Lithuania	" 50,000
Bohemia, Moravia and Austria	" 30,000
Slovakia	" 30,000
Various camps for foreign Jews in Poland ..	" 300,000
	<hr/>
	approximately 1,765,000

III.

On August 6, 1944, a report was received in Switzerland covering the happenings in BIRKENAU during the period between April 7 and May 27. This second report was drawn up by two other young Jews who succeeded in escaping from this camp and reaching Slovakia.

000448

Their declarations complete the first report, particularly in regard to the arrival of the Hungarian Jews in BIRKENAU. They also add certain new details not contained in the previous accounts. It has not been possible, however, to check the origin of this "second report" as closely as it was the first.

After the flight of the two Slovak Jews from BIRKENAU on April 7, 1944 great excitement reigned in the camp. The "Political Division" of the Gestapo instituted a thoroughgoing investigation, and the friends and superiors of the two escapees were closely questioned, although in vain. Since the two had held posts as "block recorders," all Jews exercising such functions, by way of punishment and also as a precautionary measure, were removed and, as the Gestapo suspected that they had succeeded in escaping through Building No. 3, the outer chain of sentry posts was considerably shortened so that now it cuts through the middle of Building No. 3.

At the beginning of the month of April, a transport of Greek Jews arrived, of whom about 200 were admitted to the camp. The remainder of circa 1,500 were immediately gassed.

Between the 10th and 15th of April some 5,000 "Aryans" arrived in BIRKENAU, mainly Poles, some 2,000 to 3,000 women among them being from the abandoned camp of LUBLIN-MAJDANEK. They were given numbers running from approximately:

176,000 to 181,000 Among the women were about 300 Jewish girls from Poland. The greater part of the new arrivals were ill, weak, and very run down. According to their information the healthy ones had been sent from LUBLIN to German concentration camps. Concerning the fate of the Jews held in the camp of LUBLIN-MAJDANEK, we learned from them, especially from the Jewish girls, that on November 3, 1943 all Jews in this camp, that is some 11,000 men and 6,000 women, were killed.

000449

We recalled that about this time the SS in BIRKENAU had reported that LUBLIN had been attacked by partisans and, in order to fight against the latter, a number of the SS personnel from BIRKENAU had been temporarily transferred to LUBLIN. It was now clear to us for what purpose our SS had gone to LUBLIN.

Apparently the Jews had been compelled to dig a long, deep grave in Field V of the camp of MAJDANEK and on November 3 they were brought out in groups of 200 to 300, shot and thrown into the grave. Within 24 hours everything was over. During the execution loud music was played to drown out the shots.

Three hundred girls who were active in LUBLIN on the "clearing-up Commando" and as recorders were left alive. Three days after their arrival in BIRKENAU they were all gassed and burned on special order of BERLIN. Through an error on the part of the "recorder" two of the girls were not sent to the gas chamber. This was discovered, however, the next day, and the girls were immediately shot and the recorder replaced.

The fate of the LUBLIN Jews caused great depression among the Jews in the camp of BIRKENAU who became afraid that one day the whole of BIRKENAU would suddenly be "liquidated" in the same way.

Approximately
No. 182,000

Toward the end of April more Greek Jews were brought to BIRKENAU. Some 200 were admitted to the camp and about 3,000 exterminated.

183,000 to 185,000

At the beginning of May, 1944 smaller transports of Dutch, French, Belgian, and Greek Jews arrived, as well as Polish "Aryans." Most of them were put to work in the Buna plant.

000450

On May 10, 1944 the first transport of Hungarian Jews arrived in BIRKENAU. They were principally from the prisons of Budapest, including those who had been arrested in the streets and railroad stations of the city. Among the women were:

Ruth Lorant
Mici Lorant
Ruth Quasztler
Irene Roth
Bara Fuchs

The transport was received in AUSCHWITZ and BIRKENAU according to the well-known procedure (heads shaved, numbers tattooed, etc.) The men were given numbers beginning with 186,000 and the women were placed in the women's camp. About 600 men, of whom some 150 were between the ages of 45 and 60, were brought to BIRKENAU where they were divided up among various work detachments. The remainder stayed in AUSCHWITZ where they worked in the Buna plant.

The members of the transport were all left alive and none of them, as had been customary, were sent directly to the crematoria. In the postcards which they were allowed to write, they had to give "Waldsee" as return address.

On May 15 mass transports from Hungary began to arrive in BIRKENAU. Some 14,000 to 15,000 Jews arrived daily. The spur railroad track which ran into the camp to the crematoria was completed in great haste, the crews working night and day, so that the transports could be brought directly to the crematoria. Only about 10 percent of these transports were admitted to the camp; the balance were immediately gassed and burned. Never had so many Jews been gassed since the establishment of BIRKENAU. The "Special Commando" had to be increased to 600 men and, after two or three days, to 800 (people being recruited from among the Hungarian Jews who had arrived first). The size of the "Clearing Commando" was stepped up from 150 to 700 men. Three crematoria worked day and night (the 4th was being repaired at that time) and, since the capacity of the crematoria was not enough, great pits 30 meters long and 15 meters wide were once more dug in the "Birkenwald" (as in the time before the crematoria) where corpses were burned day and night. Thus the "exterminating capacity" became almost unlimited.

The Hungarian Jews who were left alive (about 10 percent) were not included in the normal camp "enrollment." Although they were shaved and shorn and received convict's clothing, they were not tattooed. They were housed in a separate section of the camp, section "C", and were later transferred to various concentration camps in the German Reich: Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Grossrosen,

000451

Gusen, Flossenburg, Sachsenhausen, etc. The women were temporarily quartered in the "gypsy camp" in separate blocks and then also transferred elsewhere. Jewish girls from Slovakia were "block eldests" there.

The first Hungarian transports came from: Munkacs, Nagyszöllös, Nyiregyhaza, Ungvár, Huszt, Kassau, Beregszász, Marmarossziget, Nagyberezna. Among those remaining alive were:

Robert and Ervin Waizen
Stark
Ehrenreich
Katz, Chaim

The last two have already been transferred. The parents of the Waizen brothers were gassed.

The transports of Hungarian Jews were under the particular control of the former Camp Commander "Hauptsturmbannführer" HOSS, who travelled continually between AUSCHWITZ and Budapest. The Commandant of Birkenau at this time was HOSS' former adjutant, "Hauptsturmführer" KRAMER.

187,000 to 189,000 1,600 French "Aryans," almost exclusively intellectuals and prominent persons, including a small number of Polish "émigrés." Among the French were high officers, members of leading French financial circles, well-known journalists and politicians, and even, it was said, former ministers. On their arrival some of them rebelled but were put down in an exceedingly brutal fashion by the SS, some of them being shot on the spot. The French were very courageous and self-possessed. They were strictly isolated in BIRKENAU and no one was allowed to have any contact with them. After two weeks, on orders from Berlin, they were sent to Mauthausen (near Linz, in Austria.).

Since the middle of May the newly arrived Jews no longer received consecutive numbers, as formerly. A new numbering system was inaugurated beginning with No. 1 preceded by the tattooed letter "A." We do not know the reason for this measure. At the time of our flight on May 27, 1944 about 4,000 Jews had received these new numbers. The 4,000 were composed of 1,000 Dutch, French, and Italian Jews and 3,000 Jews from THERESIENSTADT who reached BIRKENAU on May 23, 1944. These were treated exactly as the previous two transports from THERESIENSTADT. They were quartered

000452

(unshorn) with the members of the previous convoy from THERESIENSTADT (who have been in BIRKENAU since December 20, 1943 and whose "quarantine" is due to be up on June 20, 1944) in Section IIB.

According to the statement of a Jew from the "Special Commando," "Reichsführer" Himmler was said to have visited BIRKENAU on the 15th or 16th of May. On one of these days I myself saw three automobiles and five men in civilian clothing drive toward the crematoria. The Jew who made this statement declared that he, as well as others, recognized Himmler, who had visited crematorium No. 1 and after a stay of about half an hour had again driven off with those accompanying him. On the day after there was an account in the Silesian newspapers of Himmler's visit to Cracow, so that this report could be true.

One other happening should not be forgotten which was told to us by the men of the "Special Commando." In the late summer of 1943 a commission of four Dutch Jews - distinguished looking men - came to AUSCHWITZ. Their visit had already apparently been announced to the Camp Commander, for the Dutch Jews in AUSCHWITZ received better clothes, as well as regular eating equipment (plates, spoons, etc.) and better food. The commission of four were very politely received and were shown over the camp buildings and particularly those portions which were clean and made a good impression. Dutch Jews from the camp were brought to them who reported that only a portion of the Dutch Jews were in this camp, the others being in other similar camps. In this manner the four men were satisfied and signed a statement according to which the commission had found everything in good order in AUSCHWITZ. After the signing the four Dutch Jews expressed a desire to see the camp of BIRKENAU and particularly the crematoria about which they had heard some stories. The camp authorities declared themselves quite willing to show them both BIRKENAU and the crematoria, the latter being used, they said, to cremate those who died in the camp. The commission was then taken to BIRKENAU, accompanied by the camp leader, Aumayer, and immediately to crematorium No. 1. Here they were shot from behind. A telegram was supposedly sent to Holland reporting that after leaving AUSCHWITZ the four men had been victims of an unfortunate automobile accident.

There is a biological laboratory in AUSCHWITZ where SS, civilian, and internee doctors are occupied. The women and girls on whom experiments are performed are housed in Block 10. For a long time the "block eldest" there was Magda Hellinger from Michalovce and a girl named Rozsi (family name unknown) from Humenné. Experiments were carried out only on Jewish girls and women, although to date no Slovakian girls have been used.

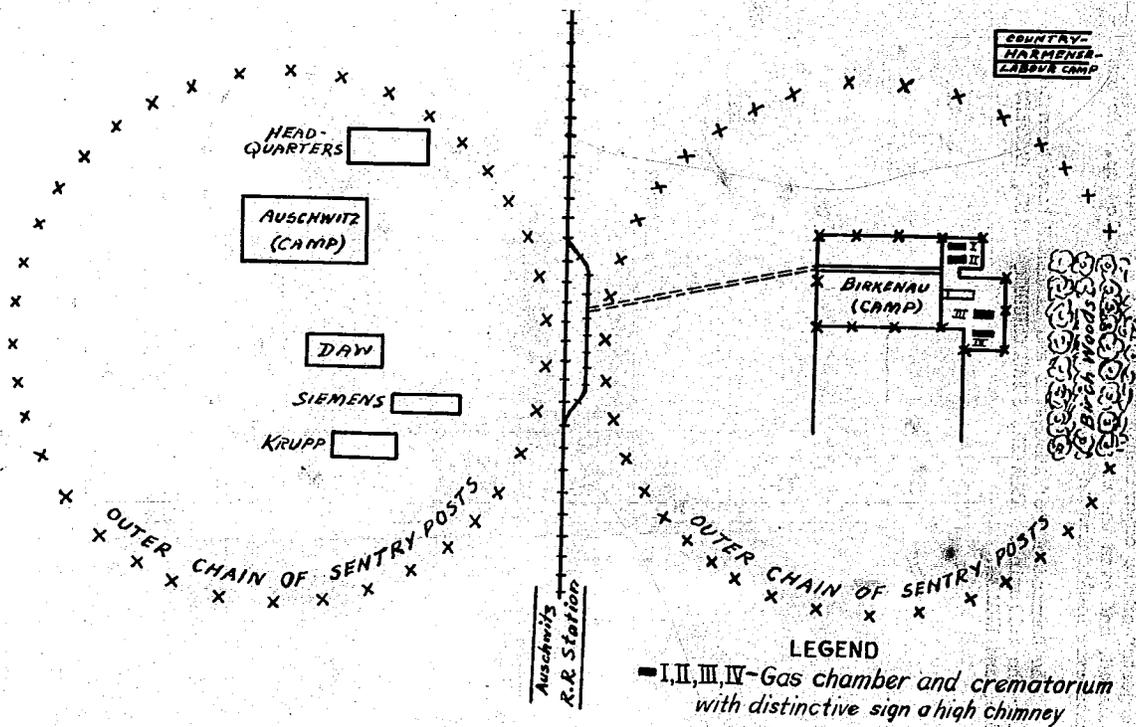
000453

Experiments were also performed on men but the latter were not housed separately. A great many died as a result of these experiments. Often gypsies were used. Block 10, where the "subjects" of the experiments are housed, is completely isolated, and even the window openings are walled up. No one whatsoever had admission to it.

The Commandants of AUSCHWITZ and BIRKENAU have been to date the following: AUMAYER, SCHWARZHUBER, WEISS, HARTENSTEIN, HOSS, and KRAMER.

000454

APPROXIMATE SITUATION SKETCH
OF AUSCHWITZ AND BIRKENAU
CAMP DISTRICTS



LEGEND
I, II, III, IV - Gas chamber and crematorium
with distinctive sign a high chimney

000455

No. 2

T R A N S P O R T

(The Polish Major's Report)

000456

I. TRANSPORT

On March 24, 1942 we were gathered together in special "assembling cell" No. 2 of the Montelupich prison in Cracow. We knew that our group consisting of 60 men was to be sent to the concentration camp of OSWIECIM (AUSCHWITZ). At 8 o'clock the next morning, two SS guards appeared with lists and started counting those present. We had to undress and wait. Finally the doors were opened and we caught sight of two columns of SS guards and policemen with fixed bayonets. In the courtyard two trucks were parked in each of which 30 men had to take their places. These trucks were quite small and the space on the inside was divided in two by a chain running across the middle. The first to enter had to stand with bent heads, whereas the others crouched down between the legs of the standing men. In this way it was possible to fill up the very small space with 30 men. We were loaded in with blows from rifle-butts, shouts and kicks. In the second separated section of the truck, two SS men stood guard with machine guns. We departed. Behind us, at a certain distance, followed motor-cyclists with machine guns. Our trucks were hermetically closed so that there was no possibility of seeing where we were going. Our journey lasted 1 1/2 hours with several short stops. Our limbs grew stiff as there was no possibility of changing one's position, and one of our men who was up against the chain became unconscious. He was brought back to his senses by blows from the guards. At last we arrived, staggered to the ground, and found ourselves standing in front of a gate over which we could read: "Work brings freedom." Inside, an orchestra was playing. This was AUSCHWITZ and it appeared that we were expected.

We were lined up in columns of five (a system applied on every conceivable occasion in the camp) and the names of the "newcomers" were once more read out. The man called up had immediately to run over to the one reading the roll and place himself in a line with those already summoned, after having received his number from the hands of an assistant. From this moment on, names were replaced by numbers. This system of "reception" was maintained until the summer of 1943. Later, all the prisoners (with the exception of Germans) had their numbers tattooed on their upper forearms, which had been the practice in the case of the Jews from the beginning. This whole numbering system was apparently applied to lessen the possibility of escape and to make it easier to identify the bodies. These numbers were handed to us by the "block leader" named STUBA, after which we went bareheaded and accompanied by the orchestra into the camp itself. The clock stood at 11 a.m. After a short visit to the "stock" room, we were shut

000457

up in a barrack until 5 p.m. There we were visited by a number of old inmates who earnestly begged us to give them our watches, rings, lighters, and cigarettes to avoid their being confiscated. Any food brought with us should be eaten at once, as it would be taken away as well. In return, the prisoners promised us bread, soup, etc., once we were officially incorporated into their ranks. At last the Capo (a sort of camp overseer) arrived and delivered a short talk in which he stressed that a prisoner could not exist in this camp for more than two months without the help of his comrades; and this was to be confirmed later on by numerous examples. Out of the 60 originally in my group I was to be the only survivor.

At 5 p.m. we were herded out into the corridor. There we had to undress and pack our clothes into bundles provided with our respective numbers. We stood there naked. All we were allowed to keep were a belt and two handkerchiefs. I wanted to keep a small holy picture, but one of the prisoners who acted as assistant in these operations dissuaded me, saying: "It isn't worth while; you will merely be laughed at and it will finally be taken anyway." First, our hair was cut short and then our heads shaved, after which we were given a bath. The water was very warm. All these preparations prior to being admitted as an inmate to the camp took place in "Block 27." Next, although it was snowing, we had to run to "Block 26" where the clothing room was located. There we were issued our prisoner's outfits which consisted of a shirt, underpants, shoes, socks, a warm jacket, trousers, vest, cap, and blanket. Everything was filthy, patched, and practically worn out. My jacket, for instance, could be buttoned up in front, but the back and sleeves merely consisted of black strips of cloth patched together. Finally this operation came to an end and we were again lined up in rows of five and taken to one of the "blocks." There we were awaited by the "block leader" (most of them were Poles from Upper Silesia) who initiated us into the mysteries of barrack duties. We were instructed in sweeping and cleaning the dormitories, in taking off our caps when commanded, and how to keep in line and step. Orders were given in German and when badly carried out the block leader grew furious and struck people right and left. The evening roll call finally put an end to these exercises. The block leader then assembled his people in front of their respective blocks and, in turn, all the block leaders presented their figures to the chief recorder or clerk. If the number of prisoners tallied with the records, the roll call was over; actually the whole tiring ceremony was nothing else but one of the numerous ways in which the prisoners were mistreated. During 1940, 1941, and 1942 the roll call was usually expected to last at least an hour in all weather conditions - frost, rain, or snow - the prisoners having to wait patiently with bare heads. If an escape was reported,

000458

which resulted in a "manco" at evening roll call, all those assembled had to wait outside until the result of the search was known. The search parties usually returned three or four hours later and with disastrous consequences for all the prisoners' health. In 1940, for example, one escape cost the lives of a hundred inmates. It was during severe winter weather and the prisoners were forced to stand out of doors from 3:30 in the afternoon until 11 o'clock the next morning, as a result of which a hundred totally or half-frozen men were counted.

After the roll call we returned to our blocks where we were allotted "rooms;" we slept three to a bed. Old-timers told us that the best thing to do was to use our clothing as a pillow; otherwise something was bound to be stolen. So we lay down without having had the slightest bit of food the whole day. The "reception" had been so strenuous and exhausting that all of us immediately fell asleep.

At 4 a.m. we were awakened by a gong and frightful confusion ensued. About 100 people were compressed into the small hall space and in a wild stampede each one first tried to tidy up his bed (the block leader would not tolerate the smallest wrinkle in the bedding) and dress himself. There was no question of washing. Ten minutes after the gong had sounded the "room eldest" arrived and kicked everyone out into the corridor as the "rooms" had to be cleaned. The corridor was thronged with people who flocked together from all over the block. Most of them had managed to get dressed. There was really scarcely room to move in this crowd and we were pushed against walls and squashed into corners and often kicked or hit for no apparent reason. After having been in the camp for over 24 hours, we finally received some cold, unsweetened coffee, after which there was a further wait of one and one-half hours until roll call; then all the prisoners were taken to work. The newcomers were at first told to fill in questionnaires in which they had to indicate an address where they desired their letters to be sent. It was strictly forbidden not to give an address or not to write, as "they" obviously needed an address to which the death of a prisoner could be reported when the need arose.

Each of us was issued a piece of cloth with a triangle and his number painted on it, which we were instructed to sew on our tunics. Prisoners were numbered from No. 1 onwards, and in November, 1943 the last consecutive serial number had reached 170,000. The triangles in question were of different colors, each representing a category of criminal or prisoner. The "Aryan" triangle was red, the red corresponding to a political prisoner, green to professional criminals, black to "work-shirkers," pink to homosexuals (according to paragraph 175) and

000459

violet to members of the "Bibelforscher" religious sect. In addition, a large letter indicated the nationality of the prisoner, such as "P" for the Poles, etc. For Jews the insignia was composed of a yellow triangle on which was sewn a second triangle whose color corresponded to the "crime," the whole forming a Jewish star. From this marking system one could therefore rapidly pick out, for instance, a Polish Jewish political prisoner or a Jewish "work-slacker," etc.

When we had finished sewing on our triangles and numbers, we were herded over to the "infirmary" where we were to be "examined" by a German doctor regarding our physical aptness for work. Again we had to undress and stand in a chilly corridor for almost three hours, shivering, as the weather was still very cold even at the end of March. We met old acquaintances who were working in the infirmary and their first concern was to have news of their relatives. Upon the doctor's arrival we had to present ourselves in groups, standing stiffly at attention. All that was required of us was to stretch out an arm, move the fingers, turn around and march off. The examination consisted of nothing more and all of us were, of course, considered fit for work. Hadn't we come here for this very purpose and besides, didn't "Work bring freedom?" We knew only too well what it meant to be considered unfit for work: being taken away and condemned to "liquidation" by gas. At last we received our first warm nourishment in 36 hours. The camp food consisted of coffee or cold tea (made from acorn leaves, etc.) in the morning and soup, thick or thin as the case might be, at midday. From the time of our arrival at the camp we had soup made from water and turnips during fully five months. After evening roll call we received 300 grams of bread, although its weight was usually considerably diminished by the time it reached the prisoner. On Mondays and Saturdays, 300 to 400 grams of cheese were distributed. It was some sort of a crude home-made, peasant cheese which often contained more worms than cheese. Rations further included 1/2 kilo of margarine for twelve persons, distributed every Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday, and blood sausage or red sausage on Wednesdays and Mondays. These rations represented approximately 300 to 400 grams. In addition to margarine on Tuesdays and Fridays we also received a spoonful of marmelade per person. Since the barrel, however, bore a label stating that the marmelade was destined for the camp, its quality was correspondingly bad. Theoretically, the above are the rations each inmate received but, practically, a good part of them were stolen before they were actually distributed. In the evening, tea or coffee was distributed with the bread. The soup had to be licked up, as most of the prisoners did not possess spoons. I forgot to mention that we had to eat our food squatting on our haunches as a punishment by the room eldest to us newcomers for having crowded around the soup kettle during distribution.

000460

After our meal we were sent to the identification service where photographs from three different angles were taken. So on that day the camp picture gallery was increased by 60 more criminals! One by one we were called up, and I noticed that my comrades came out of the photographer's room looking frightened. Beware! It was my turn. I was seated on a chair and photographed. When I tried to get up, the floor started moving and, losing my balance, I was thrown against the wall. It was a practical joke played by the photographers, (all of whom are Poles) in setting the revolving platform in motion when one got up. It was not surprising that they sometimes had to have some kind of amusement even at the expense of their camp comrades. We then returned to our quarters and by that time the roll call was again due. So ended our second day in camp; and the next morning we were to be marched off to work with all the other inmates.

All the prisoners had to work except the sick, those in "quarantine," and those confined to their cells. The total camp strength was divided into camp commandos or squads which were each headed by a "Capo," or leader, and several foremen. At the head of large working units was a "Chief Capo" who was assisted by several "Capos" and foremen. The size of one of these squads varied from one to several hundred men. Although the Capo was really in charge, a foreman often took over a group of ten, twenty, or thirty workmen. The head of the labor administration chose the "Capos," with the consent of the "Chief Capo," the prisoners being assigned to squads by the central administration. Work started after the morning roll call, i.e. in summer from 5 a.m. to 12 m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., in winter from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. without interruption. There were workshops for craftsmen, farmers, industrial workers, and various technical trades. Many, particularly those in favor, worked in the camp administration. The camp was provided with an "infirmary," a "canteen," a laundry, a bakery, and a slaughter house. Thus prisoners with certain technical training could, in principle, work in their own trades. Intellectuals, liberal professional men, shop keepers, or office workers were the worst off and they represented fully 70 percent of the total number of prisoners. The latter were all employed as unskilled labor in the worst and hardest jobs, such as the coal and gravel pits. The mortality among them was frightfully high. But it seemed to be the aim of the camp administration to kill them off as rapidly as possible.

000461

II. MY FIRST DAYS IN CAMP - THE "INFIRMARY"

My first job was with a demolition squad. Since the area surrounding the camp of AUSCHWITZ had been evacuated for a radius of almost 100 kilometers, all buildings, unless taken over by the camp, had to be torn down. Even new buildings were demolished. Our work consisted in tearing down such houses and was exceedingly strenuous, particularly since we were expected to work at top speed. A squad consisting of 50 men was supposed to demolish a large building within three to four days; and we were instructed to salvage all building material. The roof of a house, for instance, had to be carefully taken down and all planks, beams, tiles, etc., stacked away. Nothing was to be broken; in fact, the slightest damage to anything resulted in an immediate and severe beating with a shovel or pick handle. The walls had to be broken down literally by hand, brick by brick, the cement sticking to each brick being afterwards removed and the bricks piled neatly up. Even the foundations had to be torn out and the ground afterwards levelled so that no trace of the house remained. Many men died at this work, not only from exposure and the strain, but from falling walls and beams - especially those who were elderly or slow. From the 50 who set out in the morning seldom more than 40 returned on their own legs. The remainder were either brought as corpses or in a state of complete collapse in wheelbarrows or on boards. These poor souls still were expected to appear at evening roll call, after which they were taken to the infirmary. From my working comrades who went there I never saw one alive again.

My work with this squad lasted over a month. I was then transferred to the ditch-digging squad. Trenches of from 2 1/2 to 3 meters deep had to be dug, and for the last 50 centimeters we worked standing in water. We were, of course, not allowed to leave the trench during work, and this job was considered as one of the hardest in the camp. Many died at it daily. Some time later I was shifted to the "concrete squad" where I had to heave heavy posts and sacks of cement; but after the arrival of new prisoners I was detailed to the making of concrete bricks. This had the advantage of at least being work under a roof, which was very important inasmuch as work went on regardless of the weather.

In addition, the prisoners were continually mistreated and struck by commando leaders, Capos, and foremen. In general, anyone holding a commanding position in the camp liked to give special emphasis to his position of superiority. Naturally, the character of the person concerned played a considerable role; but the fundamental rule was the direct responsibility of the superior

000462

for his inferiors, each individual being in turn responsible to the collectivity.

These circumstances fostered the "stool pigeon" system. For example, one day a working comrade discovered a few pieces of turnip which he carefully hid. He continued his work but, from time to time, took surreptitious bites off his treasure. Another prisoner having "squealed" on him, the Capo arrived a few minutes later. It must be remembered that the Capo is absolute master of his commando, and that everybody tries to get into his good graces. Unfortunately, this favor often had to be attained to the detriment of the well-being or sometimes even of the lives of other prisoners. The Capo proceeded to search our comrade and, finding the pieces of turnip, knocked the weakened man to the ground, hitting him brutally about the head and face and in the stomach. He then ordered him to sit up, hands outstretched in front of him on the ground with a weight of bricks on each hand; the pieces of turnip were stuck in his mouth. All the men were then assembled and informed that the unfortunate man was to stay in this position for a whole hour. We were warned that this punishment would befall any member of the commando who committed a similar "offense." The condemned man underwent this ordeal guarded by one of the foremen, very eager to fulfill his task to the satisfaction of the Capo, so that he hit our friend every time he tried to shift his position slightly. After 15 to 20 minutes the man became unconscious, but a bucket of water was poured over him and he was again forced into his original position. After he had slumped over senseless for a second time, his body was thrown aside and nobody was allowed to pay further attention to him. After roll call that evening he was taken to the "infirmary" where he died two days later.

Or another example: on Easter Monday, 1942 the weather was extremely bad with a heavy snowfall. We were sitting in the mud scraping cement off bricks, frozen half stiff. Suddenly the Commando Chief appeared and barked the following order: "Discard caps, coats and jackets!" Sick with fear for what might follow, we obeyed and continued working in our shirt sleeves. The Capo sneered at us: "You dirty Poles, now you can celebrate!" A young prisoner, not more than 16 years old, had hidden in a trench. He was terribly thin and so trembling with the cold that he evidently did not hear the order. Or perhaps he didn't care whether he heard it or not. The Capo, however, had meanwhile staggered off (he was half drunk) since he didn't intend to remain out-of-doors in this wretched weather. As a matter of fact, he cared very little about the prisoners; the sooner they died, the better. The snow had stopped falling, but in the cold wind we froze in our shirt sleeves; certain death awaited us. Nobody knew when the Capo might come back, perhaps in a moment,

000463

perhaps in a week, or in a month. While we waited, the snow started to fall again. A few foremen came running in our direction from a stove around which they had been sitting, to see how we are getting on with our work. One of them discovered the hidden youngster and shouted: "All your clothes off, at once, you swine!" As the kid did not react, the foreman pounced on him and started beating him: "Undress or I will beat the life out of you or, better still, I will report you to the chief." At that moment the Capo arrived. A sharp blow of a whistle: "Fall in!" We formed our columns and knew that it meant "sticking together." We were led into an open space where we sank ankle-deep in mud. Now the "sport" started. "Down! Up! Quick march! etc." We literally rolled in the mud. "Flatten out! Jump! Run! Hands out front!" We were covered with mud from head to foot and scarcely able to stand. The "exercise" had now been going on for about half an hour. To finish we had to do "push up" exercises, alternately lying down flat and supporting our bodies on our hands. "Up, Down, Up, Down!" The Chief of the Commando inspected the rows and saw an old man who was unable to continue. Immediately an SS guard threw himself upon him and kicked him in the head and face with heavy hob-nailed boots. When at last the poor old man gave no further sign of life, he was left alone. We were then allowed to stand up and continue with our work. The badly injured man was carried over to a dry spot among piles of bricks. He opened his eyes, tried to say something but couldn't utter a word; and we had to leave him as in the meantime the order was given to resume work. The result was that at the end of the day we carried home another corpse. But we had grown used to it. We marched and sang jolly German songs, as the Capo wanted it to be so. The Commando Chief walked alongside the group; he grinned: "You do sing well!"

During my work in the "concrete squad" I caught pneumonia (as was found out later). At the beginning I avoided the "infirmary" and hoped I would get over it. I knew too well what happened there and that seldom one left the place alive. But I became so weak that I could hardly move, and finally had to give in. I became completely indifferent. In one way I was lucky that my friends in the "infirmary" took care of me so that I was then able to enjoy "privileged" conditions. When I entered the "Krankenbau" it was composed of three different buildings: Block 28 - internal illnesses -, Block 20 - infectious illnesses -, Block 21 - surgery. Later on three new "blocks" (Blocks 19, 9, and 10) were attached to the "infirmary." They composed the so-called "Hygiene Institute." Here, sterilizing by X-ray treatment, artificial insemination of women, as well as experiments on blood transfusions were carried on. Male and female prisoners, especially Jews, served as "guinea pigs" for these experiments. This "block" was completely isolated from the rest of the camp so that news from it reached us only very seldom.

000464

It was not easy to be admitted to the "infirmary," as the "minimum" symptom was a fever of from 38.6 to 39 degrees (C). Light cases of fever were not admitted. All applications for transfer to the "infirmary" had to be submitted to the chief of one's own "block," who had the right to reject any such request. Then the sick person had to wait for hours in the courtyard of the "infirmary" before being called in for preliminary examination. If the doctor (a prisoner) considered him worth treating, he had to undress and usually take a cold bath before being presented to the German doctor, after further long hours of waiting. The sick were classified into two groups, "Aryans" and Jews. These groups were again subdivided into further groups, of which the first included the sick who were to remain in hospital, being considered "curable." The second consisted of extremely run down patients, chronic cases, and the half-starving or mutilated whose recovery could only be effected by a long stay in the hospital. This group was practically condemned to death by phenol injections in the heart region. Facial considerations played an important role. An "Aryan" really had to be seriously ill to be condemned to death by injection, whereas 80 to 90 percent of the Jews "hospitalized" there were "eliminated" in this manner. Many of them knew about this method and applied for admission as so-called "suicide candidates," not having the courage to throw themselves on to the high tension wires.

This situation lasted during the whole of 1942 until the time the mass extermination of interned Jews at AUSCHWITZ began. Danger of death by injection did not only threaten the newly-arrived hospital cases or casualties. From time to time (usually once a month) the German doctor used to effect a minute control of all the sick. In each ward an attendant (usually a doctor) had to "present" each patient and give full account of his illness. If the patient's stay happened to have exceeded a month, or if he were very weak, he was listed. The German doctor always kept the sick records of the condemned so as to avoid any attempt at interference on the part of the prisoners themselves. Each such special check-up by the German doctor usually resulted in a list of 200 to 400 men condemned to death, while the "normal" death list of the daily routine inspection varied from 20 to 80. The injections were given on the same day. The new patients who were booked for the "syringe" (as it was called in the camp jargon) received no clothes and had to remain waiting in the corridor - naked. They were then led from Block 28 to Block 20 where the "operation" took place in a special room. An SS man by the name of KLER, a shoemaker by profession, gave the injections. He had taken up this post in the hospital as a simple SS private, but was later promoted to SS "group leader," although practically a moron. He also

000465

received supplementary food rations and was awarded the Iron Cross. There were days when this psychopath picked out victims from the wards on his own initiative, without instructions from the German doctor, on whom to practice his "technique." He was a complete sadist, torturing his victims with animal-like brutality before putting them to death. Later it was decided that his nerves had been strained by "overwork" so an "assistant" was recruited, a Polish volunteer, by the name of PANSZCZYK, No. 607 from Cracow, who was transferred to Germany during the winter of 1942 where he presumably died. The injections were then sporadically administered by "Sanitätsdienstgehilfen," or given by the chief of the "infirmary." For a certain time, another Pole named JERZY SZYMKOŃIAK, No. 15490, "functioned" voluntarily; he died in the summer of 1943.

The injections were not only administered to the weak and ill, but also to prisoners in the political section who were condemned to death. Apart from this, on one occasion, two groups (the first composed of 40, the second of 80 prisoners) of young and strong youths between the ages of 13 and 16 years were put to death, on the ground that they were "orphans" and could not be considered in the camp as full-fledged workers.

In the autumn of 1942 came the massacre of the IJUBLIN transports which caused great unrest in the camp. One of the sanitary service attendants refused to administer injections, stating that he was an SS man and not a murderer of children. Another attendant had to be summoned to carry out the job. This affair caused a lot of talk and stir as at least 15,000 to 20,000 people lost their lives and even BERLIN asked for an explanation of the high mortality rate in the hospital. The head-doctor, WIRTZ, disclaimed all knowledge of such events and laid the blame on the camp doctor whose name was ENTREST, a German from the POSEN district. A mock inquiry was held at which witnesses from the hospital administration had to testify and the lists of the "deceased" were checked. As "punishment" the camp doctor was simply transferred in the same capacity to the "BUNA." As a result of all this, murdering by means of injections stopped for a while, although it was resumed on a smaller scale soon afterwards for hopelessly sick cases. Many of those condemned to the "syringe" were used as experimental material in the "Hygiene Institute" (Block 10). The injections doubtlessly frightened the prisoners from asking to be admitted to the hospital.

Another major danger in the camp was "delousing," as it was euphemistically called. The whole camp obviously was covered with lice and fleas and large disinfection programs were carried out. However, the results were never apparent and our "washing" always came back almost as full of lice. Actually, the "delousing" was

000466

designed to combat typhus epidemics which had become a real plague at the camp. During these actions everybody was examined and those with bad complexions or in weakened bodily condition were, according to the camp doctor's mood, destined to be gassed. They were simply led to the "infirmary" from where 40 to 50 percent were "evacuated." A "delousing" action which took a particularly large toll in victims was conducted in July, 1942. During the course of this "purge" the weak, those ill with typhus or in post-typhus quarantine, were all sent to BRZINSKI without exception. This method was considered the most radical for eliminating typhus. The way in which those condemned to the gas chambers were transferred to their doom was exceptionally brutal and inhuman. Serious cases from the surgical ward who still had their bandages on, and a procession of exhausted and horribly emaciated patients, even convalescents on the road to recovery, were loaded on to trucks. They were all naked and the spectacle was dreadful in the extreme. The trucks pulled up at the entrance of the block and the unfortunate victims were simply thrown or piled on by the attendants (I frequently witnessed such tragic transports). A hundred people were often jammed into a small truck. They all knew exactly what their fate was to be. The large majority remained completely apathetic while others, mostly patients from the surgery with bloody and gaping wounds or frightful sores, struggled frantically. All around the trucks SS men milled about like madmen, beating back the howling crowd trying to lean out. Every time it was a terrible experience to have to drag our friends to the truck. Most of them were quiet and bid us farewell, but never forgot to remind us: "Do not forget revenge." Under such conditions men's hearts turn to stone. Imagine a prisoner's killing his brother in one of the wards so as to avoid his having to undergo the dreadful trip by truck. (I happen to know the names and immatriculation numbers of these two particular prisoners). It can well be imagined that we just shrugged our shoulders when told the German fairy tales regarding the KATYN incident.

III. THE JEWS

Originally, the camp of AUSCHWITZ was intended only for Poles. It was guarded by a group of Germans (no more than 30 at the beginning) who had been transferred from a German concentration camp. They were prisoners as well but "camp veterans," if such an expression may be used. Most of them had been imprisoned as far back as 1934 and were all more or less professional criminals. But as time went on AUSCHWITZ became more and more of an international camp and the first Jews started to arrive in 1941. They were immediately separated from the "Aryans" and quartered in special "blocks." Although at the time systematic executions were

000467

not an established rule, it can be stated that as a result of bad treatment by SS men, Capos and foremen (the majority of German origin but often Poles who were enlisted by force), a Jew - irrespective of his physical condition - could not last more than two weeks. A young Jew, for instance, who was robust enough to be able to do his work "on the double" (for example pushing a heavily laden wheelbarrow) would most probably be unable to keep it up in the long run. If he should show signs of holding out, he would inevitably be killed sooner or later by such mistreatment as being beaten with a shovel or pick handle.

In those days all the Jews had to work in the "quarry squad." At a trot they had to bring gravel on wheelbarrows from a pit about 15 to 20 meters deep up a steep slope. At the top, SS men and Capos checked their work and the speed at which it was carried out, and anyone considered as "loafing" was simply pushed over backwards when he arrived at the top so that he crashed back down the incline with his fully laden barrow. This was one of the guards' favourite pastimes. Such treatment of Jewish prisoners prevailed from the time the first Jews arrived at the camp until the spring of 1942, when the first large transports of Jews (tens of thousands) began to arrive and the extermination campaign was getting underway. At first there were few Jews at the camp, most of them of Polish origin, who had been sent there along with other Poles. They were immediately separated from the latter. They had been arrested not as a consequence of their being Jewish, but for offenses directed against "the security of the German State." Only from the spring of 1942 on were they rounded up and exterminated "en masse" on racial grounds. Certain large scale preparations had to be made to receive these mass transports and a special concentration camp was opened at BIRKENAU (the Polish name of the village is RAJSKO). Administered by Germans and Poles, the camp was guarded by SS detachments. Conditions were appalling. The camp had no water, no drainage system, and not even the most elementary hygienic installations. The Jews remained in civilian clothes which were marked with red paint. Food was supposed to be distributed to them on a basis similar to that prevailing in AUSCHWITZ, but abuse was flagrant. It often happened that the inmates received nothing to eat for days and then only a small part of the rations they should have had. Altogether they were inhumanly treated. The slightest complaint was punishable by death.

The first large convoys arrived from France and Slovakia. Physically able men and women - those without children or the mothers of grownup children - were sent to the camp of BIRKENAU. The remainder, i.e. old or weak men, women with

000468

small children, and all those unfit for labour, were taken to the Birch Wood (BRZEZINKI) and killed by means of hydrocyanic gas. For this purpose special gassing barracks had been built there. These consisted of large halls, airtight, and provided with ventilators which could be opened or closed according to the need. Inside they were equipped so as to create the impression of bathing establishments. This was done to deceive the victims and make them more manageable. The executions took place as follows: each death convoy consisted of some 8 to 10 trucks packed with the "selectees;" the convoy was unguarded as the whole frightful drama took place on camp territory. A private car containing the camp doctor followed each truck convoy since it was compulsory for him to be present at these mass executions. On their arrival at the gassing establishment, which was surrounded by a double barbed wire fence, men, women, and children had to completely undress. Each of them was given a towel and a piece of soap. Then they were driven into the barrack until it was completely filled up. Everything was hermetically closed, and specially trained SS units threw hydrocyanic bombs through the ventilation openings. After about ten minutes the doors were opened, and a special squad composed exclusively of Jews had to clear away the bodies and prepare for a new group of "selectees." The crematoria had not yet been constructed, although there was a small one at AUSCHWITZ which, however, was not employed for burning these bodies. Mass graves were dug at that time into which the corpses were simply thrown. This continued into the autumn of 1942. By this time extermination by gas was being intensified and there was no more time even for such summary burial. Row upon row of bodies of murdered Jews, covered only by a thin layer of earth, were widely dispersed in the surrounding fields, causing the soil to become almost marshy through the putrefaction of the bodies. The smell emanating from these fields became intolerable. In the autumn of 1942 all that remained of the bodies had to be exhumed and the bones collected and burned in the crematoria (by that time four had been completed). An alternative was to gather the remains of the unfortunate victims into heaps, pour gasoline over them, and leave it to the flames to finish the tragedy. The immense quantity of human ashes thus collected was carted away in every direction to be scattered over the fields where these martyrs had found their last rest.

In the meantime, the crematoria had been finished and the number of arrivals was steadily increasing. Gassing and burning were carried out at record speed but the supply of corpses became so large that occasionally they had to resort to the old method of open air cremation. It is estimated that approximately 1 1/2 million Jews were exterminated in this manner. With the exception of the Polish Jews, the other Jews had no idea what was in store for them at AUSCHWITZ. We were told by Dutch and

000469

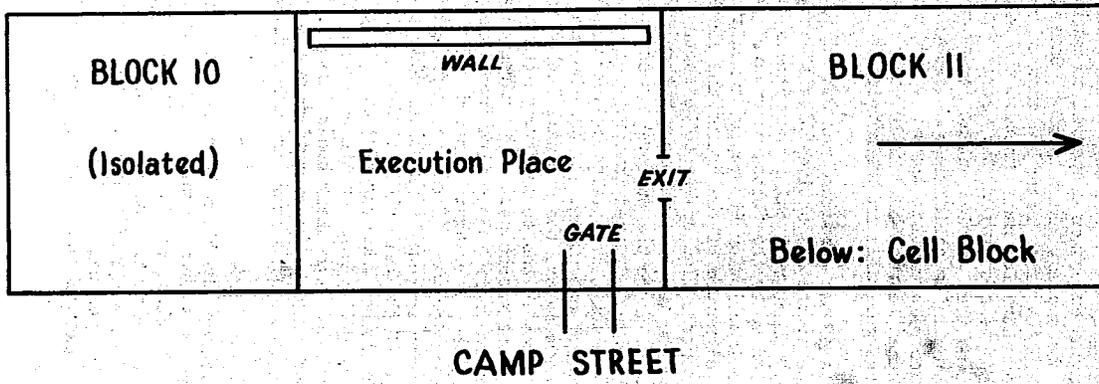
French Jews that the Germans had informed them that they were leaving their country to be transferred to Poland where everyone would be able to continue work in his own profession or, still better, where for each shop, concern, or factory seized by the Germans an equivalent source of livelihood would be put at their disposal. They were to take their whole fortunes with them and liquid cash for at least six weeks. This resulted in considerable amounts of money and valuables being brought to AUSCHWITZ (most of them by Dutch bankers and diamond merchants), most of which was stolen by the camp staff, SS men, and prisoners. The condemned Jews generally faced their fate calmly, although those arriving in 1943 had a clearer idea of what awaited them. The sporadic attempts at rebellion and mass escape, when the freight cars were unloaded upon arrival, were bloodily repelled. The special railway siding reserved for the convoys was surrounded by searchlight and machine gun posts. On one occasion these unfortunate people scored a small success. It must have been during September or October, 1943 after a transport of women had arrived. The accompanying SS men had ordered them to undress and were about to drive them into the gas chamber. This moment was always used by the guards as a good opportunity for looting, and rings and wrist watches were torn off women's fingers and arms. In the confusion resulting from one such attack, one woman managed to snatch the pistol of SS Group leader SCHILLINGER and fire three shots at him. He was seriously wounded and died the next day. This gave the signal for the others to attack the executioners and their henchmen. One SS man had his nose torn off, another was scalped, but unfortunately none of the women was able to escape. Although an attempt was made to keep this incident secret, it resulted in an order's being issued whereby SS men were not allowed to remain in camp after 8 p.m.

The extermination of Jews continued relentlessly, although in the camp tension relaxed to a certain extent. The fate of those Jews admitted to the camp has been described in the sections of my report dealing with the gassing and killing of the ill by means of injections.

IV. EXECUTIONS

Until the summer of 1941 AUSCHWITZ was mainly a concentration camp in which no executions had taken place so far. The first executions came as a surprise for the majority of the camp's inmates. They began in the summer of 1941 when one evening after roll call, various numbers were called up (I well remember there were 18 men from Cracow alone). The men whose numbers had been called were ordered to the stock room, where they had to give up

000470



- 15 -

000471

their clothes and were given old rags (a shirt and pants) in exchange. Then they were taken to the gravel pit and shot with pistols at point blank range. The other prisoners were not allowed to be present at the shooting, but the execution was so arranged that practically the whole camp could witness the proceedings. After the execution a special commando was designated to bury the bodies. This incident caused a great deal of unrest within the camp, as we had assumed until then that deportation to a concentration camp excluded the death penalty for offences against the security of the German State. From this day on executions were carried out at more or less regular intervals, the victims being called up on Tuesdays and Fridays. Later a special place of execution was set up within the camp's boundary, an open space between "Blocks 10 and 11" where executions took place generally in the morning.

The index cards of the condemned men were sent from the chief clerk's office to the respective "blocks" and in the morning, immediately after roll call, the numbers of the prisoners were called up by the "block recorder." If the index card bore the inscription "to report immediately after roll call" and the signature of the "recording clerk," it meant that the prisoner called up was to be shot. The "block recorder" assembled the victims and brought them over to the chief clerk's office. There the numbers, names, and dates of birth were checked again. Ordered into rows of five by the camp eldest and the block eldest (also prisoners), they were then marched to the place of execution. If the shooting was only to take place a few hours later, the men were locked up in cells. If the execution, however, was to be carried out at once they were taken first to the washhouse. They undressed and their numbers were marked on their thighs with indelible pencil. After these preparations, they were again lined up in fives and then sent out to the execution wall (first four men and then two at a time). The men were led out by the block eldest of "Block 11" or then by the Capo of the cell block (a Jew), who took hold of the hands of the condemned and dragged them out to the wall where he stood between the two. In the beginning the condemned were forced to kneel and bend their heads forward, but later they were usually shot standing. The executioners shot their victims in the back of the head with a short-barrelled rifle which made a muffled report.

After the execution the "body bearers" went into action and removed the corpses to a nearby stable where they were thrown on a heap of straw. The blood stains were removed and the emplacement prepared for the execution of two further victims. After the whole group had been liquidated, the bodies were kept in "Block 28" until the evening. At dusk all the bodies, including those of other prisoners deceased during the same day, were

000472

piled on to a big cart and pulled to the crematoria. Later, the corpses were also removed from the place of execution in coffins and, if a considerable number were involved, a truck was used for this purpose. These "death transports" always took place during hours of curfew, as the camp authorities wished to keep the executions as secret as possible, in which they were, however, not particularly successful.

As mentioned before, such executions started during the summer of 1941 and reached a peak in 1942 with the transfer of "disciplinary companies" from AUSCHWITZ to RAJSKO (BERKENAU) towards the end of May, 1942. Together with a large group of "Muselmänner" ("Muselmann" was a term applied in camp jargon to convicts utterly exhausted by starvation or over work) many young and sturdy men were selected and drafted into these "disciplinary companies." They were all marked with a large red dot, as in these special groups the inmates were differentiated by red dots on their chests and backs for offences committed in civil life and by black circles for "crimes" committed in the camp itself. Such "companies" were made up of about 500 men of whom, every second day, 10 to 15 were shot. The rest of them had to work extremely hard and await their turn. At the same time mass executions started in AUSCHWITZ (middle of May, 1942). Once, twice, or three times a week, 40 to 60 men were simply picked out and shot. Restlessness increased in the camp, when by the middle of June the situation had not changed, to a point approaching open rebellion, especially after one mass execution which cost the lives of 120 prisoners. The camp administration apparently got wind of this and, during a roll call sometime in June, it was announced that executions would cease and the death penalty would be abolished. It was true that the prisoners reacted with deep distrust, but on the whole the news had a quieting effect on everybody. And, in fact, there was a pause of 1 to 1 1/2 months after which executions began again, although less often and only in small groups. This state of affairs continued until October, 1942 when one of the largest mass executions ever held took 247 victims, all Poles from the LUBLIN and PODHALA districts. Terror broke out in the camp as a result, although again many reacted with complete apathy. This ended a ghastly series of executions of prisoners who, upon arrival in the camp, were already condemned to death. But some of them had been in camp over a year without knowing that their fate was already sealed. It often happened, for instance, that a prisoner selected for execution would be lying ill in the hospital but, as the sentence had to be carried out, he received a deadly injection in his bed. The famous Polish actor Witold ZACHAREWICZ was murdered in this way.

000473

All this, of course, did not mean that October, 1942 saw the end of the execution of prisoners brought to AUSCHWITZ with death warrants already signed. Only the method underwent certain changes. In the early days, for instance, the Aryan prisoners had always been given numbers and then incorporated into the camp. Later a new method was evolved consisting in immediately dividing the newcomers into two groups: those condemned to death and those who were to remain as regular inmates. The first group was not allotted serial numbers but directly transferred from the "block leader's" central office to the cells in "Block 11." The executions took place there and the arrivals were either shot at once or a few days later. This procedure was adopted in an attempt to keep the whole matter secret, and executions were only carried out late at night. In addition, the camp inmates were led to believe that only "civilians" were submitted to this radical treatment (it must be stated that only a permanent camp inmate was considered a "prisoner," whereas newcomers, without numbers and who had not yet joined the ranks, were still designated as "civilians"). So as long as only "civilians" were executed the regular inmates were not particularly upset.

Executions of "prisoners," however, did not cease altogether. The camp administration was extremely severe regarding discipline and respect of camp rules. For the slightest omission one was marched off to the execution cells and, of course, never returned. Things became even worse when the political section (meaning the camp Gestapo) decided to take charge of the punishment of petty internal offences. The frequent result was that they decided questions of life and death according to their own judgment. Bribery became the order of the day. Among the "offences" for being locked up in the execution cells were: being "politically suspect" on the grounds of having contacted "civilians" in the camp, spreading political news or commenting on the German High Command's communiques, drunkenness, theft (foodstuffs, gold, precious stones), premeditated escape, etc. The death cells were always overcrowded and every now and then they had to be "evacuated." This took place as follows: the camp leader, chief of the political section, GRABNER by name, dashed in, accompanied by a number of SS men as drunk as himself. They went from cell to cell, taking down the particulars of each occupant's case, the reason for his punishment, etc. If the camp leader had a list of those condemned to death in hand, the prisoners could consider themselves lucky, inasmuch as it might not yet be their turn. But usually no notice was taken of such a list. What decided the individual prisoner's fate was mainly the impression he made on this gang of drunkards and the mood in which the camp leader happened to be. There was no question of considering the actual penalty. If the impression he made was not too unfavourable, the prisoner remained in his cell to await his execution at a later date unless he went to his death voluntarily. The whole

000474

inspection was accompanied by a great deal of vile language and brutal treatment. Usually 85 to 90 percent of the death cell occupants were "evacuated" and shot in front of the wall so that space was again available for new arrivals. The camp in general was, of course, never informed of this secret justice nor who were its victims. It is true that the relatives of the victims were duly informed, but the cause of death was always given as being "natural." An incredible amount of paper was wasted compiling fake records of illnesses, fever charts, etc., destined to justify each single death. Death announcements were telegraphed never more than at the rate of two a day so as not to arouse suspicion on the "outside." From the beginning the executions were carried out by a single man: first, by "Oberscharführer" PALITSCH, who was later sent to an officers' training center, and then by "Scharführer" STIWETZ, who still performs these duties. Executions of women were reported from AUSCHWITZ, but in small numbers. On the other hand, great numbers of people were shot after having been brought in by truck straight from freedom or from prisons. In two instances whole families were executed, parents together with their children. In one case, an infant a few months old ended his short life in the arms of his mother before the execution wall.

000475