

ONE DAY IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP

German Refugee Describes His Actual Experiences

IT is summer, about three a.m. The sky still is quite dark. The barracks of the concentration camp are in complet quietness. The borders of the camp are indicated by a wreath of big sharply luminous lamps set up on the fence of barbed wire. Between them red lamps are burning. They tell the prisoners, that the wire is leaded with high tension of electrical current electrocuting instantly everybody who would dare to touch it.

Morning

Now it is twenty past three o'clock in the morning. Suddenly a whistle is heard. The light is switched on in the barracks. The prisoners have to get up. Swearing and grumbling they get their trousers, boots, socks and coats. They are dressed in less than five minutes. Then every man folds together both blankets and leaves the "bed room."

Few men only remain piling up about ninety straw mattresses to ten stacks of nine pieces at the back wall of the room. The blankets about hundred and eighty—for two each inmate—are put into a corner. Then the room is swept and the windows cleaned. This is "bed-room duty." The men—each day they are changed—do not like it. For they always are in danger, that a Black Guard is not satisfied with cleaning and sweeping and then they are punished very hard. Moreover this "duty" takes about an hour of the free time.

Meanwhile the other men have crowded wash room and lavatory. To-day the fact is very much discussed, that since ten days to-day is the first "normal" day. For during ten days all prisoners of the barrack—that means three hundred and sixty men—had to stand on the main place of the camp after the work until the barracks were closed at about nine p.m. This was practised in each weather. Moreover they got no supper, and after having prepared the straw mattresses and cleaned the boots it became about half past nine p.m., until they could sleep. Wakened again already before half past three in the morning, they only got not quite five hours sleep. Thus several people fainted from weakness. The reason for this punishment was, that in the rubbish box belonging to 360 men, several pieces of bread were allegedly found.

Back to "Normal"

But to-day inmates are glad, that this is over now. Nevertheless in the wash room and lavatory—much too small for so many people—prisoners press and push against each other using the most terrible swearwords. Many people do not wash themselves. They only dip their soap and toothbrush into water. Thus nobody can punish them for not having kept clean these implements and nobody can punish them for not having used them. In this not very hygienic manner prisoners save time and danger to be punished.

Meanwhile "the kitchen duty" has brought the bucket with black coffee. Now prisoners are in the "living room" drinking the coffee and eating their bread or other food bought privately. Many of them have no stool and room on the table. But they are pleased to lay on the ground, because thus they cannot be made responsible for soiling stool and table.

At about half past four the prisoners have to leave the barracks in each weather, because the "Room duty" has to clean all rooms. Thus prisoners walk up and down often talking together. Their

In our issue of February 9 we printed an account by an Austrian refugee of the methods adopted in Germany for listening-in to foreign broadcasts. We have now persuaded the same refugee to describe his actual experiences in a concentration camp. We asked for an ordinary day, not a day of horrors; and we print his account exactly as he wrote it.

chief matter is the day of the dismissal. For nobody in the camp knows, how long its detention will last.

Work Starts

At half past five prisoners form ranks and walk to the main place of the camp, where every morning and evening a counting call is held. At six o'clock



CONCENTRATION CAMP HORRORS, such as those revealed in this article, prompted President Roosevelt (above) to make his famous "quarantine" broadcast in which he advocated the drawing of a moral cordon round the Nazis by liberty-loving nations

the call is finished and the work starts. It is mostly work with pick and shovel under open air. To-day it is a nice morning, but it will become a hot summer day. Soon people are perspiring. Often a wind blows and the men not used to work under open air get cold and bronchitis in the nicest summer time. Nevertheless they have to work further. Many of the prisoners as former brain workers cannot perform the work. But driven by Black Guards and foremen and threatened always to be punished on account of "leaziness in work" they often get durable damages of heart and feet troubles. Of course prisoners know very well the proverb of the concentration camp: "Work not only by hands, but by eyes too." That means work only if a Black Guard or a foreman is near. But nevertheless there are too much watching men, as that this proverb could help very much. Many people not being able to keep pace are beaten by Black Guards or punished

otherwise. Everybody is glad, when at 11 o'clock a.m. the work in the morning is over. Some men cannot return to the barracks. They fainted and fell down during the work. The hot day was too much for them.

Afternoon and Evening

At one o'clock p.m. the work starts again after officially two hours rest. But really bringing food for the lunch from the kitchen, washing the dishes, cleaning the room or other things regularly reduce this time to one and a half hours. To-day the prisoners look up to the sky with sorrowful eyes. The clouds have sticked together to blue-black piles. Thunder is heard. Suddenly it begins to rain awfully. Very soon prisoners are wet to their skin. For they are not allowed to enter into the neighbouring barracks. Their "uniforms" made by some substitute begin to stink. To-morrow in the morning they will be not yet dry. Thus prisoners have to work on the following day in wet dresses. They will feel very cold, if the wind blows—the best source for big colds and rheumatism. But now for the moment they are glad. They enjoy now the only advantage of the rainfall. For it drives away Black Guards. Foremen too prefer it to shelter under a tree or to walk to a more protected place in stead to supervise the work. Thus the prisoners have not to work so hard, if it is raining. But they feel now very cold—a circumstance, which can lead easily to disease and above all to the feared pneumonia, a chief cause of death in the camp with his too much open air life.

After a time the thunderstorm is finished. The nice day has changed into a cool and rainy afternoon and evening. Many prisoners have to blow their nose. Because most of them have no handkerchiefs they do it with their hands. Meanwhile Black Guards and foremen have appeared again. Now they recover, what they missed of driving on during the thunderstorm. Nevertheless finally it becomes six o'clock and the work is finished.

A New Face

At a quarter past seven the evening counting call is held. After half an hour—at a quarter to seven—the desired command "Dismiss" sounds and prisoners walk to their barracks. Arrived in the room the prisoners see a new man among the group bringing food. They ask the room senior for the former man. He tells: "This man has brooken down in the afternoon carrying his wheelbarrow. After the thunderstorm the ground was so soft, that men had to work very hard, because the wheels of the barrows always sunk deep into ground. A Black Guard came driving on the men. Our fellow X—the missing man—could not keep pace. Threatened by cuffs and punishment by the Black Guard he worked as long as he become unconscious. He was taken in the hospital. I don't know if he lives still."

Thoughts

Silently prisoners eat their meal. Many of them think, that the same can happen to them every day.

At half past seven the "bed room duty" has prepared the straw mattresses again and prisoners have now not quite seven hours. They speak still a bit together thinking of their family, their future life, but too of the frighths of the winter, where prisoners had to use newspapers as protection against the cold. . . . Suddenly a man speaks: "Again a day nearer to the freedom." It was Paul Morgan, a well known Viennese actor. Famous by his Anti-Nazi jokes, which he had made before the establishment of the Hitlerism in Austria he instantly after Austria's nazification was sent to the concentration camp. Always encouraging his fellow prisoners, he did not more see freedom. He died in January of 1939 by pneumonia.