

# Life in Dachau Camp One of Constant Fear

## Austrian Jew, Now a Refugee in Detroit, Continues Story of Sordid Existence During Nazi Pogrom

*Editor's Note—This is the second of three articles in which a Viennese Jew, an officer in the Austrian Army in the World War and now a refugee in Detroit, describes his experiences during and immediately after the anti-Semitic pogrom in Greater Germany last November. For obvious reasons, his name must be withheld.*

As Told to PHILIP A. ADLER

Four days after my arrest in Vienna in connection with the pogrom throughout Greater Germany, on Nov. 10, I was taken to the Dachau concentration camp. The intervening four days were spent under undescrivable tortures and with but one meal. I was not allowed to sleep during the four nights.

Dachau to Jews of the Third Reich has become a symbol for all the horrors of the inquisition: a synonym for a death sentence.

Indeed, immediately on our arrival at Dachau, several prisoners, severely injured by their convoy during their 14-hour trip from Vienna, implored their new jailers to have them shot. They were shot. Whether some specific reason was given by the jailers for the shooting, I do not know.

Formalities of registration of the new prisoners at Dachau took up all day. We were then marched to our barracks. Our guards took away from us our clothing, underwear, documents and money. We were given a bath, a close haircut and the special uniform prescribed for Jews—a pair of linen pants, a cotton blouse and no underwear.

### PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN

We were photographed. You can imagine how nice we looked after what we had been through.

At that time the Dachau camp held about 12,000 Jewish and 8,000 Aryan prisoners. (The Nazi classification of Germans as Aryans and Jews is followed by the narrator.) Aryan prisoners told me that during August and September the Dachau camp was considerably enlarged in anticipation of Jewish prisoners. This conflicts with the official Nazi assertions that the pogrom of November had been provoked by the murder of a Nazi official in Paris early that month.

Our camp was about 1,500 steps long, 500 wide. It was surrounded by lines of barbed wire, highly charged with electricity; by a moat and a high wall. Inside the camp rose about a dozen watchtowers surmounted by machine guns. All night powerful reflectors operated from these towers.

Such work in the camp as cooking, policing, sanitation and minor clerical duties were performed by the Aryan prisoners. The activities of the numerous Nazi elite of the Schutz Staffel, or S.S., as we called them, were confined to administrative and guard duties. Camp discipline was maintained through kicks and punches.

### CAMP OVERCROWDED

The camp was divided into many blocks. Every block held two barracks. Every barrack was composed of four wards. Every block was in charge of a block sergeant assisted

by four wardens or "Zimmerkommandanten"—all picked from among the Aryan prisoners.

The camp was overcrowded. My ward, designed for 50, held more than 200 prisoners. Men slept on straw sacks—two men to a sack for one—or just on thin layers of straw on the earthen floor. Our only bedclothes was a thin cotton blanket.

Next to the living-and-bedroom was the toilet-and-washroom. Quite modern in appearance—naturally, without hot water—it was too small—one for two wards. The 400 inmates were allowed 10 minutes for their morning cleanup. One can imagine the chaos.

Jews and Aryans lived apart in Dachau, each group in its own barracks. Outside of matters pertaining to work and service, no conversation between the two was allowed. This regulation, however, was frequently violated. Most of the Aryans had been in the camp since Hitler's advent to power, six years before. As there have been no amnesties for political prisoners in the Third Reich, the only hope for freedom for these Aryans is in an overthrow of the Nazi regime.

### UNIFORMS SHOW CRIMES

Individual liberation, however, was possible for them when by their general conduct they convinced their jailers of the Schutz Staffel that they had undergone a complete change of heart. They then were made to take an oath of fealty to the National Socialist Party.

The uniforms worn by the Aryan prisoners showed the nature of their crimes. A red triangle on the blouse indicated that the prisoner was a Communist, Socialist or Democrat. A brown badge showed a work dodger. Black insignia symbolized the so-called "anti-social" groups. Green marked the vagrants, usually gypsies. Blue pointed out homosexuals, and violet stood for Bible students (the German sect of Bibel-forschar). The vast majority of these Aryans were political offenders.

Much has been written about the martyrdom of these Aryan prisoners, but only a person who has lived in a Nazi concentration camp knows what the suffering is like. Only the physically and spiritually powerful among the prisoners have survived.

During the six weeks of my confinement at Dachau, there was a continuous inflow of Aryans at the camp. I got there about six weeks after the "glorious conquest of the Czecho-Slovak Sudetenland" and the Gestapo, or German secret police, was working overtime in the liberated province. Every day our concentration camp received a new shipment of "liberated Sudeten Germans."

### GYPSIES BETTER OFF

Aryan prisoners not engaged on kitchen police, office work or as supervisors over the Jewish prisoners were employed on road building, gardening, or some such physical labor.

The treatment of these Aryans was bad enough. But there was a world of difference between this and that accorded to Jewish prisoners. Even the lowest among the Aryans, that is, the Gypsies, were infinitely better off than Jews. The discrimination was distinct and ran as follows:

Aryans slept on cots; Jews on the earthen floor. Aryans wore underwear, warm clothing, caps, gloves and, in very cold weather, ear

muffs; Jews wore linen pants, cotton blouses, no underwear, no gloves, no ear muffs. Aryans were given twice as much food as Jews—two ladleful of soup or coffee was an Aryan ration; a Jew received but one.

Aryans, under certain conditions, were allowed to receive packages from home; not Jews. Aryans, with their own money, could purchase goods from the camp canteen. The goods Jews could buy at the canteen were very limited. Among the many articles prohibited to Jews were meat and butter. Aryans were allowed a weekly bath and a change of underwear. Underwear was "verbotten" to Jews. During my six weeks at the camp I had but one bath, on my arrival.

### JEWS ARE ENVIED

Despite all these differences, Jews were envied by Aryan prisoners. The reason was this: Most of the Jews had been arrested en masse. There really were no specific charges against them, and hence they stood a chance of liberation. The Aryans had been arrested individually, on specific charges, and had no hopes. How the Aryans could stand it, why they did not commit suicide in greater numbers than they actually did—which were considerable—is beyond me.

Officially, the age of the prisoners varied between 18 and 60. Actually, there had been among us a man of 76. He died shortly after his arrival to the camp. There also was in my ward a boy of 16 who had been arrested with his father. Camp life, hard on a middle-aged man of normal health, meant a speedy death to the old and the sick.

We rose at 5 a. m. The morning cleanup—and then breakfast at 5:30. The black coffee was a substitute, of course. Every ward had to furnish its own food carriers. Although these "waiters" received double rations, there were not among us many volunteers for the jobs. And no wonder.

Attired as we were in practically nothing but a suit of pajamas, it was no fun on a cold winter day to run across the long field which separated the kitchen from the barracks, carrying a 100-pound kettle of food, to the accompaniment of blows and kicks from the S. S. guards.

### NO TIME TO EAT

We had to fall in line outside our barracks to get our rations. The distribution was slow. We often had to wait for the ladleful of soup or coffee so long that we had no time left to eat it. We had to gulp it down in a hurry to be in time for the roll call. By 6 a. m. the dishes had to be washed. This seemed impossible in view of the crowding in the toilet where the dishwashing was done.

We had to stand three roll calls daily—all held outside the barracks. Everybody had to appear in person. Men shaking with fever came wrapped in their blankets. The sick and the crippled who could not walk or stand up were carried by their comrades and supported in line. Prisoners falling dead during the roll call were a frequent occurrence. In such instances, those standing next to the fallen man were not supposed to show any concern. They were not allowed to attend to the body.

Two of the three daily roll calls were known as "Zaehlappele." Thousands of prisoners were then assigned to their tasks. The morning roll call usually lasted from 6 to 8 o'clock. It was hell.

At 8 a. m. began the Jewish daily dozen. Exercises consisted of marching, drilling without guns, of course, and callisthenics—all carried out under the command of our Aryan fellow-prisoners and under the supervision of the S. S. men.

### NO MEAT IN MENU

At 11:30 a. m. we were marched back to the barracks. Then came the usual waiting in line for the ladleful of soup, the hurried meal, dishwashing, cleaning up and the mid-day roll call, followed by more outdoor exercise till 4:30 p. m. Then came the evening roll call, which was supposed to be over by 6 p. m., but actually lasted much longer; followed by dinner, dishwashing, housecleaning, clothes brushing and shoe shining till 8 p. m.

By 8 o'clock every Aryan had to be in bed; every Jew on the floor. Lights were out at 9 p. m.

All this may sound quite harmless. The worries, anxieties and even dangers connected with this routine can be understood only by those who lived in the camp. The food, I must admit, was not bad. It was, however, devoid of meat or fats and was served in insufficient quantity. It was not an inspiring sight after every meal to see our men, especially the young ones, throw themselves on the kettles in an effort to scrape up the bits of food which stuck to their sides.

One never was free from that continually gnawing sensation of hunger.

### NEARLY ALL SICK

Nearly all of us were sick. Most of us suffered with colds, many with frost-bitten toes or ears or something. Some of us had open wounds which refused to heal; many suffered from intestinal disturbances caused by the change in

# Day-Old Waif Left in Church



—By News Staff Photographer

A day-old baby girl, found in the vestibule of St. Anthony Roman Catholic Church, Sheridan and Farnsworth avenues, Saturday night by Mrs. Edith DeFauw, 7703 Hendrie avenue, a parishioner, was being cared for today by nurses at St. Mary's Hospital. A note attached to the baby's clothes asked that it be baptized in the Catholic faith. The baby is shown with NURSE EVELYN CARRON.

diet and drinking water. Many suffered from bronchitis.

All night long people coughed, sneezed and blew noses. Sleep on the hard floor, pressed together as we were like sardines, was not refreshing. All night long the searchlights from the watchtowers played in our sleeping quarters on the floor.

Our hardships were not accidental, not of the kind caused by somebody's oversight. They were parts of a consistent program pursued by the camp administration to exterminate us "by natural means." I have much evidence in support of my contention.

Since we were not given any underwear, many of us Jews contrived to "manufacture" it out of old newspapers. It offered some protection against the cold which was unusually severe last winter.

### PAPER GARMENTS BANNED

This violation of the camp regulations was discovered by our jailers. One day the announcement came over the loud speaker that those caught wearing such underwear would be punished with 25 strokes with the cane (Stocklieben). How else explain such sadism except as a determination to exterminate us?

What money we had in our possession was taken away from us on our arrival to the camp. We then were made to write to our homes for allowances of 15 marks a week for a mess fund. For five weeks not one pfennig of that money was given to us, although, as I found out later, the relatives of many of us had been sending it to us from the very first week.

On our arrival to Dachau, the camp administration took away from us our clothing, underwear, papers—everything. We were allowed to have in our possession belts, suspenders, razors—anything that might help us commit suicide.

The very first night at the camp, a Frankfurt attorney in my ward committed suicide. I saw him hanging. A commission came the next day and investigated the matter with truly German efficiency. No detail was overlooked.

The following day our warden notified the newcomers that suicides were not forbidden at the Dachau camp and that anyone trying to prevent a person from committing suicide or to rescue him after the attempt would be severely punished.

Tomorrow—More about the daily life at the Dachau camp, as well as the story about the narrator's release, will be told in the concluding article.