

# **Dachau:**

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## **Reality and Myth**

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INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL REVIEW



## ***Dachau: Reality and Myth in History***

by John Cobden

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**John Cobden** is the pen name of an American writer whose essays on political issues have appeared in nationally-circulated magazines and major daily newspapers, including the *Hartford Courant* and the *Orange County Register*. His writings on aspects of the Holocaust issue have appeared in *The Journal of Historical Review* and, in translation, in the French journal *Revue d'Histoire Revisionniste*.

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## **Part One**

### **“Extermination Camp” Dachau?: Conditions in the Camp**

One of the most prominent camps featured in the early years of the Holocaust extermination campaign was Dachau. Stories abounded about the many thousands who were exterminated there in gas chambers. Members of a US congressional investigating committee stood inside the alleged gas chamber where so many died, and had their picture taken for the “folks” back home. The congressional commission noted that many prisoners in the camp “were suffering from typhus or tuberculosis,” and that the camp crematory was incapable of handling the large number of victims. However they also stated that this was “due to executions” presumably in the previously mentioned gas chamber. The US Army released a photo of a disinfection chamber at the camp, and told the world that “Gas Chambers, conveniently located to the crematory, are examined by a soldier of the U.S. Seventh Army. These chambers were used by Nazi guards for killing prisoners of the infamous Dachau concentration camp.”<sup>1</sup>

By the early 1960s the “official” Holocaust historians had admitted that all such eyewitness testimony was wrong. No one was ever “gassed” at Dachau.<sup>2</sup> Still, the belief that Dachau was a center for the gassing of concentration camp prisoners has persisted.

Yet one can easily disprove these gassing claims by turning to the documents produced by supporters of the Holocaust extermination story. Often the most important “revisionist” works are not those reproduced by the revisionists but by those who accept the standard “exterminationist” view.

A case in point is the 1988 book by Princeton University history professor Arno Mayer, *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?: The “Final Solution” in History*, which downplays Auschwitz as a center of gassings and admits that most deaths in the German wartime camps, including the so-called “death camps,” were the result of “natural” causes, and not from gassings or executions.<sup>3</sup>

Another book that, remarkably, affirms the revisionist case is *Dachau: 1933–45, The Official History*, by Paul Berben — a startling work in many ways. First published in 1968 in Belgium, it was republished in 1975 by the “Comité International de Dachau,” an organization that “represents the tens of thousands of deportees who were exterminated in the death camp and also those who sur-



vived.” (Berben, p. xiv). The edition consulted in preparing this booklet states that it was “published for sale only at the Dachau Camp Memorial Site.” The preface of this official history of the Dachau camp makes clear that it supports the standard “exterminationist” view of the Holocaust: “Many millions of people suffered the horrors of the concentration camps; millions were exterminated in them. Their crime had been to fight for freedom, for human rights, for the respect due to each and every individual.” Yet, the book itself begins to question the very thesis announced in the preface.

It makes quite clear, for example, that many camp prisoners were interned not because their “crime had been to fight for freedom, for human rights, for the respect due to each and every individual,” but rather because they were common criminals. Berben’s official history also acknowledges (pp. 13–14) that criminals were by no means a negligible portion of the camp population:

The third *main* category of prisoners, was the “criminals.” The S.S. distinguished between two groups in their statistical summaries: the P.S.V. and the B.V.; but both wore the same badges. The P.S.V. (*Polizeisicherungsverwahrte*) were criminals who had served their prison terms, in some case many years since, but they were considered to be dangerous and were held in the concentration camp as a preventive measure (*vorbeugend*) ... The second group, the B.V. (*Befristete Vorbeugungshaft* [temporary preventive detention]; often wrongly called *Berufsverbrecher*, professional criminal), was composed of men who were not released on the completion of their prison sentences but sent straight to the camp.

It seems very unlikely that many of the men in this group were interned because they were fighters for human rights. On April 26, 1945 (three days before the camp’s liberation), the number of criminals in Dachau was 759. (p. 221)

It also seems unlikely that many of the political prisoners, especially the Communists, were advocates of individual rights. In light of the atrocities committed by Communists throughout Europe and Asia between 1917 and 1945 (and later), it is certainly naive at best, and a lie at worst, to paint these people as freedom fighters. And yet most of the prisoners in the camp were political prisoners. Again on April 26, 1945, a camp census shows that 43,401 of the prisoners were there for political reasons. By contrast, the number of Jews in the camp was 22,100, while 128 prisoners had been purged from the *Wehrmacht*, 110 were incarcerated for homosexual behavior, 85 were Jehovah’s Witnesses, and 1,066 were classed as “anti-socials.” (p. 221)

And what of the “thousands of deportees who were exterminated in the death camp” that the Dachau Comité claims to represent. You can’t find them in Berben’s official history. Instead the book outrightly admits that “the Dachau gas-chamber was never operated.” (p. 8) How then were these thousands “exterminated”? The meager evidence offered here does not support the exterminationist view. The total number of deaths in the main Dachau camp, and the smaller satellite work centers, totaled 27,839 between the years 1940 and 1945 — a figure far short of the hundreds of thousands originally claimed. (p. 281) Yet of this total, 2,226 of the prisoners died *after* the American liberation of the camp. In other words, eight percent of the deaths occurred during a single month, when the camp was in Allied hands.

One could make a plausible case against the Allies on the basis of this fact — if it is ripped out of context in the same manner that charges against the Nazis are routinely ripped out of context. Berben’s book provides the Dachau death rate for each month from January 1940 until May 1945. During those 65 months, a total of 27,839 prisoners died — of all causes — or an average of 428 per month. This means that during a single month of Allied control, the death rate was 520 percent higher than average. One might counter by pointing out that most of these deaths were caused by the spread of typhus, which wrecked havoc on the camp in the final months. Exactly!

The typhus epidemic that struck Dachau was devastating, and in spite of all the efforts made by the camp’s medical staff, it continued to spread. The winter of 1944–45 was particularly deadly. From November 1944 until June 1945 — and including the one month (May) when the Allies controlled the camp — a total of 18,296 prisoners died. This was 66 percent of the total number of deaths between 1940 and 1945, and most of these people died from disease. If one adds to this the deaths during the winter of 1943–44, when another major typhus outbreak hit the camp, the total number of victims rises to 19,605, or 70 percent of the total number of deaths during all the war years. (See Table 1)

If the figures in Berben’s official history of Dachau are correct, just 8,234 of Dachau’s remaining deaths could have perished as victims of “extermination.” However, Berben makes quite clear that disease was a constant problem, and that many prisoners died throughout the year of such natural causes. He also points out that numerous individuals committed suicide, that some prisoners believed to be working for the German camp guards were murdered by fellow inmates, and that some were killed in Allied bombings. In March 1942, Berben notes, a single Allied bombing attack against a



**Table 1: Number of Prisoners Who Died at Dachau and in Outlying ("Kommando") Satellite Camps, 1940-1945**

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
January	—	455	142	205	53	2,888
February	17	393	104	221	101	3,977
March	86	321	66	139	362	3,668
April	101	227	79	112	144	2,625
May	87	322	98	83	84	2,226
June	54	219	84	55	78	
July	34	140	173	51	107	
August	119	104	454	40	225	
September	134	73	319	45	325	
October	171	88	207	57	403	
November	273	110	380	43	997	
December	439	124	364	49	1,915	
<i>Totals</i>	1,515	2,575	2,470	1,100	4,794	15,384

This table is taken from *Dachau: 1933-45, The Official History*, by Paul Berben, p. 281. Note that the Dachau death rate fell slightly in 1942, and that by 1943 it had fallen almost 50 percent. In 1943 the death rate was at an all time low. According to the standard "exterminationist" story, though, the German extermination program was in full swing at that time. In 1944, with the reappearance of typhus in the camp, deaths rose dramatically. Note that 66 percent of all deaths at Dachau took place during the final seven months. It should also be noted that during the winter months of 1942-43 another typhus outbreak also struck the camp. There is also an unusually high number of deaths in March 1944: Allied bombings of satellite "Kommando" camps resulted in the deaths of 223 prisoners. (See P. Berben, *Dachau*, p. 95.)

factory where prisoners worked killed 223 inmates. In another case a tunnel collapsed in a factory, killing 22 prisoners, and an Allied bombing at the same site later killed another six. These incidents alone account for 251 deaths in the camp, nearly one percent of the death total. Some prisoners were also executed, contends Berben, mostly by firing squad. But these executions account for only a very small percentage of the deaths in the camp — about .0087 percent. (p. 271)

SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, Berben also notes, actually sought to lower the death rate in the camps as much as possible, which seems odd if the extermination of prisoners was the goal.

Berben writes (pp. 94-95):

The death-rate in the camps forced the SS to take notice. With the help of copious statistics they watched its progress, not to save human lives, but to economize on man-power. On September 30, 1943, [Oswald] Pohl [who headed the SS camp agency] informed Himmler that the number of deaths in August was 40 out of an average work force of 17,300, that is 0.23 percent, whereas the previous months the percentage had been 0.32 per cent. They had achieved a reduction of 0.09. Results were obtained from other camps too. Out of a total strength estimated at 224,000 in August, there had been 4,699 deaths, that is 2.09 percent, compared with 2,23 percent in July: the improvement was therefore 0.14 percent. Himmler congratulated Pohl on the results he had obtained, even though they were difficult to check!

What we find in this official history of Dachau is thus not a confirmation of the "exterminationist" Holocaust view, but rather a repudiation of it. One can quickly account for a very large percentage of the total deaths. And while we don't know how many of the remaining deaths were from "natural" causes, we can reasonably assume that many were due to disease, accidents, suicides, and natural death. This latter category is also important because quite a few of Dachau's prisoners were elderly. "Statistics compiled by the camp administration office on February 16, 1945, list 2,309 men and 44 women aged between 50 and 60, and 545 men and 12 women over 60." (p. 11)

This admission is rather significant because, according to the "exterminationist" view, elderly prisoners were never admitted into the camps as inmates, but were separated from the others immediately upon arrival and then gassed to death. And yet, in mid-February 1945 — when one might assume that the Nazi effort to exterminate Jews and others was near its pinnacle — at this supposed "death camp," we find 2,910 elderly prisoners who, for no apparent reason, missed the gas chamber.

According to the long-standing "official" view of Dachau, the elderly and children were immediately singled out for death because they were incapable of productive work. Yet it is now admitted that, in addition to nearly 3,000 elderly, the camp also housed an unstat- ed number of children. Berben states (p. 175) that a group of prisoners formed an unofficial governing body called the "International Committee," and that this group started a school for the children in the camp:

As has already been mentioned, there were times when even children were imprisoned in Dachau. The International



Committee saw to it that they were not abandoned. A school was organized for Russian children under a Yugoslav teacher, and the older ones were placed in Kommandos [subsidiary work camps of Dachau] where they were looked after by prisoners who tried not only to keep them in good health but to teach them the rudiments of a trade as well.

While the older children were able to work, it is unlikely that this was true of the younger children in the camp. According to the "exterminationist" view, these unemployable children should have been immediately transferred to an "extermination" camp.

When evaluating the "exterminationist" and the "revisionist" views, it is important to take note of day-to-day living conditions and treatment of prisoners in the camps. Under a regime intent on the death of all Jews and other "undesirables," we would expect very little food, medical care, and so forth to be available to the prisoners. There would be no orders to lower the death rate, there would be no elderly or sick prisoners sitting around. All those capable of working would work, and all others would be put to death — the sooner the better. But as even the official history of Dachau camp affirms, the Germans were intent on keeping prisoners alive, even the sick and the elderly.

Dachau was opened March 23, 1933, as one of the first camps established as part of the Nazi concentration system. What Berben reveals about the actual living conditions in the camp refutes the "exterminationist" view of the camp. He writes (p. 4), for example:

The cleanliness of the cook-house caused visitors from the Nazi Party, from Junker schools [training schools for future high-ranking officers] and the Army to remark that the treatment given to men classified as the 'dregs of humanity' was much too good.

Visitors to Dachau, Berben then tells us, could view a museum that was designed to explain the Nazi German concentration camp system. SS personnel also took outside visitors on tours of the camp, Berben goes on to note. We must wonder how bad day-to-day conditions really were if outside visitors were regularly given tours of the camp. (While Berben's history doesn't tell us how long this state of affairs continued, we can assume that after the outbreak of war in 1939, at the latest, such tours were discontinued.)

One outside visitor who provided a contemporary account of conditions in Dachau was an Englishman, Arnold Wilson. He visited the camp shortly after it was established. His account appears in his book, *Walks and Talks Abroad*, which was published by Oxford University Press in 1939. Wilson wrote:<sup>4</sup>

By eight o'clock next morning I was at the gates of the Concentration Camp at Dachau which the Bavarian Police Service, had, without any application on my part, invited me to visit. I carried no special letter, only an ordinary pass, and I was shown round by an officer who clearly was imperfectly informed as to my identity. There were, he told me, some 1,500 men in the camp, as compared with 2,500 six months ago. Of 25,000 men interned throughout Germany in 1933, only 10,000 were now left. He had only a score of Jews in the camp, "much less than the right and natural proportion" he observed. It was an old munitions factory, but for the barbed wire and the sentries in the black uniform of the SS it looked like an *Arbeitsdienstlager* ["labor service camp"]. The men were in tighter quarters: three beds one above the other, as in the cabins of HM's [British naval] transports when I first went East. The kitchens, the food in preparation, the type of



Dachau prisoners on the day of liberation. Few observers compare the condition of these prisoners with those who died. Piles of dead bodies found at Dachau and the other camps generally were made up of emaciated individuals. Emaciation was symptomatic of many of the diseases found in the camps. If testimony of gas chambers is correct the body piles should include prisoners as healthy looking as these.



work being done in the workshops, with no lack of machinery, were all normal to German eyes. There was a canteen, where luxuries could be bought ...

There was the same discipline as in the volunteers' camp; the same routine. A weekly newspaper was circulated, as in the Tegel jail. The men looked neither better or worse fed than in the free camps or the jail, and neither better nor worse clad, except for a punishment squad of a dozen men, clean-shaven in a special dress who, on hands and knees, were weeding a gravel plot. They looked white and harried. I saw the men parading for inspection by the doctor and dentist at work. There were some twenty or thirty waiting, a larger number than one would expect to find in a free camp but of course this camp was men of all ages, mostly over thirty. I saw scarcely any young men. They are not regarded as irreclaimable and were soon sent back to civil life.

Another Englishman, Christopher Sidgwick, visited Dachau two years later, and likewise made public his account. In *German Journey*, published by Hutchinson & Co. (London, 1936), Sidgwick wrote:<sup>5</sup>

... The inside of the camp looked exactly like the inside of the better [German] Labour Corps camps I had inspected near Bremen. The men's quarters were the same army huts. They were properly heated, ventilated, and lighted. They did not smell more musty than those of the Labour Corps. There was a space, a little street, between each row of huts, and the streets were twice the width of a hut. As we came upon these huts we found the streets filled with convicts, some standing about smoking, some cleaning boots, others waiting to be marched off to whatever work there was to be had. As we passed they pulled off their knitted wool caps and braced themselves to attention.

There was no saluting, no heiling of Hitler. X told me that there were five categories of convict. Political prisoners, mostly Communists; Jews; the so-called "Traitors of the Common People"; hardened criminals of the burglar and pocket-picking type; and homosexuals.

With regard to living conditions at Dachau, one of the most amazing features was a brothel that was established there for the use of the prisoners. "During the summer of 1943 [at a time when exterminations are alleged to have been going full scale], Himmler ordered the setting-up of brothels in concentration camps called *Sonderbau* (special building). His aim was to solve the sexual problem, combat homosexual practices, and increase the workers' output ... In mid-December 1944 there were thirteen of these women

in Dachau." (Berben, p. 7) Somehow the vision of a brothel for prisoners doesn't fit in with a policy of exterminating all prisoners.

Similarly remarkable is the fact, confirmed by Berben, that some prisoners could leave the camp by joining the German military. (p. 17). He writes:

During the war individuals were rarely released, and then only German nationals. However, prisoners were exhorted to join the Wehrmacht and SS units, and conditions for enlisting became less and less demanding, in order to fill the gaps. At first the 'politicals' were not permitted the 'honour of bearing arms,' but this ban was lifted in 1944. Already in 1943, criminals had been able to 'redeem themselves' by joining the notorious Dirlwanger Brigade, but in 1944 Dirlwanger suggested to Himmler that 'politicals' should be recruited from the camps, and his proposal was accepted; 194 prisoner volunteers were released from Dachau at the beginning of November 1944 to join the Brigade.

It is also not widely known that prisoners could purchase food from a camp canteen. In the belief that money in the hands of prisoners would make it easier for them to escape, in 1942 a system of "gift coupons" was instituted, and the possession of money was forbidden. Their money would be deposited in accounts for the prisoners, who could then obtain coupons. Berben writes (pp. 60, 69):

The money in their account had to be used for the purchase of articles obtainable at the canteen ... Beetroot jam, oatmeal, sauerkraut, dried vegetables, tinned mussels and fish, cucumbers, condiments, etc. were on sale ... The canteen also stocked articles such as needles and thread, and particularly lotions, creams and perfume: the close-cropped prisoner was invited to buy something to put on his hair!

Berben criticizes SS camp personnel because they "made considerable profits" from the canteen. But even if prices were extremely high, such "considerable profits" would not have been possible without considerable sales.

Dachau was fairly well stocked with items during the early years of the war, but supplies dwindled as the war dragged on. "A large selection of goods could be bought before the war, but the canteen gradually lost its importance, and little by little reached a state when it could offer nothing." (p. 69)

How goods disappeared from the shelves of the canteen may seem irrelevant, but it is actually quite important. If the National Socialist regime had decided to exterminate its prisoners, it reasonably might simply close down the canteen and confiscate the money the



prisoners held in their accounts. Instead the canteen "gradually lost its importance" as goods disappeared from the shelves "little by little." As it happened, goods disappeared "little by little" from all the shelves in all of Germany's stores as the war dragged on. The gradual loss of goods experienced by Dachau's prisoners was like that being experienced by all Germans during the war years.

• What happened in the camp canteen reflected the larger wartime reality of Dachau. Conditions didn't suddenly become horrible. During most of the camp's existence conditions remained rather tolerable, considering that it served as a kind of prison. Berben quotes (p. 43) Wolfgang Jasper, a legation counselor and a member since 1935 of an SS cavalry unit:

We found the camp [in 1937] and the huts in faultless condition and perfectly clean. The prisoners made a very good impression on us and did not seem to be at all hungry. They were allowed to receive letters and parcels, and had a canteen where they could buy things. There were also cultural activities available.

In 1940 conditions in the camp began to decline. The new commandant, Alex Piorkowski, "rarely entered the prisoners' camp. He was not active, and left most things in the hand of his subordinates. They were given a free reign and could treat prisoners as they wished." (p. 48) Piorkowski was removed from this position on September 1, 1942, and later expelled from the Nazi party. He was replaced by Martin Weiss, former Commandant of the Neuengamme concentration camp. Berben notes (p. 49):

Some people emphasize that he [Weiss] introduced a number of humane changes in camp administration, and that he took a personal interest in seeing that his orders were carried out. He forbade Kapos [prisoner administrators] and Seniors to strike other prisoners arbitrarily; he personally inspected reports of punishments; he decided the level of these sanctions, and was present when they were administered so as to prevent abuses. According to 'privileged' prisoners [clergy, high-ranking individuals, and such], he often showed consideration and obtained a good deal of relief for them.

On November 1, 1943, Weiss left Dachau to assume command of the Lublin camp. He was replaced by Wilhelm Weiter, who, Berben reports (p. 50), maintained conditions as they had been: "Few changes were made in the camp due to any personal action of his."

After the war, Weiss was put on trial by the Allies. Berben writes: "In spite of the great number of witnesses who spoke for him during the Dachau trial, Weiss was condemned to death and executed." It



**Jewish babies at Dachau. These Hungarian Jewish women and their babies were photographed on May 1, 1945, two days after the liberation of the camp. The official US Army caption reports that these Jewish babies were born during the final months of German control of the camp. (US Army photo SC 205488.)**

is highly unlikely that a "great number of witnesses" would have defended Weiss if he had been a monster, and if conditions had been really terrible. It is also interesting to note that after moving to Lublin Weiss took the position of Inspector of Camps.

Conditions in Dachau remained fairly decent under Weiter's command. In a number of the German wartime camps, though, prisoners did suffer under the rule of unscrupulous officers. Consequently, the Nazi government convened a special commission to investigate camp conditions and the behavior of camp commandants and officers.

Official investigations of conditions at Dachau were conducted there between May and July of 1944. The Judge who investigated the camp, Berben notes, "thoroughly examined all the internal arrangements. The hospital was in perfect order. He had visited all the buildings. There was no significant overcrowding, and what was specially noteworthy was the astonishingly high number of medical



instruments for the treatment of prisoners." (p. 44)

It seems absurd to claim that the National Socialist regime was exterminating Jews on the one hand while at the same time desperately trying to save the lives of these same people. According to the current "exterminationist" view, the Nazis were using some prisoners as slave labor while simultaneously killing others. However, considering the numbers of people available for forced labor, it seems unnecessary to have expended any medical resources. If mass extermination, along with forced labor, had been the goal, then logically sick prisoners would simply have been left to die. Yet Berben spends quite a bit of time telling us how the National Socialist government continually expanded medical services throughout the war.

When the Dachau camp was first established in 1933, Berben relates, very little medical services were available to prisoners. Later, as the camp was expanded, a hospital was included in "Blocks A and B: they consisted of an operating theatre with modern equipment. Visitors were invariably shown these buildings, because they 'proved' the interest taken by the SS in the prisoners' health." (p. 104) As the war continued, the demand for health services in the camp increased. In 1940, Berben explained (p. 104), the hospital was

extended to Blocks 1, 3 and 5. But it was mainly from 1942 onwards that increasing numbers caused the sick block to be extended: in September of that year it comprised seven blocks, one of which had no wards and was reserve for offices, the pharmacy, the laboratory, and the rooms occupied by the experimental departments. In the second half of 1944, the seven blocks were linked by a long closed corridor, and then the three next blocks, 11 to 15, were added ...

The hospital care given to prisoners is praised repeatedly in Berben's official history (p. 104):

The accommodation was complete and modern, and in normal conditions specialists could have treated all the diseases efficiently. Operations were performed in two well-equipped theatres. The laboratory was well appointed, and all the necessary analyses could be made there until, at the end of 1944, the service was overwhelmed. There was an electrocardiograph and the very latest model of a Siemens X-ray apparatus.

Berben notes (p. 106) that the prisoners benefited from the increase in hospital services:

The effect of these changes on the prisoners' situation was

beneficial. Generally speaking, there was good understanding between the doctors and prisoner-nurses, and their cooperation achieved good results. Thanks to the doctors' initiative, backed up by the nurses and with the help of workmen, a special hut was built between Blocks 11 and 13 for the tuberculosis patients to take open-air cures. Sputum was examined in the laboratory, and most of those prisoners in whom it was found to give a positive reaction were hospitalized and treated by rest and fresh-air cures, and given extra rations.

As Berben's history makes clear, Dachau camp officials attempted to keep disease to a minimum. They tried to enforce certain hygiene standards, which of course, became increasingly more difficult as the war continued. As Berben notes (p. 109):

It is obvious that in a camp where thousands of men lived in a far too confined area and in deplorable conditions very strict hygiene was vital. In the early years, when numbers were still relatively low and arrivals were in small groups, adequate precautions could be taken. "The newcomers went to the showers, were cropped, given clothes and underwear, wretched, it is true, but laundered." The rooms were not overcrowded, the orders concerning the upkeep of the premises, clothing and bodily cleanliness were irksome and prompted the bullying of prisoners, but all in all they were useful because the vast majority of the prisoners realized that if they were to stand any chance of survival they would have to conform to strict rules. They knew that they could of course expect nothing from the camp authorities; when hygienic precautions were laid down, it was merely to protect the SS staff and to have the maximum labour force.

Even a cursory reading of Berben's *Dachau, 1933-1945* shows that conditions in the camp remained fairly decent until near the end of the war, when all of Germany was in havoc.

The prisoners' food situation deserves mention. While Berben writes much about a lack of food, the information he provides in his own book contradicts such complaints. As we have already seen, a canteen was available where prisoners could buy food. And we know that food was served at regular meal functions, even though Berben continually complains that it was inadequate. However, other sources of food were available, and they seem to be rather numerous. During the war, notes Berben, camp officials actually increased the number of meals for some groups of workers. "When manpower needs became pressing during the war, supplementary food was sanctioned to increase output. Certain categories of work-



ers were given a much-appreciated 'second breakfast,' called *Brotzeit*, consisting of an eighth or tenth part of a loaf and two ounces of sausage." (p. 69)

In addition to regularly scheduled meals and the second breakfast, as well as what prisoners could purchase at the canteen, family and friends of prisoners could send food parcels to inmates. "From the end of 1942, however, large consignments of food and other useful things did reach the camp ..."

In addition to these parcels, "The consignments sent by the Red Cross also brought assistance whose beneficial effort cannot be over-emphasized." Red Cross shipments alone, writes Berben, consisted of "thousands" of parcels. Dachau served as the main camp for all of the approximately 2,700 prisoners who were clergy. According to Berben (p. 151),

food parcels could be sent to clergy, and the food situation improved noticeably. Germans and Poles particularly received them in considerable quantities from their families, their parishioners and members of religious communities. In Block 26 one hundred sometimes arrived on the same day.

These "considerable quantities" of food continued to arrive until very near the end of the war, as Berben explains:

This period of relative plenty lasted till the end of 1944 when the disruption of communications stopped the dispatch of parcels. Nevertheless the German clergy continued to receive food through the Dean of Dachau, Herr Pfanzelt, to whom the correspondents sent food tickets: the priests bought bread and sausage with these and sent the parcels by the local post.

So Berben, while lamenting the lack of food, tells us that prisoners had regular meals, some had a second breakfast, that "large consignments" of food were mailed to prisoners, that "thousands" of food parcels arrived from the Red Cross, that food could be purchased at the canteen, that the clergy received "considerable quantities" from parishioners, and that this "period of relative plenty lasted till the end of 1944." All of this came to an end, Berben affirms, not because the Nazis decided to starve prisoners, but because "the disruption of communication stopped the dispatch of parcels." Yet, in spite of these admissions, Berben contends that "legitimate means of obtaining extras were available to only a limited number of privileged prisoners." (pp. 164-165)

In addition to the foregoing admissions, this official historian also acknowledges that Dachau's prisoners were given Sundays off for

leisure and culture. On Sunday afternoons, Berben tell us, the prisoners were permitted to engage in competitive games. Although this was stopped in 1938, in 1941 "this permission was granted again, and there were cultural activities as well. On Sundays a certain amount of freedom was allowed for amusements." He explains:

Theatrical entertainments, concerts, revues and lectures were arranged too. Among the thousands of men who lived in the camp there were all sorts of talents, great and small, to be found: famous musicians, good amateur musicians, theatre and music-hall artists. Many of these men devoted their time in the most admirable way to gain a few moments of escape for their comrades in misery, and to keep up their morale. And these activities helped too to create a feeling of fellowship. During the last months there were also a few film shows, about once a fortnight.

In addition, "the camp had a library which started in a modest way but which eventually stocked some fifteen thousand volumes ... There was a very varied choice, from popular novels to the great classics, and scientific and philosophical works." (p. 72) Berben also notes that "some men in spite of their miserable convict's existence nevertheless found the energy to take an interest in the arts, in science and in philosophical problems." (p. 73) Moreover, "a prisoner could subscribe to newspapers and various publications ..." (p. 75) Newspaper subscriptions were allowed right up until the very end of the war. (p. 180)

• As already mentioned, Dachau served as a central camp for incarcerated clergy. By policy, almost all members of the clergy who had been detained — 2,720 in all — were transferred to Dachau. The treatment of these prisoners warrants some special attention. Berben relates (p. 147):

On March 15, 1941, the clergy were withdrawn from work Kommandos on orders from Berlin, and their conditions improved. They were supplied with bedding of the kind issued to the SS, and Russian and Polish prisoners were assigned to look after their quarters. They could get up an hour later than the other prisoners and rest on their beds for two hours in the morning and afternoon. Free from work, they could give themselves to study and to meditation. They were given newspapers and allowed to use the library. Their food was adequate; they sometimes received up to a third of a loaf of bread a day; there was even a period when they were given half a litre of cocoa in the morning and a third of a bottle of wine daily.



While clergy prisoners were not obliged to work, beginning in 1943 some volunteered to work as nurses in the hospital. Because typhus was ravaging the camp at that time, this proved fatal to some. "Several of them fell victim to their devotion, as this was a time when typhus was raging in the camp," Berben notes. (p. 151)

With support and encouragement from camp officials, clergy prisoners built a chapel for religious services. (Prior to this, services were held throughout the camp in the barracks huts.) "The patient work by clergy and lay people alike had, in the end, achieved a miracle. The chapel was 20 metres long by 9 wide and could hold about 800 people, but often more than a thousand crowded in." (p. 153) Services were held all day long on Sundays, with one service immediately following another. (p. 154)

During the final, chaotic period, the chapel's purpose became somewhat controversial. As prisoners from camps near the front were evacuated into the interior, Dachau became increasingly overcrowded. At the same time, typhus took a terrible incredible toll as health care broke down. In an effort to combat the disease, camp officials sought to relieve the overcrowding, and accordingly asked the clergy for permission to convert the chapel into make-shift housing. "... The suggestion was put to the clergy that they should give it [the chapel] up in order to combat the shortage of accommodation, which was becoming disastrous." (p. 154) However, the clergy were adamant: they refused to surrender the chapel, even to save lives. They argued that of all the buildings in the camp were being used to house prisoners, and suggested that instead of the large chapel the small cobbler's shop and the brothel be converted into housing. They also argued that the chapel would only house 250 "which was nothing compared with the continuous intake of prisoners." The clergy had the final word: camp officials gave in to their wishes "and the chapel was retained to the last." (p. 154)

\* While Berben's description of the day-to-day treatment of Dachau prisoners does not seem to fit a pattern of extermination, charges of medical experiments do raise legitimate concern. According to Berben Dachau was a center for medical experiments to study the effects of malaria, high altitudes and freezing. If such experiments were conducted in the camp they should rightfully be condemned in the strongest of terms. However, much of what Berben writes in this regard is based on the testimony of a single person, Walter Neff, a prisoner who had worked as an assistant to Dr. Sigmund Rascher, a camp physician. According to Neff, medical experiments were conducted on 180 to 200 prisoners. Ten of these were volunteers, said Neff, and all the others, with the exception of about 40, were prisoners who had been condemned to death. During the course of the medical experiments, Neff said, 70 to 80 prisoners

died. We are not told if these 70 to 80 prisoners were among those already "condemned to death."

Neff worked with Dr. Rascher from the beginning of 1941, and was released as a prisoner on condition that he continue working with the physician. Neff regularly reported for duty at the camp in uniform, Berben notes, and he even carried a pistol. Neff claimed that he worked in the interest of the prisoners, and tried to sabotage the work of Rascher. He further claimed to have helped in a "revolt" in the town of Dachau a few days before the Americans arrived. As Berben notes, Neff's "role in his dealings with Rascher never seems to be very clear, nor the part he played in choosing the subjects for experiments." (p. 127)

As already indicated, Neff is the source for much of the "evidence" of medical experiments at Dachau. Berben goes on to write (p. 133):

The most terrible experiment at which Neff was present was one carried out on two Russian officers. They were taken from the bunker and plunged naked into a tank [of freezing water] at about 4 p.m., and they held out for almost five hours. Rascher had leveled his revolver at Neff and a young Polish aide who tried to give the two wretches chloroform. Dr. Romberg considered the whole episode as described by Neff during the trial to be improbable; in his view, the subject of such experiments is stiff and incapable of making a movement or uttering a word after 10 or 20 minutes, whereas, according to Neff, the two officers were still talking to one another during the third hour and bade each other farewell.

Neff later charged that Dr. Rascher's wife "could not have children and for this reason Himmler had forbidden Rascher to marry her, but he authorized the marriage when she had her second child." According to Berben, Neff claimed (p. 134) that

The four Rascher children were said to have been stolen. When, after a short time, she did not like a baby any longer, she put another in its place, and in this way is said to have had nine different children in her house! It must be noted however that Rascher's uncle stated that in his view the charge of illegal adoption was false, for he had seen Frau Rascher when she was pregnant for the second time, and the first child certainly bore Rascher's features.

But Neff never had the opportunity to face the man he charged with these crimes. Rascher was arrested by the German police before the end of the war and himself imprisoned at Dachau. Berben and Neff report that Rascher was executed in the camp by the Nazis. (They also mention that Rascher was shot to death and not gassed.)



Berben notes two other sources for the accusations of medical experiments:

With the exception of Dr. Gebhardt, who knew about these experiments and claims that he protested in vain to Himmler about them, all the doctors who took part in them were dead or had disappeared at the time of the Doctor's Trial. The only information about the number of prisoners used and the number of victims was provided by a nurse, Heinrich Stohr, a political prisoner ...

Even if medical experiments were performed, this does not discredit the revisionist case. Such experiments were quite limited in scope and included a very small fraction of the prisoners. Most of the prisoners chosen had already been sentenced to death.

If Dachau's prisoners, in general, were not purposefully murdered by the Nazis, how did they die? The answer to this is relatively easy to find, and Berben is quite helpful. To understand the reasons for inmate deaths, we must understand the general conditions prevailing in all of Europe during the period.

As the German economy, infrastructure and administration collapsed during the final months of the war, badly needed supplies became unavailable. As Berben repeatedly notes, food supplies and parcels almost disappeared during the final months of the war. He points out, for example, that medical service was "complete and modern, and in normal conditions specialists could have treated all the disease efficiently" but "at the end of 1944, the service was overwhelmed." Bunk space was sufficient until the last few months of the war, and then the barracks huts became increasingly overcrowded. The key factor in the high death rate of Dachau prisoners were the conditions of war during the final period of that great conflict.

As the war came to an end, and the Allies closed in on the center of Germany, enormous numbers of prisoners were evacuated from the camps near the front and moved to the interior. Because of its central location, Dachau became a key destination camp for these transfers. Thus, at the same time that food and medical supplies became more difficult to obtain, the demand increased as prisoners were brought in from other camps. Berben explains (pp. 101, 100):

From the start of the evacuation tens of thousands of prisoners arrived at Dachau in a state of terrible exhaustion, and a vast number died before the liberation and in the weeks that followed. These massive arrivals caused unparalleled difficulties and a large number of deaths among the camp population, particularly as a typhus epidemic spread ... When the

evacuation began of camps situated in areas threatened by the victorious advance of the Allies, the horror surpassed anything that had been seen till then.

The overcrowding could be quite dramatic. In the blocks selected in Berben's book as a point of illustration, the population rose by 49 percent in five months (See Table 2), and this was during the height of the typhus epidemic when the number of deaths average 2,614 per month.

Table 1: Increases in Numbers of Prisoners in Certain Dachau Barracks Blocks Between November 28, 1944, and April 26, 1945

Block	Nov. 28, 1944	April 26, 1945
2	654	939
4	733	842
6	901	1,403
8	854	1,356
10	889	1,117
12	855	1,140
14	682	990
16	869	1,137
18	861	1,138
20	889	1,152
22	783	1,446
24	968	1,306
26	524	1,090
28	707	1,547

Berben notes (p. 8) how disease spread throughout the camp:

Finally exanthematous typhus came to this block [Block 30, which housed invalids and some elderly] as well; it had thus jumped across the Lagerstrasse and traveled through the unevenly numbered blocks to the west wing. In short, writes Msgr. Neuhäusler, "what happened from the end of December 1944 and in January and February 1945 in the Dachau concentration camp constitutes one of the most frightful tragedies in the history of all concentration camps."

Typhus wasn't the only disease camp officials had to cope with, Berben reports (p. 102):

Digestive ailments were very widespread, especially diarrhea and persistent enteritis which could only have been



cured by an appropriate diet. Most of the prisoners suffered from oedema, which lead to frequent abrasions around the feet; when infected, these caused painful phlegmons. There were all kind of pulmonary infections, including pneumonia, and infectious diseases, of which erysipelas, very contagious, was the commonest. There were also cases of diphtheria and scarlet fever. All these illnesses accentuated the patient's general debility where there was no adequate treatment or diet, and fatal complications often set.

Rampant disease killed thousands, "in spite of all efforts," Berben goes on to relate. (p. 107) (If extermination was the intention, why make such efforts, especially during the final months of the war?)

Following the camp's liberation on April 29, 1945, even the best efforts of the Americans were unable to stop the disease. As already pointed out, 2,226 prisoners died in May 1945. Berben writes (p. 197):

However eager they might be to return to their families, the thousands of liberated prisoners had to be realistic: many days would go by before repatriation could begin. The typhus epidemic which has for months reaped a daily toll of lives had to be checked, so that it should not spread to the civilian and military population. Inevitably, the camp had to be put into quarantine until further notice.

The Americans were hampered in their efforts for the same reasons the Germans had been incapable of ending the disease: "for want of hospitals and medicines." (p. 198) Even after the quarantine was lifted on May 12th, disease continued to claim lives. Between June 1 and June 16, notes this official history, an additional 200 died in the camp. Moreover, as Berben relates, food "continued to give grounds for serious concern," in spite of liberation.

Dachau inmate deaths totaled 27,839, Berben reports, while the total inmate population during the years 1940-1945 was 168,433. Thus, the death rate at the infamous Dachau "death camp" during the years of history's most devastating war was 16.5 percent. As high as this figure admittedly is, it should, however, be kept in perspective. For one thing, it is probably much lower than what the public might generally assume. Also, it is actually quite low when compared to some other wartime situations. For instance, the death rate in the northern German city of Hamburg during one night of the Allied bombing was more than double the death rate at Dachau over 65 months. British historian Paul Johnson, points out in his massive work, *Modern Times* (p. 403): "... In one night alone fatal casualties in the four firestorm districts [of Hamburg] were 40,000, or up to 37.65 percent of the total population." The infamous fire

bombings of civilians in Dresden resulted in an even higher percentage of casualties. David Irving, another British historian, writes in *The Destruction of Dresden* (p. 227):

If a death-rate of this scale [361.6 per thousand] could have been possible in a city like Hamburg, where the most elaborate air-raid precautions had been taken, it seems not unreasonable to assume at least the same proportion and very probably a higher proportion of fatalities during the triple blow on Dresden ...

A Dachau prisoner was twice as likely to survive than was a German civilian in Hamburg or Dresden.

Death rates in various European armed forces during the Second World War were also very high. The German military, for instance, lost 34.3 percent of its members. Poland lost 32 percent, the Soviet Union lost 60 percent, Yugoslavia lost 82 percent, Finland lost 32.8 percent, Hungary lost 40 percent, and Romania lost 50 percent. Since most Dachau prisoners were non-Jews, we can assume that many of them, if they hadn't been incarcerated, would have been pressed into German military service where their odds of dying were twice as high. It is certainly one of the strange facts of the war that those Dachau prisoners who volunteered to join the German army to escape the camp actually doubled their odds of dying.

Most people are unaware of the terrible losses suffered by German civilians during the war and in the period immediately following. (This includes "ethnic Germans" or *Volksdeutsche*.) An estimated 16,500,000 German civilians fled or were forcibly expelled by the Allies from Central and Eastern Europe, of whom an estimated 2,111,000 were killed or perished. Prior to the expulsion this group suffered war-time casualties totaling 1,100,000. Out of a total of 16,999,000 of these Germans, an estimated 3,211,000 (or 18.89 percent) lost their lives as a consequence of the war or the flight and expulsion.<sup>6</sup>

Berben's account provides other interesting facts or comments that raise doubts about the generally accepted "exterminationist" view. For example, he cites the "confession" of Dr. Muthig, Chief Camp Physician at Dachau (p. 275). Like so many others, Dr. Muthig declared, after his "interrogation," that Dachau "prisoners unfit to work [were] subjected to euthanasia and transferred to Mauthausen concentration camp to be gassed."

There are two problems with this "confession." First, as Berben himself so aptly acknowledges, Dachau prisoners who were not fit to work were medically treated, given extra rations, offered "open-air cures," and so forth. Secondly, Holocaust historians now ac-



knowledge that Mauthausen was not a "death camp." Historian Paul Johnson, for example, tells us in his book *The History of the Jews*, that the six death camps were Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, Belzec, Chelmno and Sobibor. Unfortunately, when Dr. Muthig was "confessing" he couldn't know how the Holocaust story would later be revised in the light of incontrovertible facts.

Berben also makes some serious errors in listing death camps. On page 292 of the book he prints a map that he says is based on one produced by Belgium's Service of Research and Documentation of the Ministry of Public Health and the Family. Only two of the six "extermination camps" shown on this map are today so regarded by Holocaust historians: Treblinka and Auschwitz. Berben's map cites four "extermination camps" that no historian would today so designate: Soldau, Pustknow, Plaszow, and Theresienstadt. He claims that Majdanek was just a concentration camp like Dachau, and Sobibor is listed as an "independent camp," a term that is not defined. Most remarkably, neither Belzec nor Chelmno — each of which is today regarded as an "extermination camp" — even appears on Berben's map. Also unexplained is why Berben cites Dr. Muthig's "confession," which cites Mauthausen as a "death camp," when the map on page 292 lists, it, not as an "extermination" camp, but as a concentration camp.

Another revealing fact cited by Berben is that when a Dachau prisoner died, an autopsy was routinely performed. Until 1943, Berben tells us, an autopsy was performed on the body of every prisoner who died in the hospital or as a result of a "medical experiment." After 1943, he goes on to relate, "post-mortems were carried out on all prisoners who died at the sick block or elsewhere in the camp." In the wake of the epidemic that ravaged the camp during the final months, "they had to be satisfied with a few bodies picked at random." (p. 109) All the same, Berben tells us, "more than ten thousand autopsies were carried out under Dr. Blaha's direction." (p. 109). Where are these autopsy reports today? And if the Nazis were carrying out a program of extermination, why would they even bother to perform autopsies? This official history does not address such questions.

Finally, an observation about cremations at Dachau, cited by Holocaust historians routinely cite "eyewitness testimonies" to claim that German camp crematories were able to incinerate bodies in a matter of minutes. Only the Germans were able to carry out such rapid cremations. Fortunately, Berben provides a realistic portrayal of the cremation process at Dachau. He tells us that the camp's four cremation ovens had a total maximum capacity of seven or eight



Dachau prisoners on liberation day. Again, compare the physical condition of these inmates with the emaciated bodies whose deaths are attributed to gassing in the camp. Victims of gassing should include bodies in healthy condition.



bodies at any one time, and that "cremation lasted about two hours." During the last months of the war, when disease was so rampant, "it was no longer possible to cremate all the bodies." Even after the Germans abandoned the camp, the prisoners' International Committee that ran the camp continued to operate the camp crematory ovens. Berben relates: "The Kommandos had not left for work, except those who looked after the bakery, heating and the crematorium, the International Committee having made sure that their activities would continue." (p. 188)

To sum up here, Berben's fascinating official history of Dachau, tells us that there was the camp's prisoners were able to make use of a camp brothel, a canteen, that they had Sundays off, that there were religious church services, free recreation time, lectures, a library, newspapers, concerts, and movies. It tells us that prisoners received regular meals, that some received a second breakfast, that food arrived from the Red Cross, that food parcels were sent by relatives, and that prisoners could purchase food at the canteen. It tells us that doctors and nurses worked in a modern camp hospital to provide every possible help to prisoners, until the final months of the war when they were overwhelmed by disease and overcrowding. It tells us that disease was the primary cause of death in Dachau, and that even the Allies lost thousands of prisoners to the scourge. It tells us that there was no extermination program at Dachau, and raises doubts about the existence of any such program in other camps. Far from substantiating claims about "the tens of thousands of deportees who were exterminated in the death camp," this work proves that no such exterminations took place there. If this official history is the most damning "exterminationist" account of Dachau, the revisionists have won their case.

## Part Two

### The Dachau "Gas Chamber"?

Many once widely accepted "facts" about Dachau are now discredited. It wasn't long ago, however, when it was seriously and authoritatively claimed that people were killed in a gas chamber at Dachau. Eyewitness testimony was cited to "prove" that as many as 250,000 people were put to death in this gas chamber.

The Dachau gas chamber story appears to have begun as soon as American troops liberated the camp on April 29, 1945. One of the first sights witnessed by the liberating troops were piles of corpses of victims of disease. A room near the crematory was filled with waiting corpses. Nearby was the room that would be immortalized in photographs as the Dachau gas chamber. Soldiers who liberated the camp were told that these were the bodies of gas chamber victims. To this day many elderly former American GIs still swear that they personally saw the camp "gas chamber," and victims of gasings there.

For instance, during an appearance by two revisionists on a Boston television station, a former American soldier called in to testify that he personally saw the "gas chamber" at Dachau. With emotion dripping from his voice, he described this "gas chamber" as huge. Similarly, during an December 17, 1990, appearance by two other revisionists (Mark Weber and Theodore J. O'Keefe) on Los Angeles radio station KFI, a Second World War veteran who phoned in castigated the revisionists as liars because, he told the audience, he had personally seen the bodies of prisoners put to death in the Dachau gas chamber. This caller's story was not, however, in line with either the current or the once-held version of the Dachau "gas chamber" story. He claimed to have seen a Jeep up on blocks, with a tube running from the exhaust pipe into the Dachau gas chamber. According to the older (and now universally discredited) version of the Dachau gas chamber story, gassings were supposedly carried out there by dropping cyanide gas pellets into the lethal room, or by pumping in cyanide gas through pipes. Possibly he did see a Jeep up on blocks, perhaps for repairs, and very likely he did see bodies. But this is the only account I've come across that claims that people were killed at Dachau with exhaust from a Jeep. All the same, this man was on the verge of weeping as he told his "eyewitness" account. For more than 40 years he has believed that what he thought he saw is the truth, and no evidence exists that will convince him otherwise.



Former Dachau inmates have provided similarly striking “eyewitness testimony” of gassings in the camp. One such person is Nerin Gun. In a memoir of his internment there, this Turkish journalist tells us that 3,166 inmates were gassed in a phony shower room near the camp crematory, and that altogether 100,000 people died in Dachau.<sup>7</sup> Gun even provides a vivid and rather detailed description of the alleged gassing process, which most readers would presumably accept as credible:<sup>8</sup>

I belonged to the team of prisoners in charge of sorting the pitiful herds of Hungarian Jewesses which were being directed to the gas chambers ...

Sometimes the internees tried to persuade those women who were carrying infants in their arms to let them take the children from them, for it was sometimes possible to stow babies away in the camp where devoted women would take care of them ... But our arguments were of no avail. It was impossible to tell the victims what was going to happen inside, for they would not have believed it, or else, seized with panic, they would have started to scream. So the mothers refused to give up their children, and the babies were asphyxiated and burned with their mothers.

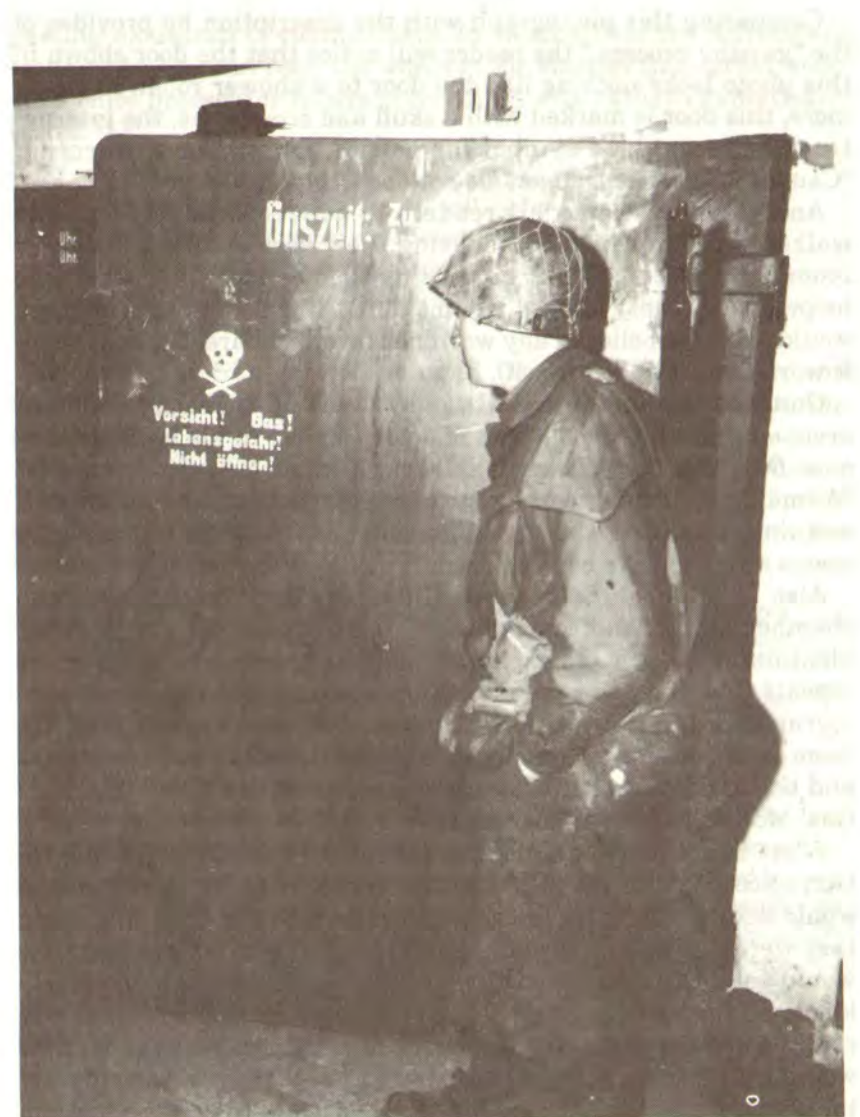
Gun goes on to describe

the horror of what went on in the “shower room.” The naked women, their sweating bodies pressed closely one against the other, the babies suffocating in their arms. Maybe one mother would have put her baby down on the floor to spare it the first shock of the expected spray of scalding water ... then her face contorted with the horror of seeing her baby start coughing first, as the fumes of the gas issued from the floor, start to vomit blood, turn blue, violet, black, crushed under the weight of the bodies of the other victims slipping to the floor, like melted wax.

But now suddenly, stealthily, the same horrible surprise as for the women who expected a spray of hot water and instead inhaled a deadly gas ...

In his memoir, Gun reproduces the familiar US Army photograph of a GI standing in front of the alleged Dachau gas chamber. In Gun’s memoir, this photo is captioned:

The gas chamber. At the moment of liberation, the hour of the last operation was still written on the door. Since then, Germans have tried to deny that there was a gas chamber in the camp. This photograph is proof: it was taken the day of the liberation.



This US Army photo was taken at Dachau on April 30, 1945, one day after the camp’s liberation. It shows a GI standing in front of a door marked with a skull and crossbones and the words “Caution! Gas! Life danger! Do not open!” According to the official caption, “these chambers were used for delousing clothes, as part of the routine to curtail the spread of typhus. This chamber was never used to kill people. For several decades, this photo has been widely reporduced to help keep alive the notorious Dachau “gas chamber” myth. (US Army photo SC 206194.)



Comparing this photograph with the description he provides of the "gassing process," the reader will notice that the door shown in this photo looks nothing like the door to a shower room. Furthermore, this door is marked with a skull and crossbones, the internationally recognized symbol for poison, as well as a warning: "Caution! Gas! Life Danger! Do not open!"

And yet, Gun wants his readers to believe that 3,166 people walked through this door believing they were entering a shower room. As a matter of fact he tells us that he and the others who helped "sort" these alleged victims didn't warn them because they would not have believed any warnings (even, apparently, the graphic warning on the door itself).

Gun isn't the only writer who didn't know that Dachau had been dropped from the "official" list of death camps. In his book *Deliverance Day: The Last Hours at Dachau*, Michael Selzer tells us that "A small gas chamber was constructed late in 1942; and although it certainly was put to use (despite some reports), its full capacity seems never to have been utilized."<sup>9</sup>

Also in his book Selzer reproduces the familiar Dachau "gas chamber" photo, and comments on it: "A sign in the gas chamber identifies it as such and explains that it was never used. Your guide repeats this. But you have done your research, and remember photographs of the doors before they got their new coat of grey. On them — the outer side — were once stenciled a skull and crossbones and the words *Vorsicht! Gas! Lebensgefahr! Nicht öffnen!* 'Caution! Gas! Mortal Danger! Do not open!'"<sup>10</sup>

What I find hard to believe is that more than 3,000 people (in Gun's account, but up to 250,000 according to other eyewitnesses) would actually walk through this massive air-tight door, and think they were entering a shower. I find it impossible to believe that they would read the writing on the outside of the door, which clearly identifies the room as a lethal gas chamber, and still believe it was really a shower. Gun would have us also believe that the victims would still believe this was a shower even if they were explicitly told it was a gas chamber: "It was impossible to tell the victims what was going to happen inside, for they would not have believed it ..." Gun's account, like the accounts of other "eyewitnesses," is an insult to the intelligence of the people allegedly exterminated.

The US Army's Dachau "gas chamber" photo is one of the most familiar photographs cited as evidence of homicidal gassings in German wartime camps. During the period immediately following the end of the war, it was official Allied policy that Dachau was an extermination camp. At the famous Nuremberg "war crimes" trial of 1945-46, German defendants were charged (and found guilty) of

gassing thousands of victims there. In volume 19 of the Nuremberg transcripts, you can read the words of Sir Hartley Shawcross, Britain's chief prosecutor in the proceeding, who rather dramatically stated:<sup>11</sup>

Twelve million murders! Two-thirds of the Jews in Europe exterminated, more than six million of them on the killers' own figures. Murder conducted like some mass production industry in the gas chambers and the ovens of Auschwitz, Dachau, Treblinka, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Majdanek, and Oranienburg.

(Notice that Shawcross included Dachau, Mauthausen and Oranienburg, camps that no historian today believes were extermination camps.)

Moreover, the American prosecutor presented to the Nuremberg Tribunal a US Congressional report, labeled document L-159, that purported to explain how gassings were conducted at Dachau. According to this report:<sup>12</sup>

A distinguishing feature of the Dachau Camp was the gas chamber for the execution of prisoners and the somewhat elaborate facilities for execution by shooting.

The gas chamber was located in the center of a large room in the crematory building. It was built of concrete. Its dimensions were about 20 feet by 20 feet, and the ceiling was some 10 feet in height! In two opposite walls of the chamber were air tight doors through which condemned prisoners could be taken into the chamber for execution and removed after execution. The supply of gas into the chamber was controlled by means of two valves on one of the outer walls, and beneath the valves was a small glass-covered peephole through which the operator could watch the victims die. The gas was let into the chamber through pipes terminating in perforated brass fixtures set into the ceiling. The chamber was of size sufficient to execute probably a hundred men at one time.

The room in which the gas chamber stood was flanked on both ends by warerooms in which the bodies were placed after execution to await cremation. The size of each room was approximately 30 by 50 feet. At the time we visited the camp these warerooms were piled high with dead bodies. In one of the rooms the bodies were thrown in an irregular heap. In the other room they were neatly stacked like cordwood. The irregular pile of bodies was perhaps 10 feet high, covering most of the floor space. All of them were naked.

The description provided here does not correspond with the testimony of either of the American veterans who challenged the revi-



sionists. The first, it will be recalled, claimed that the "gas chamber" room was "huge"; according to the Congressional report it is only 20 by 20 feet. When you review the veteran's call to the Boston television station it seems that he is describing a room much larger than this. The other veteran claimed the apparatus was an automobile with a tube running from the exhaust pipe. The document filed with the Military Tribunal by the US government doesn't even come close to this description.

Allied officials also presented to the Nuremberg Tribunal an "eyewitness," Dr. Franz Blaha, who allegedly helped with the gassing executions. Blaha testified:<sup>13</sup>

Many executions by gas or shooting or injections took place right in the [Dachau] camp. The gas chamber was completed in 1944, and I was called by Dr. Rascher to examine the first victims. Of the eight or nine persons in the chamber there were three still alive, and the remainder appeared to be dead. Their eyes were red, and their faces were swollen. Many prisoners were later killed in this way.

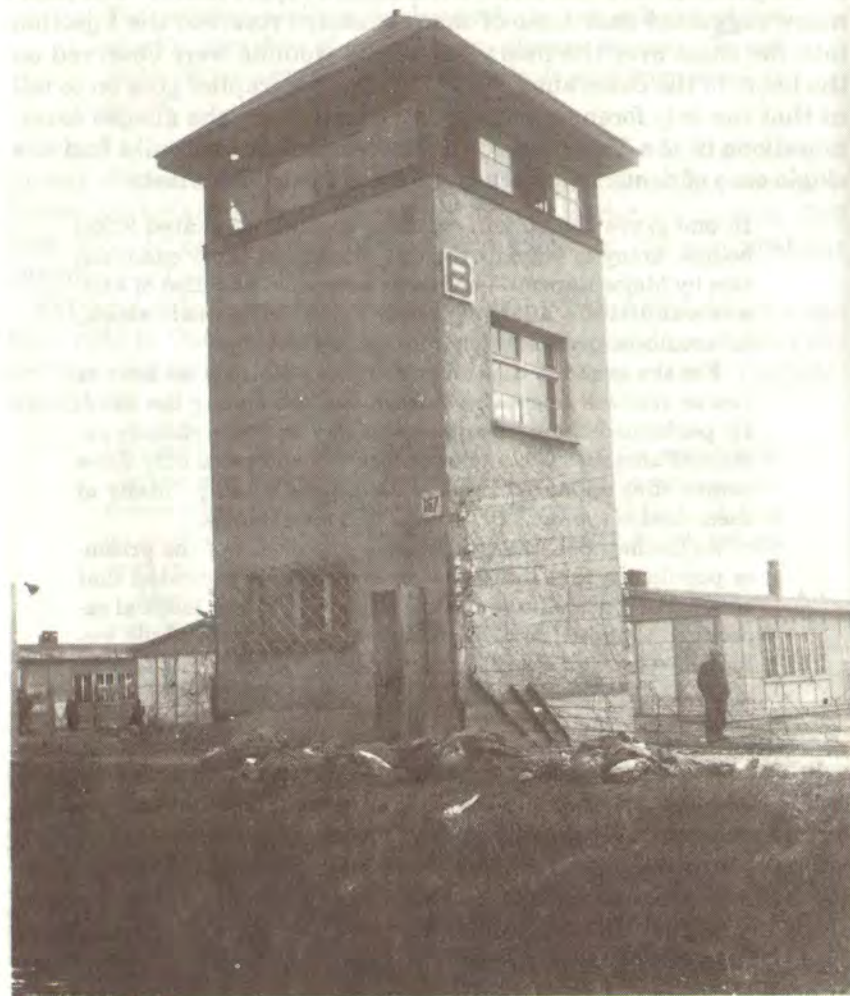
(Notice that whereas Blaha claims the gas chamber wasn't built until 1944, Michael Selzer, quoted earlier, claims the lethal chamber was built in 1942.)

In his testimony to the Nuremberg trial, Blaha also claimed that, in addition to gassings, Dachau prisoners were also killed with injections of poison. But forensic evidence collected at the scene by American medical authorities actually proves this did not happen. Dr. Charles P. Larson was assigned by US military authorities to carry out thousands of autopsies at Dachau. He later recalled:<sup>14</sup>

I was the only forensic pathologist on duty in the entire European Theater — which is why I was detailed ultimately to conduct the autopsies at Dachau. So whether the authorities liked what I did or not, they were stuck with the only top-qualified man in my field and they had to take me!

Dr. Larson filed a report on the accusations of poisoning by injection. He wrote:<sup>15</sup>

... According to reliable testimony, these individuals were murdered by the hypodermic injection of an unknown poison a matter of hours before the Americans liberated the camp. The German doctor for the camp — a "Dr. Blanke" — was seen to have used a large syringe with a needle and to have injected this unknown poison into these individuals. The result of the injection was death in from five to 20 minutes. Death was proceeded by generalized convulsions. In a search of the camp and of "Dr. Blanke's" home and office, no clue



**Bodies of German troops lying at the base of a Dachau guard tower. These men were shot down by American soldiers after they had surrendered.**



was found as to the type of poison used. From some autopsies performed, the brain, portions of the liver, the spleen, the heart and one kidney were retained for transmission to the First Medical Laboratory in Paris for toxicological examination to determine the type of poison administered.

According to Larson's biographer, "Major Larson later received reports from the FML in Paris that the organs he had sent in for toxicological examination on three autopsied cases were negative for all poisons." On this issue, Dr. Larson's report noted: "The testimony suggested that some of those poisoned received the injection into the chest over the heart. No needle wounds were observed on the heart in the cases autopsied." Larson's biographer goes on to tell us that the only forensic pathologist investigating the alleged exterminations in the European concentration camps never did find one single case of death by poison or by poison gas. He writes:<sup>16</sup>

In one grave the bulldozers uncovered an estimated 2,000 bodies, many of which were subjected to autopsy examination by Major Larson. All of those autopsied had died of various conditions such as emaciation with starvation, tuberculosis, typhus or other infectious diseases.

For the next ten days, many nights with only an hour or two or restless sleep, Col. Larson worked among the dead. He performed about 25 autopsies a day and superficially examined another 300 to 1,000 bodies. He autopsied only those bodies that appeared to have died questionably. "Many of them died of typhus," Dr. Larson told me recently.

At Dachau Col. Larson's work — the profile of the prisoner population that his autopsies projected — indicated that only a small percentage of the deaths were due to medical experimentation on humans. It indicated that most of the victims died from so-called "natural causes" at the time; that is, of disease brought on by malnutrition and filth which are the handmaidens of war.

In spite of the fact that thousands of autopsies were performed under the auspices of the US military proving that no one was exterminated by any type of poison, "eyewitness" accounts of such killings continue to flourish. For years after the war ended, Dr. Larson himself remained silent on this issue, and only rarely spoken about his forensic investigations. In 1980, while he was being honored by the University of Kansas, he explained why in a newspaper interview. "Larson has talked little publicly about the war experience," a journalist noted in his article about the physician's work at Dachau. "One reason for his silence has been that his autopsy findings conflicted with the widely held belief that most Jews in Nazi

camps were exterminated by gassing, shooting or poisoning." Larson himself explained: "What we've heard is that six million Jews were exterminated. Part of that is a hoax." The article went on to tell readers:<sup>17</sup>

Larson said in an interview Monday that certainly hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. But most died as a result of the conditions to which they were subjected rather than mass exterminations.

"They worked these people to death," he [Larson] said. Fed on potato peelings, inadequately clothed and packed into shacks, they died of every known disease, he said. "In one camp, 90 per cent died of tuberculosis. It went from shack to shack."

Other eyewitness reports also exaggerate deaths at Dachau and invent stories of gas chambers. Pastor Martin Niemöller, the well-known anti-Nazi German Protestant church leader, claimed in 1946 that 238,756 persons had been exterminated in the mythical gas chambers of Dachau.<sup>18</sup>

Father Alexis Lechanski, one of the many Polish priests who had been held in Dachau during the war, made similar claims about the camp in an article published in 1989 in a conservative Catholic weekly:<sup>19</sup>

During the ten [actually twelve] years of its existence, Dachau was a veritable factory of death and became an immense tomb for 278,000 men, women and children. In this number more than 50,000 Poles and about 800 Polish priests were included ...

Above a heavy door there was an inscription in the German language, *Brausebad* (shower bath). A sense of stupefaction filled your mind as you grasped the significance of that inscription. The victims to be gassed were previously told they were going to take a bath. Each would be given a towel and a small piece of soap. They would be ushered undressed into the gas chamber that really produced the impression of a bathroom. The condemned prisoners were deceived particularly by small false sieves or gratings fixed up in the ceilings. The cement floor had large holes covered with an iron grate. It could easily have been taken as the means of draining off the water. In the wall on the left side a small glass peephole was set up for watching the effects of the gas and the reactions of dying victims. It was such a tiny and harmless-looking thing.

When the room was filled with prisoners, the door was shut and the faucet at the end of the pipe for conducting gas from the outside was opened to bring a violent and dreadful



end to all those unfortunate people. The gas came up from underneath the cement floor through the hole in the middle. Death followed almost in a flash, in three to five minutes' time. Then a special squad of prisoners had to clear away the warm, sometimes not quite dead, bodies of their camp fellows. The corpses afforded a horrible sight. Their faces would be distorted. Their eyes dim, glassy, wide open, and full of dread and would be stubbornly looking at some far-off distance as though sending their last thoughts to their children and all they loved; as though entreating Heaven above for revenge for their lives so cruelly tramped out.

Here is yet another "eyewitness" who has embellished his story, this time to appeal to a Catholic readership. In this account, the victims die "entreating Heaven above," and "sending their last thoughts to their children." Incredibly, Father Lechanski suggests that the Dachau gas chamber death toll was 278,000. Eyewitness Nerin Gun would only hazard a claim of 100,000 Dachau deaths, of whom, he wrote, about 3,000 died in the gas chamber. By contrast, the official organization of Dachau survivors now puts the total Dachau death toll at less than 30,000, and acknowledges that no one died in a gas chamber.

Another Polish Priest who was interned in Dachau during the war has provided a similarly imaginative account of life in the camp. As Father Bonislaw Szymanski related in a 1985 article: "His captors taught him and many of his fellow priests how to lay bricks, and forced them to construct buildings that would be useful to the camp: a crematorium, a gas chamber."<sup>20</sup>

Although Fr. Szymanski claimed to have worked on constructing the camp "gas chamber" building, Berben's official history of Dachau shows that this is not possible: all priests had been withdrawn from work details by the time this building was built. The earliest that any "eyewitness" claims that the "gas chamber" building was constructed is 1942. (Others claim 1944.) However, the priests were "free from work" as of March 15, 1941.

According to Berben's official history of Dachau:<sup>21</sup>

On March 15, 1941, the clergy were withdrawn from work Kommandos on orders from Berlin, and their conditions improved. They were supplied with bedding of the kind issued to the SS, and Russian and Polish prisoners were assigned to look after their quarters. They could get up an hour later than the other prisoners and rest on their beds for two hours in the morning and afternoon. Free from work, they could give themselves to study and to meditation. They were given newspapers and allowed to use the library. Their food was

adequate; they sometimes received up to a third of a loaf of bread a day; there was even a period when they were given half a litre of cocoa in the morning and a third of bottle of wine daily... Sometimes two or three days' rations were issued together and the priests had to drink it at one sitting, which caused some of them to feel rather cheerful.

Szymanski also exaggerated in claiming that: "Eventually, some prisoners were allowed to receive packages from their families. Some of the Polish priests found altar breads and small containers of wine tucked into their parcels. 'We celebrated Mass there, secretly, in Dachau,' said Father Szymanski. It was like the early Christians in the catacombs."<sup>22</sup>

Such fanciful tales of secret masses similar to early Christians does not correspond with the current official history of Dachau. As Berben relates, the Catholic priests there not only enjoyed preferential treatment (with Polish and Russian servants), but were permitted to openly celebrate Mass in a chapel that had been built for their use. According to Berben, this chapel could "hold about 800 people, but often more than a thousand crowded in." Berben describes in detail the decor of the chapel, which had eight windows and a floor that was "carefully polished" with a "good-quality floor polish." Berben's account continues (p. 153):

The high altar was on a platform six feet square; the tabernacle, decorated at first with metal from food-tins, had been replaced at Easter 1944 by another one, made of artistically carved pear-wood, behind which a crucifix four feet high, presented by a Munster congregation and flanked on all sides by three candelabra. On the right the credence table served as an extra altar, and on the left there was a harmonium provided by the Dean of Dachau. A fine statue of the Virgin had been sent by the head of the Salvatorians in Freudenthal in the diocese of Branitz, at Easter 1943.

While Berben's description continues in this vein, this is sufficient to make the point here about Fr. Szymanski's "eyewitness testimony."

In an undated document entitled "Father Bruno's World War II Recollections," which appears to be the basis for the 1985 article about Fr. Szymanski's experiences, a priest recounts: "Whoever was unable to work, for whatever reason, had to die, and die they did ... in gas chambers. In 1942 alone about 300 Polish priests were gassed."

These priests seem to have been rather inventive in their old age. Contradicting accepted facts about Dachau, their stories predictably have nothing to back them up.



Interestingly, the same Catholic weekly that published Fr. Szymanski's fanciful account was also one of the first periodicals anywhere to expose the Dachau gas chamber story as a myth. In a 1959 issue of *Our Sunday Visitor*, a letter by reader Stephen Pinter appeared in which he responded to a previous article about Dachau.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, false statements appear in the Pritchett article, such as the reference to gas chambers at camp Dachau. I was in Dachau for 17 months after the war, as a U.S. War Department Attorney, and can state that there was no gas chamber at Dachau. What was shown to visitors and sightseers there and erroneously described as a gas chamber, was a crematory. Nor was there a gas chamber in any of the other concentration camps in Germany. We were told that there was a gas chamber at Auschwitz, but since that was in the Russian zone of occupation, we were not permitted to investigate, since the Russians would not permit it.

According to a special issue of the British military history periodical, *After the Battle* (which was largely devoted to Dachau), the US Army mis-labeled the famous photo of the camp's "gas chamber":<sup>24</sup>

Although this picture, taken on April 30 by T/4 Sidney Blau, is captioned as the gas chambers being examined by the Seventh Army soldier, they are in fact the decontamination rooms for the clothing removed from the dead located at the extreme western end of the cremation building.

According to *After the Battle*, these "oven-like chambers were used to disinfect the clothing, which had been removed from the corpses, so that it could be safely returned to the clothing depot in the administrative block for re-issue." What this means is that one of the two rooms claimed by eyewitness to have been the gas chamber where prisoners were executed was actually a facility that used cyanide gas to kill typhus-spreading lice in the clothing of dead prisoners. That is, this gas chamber was used to save lives.

*After the Battle* does suggest that a homicidal gas chamber was built in Dachau: "The official literature on sale in the museum shop states that the gas chamber was never used for its intended role but only as a shower room." This claim is almost amusing. Eyewitness after eyewitness repeats gripping, mournful tales of innocent prisoners stepping in to take a shower, only to find poison gas pouring out of the showerheads. Now the "official literature" tells us that the opposite was really true. Instead of stepping into a shower room to be gassed, we are now told they stepped into a gas chamber only to be showered!

In spite of the eyewitness accounts we have recounted here,



American soldiers who liberated Dachau summarily killed 520 of the 560 German camp personnel who had surrendered. Here, soldiers of the 157th Regiment, 45th Division, have just machine-gunned a group of about a hundred German prisoners. Four who were missed are still standing; they were killed moments after this photo was taken. No one was ever punished for this atrocity. (US Army photo SC208765.)

Dachau has been officially exorcised of the gas chamber demon. Simon Wiesenthal, the famed hunter of alleged ex-Nazis, wrote in a letter published in 1975: "Because there were no extermination camps on German soil the Neo-Nazis are using this as proof that these crimes did not happen and furthermore exhibit witnesses from German Labour-Camps who have never seen mass-extermination."<sup>25</sup>

One of the most prominent Holocaust historians, Dr. Martin Broszat of Germany's prestigious Institute of Contemporary History (in Munich), stated in a letter published in 1960 in the German weekly *Die Zeit*:<sup>26</sup>

Neither in Dachau nor in Bergen-Belsen nor in Buchenwald were Jews or other prisoners gassed. The gas chamber in Dachau was never entirely finished or put "into operation." Hundreds of thousands of prisoners who perished in Dachau



and other concentration camps in the Old Reich [that is, Germany in its borders of 1937] were victims, above all, of catastrophic hygienic and provisioning conditions: according to official SS statistics, during the twelve months from July 1942 through June 1943 alone, 110,812 persons died of disease and hunger in all of the concentration camps of the Reich.

No reputable historian still contends that anyone was ever killed in a Dachau "gas chamber." Today the only remaining dispute on this issue is between those who contend that no homicidal gas chamber ever existed in the camp, and those who argue that there was a homicidal gas chamber in Dachau, but it was never actually used to kill anyone.

One would think that all of this evidence would induce the "exterminationists" to admit that the "revisionists" were right all along. But that doesn't seem to be the case. Most of them simply ignore the revisionists, and refuse to discuss the issue with them or to publicly debate them. This in spite of the fact that the revisionist case keeps getting stronger with each new bit of evidence, and the exterminationist case gets ever weaker. When a person named Shihadeh pointed out in a letter to the Penn State College student paper that the exterminationist case keeps changing, a dean of the school, Brian Winston, responded (April 17, 1989) with a blistering attack:

I'm afraid that the only thing that had been changed is the nature of Shihadeh's ignorance. The distinction between the concentration camps, such as Dachau, and the death camps, such as Sobibor, is now understood even by the dimmest among us, it would seem. However, nowhere in the Holocaust literature that I know is there any claim that there were gas chambers at Dachau. In my research I have never encountered any eyewitness to it. This, in the end, is the position to which orthodox believers in the Holocaust story are having to resort. In spite of many "eyewitness" accounts describing Dachau "gas chambers," they now assert that no such accounts ever existed! In effect, they now concede that the Revisionists were absolutely right all along, but they adamantly refuse to give Revisionists any credit for this. Instead they prefer to pretend that the Revisionist position, which has been proven, was really their position all along.

This is not to say, of course, that atrocities were not committed at Dachau. Some such atrocities have already been covered in the first section of this booklet. However, other Dachau atrocities have generally been ignored by historians, and are totally unknown to the

general public. The first time one specific atrocity came to my attention was while reading a newspaper article by a friend who had helped liberate Dachau. In that account he briefly mentioned how the American troops had lined up and illegally executed the German troops who had surrendered the camp. I was shocked to learn this, and it was this shock that helped stimulate my interest in the truth about Dachau. Having never known that this friend had been in Dachau, I called him and asked him to recount the story. When he was finished I had one question: Did he see any evidence of a gas chamber in Dachau? His answer was a firm No. Since then, and as I further investigated the history of the Dachau camp, I have come across other accounts verifying what my friend told me.

One Dachau prisoner recounted the same story:<sup>27</sup>

I ascertain that the Americans are now master of the situation. I go toward the officer who has come down from the tank, introduce myself and he embraces me. He is a major. His uniform is dusty, his shirt, open almost to the navel, is filthy, soaked with sweat, his helmet is on crooked, he is unshaven and his cigarette dangles from the left corner of his lip.

At this point, the young Teutonic lieutenant, Heinrich Skodzensky, emerges from the guard post and comes to attention before the American officer. The German is blond, handsome, perfumed, his boots glistening, his uniform well-tailored. He reports, as if he were on the military parade grounds near the Under den Linden during an exercise, then very properly raising his arm he salutes with a very respectful "Heil Hitler!" and clicks his heels.

"I hereby turn over to you the concentration camp of Dachau, 30,000 residents, 2,340 sick, 27,000 on the outside, 560 garrison troops."

Am I dreaming? It seems that I can see before me the striking contrast of a beast and a god. Only that the *Boche* is the one who looks divine.

The American major does not return the salute. He hesitates for a moment, as if he were trying to make sure that his is remembering the adequate words. Then, he spits into the face of the German.

"*Du Schweinhund!*"

And then, "Sit down there!" — pointing to the rear seat of one of the jeeps which in the meantime have driven in.

The major turns to me and hands me an automatic rifle.

"Come with me."

But I no longer had the strength to move.

"No, I stay here —"

The major gave an order, the jeep with the young German



officer in it went outside the camp again. A few minutes went by, my comrades had not yet dared to come out of their barracks, for at that distance they could not tell the outcome of the negotiations between the American officer and the SS men. Then I hear several shots.

"The bastard is dead" the American major says to me.

Berben's official history gives short shrift to the fate of German troops. He does mention that on the morning of the camp's liberation "white flags had replaced the swastika on all the flagpoles in the camp, though the guard towers were still occupied and machine-guns were still trained on the blocks." (p. 191) Other accounts also make it clear that the German troops had surrendered; they were not killed in battle but were executed while prisoners of war. Germans were put on trial and executed for similar acts, but, then, the victors were the prosecutors, judges and executioners, and they write the official history.

*After the Battle* recounts another Allied massacre at Dachau. In this case the German guards in the camp towers were coming down, hands raised in the international symbol of surrender:<sup>28</sup>

The SS men promptly came down the ladder, their hands reaching high. But now the American GI saw red. He shot the Germans down with a telling blast and to make doubly sure sent a final shot into their fallen bodies. Then the hunt started for any other Germans in SS uniform. "Within a quarter of an hour," wrote [Nerin] Gun, "there was not a single one of the Hitler henchmen alive within the camp."

Selzer (p. 176) also confirms this atrocity: "... Surrender or no, the Nazis were pulverized by fire from a score of rifles as they stepped out. Climbing over their corpses, the GIs rushed into the towers. More shots were heard."

Selzer recounts (pp. 188-189) a third incident of murder of surrendered German troops.

"Kill 'em!" someone echoed. "Kill 'em! Kill 'em!" Others took up the cry until it seemed that the whole squad was chanting the same refrain: "Kill 'em!"

Screaming the words now, his body convulsed with sobs, Smitty let off a burst of fire from his machine gun. Noiselessly, ten or twelve Nazis slipped to the ground, dead. The spectacle did not propitiate any of the men. Without even pausing, they continued to scream. "More, more! Kill 'em all!" they yelled. Again Smitty pulled the trigger, and again Nazis fell to the ground — this time about thirty of them. Skodzensky was in this batch. But his death did not appease the GIs, either. Smitty took his time. The seconds ticked by

until the suspense became unbearable. Again he opened fire, in a long raking action that felled thirty, forty, fifty, and finally nearly eighty Nazis. Now only three remained standing, miraculously unscathed by the spray of lead. Two had their hands dutifully in the air, as they had been ordered, while a third, whether out of defiance or despair, crossed his arms in front of him and awaited his fate. Smitty, however, noticing that some of the men on the ground were wounded rather than dead, temporarily ignored the three still on their feet and directed the gun at the pile of bodies on the ground. They soon stopped twitching. Now he turned his attention to the three survivors.

... But there were no more to kill. One-hundred and twenty-two Nazis lay dead in a neat row along the base of the wall.

I should, in fairness, mention here my suspicions about the validity of these first person accounts. While I do think that these incidents did happen, I am skeptical of these "first person" descriptions. It has always amazed me that those individuals who provide first person Holocaust accounts always happen to be right where the action is. Selzer does not write as if he actually witnessed anything himself; his accounts are actually based on stories he was told. He even admits (p. 13) that his account of Dachau is somewhat fictionalized:

I have conflated a number of accounts given to me. That is to say, while much of an individual's story, as told in this book, belongs to the (pseudonymous) person in connection with whom it is told, there are in almost every instance additional episodes, experiences, and insights that do not belong to that individual but to another, who makes no independent appearance in this book ... even where his friend [of various characters in the book] may know the real identity of [any character] ... they should not assume that every aspect depicted pertains to the real-life person.

In particular, Selzer's description of the Dachau massacre of German prisoners seems to be nothing more than a fictionalized account based on the photograph reproduced in this booklet. However, if you look closely at the photo you will see, at the far right, a fourth man who appears to be standing against the wall, and maybe another German guard who survived the initial executions. It appears Mr. Selzer didn't notice him.

Berben does not actually mention this massacre, perhaps because he does not wish to acknowledge any Allied war crimes. Instead, he manufactures an incident to justify the killings: "... Gunshots were



heard near the camp and the violence of the explosions made the hut walls shake. Soon, however, the noise abated. It was later learned that it was an attack on the camp by the SS Viking Division, which had fortunately been repulsed by the Americans." (p. 194) By coincidence it was troops of the SS Viking Division who were killed in this massacre.

There are some important qualitative differences between the eyewitness testimony of the Dachau massacre of German prisoners, and the "eyewitness testimony" of execution gassings at the camp. In the case of the massacre, testimony is provided by individuals who have no motive to exaggerate or invent what really happened. By contrast, nearly all Holocaust "gassing" testimony comes not from the alleged perpetrators, but from the alleged victims, who certainly did have a motive to exaggerate and invent. In the case of the Dachau massacre, we have testimony from American soldiers as well as from prisoners who hated the Germans. Another difference is that whereas in the case of the massacre, we know that the American troops as a matter of course had in their possession the weapons employed in the killings, while there is no documentary or forensic evidence that the Germans had or used homicidal "gas chambers." In the case of the massacre, all the eyewitnesses agree on the fundamentals. There is no disagreement about who was killed and who carried out the killings, or when and where the killings took place. This is not true in the case of "testimony" about "gas chamber" killings.

And there is another critical difference: in the case of the massacre, photographic evidence exists proving beyond any doubt that the killings actually took place. In the photo reproduced in this booklet, the victims can be seen lying on the ground in front of the wall. Also visible are four prisoners who are still standing, awaiting the next lethal volley. The photo also shows the American troops, and a GI kneeling in front of the machine gun that was used to kill the prisoners.

Together in this single photograph, we see the victims, the instrument of killing, and the perpetrators. In the case of the alleged "gas chambers," NO comparable photo exists.

Another important fact about this massacre should be noted. Of all the atrocities committed at Dachau (by either the Germans or the Allies) the liberation day massacre of German prisoners was probably the worst. According to Selzer, 122 Germans were summarily killed at Dachau on liberation day (although it is not clear if he includes in this figure the guards murdered at the towers). The greatest single atrocity death toll at Dachau prior to this, according to Berben, was the execution of 90 Soviet military officers on Sep-

tember 4, 1944.

After the war Dachau was the site of the American-run war crimes trials at which German soldiers were tried for murdering American prisoners of war in what is known as the Malmedy incident.<sup>29</sup> The defendants in the Dachau "Malmedy" trial were found guilty, and 43 were sentenced to death. But unlike the murders committed by the American troops at Dachau, the Malmedy incident was not a clear-cut atrocity. As American historian Alfred de Zayas has noted, "the killings were so closely related to the fighting that the case for deliberate murder was rendered somewhat tenuous."<sup>30</sup> (As it happens, this incident had already been investigated by German authorities during the war.)

The case against the Germans in the Malmedy case was so weak that General Thomas T. Handy, Commander-in-Chief of the American armed forces in Germany, commuted the death sentences to life imprisonment. As de Zayas notes (p. 120): "... General Handy explained his decision on January 31, 1951, by conceding mitigating circumstances, since the killings had 'occurred in connection' with confused, volatile and desperate fighting." By contrast, the Dachau massacre of German prisoners had not occurred "in connection with confused, volatile and desperate fighting"; it was simply a clear cut, illegal atrocity. It has also been admitted that during the trial the "Malmedy" defendants were mistreated "at the hands of the American guards."<sup>31</sup> German defendants in other postwar trials were similarly mistreated to "persuade" them to confess to various crimes.<sup>32</sup>

Another Dachau "incident" that is almost entirely unknown to the general public (and which Berben fails to mention) occurred on January 19, 1946. Historian Nikolai Tolstoy writes about this atrocity in his book, *The Secret Betrayal*, which tells the story of a secret deal worked out between Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin and US and British leaders at the February 1945 Yalta conference. Under this arrangement, three million men, women and children who had been, at one time or other, citizens of the Soviet Union, were forcibly rounded up and deported to the Soviet Union, where they faced execution or imprisonment. This program, known as "Operation Keelhaul," included women and children as well as many individuals who had left Russia before the Communist takeover of the country in 1917. Dachau comes into play because it served as a prison camp for nearly 400 Russians who had fought against the Soviets on the Axis side. Tolstoy describes what happened.<sup>33</sup>

In was from amongst these [Russians who were imprisoned after the war at Dachau] that the Americans decided to se-



lect the first batch for repatriation under the new McNarney-Clark directive. Rumours of what was impending spread amongst the Russians, and when they were paraded for entrainment on January 17 [1946] they adamantly refused to enter the trucks. American troops threatened them with firearms, upon which they begged to be shot on the spot — anything rather than deliverance into the hands of the NKVD [Soviet secret police]. Baffled, the guards returned them to their barracks.

It was realised that the only way to effect the operation would be by means of a massive deployment of force. Two days later a shock force of 500 American and Polish guards arrived outside the camp. What followed was vividly described in a report submitted to Robert Murphy:

Conforming to agreements with the Soviets, an attempt was made to entrain 399 former Russian soldiers who had been captured in German uniform, for the assembly center at Dachau on Saturday, January 19.

All of these men refused to entrain. They begged to be shot. They resisted entrainment by taking off their clothing and refusing to leave their quarters. It was necessary to use tear-gas and some force to drive them out. Tear-gas forced them out of the building into the snow where those who had cut and stabbed themselves fell exhausted and bleeding into the snow. Nine men hanged themselves and one had stabbed himself to death and one other who had stabbed himself subsequently died; while 20 others are still in the hospital from self-inflicted wounds. The entrainment was finally effected of 368 men who were sent off accompanied by a [Soviet] Russian liaison officer on a train carrying American guards. Six men escaped en route. A number of men in the group claimed they were not Russians. This, after preliminary investigations by the local military authorities, was brought to the attention of the Russian liaison officer, as a result of which eleven men were returned by the Russians as not of Soviet nationality.

The irony of this tear-gassing incident should not be ignored because it is the only “gassing” of any kind ever to take place in Dachau — and it was done by Americans.

Tolstoy goes on to note:

Protests from distinguished non-Americans were also aroused by press accounts of the Dachau incident. The man whose armies had very nearly destroyed Bolshevism at birth, General Denikin, addressed a moving appeal to his fellow-soldier, Eisenhower. Three weeks later, Pope Pius XII issued a strong condemnation of the (still) secret agreement made

at Yalta, protesting against the “repatriation of men against their will and the refusal of the right of asylum.”

In all likelihood, every one of these 351 men taken by force from Dachau was later put to death by the Soviets. That is, this American action most likely contributed directly to their deaths.

While these executions did not actually take place at Dachau, the circumstances of this incident rightfully makes it part of the Dachau story. The death toll of this atrocity supersedes that of the liberation day killings of German prisoners. Thus, the single worst Dachau atrocity was carried out by the Soviets with American complicity, and the second worst was carried out by American troops on liberation day. Apparently the third worst atrocity was the illegal killings of Soviet military officers by the Germans on September 4, 1944. A distant fourth, was the alleged execution of 31 Soviet officers by the Germans on February 22, 1944. I am not counting here the deaths of 223 Dachau prisoners in a March 1944 Allied bombing raid because there is no indication that this was done intentionally.

The story of Dachau is a fascinating one. The truth about this camp has been illusive and distorted. Some have fictionalized it for profits to be made through books and movies. Others have distorted the truth for certain political ends. Some have simply believed propaganda that was fed to them by the victors. Few have bothered to actually carry out any investigation on their own. But Dachau does teach us something important. In war there isn't simply a “good” side and an “evil” side. While I firmly believe that there was no valid excuse for the establishment of Dachau, or any of the other German camps, I cannot find evidence that Dachau was established systematically to murder people. I have found evidence of German efforts to make life bearable. Indeed, because the death rate for Dachau prisoners was considerably lower than it was for others in Europe during the war years, these German measures much have been successful to some degree. Nor can I find Allied actions at Dachau totally blameless; the two worst atrocities at the camp were committed by the Allies. The lesson we must learn is that there is no good war.

In *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau* (pp. 272–273), Alfred de Zayas expressed a view I heartily endorse:

For there are not only heroes in war but also criminals — and as Vietnam has shown us, war crimes have not been committed exclusively by one people in history, nor just by one or the other party to a struggle. In every armed conflict heinous war crimes have been committed; most of them have gone unpunished. Today, after countless fratricidal wars,



Western thinking recognizes that dying for one's country may be necessary but that death on the battlefield is not sweet, nor is it a positive value in itself. War is neither glory nor honor. It is horror upon horror, injustice, agony, and waste.

## Notes

1. See the useful annotated bibliography of Dachau "gassing" claims compiled by Robert Faurisson and published in *The Journal of Historical Review*, Fall 1990 (Vol. 10, No. 3), pp. 296–307.
2. See *The Journal of Historical Review*, May-June 1993 (Vol. 13, No. 3), pp. 9–12.
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25. *Books & Bookmen* (London), April 1975, p. 5.; Similarly, in a letter published in *Stars and Stripes* (Europe), Jan. 24, 1993, p. 4, Wiesenthal acknowledged that "there were no extermination camps on German soil."
26. "Keine Vergasung in Dachau," *Die Zeit* (German edition), August 19, 1960 (and in the US edition, Aug. 26, 1960, p. 14); Facsimile of this letter, with translation and commentary, in *The Journal of Historical Review*, May-June 1993 (Vol. 13, No. 3), p. 12.
27. A. Mollo, "Dachau," *After the Battle* (London: 1980), Issue No. 27, p. 13; Probably the most thoughtful and detailed account of the liberation day massacre of German camp personnel is *Dachau: The Hour of the Avenger*, a memoir and investigation by Howard Buechner. This well illustrated 175-page softcover book is available from Thunderbird Press, 300 Cuddihy Dr., Metairie, LA 70005, USA. See also: *The Journal of Historical Review*, May-June 1993, pp. 7, 8, and, *The Journal of Historical Review*, Nov.-Dec. 1993, p. 47.

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29. For more of this, see: Joseph Halow, *Innocent at Dachau* (Institute for Historical Review, 1992). Available, in hardcover, from the IHR for \$15.95, plus \$2.50 shipping.
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# Dachau:

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