An Indelible Stain on American Honor . . .

OTHER LOSSES

An Investigation into the Mass Deaths of German Prisoners at the Hands of the French and Americans After World War II

Under the tutelage of the censored U.S. press—newspapers, radio and TV—Americans think of themselves as the most generous and forgiving people on Earth. And we are—to the Israelis, and hundreds of other nationalities which have benefitted from American foreign policy aid and munificence. Too bad that nobody of substance has told them about the atrocities, including mass murder, perpetrated by Dwight David Eisenhower. Instead of praise, Ike should be remembered for his murder of millions of hapless German prisoners after World War II. This blot on the honor of America can never be removed. The appalling story is told by reporters willing to brave the unspoken journalistic taboo of silence when it comes to Ike’s crimes. One of these venturesome reporters is the Canadian James Bacque. Bacque has told the chilling story of Ike’s mass murder of millions of disarmed, surrendered German soldiers in 1945 in his book Other Losses. Other Losses (softcover, 324 pages, $20 plus $5 S&H in the U.S.) is available from TBR, P.O. Box 15877, Washington, D.C. 20003. Call 1-877-773-9077 toll free to charge. See page 64 for a handy mail-in ordering form. See also at www.barnesreview.com.

1947, when most Germans had either died or had been expelled from the camps, that Red Cross officials were finally allowed to inspect a Polish camp. Yet even at this late date, there were still a few camps the Red Cross was not allowed to investigate. 17

Efforts to bring perpetrators in Polish camps to justice were largely unsuccessful. Czeslaw Geborski, director of the camp at Lamsdorf, was indicted by the Polish authorities in 1956 for wanton brutality against the German prisoners. Lamsdorf was initially built by Germany to house Allied prisoners of war. Geborski admitted at his trial that his only goal in taking the job was “to exact revenge” on the Germans.

On Oct. 4, 1945, Geborski ordered his guards to shoot down anyone trying to escape a fire that engulfed one of the barracks buildings; a minimum of 48 prisoners were killed that day. The guards at Lamsdorf also routinely beat the German prisoners and stole from them. Prisoners in Lamsdorf died of hunger and disease in droves; guards recalled scenes of children begging for scraps of food and crusts of bread. Geborski was found not guilty despite strong evidence of his criminal acts. 18

CZECH-RUN CAMPS

The Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia was used by Germany to intern many of Germany’s, Austria’s and Czechoslovakia’s most famous or most talented Jews during the war. On May 24, 1945, the Czech government decided to use the Theresienstadt camp to imprison 600 Germans from Prague. Within the first few hours of their arrival between 59 and 70 Germans were brutally beaten to death. Two hundred more of the Germans were reported to have died from torture and beatings within the next few days.

The camp commandant, Alois Prusa, took great pleasure in the beatings, and reportedly used at least one of his daughters to assist him in killing the German inmates. Prusa and his assistant told the remaining Germans they would never leave the camp. 19

Torture appears to have been the rule in Theresienstadt. Guards at Theresienstadt used a variety of instruments for beating and lashing their victims: steel rods sheathed with leather, pipes, rubber truncheons, iron bars and wooden planks. One woman in Theresienstadt ob-
served and still remembers the screams from a female SS member forced to sit astride a dagger.

Dr. E. Siegel, a Czech-speaking medical doctor working for the Red Cross, was also subject to extensive torture in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Dr. Siegel thought the guards were ordered from above to commit their acts of torture, because the methods used in all Czech camps were broadly similar.20

Much of the savagery at Theresienstadt stopped when Prusa was replaced by a Maj. Kalal.21 However, one secret Soviet report said the German inmates at Theresienstadt repeatedly begged the Russians to stay at the camp. The report states: “We now see the manifestations of hatred for the Germans. They [the Czechs] don’t kill them, but torment them like livestock. The Czechs look at them like cattle.”

The horrible treatment at the hands of the Czechs led to despair and hopelessness among the Germans. According to Czech statistics, 5,558 Germans committed suicide in 1946 alone.22

Czech author Dr. Hans Guenther Adler, a Jew who was imprisoned during the war in the Theresienstadt concentration camp, confirms that conditions in Czech-run Theresienstadt were deplorable for Germans after the war. Adler writes:

“In Czech- and Polish-run camps, female inmates were subject to worst kind of barbaric deprivations.”

Certainly there were those among them who, during the years of occupation, were guilty of some infraction or other, but the majority, among them children and adolescents, were locked up simply because they were German. Just because they were German? That phrase is frighteningly familiar; one could easily substitute the word “Jew” for “German.” The rags given to the Germans as clothes were smeared with swastikas. They were miserably undernourished, abused. . . . The camp was run by Czechs, yet they did nothing to stop the Russians from going in to rape the captive women.”23

After the war, the Red Cross reported that the sexual abuse of female inmates in Czech-run camps was pervasive and systematic. A foreign observer of one Czech camp noted that the women were “treated like animals. Russian and Czech soldiers come in search of women for purposes which can be imagined. Conditions there for women are definitely more unfavorable than in the German concentration camps, where cases of rape were rare.” In another Czech camp, the Czech and Soviet soldiers would “take away the prettiest girls, who would often disappear without trace.”

Jean Duchosal, secretary general of the ICRC, reported that girls were often raped at the Matejovce camp in Slovakia, and that beatings were daily occurrences.

The same was true of the Czech-run camp of Patrónka. A Prague police report of June 1945 mentioned that Revolutionary Guards were in the habit of “exposing women’s body parts and burning them with lighted cigarettes.”24

SYSTEMATIC STARVATION

A common feature of most Czech-run camps was the provision of so little food to camp inmates as to make not merely malnutrition but actual starvation largely a function of the length of incarceration. The Czech government in 1945 and 1946 contrived as a matter of policy to ensure that there would be no improvement in the food rations provided to ethnic German inmates, regardless of the availability of food. For example, none of the 4.5 tons of food the Red Cross delivered to the Hagibor camp shortly before Christmas 1945 was issued to the inmates, despite the fact that malnutrition-related deaths were occurring at a rate of three per day.

Richard Stokes, the prominent British Parliament member, visited Hagibor in September 1946 and calculated the daily food ration at Hagibor to be “750 calories per day, which is below Belsen level.”25

The Red Cross found that published regulations in Czech-run camps regarding the dietary requirements of inmates were almost invariably ignored. Pierre W. Mock, head of the ICRC delegation in Bratislava, calculated the daily caloric intake of prisoners at Petřžalka I camp at 664 per person during the third week of October 1945. The daily caloric intake had declined to 512 per person when Mock returned to the Petřžalka I camp in the last week of December. At Novaky, a former German concentration camp, Mock found the milk and bread ration woefully inadequate to feed the population of more than 5,000.

A Red Cross visitor at the Hradisko camp near Prague was informed by the guard in charge of food distribution that the inadequate food ration issued to the inmates was fixed by law and unchangeable. The guard also told the Red Cross visitor that the few Czech children at Hradis-
tko received twice as much food as the German inmates. A social worker attempting to ameliorate the worst elements of the Czechoslovak camp system confidentially advised the British Foreign Office in February 1946 that the Czech government would not permit relief supplies to be distributed to the needy German civilian inmates. 26

German prisoners at Svidnik camp in Czechoslovakia were also forced to clear away minefields. Strong protests by the delegation of the ICRC at Bratislava eventually succeeded in having this practice stopped. 27

In addition, the ICRC sent a general memorandum to the Prague government on March 14, 1946, stating that it held its duty to be to carry out the German expulsions as humanely as possible. In view of the unsatisfactory condition of the camps, the ICRC was of the opinion that provisional internment of Germans in Czechoslovakia should be ended as soon as possible. 28

Thus, the German prisoners in postwar Soviet, Polish and Czech concentration camps were subject to brutal treatment—resulting in the loss of many tens of thousands of lives.

ENDNOTES:
5 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 298.
12 Public Record Office, FO 371/46900.
20 Ibid., 154, 157.
21 Ibid, 156.
25 Ibid., 144, 151-2.
26 Ibid., 144, 146.

JOHN WEAR was born July 11, 1953 in Houston, Texas. John graduated with a degree in accounting from Southern Methodist University in May 1974 and passed the CPA exam later that year. He graduated from University of Texas Law School in December 1977 and passed the Texas bar exam in February 1978. He has worked most of his career as a CPA. His longest and most recent employment was from 1994 to 2008 working for Lacerte Software, a tax software division of Intuit Corporation.

The Devil’s Handiwork: A Victim’s View of “Allied” War Crimes