

## Extract from, *Lee Miller's War*, Thames and Hudson

I arrived at Dachau on the night of 30 April as blackout and shells were falling. The camp had been liberated by the combined operations of the 42nd and the 45th Infantry Divisions. Just outside a picturesque town, it was typical of all great Nazi concentration camps, a large barracks area of oblong buildings. Half of the camp was a permanent billet for SS troops, the remainder for starved, half-crazed prisoners.

In this case the camp is so close to the town that there is no question about the inhabitants knowing what went on. The railway siding into the camp runs past quite a few swell villas and the last train of dead and semi dead deportees was long enough to extend past them. The cars are still full of skeletal dead and the path beside the trains is littered with the fleshless bodies of those who tried to get out and walk to their execution.

The SS barracks are empty although the roads between them are decorated with the battered carcasses of soldiers. The dog kennels are vacant — one dead dog lies on the grass. The small canal bounding the camp was a floating mess of SS, in their spotted camouflage suits and nail-studded boots. They slithered along in the current, along with a dead dog or two and smashed rifles. Prisoners and soldiers tried to fish out some of the bodies.

One block is an Angora rabbit farm where the rabbits are an industry of the prison. They are much less crowded and better cared for than humans, beautifully clean and housed - lovingly looked after by Capo prisoners. The stable of work-horses was also perfection, with fat-bottomed beasts which shocked the eye after so many emaciated humans.

The crematorium was out of fuel long enough to pile up two rooms of bodies. The gas chambers look like their titles, written over the doors:

"SHOWER BATHS". The selected victims, having shed their clothes, walked in innocently, leaving their prison clothes behind them to be bathed and deloused. Turning on the taps for the bath, they killed themselves, thereby saving the SS the stigma of being murderers.

The overcrowded blocks of prisoners were further crowded by incoming evacuated prisoners from other camps. The triple-decker bunks, without blankets or even straw, held two or three men per bunk who lay in bed too weak to circulate around the camp in victory and liberation marches or songs, although they mostly grinned and cheered, peering over the edge. In the few minutes it took me to take my pictures, two men were found dead and were unceremoniously dragged out and thrown on the heap outside the block. Nobody seemed to mind except me. The doctor said it was too late for more than half the others in the building anyway. The bodies are just chucked out so that the wagon that makes the rounds every day can pick them up at the street corner, like garbage disposal.

All over the camp are heaps of clothing - dirty, soiled rag piles: civilian clothes from those immediately executed and prisoner clothes from the dead. Prisoners were prowling these heaps, some of which were burning, in the hope of finding something more presentable than what they were already wearing. Naturally, the moment the guards of the camp were disposed of by very fine methods devised by the prisoners themselves, they looted the warehouses of both Nazi and prisoner supplies. Only the strongest and most active of the prisoners could participate in this pleasure. Anyone able to wander around the grounds is pretty well off. There are thousands in the bunks who are too weak to scrounge or ever dress themselves again.

This camp was not designed for women, but in the last-minute evacuation of other camps as the Krauts retreated, about five hundred women were shifted here and put into one block. They are mostly healthy ones who were worth bringing in for labour, although now there are many hospital cases including typhus. There are newborn babies and wildly insane people among them. They are cared for by a Viennese woman, Dr. Ella Lingens, LLD MD also of the London School of Economics, as she is not only a doctor of medicine but also of law. She was imprisoned two and a half years ago for having helped hide Jewish women. She has a six-year-old son, she hopes, in some Austrian village, and a husband she has been unable to hear from all this time.

The ward is the former camp brothel; hence it is better decorated than the others with only two-decker bunks. Patients have already started embroidering signatures of other prisoners and of their head nurse on miserable towels, etc. Other girls are sewing scraps of coloured cloth into their national-flag boutonnières.

Trucks arrived and began unloading food, officially looted from German warehouses. Prisoners climbed on the roofs celebrating, singing hymns and national anthems in honour of the birthday of a Dutch princess, cheering everything they could think of, and finally sorting out three strips of coloured material, not yet sewn together but which will make their national flag.

Dachau is the prison for the cream of the crop — nearly all political prisoners. It is here that Niemoeller, Schuschnigg and others were until last week. We hoped to find some of them, but the Krauts took many with them, probably to their last stand in Munich as hostages. There remained many journalists, such as Philippe Brundt of *Le Peuple* and *Le Soir*, Brussels, and Leurs Vancoeverde, a Dutchman who had been correspondent for United Press. Also ex-ministers and intellectuals such as Wladimir Paulin, Czech Minister of Finance and Professor at Prague University, Dr. Jindra Polak, chief of the General Hospital in Prague, and Joseph Hrnicko, general manager of a famous glassworks.

Soldiers were encouraged to sightsee around the place; they were urged to photograph it and tell the folks back home. However, by midday only the press and medics were allowed in the buildings, as so many really tough guys had become sick that it was interfering with duties.