

The Holocaust Historiography Project

Remarkable Nonsense about the Holocaust

Shooting orchestra members

Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal. Volume V. Nuremberg: IMT, 1947. pp. 450.

[...]

I will not make any comment on this document, although I do beg the Tribunal to take note of a certain Obersturmfuehrer Willhaus mentioned in this document.

The Tribunal will find the excerpt which I shall now read into the Record on Page 58 of the document book -- on the reverse side of the page, Column 1 of the text. I quote:

"SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Gebauer established a savage system of murder in Yanov Camp, which, after his transfer to another post, was perfected by the camp commandant, SS Obersturmfuehrer Gustav Willhaus and SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Franz Wartzok.

"A former inmate of the camp told the commission:

"I have seen with my own eyes how SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Fritz Gebauer strangled women and children and froze men to death in barrels filled with water. The hands and feet of the victims were shackled before they were lowered into the water. Those doomed to die remained in the barrels until they froze to death."

"According to the testimonies of numerous Soviet prisoners of war and also of French citizens held in German camps, it was established that the German thugs invented the most vicious methods for exterminating human beings, a fact which they considered as particularly praiseworthy and in which they were encouraged both by the higher military command and y the government.

"SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Franz Wartzok, for instance, loved to hang internees by both feet on posts and leave them in this position until they died; **Obersturmfuehrer Rokita personally slashed open the bellies of the prisoners.** The chairman of the investigation section of the Yanov Camp, **Heine, pierced the bodies of internees with sticks or a piece of iron, he would tear out the finger nails of women with pliers, then he would strip his victims, hang them up by their hair, swing them out and shoot at the 'moving targets.'**

"The commandant of the Yanov Camp, Obersturmfuehrer **Willhaus, systematically shot with an automatic rifle from the balcony of his office room the prisoners employed in the workshops, partly for sheer love of sport and partly to amuse his wife and daughters. He would then hand his rifle to his wife and she too had a shot at the prisoners. Sometimes to please his 9-year-old daughter, he had children between the**

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ages of 2 and 4 years tossed in the air and then took pot shots at them, while his daughter applauded and shrieked, 'Papa, do it again; do it again, Papa!' And he did it again.

"**The internees of this camp were exterminated for no reason at all, often as a result of a bet.** A woman witness, Kirschner, informed the Investigating Commission that a Gestapo Commissar, **Wepke, bet the other camp executioners that he could cut a boy in half with one stroke of the axe. They did not believe him. So he caught a 10-year-old boy on the road, made him kneel down, told him to hide his face in the folded palms of his hands, made one test stroke, placed the child's head in a more convenient position and with one single stroke cut the boy in half.** The Hitlerites heartily congratulated Wepke, shaking him warmly by the hand.

"In 1943, for Hitler's birthday -- his 54th -- the commandant of the Yanov Camp, Obersturmfuehrer Willhaus, picked out 54 prisoners of war and shot them himself.

"A special hospital for prisoners was organized in the camp. The German hangmen Brambauer and Birman checked up the patients on the 1st and 15th day of each month; and, if they discovered that among the patients there were some who had been in the hospital for over 14 days, they shot them on the spot. Six or seven people were killed during each investigation.

"**The Germans executed their tortures, ill-treatments, and shooting to the accompaniment of music.** For this purpose they created a special orchestra selected from among the prisoners. They forced Professor Stricks and the famous conductor Mund to conduct this orchestra. **They requested the composers to write a special tune, to be called the 'Tango of Death.'** Shortly before dissolving the camp the **Germans shot every member of the orchestra."**

Later on I will present to the Tribunal, as a photo-document, photographs of this "orchestra of death."

What took place in Yanov Camp was in no way exceptional. In exactly the same manner the German fascist administration behaved in all concentration camps in the occupied area of the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia, and other Eastern European countries.

I submit to the International Military Tribunal Exhibit Number USSR-29 (Document Number USSR-29). It is a communique of the Polish-Soviet Extraordinary State Commission for the investigation of the crimes perpetrated by the Germans in the extermination camp of Maidanek in the city of Lublin. The Tribunal will find this communique on Page 63 of the document book. I quote

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Section 3 of this document, "Tortures and Murder in the Extermination Camp" Page 64 reverse side of the document book beginning with the last paragraph of the first column of the text:

"The forms of torture were extremely varied. Some of them were in the nature of so-called jokes which frequently ended in death. They included mock-shooting when the victim was rendered insensible by a blow over the head with a blunt instrument, and mock drownings in the pond of the camp which often ended in actual drowning.

[...]

Send all questions and comments to webmaster@historiography-project.org.