

*Statements communicated to the Foreign Office on October 28, 1938,
by a Charity Organisation working in Germany.*

(a) Statement by Jewish ex-Prisoner; August 1938.

(Translation.)

HERR X, a well to do Jewish business man, was for six weeks in the concentration camp at Buchenwald. In order to preserve a semblance of legality, police records are searched through and the slightest bad mark against a Jew, sometimes a trifling offence of forty years ago, is made the excuse for the arrest.

Herr X said that the working hours were sixteen per day, Sundays and week-days alike. During these hours it was forbidden to drink, even in the hottest weather. The food in itself was not bad, but quite insufficient. Weak coffee at dawn and a half litre of soup at midday; bread allowance for the whole day 250 grammes. (Men who had any money could sometimes buy condensed milk, &c., from the canteen.) While he was there the work of Jewish prisoners was doubled, and their rations halved. The work, of course, consists in moving heavy stones, often far beyond the strength of even a normal well-fed man. The Jews were sneeringly told by their guards that they were only experiencing the same treatment as their forefathers in Egypt, and that Pharoah had not gone half far enough.

The men were kept standing at attention for many hours on end. Floggings were very frequent, for such small offences as drinking water during working hours. The usual punishment was twenty-five strokes given alternately by two guards. This often produced unconsciousness, but the Jews were told that the Führer had himself given orders that the Jews might receive up to sixty strokes.

Herr X was in a group of 480 men who had only one tap at which to wash and drink for a quarter of an hour on getting up. Later even this was stopped. During the six weeks he was in the camp Herr X saw neither soap nor tooth-brush.

There were about 8,000 men in the camp when he was there, but it was rumoured that the number was shortly to be increased to 20,000. There were 1,500 Jews and 800 Ernste Bibelforscher (International Bible Students). The rest were politicals, so-called criminals and gypsies. Each man wore a badge—Jews yellow with the star of David, Bible Students violet, &c. The Communists and others who were prisoners of long standing, acted as sub "warders." Jewish prisoners wrote and received letters twice a month. The Bible Students were allowed no communication with the outside world, but on the other hand, their rations were not cut down. Herr X spoke with the highest respect of these men. Their courage and religious faith were remarkable, and they professed themselves ready to suffer to the uttermost what they felt God had ordained for them.

Deaths took place daily in the camp. (Their relatives were often first informed of this by a call from an official who said they could have the ashes on payment of 3 marks.) Herr X—a man in the sixties—had a complete collapse after his release, and was three weeks in bed. Another man was taken to the City Hospital with such high fever that he was not expected to live, and another, released at the same time, was in such a state of nerves that he could not cross a road.

Herr X made the statement, which was fully confirmed on enquiry that no Jewish prisoner is ever released unless he can produce evidence that he is able to leave Germany. There appears to be no release from this system of deliberate torture of mind and body but death. Herr X entreats that some way may be found by which these men could be released *en bloc* and placed in some kind of humane concentration camp in another country while their ultimate destination and fate was being decided. He realises that such a proposal is quite beyond the scope of any private Refugee Committees, and needs international planning, but he begs that it may at least receive careful and sympathetic consideration.

(b) *Statement by a Jewish-Christian Prisoner.*

(Translation.)

Herr Z had a small business in Germany (with three employees). Arrested in June 1938 in a "round-up" in the streets of Berlin without any cause or pretext. No order of arrest (and later no papers of discharge). Brought to the Alexander Place prison; put in cell where there were thirty-two men, too small for it to be possible to lie down. Took it in turns to sit down during the night. One bucket

for sanitary purposes. (Awful stench.) Stayed two days there. Previously in the police quarters everyone had been asked for their life history, and forced to sign their approval of being put into "protective custody." All belongings taken away. About 3,000 prisoners collected from fifteen different police quarters. Transportation in lorries to station, and put in special trains with no mention of the final destination. Prohibition to talk. Arrived 6.30 A.M. at Weimar. Reception by S.S. men with insults and blows: "Jew-dogs, blackguards, now we have got you!" &c. Some 3-4 per cent. Aryans and a few gypsies. Taken away in lorries under Camp Commandant Schneider. One-and-a-half hours to Buchenwald. Awful condition of camp. Filth and mud up to the knees in places. Many trees had been cut down but stumps left. Almost impossible to walk. A man with heart trouble who cannot walk is dragged along by the feet by other prisoners (S.S. men do not touch Jews). The flesh is torn from his face. He is so disfigured as to be unrecognisable. (Other examples similar to this.) Three hundred and fifty of the new arrivals lodged in the basement of the barracks. (In the whole camp there were about 10,000 men, 100 straw sacks and no other furnishings.) Three men to each straw sack in four rows. Obligated to lie on our sides; and crosswise over sack so as to make room; packed like sardines; lying on the back forbidden or blows given with a club ("Knuppel"). The men directly in charge are older prisoners. The "Black Superiors," themselves "professional criminals," sleep with us. Their word is absolute law.

On our arrival a roll-call lasting for hours with address by the commandant, who has given all instructions for our "reception."

Camp-orders: this is no prison or place of correction; here there are other methods. Any attempt at escape or attack (mere talking or gesticulation can be taken as such) is stopped by the 1,000-volt charged wire. Every sentry is to use his rifle without warning if anyone moves in his direction. Every bullet costs 12 pfennigs, and that is just what a Jew is worth, neither more nor less. All this interlarded with words of abuse—"Jewish swine," "the Chosen People, God's People, Jewish muck, dirty swine," &c. (but after a few days one gets used to it). The commandant's representative calls the roll and appoints the officers. The first days are occupied with roll-calls, clothes distribution (military boots, trousers and coat, but no underclothing). The things are worn over the naked body. Everyone shivers with cold. Buchenwald lies high. After ten days we get underclothes.

Time-table: 3.30 A.M., get up (bed about 10 P.M.), very bad air; smell appalling; water drips down the tiny cellar windows. Form ranks at 4.30. Coffee distribution at 4.45 on the square where the gallows stand and the blocks (for flogging). Before the time of this report, the body of the murderer of an S.S. man hung there. The hangman is a professional criminal who has now become a "veteran." Ordinary German salute strictly forbidden in the camp. The salute means standing to attention with the cap off, while

commands are repeated. 5.30 A.M., end of roll-call; until then stand stiffly to attention. Those who have reported sick now come forward, are separated off and inspected by the commandant. He at once treats the "fit" with his riding whip, in their face, in the presence of the others; "Jews do not fall ill." The commandant decides by sight who is "ripe" for the doctor. These number 6 or 7 per cent.; the others have to go back into the labour gang. No differentiation of the sick in the labour gang; they are helped on by kicks and riding whip. The doctor declares the sick as either "ill" or "fit"; in the latter case they are punished in the evening for "lies." In the end no Jews were accepted as sick; there could only be "well or dead." In the roll-call many are unable to continue standing; they have to be forcibly held up by their companions in misfortune, so that they can be seen from the front, even those who are completely collapsed; the ranks must be complete. The work consists of stone-breaking a quarter of an hour away from the road which is built. It is outside the camp, but within the charged wires. Attempts at flight occur, but all end with shooting. Many end their sufferings by feigning flight in order to be shot down. Everywhere sentries are posted around. A colony of "cripples," men with wooden legs, ruptures (sometimes if their belts are lost the ruptures break out again), are obliged to carry massive stones at the will of the guard. They included old men of 70 who were utterly unequal to the work. In one instance a guard prodded with his bayonet a man who was ill and who kept on collapsing. After this had happened repeatedly, the man rushed to the wire to put an end to himself, and was shot down. The quarter of an hour's stretch to the road is done twelve to fifteen times in the morning and eight times in the afternoon by those who are really able to work; the "cripples" do half this. Every four men of the former have to deal with a barrow loaded up with great boulders, and often have to do it running. Woe to anyone who trips! Anyone who is unfit gets blows from the club by the overseer, and after him the guards with the butts of their rifles follow suit. All parties are thorough in their inflicting of punishment for fear of their own superiors. Any drinking of water is expressly forbidden. For false reporting of being sick, for "lies," or being "work shy" the penalty is the whip. At 11.30 comes the midday pause (although sometimes work is enforced till 7 o'clock without food). 12.30, work resumed till 3.30. 4 P.M., roll-call. This generally lasts till 5.30; for many of the "Jew people" till 10. How "Non-Aryans" are distinguished from Jews is not clear. Woe to the non-Aryan who by mistake gets among the Aryans. Jews have to wear the "David Cross" with the sign: red for "professional criminal," black for the "work shy," lilac for the "Bible bug." One is compelled to sign oneself as a "professional criminal," and it goes on the card index. (On the other side of the card one's real profession is stated.) Woe to him who refuses to sign the statement! Yellow is the sign for a Jew and has to be added to the other.

The floggings take place at the afternoon roll-call, the individuals having to step forward. The penalties are read out (being fixed beforehand). Normal punishment is twenty-five strokes on the seat, carried out by two guards standing on each side with riding whips. The prisoner is lashed to a board. If he cries out the strokes are increased up to thirty-five. The guards use all their force, sometimes springing into the air so as to bring the arm down with increased momentum. Few days pass without cases of flogging, and the number may be from two to ten. After the flogging the men have to stand to attention with face to the wall to the end of the roll-call. Then the sanitary officer comes round and puts ointment on the wounds.

The other punishment is hanging up 3 metres from the ground by the arms, which are violently bent back for the purpose. This is done by express orders from the commandant given through a microphone. Special men are employed to carry out these punishments and they do nothing else. The hanging lasts for ten to twelve hours and is in public. Another form of it is to have the arms round the trunk of the tree with wrists handcuffed. The feet are off the ground, but it is regarded as milder punishment and the S.S. men can inflict it at any time.

In the evening there is no sort of free time but things are easier. There may be examinations by the State Police but no mishandling; once in fourteen days a letter home, if it has not been forbidden. But, of course, it is impossible to say anything about the real circumstances and the families know nothing of it. Herr Z. was only in the camp fourteen days, but he gives the following individual instances happening in this short period: A man who had been condemned to stand with his eyes to the wall, at the end of three hours or so—as is inevitable—began to droop slightly thinking he was unobserved. But a rigid position is demanded all the time. A guard saw that the prisoner was not standing properly. He seized the prisoner and beat his head repeatedly against the stone wall (the stones were rough with sharp edges). The blood gushed out and streamed down the wall. Then renewed fury seized the guard: "You swine to make that mess on the wall!" Now he threw him on the ground and beat him mercilessly. Herr Z. thought the man would surely be dead, but he survived.

An even worse case was that of a middle-aged man who received an affectionate letter from his wife. He was an educated man of a sensitive type and unable always to maintain the degree of self-control and outward hardness which is demanded. He gave way to a moan. For this he was tied up to a tree and left fourteen hours. He became unconscious. Two guards passed: "Ahah! he is already dead!" They loose him and throw his body on the ground. Then they jump on to his body and stamp on him in their heavy boots. He moves slightly. "Ahah! he is *not* quite dead!" Herr Z. had to pass on, but next time he saw the man his breast and face were a mass of clotted blood, his eyes swollen and purple. Moreover, he

had gone mad. At the roll call he had to be helped up by a man on each side. But his head hung forward and he made spasmodic convulsive movements. At night he suddenly started up screaming wildly, and tried to run away over the bodies of the men lying packed together. The order was then given that in future the two men lying next to him at night were to be responsible for his keeping quiet, and if he screamed again they would themselves get twenty-five lashes.

The S.S. men employed in the camp were mostly very young men of 17 to 20 who had been specially "trained" for the purpose. But they were already so brutalised and sadistic that it was a constant wonder to Herr Z. how it could have been brought about (and what would their mothers think?). They seemed to revel in inflicting torture. One instance of it was the tickling of a prisoner's face with a straw, and then when the face twitched giving him a terrific blow. The sadistic amusements of the guard shows itself, *e.g.*, in their treatment of an old man, a lawyer by profession, whose Jewish features were rather specially marked. He was made to stand like a statue on the top of a wall for six to eight hours on end as a "monument." All the passers by laughed heartily at this good joke. On another occasion a guard asked him whether he was feeling the heat, and when the lawyer assented, ten buckets of water were poured over his head. Herr Z. himself fared relatively well in the camp. He attributes this to prayer by which he was able to overcome fear. It requires much physical strength and nerve power to carry out briskly all the exorbitant demands that are made upon one, and to get through the heavy labour and other physical ordeals without faltering or flinching. Signs of weakness evidently excite the sadistic instincts of the guards. Thus when a man was on the ground at their feet they would habitually kick him in the face. Herr Z. used to pray and beseech God to let the victims die, as one bout of torture simply led on to another one. It would have been so much simpler and more merciful to shoot them than to allow a life, which for all practical purposes had already been destroyed, to drag on to the prolonged infinite agony of the victim.

The camp held 10,000 prisoners, about half of them Jews (and some "Bible Seekers"). There were many deaths daily.

Herr Z. was only fourteen days in the camp. He was one of a small number who were released because all arrangements were ready for their emigration. For any prisoner, however, who bore scars release was impossible.

They were strictly threatened that if a word was said as to what they had seen or experienced in the camp they would immediately be put back. Herr Z. had asked leave to stay a few weeks before leaving the country in order to finish selling his possessions. It was made clear to him, however, that he would be rearrested. A German pastor pleaded his case with the English Consul at the port and Herr Z. received his visa to leave the country at once. The sale of his car had paid for his ticket to South America. But his business had to

be closed down and the 100 per cent. tax on all possessions bought since 1933 prevented him taking away most of his belongings (expensive professional instruments, &c.). He finally came away with just 10 marks in cash.

Herr Z. had fought through the war. But life in the trenches compared to that in a concentration camp, was a "sanatorium."
