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## **Germany**

We are publishing below extracts of a report of the People's Front Committee which was formed in the German concentration camp Buchenwald during the Nazi regime. The importance of this report consists, in our opinion, not so much in the treatment of the different subjects, but much more in the fact that many years of captivity in this hell did not kill the spirit of these men. Again and again they started to discuss the possibilities of creating a better world, and what is even more important, they set about to organise the preparatory steps for it.

Following this report we reproduce some authentic figures and facts on conditions in Buchenwald during the years 1937 till 1945. They were compiled by a former prisoner of this camp who was there throughout these seven years. He gained access to them owing to special circumstances.

### **Report on the Activities of the People's Front Committee in the former Concentration Camp Buchenwald**

#### **Preparatory Work**

In the course of the years 1937 till 1943 various efforts were made in the Camp to give expression to the idea of a People's Front, comprising all anti-Fascist forces. Using some statements made by political emigrants, a political declaration was issued laying down the most important conditions for the creation of a New Germany.

In December 1943 this work received a new impulse. During the months January till March, 1944 we worked intensely to broaden and deepen the conception of the People's Front idea. In April, 1944 we succeeded in formulating a six point Manifesto which we deemed a suitable introduction for this idea to a selected number of politically interested comrades. The six points - which, like all other written work of the People's Front Committee, cannot be reproduced verbatim because all documents had to be destroyed during the wave of arrests in November and December, 1944 - deal with the eradication of fascism, the re-establishment of freedom, the creation of a new democratic republic, the ending of the war, the punishment of war-criminals and of those guilty of acts of terror, the securing of peace; it discusses further some immediate measures in the economic and political sphere, specially the economic and political co-operation with the U.S.S.R. . On May 1st, 1944 the Manifesto was circulated to a group of people whose number was restricted through the illegality of our work, and it immediately provoked a very lively discussion. This discussion showed that a considerable number of comrades lacked certain preconditions necessary for its understanding, which was due to their long imprisonment. We therefore added an introduction which soon enabled us to gain the support of these

persons for the Manifesto. We also succeeded in informing members of the most important foreign nations in the camp of its contents.

### **Constitution and Programme.**

The time had come to start with the creation of a People's Front Committee embracing all anti-Nazi groups. With the consent of all concerned this Committee was formed as follows:

Hermann L. Brill [1], German People's Front of 1936.

Werner Hilpert [2], Christian Democrat.

Ernst Thape [3], Social Democratic Party.

Walter Wolf [4], Communist Party of Germany.

This committee held its first session on July 5th, 1944 and chose comrade Brill as its Chairman.

It was first suggested to enlarge this committee by the inclusion of a representative of the younger generation. This plan, however, had to be dropped owing to various difficulties; the Chairman was instructed to keep in constant touch with the young prisoners.

Secondly, the question was brought forward whether the Manifesto of May 1st, 1944 could form the basis of our work. After several sessions this question was answered in the affirmative; it was thought necessary, however, to work out in greater detail the most important ideas of the Manifesto. Thus the following programme was agreed upon:

- 1) Principles of our Policy.
- 2) The Building up of a New Administration.
- 3) The Civil Service.
- 4) Militia.
- 5) Economic and Social Questions.
- 6) Public Opinion, especially the Press.
- 7) Education.

Later on was added: Problems of Germany's Future as a Nation.

The Committee had worked on all questions with the exception of 4), and had formulated the results in writing. All decisions of the People's Front Committee were unanimously reached.

### **The Principles of our Policy.**

As early as August, 1944 the draft dealing with the principles of our policy was accepted. It contained the following ideas:

The fight against the Nazis cannot be carried on by individual organisations, it must be the result of a broad anti-Nazi movement in town and country. It is therefore important to direct this movement upon concrete political aims. The instrument for this

must be the People's Front Committees formed from against all anti-Fascist groups. They are to be formed throughout the Reich on all levels, and are to be represented by a German People's Congress. This Congress must appoint the Government and the people's representative body.

The legitimacy of the Nazi dictatorship is to be abolished.

The overthrow of the dictatorship must be carried out in three spheres: the N.S.D.A.P., the State, the social structure. To this end a detailed legislative programme had been drafted, details of which are not interesting here. Generally speaking, this programme makes the following provisions:

What matters is not to what organisations persons belonged, but what were their practical activities during the Nazi regime. Formal dissolutions, dismissals, etc. are completely inadequate;

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It is essential that Nazi organisations and leading Nazis are physically exterminated. And finally, the negative process of eradication must be accompanied by positive reconstruction work through new forces.

It was especially stressed that these considerations hold good for all fascist organisations, even if they were not expressly Nazi, and the punishment of war criminals was demanded.

Principles were established for the compensation of the victims of Nazi terror.

Finally the judicial procedure was laid down.

## **Reconstruction of a New Administration**

Realising that in addition to the new Government apparatus a new administrative machinery is necessary the Committee then discussed the reconstruction of the administration of the German People's Republic. We were agreed from the beginning that this task could not be solved unless the present relationship between the Reich and the Provinces (Laender) was altered. Thereupon a detailed plan was worked out for the redistribution of the administrative districts within the Reich. Furthermore, radical measures were decided upon for the simplification and unification of the administrative authorities and of the Courts.

## **Civil Service**

These considerations led us to the discussion of the problem of the civil Service. For, more than for any other State, it is decisive for the development of the People's Republic, especially in view of the experiences of 1918, which persons staff the new posts. First, all offices must be radically purged of fascist elements. The question was then examined to what extent Civil Servants are at all necessary. It was decided to restrict the use of the term "Civil Servant" to those persons who have a public function, to abolish the privileges hitherto enjoyed by Civil Servants (employment for life, superannuation, etc.), to introduce the election of Civil Servants for a certain period, to put them socially on the same level as other skilled employees, but to respect acquired rights through transitory measures, and to offer a special opportunity to young people.

## **The Future of Germany**

Various statements concerning the dismemberment of Germany and permanently holding her down caused the Committee to discuss the future of Germany. It was found as a result of historical examination that the German people, like any other people, had a right to exist as a nation. All solutions running counter to this were rejected; the German people's self-liberation from the Nazi regime was regarded as the main possibility for Germany's continued national existence. Problems of the peace were discussed and the expectation was expressed that the U.S.S.R. above all would have a special interest - from the point of view of her own foreign policy - to advocate the preservation of a German State.

### **Economic and Social Questions**

The food question occupied, of course, the first place in the discussions of economic problems. For its solution co-operation between the town and the country people was demanded and it was stated that the German peasants should have the right to form their own

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party.

A free co-operative economy is to be aimed at.

Industry and transport should be partly nationalised. The fortunes of the Nazis and of other war criminals should be confiscated.

In the sphere of social legislation the high standard of 1930 is to be reached again. The German Labour Front must be dissolved and changed into a United Trade Union (Einheitsgewerkschaft).

### **Public Opinion**

As we were convinced that all these changes could not be effected unless a complete re-orientation of public opinion took place, we held detailed and extensive discussions on the problems of the Press, radio, film, theatre and literature with various competent persons of all shades of opinion, including persons from other countries. Tangible results were achieved, however, only in the sphere of the Press and literature.

### **Education**

A special commission was set up to discuss the problems of education. After extensive personal discussions and two lectures, also followed by discussion, one dealing with facts and the other with principles, this commission worked out immediate measures for re-starting the schools and a plan for a new type of political education. The immediate measures should secure a reform of the schools, affecting the different types of schools, teaching material, school administration etc. Unfortunately, no decisions could be reached any more in this sphere either.

### **Discussions on Current Events**

Side by side with the programme, political events were discussed, not only for the purpose of mutual information, but also to examine our fundamental convictions in the light of reality. They were always confirmed. In January, 1945 some slogans were issued as a result of these discussions. They were all concerned with the ending of the

war. The final resolution of the Committee, too, was on the same lines.

## **Mutual Aid**

During the hard times we experienced our comrades needed most of all ideological help. To present political ideas to them, to make their own ideas politically productive, to get the stimulus of their criticism for our own work in the Committee, was our aim in circulating the results of our discussions amongst a small number of comrades. We found it most regrettable that this could be done only to such a limited extent. But we may hope that in the renaissance of 1945 the seed we sowed will bear some fruit.

We rendered effective aid when in August, 1944 and after those arrested for alleged complicity in the revolt of July 20th came into the camp. We set ourselves the special task of looking after the youth. This work too, was not in vain.

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## **The End and the Beginning**

Soon after the liberation of the prisoners of Buchenwald the members of the People's Front Committee were very glad to find that their ideas were incorporated in the resolution of the first meeting of the German Communists, and also in the Manifesto of the Democratic Socialists. Our slogans were also publicised through many posters.

The members of the Committee have completed their work as Nazi-prisoners in the camp by issuing a resolution; they will continue their work as free human beings. They will submit this report to all parties and groups in question with the request to take note of it, and, if necessary, to take themselves the initiative in forming a German People's Front Committee.

We part with all our co-workers and comrades with the cry:

DOWN WITH FASCISM!  
LONG LIVE FREEDOM!  
LONG LIVE THE GERMAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC!

The People's Front committee:

Hermann L. BRILL  
Werner HILPERT  
Ernst THAPE  
Walter WOLF

Buchenwald, April 19th, 1945.

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## **Concentration Camp "Buchenwald"**

In July, 1937 the first detachment of so-called professional criminals (Berufsverbrecher) arrived at the Ettersberg near Weimar to build a new large concentration camp. The future concentration camp had then no name as yet, and it was called Concentration Camp Ettersberg. The first roll-call took place on July 19th, 1937 and showed the presence of 149 prisoners. The following day another 70 prisoners arrived who were taken in so-called preventive custody; they too were

"Berufsverbrecher" from the concentration camp Sachsenburg. On July 27th the first political prisoners arrived, also from the concentration camp Sachsenburg; there were 7 Bibelforscher (a religious sect) amongst them. On July 27th, the name Buchenwald was first used in official correspondence. At that time the number of prisoners had increased to 327 men. On July 30th, 1937 six hundred prisoners arrived from the concentration camp Lichtenburg, and on August 6th, 1937 a further transport arrived from Lichte.

The first death recorded in the lists was that of the German Hermann Kempek [5], who died in Buchenwald on August 14th, 1937. The next two deaths were reported on August 15th, 1937.

Further transports from Sachsenhausen and Lichte followed. In addition to these individual prisoners arrived. The total figure of arrivals in 1937 amounted to 2,912 men. Of these 48, i.e. 1.65 % were dead by January 1st, 1938.

The last roll-call by the S.S. was held on April 3rd, 1945. At that time 80,011 prisoners belonged to the camp. On April 11th, 1945 the concentration camp was liberated by the victorious Allied troops.

The development of the concentration camp is shown by table 1,

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which records the total number of arrivals and deaths in each year.

TABLE 1

Year	Arrived	Died
1937	2,912	48
1938	20,122	771
1939	9,553	1,235
1940	2,525	1,772
1941	5,890	1,522
1942	14,111	2,898
1943	42,177	3,516
1944	97,866	8,644
1945 (3 mths.)	43,823	13,056
Total	238,980	33,462

### 14 % Dead

This table shows that during seven years and nine months a total of 238,980 persons went through the concentration camp Buchenwald, 33,462, i.e. 14 %, of whom died.

Gas chambers, as operated in Auschwitz, were not set up in Buchenwald. Probably the S.S. was afraid they would not be able to keep it secret in the densely populated district of Germany where Buchenwald was situated. This does not mean, however, that we did not feel the effect of this institution in Buchenwald. As early as July 13th, 1941 ninety-four "invalids", Germans and Poles, mostly but not exclusively Jews, were formed into a transport which was taken to Hohenstein near Dresden under heavily armed S.S. guard. A few days later their clothes and other belongings, e.g. false teeth, were sent back to Buchenwald. As far as we could find out at the time the deportees were gassed at their destination. It is probable that then the S.S. built and tested gas chambers.

Further transports were sent off on March 2nd, 11th and 12th, 1942; they comprised a total of 285 prisoners, all Jews.

## **The Poles**

Following the Polish campaign Buchenwald experienced a terrible and tragic aftermath: the campaign against the so-called Polish snipers and other Poles from the part of Poland which belonged to Germany before 1918. On October 15th, 1939 one thousand Poles arrived; on October 16th, 1939 one thousand ninety eight. All of them were accommodated in tents under the most primitive and cruel conditions. They received only half the food rations of the other prisoners. The terrible results of this annihilation campaign are shown by a comparison of the casualties: From September 16th until October 15th, 1939 forty four prisoners died in the concentration camp Buchenwald, from October 16th until November 15th, 1939, six and half times as many, namely 283 died.

## **Russian Prisoners**

On June 22nd, 1941 Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. The first direct effect of this fact upon the camp was the arrival of 2,000 Russian prisoners of war on October 18th, 1941. The S.S. could not prevent their enthusiastic welcome by the other prisoners, nor the presents of bread, food, tobacco, etc., given to them. The whole camp was punished for this action, and some prisoners who made themselves conscious were specially picked out.

On March 12th, 1942 and on the following days two major transports left the camp. 400 prisoners went to the concentration camp Natzweiler and 800 prisoners to the concentration camp Ravensbrueck.

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Through these deportations the S.S. obviously tried to break the strong anti-fascist spirit in the camp which had become so evident through the prisoners' attitude to the Russian prisoners of war. Many political prisoners who had been in the camp for years were amongst those sent away. In the new camps they were given the heaviest physical jobs; their food and accommodation was completely inadequate. Most of them died and only some were able to return to Buchenwald after a time. After this transport had left, the German prisoners had to undergo a strict examination and a number of them were formed into a special unit, isolated from the others, for heavy labour.

In autumn, 1941 the mass executions of Russian prisoners of war, officers and men, started. But Polish officers, German civil servants and high-ranking officers, German and foreign women, were all executed in Buchenwald. New places for carrying out the executions were established, e.g. in the horse stable, and the crematorium was greatly enlarged. Those destined to be executed were not entered in the camp lists on their arrival, but were isolated from the other prisoners and handed over to another department for "special treatment" (Sonderbehandlung) - as the official term ran - i.e. execution. Unfortunately, the S.S. destroyed all documents referring to this on April 1st and 2nd, 1945, and thus no figures can be given.

## **Labour Slaves**

The S.S. succeeded in securing labour slaves from amongst the Germans in the

following way. From December, 1942 onwards the penal institutions had to surrender a proportion of their cheap labour to the concentration camps. A decree was issued ordering the sending of convict labour to concentration camps. Officials were sent round to inspect the prisons and soon afterwards prisoners, generally criminals such as murderers, people convicted for man-slaughter or for sexual offences, with long sentences, were sent to Buchenwald. Many of them were used for experiments in the typhus barracks and many others died because they could not stand the open-air life in winter and spring after they had lived for years in closed cells.

The S.S. was primarily interested in extracting labour from the prisoners. Those of us who were in charge of the registration of our fellow-prisoners had to contend with tremendous difficulties to find out the particulars of the newcomers, and thus to prevent them from being exploited to the end as anonymous figures, as the S.S. would have liked to do.

During the year 1942 the German concentration camps developed more and more into labour camps for the German war industry, in addition to being detention camps for political opponents of the regime. At the beginning of 1942 high-ranking S.S. leaders founded the "DAW" [6] (Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke - German Equipment Works). For every prisoner the works paid to the camp administration a small sum daily. In this way the camps could stand on their own feet financially. The shareholders of the "DAW", owing to the cheap labour and the influence they had with the military authorities they supplied, were soon amongst the biggest war profiteers in Germany.

In summer, 1943 armament works were built inside the concentration camps. A railway line was laid from Buchenwald to Weimar in record time, and the so-called Gustloff Works [7], consisting of 13 enormous ships, were erected in the vicinity of the camp. Apart from working there, an ever increasing number of prisoners were employed in the already existing armament factories.

## "Dora"

The biggest and most dreaded outside working group (Aussenkommando) was called "Dora". The prisoners first had only a suspicion which, however, was soon confirmed. The production of the senseless and cruel V-weapons was taken

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over by the S.S. It was their satanic plan to let foreigners produce these weapons which were designed for the total destruction of their own countries. They also probably thought that the secret of these weapons could be better kept by employing prisoners isolated from the world and that, furthermore, the Allied air-force would not bomb the works out of consideration for the prisoners. Everything connected with the production was treated with utmost secrecy. The Germans and Czechs employed had to be specially registered with the Central Security Authority for the Reich (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) to prevent their possible release.

## "Scrapping"

The majority of newly-arrived prisoners, with the exception of those who were too weak and therefore left in the camp to die, were sent out to work in armament factories. After months of the heaviest type of physical work, with bad food, no peace even in their leisure time, no possibility of washing themselves or of changing their underwear,

they either perished at their working place or were brought back half-dead to Buchenwald or sent to the concentration camps Auschwitz, Lublin or Bergen-Belsen - not for recuperation, only to be killed. The expression used by the S.S. for this complete exploitation of their slave labour was "scrapping" (Verschrottung). They scrapped all they could lay hands on: Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Yugoslaves, Frenchmen, Jews and non-Jews, they would have scrapped the population of a whole continent had they not been prevented by the victorious Allied armies.

### **Air Raid on Buchenwald**

On August 24 th, 1944 at noon the armament plants belonging to the concentration camp Buchenwald were bombed and completely destroyed. In the prisoners' camp proper not a single explosive fell and it was only owing to some small incendiary bombs which were blown about by the wind that the laundry and the tailors' and shoemakers' shops of the prisoners were burnt out. This, however, did not cause any casualties amongst the prisoners. No air-raid precautions for the prisoners were taken by the S.S., they did not even allow the prisoners to march back into the camp during air-raid alarms, not before the attack was actually on top of them. The prisoners had to stay in the factories or in their close vicinity. No shelters, not even trenches were built for the prisoners; at the time of the attack the water main which supplied the whole camp was turned off. Prisoners who wanted to save themselves from the bombs by running away were mercilessly shot down by the S.S. cordon. It was thus inevitable that 364 prisoners died in this air-raid. It can no longer be established how many of these were shot by the S.S. What is certain, however, is that Ernst Thaelmann [8] who was supposed to have been killed in this raid never was a prisoner in Buchenwald. The prisoners owe it to the good marksmanship of the allied air force that their casualties were not much higher.

### **Campaign "Gitter"**

After the abortive attempt on Hitler's life on July 20th, 1944 Himmler had taken charge of the Home Army. The effect of this was soon felt in the Buchenwald camp. On August 22nd, 1944 the so-called campaign "Gitter" was put into operation throughout the Reich, consisting of the arrest of all former officials of anti-fascist parties, and their immediate detention in the nearest concentration camp. Within a few hours about 750 prisoners, victims of the campaign "Gitter", arrived in Buchenwald. They all came from the vicinity of Weimar; further transports were due to arrive from Saxony, the Rhineland and Westphalia.

After the air raid of August 24th these transports were, however, not continued. The campaign "Gitter" evidently met with the opposition of some fascist groups. Details and motives for this are as yet unknown to us. We knew, however, that a few days later the

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Gestapo from Weimar arrived in the camp, shortly interrogated the prisoners and released the majority of them.

### **The Collapse**

A final mad influx of new arrivals and an almost unimaginable increase of unnecessary human suffering was caused by the evacuation of the big concentration camps in the East. On January 13th, 1945 the offensive on the Vistula started. The Red Army approached the concentration camp Auschwitz with its approximately 80,000

prisoners. Auschwitz was evacuated. A short time afterwards the concentration camp Gross-Rosen near Breslau had to be evacuated. On January 22nd the first transport of evacuated Jews from the concentration camp Auschwitz arrived in Buchenwald in open railway trucks. More followed soon. Icy frost prevailed at that time. The prisoners had been on the way for days, insufficiently clad and nourished. Their comrades in the overcrowded trucks had died of exhaustion. In order not all to perish they were compelled to throw the corpses out of the moving train. Complaints were made to the camp commander that in the places passed by the train corpses were found on both sides of the rails. Many prisoners dragged themselves from the railway to the camp with their last reserves of energy. Prisoners were sent out with small two-wheeled carts to pick up those who had collapsed or died and to take them to the camp. The road leading to the camp was strewn with blankets, caps, coats, food vessels, etc., and with human beings who had collapsed on the way.

It was no longer possible to count the newcomers. Nor was it possible to check up the number of those who had been evacuated from the camps in the East and the number of those who had died, fled or simply collapsed on the way.

When the concentration camp Buchenwald was liberated by the victorious allied army on April 11th, 1945 a little more than 21,000 prisoners were left on the Ettersberg.

### **[Letter of the S.S. Economic Board to all Concentration Camps]**

The following letter of the S.S. Economic Board shows how the greed of the S.S. leaders to get cheap labour out of the prisoners conflicted with the sadism and the laziness of the various camp administrations who refused to look after the health of the prisoners. It may be, too, that the sums of money and the quantities of food allotted to the prisoners were embezzled by other Nazi officials who had no share in the profits of the Nazi bosses.

Copy of a letter of the S.S. Main Economic Board to all concentration camps:

S.S. Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt  
Amtsgruppe D-Konzentrationslager  
D III/Az.: 14h (KL) 12.42 Lg/Wy

Oranienburg, 28th Dec., 1942

Re: - Medical attention in the concentration Camps.

Ref.: None

Enclosures: 1.

SECRET.

To the camp doctors of the Concentration Camps:

Da., Sh., Bu., Neu., Au., Rav., Flo., Lu., St., Gr.-Ro., Nied., Natz., Hinz., Mor., Herzog., Mau.

Copy for the Camp Commander.

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You will find enclosed statistics regarding the incoming and outgoing prisoners. These

statistics show that out of 136,000 incoming prisoners about 70,000 have died. In view of such a death rate it will be impossible to keep the number of prisoners at such a high level as has been ordered by the Reichsfuehrer of the S.S. The camp doctors must see to it with all available means that the death rate decreases in the various camps.

Signs: (Unreadable)

S.S. BRIGADIER and MAJOR GENERAL of the  
WAFFEN S.S.

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### STATISTICS

JUNE TILL NOVEMBER,  
1942.

#### INCOMING PRISONERS

Month	Incoming pris.	Transfers	Total
June	10,322	1,575	11,897
July	25,716	6,254	31,970
Aug.	25,407	2,742	28,149
Sept.	16,763	6,438	23,201
Oct.	13,873	5,345	19,218
Nov.	17,780	4,565	22,345
Total	109,861	26,919	136,780

#### OUTGOING PRISONERS

Month	Releases	Transfers	Deaths	Execut.	Total
June	673	1,903	4,080	243	6,899
July	907	4,340	8,536	477	14,260
Aug.	581	2,950	12,733	99	16,363
Sept.	652	6,805	22,598	144	30,199
Oct.	1,089	6,334	11,858	5,945	25,235
Nov.	809	5,514	10,805	2,350	19,478
Total	4,711	27,846	70,610	9,267	112,434

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### Bergen-Belsen six Weeks after the Collapse

On June 18th, a friend of ours visited the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen. We reproduce an extract from his report to show how much there is still to be done in doing away with the misery which still exists in the concentration camp and thus wiping out the worst traces of Nazi misdeeds.

"... The nurse, very pale in her white apron, was leaning against the wall and with a toneless voice she told of incidents as they came into her mind. The Polish doctor was sitting at the table, nervously moving his arms, scribbling something, then getting up and running up and down the room. Now and then he interrupted and added one or the other fact. His wife sat in the corner, silent and very calm. She also gave some more

information while she continued mending a dress. Other nurses came in, confirmed an incident, added another, and quickly disappeared. All of them had their prison number tattooed on their arms.

'Belsen was a camp for women. You find here all nations. Jewish people who had no longer a right to live. Most of them come from Poland.

Yes, some babies were born here. A child is something so precious to us that we would not wish to part with a single one. Look my wife here gave birth to a son, and I killed him with my own hands because I did not want the SS to kill him. This was in a camp in Silesia where we were allowed to be together. You have no idea what they did to our children.

I myself can't believe that I have gone through all this. They killed all the Jewish children in Poland, they threw them out of the windows, they gassed and burned them by the hundreds. In one orphanage the SS-men ordered the little children to put their head on the table and then they shot them with pistols, one by one. We hid our children wherever we could. When our women were deported many of them did not take any food, but put their children of two, four and six years in their rucksacks. In Silesia a mother came to me with her ten months old baby and asked me for an injection. When I would not do it she went on her knees and begged me. She could not hide the baby any longer, and the SS would kill it so brutally. So I gave the injection to the child, and I don't know to how many more.

Oh, if I could only have gone with that transport to Sweden, but the list is closed. I want to get away from here, to start life again. Yes, I have everything I need, and I am so lucky to have found my wife again. I have work to do, I worked all these years, but after almost six years of imprisonment I cannot stand the sight of these fences any longer. But where can I go? It is impossible to go to Poland. In the town from where we come there are only 50 or 60 people alive. All my relatives are dead. I can't go back to such a dead place, and here in Germany I cannot stay either. If we had a place where we could work in peace and could be free men again many of us would even stay in Germany. But I really want to start a new life in a new country. I want to get rid of all that is behind me. I wanted to do so much here, but I have no patience, I can't concentrate.' ..."

### **Experiences of a Belsen-prisoner while doing her slave Labour**

"In the factory in Hannover I had contact with the workers and I received regularly news from the B.B.C. through an old foreman, a former shop steward and trade union secretary. He kept up our morale at the risk of his life and brought me little things which meant so much to a slave-worker: soap, a spoon, a cup, stockings.

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During the twelve years of terror he never gave the Hitler-salute and his only concern was to rebuild the German trade union movement. There were many other workers who were not Nazis. They were, however, less courageous than he. But even the Nazis in the factory treated us correctly. Everybody wished for the end of the war and they knew that it would be the defeat of Germany."

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## Editorische Anmerkungen

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- 1 - *Hermann Brill (1895-1959), USPD (1918-1922), SPD (1922-1933, 1945-1959), MdL in Thüringen (1920-1932), MdR (1932), Austritt aus der SPD wegen ihrer passiven Haltung zu Hitler (1933), mehrmalige Verhaftung wegen Widerstands gegen die NS-Diktatur, Verurteilung zu 12 Jahren Zuchthaus (Zuchthaus Brandenburg-Görden sowie Konzentrationslager Buchenwald), federführender Verfasser des „Buchenwalder Manifests“ (April 1945), nach Kriegsende Mitgründer und Landesvorsitzender der Thüringer SPD, erster Thüringer Regierungspräsident (Juni bis Juli 1945, damals noch unter amerikanischer Besatzung), zweimalige Verhaftung, nachdem Thüringen Teil der sowjetischen Besatzungszone geworden war, Übersiedlung zunächst nach Berlin (Ende 1945), dann nach Wiesbaden (1946), Chef der hessischen Staatskanzlei (1946-1949), MdB (1949-1953), Berater der hessischen Landesregierung und Honorarprofessor in Frankfurt am Main und Speyer (nach 1953).*
- 2 - *Werner Hilpert (1897-1957), deutscher Politiker, Landesvorsitzender der Zentrumsparterie in Sachsen (1932-1933), während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im KZ Buchenwald, Mitverfasser des „Buchenwalder Manifestes“, Mitbegründer der CDU in Hessen (1945), stv. Ministerpräsident in Hessen (1945-1947), Minister für Wirtschaft und Verkehr (1946-1947), Minister der Finanzen (1947-1950), Vorstandsmitglied der Deutschen Bundesbahn (1952-1957).*
- 3 - *Ernst Thape (1892-1985), deutscher sozialdemokratischer Politiker, politischer Redakteur und Vertriebsleiter bei der Magdeburger „Volksstimme“ (1922-1933), Häftling im KZ Buchenwald (1939-1945), Mitverfasser des „Buchenwalder Manifestes“, Vorsitzender der SPD der Provinz Sachsen (1945), nach der Zwangsvereinigung von SPD und KPD zur SED Mitglied der SED, Minister für Volksbildung und Wissenschaft des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt (1946), Rücktritt und Austritt aus der SED (1948), Flucht nach Westdeutschland, Pressereferent der Staatskanzlei der niedersächsischen Landesregierung (1949-1957).*
- 4 - *Walter Wolf (1907-1977), Mitglied der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (KPD), in Absprache mit der illegalen KPD-Leitung Eintritt in die SA (1933), Mitglied des NS-Lehrerbundes und der NS-Volkswohlfahrt (1934), nach Auffliegen seiner illegalen Tätigkeit für die KPD Inhaftierung im KZ Buchenwald (1938-1945), Mitverfasser des „Buchenwalder Manifestes“, Leiter des Landesamtes für Volksbildung und Minister für Volksbildung in Thüringen (1945-1947), Professor an der Pädagogischen Hochschule Potsdam (1953-1972).*
- 5 - *Hermann Kempek (gest. 1937), erster Toter im Konzentrationslager Buchenwald (13. August 1937). Weitere biographische Daten konnten nicht ermittelt werden.*
- 6 - *„DAW“ = Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke, 1939 gegründetes, von der SS betriebenes Rüstungsunternehmen mit Betrieben in Konzentrationslagern, Beschäftigung von Häftlingen, die durch rücksichtslose, brutale Behandlung und Unterernährung an den Folgen der Arbeit oft starben.*
- 7 - *„Gustloff Works“ = Wilhelm-Gustloff-Werke, vor 1934 Suhler Simson Werke, Enteignung des jüdischen Besitzers (1935), unter Stiftungsführer Sauckel Überführung in die Wilhelm-Gustloff-Stiftung (1936), Umbenennung in Wilhelm-Gustloff-Werke, Umstellung ausschließlich auf Kriegsproduktion (1940), Zwangsverpflichtung von Fremdarbeitern und Häftlingen der Konzentrationslager, Waffenfabrik im KZ Buchenwald (1942).*

8 - Ernst Thälmann (1866-1944), SPD, USPD, KPD (ab 1920), Führung des Roten Frontkämpferbundes (ab 1924) und der KPD (ab 1925), Unterwerfung unter das stalinistische System der UdSSR und Gleichschaltung mit der KPdSU, vertrat in der KPD die Linie, die in der SPD ihren Hauptfeind sah, MdR (1924-1933), im Konzentrationslager Buchenwald ermordet (28. August 1944).