

Atrocities of Lansburg Concentration Camp by Sgt. Robert Hartwig,

C134<sup>th</sup> Armored Ordnance Battalion

Late last night we moved into a town—a very new town in the sense the “Krauts” had just run out of it. That is, most of them. Even though late we roamed around a little —catching all the new rumors. During our wandering we came across an American First Sergeant who had been released that day from a German prison camp. They told us some of the atrocities normally practiced by the Germans on their prisoners. We took their stories, as one might say, with a grain of salt and didn’t fully believe all they had to say. They told us of slowly being starved, having to eat snails, dandelions, weeds, and occasionally some very thin potato soup.

Later in the evening at a meeting, our Captain told us of a slave labor camp near us where some two hundred people had been burned that morning. That seemed impossible to us, as did the other stories.

Next morning I had a chance to ride to this scene, to actually view the results of mass barbarianism, and to take some pictures. Our party consisted of Captain Jones, Tec 5 Tannehill, Pfc Singer, and myself. After driving about eight (8) miles, we knew we were near a camp site because of the sickening odor of burning bodies. About a mile over to our right were some smoking ruins. We drove past signs warning of typhus. As we drove toward the buildings the sight that met our eyes seemed unbelievable. There were rows upon rows of dead—dead who had died different and more horrible deaths. We learned that the majority of them had died from injections. Injections of what we are not sure. Some appeared to have been poisoned. I am also told that people in their condition were also killed by an injection of oxygen into the blood stream. We know that some of them were as long as thirty hours dying. Even when we were there an occasional groan could be heard from someone in that

mass—or movement of an arm or leg could be seen. The expressions on their faces were indescribable. The positions they were in—some half sitting, other up on one arm or in a twisted grotesque shape.

For now, let us identify the place as in the Lansburg Concentration Camp area. In the short time we were there we drove by five separate camp sites, occupying possibly 1000 acres, one of which we explored rather thoroughly. This particular camp was known as the “Krankenlager,” meaning in English, the “Sick Camp.” This is where the biggest burnings took place. Many buildings were left standing. We went through some of those that were empty. The odor was nauseating. The floor of each building was dirt and dug about three feet below the surface of the ground. It had a roughly constructed wooden roof and that covered with dirt. There was no provision for drainage and the slightest rain would leave water on the floor. Each building was about fifty feet by fifty feet with a wooden shelf (one and one-half feet high and five feet wide) along each wall. A small pad of straw was the bedding for, the prisoners sleeping on the shelf. They slept with their feet toward the middle of the aisle, either party doubled up or, their feet hung near the end. There was one stove in the middle of each building and without fuel. I don't believe there was as much fuel in the whole camp as I have seen behind the average farmhouse in Germany. There was one small window at each end.

The Germans claimed that the condition of the prisoners was due to typhus. How we know that this was not generally true. Their ill health was due to malnutrition and overwork. The kitchen was filthy, half-open building and contained large cooking pots used to prepare soup and liquid foods of any kind. Their food ration consisted of potato soup made to proportion of one pound of potatoes to one gallon of water. To make it worse the cooks ate considerable of the potatoes instead of using them in the soup, and one-pound loaf of bread was issued for eight men each day.