

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

The Model Ghetto.

Mann, Klaus

Prag, 1945-06-10

Nutzungsbedingungen

Bei zahlreichen Dokumenten auf monacensia-digital.de sind die Urheberrechte bereits abgelaufen. Sie sind gemeinfrei und dürfen ohne weitere Rücksprache mit der Monacensia weiterverwendet werden.

Bei den Dokumenten, bei denen noch Urheberrechte bestehen, müssen für eine Weiterverwendung stets die Rechteinhaber*innen angefragt werden sowie eine Publikationsgenehmigung der Monacensia eingeholt werden. Das Zitatrecht bleibt hiervon unberührt.

Zur Erteilung einer Publikationserlaubnis wenden Sie sich bitte an:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus

Literaturarchiv

Adresse: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Terms of use

The copyrights for numerous documents on monacensia-digital.de have already expired. They are in the public domain and may be reused without further consultation with Monacensia. In the case of documents for which copyrights still exist, the copyright holders must always be contacted for further use and publication permission must be obtained from the Monacensia. The right to quote under copyright law remains unaffected by this. To obtain permission for publication, please contact:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus:

Literaturarchiv

Address: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

The Model Ghetto

Theresienstadt Was Used by the Nazis to Show They Had a 'Perfect' Jewish Community

By Klaus Mann
Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

PRAGUE. THERESIENSTADT, near Prague, is an ancient little town formerly used by the Austrians as a fortress and garrison. To the Nazis the place seemed suitable for more sinister purposes. It was there they decided to establish a model ghetto, or "perfect" Jewish community.

At one time, this Jewish settlement had as many as 60,000 inhabitants. Needless to say, none of them lived there voluntarily; they all were prisoners within the town limits, completely cut off from the outside world. Allegedly, they enjoyed self administration; they had their own mayor, their own courts, their religious services. Indeed the Nazis—uncannily systematic as only madmen and Germans can be—went so far as to print special currency for their victims, neat handsome bills adorned with a portrait of Moses and with the signature of a man called Jakob Edelstein, "the oldest of the Jews in Theresienstadt."

In reality, the place was ruled, not by any benign rabbi, but by a brutal SS obersturmführer, who occupied the most prominent building in town. Theresienstadt was in fact nothing but a glorified concentration camp with all usual terroristic practices. Especially the so-called "little fortress" adjacent to the town itself which witnessed most of the gruesome scenes. It was there that political prisoners and more positive Jews were kept and "educated."

What made the whole setup unique, and in a sense singularly horrible, was its hypocritical front of respectability. It was a show place meant to impress foreign visitors. Neutral journalists were sent by Goebbels to Theresienstadt.

They saw a peaceful little community—everybody happy, stores full of merchandise no signs of terror or starvation.

What the visitors did not know was that those inhabitants of the "parade" ghetto who showed too conspicuous marks of maltreatment or malnutrition had to hide for the duration of the official tour. Some Jews whom foreign visitors saw purchasing coffee or shoes in prosperous-looking stores had to deliver the same goods at the back doors of the same establishments a few minutes afterward.

Jewish children were ordered to refuse proffered candy, saying: "Thanks, I have been eating sweets all day long."

ONCE popular Berlin comedian, Kurt Gerron, who performed his stunts for an inspecting commission, had to be blackmailed into doing so. The tenor of the Vienna opera who entertained the gentlemen of the press with his arias had a cogent reason—threatened with the next "transport" scheduled to leave for an unknown, or rather only too well known, destination. It was a permanent nerve-racking fear of those terrible "transports" which haunted the people of Theresienstadt. In most cases, the goal was the gas chamber in Oswiecim or one of the other "annihilation" camps.

Selection of victims was arbitrary, unpredictable. Certain groups of the community were particularly endangered—mothers with little children, for instance. No woman in Theresienstadt was allowed to give birth to a child. Healthy young men stood a

comparatively good chance to be spared; they could be used as slave labor.

One hundred and sixty thousand Jews passed through Theresienstadt since 1941. Only about 3,000 survived. All others died through starvation or disease, or disease, perished in one of the deadly transport trains. There were about 1,000 "lucky" Jews, "old timers" who had been "privileged" because of their half-Aryan children. They had lived through five years of hell. Their faces were marked. They talked and gossiped—excited to see a stranger who would listen to their pitiful stories.

I met some people in Theresienstadt whom I had known in pre-Hitler days. One of them was a former aunt, the forced wife of my uncle, Heinrich Mann. When the Nazis invaded Prague in 1939 this woman, who is of Czech-Jewish origin, was put in jail and subsequently sent to Theresienstadt. Her only child first shared her imprisonment, but was soon released. Being the daughter of purely Aryan Heinrich Mann my cousin had the status of a mischling (person of mixed race) under Nazi law. She was spared the ghetto, but she was not allowed to visit her unfortunate mother once during all these years.

I remembered my aunt as an attractive woman, full of vitality and sparkling wit. What I was seeing now was a pathetic shadow of the hearty matron I used to know. I could hardly recognize her changed features. She had lost half of her weight, her hair had turned white, her face was partially paralyzed. "What have they done to you?" I asked.

"NOTHING not really," she said, and her voice had that typical Theresienstadt tone—dead, broken accent, rather heartbreaking if you hear it from a human being whom you have known and liked. "Nothing unusual," she continued. "Just the kind of things they were doing to all of us."

"But when did you get paralyzed?" I insisted. "How did it happen?" Where?

"Oh, that was years ago," she said. "Right after my arrest. They separated me from my child, you know. I didn't know where she was, so I asked my guard. He grinned and said to me: 'Way, don't you hear her scream? They're just taking her away on a transport; that's why she yells.' So I tried all night long to hear my daughter's voice. I couldn't hear—naturally not; she hadn't been sleeping at all but was fast asleep in another cell."

"But could I know that the guard had lied to me—just for the fun of it? I kept listening to all the noises in the corridors and neighboring rooms. I heard other people screaming and wondered if it was her voice. It was a long night. And in the morning I couldn't move my right arm and my right leg any more, and my face was all twisted."

Notebook from Germany...

(Continued from Page 1)

mandy beaches. The phone rings. "Hello," a lieutenant answers. "Yes, sir! Yessir! Yessir! Right away, sir!"

He picks up the receiver, shouts an order, and the Seabee battalion springs into action much like a doughboy CP during a battle. Seabees in all stages of undress run about. People holler. You almost expect to hear someone shout, "Call for more artillery! We need tanks . . . and right away! Where the hell is that artillery!" But, instead, the mobilized Seabees are told crisply: "Go immediately and see about the hot water. . . . The admiral wants a bath!"

AT Goering's beautiful hunting preserve near Hanover, once the stamping grounds of German royalty, a Luftwaffe officer guide chuckles: "Big fat Hermann always made his men come ahead of him to corral the game so he wouldn't have to walk far. Then, on the day of the hunt, those men had to chase the game right under the sights of Goering's gun. If the marshal missed one of his shot quickly to keep him from getting angry."

GIC investigators tell weird stories about how willingly trapped Germans squeal on each other. Gen. Kurt Dittmar himself, the voice of the German high command, gave away, among other things, the name of western Germany's Werewolf director, one Kreisleiter Nienmüller, of Wolmirstedt. Nienmüller was found quickly—like a lot of other Nazi bigwigs, dead. A German taken in one town pleaded all sorts of innocence and cursed Hitler, Himmler and everything Nazi with all the vehemence at his command.

Then his wife and sister-in-law were ques-



Bert Shepard Was In - and - Coming.

Comeback Query

Can a Ballplayer Get Back in Shape After A Layoff in the Army?

By Gene Graft

Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

MAJOR league baseball is one business that sentiment—and the GI Bill of Rights—will influence only slightly when Johnny comes marching home from the wars.

Not that big league owners will refuse to retire returning veterans, because they already have signified their desire "to do everything possible for servicemen." But whereas a bookkeeper or shoe clerk will be able to handle his former job, a baseball player may find that his ability has suffered by the prolonged layoff. And there are cold statistics printed daily to prove that he either can or cannot make the grade.

A few, like Bert Shepard, already are virtually disqualified from chasing their former baseball jobs. Shepard was an up-and-coming player until his career with the AAF in England ended tragically over occupied Europe when he suffered the

loss of his right leg in a fighter plane melee.

The plucky discharges returned to the Washington Senators, hobbled around training camp on an artificial limb for several days, then agreed to sign as coach instead of player until he became more accustomed to the handicap. He works out daily with the club, however, and has the assurance of Clark Griffith, club president, that he will be placed on the active player roster just as soon as he proves his worth.

THEN there are others who enlisted or were drafted in the early days of the war. Men like Hugh Mulcahy, Phillies star pitcher who was the first major leaguer to be inducted, and Hank Greenberg, drafted in May of 1941, Mulcahy, Greenberg and dozens of others in the same fix have been away from the game long enough to personally wonder whether they ever will be able to regain the co-ordination and physical condition they once had. What's more, they aren't getting any younger, and when a professional athlete passes the 35-year mark, his eyes and legs are not what they used to be.

Sure, they will be welcomed back to the fold. And they undoubtedly will be given every opportunity to make good all over again. But a few bad days at the plate, or a few unimpressive appearances in the pitcher's box, and they will have lost their guarantee of a job, seniority, old salary, etc.

The over-all outlook is not this gloomy, however, and several GI refugees from a first sergeant's wrath already have made the rocky jump from the Army to the major leagues. The prize example is Dave "Boo" Ferriss, American League freshman pitching sensation. Ferriss, who received his honorable discharge from the AAF too late even to be included on the Boston Red Sox roster, has been burning up the league with his brilliant work on the mound.

THE Navy has been able to "preserve" the talent of more former athletes because of its far-flung military training program which offered them jobs similar to what they were doing before Pearl Harbor. That the move has paid dividends is evident from the number of men who reported back to their teams without any apparent loss of their former ability.

Alton Benton, rangy right-handed pitcher, returned to the Detroit Tigers after more than two years in the Navy and proceeded to make opposing batters wish he had remained in the service for 30 years. Unfortunately, Benton fractured his leg in a mix-up at second base two weeks ago, but he already has proved he can more than cope with athletes who never were in the armed forces.

Another ex-sailor making the grade is Robert "Shanty" Havener. He slipped into the Senators' spring camp at College Park, Md., on his own, showed Manager Ossie Bluege his discharge papers—and his assortment of sharp-breaking curves and a fast ball—and was signed on the spot. He now is round to stay, according to Bluege, and nobody will dispute Bluege's ability to judge pitching talent.

Epitaph

LIDICE.

AT the far end of a gently sloping wheatfield, splashed red by millions of poppies, a sign reads: "Here stood the village of Lidice." This is the only epitaph on the quiet little Czech village that was scorched from the earth by vengeful Germans two years ago, following the assassination of Reinhardt "The Hangman" Heydrich. Because Lidice is a hallowed name to them now, the Czechs want it to live in memory only. The new maps put out by the government do not show its name. All of the 667 males in Lidice were marched unclothed to a hillside cemetery early on the morning of June 10. They were shot in rows of ten. The bodies were dumped into a hole in what had been the center of town. Only two of the 667 are known to be alive today. Even the cemetery was leveled. A flock of sheep grazes today in the clover that grows there. As a simple memorial to Lidice's dead, workers from near-by villages have cleared away a plot 25-feet square. The edge of this powdery, yellow clay patch of ground is brightened with fresh-cut flowers. In the center are two earthen mounds, flattened on top, with neatly infold crosses of snow-white pebbles.