

ROBERT Randleman

TITLE: International Liberators Conference, tape #61

I DATE: October, 1981

SOURCE:

RESTRICTIONS:

SOUNO QUALITY: Fair to Good

IMAGE QUALITY: Fair to Poor

OURATION: ~2 hour

LANGUAGE: English

KEY SEGMENT:

GEOGRAPHIC NAME:

PERSONAL NAME:

CORPORATE NAME:

KEY WORCS:

NOTES:

CONTENTS: Interview with Fr. Edward Ooyle, James Livesay and Rabbi Plaut on their memories of the liberation of Nuthausen (ph.~ camp, 12 April 1945.

01:30 Ooyle was born on 30 June 1907. At the time of the liberation, he was a captai~ and Catholic chaplain of the 104th Timberwolf division. Livesay was born on 16 July 1924 and was a PFC with the 104th. Plaut was born on 1 November 1912 and was the company's rabbi. He was a naturalized American, born in Germany, not far from

Nuthausen.

05:00 Ooyle stated that the medics were the first to arrive at the camp. Out of 6,000 prisoners, 5,000 were emanciated corpses. Villagers were recruited to help carry out the bodies for burial. Livesay stated that the j~b of the medics was to take of the living, the dying, and lastly, the dead. Upon seeing the mass of bodies, he remembers becoming physically ill.

08:30 Plaut said that until that moment, most of the soldiers did not understand what the war was about. He described the paradox of a Jew coming freely into the camp, with the Star of Oavid flying from his jeep. The surviving Jews kissed his feet when they saw him. Plaut also mentioned the physical sickness he experienced. He asked the villagers to dress in their Sunday best to help bury the victims; they brought spadee; and spoons to help dig graves. They said they knew nothing about what had been going on inside the camp. E30th men and women helped in the burials, but Plaut said that the children were protected from knowing.

14:00 Plaut described how a CathoLic had given him ~ Talmud the latter had salvaged from a burned synagogue. The Germans

had ripped it precisely where the Ten Commandments were written.

17:20 Was their belief in God eVel- challenged by the experience?

Ooyle said that the Holocaust was the tragic failure of man, not of God. His faith was never jeopardized. The experience made him more aware of the need of God, given the horrible potential of human nature. Live\$ay said that he never questioned God's hidden intention.

19:25 Plaut stated that his own faith was severely tried, and he

arrived at a different conception of God through his experience. The Holocaust was not solely the failure of man, since God shares a measure of responsibility for human freedom. God gambled in giving man free will, but, in the camps, he lost the gamble. Ooyle responded by saying that man chooses to abuse his free will.

21:45 Was there a theological origin to the Final Solution?

Ooyle said that the law of God is to love one's neighbor, therefore, the Final Solution cannot be consiciered theology.

Z4:25 Plaut asked whether the Germans were prepared to accept

Hitler's guidance? Were they prepared for the intense

expression of hatred, based on a history of anti-semitism, largely propagated through the Catholic Church? In Germany, students were taught that the Jews were an inferior race. Plaut described the abuse he suffered in school, and how he became accustomed to it.

27:20 Livesay referred to James Michener's *The Source*, in which he writes that the Jews believed so strongly that they were the chosen people that it became a fault. Perhaps anti-semitism was an effort to get Jews to change their ways.

28:20 Plaut asked Livesay if he means that the fate of the Jews was their own fault? Of course, Jews are not perfect. We are all responsible for the civilization in which we live. The enormity of the Holocaust is that it is a failure of modern civilization. It was the worship of race; it was unbridled ambition that found a victim. All we have learned is that humans are capable of the worst as well as the best.

30:00 End of interview.