

-TITLE-LEON FREEDMAN
-I_DATE-OCTOBER 1981
-SOURCE-INTERNATIONAL LIBERATORS CONFERENCE
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-IMAGE_QUALITY-EXCELLENT
-DURATION-
-LANGUAGES-
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
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0:00 Mr. Freedman was born on march 5, 1913. At the age of thirty-two, he served as a private in the U.S. army's 76th division, 304 infantry in Company B, where he was present during the time of the liberation of Buchenwald.

1:10 Mr. Freedman was first made aware of the Nazi camps while stationed at a road block in a small village in Saxony Thuringia, Germany. One day, he and other soldiers noticed a group of bedraggled, hobbling men and boys approaching. At first, the soldiers thought that the group might be S.S. men in disguise (as was sometimes the case), but as the group got closer, the soldiers could tell from their deteriorated physical and mental condition that these were survivors of some horrible ordeal. The soldiers soon learned that the men had run away from what they described as a 'labor camp'.

4:15 Mr. Freedman and his fellow soldiers were angered by the survivors stories and wanted to help them. At the first cottage they came upon, they ordered the inhabitants to give food, water and shelter to the survivors. The soldiers also gave them their own army rations. During this time, other groups of camp survivors arrived and they too were in terrible physical and mental shape. it was then that Mr. Freedman realized that "something dreadful had happened."

5:30 Mr. Freedman and some Italian soldiers had sometimes entertained allied troops. Thus a special service officer asked him to visit Buchenwald and attempt to entertain and cheer up its inhabitants.

6:25 When Mr. Freedman and the other soldiers arrived at Buchenwald, they immediately noticed the acrid stench that pervaded the camp. they found the odor very disturbing. In addition, while walking around the camp, they noticed some siding(?),, coming out of which was clothing. On closer inspection, they found that all the garments were children's clothing; sweaters, hats, mittens etc.

They found this confusing because they did not see any children in

the camp.

9:00 As they walked around the camp, the soldiers saw tattered clothing on barbed wire and also remnants of human bodies, partly clothed in striped uniforms. The soldiers were very shocked and angry by what they saw.

9:45 The soldiers were directed into a building which was occupied by young women awaiting transport to allied lines. The women were between the ages of seventeen and thirty and were mostly Hungarian.

The women were in very poor physical condition, some could not even stand up. They were all extremely emaciated and had swollen and bruised feet. The soldiers were also impressed by their closely cropped hair, which some tried to hide under bandanna-like cloth.

11:38 Although the women were very weak, they greeted the soldiers enthusiastically. The soldiers brought candy bars and also tried to entertain the women by playing American and Hungarian songs. Mr. Freedman remembers one small, frail woman who sat down on the battered piano and played beautiful, classical music. Mr. Freedman and the other soldiers were very affected by this. (As he recounts this incident, Mr. Freedman begins to cry and says that he cried then as he cries now.)

13:40 The men stayed at the camp for a few hours. When they returned the next day, they learned that some of the women had died soon after they left the day before. Mr. Freedman remembers in particular, a small, beautiful red haired girl who had been too weak to stand and could merely wave and smile at the soldiers when they first arrived. But the next day, she was dead.

14:41 Soon after, Mr. Freedman's unit was transferred to another section of Allied territory. He says that he never again saw camp survivors while in Germany.

15:20 A little while later, Mr. Freedman was transferred again. This time to Altenburg, the ancient seat of the Dukes of Saxony. He and the rest of his entertainment unit were housed in a private, German home. One day, another soldier returned from an outing carrying a rare Etruscan figurine. Mr. Freedman, who was knowledgeable in art, was interested to learn that the soldier had taken the figurine from a nearby castle.

17:23 Mr. Freedman went to the castle the next morning and entered. He was amazed to see elaborate halls, complete with ancient artifacts. Soon after arriving, an elegantly dressed man appeared in the doorway. He announced himself as the owner of the castle and gave Mr. Freedman a tour.

20:58 On the way out, the man introduced Mr. Freedman to his mother, who was sitting in an immense banquet room. Upon meeting him, the woman shook her finger at Freedman and said, "Hitler was a great man. He will live in history. He is the savior of the

German people.

22:35 Mr. Freedman was rendered shocked and speechless by the woman's proclamation. All he remembers telling her was that she was extremely mistaken. He told her that he hoped her ancestors would realize the terrible crime that had been committed against humanity. While this was happening, the castle's owner was silent.

he lead Freedman to the door and gave him some fine porcelain as a gift.

25:00 Before Freedman departed, the man asked him to come back the following day when he would gave him some rare porcelain figurines to present to the U.S. Gov't. He asked that Freedman's unit was transferred early the next morning and thus, he never returned to the castle. As the Americans were leaving Altenburg, the Russians were entering to take over the city.

27:02 Mr. Freedman believes that educating the populous about the Holocaust in crucial. he feels that any and every medium should be employed to make the public aware of the atrocities that were committed against humanity. he feels that we must all beware the weaknesses of humanity. He feels that we must all beware of weaknesses of human morality and that "We are all brothers and all brother's keepers."

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