

-TITLE-GEORGE TIEVSKY
-I_DATE-OCTOBER 1981
-SOURCE-INTERNATIONAL LIBERATORS CONFERENCE
-RESTRICTIONS-
-SOUND_QUALITY-VERY GOOD (BEGINNING SEGMENT IS DISTORTED)
-IMAGE_QUALITY-VERY GOOD (BEGINNING SEGMENT IS DISTORTED)
-DURATION-ROUGHLY 33 MINUTES
-LANGUAGES-ENGLISH
-KEY_SEGMENT-
-GEOGRAPHIC_NAME-
-PERSONAL_NAME-
-CORPORATE_NAME-
-KEY_WORDS-
-NOTES-
-CONTENTS-
1:00:20 Interview begins after 20 seconds of distorted sound and image.

1:00:34 George was an American medical liberator of Dachau. He volunteered in the Army in January 1944 after completing his medical internship. In late 1944 he served in Germany as a Captain in a medical corp. He was part of the 66th Field Hospital of the 7th Army. This was a mobile surgical unit with 60 beds which had, during periods of combat, operated almost in the front lines, treating critically wounded soldiers. At the cessation of hostilities, this unit was stationed in a field near Munich.

1:02:16 On 2 May 1945 George's unit was ordered to Allach, a subsidiary camp of Dachau. The order was given suddenly in response to the threat of a typhus epidemic in Allach. Once there, the unit was "inundated" with patients. The number of personnel were limited - only 11 nurses and 13 physicians. The patients at Allach were liberated prisoners being sent there directly from Dachau.

1:03:48 George discusses his reaction to the camp of Dachau itself. He is asked to contrast it with his experience as a doctor in a front -line combat hospital. George felt, at the time, that the difference between the two situations was like the difference between two different worlds, between two different planets. He recites a letter which he wrote to his future wife during his first week at Dachau - "Without a doubt this is the most loathsome place that I have ever seen. One can feel death itself here in its most repulsive form. There is something indescribably horrible about the place. It is almost incredible to think that human beings could systematically kill other human beings by the hundreds of thousands as if they were so much cattle. Until one sees something like this with one's own eyes, there is a small element of doubt, because it is so very difficult for us to conceive of anything like this. But, today, I saw with my own eyes the pile of human dead stacked like so many bundles of wheat. The piles were not as high as yesterday, for , the furnaces are whittling them down.

I saw the furnaces also, and men stoking the furnaces with coal so as to keep them hot enough for cremation. One of the former prisoners volunteered his services to show me about the crematorium. I met him at the gas chambers. These were at one end of the long building with contained the furnaces, and there were about eight or ten of them - each holding a few persons. After death, the bodies were then crated to the furnaces, or, if they were too full, to a small building where they were stored - at least, they were supposed to have been stored there. When the Americans first came, they found hundreds of bodies piled on the ground outside the crematoria. The cremation building is enclosed by a high wall and is set as if in a small park, with winding lanes and tall trees. Small house-like boxes dotted the grounds and I asked my guide what they were. In these the vicious dogs of the camp were housed. These dogs were especially trained to take part in the torturing of the prisoners. We did not visit other portions of the camp. We could see it well through the barbed wire - and the former prisoners, who are being kept there for quarantine purposes. It resembles the camp at which we are now stationed, Allach, and I am sure that the same indescribable living conditions were present there. In the square of the main camp area, the flags of America, Russia, Britain, and France are now flying. Two American evacuation hospitals are giving medical care to the personnel of the camp. I have written of the patients we are receiving here already. In our several days of operation, three have died and there will be many more - three quarters of them have tuberculosis. We are X-raying all of them - not that we will be able to do anything for those who have the disease - sanitation will be needed - but to protect our own personnel and the non-infected patients. There are many cases, for advanced, which have only a few months ahead of them. And, of course, all are severely malnourished and many present the classical signs and symptoms of vitamin deficiency - textbook pictures. Almost all have severe diarrhea as a part of the effects of vitamin deficiency and malnutrition."

1:07:58 George is asked as to his medical opinion, at that time, as to whether these patients would ever again lead "normal lives." He responds by stating his surprise, both at that time, and in the present, at the vitality of the human body, both physically and psychologically.

1:09:54 Today, George knows of many survivors who have reached positions of prominence and success. There are, of course, those who never recovered. Ultimately, George does not believe that one can compare the behavior of the survivors with that of any other group, for, their experience was unique. He thinks that part of the reason for the speedy recovery of the survivors at Dachau was that they received food, medical attention, and love from the American nurses, doctors, and technical personnel.

1:10:39 The interviewer now speaks of some of her own experiences. She was a survivor (of Auschwitz) who saw and appreciated the aid given to the survivors by the allied medical personnel. For her, it was very strange, reassuring, and healing to again be in a world where people "still had compassion."

1:12:29 George is asked about his professional opinion of the mental state of the survivors. He states that most function very well, some exceptionally well. Again, he states, he is amazed at the vitality of the human body and mind.

1:13:14 The interviewer discusses the "bad environment" explanation used today to explain much of the crime in the inner cities. She compares young survivors with today's youth, and asks George why the survivors did not turn to crime and violence. He responds with a story. soon after the liberation, some of the prisoners of Dachau took a car and began to drive the surrounding roads. As they were doing so, they came upon the camp Commandant, who they captured and put in the car. As they drove through the evening, they debated as to how they might best torture him to death. Yet, by the morning, they had resolved to turn him over to the authorities. For, they reasoned, if they killed him, they would be no better than the Nazis themselves. George states that this illustrates why the survivors didn't turn to crime - it was due to their Judaic traditions. "We have a tradition almost 4000 years old burned into our souls.: Thus, the Jews are able to survive without becoming criminals.

1:15:38 George discusses his feelings, as a Jew, upon entering a camp where most of the prisoners were Jews. It was a terrible sight, regardless, but it was ten-fold more traumatic for him as a Jew. He relates a story of how, when he greeted an American Jewish orderly in Hebrew, the patients, overhearing him, applauded. He later realized that they had done so because they had recognized him as a free Jew.

1:17:01 George discusses his attitude, at the time, towards the Germans. He would have treated one, even an SS officer, for it was his duty as a doctor. He wondered, at that time, how the local German population could carry on living normally during the war while the stench of the death camp filled the air, constantly reminding them of what was happening right in their midst.

1:18:36 George admits that, as an American, he had the knowledge that there existed concentration camps, but, he states that neither he nor any other average citizen knew the enormity or the nature of the Nazi crimes. No one knew of the exterminations. He had no psychological preparation before coming to Dachau. Even his commanding officer did not know what they were going to see.

1:19:55 Here the interviewer demands to know why the allies did not destroy the camps earlier. She states that. "We (the prisoners) wanted to die - but for them (the Nazis) to die also." George responds that the American did not know, that the President and the Secretary of State suppressed the information as early as 1944.

1:22:00 George states that Jan Karski, an emissary from the Polish underground and an eyewitness to the Nazi atrocities, came to American with photos and documents. George claims to have met him. He states that Karski's reports were ignored, that the information was suppressed, because American Authorities believed that any action against the camps would impede the war effort. No average citizens knew of the abyss - of the extent of the crime.

1:24:00 The interviewer contends that Americans - that American Jews - did know, from sources such as the New York Times, but that they failed to act, to protest, to demand action. George denies this, but, states that it was a political problem. Roosevelt, George says, had the Jewish vote in his pocket. One must remember the context. The United States was in a depression and Europe and the war seemed remote. Roosevelt, who was liberal, could count on the Jewish vote, for they voted liberal.

1:26:32 The interviewer states that the whole world refused to take the Jews before the war. No country would admit them, and, thus, the Nazis felt no compunction about liquidating the Jews. George claims that the world attitude was due to an Anti-Semitism rooted to 2000 years of Christianity. The crime of 1942-45 was the crime of the Christian West.

1:27:24 George tells a story. During the first few weeks at Dachau, an enlisted man came to George's tent in tears. He was a Jew, and the Christians in his tent had been Jew baiting him. George reflected that all of these Christians had seen Dachau, that they had seen the camp and the dead. At that time, George knew that Anti-Semitism would not end as a result of the Holocaust.

1:28:36 George does not think that the world learned a lesson. The Holocaust could happen again, for two reasons. The first was illustrated by (ph Durrenmath's play, "The Visit". Set in Central Europe, it is a story of a well loved man who is eventually killed by towns people seduced by an old woman's money. This is what happened to the Jews. The second reason was revealed in a famous experiments. Study individuals were instructed to administer painful shocks to other individuals (who were, in fact, actors). In all but one case, the study individuals persisted to the lethal point. This revealed the innate human capacity for cruelty under the proper conditions.

1:32:01 George discusses the effects of his experience upon his life. It reinforced his Judaic feelings. he is a Zionist. He is active in the Jewish community. The effects upon his personal life have been more subtle. He has repressed his memories for 30 years.

Today he is very disturbed when he remembers what he experienced.
"I will not sleep well tonight"
.END.