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Summary

John Roscoe was a civilian Intelligence Officer with Engineering interests, operating in a four-men team in the European Theater during World War II, under orders from the War Department in Washington. He had visited a labor camp near Weimar, where the German 88 Artillery weapons were made, employing Jews and Displaced Persons who were quartered in Buchenwald. The factory had been bombed to the point that it became inoperative. Although not part of his mission, he visited the newly liberated Buchenwald Concentration Camp, as a matter of personal interest. He had heard of concentration camps but found Buchenwald beyond expectations. About a week after liberation there were still thousands of bodies stacked near the entrance, awaiting evacuation to the nearby crematorium. While many prisoners had been evacuated, there were so many others who had no place to go. Buchenwald was the first concentration camp where political prisoners and Jews were imprisoned and their disposition was not immediately apparent. Most were wearing the striped prison uniform. They were sleeping in barracks that had not yet been cleaned up. There was a terrible odor. The beds were stacked up bunks made of wooden planks, with gaps between them. Dysentery was rampant and feces from above would fall through the cracks unto those sleeping below. Four to five people had been assigned per bunk with but one blanket. The sick hesitated to go to the hospital since doctors there had used them to perform experiments which most would not survive. John visited the crematorium and found that there was a specially designed elevator which could be used to move a body from a torture chamber below. That basement was labelled as an NCO Club, but evidence of torture was prevalent. Meat hooks had been installed and blood-stained walls pointed to the torture of hanging people from their shoulder blades. John was particularly disturbed about the elevator since it showed the premeditation of murder and torture in specially designing this means of lifting the dead, tortured bodies to be burned above. John was told many rumors about activities in the camp. He was also apprised that the nearby Germans had claimed not to know what was going on in the camp and the new mayor, a refugee from the camp, made them visit and see the dead bodies and its hideous operation. He also heard that prisoners who were transferred to Buchenwald were happy to arrive there, since other camps had been much worse. John only stayed in the camp for a half a day.

During the remainder of the interview John told numerous war stories and philosophized about a wide range of topics encompassing politics, cultures, religion, class, and the values of various nationalities. He said he never met a German who admitted to him that he was a Nazi.