

GEORGE S. PATTON, WAR AS I KNEW IT, BOSTON/NEW YORK 1947, P. 292 FF.

[...] we drove to Ohrdruf and visited the first horror camp any of us had ever seen. It was the most appalling sight imaginable. A man who said he was one of the former inmates acted as impresario and showed us first the gallows, where men were hanged for attempting to escape. The drop board was about two feet from the ground, and the cord used was piano wire which had an adjustment so that when the man dropped, his toes would just reach the ground and it would take about fifteen minutes for him to choke to death, since the fall was not sufficient to break his neck. The next two men to die had to kick the board out from under him. It was stated by some of the Germans present that the generals who were executed after the Hitler bomb incident were hanged in this manner.

Our guide then took us to the whipping table, which was about the height of the average man's crotch. The feet were placed in stocks on the ground and the man was pulled over the table, which was slightly hollowed, and held by two guards, while he was beaten across the back and loins. The stick which they said had been used, and which had some blood on it, was bigger than the handle of a pick. Our guide claimed that he himself had received twenty-five blows with this tool. It later developed that he was not a prisoner at all, but one of the executioners. General Eisenhower must have suspected it, because he asked the man very pointedly how he could be so fat. He was found dead next morning, killed by some of the inmates.

Just beyond the whipping table there was a pile of forty bodies, more or less naked. All of these had been shot in the back of the head at short range, and the blood was still cooling on the ground. In a shed near-by was a pile of forty completely naked bodies in the last stages of emaciation. These bodies were lightly sprinkled with lime – not, apparently, for the purpose of destroying them, but to reduce the smell. As a reducer of smell, lime is a very inefficient medium. The total capacity of the shed looked to me to be about two hundred bodies. It was stated that bodies were left until the shed was full and then they were taken out and buried. The inmates said some three thousand people had been buried from this shed since January 1, 1945.

When our troops began to draw near, the Germans thought it expedient to remove the evidence of their crimes. They therefore used the inmates to exhume the recently buried bodies and to build a sort of mammoth griddle of 60 cm. rail-way tracks laid on a brick foundation. The bodies were piled on this and they attempted to burn them. The attempt was a bad failure. Actually, one could not help but think of some gigantic cannibalistic barbecue. In the pit itself were arms and legs and portions of bodies sticking out of the green water which partially filled it. General Walker and General Middleton had wisely decided to have as many soldiers as possible visit the scene. This gave me the idea of having the inhabitants themselves visit the camp. I suggested this to Walker, and found that he had already had the mayor and his wife take a look at it. On going home those two committed suicide.
