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Het volgende artikel staat in de krant van de 83^{ste} Infanterie Divisie, bijgenaamd Thunderbolt, van 28 april 1945 op pagina 4. Van bovenstaande link kun je de hele krant downloaden.

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Liberated . . .



Here are three of the broken, diseased, half-starved inmates of the hard labor camp at Escherhausen, freed by doughs of the 529th Infantry during the 83rd's race to the Elbe. And there were 6,000 others like them at this camp. (Signal Corps Photo)

Thunderbolts Free Slave Laborers From Underground Prison Plant

The I and R Platoon of the 329th Infantry overran a combination concentration camp, underground factory and slave labor camp near the village of Eschershausen during the Division's drive to the Elbe. Situated in the midst of small villages with antiquated houses, quiet streets and innocent looking natives, it was hard to realize such a place existed.

The slave laborers, Russian, Polish Italian, Dutch, French and Belgian, who worked in the underground factory were treated badly, but their treatment was mild compared to the slow death administered to the inmates of the concentration camp.

Some of the men had been driven out of their minds by their Nazi captors. Though they were free to walk about the grounds, they stayed behind the barbed wire enclosure baring their chests in gestures of martyrdom. Others who had survived long years of imprisonment without losing their sanity were lice-infested (to a man they were constantly picking lice from their bodies), toothless, pitifully emaciated and almost incapable of realizing that they had been rescued.

SHOT BY GUARDS

A Dutch officer who had been in several concentration camps since he was arrested in July, 1942 said that the men found by the 329th in this one had been forced to march from Hameln, a distance of 40 kilometers, when the American advance threatened to overrun them there. They had nothing to eat on the march and anyone who fell out of the column was shot on the spot by the German guards. Out of the 420 who started on the hike, only 379 ar-

sanitary living conditions where workers could produce uninterruptedly for the Fatherland was completely blasted by the sight of this miserable, tomb-like cave.

Slave laborers lived in one-story shacks near the factory and entered the caves for their 12-hour shifts through seven separate entrances, according to nationality. Each group worked in a separate section of the factory and never knew who was living in the neighboring camp or working in the next tunnel.

One WP Grenade Nets 350 Krauts

The story of how 1st Lt. Warren W. Witt of Tonca, Okla. captured 350 Germans using only a WP grenade was told this week by members of Co K, 330th Infantry.

During the company's assault in the Harz Mountain area, they overran a German ammunition truck. Witt set it on fire with a WP grenade after the company had passed by. The ensuing explosions could be heard for several kilometers.

rived at the Eschershausen camp.

When it became evident that they were to be freed shortly some of the prisoners gave vent to their feelings. Two Italians were shot to death for singing "Over There" with the emphasis on the line "the Yanks are coming" and a 55 year old Hollander lost his eyesight for mentioning that he would soon be free.

It was the practice of the guards to beat prisoners with rubber clubs about an inch in diameter enclosing four strands of thick wire.

Food consisted mainly of black bread soaked in hot water. Inmates had their choice of drinking the water or washing in it. Among the regular prisoners, there was an average of 25 deaths monthly from malnutrition and disease.

INFESTED WITH LICE

Some of the prisoners warned dough-boys from entering the enclosure because of its infested condition. The lice were so thick they could be seen with the naked eye. Occasionally an inmate would come outside the barbed wire to beg a cigarette from a soldier or to pick up one which had been discarded. Otherwise they gazed with vacant stares at their liberators and, except for a very few, seemed oblivious to the fact that they were free.

The underground factory, 15 kilometers of tunnels on three levels, was hewn out of solid rock. Foreign workers labored there 12 hours a day producing plane and tank parts for the Nazi war machine. The air was dank and the general working conditions vile. The Nazi vision of well-lighted underground factories complete with

A short distance up the road a lone German broke out of the woods carrying a white flag. In broken English he informed Witt that his commanding officer wished to surrender both himself and his men. A few minutes later Germans marched out of the woods from both sides all with their hands over their heads and ready to be taken to the PW cage.

A later count showed that 350 Germans surrendered after becoming convinced that an entire American regiment was attacking on their front because of the terrific noise made by the exploding ammunition truck.

Kamerad! . . .

As of press time last night, some 74,500 supermen have cried "Kamerad!" to men of the 83rd along the path of the Thunderbolt across Europe. The whole AEF in World War I took only 63,079 prisoners.

The current campaign from the Rhine to the Elbe accounted for 34,500, including five generals, while the surrender of General Elster and his March Group of 20,000 at Beaugency last Fall constituted the second highest count.