

April '45

For your Files —

Bismarck Soldier Sees Atrocities

An actual witness to the atrocities committed by the Germans was Pfc. John Conrad, son of Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Conrad, 619 Sixth St., Bismarck. His wife resides in Westfield, N. J. Following is an account of what Pfc. Conrad has seen, written to his brother, Gaylord, 320 Ave. A. West on April 8th from Germany where he is with Patton's Third Army, 89th Field Artillery.

"We will need some definite understanding of the amount of energy we must expend to defeat Nazism to maintain a new and better world. This will require doing our utmost.

"That is the inescapable conclusion you arrive at when you actually see the German atrocities. Make no mistake they are not over-amplified, they do not get bigger from the teller of tales. If anything, whatever you may read or seen is an understatement from my own personal observations.

"We have all heard of war atrocities and read of them before, time and time again, I had always had a sceptical feeling because they appeared so gruesome. The atrocious acts are true. Nazi Germany today is evidence conclusive of the fascist policies. These policies must be done away with.

"Just recently I accompanied the battery commander and his driver on a reconnaissance patrol early one morning near the front. We were seeking a new artillery position for moving up. An infantry colonel stopped us on the road and told of a Nazi concentration camp in the vicinity which he said we should inspect. We proceeded. The area was perhaps a hundred yards square. Double barbed wire marked the boundry of the areas. Between these top and bottom rows hung more loose barbed wire. On every post to which the wire was strung, hung flood lights. Guard houses were scattered along.

"We drove through double steel gates to the interior. Outside the barracks lay twenty dead prisoners. The scene was horrible. They were only half clothed. They looked so thin and weak, I don't see how they could have moved. Doctors say many had typhus. Their faces were drawn and shallow. We identified one as an American officer. He was not as thin as the others, but he had been shot in cold blood by the German keeper.

"This is not propaganda—I saw it."

"In a nearby shed we found bodies laid toe to head, toe to head, twenty feet long and five feet high. A double row. They were thin, ragged bodies.

"We left this stockade and passed many of these same enclosures on both sides of the road.

"Two miles farther we stopped at the edge of a group of trees. Freshly broken earth was piled in a long row. Huge stacks of wood were piled high. At the far end of the dirt pile was a barbecue pit in which were the charred remains of a big fire. Close examination revealed the charred remains to be human ashes. A major who joined the group estimated four thousand were burned and buried in this common grave. It was an extermination camp. Probably used for the political enemies of Hitler, the fascist and the Nazi party.

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Wing many years ago and was a Red Cross worker in World War I.

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"If there is any doubt in the minds of our friends about these conditions I only hope they could see what I have been a witness to. There is no questions about a hard or soft peace for the Germans."

John