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"Organized Crime Against Civilization": The Congressional Investigation of Liberated Concentration Camps in 1945

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**“ORGANIZED CRIME AGAINST CIVILIZATION”:
THE CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION OF
LIBERATED CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN 1945**

A Thesis Presented

by

Benjamin A. Lindsey

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
Specializing in History

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Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, The University of Vermont, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, specializing in History.

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Date: March 27, 2012

Abstract

This study examines the congressional mission to liberated concentration camps in April and May 1945. General Dwight D. Eisenhower requested a congressional mission and a group of newspaper editors and publishers to view firsthand the horrors of the concentration camp Buchenwald, so that the American public might be made more aware of German atrocities in concentration camps and to dispel the belief that the atrocity reports were wartime propaganda. The congressmen and newspapermen were horrified by what they saw at the German concentration camps, and many reported back to the American public about the atrocities and conditions in the concentration camps through articles, interviews, speeches, and rallies. Upon their return to the United States, the congressmen published a report on the conditions within the camps, and many of them spoke in Congress and to the public about the need to re-educate the Germans, try guilty Germans, and rebuild Germany. The congressmen and editors and publishers brought legitimacy to the reports of American war correspondents concerning German atrocities, and their efforts contributed to constructing a political climate that allowed for and legitimized the Nuremberg Trials, the U.S. Army denazification efforts, and the rebuilding of Germany through the Marshall Plan. To examine this mission, newspaper articles from April and May 1945 were collected from thirteen American newspapers, as well as the *Times* of London. Research was also conducted in the personal collections of two of the congressmen who toured Europe at that time, as well as at the National Archives in College Park, MD. This study goes beyond the existing research by examining the congressional mission to Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau, which, though it has been briefly mentioned in existing Holocaust literature, has never been fully examined.

For my wife Sara, who believed in me from the start and followed me all the way from Oregon to Vermont so that I could earn my Master's in Arts at the university I most wanted to attend.

And for Trevor Sehrer, who helped me realize that I could become more than what I was.

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Investigators who Visited Germany in April and May 1945

Senators and Congressmen who Inspected German Concentration Camps

Senator Alben W. Barkley (D-KY), Senate Majority Leader

Senator Charles W. Brooks (R-IL)

Senator Walter F. George (D-GA), Acting chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations

Senator Leverett Saltonstall (R-MA)

Senator Elbert D. Thomas (D-UT), Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs

Senator Kenneth S. Wherry (R-NE), Republican Whip

Representative Edouard V. Izac (D-CA)

Representative James W. Mott (R-OR)

Representative James P. Richards (D-SC)

Representative Dewey J. Short (R-MO)

Representative Robert E. Thomason (D-TX)

Representative John M. Vorys (R-OH)

Newspaper and Magazine Editors and Publishers who Inspected German Concentration Camps

Julius Ochs Adler, *New York Times*

Malcolm Bingay, *Detroit Free Press*

Amon Carter, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

Norman Chandler, *Los Angeles Times*

William L. Chenery, *Collier's*

E. Z. Dimitman, *Chicago Sun*

John Randolph Hearst, *Hearst Newspapers*

Ben Hibbs, *Saturday Evening Post*

Stanley High, *Reader's Digest*

Ben McKelway, *Washington Star*

William I. Nicholson, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*

Joseph Pulitzer Jr., *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Gideon Seymour, *Minneapolis Star Journal*

Duke Shoop, *Kansas City Star*

Beverly W. Smith, *American Magazine*

Walker Stone, *Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance* and *Washington Daily News*

M. E. Walter, *Houston Chronicle*



Preface: The members of the congressional mission to Nazi concentration camps in April and May 1945 view bodies at the Buchenwald concentration camp, April 24, 1945. The congressional mission to the concentration camps corresponds with a turning point in how the American public viewed Germany. Although reports of German atrocities had been coming to the United States since the early years of the war, many Americans doubted their veracity. The congressmen returned from the camps to tell Americans that what they had read in the newspapers was entirely true: the Germans had committed war crimes on an incredible scale. Their report to Congress, interviews, and public speeches added legitimacy to the correspondents' reports and helped to convince and prepare Congress and the American public to take a larger role in Europe after the war, through denazification efforts, trials of Nazi criminals, and especially the Marshall Plan. Although the congressional visit to these liberated concentration camps has received brief mention in existing literature, it has never before been fully examined. This study provides a more in-depth examination of the purpose and effects of the congressional mission, as well as a detailed account of the mission and the reports produced by the congressmen and editors and publishers who toured Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau in April and May 1945. Photograph 1: National Archives RG-111-SC-204746, Box 266.

Section One: The Congressional Mission

In April and May 1945, twelve members of Congress, six senators and six representatives, representing both sides of the aisle, traveled to Europe at General Dwight D. Eisenhower's invitation to see for themselves the atrocities and conditions in German concentration camps. What they saw convinced them that the Nazi¹ government had engaged in the deliberate mistreatment of its political and racial opponents through a program the congressmen later described as "a systematic form of torture and death."²

Eisenhower and the Concentration Camps

By April 1945, the American and British armies were advancing quickly into Germany from the west. The landing at Normandy had been a triumphant success, and although the Battle of the Bulge slowed the Allied advance for a time, it could not stop the momentum of the Allied armies. During their rapid push to meet the Soviets in Germany, Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr.'s Third Army encountered the first German concentration camps. Although the Soviets had already liberated Majdanek, on the outskirts of Lublin, Poland, more than half a year earlier, the liberation of Ohrdruf and Buchenwald gave the American army its first glimpse of the concentration camp system.

The U.S. Army liberated Ohrdruf, a subsidiary camp of the Buchenwald concentration camp, near the German city of Gotha on April 4, 1945. After liberating

¹ Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or National Socialist German Workers' Party, abbreviated NSDAP and commonly called the Nazi Party.

² United States Senate, *Atrocities and Other Conditions in Concentration Camps in Germany*, (S. Doc. 79-47) Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1945, 1, 14.

Ohrdruf, Patton was so overwhelmed by the scope of the camp that he invited Commander in Chief of the Allied Forces in the European Theater of Operations General Dwight D. Eisenhower to tour the camp and see the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis against their political prisoners.

On April 12 Eisenhower viewed his first concentration camp; he spent the day touring the camp with Patton, and what he saw and heard “etched the date in my memory.... I have never felt able to describe my emotional reactions when I first came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency.” Eisenhower “visited every nook and cranny” of Ohrdruf so that he might testify firsthand in the future, “in case there ever grew up at home the belief or assumption that ‘the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda.’” He later wrote that, “[u]p to that time I had known about [concentration camps] only generally or through secondary sources. I am certain, however, that I have never at any other time experienced an equal sense of shock.”³

Three days later, on Sunday, April 15, Patton wrote Eisenhower again, this time concerning Buchenwald, which the Third Army had liberated on April 11. He told Eisenhower that Buchenwald had a larger population than Ohrdruf, that one hundred prisoners were dying per day, and that the crematorium was “far superior” to that of Ohrdruf. In the letter, Patton told Eisenhower that he had requested “the press to go up there and see it, and then write as much about it as they could.” He had also contacted General Omar N. Bradley the night before to recommend that Eisenhower send “selected

³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1948), 408, 409.

individuals from the upper strata of the press to look at [Buchenwald], so that you can build up another page of the necessary evidence as to the brutality of the Germans.”⁴ For Patton and Eisenhower it was necessary that Americans read accurate reports of the atrocities and conditions in German concentration camps, so that following the war Americans would be interested in maintaining a presence in Germany for denazification and war crimes trials. Eisenhower urged Patton in his reply to ensure that “every visitor coming into that region ... be urged to see the place”⁵; Patton took Eisenhower’s advice even further: he invited thousands of American soldiers to Buchenwald to see the “Dantesque scene of human woe and to listen ... to the tales of men who had lived through things that shouldn’t be allowed in hades.”⁶ Hundreds of British and American soldiers came to see the camp daily, “to see the living dead and be convinced that the report of Nazi atrocities is not just propaganda.”⁷ Patton also compelled the citizens of Weimar to walk to Buchenwald and tour the camp to “see for themselves the horrors of the Nazi regime.”⁸

The *Times* of London believed that Patton had taken the “proper course” in his decision to bring the citizens of the nearby city of Weimar to Buchenwald, because for “many years the Nazi leaders have denounced as lying hostile propaganda the stories

⁴ General George S. Patton Jr. to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 15, 1945, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS, retrieved from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/1945_04_15_Patton_to_DDE.pdf.

⁵ General Dwight D. Eisenhower to General George S. Patton, Jr., April 18, 1945, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS, retrieved from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/1945_04_18_DDE_to_Patton.pdf.

⁶ William H. Stoneman, “Yank Soldiers View Horrors of Huge Nazi Prison Camp,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., April 23, 1945, 4.

⁷ Don Whitehead, “Proof of Nazi Horrors Shown to Congressmen,” *LA Times*, April 23, 1945, 5.

⁸ “General Patton Forces Weimar Germans to View Murder Camp Horrors,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 20, 1945, 2A.

about the concentration camps that became known to the outside world.” The *Times* suggested that many Germans may have believed the Nazi leadership claims of propaganda, and that it was necessary for those claims to be proven false. According to the *Times*, this was “the beginning of the re-education of Germany.”⁹

After reading Patton’s letter concerning Buchenwald, Eisenhower decided something had to be done to inform the American public about German “bestiality and cruelty,” to make the public believe that the stories coming back from American war correspondents in Europe were true and not just wartime anti-German propaganda. To this effect Eisenhower cabled Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, asking him to invite twelve members of Congress and a group of prominent newspaper and magazine editors and publishers to come to Germany to see for themselves the “practices of the Germans in these camps.”¹⁰

It was with German re-education in mind, along with the rebuilding of Germany and war crimes trials, that Eisenhower conceived of a congressional mission to tour Buchenwald. Eisenhower knew that a similar peace to that which followed the First World War could lead to yet another war, so he envisioned a different peace. To achieve this goal, he realized that he would need the support of Congress, which controlled the U.S. federal budget. For the United States to maintain the necessary military presence to oversee German re-education, rebuilding, and war crimes trials, Congress would need to believe all three to be necessary.

⁹ “The Victims,” *Times* (London), April 20, 1945, 5.

¹⁰ General Dwight D. Eisenhower to General George C. Marshall, April 19, 1945, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS, retrieved from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/1945_04_19_DDE_to_Marshall.pdf.

It was not just access to the congressional purse, however, that Eisenhower wanted from Congress; he invited newspaper and magazine editors and publishers in addition to the congressional committee because he wanted to legitimize the atrocity news that was already being read by Americans at home; that legitimacy would help to build public support for war crimes trials abroad. Eisenhower knew that many Americans were skeptical of the war crimes claims; after all, similar claims had been made following the First World War, and after investigation they were proven false. Also, Americans were simply having a hard time believing something so terrible could actually happen—that these crimes could actually be committed by a “civilized” nation such as Germany was a difficult pill to swallow. Photographs of the atrocities went a long way to convincing the skeptics, but for the public to believe the truth of the atrocity stories, the photos needed to be backed by the assurances of respected congressmen and editors and publishers.

The American public had been reading about antisemitic activity in Germany since 1933, after Adolf Hitler became chancellor, and stories about German atrocities during the war had made their way to the United States as well. American reporters and diplomats had been stationed in Germany for a long time, and a good deal of information about the activities in Germany had been transmitted to the United States.¹¹ Many American reporters sent back details about persecution of the Jews, book burnings, and the purging of the universities, and many were sent home by the Nazi regime for

¹¹ Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 122, 123.

reporting the truth.¹² But many newsmen did not report on what was happening to the Jews; they favored telling Americans less to maintain morale at home.¹³ Generally, the American press was tolerated in Germany until the United States entered the war, at which time most of the remaining reporters and diplomats were detained in Berlin as enemy aliens.¹⁴

Because the British intelligence office had been successful in breaking enemy codes, the British government knew far more about Nazi war crimes than did Roosevelt and his government. When British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was first lord of the admiralty in World War I he had been closely tied to the code breakers, and after the war he maintained his connections. Additionally, in 1939, the Polish secret service duplicated Germany's Enigma machine and supplied one to Britain, so British code breakers were reading German orders as early as September 1939.¹⁵

Their reports, however, only grasped a fraction of what was going on, but they did include information about mass killings directed by higher *Schutzstaffel* (SS) leaders.¹⁶ Between August 23 and 31, 1940, British decoders noted that 12,361 Jews had been killed by the SS and Order Police, and that the actual number was probably double that, according to a September 12 summary, because they could only decode about half of the

¹² Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany and the United States: A "Special Relationship"?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 121.

¹³ Breitman, *Official Secrets*, 136.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124, 125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 88, 89.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 92.

messages.¹⁷ Four months before the January 20, 1942 Wannsee Conference, at which the “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem” was discussed and set in motion, British intelligence had a “basic grasp of Nazi intentions toward Jews in the Soviet territories.”¹⁸

Despite this abundance of evidence, intelligence officers were preoccupied with the war, not the beginning of the Holocaust. Although the British Ministry of Information had begun special “Reports on Jewry,” in which they concluded that the “Germans clearly pursue a policy of extermination against the Jews [and] the only things Jewish that will remain in Poland will be Jewish cemeteries,” this information was not well known outside of MI 8 (British signals intelligence), and some specialists in MI 14 (British military intelligence), the Air Ministry, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and the Joint Intelligence Committee.¹⁹

During the war, many U.S. administrators and officials did not have sufficient evidence of the Final Solution because British intelligence was not sharing its information on the Holocaust. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which had less reliable information (and less information overall) than London, was still able to get an accurate picture of the Final Solution, but probably not until late in 1942. Concerning the reports of Nazi atrocities in 1942, Allen Dulles, who would later head the OSS, suggested the creation of a tribunal from Allied and neutral nations to examine evidence of Nazi violence after the war, but no action was to be taken by the military to rescue Jews.

¹⁷ Although the persecution and attempted genocide of the European Jews is central to the story of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, it will not be a major focus here. The concentration camps visited by the congressional delegation were not central in the extermination of Europe’s Jews, but were places for internment of political opponents and/or slave labor.

¹⁸ Breitman, *Official Secrets*, 96, 97.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

During the war, U.S. and British military leaders chose to focus on what they believed to be the more important issues of military and diplomatic strategy and the Allied partnership, rather than with specific decisions about the rescue of Jews. The leadership of both the United States and Great Britain had decided that dealing with German war crimes would have to wait until after the end of the war.²⁰

Although reports of persecution of German Jews had been present in American and British newspapers since 1933, and stories about the mass murder of Jews had been making their way out of the East since 1941, rumors and reports of what would later be known as the Holocaust went largely ignored in the West. There are four important reasons why people in the West, most notably in the United States and Great Britain, did not believe the atrocity reports that came out in World War II: 1) atrocity propaganda from World War I, which was used to spur outrage among the Entente, was proven after the war to be false, making people less likely to believe news of new atrocities; 2) the crimes of the Holocaust were so unbelievable that people could not really understand or “know” them until they saw them personally or in photographs²¹; 3) reports on Nazi antisemitic actions in Germany before the war had been played down or suppressed in Western newspapers and magazines; and 4) Allied antisemitism and xenophobia made Americans less sympathetic to Jewish and foreign victims.

In order to gain support for post-war trials and the rebuilding and re-education of Germany, Eisenhower needed to change the minds of the American public and the U.S.

²⁰ Ibid., 144, 231, 131, 228.

²¹ Ibid., 8, 9.

government; he needed them not only to believe the reports of German atrocities, but also to believe that Germany could be “fixed.” Eisenhower needed to overcome a U.S. isolationist movement that had become strong following the First World War. Isolationism had been so strong in the United States that, although President Roosevelt recognized the dangers of Nazism early on, he followed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s lead and favored appeasement in international policy toward Germany.

The relationship between Nazi Germany and the United States began civilly. Hitler did not want to antagonize Roosevelt because early in the 1930s the United States was still a valuable economic ally, and many in the United States supported Hitler and his regime as a stabilizing power in Europe. Some Americans were uncomfortable with the rumors coming out of Germany concerning the oppression of Germany’s Jews and Hitler’s political opponents, but many in America believed that as Germany recovered from the Depression the Nazis would relax some of their more oppressive measures. German propaganda had convinced America, and it was not until the war broke out in 1939 that U.S. opinion would turn against Germany.²²

As the 1930s progressed, Hitler broke more and more of the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty, the peace treaty that had ended the war with Germany. Many in the United States and Great Britain felt that the Versailles Treaty had been unfair and were therefore willing to forgive Germany for breaking the Versailles restrictions. Also, the Great Depression was not a time when Great Britain or France could afford to spend money to enforce the treaty through military means. The British government hoped that

²² Gatzke, *Germany and the United States*, 110.

Hitler would become more reasonable after each time he violated the treaty, but he continued to seek more, and more was given in hopes that it would be the last thing he took. Because Great Britain was one of the only countries that could enforce the treaty, their policy led other governments to follow suit, and appeasement of Germany became the international response to German demands.²³

Germany's steady rearmament went against the Locarno Treaties, which had secured European non-aggression and economic cooperation, and the Versailles Treaty, neither of which were signed by representatives of the United States, so the U.S. was not obligated to confront Germany. Neither Great Britain nor France were in a position to enforce the treaties, so Hitler was able to slowly build up Germany's forces, facing no opposition when Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring declared on March 9, 1935, that Germany had an air force, or even when conscription was instituted on March 16, 1935, and Hitler announced that he would build Germany's armed forces to thirty-six divisions, approximately a half million men.²⁴

On September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, it was clear that appeasement had failed as a strategy to placate Germany and avoid war. The policy of appeasement had allowed Hitler to rebuild the German armed forces without any serious consequences, and after Germany's army had been rebuilt, appeasement allowed him to annex Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia with little resistance.

²³ Ibid., 117.

²⁴ Arnold A. Offner, *American Appeasement: United States Foreign Policy and Germany, 1933-1938* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1969), 141, 111, 112.

Isolationists in the United States had pressured Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Calvin Coolidge not to sign the Versailles or Locarno Treaties, respectively, and because the United States was not tied in to politics in Europe, Hitler was allowed to expand his power unchecked. It was partially in answer to this isolationist sentiment in the United States that General Eisenhower invited members of Congress and the editors and publishers of American newspapers and magazines to view the newly liberated concentration camps in Germany. Eisenhower believed that America needed to maintain a military and political presence in Germany after the war to avoid a similar collapse in international relations by reintegrating Germany into the larger European community, by helping to rebuild and re-educate Germany, and punishing war criminals.

In the minds of Marshall and Eisenhower, the failed World War I peace and Versailles Treaty contributed considerably to the success of Hitler and the Nazis, as well as to the outbreak of World War II. Both men believed that to avoid a third world war, a different peace would need to be made at the end of the war; a peace wherein Germany was reintegrated into Europe economically, where the German people were successfully denazified, and where Nazi criminals paid for their crimes. After representative Clare Booth Luce (R-CT) returned from visiting Buchenwald on April 21, 1945, she spoke to this exact sentiment: “Unless a punishment commensurate with the crimes committed is meted out,” she told a crowd at Carnegie Hall on May 22, “I warn that again before 25 years have elapsed this same people will plunge the world into a holocaust infinitely

greater than the one we are now passing through.”²⁵ To help create such a peace, Eisenhower knew that Congress and the American public would need to back Army efforts, and to secure that support Eisenhower called on Congress to send a delegation of investigators to Europe in April and May 1945.

“Outstanding Men” and “Trained Observers”

Paul Wooton wrote in the *Times-Picayune* after the return of the delegations from Germany that Marshall and Eisenhower “are being given credit for unusual perception in arranging for editors, publishers, legislators and other reputable persons to view German atrocities at first hand.” Marshall and Eisenhower, according to Wooton, believed that a hard peace with Germany was essential in discouraging “a philosophy that is inconsistent with the kind of world the peace-loving nations want,” and he hoped that the reports produced concerning the trip would “curb any maudlin sympathy for the perpetrators of the greatest crime of history.” Wooton also mentioned the false war crimes charges of World War I and how those false charges could open the door for the claim that the current war crime charges were also propaganda.²⁶

General Eisenhower described it as “vitaly important” that enough testimony “from people who would be believed” came back to the United States from the concentration camps. Wooton explained that “[b]y bringing the atrocities to the personal attention of outstanding men, who are trained observers, the character of these outrages

²⁵ Alvin H. Goldstein, “Speakers at Rally Warn of Danger if Another World War of German Origin is Permitted to Develop,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 23, 1945, 1B.

²⁶ Paul Wooton, “Atrocity Camp Visits Praised,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 14, 1945, 7.

could be established beyond all doubt.”²⁷ When Eisenhower met the congressional mission for lunch at the Hotel Lion d’Or in Paris on April 25, he told them that although at that time they had only seen one camp, Buchenwald, there were many others. He told them, their “responsibilities, I believe, extend into a great field, and informing the people at home of things like these atrocities is one of them.... I want you to see for yourselves and be the [spokesmen] for the United States.”²⁸ Eisenhower wanted trusted experts, individuals whom the American public would believe, to see the concentration camps and report on the condition of the camps and the prisoners within.

After seeing Buchenwald, the editors and publishers agreed with Eisenhower and believed that even more trusted experts should visit the camps. Norman Chandler of the *LA Times* wrote that the group was so shocked by what they saw that they cabled Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson on April 28 to urge him to send yet another group to tour the camps, “this time the clergy of all denominations.” Chandler wrote that he wished every American could see what he and the others saw while touring the concentration camps so that all Americans could have a “complete understanding” of the nature of the Nazi enemy, and one could argue that a clerical visit to the concentration camps would have a similar effect as a congressional and editorial visit—many Americans look to religious leaders as moral and cultural authorities in their lives and would value their opinions on German war crimes.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Charles F. Kiley, “Nazi Camp ‘Horrible’ Says Dewey Short,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 26, 1945, 12A.

²⁹ Norman Chandler, “Stories of Nazi Prison Horrors Substantiated,” *LA Times*, April 28, 1945, 1.

What Eisenhower wanted was a group of men and women whom the public would trust to report accurately about the veracity of war crimes claims. For the United States to remain involved in German affairs, including the trial of German war criminals, the American public needed to know the truth about the conditions in the concentration camps so that they would support whatever needed to be done with Germany following the war.

On the afternoon of April 20, Colonel William Arthur of General Marshall's staff called M. E. Walter to tell him that the *Houston Chronicle* had been selected to send a representative to Europe. "We want to give editors of the leading newspapers and magazines of the nation a first-hand view of the situation in Germany," Arthur explained in his call. "The War Department feels that a personal inspection trip will enable the editors to appreciate better the fighting front reports of their correspondents, and to apply these reports more intelligently in their editorials," which in turn would drum up support for continued military presence in Germany.³⁰

Duke Shoop wrote in the *Kansas City Star* that Eisenhower was shocked by what he saw in the concentration camps. He remembered the atrocity stories of the previous war, tales "such as amputations of the hands of little children" that did not stand up under the "demand for real evidence and documentation." Eisenhower, according to Shoop, remembered that the American people "adopted an easy attitude toward the Germans [after World War I]. So he invited members of Congress and newspaper and magazine

³⁰ "Chronicle Managing Editor to Inspect Horror Camps," *Houston Chronicle*, April 22, 1945, 1, 6.

men to see the same brutalities that had shocked him,” in an effort to prove the validity of the current war crimes claims.³¹

Walter explained the understandable skepticism of the American public concerning atrocity stories coming back from war correspondents in Germany. “In the last war,” he wrote, “so many atrocity stories were disproved after peace had been declared that people became skeptical, and when stories began coming back on the horror camps maintained by the Nazis there was some doubt.” Walter wrote that Eisenhower believed that doubt could be laid to rest if respected editors and publishers from throughout the nation saw the crimes of the Nazi regime for themselves; then, there would be no questioning the atrocities in the following years.³²

In April 1945, as concentration camps were overrun by the American and British armies, more news, accompanied now by photographs, began to appear in American newspapers. In the April 20 *Christian Science Monitor*, Peter Lyne reported that, although the previous Russian reports of German atrocities in Eastern Europe from Russian and Polish witnesses were only “half believed” during the war, “now the United States and Britain can add to their testimony in factual evidence.”³³ On the same day, the *Times* of London stated that reports of “cruelties perpetrated in the political concentration camps” as told by German, Jewish, Russian, and Polish witnesses, which in the past had been dismissed as “hallucinations” because it was difficult “to imagine a degradation of

³¹ Duke Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

³² M. E. Walter, “Exaggeration of German Political Camp Horrors is Impossible, Walter Declares,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1945, 1, 13.

³³ Lyne, “Unprecedented Brutalities,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 1945, 1, 9.

the soul that descend so far below the animal level of cruelty,” were legitimized as photographs “remove[d] the last possibility of doubt.”³⁴

The United States and Nazi Germany

As early as the beginning of 1933, news about the political oppression of Communists and other political opponents of the Nazis had come into the United States from American correspondents in Germany. News about the persecution of Jews was only part of the story about Nazi Germany and was not central to the reports coming from the correspondents. Of more interest to the reporters was news about the political upheaval in Germany. Hitler’s seizure of power, violence against political opponents, the March elections, and the Reichstag fire occupied substantial space in their reports, while violence against the Jews was given less attention. The way that the American press told—or did not tell—the story of antisemitism in Germany worked to shape American reaction to the persecution. The press, though ostensibly objective, was not neutral in reporting persecution, and Americans did not get a complete picture of the Nazi persecution policies. Also, in the early months of the Nazi regime, United States diplomats urged American correspondents in Germany to “moderate the tenor of their dispatches, lest public opinion [turn] against Germany.” This was done with an eye to protecting the favorable relations between the German and American governments and is

³⁴ “The Victims,” *Times* (London), April 20, 1945, 5.

important when considering what the American public knew about the abuse of Nazi political opponents and German Jews.³⁵

In 1933, papers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, and *London Daily Herald* all carried reports that the Nazis were planning to massacre their political opponents and Jews, but many in America were skeptical. Many other papers and magazines “were convinced that the situation could not be *as* bad as the reporters contended,” and labeled such reports as exaggeration. The idea that reporters were exaggerating mistreatment in Germany was much easier to accept for the American public than the reality that Germany, a “modern” nation, was engaging in such brutal persecution. And because American correspondents in Berlin reported often on how they were courteously treated in Germany and how the German people seemed happy and successful, Americans continued to disbelieve reports of anti-Jewish violence and policy.³⁶

The German government also worked hard to influence the American press. Norman Chandler, the publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, who visited Germany during the 1936 Olympic Games “berated Ralph Barnes of the *New York Herald Tribune* and William Shirer of CBS for their critical and alarming stories on Germany.” He and the other businessmen with whom he toured Germany said “that they had never seen a people so ‘happy, content, and united.’” It was difficult for correspondents to convince those who did not actually witness acts of persecution and discrimination that there was more

³⁵ Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: The Free Press), 15, 3, 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15, 16, 7.

to the Third Reich than its economic revival.³⁷ After viewing the concentration camps for himself in 1945, Chandler was more than convinced; he told the United Press in an interview that “[w]hat we saw proved [that] our own reports during this war told the absolute truth without exaggeration.”³⁸

Many American reporters, some of whom remained in Germany until 1942, saw firsthand the brutalities inflicted on the Jews and political opponents of the Reich. They witnessed the effects of the Nuremberg Laws, the expropriation of Jewish wealth, and marking of Jews with a yellow star. Beginning in 1941, American correspondents often heard tales of “massacres of civilians” from German soldiers on leave from the Russian front, and many “watched as Jews were loaded onto trains for ‘resettlement’ in the east.” Many correspondents, however, feared that if they reported what they had seen or heard they would be expelled from Germany or otherwise punished. They also feared for the safety of their informants, who might find themselves in a concentration camp if the Nazi government learned that they were telling American reporters about German crimes. Even if they filed reports containing the gory details of persecution, the American public did not always read exactly what the correspondents wrote. Editors in America decided what was printed and where in the paper the stories would appear. Oftentimes, editors would cut portions of stories that they believed to be “unreliable or unbelievable.”³⁹

On other occasions, when American correspondents were critical of the Nazi regime, the German government censored their reports or expelled the journalist.

³⁷ Ibid., 33.

³⁸ Joseph W. Grigg, “Nazi Atrocities Surpass Stories, Chandler Says,” *LA Times*, May 6, 1945, 8.

³⁹ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 7.

Journalists who wrote atrocity stories faced punishments such as having their paper's reporters banned from Germany or being unable to use the German postal system. Naturally, correspondents tried to avoid expulsion, censorship, and especially having their paper banned from Germany, because it would anger their employers and could seriously damage their own careers. Additionally, American reports from Germany were often censored by the Nazi government; radio was strictly regulated, often more than printed reports. When reports were not censored, correspondents had to work carefully so that the German government did not prevent the sending of their stories. Correspondents in Germany feared even harsher measures than censorship or expulsion should their reports offend or anger the Nazi government: some reporters were arrested and held in Nazi prisons. The United States State Department offered no protection to correspondents who were expelled from Germany or locked in a German prison. The State Department made it clear that it "would take no action if the Nazis expelled or arrested reporters."⁴⁰

Despite German threats, arrests, expulsions, and censorship, an "astonishing amount of information was available long before the end of the war," and many aspects of the Nazi horrors were known before the camps were opened by the U.S. Army in 1945. These horrors, however, were mostly viewed as exaggeration rather than an accurate reflection of German anti-Jewish and anti-opposition policy. Rather than exaggerate, however, most American correspondents were conservative in the tone of their reports, so as not to be accused of "fomenting hysteria." They wrote balanced and

⁴⁰ Ibid., 22, 7, 21, 24.

reserved reports and tended toward moderation, rather than exaggeration. Even so, their reports about Nazi horrors were greeted with skepticism.⁴¹

A great deal of American skepticism has its origin in the false atrocity reports that came out of Belgium during the First World War. The Bryce Report, in particular, suggested that the Germans participated in the brutal killings of babies and mutilations of defenseless women in Belgium; these atrocities were later discovered to be fiction. The principal material for the report consisted of 1,200 depositions that recounted supposed acts of German barbarity in Belgium. Many of the depositions were made by Belgian refugees in Britain and by British and Belgian soldiers stationed in Britain and France. Lord James Bryce's report relied almost entirely on these accounts, and he did not bother to fact check them because at the time Britain was trying to convince neutrals such as the United States to join the war, so Bryce chose to exploit any advantage he could get.⁴² When stories of German atrocities during World War II began to make their way to back to American readers, they remembered the embarrassment caused by the false atrocity tales of World War I, and many tended to dismiss the new reports. Even reporters who had proof of mass killings and persecution often doubted their own stories because they were so similar to the false stories from the last war, and when reporters believed the news and reported it, those far from Germany—both editors and the public—often did not fully trust the reports.⁴³

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2, 20.

⁴² Trevor Wilson, "Lord Bryce's Investigation into Alleged German Atrocities in Belgium, 1914-15," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14, no. 3 (1979): 372, 379.

⁴³ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 8, 9.

It was with these concerns in mind that congressmen such as Senator Charles Brooks (R-IL) and Representative Edouard Izac (D-CA) were selected to accompany the congressional mission abroad. Izac had been a prisoner of war in Germany during the First World War. He said that his own experiences as a German prisoner had “prepared him for some instances of brutality in the prison camps,” though by the end of the trip he said what he and the rest of the congressmen had seen “defied descriptions.”⁴⁴ The inclusion of Brooks, “one of the leading pre-Pearl Harbor isolationists,” as a member of the delegation spoke to one of the main purposes of the trip: to further encourage American involvement abroad after the end of the war.⁴⁵

On December 8, 1942, almost a year after America entered the war, Roosevelt informed American Jewish leaders that the government had proof of the mass killings in Europe. American Jewish groups publicized what they knew, and the press reported what little news of the Holocaust it had. Although the American public knew about Jewish persecution from before, they comprehended little of the Holocaust. They had access to some facts, but facts did not necessarily mean understanding. Americans were skeptical; they were hesitant to believe stories so similar to the World War I war crime propaganda.⁴⁶

Racist attitudes in the United States also affected how much attention reports of antisemitic activity in Germany received. In 1920s America, race and national origin were important issues; people belonging to the Western European “Nordic” races were

⁴⁴ “Congressmen Urge Penalties for Reich,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 10, 1945, 14.

⁴⁵ Mary Spargo, “Congressional Group to View Nazi Atrocities,” *Washington Post*, April 22, 1945, 1, 2.

⁴⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945*, The Oxford history of the United States, vol. 9 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 794, 795, 795

valued more highly than the “undesirable races” of the East.⁴⁷ To ensure that the United States would be populated by only “desirable races,” the 1924 National Origins Act imposed a cap of 150,000 immigrants per year and instituted a quota system that favored “desirable races.”⁴⁸ The quota system stipulated that only a certain number of persons could emigrate to the United States from any given country. Western European countries, specifically Germany, Great Britain, and Ireland, were favored heavily over most other countries, especially Middle Eastern, Asian, and African countries.⁴⁹ Quotas were not changeable between countries and the 1924 law made no official recognition of “refugees,” and therefore made no provision for offering asylum to the victims of persecution. In 1924 the country had effectively closed its doors to any more mass immigration.⁵⁰ The Immigration Act of 1924 was comprised of a series of reconstructed racial categories, in which race and nationality—concepts that had been loosely fused since the nineteenth century—were separated and realigned in new ways. The law differentiated Europeans according to nationality and ranked them in order of desirability.⁵¹

After the so-called Nuremberg Race Laws,⁵² which effectively made German Jews second class citizens, were passed in Germany in 1935, New York governor Herbert

⁴⁷ Mae M. Ngai, “The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924,” *Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (1999): 67, 68.

⁴⁸ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 413, 414.

⁴⁹ Ngai, “Architecture of Race,” 69, 74.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 413, 414.

⁵¹ Ngai, “Architecture of Race,” 69, 70.

⁵² The Nuremberg Laws included the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, which, among other things, prohibited marriage and sexual relations between Jews and citizens of “German or related blood,” and the Reich Citizenship Law, which stripped Jews of their German citizenship; see Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2003), 66-69.

Lehman proposed doubling the number of German Jews annually admitted to the United States, from twenty-five hundred to five thousand. President Roosevelt, however, was in no mood then, in the midst of the Great Depression, to change his mind and take the immigration barriers down. In the United States, immigration statutes forbade issuing visas to persons who were “likely to become a public charge,” and under the circumstances in Nazi Germany, where Jews were being dispossessed, few German Jews could qualify for visas because the amount of assets they could bring out of Germany was strictly limited by the Nazis.⁵³ During this time of economic crisis in the United States, the American press framed its opposition to immigration around the faltering economy and unemployment; the press demonized immigration as an additional burden on an already overburdened economy. Although many in the American press were appalled by German abuses of Jews, anger about the mistreatment of German Jews did not alter the press’ resistance to increased immigration.⁵⁴

After the German-Austrian *Anschluss*, the German occupation and annexation of Austria in 1938, Roosevelt ordered the merging of the German and Austrian quotas and the special expediting of Jewish visa applications, allowing about fifty thousand Jews to escape in the following two years. American sentiment, however, remained largely isolationist. In a 1939 poll, Americans were asked, “If you were a member of congress, would you vote yes or no on a bill to open the doors ... to a larger number of European refugees?” An overwhelming 85 percent of Protestants, 84 percent of Catholics and even

⁵³ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 412, 414, 413.

⁵⁴ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 92, 89.

25.8 percent of Jews answered “no.”⁵⁵ In the United States there was little enthusiasm for taking in persecuted Jews, and these restrictions on immigration reflected a larger movement of isolationism in the United States and a desire to remain outside of European politics and alliances.

American appeasement of Germany stemmed from American isolationism and was centered around a desire not to become involved in European wars and politics. Isolationism was strong in the United States in the 1930s and had been since the early days of the republic, when George Washington warned against becoming entangled in foreign wars and affairs in his Farewell Address. Isolationism had played a strong role in the United States Senate’s rejection of the League of Nations, which also kept the United States out of involvement in the Versailles Treaty.⁵⁶

American isolationists in the 1920s and 1930s were not uninterested in international affairs, nor were they necessarily pacifists; isolationists could be found in both political parties and were opposed to “entangling alliances” and collective security commitments and international organizations, such as the League of Nations. Isolationists did not want the United States to be bound by prior commitments in alliances or international organizations—commitments which many believed led to World War I. Isolationists were pro army, rather than pro navy, because an army without a navy is

⁵⁵ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 414, 417.

⁵⁶ See John Bledsoe Bonds, *Bipartisan Strategy: Selling the Marshall Plan* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

primarily defensive; American isolationists feared that a navy would be used to support international intervention abroad.⁵⁷

Isolationist sentiment in the United States was strong following the First World War, and Congress codified this sentiment into the Neutrality Laws, which aimed to insulate the United States from potential wars in Europe.⁵⁸ The Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937, were designed to keep the United States from becoming involved in foreign wars by putting an embargo on arms and imposing cash and carry restrictions on other strategic goods. These acts severely restricted President Roosevelt from giving aid to Britain and France at the beginning of World War II.⁵⁹ The neutrality laws remained in effect, even after the German occupation of the *Sudetenland*, the northern and western border regions of Czechoslovakia, in March 1939. Although Roosevelt tried to repeal the Neutrality Acts, Congress was unwilling to budge.⁶⁰

Roosevelt issued two Neutrality Proclamations on September 5, 1939, as mandated by the 1937 Neutrality Act. One of the proclamations put an embargo on all “arms, ammunition, or implements of war,” including “aircraft, unassembled, assembled or dismantled,” as well as “propellers or air screws, fuselages, hulls, wings, tail units [and] aircraft engines.” The United States could not aid the Allies in the war through the sale or loan of military goods. Roosevelt, however, wanted to support Britain and France, and he got to work on repealing the Neutrality Act, which was revised and signed on

⁵⁷ Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt & the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 6, 7.

⁵⁸ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 393, 394.

⁵⁹ Gatzke, *Germany and the United States*, 121.

⁶⁰ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 422, 423.

November 4, 1939. The revision was only a partial victory, however, in that it stated that belligerents could purchase arms, but not on credit.⁶¹

A majority of Americans did not want to see Britain fall to the Axis powers and favored Roosevelt's plans to aid Britain without going to war. By this time the isolationists were becoming a minority, with most people hoping for an Allied victory in World War II. Even so, before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. 80 percent of Americans opposed American entry into the war, though many supported the president's aid for Britain.⁶²

March 1939 saw the beginning of the end of appeasement, when German troops occupied parts of Czechoslovakia and the United States began to apply economic sanctions against Germany. The German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 seemed to many Americans to be a sign that Germany was shifting attention from the West, making it less likely that the United States would become involved and strengthening the resolve of American isolationists.⁶³ However, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Roosevelt was able to marshal the United States to war not only in the Pacific, but in the Atlantic as well.

Creating the Congressional Mission

To combat American isolationist tendencies and appeal to the whole nation, the groups of congressmen and editors and publishers were selected to include a broad range of political beliefs and from a wide geographic disbursement. For the congressmen

⁶¹ Ibid., 432-34.

⁶² Cole, *Roosevelt & the Isolationists*, 11, 12.

⁶³ Gatzke, *Germany and the United States*, 124, 131.

invited to tour the German concentration camps, the trip was “wholly unexpected.” On Thursday, April 19, Eisenhower cabled General George C. Marshall to request a congressional committee and a number of prominent editors and publishers to visit Buchenwald. He also extended his invitation to the British parliament. Eisenhower cabled to Marshall, “[w]e continue to uncover German concentration camps for political prisoners in which conditions of indescribable horror prevail.... I have visited one of these myself and I assure you that whatever has been printed on them to date has been understatement.”⁶⁴ Eisenhower “felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the American and British publics in a fashion that would leave no room for cynical doubt.”⁶⁵ Marshall replied on the same day, telling Eisenhower that his “proposal [had] been cleared with and approved by the Secretary of War and [President Harry Truman]. Plans,” he wrote, “are being formulated and you will be kept advised.”⁶⁶

Eisenhower’s expressed desire was for a “delegation from the Congress of the United States to see for themselves the real situation before time elapsed and it was cleaned up, in order that they might report their true findings to the Congress and to the American people.”⁶⁷ Eisenhower believed that it was important at the time, and for the future, “to have firsthand testimony of detached witnesses who were in no way involved in propaganda,” which is why leading newspaper and magazine editors and publishers

⁶⁴ Eisenhower to Marshall, April 19, 1945.

⁶⁵ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 408, 409.

⁶⁶ General George C. Marshall to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, April 19, 1945, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS, retrieved from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/1945_04_19_Marshall_to_DDE.pdf.

⁶⁷ 79 Cong. Rec., A2374 (May 17, 1945).

and congressmen were called upon to “observe and to question prisoners and all others available in the concentration camps.”⁶⁸

According to M. E. Walter of the *Houston Chronicle*, the editorial trip, suggested by Eisenhower and sponsored by the War Department, “was for the purpose of giving the editors an opportunity to see things for themselves so that they would have a better understanding of the stories being sent back by the correspondents and be able to have a more intelligent appreciation of the problems that must be faced in the postwar era,” alluding to Eisenhower’s goal of a lasting United States presence in Germany following the war. Walter explained also that the trip was arranged immediately following Eisenhower’s cable to Marshall, so that the editors and congressmen could see the “notorious concentration camps as soon as possible after they had been opened by American troops.”⁶⁹

On Friday, April 20, one day after Eisenhower cabled Marshall, Marshall’s staff was in communication with Congress to form an official committee to investigate evidence of German atrocities in concentration camps.⁷⁰ Around noon, two representatives from the Office of the Chief of Staff called on Majority Leader of the Senate Alben W. Barkley (D-KY) and Speaker of the House of Representatives Sam Rayburn (R-TX) to discuss the cablegram that General Eisenhower had sent to General Marshall on April 19. Barkley and Rayburn oversaw the selection of twelve

⁶⁸ William L. Chenery, “I Testify,” *Collier’s*, June 16, 1945, 14.

⁶⁹ M. E. Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account of His Trip to European War Zone,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

⁷⁰ William S. White, “Congress, Press to View Horrors,” *New York Times*, April 22, 1945, 13.

congressmen, including Barkley himself, to take Eisenhower up on his invitation.⁷¹ On April 22, the War Department released an official statement concerning the congressional delegation:

At the personal request of General Eisenhower and with the approval of the Secretary of War and the Chief of Staff, leading members of both Houses of Congress will be flown to Germany in Army aircraft within a few days to make a personal inspection of conditions of unspeakable horror which exist in Nazi concentration camps for political prisoners uncovered by the advance of the Allied armies.... [T]he inspection is for the purpose of giving members of Congress at first hand a picture of conditions which General Eisenhower says are almost impossible to describe in words.⁷²

In the letter, Eisenhower requested that a group of twelve congressmen and a group of senior magazine and newspaper editors come to Germany to see “the evidence of bestiality and cruelty” of the Nazi concentration camps, so that “no doubt [is] left in their minds about the normal practices of the Germans in these camps.”⁷³ Concerning his request, Geoffrey Parsons Jr. of the *International Herald Tribune* wrote that it was “a fair guess that Eisenhower would not make the request unless he personally had been terribly shocked by what he has seen in Germany and felt strongly that information about conditions in these German camps should be disseminated as widely as possible in America.”⁷⁴

Because Eisenhower gave no recommendations as to who ought to make up the congressional delegation, it was up to Senate Majority Leader Barkley and Speaker of the House Rayburn to decide; they “at once set about to consult with the minority leaders of

⁷¹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 1-3.

⁷² William S. White, “Congress, Press to View Horrors,” *New York Times*, April 22, 1945, 13.

⁷³ Eisenhower to Marshall, April 19, 1945.

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Parsons Jr., “Ike Calls for Congressmen to View Atrocities,” *Boston Daily Globe*, morning ed., April 21, 1945, 1, 3.

the two respective Houses,” in order to create a delegation to accept Eisenhower’s invitation. The matter of the committee came to Congress too late on Friday for the whole of Congress to be consulted in the creation of the delegation, so it was agreed that under these circumstances the group “should be immediately named, in order that the mission might go forward without delay,” and it was agreed that an equal number of Republicans and Democrats from both houses would be chosen for the inspection tour.⁷⁵ It was important to include an equal number of both parties and a wide geographical disbursement so that the congressional mission to Europe well represented the entirety of the American people, giving the largest possible number of Americans representation on the committee.

Because of the nature of the trip and in order to ensure expert opinions, Barkley desired representatives from the Foreign Affairs, Military Affairs, and Naval Affairs Committees, and so Senator Walter F. George (D-GA) and Senator Elbert D. Thomas (D-UT) were selected, but it was impossible to get Senator David I. Walsh (D-MA), chairman of the Committee on Naval Affairs, as he was out of Washington D.C. for the weekend. Eventually, after some urging from the rest of the committee, it was decided that Majority Leader Barkley would accompany the delegation in the place of Walsh.⁷⁶ They decided that the committee should be made up of six members of each house of Congress, and that it should evenly represent both the Republican and Democratic parties. On the morning of the 21st, Minority Leader Wallace H. White Jr. (R-ME)

⁷⁵ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 1, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2, 3.

advised Barkley that he was ready to recommend Senators C. Wayland Brooks (R-IL), Leverett Saltonstall (R-MA), and Kenneth S. Wherry (R-NE) to represent the Republican minority. From the House of Representatives, Edouard V. Izac (D-CA), James W. Mott (R-OR), James P. Richards (D-SC), Dewey Short (R-MO), Robert E. Thomason (D-TX), and John M. Vorys (R-OH) were chosen.⁷⁷

The congressmen represented both political parties equally and twelve of the U.S. states from all regions of the country. The congressmen hailed from a variety of backgrounds: many had been lawyers and all but four had served in the First World War, representing the Navy, Army, and Marines. Sen. Thomas had been a Mormon missionary to Japan in the years before World War I, Rep. Short had spent a number of years in Germany as a student at both the Heidelberg University and the University of Berlin, and Rep. Vorys had been assistant secretary to the American delegation at the Conference on Limitation of Armament in 1921-22 in Washington, D.C., resulting in a series of disarmament treaties between nations with interests in the Pacific Ocean and East Asia.⁷⁸ Because of the diversity of their experiences, they brought a wide variety of perspectives to their investigation of atrocities and conditions of the German concentration camps.

At almost the same time that the congressional group was being assembled, leading newspaper and magazine editors and publishers were receiving invitations to tour Europe as well. According to Norman Chandler, one of the editors who toured the concentration camps, Eisenhower's reason for asking for such a group was "simple."

⁷⁷ Ibid., 2, 3.

⁷⁸ Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/biosearch/biosearch.asp>.

Chandler wrote that, “[h]aving seen one of these horror institutions, [Eisenhower] found it difficult to believe the evidence of his own eyes. He wanted the American people to know that the American war correspondents were accurate in their reports, that this was not propaganda but the plain unvarnished truth.”⁷⁹ Eisenhower’s request for such a group was not because he felt the war correspondents had been inaccurate or were reporting the conditions of the concentration camps poorly, explained Malcolm Bingay in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Rather, he made the request “as a means of convincing the American people that the conditions cannot be exaggerated.” Both the editors and Eisenhower had an interest in proving the credibility of the earlier reports on German atrocities. Eisenhower’s thinking, according to Bingay, was “as simple, direct and clear as his own personality”: he wanted the American people to be assured that the news they were reading about the concentration camps were the “plain, unvarnished truth.”⁸⁰

General Marshall’s staff selected eighteen editors to follow the congressmen on a tour through Europe: Julius Ochs Adler of the *New York Times*, Malcolm Bingay of the *Detroit Free Press*, Amon Carter of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Norman Chandler of the *Los Angeles Times*, William L. Chenery of *Collier’s*, E. Z. Dimitman of the *Chicago Sun*, John Randolph Hearst of *Hearst Newspapers*, Ben Hibbs of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Stanley High of *Reader’s Digest*, Ben McKelway of the *Washington Star*, William I. Nicholson of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*,⁸¹ Joseph Pulitzer Jr. of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Gideon Seymour of the *Minneapolis Star Journal*, Duke Shoop of the

⁷⁹ Chandler, “Stories of Nazi Prison,” *LA Times*, April 28, 1945, 1.

⁸⁰ Malcolm W. Bingay, “Editor Says Buchenwald Shows Nazism is a Peril to Mankind,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 29, 1945, 3.

⁸¹ The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* is now the *New Orleans Times*.

Kansas City Star, Beverly W. Smith of *American Magazine*, Walker Stone of the *Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance* and *Washington Daily News*, and M E. Walter of the *Houston Chronicle*. As was the case with the congressmen, the editors were selected hastily “on the basis of availability and geographical distribution.”⁸²

M. E. Walter was a uniquely appropriate choice because he was a World War I veteran who had been taken prisoner by the Germans, making him “well equipped to make a comparison between the German treatment of prisoners in this war and in the last war.”⁸³ Also selected for the group was former brigadier general and then-general manager of the *New York Times* Julius Ochs Adler, who would provide an expert opinion from the military angle.⁸⁴ Norman Chandler was also a wise choice, considering that he defended Germany from the “critical and alarming stories” being published about it in 1936.⁸⁵

The Congressional Mission to German Concentration Camps

On Sunday, April 22, the congressional mission departed from Washington D.C. at 11:51 a.m. aboard a C-54 four-engine plane for Paris, via Bermuda and the Azores.⁸⁶ The delegation arrived at Paris’ Orly Airfield at 7:15 p.m. the following day, Monday, April 23,⁸⁷ where they were met by American Embassy, Visitors’ Bureau, and U.S. Army

⁸² “Congressmen, Editors to View Nazi Atrocities,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 22, 1945, 1, 12.

⁸³ “Chronicle Managing Editor,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 22, 1945, 1, 6.

⁸⁴ “Adler Says Atrocities Worse than Any Battlefield,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., April 28, 1945, 3.

⁸⁵ Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 33.

⁸⁶ United States Army Adjutant General Visitors’ Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” folder European Trip Death Camps, April-May 1945, carton 385; Memorandum by Leverett Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, folder Travel Files: Europe, 2 of 4, carton 152, both in Leverett Saltonstall Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA, 1 (hereafter cited as Saltonstall Collection).

⁸⁷ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 1.



Photograph 1: The congressional mission arrives at Orly Airfield, outside of Paris, France, April 24, 1945. From Left to right: (on ground) Rep. Dewey Short (R-MO), Rep. R. Ewing Thomason (D-TX), Sen. Walter George (D-GA), Sen. Alben Barkley (D-KY), Rep. James Mott (R-OR), Rep. James Richards (D-SC), Rep. Ed V. Izac (D-CA), (on stairs) Sen. Leverett Saltonstall (R-MA), Sen. Kenneth Wherry (R-NE), Sen. C. Wayland Brooks (R-IL), and Rep. John Vorys (R-OH). (National Archives RG-111-SC-263972, Box 477)

representatives, before being taken to the Ritz Hotel in Paris for the night.⁸⁸ At almost the same time that the congressmen arrived in France, the group of eighteen editors had assembled at La Guardia Field in New York. They departed at 2:30 p.m.⁸⁹ aboard an Army Transport Command C-54 bound for Paris by way of Bermuda and the Azores.⁹⁰

The day after their arrival in Paris, Tuesday, April 24, the congressional group flew to Weimar, Germany, where they met and lunched with Brigadier General Frank A. Allen Jr., director of public relations of the Supreme Headquarters, before driving to the

⁸⁸ U.S. Army AG Visitor's Bureau, "Itinerary of Congressional Group," 2.

⁸⁹ Walter, "Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account," *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

⁹⁰ "Editors Reach Paris for Atrocity Tour," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 25, 1945, 3.



Photograph 2: Congressmen watch a former prisoner demonstrate how victims were hung on hooks and then clubbed to death at Buchenwald, April 24, 1945. From left to right: R. Ewing Thomason, James Mott, Charles Brooks, Kenneth Wherry, Alben Barkley, Dewey Short, and John Vorys. (National Archives RG-111-SC-204010, Box 263)

Buchenwald concentration camp on the outskirts of the city.⁹¹ The congressmen were accompanied on their tour by Brigadier General John M. Weir, Colonels Robert Thompson and John Hall, and a group of photographers.⁹² At Buchenwald, the group toured the barracks, hospital, and crematorium and met hundreds of prisoners who told them about their lives in the concentration camp. The next day, on April 25, the party of American publishers also inspected Buchenwald with General Allen and Kurt Gatnor, a former high officer in the Austrian army and Buchenwald prisoner, as their guide.⁹³ While in the camps, the editors “divided into twos and threes and mingled with those who

⁹¹ U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 2.

⁹² U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 6.

⁹³ Robert Wear, “U.S. Newsmen Leave Paris for Germany,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 25, 1945, 1; “Editors Want to Visit Other Nazi Camps,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 27, 1945, 4.



Photograph 3: A group of newspaper and magazine editors views bodies at Buchenwald, April 25, 1945. Retrieved from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), http://resources.ushmm.org/inquiry/uia_doc.php/photos/5553?hr=null.

had been freed, slave laborers and civilians of many nationalities.”⁹⁴ The group “talked with the prisoners, checked over the installations ... and gathered evidence on a great mass of atrocities.”⁹⁵ United Press War Correspondent Robert Meyer accompanied the editors and publishers through Buchenwald. He had visited the camp earlier and told them that “the murder factory had been cleaned up considerably.”⁹⁶ Gideon Seymour, vice president and executive editor of the *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, was fluent in German and was able to get stories about Buchenwald firsthand from the prisoners and

⁹⁴ Duke Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

⁹⁵ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

⁹⁶ “U.S. Editors, Congressmen Find Buchenwald ‘Cleaned Up,’” *Washington Daily News*, April 26, 1945, 8.

their guards.⁹⁷ On their return flight, they were flown low over Coblenz and Frankfurt, which Walter described as being “at least 50 per cent in ruins.”⁹⁸

After their visits to Buchenwald, both the congressional delegation and the group of editors and publishers requested to extend their visit to Europe. Many of the editors said that they were unable to form a full opinion on the extent of German brutality because of the limited time they were able to spend in the camp, so they asked “to be taken to other German prison and internment camps to obtain a complete picture of German treatment of prisoners and internees.”⁹⁹ Rep. Dewey Short told Congress on May 16 that after visiting Buchenwald the group decided that they should all remain in Europe to see another camp, fearing that people would say to them that Buchenwald was an exception to the norm, that it was “all set up.”¹⁰⁰ Additionally, both groups hoped to inspect other American installations in Europe and to visit and interview American soldiers who had been liberated from German prisoner of war (POW) camps.¹⁰¹

The following week, the congressional delegation attended the daily briefing at the Twelfth Army Group Headquarters, inspected Allied bomb damage meted out to Frankfurt, Bonn, Cologne, and Aachen from the air, and met and lunched with Eisenhower at the Hotel Lion d’Or.¹⁰² On April 26, the congressional group met and

⁹⁷ “Seymour to Tell Public of Atrocities Seen in Naziland,” *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, May 9, 1945, 17.

⁹⁸ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

⁹⁹ “Editors Inspect Buchenwald,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1945, 12; “American Editors Leave Paris for Horror Camps,” *Minneapolis Star Journal*, April 25, 1945, 4.

¹⁰⁰ 79 Cong. Rec., H4673, (May 16, 1945).

¹⁰¹ Charles F. Kiley, “Nazi Camp ‘Horrible’ Says Dewey Short,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 25, 1945, 12A.

¹⁰² U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 2.



Photograph 4: General Dwight D. Eisenhower greets the congressional mission at his advance headquarters in Paris, France, April 25, 1945. From left to right: Ed. V. Izac, Leverett Saltonstall, John Vorys, James Mott, Alben Barkley, C. Wayland Brooks, Dewey Short, R. Ewing Thomason, Kenneth Wherry, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. (National Archives RG-111-SC-204011, Box 263)

interviewed French General Charles De Gaulle. According to Senator Saltonstall, De Gaulle “talked very objectively about the future of France. He told us [that] in his opinion 600,000 Frenchmen had been killed, of which approximately 350,000 were in the prison camps and slave labor and 150,000 in the armed forces and the balance from bombing and other matters.”¹⁰³ That night the group dined with U.S. Ambassador Jefferson Caffery, and on Saturday, April 28, they met Brigadier General Fenton S. Jacobs, commanding general of the Channel Base Section.¹⁰⁴ The group also inspected reception camps and hospitals for liberated prisoners of war and the displaced persons reception

¹⁰³ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 1.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 2; Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 1, 2.

center at the Gare d'Orsay, viewed bomb damage at a number of cities in Germany from the air, and toured sites of interest in Germany, such as the Krupp armament works at Essen.¹⁰⁵

The editors met General Bradley at Wiesbaden for a question and answer session on April 25, and the next day, Eisenhower, who spoke “at length on the military situation but refused to predict the end of the war.”¹⁰⁶ Their meeting with Eisenhower was “off the record,” meaning they could not make notes during the meeting, but Pulitzer wrote that Eisenhower “talked and answered with astonishing frankness the barrage of questions we fired at him. Some of the questions concerned delicate political situations as well as military, but to every question he came back with a direct answer.”¹⁰⁷ On April 26, the editors returned “to Paris for briefing by Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee.”¹⁰⁸ In Paris, the editors met Parisians and “attended the regular briefing given war correspondents twice a day.”¹⁰⁹ They were also given an Army report on Buchenwald prepared by Brigadier General Eric Wood and Lt. Colonel Charles Ott, which described the mission and structure of the camp, the population at the time of liberation, and the practice of taking tattooed human skin for souvenirs.¹¹⁰ The editors were also given access to over thirteen “volumes of pictures and affidavits compiled by the French government

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Army AG Visitor's Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 2, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Pulitzer, “Some Highlights of Editors' Trip: Eisenhower, Bradley and Devers and a Night at Folies Bergere,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 21, 1945, 1B, 6B.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Army AG Visitor's Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 2.

¹⁰⁹ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

¹¹⁰ “Camp of Horror,” *Kansas City Star*, April 29, 1945, 7; Brigadier General Eric F. Wood and Lt. Colonel Chas. H. Ott, *Inspection of German Concentration Camp for Political Prisoners Located at Buckenwald on the North Edge of Weimar*, April 16, 1945, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Archives, Abilene, KS,



Photograph 5: Members of the congressional mission view the V-1 and V-2 bomb factory under the Harz Mountains, adjacent to the Dora concentration camp near Nordhausen, Germany, May 1, 1945. From left to right: Leverett Saltonstall, Major H. A. Beckley, Major General Wilton Persons, Kenneth Wherry, C. Wayland Brooks, Ed. V. Izac, John Vorys, War Dept. Rep. John Weir, Major General L. W. Rocks. (National Archives RG-111-SC-264023, Box 477)

regarding atrocities committed in occupied France by the Germans.”¹¹¹ On April 30 the group of editors flew to Brussels, and then drove to Antwerp where they interviewed the burgomaster and the governor of the province and inspected the bomb damage before returning to Brussels to interview the new prime minister. The editors and publishers also flew over the Ruhr and the Rhineland, including Cologne, which Walter observed to be

retrieved from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/holocaust/Inspection_of_German_Concentration_Camp.pdf.

¹¹¹ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

“almost a total ruin.” The group landed near Essen and traveled by Jeep to the Krupp works, which had been bombed to rubble.¹¹²

On May 1, the congressional delegation toured the Dora concentration camp near Nordhausen, where they saw the V-1 and V-2 bomb factory hidden within the Harz Mountains. There they were told how the rockets, airplane engine parts, and “other munitions of war” were built using slave labor.¹¹³ Later they viewed German industrial sites that had been destroyed before flying to Heidelberg for the night,¹¹⁴ where they dined with General Jacob L. Devers, commanding general of the Sixth Army Group. After a tour of Heidelberg University, the congressional delegation split into two groups: one group flew to Erlangen, Germany, to meet General Patton, and the other, made up of Saltonstall, Short, Mott and Izac, flew to Frankfurt, where they lunched with Lt. General Alexander M. Patch, Commanding General of the Seventh U.S. Army.¹¹⁵ The next day the group drove to the Dachau concentration camp, which the Army was able to capture “practically intact” because of the speed of the American advance. The “evidence of German brutality” was left untouched, awaiting congressional inspection.¹¹⁶ Short and Saltonstall rode “all the way [with General Patch] from [his] headquarters down to Dachau,” a trip of about 160 miles, during which they saw a “tremendous number of

¹¹² Ibid., 1, 6.

¹¹³ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 10.

¹¹⁴ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 2.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 3; Walker Stone, “Tangled Piles of Rotting Corpses Tell Story of Dachau Horrors,” *Washington Daily News*, May 5, 1945, 8; U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 3.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 11, 12.



Photograph 6: Rep. John Vorys inspects one of the incinerators at the Dachau concentration camp, May 2, 1945. (National Archives RG-111-SC-264013, Box 477)

refugees.”¹¹⁷ E. Z. Dimitman described millions of such people who could be seen in Europe, “sleeping by the roadside—in a barn—in an empty house—in a bombed-out building.” He said that the “roads are filled with people seeking their homes.... You ask them—‘where are you going?’ The answer is always ‘home.’”¹¹⁸

That afternoon, Saltonstall’s group viewed Dachau, the first concentration camp to be run by the SS. The Dachau concentration camp was just outside of the small Bavarian town of Dachau, only about 12 miles north of Munich, the birthplace of the Nazi movement. At Dachau the congressmen viewed the “gas chamber, crematorium and

¹¹⁷ 79 Cong. Rec., May 16, 1945, 4674; Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 2, 3.

¹¹⁸ E. Z. Dimitman, *Lest We Forget!: “Report to America” after a Visit to Inspect German Prison Camps at the Invitation of General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Chicago: Chicago Sun, 1945).

saw piles of dead.”¹¹⁹ The congressmen “passed by death-laden railroad cars and inspected the crematory with its piles of corpses,” before departing from the camp after only about thirty minutes. The congressmen were so shocked by the Dachau “death train” and body disposal plant that they departed early, leaving little time to interview prisoners or inspect the “filthy quarters of [the] 32,000 camp inmates remaining alive.”¹²⁰ Walker Stone of the *Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance* visited Dachau the following day, on April 25, along with the second group of congressmen. Stone wrote that he could not blame the congressmen for departing after only half an hour: “[w]e might have departed posthaste too had we seen the crematory first. But that came last with us, concluding six hours of waking thru camp, talking with the few who could speak English among the milling thousands in the compounds.”¹²¹ The editors and publishers spent the afternoon—between four and six hours¹²²— at the concentration camp, which they observed to be even worse than Buchenwald.¹²³

The next day the editors toured Munich and lunched with Major General Charles Frederick, commanding general of the Forty-Fifth Division, who was tasked with preserving order in Munich. The general “had impounded a supply of Mauser pistols

¹¹⁹ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 3.

¹²⁰ Stone, “Tangled Piles of Rotting Corpses,” *Washington Daily News*, May 5, 1945, 8.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²² Walker Stone of the Scrips-Howard Newspaper Alliance, who was present on the trip, says six hours; the United Press, through an interview with Norman Chandler, claims four hours.

¹²³ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.



Photograph 7: M. E. Walter, of the *Houston Chronicle*, tours a barracks building at Dachau, May 3, 1945. Retrieved from USHMM, http://resources.ushmm.org/inquiry/uiia_doc.php/photos/11808?hr=null

found in a Nazi warehouse and presented each of [the editors] with one.” At 4:30 p.m. the press group left Munich for Paris where they dined as guests of General Allen.¹²⁴

On Friday, May 4, the congressional delegation met with representatives of the French Ministry of Justice and the French War Crimes Commission, and two days later they flew to London to meet the with the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC). The congressional committee reported that both agencies were in the process of investigating the concentration camps for themselves at the very time that the congressmen were visiting Europe. The UNWCC was headquartered in London and represented sixteen of the Allies; at the time of the congressional visit to Europe, the

¹²⁴ “Atrocities Made Nightmare Seem Like ‘Pleasant Dream,’ U.S. Editors Declare,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 5, 1945, 1, 2.

UNWCC was already drafting specific charges against the leaders they viewed as responsible for the concentration camp system. The committee reported that they were pleased with the ongoing United Nations (UN) and French efforts, and they recommended against the creation of an additional American agency to investigate war crimes.¹²⁵

On May 6 the congressional group returned to Paris and from there flew to Washington D.C. by way of the Azores and Bermuda, arriving in Washington D.C. on the evening of May 8.¹²⁶ The press group left London for Iceland, and, after meeting some wounded, returning soldiers, they left for Washington D.C. and arrived the same day the congressmen did.¹²⁷

A number of other groups also took up Eisenhower's invitation to visit Buchenwald: Churchill told Parliament of Eisenhower's April 20 invitation to send number of members of Parliament "at once to his headquarters in order that they may themselves have the ocular proof of their atrocities." Immediately one hundred members volunteered for "this grim job"¹²⁸; Churchill, however, decided that only eight members of the House of Commons and two from the House of Lords would travel to the Allied Supreme Headquarters, "where General Eisenhower [made] all the necessary

¹²⁵ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 15.

¹²⁶ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 3.

¹²⁷ Walter, "Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account," *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

¹²⁸ Peter Lyne, "Unprecedented Brutalities Uncovered in Newly Captured Nazi Prison Camps," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 1945, 1, 9.



Map 1: Sen. Leverett Saltonstall's copy of the itinerary map of the congressional mission, prepared by the U.S. Army Visitor's Bureau, April 23 through May 7, 1945. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Leverett Saltonstall Collection, Carton 385, Travel File: Germany, 1945).

arrangements for their inspection of the scenes of atrocities.”¹²⁹ It was considered especially important that Mavis Tate, Conservative M.P., accompany the Parliamentary delegation, both because she was a woman and “because in 1934 she visited concentration camps in Germany and was conducted over a huge camp at Oranienburg.” She said of her visit that “everything was done by our guides on my visit to Germany 11 years ago to make it appear that the camps were run on model lines. Now there will be no guides—the mask will be off.”¹³⁰

On April 21, the Parliamentary delegation, along with U.S. Representatives Clare Booth Luce, Leonard Hall (D-NY), and John Kunkel (R-PA), who were touring the European front, visited Buchenwald at around 11:00 a.m.¹³¹ The members of Parliament and Congress were able to extend their visit from one to nearly three hours.¹³² The next day, eight more American congressmen, including Rep. Gordon Canfield (R-NJ) and Senator Henry M. Jackson (D-WA), all of whom were already in Britain on various missions, visited Buchenwald.¹³³ One of the eight, Rep. Carter Manasco (D-AL), was “still boiling mad” after undergoing the delousing process to protect the group from the diseases running rampant in Buchenwald, when he and his party encountered a “decorated picture of Hitler plastered on an imposing building.” In true Alabama form, Manasco gave the picture “a full mouthful of tobacco-flavored contempt—and scored a

¹²⁹ “Nazi Crimes, M.P.s to See Prison Camps,” *Times* (London), April 20, 1945, 4, 8.

¹³⁰ Lyne, “Unprecedented Brutalities,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 1945, 1, 9.

¹³¹ 79 Cong. Rec. H4166 (May 3, 1945) (statement of Rep. Luce); *Buchenwald Camp: The Report of a Parliamentary Delegation: Presented by the Prime Minister ... to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, April 1945* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery office, 1945), 3.

¹³² “M.P.s’ Visit to Buchenwald,” *Times* (London), April 23, 1945, 3.

¹³³ “Eight Congressmen View Horrors of Nazi Prison,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1945, 7.

bull's-eye.”¹³⁴ All told, at least twenty-three congresspersons visited Buchenwald in April 1945.

On April 27, twelve members of the UNWCC, including Chairman Lord Wright and a number of allied military officials, visited Buchenwald and made a “thorough inspection of the camp.”¹³⁵ The objective of their visit was “to question victims and to build legal cases for the trials of those responsible.”¹³⁶ Wright and the rest of the group returned to Britain on April 30.¹³⁷

The congressional mission, led by Majority Leader Barkley, arrived in Europe only three days after receiving Eisenhower’s invitation, and the congressmen, followed by esteemed editors and publishers, toured the camps and other sites as representatives of the American people to bring back the true story of Nazi atrocities. Their roles as trusted agents of the American people, along with their varied backgrounds and broad geographical representation, made them an ideal group to tour concentration camps and report on the conditions within. Many of the congressmen were skeptical, and, as Rep. Short admitted upon return to the United States, “I heard about [German war crimes]. I read about it. I saw pictures—but I could not believe it.”¹³⁸ After standing in the midst of the concentration camps and after smelling the stench of the barracks and decaying bodies, the congressmen returned home completely convinced that war crimes had been

¹³⁴ Alex Singleton, “Congressman Angry at Atrocities Spits Tobacco in Hitler Photo’s Eye,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 25, 1945, 1.

¹³⁵ “Crimes Commission to See Atrocities,” *Times* (London), April 23, 1945, 3; “Views of War Crimes Commission,” *Times* (London), April 28, 1945, 4.

¹³⁶ “War Crimes Group to Inspect Camps,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1945, 3.

¹³⁷ “51,000 Perished at Buchenwald,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 30, 1945, 11.

¹³⁸ 79 Cong. Rec., A2374, A2375 (May 17, 1945).

committed, and they were ready to advise Congress and the American public that an American presence needed to be maintained in Germany after the end of the war. Seeing the conditions of the camps convinced the congressmen that those responsible needed to be punished for their crimes; seeing the destruction of Germany convinced them of the need to rebuild the country's infrastructure; and interacting with a population that did not recognize any shared guilt for the crimes of the Nazi government inspired them to seek German re-education and denazification.

Section Two: “Organized Crime against Civilization”

What the congressmen and editors discovered when they toured Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau was evidence that the Nazis were engaged in “organized crime against civilization.”¹ They observed that political and racial opponents of the Third Reich had been targeted for imprisonment and elimination through deliberate starvation, overcrowding, and a variety of other means. Upon their return to the United States, the congressmen reported on the conditions and atrocities of German concentration camps to Congress and the American public through an official report, interviews, and public appearances.

Evidence of Atrocities

In their role as expert witness to German atrocities, the congressional committee considered three different types of evidence when inspecting the concentration camps: visual evidence, prisoner testimony, and “common knowledge” of the concentration camps. All three types of evidence were seen or collected by the congressmen firsthand. The first two types of evidence are easy to understand: Visual evidence is what the congressmen saw during their investigation, including piles of bodies, gas chambers, crematoria, and so on; what the congressmen referred to as “prisoner testimony” was evidence that individual prisoners had seen with their own eyes and then reported to the delegation through interviews and conversations. The third type of evidence is more complicated. The congressmen defined “common knowledge” as “evidence of things

¹ United States Senate, *Atrocities and Other Conditions in Concentration Camps in Germany*, (S. Doc. 79-47) Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1945, 15.

done in the camp which were not done publicly but which ... all prisoners were aware of.” According to the congressmen, the prisoners had learned “from custom and experience, from ... conversation with the guards and amongst themselves, and from the very plain and almost mathematical kind of circumstantial evidence,” much about the goings on within the concentration camp that. Although they had not seen everything with their own eyes, it could be said that they have an accurate knowledge of much of what occurred in the concentration camps.²

After interviewing hundreds of prisoners, it was the unanimous opinion of the committee that “this third kind of evidence was often as accurate and reliable as the two kinds of direct evidence.” As an example of this third type of evidence, the committee referenced the torture chamber at Buchenwald. No prisoners actually saw the strangulation that occurred there, as all prisoners who entered the execution chamber were executed, but the “circumstantial evidence of it was so complete ... as to leave no doubt.” The committee therefore relied on evidence that “was either actually seen by us or reported to us by competent and reliable eyewitnesses or that it is based on circumstantial evidence which we have considered to be trustworthy.” During their meetings with the many American generals, as well as in briefings, the congressmen were given a number of Army documents pertaining to the concentration camps. They chose to ignore much of that evidence for their report, save for statistics gathered in a demographic report made by the U.S. Army on April 16, which categorized by nationality the population of the Buchenwald concentration camp, because they wanted

² Ibid., 4, 5.

their report to Congress to be based “exclusively upon [their] own personal investigation.” They did find, however, that much of the evidence that the Army had collected corroborated that which they had seen and heard during their inspection.³

In general, the congressmen “found evidence [in the concentration camps] of the ‘fiendish and sadistic’ program aimed at all opponents of the Hitler regime.”⁴ Reps. Short and Thomason told the *Chicago Sun* upon their return that they had “found hundreds of dead bodies piled around and scattered promiscuously and thousands still alive who will either die or would have died except for their liberation by the American armies.” The two continued, telling the *Chicago Sun* that they

found this entire program constituted a systematic form of torture and death, administered to intellectual political leaders and all others, including Jews who would not embrace and support the Nazi philosophy and program. We found the extent, devices, methods and conditions of torture almost beyond the power of words to describe. They reached the depths of human degradation beyond belief, and constituted no less than organized crime against civilization and humanity for which swift, certain and adequate punishment should be meted out to all those who were responsible.⁵

From the prisoners the congressmen learned that Dachau had opened in 1933 and was initially populated with “those who dared to oppose the Hitler regime.” But after the *Anschluss* and the beginning of the war, the concentration camps in Germany became much more international. The committee noted that Jews, Poles, and Russians were “treated with a greater degree of severity than other nationalities.... We found that a colossal scheme of extermination was planned and put into effect against all those in

³ Ibid., 5, 4, 6, 5.

⁴ William R. Miner, “2 Congressmen Urge Death for 4½ Million Germans,” *Chicago Sun*, May 10, 1945, 3.

⁵ Ibid., 3.

occupied countries who refused to accept the principles of nazi-ism [sic] or who opposed the saddling of the Nazi yoke on their countries.”⁶

Before the war began, the concentration camps had been populated with political prisoners, Communists, liberals, intellectuals, and other anti-Nazis, as well as Jews arrested on or after Kristallnacht in November 1938. After the war began, political prisoners from all over Europe were sent to these three German camps.⁷ As Walter explained, the “[p]risoners in these concentration camps were of two kinds. There were first the political prisoners ... [and] there were the poor slave laborers brought to Germany from the occupied countries.”⁸

Duke Shoop explained that there were “two types of prisoners, those able to work in the arms factories and farms and those unable to work because of disease or illness”; those who worked, he was told, received “twice the daily food ration” of those who did not work.⁹ This was especially noticeable at the Dora concentration camp and neighboring slave labor factory. Concerning conditions and atrocities at Dora the congressmen had relatively little to report, save that the Dora prisoners “had been used as slave labor in the underground factory and for work parties in adjacent farms and in smaller munitions factories.”¹⁰ Rep. Luce told newspapers that approximately 50,000 prisoners were interned at Dora and they “were dying at the rate of 900 daily when our

⁶ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 12, 14.

⁷ E. Z. Dimitman, “Nazi Prison Horror Shouts an Answer to ‘Soft-Peacers,” *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2.

⁸ M. E. Walter, “Exaggeration of German Political Camp Horrors is Impossible, Walter Declares,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1945, 1, 13.

⁹ Duke Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

¹⁰ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 10.

troops arrived.” According to Luce, “the dead and dying were difficult to tell apart in the hideous barracks of Nordhausen (Dora).”¹¹

In their report the congressional committee wrote that the three camps they visited were “typical of all the concentration camps in the Reich, and their physical characteristics, functions, management, and operation furnish an accurate cross section of the entire German political-prisoner camp system and policy.”¹² According to the report, these concentration camps were places of “incarceration, punishment, and liquidation of civilians who were opposed to, or who were suspected of being opposed to, the Hitler regime.”¹³ Indeed, this is generally true of Buchenwald and Dachau, especially before 1939 and the beginning of the war. Both Buchenwald and Dachau were built to house political opponents of the Reich and served only that purpose until the war began. Dora, on the other hand, was a slave labor camp and as such was home not only to those who opposed the Nazis, but also to many others whom the Nazis forced into slavery.¹⁴

By the time that the congressmen arrived at Buchenwald, the camp had been occupied by American forces for twelve days and had been significantly cleaned up. All of the prisoners who were able to leave had been evacuated, leaving “only about 6,000 too sick and weak from undernourishment.”¹⁵ These prisoners were dying at a rate of about twenty per day, according to the American medical officers in charge, and the majority, they said, were past saving. Walter wrote that those prisoners who “might

¹¹ “Nazis Starved Slave V-Bomb Workers to Preserve Secrets,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, May 4, 1945, 1.

¹² This interpretation is inaccurate and will be discussed below.

¹³ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 4.

¹⁴ See André Sellier, *A History of the Dora Camp* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003).

¹⁵ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 6; Walter, “Exaggeration,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1945, 1, 13.

escape death in the immediate future were so weakened by their experience that they would go through life permanently disabled in mind and body.”¹⁶

On April 16 the U.S. Army determined that that the total number of prisoners at Buchenwald was 20,000, of whom 4,000 were Jewish, but by the time the editors and congressmen arrived around 14,000 prisoners had been removed, leaving behind about 6,000 prisoners who were too sick or weak to travel.¹⁷ The population of the three camps was quite diverse. The population of Buchenwald, at the time of liberation, was made up of a majority of Russians and Poles and French, but also Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Dutch, Belgians, Austrians, Italians, Czechs, anti-Franco Spanish, and almost 2,000 German anti-Nazis. No matter their nationality, “[t]heir stories,” according to Dimitman, “were all the same – starvation, brutality, disease, degradation and finally, welcome death.”¹⁸ Of the 3,800 Poles present at Buchenwald when it was opened by the Army, over 1,000 were children between the ages of six and fourteen.¹⁹

The congressmen described the prisoners of the camp as “the intelligentsia and ‘leadership’ groups from continental Europe, as well as ‘democratic’ or anti-Nazi Germans and their relatives.”²⁰ The committee described Buchenwald as an “extermination factory” in which “starvation, beatings, tortures, incredibly crowded

¹⁶ Walter, “Exaggeration,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1945, 1, 13.

¹⁷ M. E. Walter, “American Editors Visit Buchenwald, Find Death Toll There Still Mounting,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 29, 1945, 4.

¹⁸ Dimitman, “Nazi Prison Horror,” *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2.

¹⁹ M. E. Walter, “Chronicle Man Finds 15 Victims of Buchenwald Camp Die Daily,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 28, 1948, 1, 4.

²⁰ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 6.

sleeping conditions, and sickness” as well as organized over-work and outright execution were used to murder prisoners.²¹

William Chenery noted in a pamphlet published on June 16 that the lack of Jews in the concentration camps was because the camp “program was designed to kill Jews, Poles and Russians. Polish Jews seemed to have been worst treated.”²² Shoop noted in the *Kansas City Star* that it appeared that “[a]t first the Russians and Poles were needed in the war factories and farms adjoining the prison camps. But as they became ill from overwork and undernourishment they were left to die, their corpses cremated in big ovens.” Concerning the women of the concentration camps, Shoop wrote that most of them were “forced into prostitution” to service “prisoners who worked hard and earned merit awards”; once the women became sick they were murdered.²³ Walker Stone estimated that the Dachau camp “might decently have accommodated 3000,” but the population during the war ranged from 8,000 to 10,000, and when the U.S. Army liberated Dachau on April 30, the camp population exceeded 40,000.²⁴

The parliamentary delegation concluded that “a policy of steady starvation and inhuman brutality was carried out at Buchenwald,” and the editors observed that the population of Buchenwald resembled “human skeletons wandering in a daze around the huge camp.”²⁵ The grotesque appearance of the prisoners remained vivid in the minds of

²¹ *Ibid.*, 6, 9.

²² Chenery, “I Testify,” *Collier's*, June 16, 1945, 28.

²³ Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

²⁴ Stone, “Tanged Piles of Rotting Corpses,” *Washington Daily News*, May 5, 1945.

²⁵ *Buchenwald Camp: The Report of a Parliamentary Delegation: Presented by the Prime Minister ... to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, April 1945* (London: His Majesty's Stationery office, 1945), 3, 7; “Editors Inspect Buchenwald,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1945, 12.



Photograph 9: Members of the congressional mission view the hospital at Dachau, May 2, 1945. From left to right: C. Wayland Brooks, R. Ewing Thomason, Alben Barkley, and Brig. General Frank Allen. (National Archives RG-111-SC-263990, Box 477)

the editors. William Nicholson reported that the patients in the Buchenwald hospital were “living skeletons, dying from all types of diseases and starvation,” so weak that they could not even crawl over their bunk mates for food. “The haunted expression in these patients’ eyes,” he wrote, “reminds you of a beast which has remained caught in a steel trap for days before being killed. The look in the eyes of these prisoners ... is something that will bring such a deep impression into your brain it will never be erased.” The patients, he explained, were still dying at a rate of about thirty per day. They were so far gone that the Army doctors could do little to battle the rampant disease coupled with

starvation and malnutrition.²⁶ Julius Ochs Adler reported that many had starved to death and that he had seen their bodies “piled in squares with 20 to 25 bodies in each square... Their legs above the knees had shrunk to the dimensions of an average man’s wrist. Their faces showed the agony in which they had died.”²⁷

The general prisoner population, Walter reported, were dying at half the rate of the hospital patient rate—fifteen per day, even though it had almost been two weeks since the Army opened the camp. The prisoners were sick and starving, most of them past saving, and although Army officers assured the press group that much had been done to clean the camp and improve the conditions, it was still “a place of degradation and filth.”²⁸

The congressmen reported that prisoner rations generally consisted of about “one-half a pound of black bread per day and a bowl of watery soup for noon and night, and not always that.”²⁹ American surgeons, reported Joseph Pulitzer Jr., explained that many of the adult corpses weighed between sixty to eighty pounds, “having in practically all cases lost 5 per cent to 60 per cent of their normal weight.”³⁰ The camps swarmed with lice and vermin, disease was common, and those who did not die of disease or torture died the long, slow death of starvation. The congressmen found no evidence that the German people were wanting for clothing or food, however: “The contrast was so striking that the only conclusion which we could reach was that the starvation of the

²⁶ L. K. Nicholson, “Publisher Describes Horrors of Buchenwald,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1946, 1.

²⁷ “Adler Says Atrocities Worse than Any Battlefield,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., April 28, 1945, 3.

²⁸ Walter, “American Editors Visit Buchenwald,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 29, 1945, 4.

²⁹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 15.

³⁰ Joseph Pulitzer, “A Report to the American People,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 20, 1945, 1D, 4D.



Photograph 10: Senate Majority Leader (and future vice president to Dwight D. Eisenhower) Alben Barkley views corpses at Buchenwald, April 24, 1945. (National Archives RG-111-SC-204745, Box 266)

inmates of these camps was deliberate.”³¹ In an April 28 dispatch from Paris, Adler agreed with the congressional delegation that the German civilians in the nearby areas appeared well-fed and well-clothed, untouched by war or want.³²

All of the prisoners Walter spoke with “agreed on the inadequacy of the rations, which consisted almost exclusively of substitute coffee, weak soup and a small piece of bread daily.” Walter wrote that most of the prisoners who arrived at the camp arrived “half starved or worse” after making the trip to the camp on foot on in crowded trains

³¹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 15.

³² “Adler Says Atrocities Worse,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., April 28, 1945, 3.

with “practically no food.”³³ An April 29 article in the *Kansas City Star* quoted the Ott and Wood report on Buchenwald in saying that “starvation complicated by hard work, abuse, beatings and torture, and incredibly crowded sleeping conditions” were some of the ways Nazis killed prisoners.³⁴

In Dachau, Walter reported, “the prisoners in the most distressing condition were ... those who had been brought to the camp in the last few weeks ... [including] 4000 brought down from Buchenwald on a 21-day railroad trip with only a couple of potatoes and a piece of bread for nourishment.” Of those 4000, 1300 were dead on arrival and the survivors were so far deteriorated that Army doctors doubted that only a small number of them would survive.³⁵

The “death train” sat at the far end of the SS section of the camp and had arrived from Buchenwald, bringing trainloads of prisoners to Dachau in an attempt by the SS to flee the advancing Allied Armies. By the time the train had arrived at Dachau, most of the prisoners were dead or dying of starvation and exposure.³⁶ The fifty-car train was full of corpses, just as it was when it was discovered by the army. In each of the train cars “the floor of the car was covered with dead, emaciated bodies. In some of the cars there were more than enough to cover the floors.” They were advised by Army officials that “at least 100 of these civilian prisoners had been jammed into each car—locked in—and they had been on the road for several days without food or water and that approximately 3,000

³³ Walter, “Chronicle Man,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 28, 1948, 1, 4.

³⁴ “Camp of Horror,” *Kansas City Star*, April 29, 1945, 7.

³⁵ M. E. Walter, “Hatreds in German Horror Camps Show How Sick Europe Really is,” *Houston Chronicle* May 20, 1945, 1, 14; Walter’s numbers were inaccurate. A more accurate account of the “death train” is provided in the Senate report, described in the following paragraph.

³⁶ Chenery, “I Testify,” *Collier’s*, June 16, 1945, 14.



Photograph 11: Members of the congressional mission view the crowded sleeping conditions at Buchenwald, April 24, 1945. From left to right: John Vorys, Brig. General John Weir, Colonel William Williams, Alben Barkley, C. Wayland Brooks, and Leverett Saltonstall. (National Archives RG-111-SC-204013, Box 263)

of them were dead upon arrival and most of the others were in a dying condition.” The congressional report described dead bodies surrounding the train cars; people who had “apparently crawled out of the cars and had died on the ground.” Near the train they saw three dead SS guards, whom they were told were killed by Russian prisoners.³⁷ It was the rail cars overflowing with dead that shocked the Army soldiers the most, reported Pulitzer. The sight of it so “enraged our troops when they overran the camp that they showed no mercy whatever for the German guards and troops who were still to be found.”³⁸

³⁷ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 12.

³⁸ Pulitzer, “A Report,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 20, 1945, 1D, 4D.

The committee report also described the housing conditions for the prisoners in the Buchenwald barracks, hospital, and the “little camp,” reserved for new prisoners, prisoners undergoing punishment, and Jews. In all three, prisoners were crammed together: In the little camp there was about thirty-five cubic feet of space for each man, well under the 600 required by U.S. Army regulations. Prisoners in the little camp also received less food per day than other prisoners and the death rate was about fifty persons per day. In the regular barracks each prisoner was allotted about 85 cubic feet of space and slept in a 30 by 72 inch bunk, with less than one “thin, shoddy, and undersized” blanket per prisoner, meaning that many prisoners had to share. The hospital was “a building where moribund persons were sent to die.” There were no medicines to treat the rampant typhus and tuberculosis, and the prisoners slept in similar cramped conditions as the regular barracks. At the time of the congressional visit, the death rate in the hospital barracks ranged from five to twenty persons per day.³⁹ The congressmen found that, in general, the prisoners were “herded together” in wooden barracks that would have been too small for “one-tenth of their number.” They slept on “wooden boards in tiers of two, three, and even four, sometimes with no covering, sometimes with a bundle of dirty rags serving as both pallet and coverlet.”⁴⁰

According to the congressional report, all three camps were run by the SS and Gestapo, acting under orders from their superiors with a wide discretion given for the

³⁹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.



Photograph 12: Rep. John Vorys views the Dachau barracks on May 2, 1945. (National Archives RG-111-SC-264012, Box 477)

methods they were to use to control the prisoner population.⁴¹ Short and Thomason explained the concentration camp *Kapo* system to the *Chicago Sun*, describing it as a system wherein the Nazi guards would assign “some of the punitive duties to the prisoners, especially the habitual criminals who had charge of the barracks.”⁴² Different groups of prisoners, Walter observed, were set against one another; as when formerly active Russian Communist prisoners were placed in charge of 1,000 clergymen at Dachau.⁴³ According to M. E. Walter, the Russian prisoners “delighted in persecuting the clergy.” One of the clergymen interviewed by the editors said that he had been in the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴² Miner, “2 Congressmen Urge Death,” *Chicago Sun*, May 10, 1945, 3.

⁴³ Other reports suggest German Communists were used to oversee the Catholic prisoners.

camp since September 1941. He reported that the prisoners had been treated as badly by the collaborating Kapo prisoners as they had been by the SS.⁴⁴

While touring Dachau the editors witnessed an attack by the former prisoners on a Dachau Kapo. They were told that “[s]everal of these collaborationists already had been killed by irate prisoners and many others are slated for punishment,” including an Armenian, who had been beaten to death by a gang of prisoners. “The Nazis,” Walter astutely observed, “took advantage of these [European] prejudices, kept them alive and fanned them into flames.”⁴⁵ They exploited existing prisoner animosities to keep the prisoners from finding solidarity in their shared suffering. Chenery explained it as “one of their tricks, using prisoners to make other prisoners miserable.”⁴⁶

One unique aspect of Dachau was that it was the camp where most of the Catholic priests detained by the Third Reich were held. German Priests at Dachau received special privileges for the first few years, but after Easter, 1942, priests had to work in Dachau.⁴⁷ Chenery reported that the German priests “arose at 4 a.m. and worked until 7 p.m.” Polish priests worked too, but they were also subject to various other tortures. “The Polish priests were used as test animals in medical experimentation,” Chenery explained. “One hundred and seventy of them were infected with malaria to test the efficacy of certain antimalarial drugs.”⁴⁸ At Dachau, a priest told Stone that “Polish priests [were]

⁴⁴ Walter, “Hatreds in German Horror Camps,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 20, 1945, 1, 14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, 14.

⁴⁶ Chenery, “I Testify,” *Collier's*, June 16, 1945, 14.

⁴⁷ Stanislav Zámečník, *That Was Dachau* (Paris: Foundation Internationale de Dachau, 2004), 169, 170.

⁴⁸ Chenery, “I Testify,” *Collier's*, June 16, 1945, 14.

immersed in water of a sea temperature to determine how a Nazi aviator or sailor might be expected to live if he by war hazard were dumped into the sea.”⁴⁹

This unique form of torture and murder was also conducted at Buchenwald. Dimitman reported that the editors “saw the medical experiment chamber but no evidence was present. Prisoners told us [that] Army authorities confirmed that here vivisection was practiced on humans—also, but undocumented, that typhus injections were given.”⁵⁰

Another torture the prisoners were subjected to, especially at Dora, but also at Buchenwald and Dachau, was over-work as slave laborers. Prisoners at Dora were worked in quarries and factories until they were no longer viable for labor. The congressmen accurately noted that “[w]hen the efficiency of the workers decreased as a result of the conditions under which they were required to live, their rations were decreased as punishment. This brought about a vicious circle in which the weak became weaker and were ultimately exterminated.”⁵¹ The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* quoted Rep. Luce, who said that the Dora prisoners were “slaves who could be counted upon to take the secrets of the diabolic weapons upon which they worked into the burning kilns with them ... slow starvation made it certain that they should all, in the end, die on the job.” She dramatically told Congress that “[i]t remained for the Nazis to hit upon this terrible device of using the blood and fat of men to stoke secret furnaces and fire secret weapons, a sheer fuel oil, and when it was used up, to scrap the human containers.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Stone, “Tanged Piles of Rotting Corpses,” *Washington Daily News*, May 5, 1945.

⁵⁰ Dimitman, “Nazi Prison Horror,” *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2.

⁵¹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 11.

⁵² “Nazis Starved,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, May 4, 1945, 1.

On May 3, two days after her return to the United States, Luce presented evidence of atrocities before congress. She described the Nazi policy of death by starvation that she witnessed in Buchenwald, as well of the “beatings, burnings, hangings, clubbings, foul mutilations, and massacres” practiced in the camps. Luce explained that “[n]o American ... even in jail, protected from infamies by a commonly held code of decency, can imagine what grisly tortures were visited upon some of the prisoners for the smallest infraction of the camps’ inhuman disciplines.”⁵³

The basement below the Buchenwald crematorium was the “strangling room,” a cement cellar into which prisoners were tossed by way of a thirteen foot cement shaft. Should a prisoner not die from the fall, they were “garroted, with a short double-end noose, by SS guards and hung on hooks along the side walls, about 6½ feet above the floor.” Along the wall, the congressmen saw evidence of about forty-five or fifty hooks.⁵⁴ William Nicholson explained that “[c]ondemned prisoners were forced to stand upon a small box. Then the box was removed and the prisoner was suspended by a thin wire until he slowly strangled to death.”⁵⁵ Pulitzer explained further that, the “Nazis, when they hanged offenders, so conceived their gallows or hanging hooks, that way the victim’s neck was never broken.” Should the prisoner strangle too long without dying, Pulitzer said, “the guard would club him to death with a wooden club which I have held

⁵³ 79 Cong. Rec., H4166 (May 3, 1945).

⁵⁴ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 9.

⁵⁵ Nicholson, “Publisher Describes Horrors,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, April 28, 1946, 1.



Photograph 13: Members of the congressional mission view the gas chamber, disguised as a shower, at Dachau, May 2, 1945. From left to right: Kenneth Wherry, C. Wayland Brooks, John Vorys, and James Richards (U.S. Army officers unidentified). (National Archives RG-111-SC-204838, Box 266)

in my own hands.”⁵⁶ The committee reported that approximately sixty to eighty prisoners were murdered in this fashion per day.⁵⁷

Julius Ochs Adler reported in his dispatch from Paris on April 28, that what he had witnessed in Germany was “worse than any battlefield.” In Buchenwald, according to Adler, some 32,705 people had died since July 1937. “Some were tortured and died under torture. Some were flogged to death. Some were strangled. Some were drained of their blood and murdered. Some died as a result of medical ‘experiments.’”⁵⁸ Leverett Saltonstall recalled in his notes that the congressmen “were told by a Dutch doctor [at

⁵⁶ Joseph Pulitzer, “Descriptions of Atrocities found to Understate Facts,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 29, 1945, 1, 3.

⁵⁷ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 9.

⁵⁸ “Adler Says Atrocities Worse,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., April 28, 1945, 3.

Dora] about men being hung or shot or how they worked them until they died. 135 were hung with others standing at attention.”⁵⁹

The gas chamber at Dachau stood out as one of the most distinguishing features to visiting congressmen. It was located in the center of the crematory building, built of concrete. On two opposite walls of the chamber were airtight doors, one of which the condemned prisoners would enter through, the other through which their naked corpses would be removed. The congressmen estimated that the chamber was large enough that about one hundred prisoners could be executed in one gassing. On either side of the gas chamber were warerooms, where the bodies of the executed prisoners would be placed to await cremation. “At the time we visited the camp,” the congressmen wrote, “these warerooms were piled high with dead bodies.” In one room the bodies were stacked neatly “like cordwood,” in the other there was an irregular pile of corpses; all of the bodies were naked. “The stench indicated that some of them had been there for several days.”⁶⁰

The Dachau crematorium was attached to “[o]ne of the worst death traps seen by the party”: a gas chamber disguised as a shower.⁶¹ The *New York Times* reported that Gideon Seymour described the gas chamber as:

[A] room about 30 or 20 feet square, with twenty-five rows of perforated pipes overhead. There were not water connections to the showers, but instead the pipes were supplied from the same gas pipes that led to the crematorium chambers. The prisoners who were doomed to die would be brought in, provided with towels and

⁵⁹ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 2.

⁶⁰ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 13.

⁶¹ “U.S. Editors Back, Urge Harsh Peace,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1945, 17.



Photograph 14: Rep. John Vorys (right) investigates a room filled with bodies at Dachau with Maj. General Wilton Parsons (left), May 2, 1945. (National Archives RG-111-SC-264011, Box 477)

soap, in the belief that they were to have baths, while the real purpose was to kill them.⁶²

Whether or not the Dachau gas chamber was actually used for the mass murder of prisoners is not entirely clear; however, the general consensus of Dachau historians is that the chamber was built too late for it to be of practical use before the liberation of the camp. Former Dachau prisoner and Auxiliary Bishop of Munich Dr. Johann Neuhäusler wrote that construction of the Dachau gas chamber “was begun in 1942, but as a result of ‘sabotage’ by the prisoners it was not finished until 1945,” so the gas chamber was

⁶² Ibid., 17.

“never set in action in Dachau. Only the dead were brought to the crematorium for the ‘burning,’ not the living for ‘gassing.’” Neuhäusler explains that thousands of Dachau prisoners were in fact gassed, but that they were taken to Austria to be murdered at Hartheim, near Linz.⁶³ Dachau historian Stanislav Zámečník agrees that the chamber was not used for mass murder, but suggests that it *was* tested and that prisoners were murdered in the tests. He also argues that Sigmund Rascher, one of the Nazi doctors who worked at Dachau, used the gas chamber “for experiments with combat gases.”⁶⁴ Of course, for the visiting congressmen and editors, the state-of-the-art gas chamber disguised as a shower, flanked by two rooms full of dead bodies, would have appeared to be a sinister execution chamber, and it is understandable that they reported on it extensively.⁶⁵

Behind the crematory building was an enclosure where execution by shooting was carried out. It was divided into three sections, each separated from the other by three-foot-high wooden fences. One section was for political prisoners, one for women, and the last was for “prisoners of distinction,” including those with military records (these prisoners were not prisoners of war, but political prisoners who had served in earlier wars). These prisoners of distinction were buried in wooden coffins, while the bodies of regular prisoners, when they were not cremated, were buried en masse, without clothing or coffins.⁶⁶

⁶³ Johann Neuhäusler, *What Was It Like in the Concentration Camp at Dachau? An Attempt to Come Closer to the Truth* (Dachau: Manz A.G., 1960), 15, 16.

⁶⁴ Zámečník, *That Was Dachau*, 288, 289.

⁶⁵ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 13, 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

The bulk of the prisoners who died, however, were cremated in one of the elaborate concentration camp crematoriums, which were often attached to the primary location of prisoner murder. At Buchenwald, Dimitman reported that the body disposal plant was “the nicest place in the camp. Modern, it was the only brick building in the vast expanse that held as many as 53,000 political prisoners at one time.” The crematorium at Dora, it was estimated, could cremate up to two hundred prisoners in a day, and Walter reported that, according to the estimates of American engineers who examined the crematoria, the capacity of the Buchenwald and Dachau crematoria was double that of Dora—up to four hundred bodies in a twelve hour day, which was about two percent of the Buchenwald population at the time of liberation.⁶⁷ At the Buchenwald body disposal plant, gold fillings were removed from corpses before they were placed into one of the firebrick, coal-powered incinerators, each with a capacity of three bodies. The incinerators were located a short elevator ride away from the “strangulation room” in the basement. The body-disposal plant was, according to the congressmen, a model of “German industrial efficiency.”⁶⁸

For persons who died “natural deaths,” that is, any death within the camp that was caused by disease or starvation, and not outright murder, the committee report revealed that each morning the prisoners “were required to strip and bring to roll call the naked bodies of all comrades who had died during the previous 24 hours.” A truck would then

⁶⁷ Dimitman, “Nazi Prison Horror,” *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2; Walter, “Exaggeration,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1945, 1, 13.

⁶⁸ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 8.



Photograph 15: Members of the congressional mission view bones and human remains in the Buchenwald crematorium, April 24, 1945. Alben Barkley (foreground), Ed V. Izac, John Vorys, Dewey Short, C. Wayland Brooks, and Kenneth Wherry. (National Archives RG-111-SC-204745, Box 266)

drive around the roll call square to collect the bodies and take them to the crematorium.⁶⁹

In Dachau, according to Stone, “[d]eath was apparently the route out of the camp. The crematory was very efficient, so much so that the dying in other camps were shipped to Dachau.” He reported that between 1933 and 1942, 34,000 prisoners had died of “natural deaths.” Stone wrote that 1,600 prisoners died in 1943, “4800 in the year 1944 and 13,000 in the first four months of this year before liberation May 1.”⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid., 8, 9.

⁷⁰ Stone, “Tanged Piles of Rotting Corpses,” *Washington Daily News*, May 5, 1945; these numbers are close to the actual dead; however, Zámečník estimates the total number of dead to be lower than Stone reported. Rather than 53,400 total dead, there were closer to 41,566 (excluding those Dachau prisoners who died in the Dachau sub-camps and on external work detail and also those who were exported to Majdanek and Bergen-Belsen who died of inhumane treatment and starvation); see Zámečník, *That was Dachau*, 379.

When the American forces arrived at Buchenwald, the camp had run out of coal and an estimated 1,800 bodies had built up in front of the disposal plant. By the time the congressional committee had arrived on April 24, most of the bodies had been buried, but even then a truckload of about sixty bodies sat before the crematorium, and piled on the ground near the truck were an additional twenty-five bodies.⁷¹

During their tour of Buchenwald, the pressmen and congressmen also witnessed one of the more contentious Nazi atrocities, both at the time and in today's literature: tattooed human skin that had been tanned and saved as souvenirs for the SS. Dimitman reported on April 28 from Paris that the group "saw a room full of dying prisoners. They were nothing but bones ready to be stripped of their skins for lampshades—that is, if they were tattooed. The Elite Guards (SS) made nicely tattooed skin into Lampshades."⁷² The *Kansas City Star* also reported on the tattoo collection, citing the Wood and Ott report, which declared that accounts of the use of tattooed "human skin as souvenirs by SS personnel were 'true in every respect.'" The newspaper continued to quote the report:

The wife of one of the SS officers⁷³ started a fad that any prisoners who happened to have extensive tattooing [sic] of any sort on his body was brought to her and that if she found the tattooing [sic] satisfactory the prisoner was killed and skinned and that the skin with the tattooing [sic] was then tanned and made into souvenirs such as lampshades, wall pictures, book ends, etc., and that about forty examples of this artistry were found in the SS officers' quarters. This statement was confirmed by Lieut. Walter Emmons. And we ourselves saw six examples at camp headquarters, including a lampshade.⁷⁴

⁷¹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 9.

⁷² Dimitman, "Nazi Prison Horror," *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2.

⁷³ Not just an officer, Ilse Koch was wife of Buchenwald Commandant Karl Otto Koch.

⁷⁴ Shoop, "Deeds of Fiends," *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.



Photograph 16: Former Buchenwald prisoners exhibit human remains and artifacts, including the shrunken heads of two Polish prisoners who attempted to escape, and tanned human skin with tattoos. April 16, 1945. Retrieved from USHMM, http://resources.ushmm.org/inquiry/uiia_doc.php/photos/19348?hr=null

The tanned human skins were found alongside shrunken heads and human organs in the commandant's quarters. Shoop reported in the *Kansas City Star*, that Ilse Koch, wife of Commandant Karl Koch, "made a hobby of tattoos." The story the editors heard from many of the prisoners was that "whenever she noticed an unusual design on a prisoner she arranged to add the human skin to her collection." She had the prisoner killed, and then the tattooed skin was tanned and made into a souvenir, such as a lampshade, knife

sheath, or a wallet.⁷⁵ Such objects can be seen in some of the video footage made of Buchenwald after liberation.⁷⁶

The reports of the tanned human skin souvenirs are contentious, and many disagree as to their veracity. Eugen Kogon, an eminent scholar of the Nazi concentration camp system, writes that tattoos were originally collected at Buchenwald to support camp medical officer Erich Wagner's doctoral dissertation on tattoo markings, and that the skins were then put on display for exhibit to SS visitors. "The practice got to be so popular among the SS," writes Kogon, "that [SS captain] Müller received detailed suggestions about it from Berlin," and later hundreds of such specimens were sent to Berlin at the request of the chief concentration camp medical officer, SS Colonel Lolling. Müller even helped to prepare souvenirs such as "penknife cases and similar articles from human skin."⁷⁷

The evidence connecting Ilse Koch to the tattoo collection is, however, more tenuous. Though witnesses at Koch's trial testified that she had two lamp shades made from human skin, along with a photo album, briefcase, a pair of gloves, and book covers, there is no direct evidence to connect the items to Koch, and it is more likely that Koch simply took an interest in the dissertation prepared by Wagner. Either way, Koch's brutality in other areas of the camp earned her a spot on the docket of the Dachau Trials,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 1, 6.

⁷⁶ U.S Department of Defense, *Nazi Concentration Camps*, 1945. Feature film, 59 min, retrieved from http://www.archive.org/details/nazi_concentration_camps.

⁷⁷ Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 238.

lasting from June 30, 1945, when she was accused by the American military courts in Dachau, to January 15, 1951, when she was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison.⁷⁸

One of the most important observations that the congressmen made concerning the network of concentration camps that they investigated was in their conclusion. The congressmen noted that though each of the camps the committee visited “differed in some details, they were all of the same general pattern and design and administered for the same purpose.” In each of the three camps they found four general classifications of prisoners: political prisoners, “habitual criminals,” conscientious or religious objectors, and the workshy—those imprisoned for failure to work. The committee noted that the camps “all carried into effect the same pattern of death by hard labor, starvation, hanging, strangulation, disease, brutality, gas chambers, gallows, and filthy and unsanitary conditions, which meant inevitable death eventually to every imprisoned person.” Each camp was guarded by the SS, and in each camp, prisoners, usually “habitual criminals,” were assigned duties within the camp to help keep the other prisoners in line.⁷⁹

A Sordid and Fantastic Story

Upon his return the United States on May 3, Rep. Hall, who viewed Buchenwald with Luce and the Parliamentary delegation, said that although the photographs of Buchenwald were “revolting in every respect,” he believed they needed to be shown to the American people. “Even the pictures,” continued Hall, “cannot show the cruelty and depravity of a people who treat human beings as the German people treated those in their

⁷⁸ Wendy A. Sarti, *Women and Nazis: Perpetrators of Genocide and Other Crimes During Hitler’s Regime, 1933-1945* (Palo Alto: Academica Press, 2011), 150-55.

⁷⁹ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 14.

detention camps.”⁸⁰ Senator Jackson was quoted by the *Boston Daily Globe* as saying, “[w]e heard atrocity stories from the last war which were not verified, but now we have seen them with our own eyes and they are the most sordid I have ever imagined.”⁸¹

Norman Chandler said in a United Press interview that “[a]fter the last war people were inclined to kiss off atrocity stories as propaganda. The thing that impressed me most was that the actual sight was worse than any atrocity story. What we saw proved our own reports during this war told the absolute truth without exaggeration. The things we saw could not be exaggerated.”⁸²

Dewey Short told Congress on May 15 that, although the reports from the correspondents and the accompanying photographs did not lie, after seeing the atrocities firsthand he recognized that they were unbelievable and unknowable without real, solid evidence: “it is next to impossible to believe them. The whole and sordid story is so fantastic that it is beyond human comprehension.”⁸³ Though photographs and eventually newsreels depicting the scenes at many of the concentration camps were being seen by many Americans in late April and into May, for the congressmen and editors who visited the camp, nothing made the scenes more “true” or “real” than the stench of the camps.

Rep. Short told Congress: “Dachau has been a nightmare to me and I now almost faint when I think of it and the reeking stench of dead men. Oh, you cannot get the picture. You have to move and walk in the midst of all that—and touch it, and feel it, and

⁸⁰ “Congressmen Back,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 3, 1945, 6A.

⁸¹ Don Whitehead, “Buchenwald Prison Sights Leave Congressmen Aghast,” *Boston Daily Globe*, morning ed., April 23, 1945, 3.

⁸² Joseph W. Grigg, “Nazi Atrocities Surpass Stories, Chandler Says,” *LA Times*, May 6, 1945, 8.

⁸³ 79 Cong. Rec., A2374, A2375 (May 17, 1945).

smell it.”⁸⁴ “The official report,” Short continued, “was understatement ... rather than exaggeration.... I nearly fainted, not on one, but on several occasions. These dirty, filthy, shabby barracks, the squalor and stench of bunks where men slept on bare boards.”⁸⁵ So gruesome was the sight of the barracks that Short, a grown man who had fought in the First World War, was willing to admit that he had been overwhelmed by the scene.

Walker Stone wrote in the *Washington Daily News* that the citizens of the small town of Dachau claimed that they knew nothing of what went on inside the concentration camp. “Their organs of smell,” he suggested, “must be numb.”⁸⁶ When Stone described Buchenwald on May 5, he wrote that he was most disturbed by the “sickening stench of thousands of dead and the sight of tangled piles of emaciated and rotting corpses.” Despite the atrocity of the scene, Stone recognized that the camp must have been much worse when liberated by the Allies, as it had been under American control for ten days, during which time they worked to clean the camp.⁸⁷ Duke Shoop, of the *Kansas City Star*, also commented on the number of bodies still at Buchenwald: “we saw bodies; bodies and the living dead. Bodies in piles on the ground, in pits, on flat cars, in trucks.”⁸⁸

Malcolm Bingay, Seymour, Dimitman, and Walter told America from France that the “stories of systematic starvation and torture of the political prisoners have not been exaggerated. Dachau was even worse than Buchenwald.”⁸⁹ In his article for the *LA Times*

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ 79 Cong. Rec., H4672 (May 16, 1945).

⁸⁶ Walker Stone, “Those Small Red Cross Parcels are Treasure to Dachau Victims,” *Washington Daily News*, May 7, 1945, 10.

⁸⁷ Stone, “Tangled Piles of Rotting Corpses,” *Washington Daily News*, May 5, 1945.

⁸⁸ Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6.

⁸⁹ “Atrocities,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 5, 1945.

titled “Stories of Nazi Prison Horrors Substantiated,” Norman Chandler wrote that there was no need for him to go into gory detail about the camp; the details had all been told by correspondents. “My purpose [in this article] is merely to testify as to the accuracy of the American correspondents—they have told the truth. They have not exaggerated. Exaggeration, in fact, would be difficult.”⁹⁰

The congressmen who visited Buchenwald on April 23 reported that “the evidence of Nazi atrocities committed there exceeded the wildest flights of imagination.” Rep. Gordon Canfield “declared the evidence bore out everything that had been said or written about Nazi brutality,” and after returning from Europe, Senator Wherry told the *Houston Chronicle* that the stories that war correspondents had been reporting “were not exaggerated”; the congressional delegation had seen the strangulation room and evidence of murder there. He told the paper, “[w]e saw the emaciated bodies. We saw the crematories.”⁹¹ Senator Saltonstall spoke with the *Daily Globe* in an interview that was published on May 16. He told the *Globe* that the photographs and films that were shown in newspapers and cinemas were “not fake.”⁹² Dimitman reported that the horrors of the concentration camps had thus far been accurately and truthfully reported by American correspondents. The story of Buchenwald, he wrote, “was told in the American style of reporting—factually and objectively.” But, he opined, “[t]hat is not the way a story such

⁹⁰ Norman Chandler, “Stories of Nazi Prison Horrors Substantiated,” *LA Times*, April 28, 1945, 1.

⁹¹ “Eight Congressmen View Horrors of Nazi Prison,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 23, 1945, 7; “Solons Who Saw Nazi Camps Ask ‘Harsh Peace,’ Death for Gestapo,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 10, 1945, 18.

⁹² “‘Nazis No Better than Cavemen’—Saltonstall,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., May 16, 1945, 1, 6.

as this should have been written. It should have been written in anger and with indignation.”⁹³

Some of the congressmen and editors reported that there were scenes in the concentration camps which were “too gruesome” to describe. Shoop reported that, overall, SS methods for murder “ran the gamut from deliberate starvation and routine beatings to sadistic tortures *too horrible and too perverted to be publically described.*”⁹⁴ The reality is, between the photographs, newsreels, and detailed reports by war correspondents and the congressmen and editors who visited the camps, the concentration camps were quite well described. By labeling some camp scenes as “indescribable,” however, the congressmen and editors were calling upon the power of the imagination of the American public to fill in the story. People who never visited the camps would never know the “stench,” but they could imagine it. Labeling some scenes as indescribable also allowed the congressmen and editors to call upon the *power* of propaganda without using actual propaganda. The public read over and over about the conditions of the camps and then read that there was *even more* to them, instances so terrible that they could not be repeated in polite company—but what could be worse than a collection of tanned human skin? or the image of a man hanging from a wire around his neck, strangling to death in the basement of a crematorium? These are the questions that the congressmen and publishers wanted Americans to ask themselves.

⁹³ E. Z. Dimitman, “Nazi Prison Horror Shouts an Answer to ‘Soft-Peacers,’” *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2.

⁹⁴ Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6, emphasis added.

A Program of Extermination?

According to the congressional report, the concentration camps were places of “incarceration, punishment, and liquidation of civilians who were opposed to, or who were suspected of being opposed to, the Hitler regime.” While not an accurate assessment of the entire concentration camp system, their evaluation of the camps they visited was more or less accurate. Their observations ceased to be accurate when they concluded their report by writing that the camps they witnessed were part of a “calculated and diabolical program of planned torture and *extermination*.”⁹⁵ Here, the congressmen were confusing reports of a Nazi policy of extermination with the camps that they had visited. Their confusion is entirely understandable, considering the incredible quantities of dead produced by Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau, but it is still inaccurate to claim that these three camps were part of a systematic extermination program.

Immediately following their seizure of power in 1933, the Nazis began to arrest and oppress their political opponents within Germany. Violence between Nazis and Communists had been common during the mid-to-late 1920s and the early 1930s. The two groups fought in the newspapers and in the streets, but after Hitler assumed the chancellery on January 30, 1933, the tenor of that violence changed. Once in power, the Nazis began arresting outspoken German Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats, and liberals. Many were detained for “re-education” in the new German concentration camps. In March 1933, the concentration camp system was reorganized. Locally run camps were incorporated into a camp system run by Hitler’s private army, the SS. Under Oberführer

⁹⁵ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 4, 15, emphasis added.

Theodore Eicke, rules and regulations for the system were codified at Dachau, the first SS concentration camp. The concentration camps inside of the pre-1939 German borders were created to hold political prisoners and supply slave labor to the Third Reich, not as part of the extermination program later carried out in occupied Poland. The dramatic condition of the camps when the congressmen visited them can be attributed to the Soviet push into Poland. Camps in Poland, such as Auschwitz, had been abandoned by the Germans, and thousands of prisoners had been brought from Poland into the camps in Germany.⁹⁶

That the congressmen misunderstood the nature of the concentration camps is entirely understandable; since the liberation of Majdanek by the Soviets in June 1944, word of a Nazi extermination program had spread. When the congressmen saw the piles of dead, the gas chambers, the emaciated and diseased condition of most of the prisoners, they assumed that what they were witnessing was the Nazi program of elimination, rather than the gruesome result of the German concentration camp program. To them it must surely have appeared to be a scheme of extermination, but the thousands dead at Dachau and Buchenwald pale before the numbers killed in the so-called “final solution”: 900,000 Jews murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, roughly 1,584,500 Jews killed at the other killing centers in Poland—Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor, and Chelmno; and 1,350,000 Jews estimated to have been killed by mobile killing units in the East. The scale of murder at

⁹⁶ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 2003), 1046-51.

Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau was incredible, but does not approach the final solution as carried out in occupied Poland.⁹⁷

Norman Chandler claimed that through starvation, over work, abuse, beatings and torture, crowded conditions, and murder, “many tens of thousands of the best leadership personnel in Europe, including German democrats and anti-Nazis, have been exterminated,” which is accurate to a point. The anti-Nazis and other political opponents were not necessarily in camps to die; they were there for re-education, and it was acceptable if they died. Shoop recalled that on each of their forays into Germany he did not see one Jewish person. “Jews,” he wrote, “were shot, garroted, hanged or gassed,” and Chandler reported that the Jews in the camps had received the worst treatment, but that “the atrocities were all-encompassing.”⁹⁸ Shoop was entirely correct in his observation, and Chandler’s statement is partially true—Jews in the concentration camps had definitely received the worst treatment; in fact, they were targeted for extermination. That the atrocities were “all-encompassing,” however, is a simplification. Yes, all concentration camp prisoners had difficult lives, but as Primo Levi points out, some prisoners had more tolerable conditions than others. The reality is that each prisoner had a different experience within the concentration camps, save those prisoners who were sent immediately to their deaths at killing centers such as Birkenau, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Sobibor.⁹⁹ Simply put, the congressional and editorial groups that toured the

⁹⁷ Ibid., 958, 408.

⁹⁸ Shoop, “Deeds of Fiends,” *Kansas City Star*, May 13, 1945, 1, 6; “Vivisection by Nazis Told,” *LA Times*, May 18, 1945, 1, 3.

⁹⁹ See Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1988).

concentration camps in April and May 1945, did *not* witness the Holocaust, they only thought they did.

Although the congressmen were inaccurate in reporting that they had visited places of prisoner “extermination,” the congressmen reported the “truth” about the concentration camps, so far as it appeared and was reported to them. Their mistake lay in the fact that they let news of an extermination program color their interpretation of what they witnessed at Buchenwald, Dora, and Dachau. Their mission to the camps was a success in that they returned to the United States ready and willing to maintain a military presence in Germany as long as was necessary to re-educate the German people, try the Nazi criminals, and rebuild Germany as a functioning member of Europe. Though they were wrong about the program of extermination, their reports to Congress and the American public succeeded in helping to create a political climate in the United States that was accepting of the need to maintain an American presence in Germany.

Concentration Camps versus Prisoner of War Camps

Another object of confusion, however, the congressmen and editors were able to clear up. In an effort to clarify, as well as to calm the families of soldiers captured overseas, the editors made sure to note the difference between German concentration camps and POW camps. As early as April 21, 1945, the day after General Marshall’s office contacted Congress to invite the congressional mission, Senator Albert “Happy” Chandler (D-KY) and Rep. Overton Brooks (D-LA) “joined in drafting a resolution calling for appointment of a War Atrocities Commission to look into ‘the Axis

annihilations far below the level of animal cruelty.”¹⁰⁰ Chandler introduced the resolution in the Senate, and Brooks presented it to the House of Representatives on Monday, April 23.¹⁰¹ At that time, there was still confusion in America as to what the purposes of concentration camps were, and the resolution they drafted authorized the President of the United States to appoint a permanent or semi-permanent commission to “examine and keep a record” of Nazi crimes against Americans and Allied prisoners of war.¹⁰² Chandler and Brooks mistakenly believed that American prisoners of war were being held in the concentration camps on which the war correspondents were reporting.

This inaccuracy was well addressed by both parties who toured the camps at Eisenhower’s request. “Buchenwald,” wrote Walter, “should not be confused with the prison camps where American soldiers were kept. This camp was for political prisoners ... who had opposed the Nazis or, as they phrased it, were ‘politically unstable.’”¹⁰³ Walter explained in another article that U.S. soldiers, though poorly fed and subjected to long marches, “were generally treated fairly well,” and the editors heard of “only a few cases of outright brutality.”¹⁰⁴ On May 9, the *New York Times* also clarified that “[t]he atrocities at Dachau and Buchenwald did not involve Americans ... our soldiers suffered mostly from lack of food and long marches.”¹⁰⁵ “Compared with the pitiful creatures in the [Dachau] concentration camp,” Walter wrote in the *Houston Chronicle*, American prisoners “seemed almost normal in mind and body even though most of them were

¹⁰⁰ “Groups from U.S. to View Nazi Horror,” *LA Times*, April 22, 1945, 1, 2.

¹⁰¹ “War Atrocities Commission Demanded in Congress,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 23, 1945, 8.

¹⁰² 79 Cong. Rec., S3628 (April 23, 1945).

¹⁰³ Walter, “Chronicle Man,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 28, 1948, 1, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

¹⁰⁵ “U.S. Editors Back,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1945, 17.

around 30 pounds underweight.”¹⁰⁶ Joseph Pulitzer assured the Missouri House of Representatives that the camps were for political prisoners only and that no Americans were held in any of the concentration camps he visited.¹⁰⁷

On May 15, Walter wrote that only a few of the U.S. former prisoners of war complained of brutal treatment. They “had been forced to do heavy work and make long marches on very inadequate rations,” but otherwise, he reported, the regular German army followed the rules of warfare in their treatment of prisoners of war.” He did note that conditions worsened for Americans in German prisons around January 1, 1945, as the Allies were closing in on Germany.¹⁰⁸

The distinction between prisoner of war camps and concentration camps was an important one for the congressmen and editors to make for two key reasons: The newspapers at that time were full of articles about the grotesque conditions of the concentration camps, and many Americans, especially families of POWs, needed to be assured that American prisoners were not being subjected to the same conditions as were political prisoners. Additionally, by divorcing the POW camps from concentration camps, the congressmen and editors were lessening the potential for a retaliatory peace. Had American POWs been tortured in the same way that concentration camp prisoners were, Americans might have been less willing to engage in re-education and rebuilding

¹⁰⁶ Walter, “Exaggeration,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 1945, 1, 13.

¹⁰⁷ Curtis A. Betts, “Pulitzer Tells Legislators of Horrors of Nazi Prison Camps,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 17, 1945, 1.

¹⁰⁸ M. E. Walter, “Most U.S. Prisoners in Germany Will Come Through Without Any Permanent Disability,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 15, 1945, 1, 9.

and more desirous of a harsh, punitive peace, akin to the peace that followed the First World War.

Walter, a World War I veteran and former German prisoner of war, found “little similarity between the government headed by the Kaiser and that headed by Hitler insofar as treatment of prisoners is concerned.” He wrote that he had been treated well as a German prisoner during the last war; he recalled that the “food was poor but so also was the food of the native population.” Because of that experience, he had doubted the reports and horror stories that had come back about the prisoner camps of Nazi Germany. But when he saw the concentration camp at Buchenwald he wrote that, in comparison, “the prison camps I was in in 1918 were de luxe [sic] hotels.”¹⁰⁹ Walter wrote that he “was impressed chiefly by how dirty [Buchenwald] was.” He compared the conditions of Buchenwald to the conditions of the prisoner of war camp he was interned in during the First World War, noting that those older camps were much cleaner and less crowded.¹¹⁰

After the presentation of the report to Congress, Joseph L. Hill (D-AL) asked if the congressional mission had visited any POW camps, to which Barkley replied that they did not, but that they “saw hundreds, if not thousands, of prisoners of war ... who had been liberated and released as our armies marched forward. We talked to them by the hundreds concerning the conditions which they found in prisoner-of-war camps.” Their “greatest complaint was lack of food.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ “U.S. Editors, Congressmen Find Buchenwald ‘Cleaned Up,’” *Washington Daily News*, April 26, 1945, 8.

¹¹⁰ Walter, “Chronicle Man,” *Houston Chronicle*, April 28, 1948, 1, 4.

¹¹¹ 79 Cong. Rec., 4582 (May 15, 1945).



Photograph 17: Members of the congressional mission interview Colonel Paul Good, from Corvallis, OR, who was captured by the Germans at Omaha Beach on D-Day and liberated from Stalag 7A, Moosberg, Germany, May 3, 1945. Left to right: James Richards, Kenneth Wherry, C. Wayland Brooks, John Vorys, Maj. General J. A. Van Fleet, Colonel Good, and Maj. General Wilton Persons. (National Archives RG-111-SC-231234, Box 360)

After the tours of Buchenwald, both groups returned to the Weimar airfield, where they met and spoke with a group of liberated Allied prisoners on their way to France.¹¹² On April 25, the congressmen visited camps for returned prisoners of war,¹¹³ and the following day they visited the Displaced Persons Reception Center operated by the French at the Gare d'Orsay and the 48th U.S. General Hospital, where they met

¹¹² U.S. Army AG Visitor's Bureau, "Itinerary of Congressional Group," 2; Walter, "Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account," *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

¹¹³ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 1.

liberated American prisoners of war.¹¹⁴ Also on April 26, the editors toured a Recovered Allied Military Personnel (RAMP) camp and a camp for German prisoners of war.¹¹⁵

Saltonstall wrote that there they “saw the embarkation camp [about forty miles from Le Havre air field], which was divided into three parts, --the receiving, the processing and those who were ready to go,” and from there they drove to RAMP Camp Lucky Strike to interview liberated prisoners of war. In Paris the group was briefed by Brigadier General Eric F. Wood, chief of the Prisoner of War and Displaced Persons Division and the U.S. Group Control Commission.¹¹⁶

The following day they flew to Le Havre to visit Camp Wings, “where recovered Allied prisoners of war [were] brought after being liberated. Then [the congressmen] drove to Camp Lucky Strike, 40 miles to [the] northeast, where American liberated prisoners [were] being prepared for return to the United States.” They interviewed many of the soldiers, “all of whom,” observed Walter, “were in good spirits and rapidly regaining weight.” On another evening, the editors visited the repatriation center for liberated French prisoners of war.¹¹⁷

Part of this confusion stemmed from the fact that Army censors were having difficulty passing along stories of the prisoner of war camps. “The censors ... contended that unfounded exaggerations might be printed, provoking the Germans to retaliate [and] that undue anxiety would be created among prisoners’ relatives.” As of April 21, the

¹¹⁴ U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 2.

¹¹⁵ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

¹¹⁶ Memo by Saltonstall, May 11, 1945, 1; U.S. Army AG Visitor’s Bureau, “Itinerary of Congressional Group,” 1-3.

¹¹⁷ Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

policy on censoring POW reports was relaxed, and war correspondents could “report what they see, but still cannot write of what liberated Americans tell them, if severe cruelty is involved.”¹¹⁸ These measures were designed, at least in part, to protect Allied prisoners of war from German retaliation, but as more and more POW camps were liberated and the tide of the war turned dramatically against the Germans, such fears lost importance.

Reporting on Atrocities and other Conditions

About one week after Germany’s unconditional surrender, on May 15, 1945, after the roll was called at noon, Senate Majority Leader Alben W. Barkley came forward to the well of the Senate Chamber to address the Senate. Standing before the Senate, he read uninterrupted the report that he and the other congressmen had drafted concerning the atrocities and conditions of German concentration camps.¹¹⁹

The tenor of the congressional report was scholarly in tone and emotionless. Though many of the congressmen gave emotional and even vengeful reports to newspapers and in speeches, their report to Congress was professional, scientific, and devoid of emotion. The scholarly tone of the report was due to the congressmen’s desire to appear to be detached, expert witnesses. The congressmen avoided strong, colorful language in order to maintain their position as expert witnesses to Nazi atrocities. The

¹¹⁸ Thoburn Wiant, “Censors Hold Up Details of Abuse of Yanks by Nazis,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 21, 1945, 2A.

¹¹⁹ 79 Cong. Rec., 4576 (May 15, 1945).

following day, Rep. Short spoke to Congress more passionately, commenting on how difficult it was to believe his own eyes when faced with the concentration camps.¹²⁰

In Britain, less than a week after their visit to Buchenwald, the parliamentary delegation gave their report to Parliament. Backed with “gruesome exhibits,” the ten members of Parliament prepared a “purely factual account minus adjectives or moralizing” of the Buchenwald concentration camp, in which “they disclosed that several of them had wept and one had fainted at the scenes of brutality.”¹²¹ The evidence collected by the Parliamentary delegation was presented to both houses of Parliament as *Buchenwald Camp: The Report of a Parliamentary Delegation*.¹²² The object of the delegation, as stated in their report, was to find the truth of the crimes of the Nazis “while the evidence was still fresh,” and “to test the accuracy of the reports already published.” To do so, the members examined only that evidence which was still visible at the camp.¹²³ On April 28, the *Times* of London described the Parliamentary report as “a restrained factual presentation of evidence of brutality collected on the spot,” and sections from the report were reprinted in the paper.¹²⁴ On May 3, Rep. Luce introduced into the Congressional Record the Parliamentary report on Buchenwald, and sections of the report were also printed in the *Washington Post*, along with some other details about the Parliamentary visit to the camps. Moreover, the Wood and Ott report on the

¹²⁰ 79 Cong. Rec., 4672 (May 16, 1945).

¹²¹ “Untitled” *Huston Chronicle*, April 23, 1945, 8.

¹²² “The Horrors of Buchenwald,” *Times* (London), April 28, 1945, 2.

¹²³ *Buchenwald Camp*, 3, 7.

¹²⁴ “Horrors of German Camps,” *Times* (London), April 28, 1945, 3.

conditions of Buchenwald was reprinted in both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Kansas City Star* on April 29, 1945.¹²⁵

On May 15, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Boston Daily Globe*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Kansas City Star*, *Minneapolis Star Journal*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *Chicago Sun* all reported to the nation that Congress had heard Barkley present the group's findings to Congress. On May 16 the story was carried by the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *LA Times*, *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*. Of all the newspapers investigated for this study, only the *Times* of London, *Times-Picayune*, and *Washington Daily News* did not report on the description of atrocities and conditions to Congress. Between April 15 and June 1, over two hundred articles concerning the concentration camps were published in the above fourteen newspapers, and many were accompanied by photographs of the camps and the liberated prisoners.

Although the congressmen reported to the newspapers in a relatively limited capacity, reserving their report for Congress,¹²⁶ the newspaper and magazine editors and publishers filed report after report, sending a flurry of articles back to America from Europe, and publishing even more upon their return to the United States.¹²⁷ While abroad, Adler sent a dispatch from Paris on April 28, and on the night of May 4, at 12:15 a.m. (6:15 p.m. EST), Malcolm Bingay, M. E. Walter, E. Z. Dimitman, and Gideon D.

¹²⁵ 79 Cong. Rec., 4167-69 (May 3, 1945); "Official Horror Camp report Calls It New Low in Vileness," *Washington Post*, April 28, 1945, 9.

¹²⁶ It should be noted that a number of congressmen did not follow Majority Leader Barkley's lead in choosing not to discuss their trip before the report was given to Congress.

¹²⁷ "Adler Says Atrocities Worse," *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., April 28, 1945, 3.

Seymour broadcast a report about their visits to Buchenwald and Dachau through the National Broadcasting system in the United States.¹²⁸

After their report was read before Congress and entered into the Congressional Record, many of the congressmen then felt free to speak and write more about what they experienced and learned during their sojourn through Europe. Senator Saltonstall spoke with the *Daily Globe* in an interview that was published on May 16.¹²⁹ In the days following their return, many of the congressmen gave short statements to the United Press, which were carried in other newspapers.¹³⁰

Many of the editors and publishers wrote numerous articles for their papers or magazines; Joseph Pulitzer Jr. was especially prolific after his return to the United States, authoring a number of “Report(s) to the American People” in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. E. Z. Dimitman presented his findings before “friends of the *Chicago Sun*,” and later printed a pamphlet titled *Lest We Forget!* that included his address as well as a dispatch he had sent from Munich on May 3. William Chenery published a long article in *Collier's*, the magazine he edited, telling of the editorial tour of the camps, and Clare Booth Luce penned an opinion piece for the magazine *Prevent World War III*, in which she called for a harsh peace with Germany.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Ibid.; “Atrocities,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 5, 1945; “Seymour Sees Dachau Camp Gas Showers,” *Minneapolis Star Journal*, May 5, 1945, 3; Walter, “Walter Gives Day-by-Day Account,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 13, 1945, 1, 16.

¹²⁹ “‘Nazis No Better than Cavemen’—Saltonstall,” *Boston Daily Globe*, evening ed., May 16, 1945, 1, 6.

¹³⁰ Miner, “2 Congressmen Urge Death,” *Chicago Sun*, May 10, 1945, 3.

¹³¹ Clare Booth Luce, “German People Must Answer for Crimes,” *Prevent World War III*, May-June 1945, 33, 34.

In addition to the reports they filed with Congress and in the newspapers, many of those who toured the concentration camps spoke publically and privately about what they saw in German concentration camps. On Sunday, May 13, Senator Saltonstall addressed the graduating class of Smith College in Northampton, MA. He told the assembled graduates that “[w]ords of mine can never begin to bring home to you the systematic form of torture imposed upon the political and other prisoners in some of the prison camps in Germany.” In his address he did not go into specifics about the atrocities of the camps; he did, however, call for the punishment of Nazi leaders and lauded American participation in the United Nations as a way to protect the “physical security and the future of opportunity in life for the American people.”¹³² In his speech to the women of Smith College, Saltonstall advocated exactly what Eisenhower had hoped the congressmen would encourage upon their return: the need to remain involved in international politics following the end of the war.

Gideon Seymour spoke at a public meeting at the Minneapolis Auditorium on Sunday May 12, at 8:00 p.m. and gave a presentation he titled “A Report on Europe,” “based on his personal observation of German atrocities,” and M. E. Walter addressed the Minneapolis Elks Club on Tuesday May 15 at 8:00 p.m. and discussed his recent inspection of German concentration camps.¹³³

E. Z. Dimitman spoke before friends of the *Chicago Sun* at the Palmer House Hotel on May 16, 1945. Much of what he said echoed what he and the others had already

¹³² Leverett Saltonstall, “Remarks by Senator Saltonstall,” (lecture, Smith College Graduation, Northampton, MA, May 13, 1945), Saltonstall Collection.

¹³³ “Seymour to Tell Public of Atrocities Seen in Naziland,” *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, May 9, 1945, 17.; “M. E. Walter Will Address Elks Club,” *Huston Chronicle*, May 14, 1945, 5.

published in the papers concerning the concentration camps.¹³⁴ On Thursday May 17, at 1:30 p.m., Joseph Pulitzer addressed the Missouri House of Representatives “in response to an invitation extended by the house, by unanimous vote.”¹³⁵ Pulitzer “gave an eyewitness account of the horrors of the concentration camps.”¹³⁶ Pulitzer’s address before the Missouri House of Representatives was broadcast on a number of Missouri stations, and was rebroadcast twice the next day by three different stations.¹³⁷

Norman Chandler addressed “almost 1000 friends [of the *Los Angeles Times*] in the Biltmore Bowl” on Friday May 18, where he told them of “Nazi political prison camp atrocities.”¹³⁸ Listening to Chandler on Friday were political leaders, high-ranking military officers, business executives, educators, clergymen, and “leaders of all walks of life,” including the mayor of Los Angeles. Chandler’s presentation was broadcast on two different radio stations later that day.¹³⁹

The largest and most widely-reported public event was held at Carnegie Hall, on May 22, 1945, by the Society for the Prevention of WWII. The event featured Senators Alben Barkley and Leverett Saltonstall, Representatives Dewey Short, Ed Izac, and Clare Booth Luce, as well as Joseph Pulitzer Jr. The principal speakers at the event were two former German prisoners, Sargent Milton Felson, an American who spent a year and a half in German prisoner of war camps, and Mrs. Alfred B. Spanjaard, a native of Holland

¹³⁴ E. Z. Dimitman, *Lest We Forget!: “Report to America” After a Visit to Inspect German Prison Camps at the Invitation of General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Chicago: Chicago Sun, 1945).

¹³⁵ “Joseph Pulitzer to Address Legislature on Atrocities,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, May 14, 1945, 3A.

¹³⁶ Betts, “Pulitzer Tells Legislators,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 17, 1945, 1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁸ “Vivisection by Nazis Told,” *LA Times*, May 18, 1945, 1, 3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1, 3.

and survivor of the Belsen concentration camp. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, “[s]wift and drastic punishment of German war criminals was advocated by members of both houses of Congress, by American newspaper editors and other persons.”¹⁴⁰

According to Alvin Goldstein of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the most dramatic speaker that night was Mrs. Spanjaard. “The audience at Carnegie Hall,” wrote Goldstein, “listened in almost breathless silence as she told in accented English of the almost unspeakable cruelties visited by the German invaders on her neighbors and later on her and her family.”¹⁴¹ Dr. Guy Emery Shipler, editor of the *Churchman*, chaired the meeting and the speakers were welcomed by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.¹⁴²

What Should be Done with Germany?

At the same time that the congressional committee was being formed to go to Europe, Representative Daniel Flood (D-PA), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, announced that he would offer a resolution in Congress on Monday, April 23 to send a committee to “leave at once for Germany ‘to visit the death houses and prison camps and get firsthand information.’” Flood requested such a mission because he believed that “Congress should see to it that all of the facts are brought out,” and that the American people needed to know what had gone on in the camps.¹⁴³ Instead, as a congressional mission had already departed, Flood introduced a resolution in the House

¹⁴⁰ “Urges Executions of 1,500,000 Nazis,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1945, 11; Alvin H. Goldstein, “Speakers at rally Warn of Dangers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 23, 1945, 1B.

¹⁴¹ Goldstein, “Speakers at rally Warn of Dangers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 23, 1945, 1B.

¹⁴² “Meeting Urges Swift Nazi War Crimes Action,” *LA Times*, May 23, 1945, 1; “Urges Executions of 1,500,000 Nazis,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1945, 11.

¹⁴³ “Bill to Send Delegation to be Offered in Congress,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 21, 1945m 2A.

of Representatives that called for the creation of a commission with investigating powers to examine claims of Nazi atrocities and report on them to the United Nations War Crimes Commission, which did not have investigation powers, and Rep. Ed Gossett (D-TX) introduced a resolution that would ensure that legislation be passed to punish war criminals. Gossett's resolution also called for the publication of an official report of war crimes and atrocities so that history would "not repeat itself in the nonpunishment [sic] of war criminals or in failure to preserve and publicize authentic records of war crimes."¹⁴⁴ After their meetings with the war crimes commissions in London and France, Barkley reported to Congress on May 15 that the congressional mission was pleased with the actions both commissions were taking, and recommended against the creation of an American crimes commission, as the UNWCC had the task well at hand.¹⁴⁵

In their report to Congress, Barkley and the rest of the congressional mission concluded that the Nazi policies in the concentration camps "constituted no less than organized crime against civilization and humanity and that those who were responsible for them should have meted out to them swift, certain, and adequate punishment." Having reached that conclusion, the committee then addressed the burgeoning UNWCC and the French War Crimes Commission. The committee reported that both agencies were in the process of investigating the concentration camps for themselves at the very time that the congressmen were visiting Europe.¹⁴⁶ The Allied War Crimes Commission, run by the United Nations and headquartered in London, represented sixteen of the Allies and was

¹⁴⁴ 79 Cong. Rec. H3666 (April 23, 1945).

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Senate, *Atrocities*, 16.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

already drafting specific charges against the leaders they viewed as responsible for the concentration camp system. While abroad, the committee was able to confer with both the War Crimes Commission in London and the French Commission in Paris. In answer to legislation proposed in their absence that addressed the need to investigate war crimes, the committee reported that they were pleased with the ongoing UN and French efforts and they recommended against the creation of an additional American agency to investigate war crimes.¹⁴⁷

Joseph Pulitzer Jr. suggested a different solution when he spoke at the Carnegie Hall rally. Pulitzer declared that “every member of the Gestapo, every member of the S.S., all German industrialists and financiers and the entire German general staff should be shot.”¹⁴⁸ Pulitzer estimated that “this might involve the execution of possibly 1,500,000 individuals.” According to the *New York Times*, Pulitzer declared that the guilty “should be put out of this world with Army bullets through their heads.”¹⁴⁹ E. Z. Dimitman reported from Paris during the tour of Europe that “Buchenwald concentration camp is the answer to the ‘soft-peace’ boys and girls, the ‘forgive-and-forget’ brigades, the let’s kiss-and-make-up’ delegations, the appeasers in America and all the native Fascists who term themselves isolationists and nationalists.”¹⁵⁰ In a call to action, Pulitzer said that the United States needed to “de-Nazify and demilitarize Germany,” and should

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴⁸ “Meeting Urges Swift Nazi War Crimes Action,” *LA Times*, May 23, 1945, 1.

¹⁴⁹ “Urges Executions of 1,500,000 Nazis,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1945, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Dimitman, “Nazi Prison Horror,” *Chicago Sun*, April 29, 1945, 1, 2.

the United States not take such action, it was his opinion that “this war will have been fought in vain.”¹⁵¹

Dewey Short, speaking at Carnegie Hall “heatedly and with an orator’s fervor,” recommended that the high command of the Wehrmacht and all SS and Gestapo personnel, save those “forced to join in the last months of the war,” be executed.¹⁵² Short also advocated for German recovery and re-education, calling for a “strong state in central Europe,” not because he felt “any love for the Germans,” but for the self-defence of the United States.¹⁵³ Alben Barkley warned against delaying punishment, calling for “swift, certain and adequate” punishment of German war criminals.¹⁵⁴ Pulitzer, Short, Barkley, and Izac all recounted their observations of the atrocities and conditions of the concentration camps in Germany and agreed that “severe punitive measures and long supervisional [sic] processes were mandatory.”¹⁵⁵ In Chandler’s opinion, the peace terms that the United States would offer Germany “cannot be too severe,” and Rep. Mott suggested that the Allied nations ought to let the German people “suffer just a little” and that the Gestapo and SS ought to all be executed.¹⁵⁶

Rep. Izac, who had been a prisoner of war in Germany during the First World War, told reporters on May 10 that he was “convinced the German people must be

¹⁵¹ Curtis A. Betts, “German General Staff Guiltiest of the War Criminals, in a Sense, Pulitzer Tells State Legislature,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 18, 1945, 1C, 12C.

¹⁵² Goldstein, “Speakers at rally Warn of Dangers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 23, 1945, 1B; “Meeting Urges Swift Nazi War Crimes Action,” *LA Times*, May 23, 1945, 1.

¹⁵³ “Urges Executions of 1,500,000 Nazis,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1945, 11.

¹⁵⁴ “Meeting Urges Swift Nazi War Crimes Action,” *LA Times*, May 23, 1945, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Goldstein, “Speakers at rally Warn of Dangers,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 23, 1945, 1B.

¹⁵⁶ “Vivisection by Nazis Told,” *LA Times*, May 18, 1945, 1, 3; “Congressmen Urge Penalties for Reich,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 10, 1945, 14.

subjected to harsh terms or they may decide ‘war is a good thing after all.’” He advocated confiscation of the properties and goods of the German people and “distributing them to the peoples whose own farms and homes were striped by the Nazi armies.”¹⁵⁷

Rep. Luce, who returned to the United States on May 1 from a two-month long tour of the European battle fronts,¹⁵⁸ told the *New York Times* that “[d]eath, destruction, starvation, disease, political chaos,” which were to her mind indescribable, would only become worse in Europe before it got better. “Only the presence of Allied troops in Europe,” Luce claimed, “brings the least semblance of order.”¹⁵⁹ Luce believed that as part of keeping order, harsh peace terms would need to be given to Germany.¹⁶⁰ Norman Chandler told the friends of the *Los Angeles Times* at the Biltmore Bowl that General Eisenhower had told him and the other newsmen that “the German people must be watched and dominated for many years to come.”¹⁶¹

On their trip the congressmen and editors met and saw hundreds of Germans, many of whom claimed not to know what occurred within the concentration camps, many of whom claimed to have not supported Hitler. They came home knowing that Germany needed rebuilding and re-education, not just punishment for war crimes.

In addition to punishing with Nazi war criminals and re-educating the German people after the end of the war, the Allies needed a plan to for the whole of Germany. By 1945, two diametrically opposing plans had been created. One, authored by Henry

¹⁵⁷ “Congressmen Urge Penalties for Reich,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 10, 1945, 14.

¹⁵⁸ “‘Germany Must Have Hard Peace,’ Declares Rep. Clare Booth Luce,” *Boston Daily Globe*, morning ed., May 2, 1945, 6.

¹⁵⁹ “U.S. Europe’s Hope, Mrs. Luce Reports,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1945, 12.

¹⁶⁰ “‘Germany Must Have Hard Peace,’” *Boston Daily Globe*, morning ed., May 2, 1945, 6.

¹⁶¹ “Vivisection by Nazis Told,” *LA Times*, May 18, 1945, 1, 3.

Morgenthau Jr. and supported in principle by both the French and Soviets, was to deindustrialize Germany and break the nation into a series of smaller states. The other, created by U.S. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall and his staff and favored by the British and President Truman was to rebuild Germany and use it as an industrial engine to stabilize the faltering European economy.¹⁶²

Conclusion

During their tour of the concentration camps, the congressmen and editors discovered that what the war correspondents had reported back to America had indeed been true: the Germans had committed war crimes on an astonishing scale—what the congressmen called “organized crime against civilization and humanity.” The congressmen reported that all three of the camps they visited “were all of the same general pattern and design and administered for the same purpose,” to torture and exterminate political and racial opponents of the Third Reich. These goals, they found, were met through overwork, starvation, unsanitary conditions, disease, and murder.¹⁶³ They determined, after seeing that the German people were both well fed and clothed, that the conditions in the concentration camps were not due to material shortages, as conditions in POW camps had been during the First World War; rather the terrible conditions in the concentration camps were deliberate. Paul Wooton articulated this point

¹⁶² See Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹⁶³ U.S. Congress, *Atrocities*, 15, 14, 15.

clearly: the harsh conditions of the Nazi concentration camps were not the by-product of war, but part of a “deliberately calculated policy of the Nazi leadership.”¹⁶⁴

All three of the liberated concentration camps visited by the congressmen and editors were near urban centers, but the people of the towns of Dachau and Nordhausen and the city of Weimar claimed to know nothing of the goings on of the concentration camps. According to Chenery, the people of the Bavarian city of Munich, only twelve miles away from Dachau and site of the failed Nazi *Putsch*, or coup, to seize power in Germany on November 9, 1923, claimed “to know nothing of the bestial cruelties and the scientific murders practiced during twelve years at Dachau. The people of Weimar ... say they did not know what was happening at Buchenwald. In all probability they did not know the details. Visitors were not allowed.” Chenery gave the civilian populations near the camps the benefit of the doubt, accepting that they probably could not “have done anything to improve the condition or the treatment of the men in the concentration camps,” recognizing that the concentration camps were used to “imprison Germans feared or distrusted by the Nazis. In truth, the Nazis appeared to have destroyed or intimidated into silence any possible political opposition in Germany.”¹⁶⁵ This raises the question of who in Germany was guilty.

According to Chenery, the German people were not, as a whole, guilty of war crimes. He explained that they almost had no choice but to be silent and not interfere, lest they wind up in a concentration camp themselves. For M. E. Walter, a former German

¹⁶⁴ Wooton, “Atrocity Camp Visits Praised,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 14, 1945, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Chenery, “I Testify,” *Collier's*, June 16, 1945, 28.

POW from World War I, the conditions of the concentration camps indicated that “the [Germans had] deteriorated in character in the 27 years since the last war.”¹⁶⁶ Walter saw the concentration camps as evidence of a change in the *entire* German character, not just that of the leadership. But were all Germans to blame? When the congressmen and editors returned from their trip, many made recommendations about who they considered to be guilty and how they should be punished: Representatives Thomason and Short told the *Chicago Sun* that an estimated 4,400,000 members of the Gestapo and SS were guilty of war crimes and should be killed.¹⁶⁷ Joseph Pulitzer Jr. told the Missouri House of Representatives that German General Staff was “the guiltiest of the German war criminals.” Pulitzer divided the war criminals into four separate groups: “the Gestapo, the S.S., the German financiers and industrialists, and the German general staff,” for whom he advocated imprisonment or death. In a call to action, Pulitzer said that the United States needed to “de-Nazify and demilitarize Germany,” and should the United States not take such action, it was his opinion that “this war will have been fought in vain.”¹⁶⁸

Acting on Allen Dulles’s 1942 suggestion that a tribunal made up of men from Allied and neutral nations should examine evidence of Nazi violence after the war, the UNWCC had been created in 1943, and by autumn the UNWCC had begun to compile lists of accused war criminals.¹⁶⁹ By January 1945, advocates of a trial, rather than summary executions, had gained the upper hand, and preparations for a trial of major war

¹⁶⁶ “U.S. Editors, Congressmen,” *Washington Daily News*, April 26, 1945, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Miner, “2 Congressmen Urge Death,” *Chicago Sun*, May 10, 1945, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Betts, “German General Staff,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 18, 1945, 1C, 12C.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 131.

criminals moved forward. On April 2—while the congressmen were touring Germany—Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson agreed to lead the European war crimes prosecution effort, and on May 2 President Harry S. Truman appointed him Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality. By the end of June, the British, French, and Soviet governments had agreed to a “Great Powers” trial of criminals, and they sent representatives to London to meet and begin formulating a trial plan.¹⁷⁰ Despite differences in legal procedure between the four countries, there was remarkable cooperation in preparing and prosecuting the Nuremberg Trial of Major War Criminals in 1945.

All twenty-two¹⁷¹ Nuremberg defendants were tried on at least one of four counts: Count one was conspiracy to prepare and execute the substantive crimes enumerated in counts two, three, and four. This count divided the judges more than the rest, because France, the USSR, and Germany did not have conspiracy laws in their criminal law, and so the charge confused them. Count two was crimes against peace and waging wars of aggression, which were also wars in violation of international treaties, agreements and assurances (e.g., breaking the Nazi-Soviet pact). This count was a creation of the courts and the Allied Powers and new to international law. Count three was for violations of the traditional laws of war, mistreatment of prisoners of war, murder, and devastation not

¹⁷⁰ Bradley F. Smith, *Reaching Judgement at Nuremberg* (New York,: Basic Books, 1977), 21, 36, 38, 42, 43.

¹⁷¹ There were originally twenty-four defendants, but Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach was deemed unfit for trial, and Robert Ley killed himself before the trial began.

justified by military necessity. Lastly, count four was for crimes against humanity, which included actions from before the war.¹⁷²

The lesson that the Americans broadcast to the world after the trial was that the Allies had discredited the Third Reich at Nuremberg by acting virtuously rather than summarily executing the prisoners. This message flooded the media in occupied Germany and was reinforced by the opinion of the majority of the defense counsel, who seem to have felt that the trial was fair and the verdict moderate.¹⁷³ By sentencing the prisoners to different types of punishments for varying crimes, the court ensured that future “belligerent leaders [would not be] in a situation where the only alternatives for them are victory or death.”¹⁷⁴ The execution of all of the guilty defendants would have detracted from the meaning of the trial—suggesting that Nuremberg was more about vengeance than justice.¹⁷⁵

At the end of World War II, victory over an “evil ideology” inspired a mission for the victors: the evils of the Nazis needed to be wiped away from Germany. Like the congresspersons and editors and publishers, the leadership of all four victorious powers wanted to re-educate the Germans to get rid of the Nazi taint. Additionally, many in the West believed that there needed to be re-education of the Germans if the country was going to become democratic.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Smith, *Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg*, 13-18.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 300, 301.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁷⁵ Norman J. W. Goda, *Tales from Spandau: Nazi Criminals and the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 273.

¹⁷⁶ James F Tent, *Mission on the Rhine: Reeducation and Denazification in American-Occupied Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1.

After their trip abroad, the congressional delegates returned to the United States ready and willing to maintain American involvement in post-war Germany. Many of them publically called for the re-education of the Germans in addition to the punishment of war criminals. War crimes trials and re-education were, however, only two aspects of the post-war Europe that Generals Marshall and Eisenhower envisioned. Although many of the congressional delegates, editors, and publishers wanted a “harsh” peace, they had seen many of the bombed-out German cities and they trusted Marshall and Eisenhower, who recommended rebuilding Germany and economically re-integrating Germany with the rest of Europe. The congressmen were ready to support whatever Marshall and Eisenhower had in mind for Germany; from their meeting with him, they knew him to be fair and that he did not want vengeance or retribution, but a just peace.

Both Generals Marshall and Eisenhower knew that if the United States was to continue its presence in Europe after the end of the war, the U.S. Army would need the funds to do so. As enumerated in the United States Constitution, Congress held the purse strings for the U.S. budget, and so Eisenhower called for congressmen to see Germany. The main focus of their trip abroad was the concentration camps, but the congressmen also flew over and toured bombed-out cities and destroyed factories to see the extent of the destruction in Europe.

After seeing the destruction in Europe and considering the failed peace after the First World War, the congressmen and editors were convinced that rebuilding needed to occur and that Germany needed to be reintegrated into the European community. With that same goal in mind, General Marshall and his staff devised the European Recovery

Program, better known as the Marshall Plan, which made European self-help possible. The Marshall Plan did not necessarily create stability and success in Europe; however, it created a place in which stability and success could develop by facilitating essential imports, easing production bottlenecks, encouraging growth in capital, and helping to suppress inflation.¹⁷⁷ On April 2, 1948, when the Marshall Plan passed in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, six of the twelve congressmen who toured Europe in April and May 1945 voted “yes” on the resolution. Three of the representatives who toured Germany were no longer present in the House for the vote, and Rep. Richards did not vote either for or against the resolution; of the senators, only Brooks and Wherry voted against the bill.¹⁷⁸

The Marshall Plan was designed to reduce the barriers to the flow of goods, services, and capital between the European states and to permit natural market mechanisms to promote integration. It was also supposed to organize European institutions to transcend national sovereignties and coordinate policies so that normal market forces could operate; this would bring once-rival states into a single unit of economic and political power.¹⁷⁹

In a way, the Marshall Plan can be viewed as an extension of President Woodrow Wilson’s unrealized post-World War I plans to rebuild and rejuvenate a war-torn Europe by reintegrating Germany economically with her neighbors. The Marshall Planners wanted to bring Germany into a wider Western European framework and reconcile its

¹⁷⁷ Hogan, *Marshall Plan*, 432.

¹⁷⁸ 80 Cong. Rec., H4070, H4026 (April 2, 1948).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 428.

recovery with the security and economic needs of its neighbors and the United States. The French were the greatest resisters in the West, calling for a policy that harkened back to the French policy of 1920, which called for limits on the German military and reparations payments for damage done during the war. As in 1920, America traded concessions on reparations for financial aid.¹⁸⁰

For the U.S. government, the rebuilding and reindustrialization of Germany and a strong line against the growing threat of the USSR took precedence over the punishment of Nazi supporters and denazification, and so denazification was sacrificed in favor of German economic recovery.¹⁸¹ Because of these priorities, the denazification of Germany and the reeducation of the Germans was, by 1949, a failure. Many former Nazis and Nazi collaborators continued to hold political and economic power in western Germany, and most Germans chose not to face their Nazi past, a position that would last until the next generation and the Auschwitz trials in the 1960s, during and after which the German people increasingly faced and recognized their Nazi past.¹⁸²

By 1947, American soldiers, policymakers, and the public had transformed their image of Germans from villains to victims. In this transformation, the relationships that GIs developed with individual Germans played an important role. Americans began to see the Germans as victims of potential USSR takeover and victims of material shortages. This victim-rescuer relationship was solidified by the Soviet blockade of Berlin from

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 18, 20.

¹⁸¹ Carolyn Woods Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 165.

¹⁸² Rebecca Wittmann, *Beyond Justice: The Auschwitz Trial* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 5, 6.

June 24, 1948 to May 12, 1949, and the food airlift program that the United States responded with; after that point, the Soviets had taken over the role of villain and the Germans became the victims.¹⁸³

In the post-World War II period, fears of Soviet expansion led the State Department and the Pentagon to match military commitments to economic aid. Western leaders believed that they needed Germany as a bulwark against the USSR—they saw Stalin’s plans for Germany as part of a larger desire for European hegemony.¹⁸⁴ By 1947, many of the Western powers favored a gradual unification of the four zones of Germany, and Marshall was pushing to begin rebuilding Germany.¹⁸⁵

When the congressmen and editors returned to the United States from Europe, they helped to create a political climate at home that was conducive to maintaining an American presence in Germany after the war. The congressmen and editors helped to convince Americans that without trials, denazification, and the recovery of Germany, a third world war was inevitable. The congressional mission to the concentration camps in April and May 1945 was a success: it helped to encourage a political climate that made the Nuremberg Trials, denazification efforts, and the Marshall Plan possible. Although denazification ultimately failed, the Nuremberg Trials set a precedent that domination or death were not the only two options available for governments that began wars, and the

¹⁸³ Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 203, 126, 195.

¹⁸⁴ Hans W. Gatzke, *Germany and the United States: A “Special Relationship”?* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 149.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

Marshall Plan ensured West Germany a place in Europe, allowing it to become one of the primary stabilizing countries in the region and an anchor for today's European Union.

By the end of May 1945, the findings of the congressional and editorial missions to Germany had been widely published and presented to the American public. Many newspaper articles had been written, William Chenery had published his pamphlet, the Congressmen had made their report to Congress, and both editors and congressmen had spoken publically about the atrocities and conditions in the German concentration camps. Additionally, in May the army released footage of the concentration camps in a series of films screened for the American public. Short, twenty-minute newsreels about the camps were played before feature films, and according to a Gallup poll published on May 20, 84 percent of Americans considered the “reports of Nazi killing and torture [to be] authentic.” Of those polled, 60 percent either wanted to see or had seen the films of the concentration camps, 87 percent of the public wanted the films to be shown to all German prisoners of war, and 89 percent thought they should be shown to everyone in Germany.¹⁸⁶

General Dwight D. Eisenhower had hoped that the congressmen and editors would in educating the public, helping them to know that the war crimes charges against the Germans were legitimate. He hoped that Congress would be convinced that the United States needed to maintain a presence in Germany after the war to rebuild the country, re-educate the Germans, and prosecute the war criminals. His goals were

¹⁸⁶ George Gallup, “Public says U.S. and Germans Should See Nazi Horror Films,” *Washington Post*, May 20, 1945, 5B.

realized following the war: the public believed the war crimes charges because reputable persons backed the reports of the war correspondents. The visual evidence of film and photographs complemented the trusted word of the congressmen and editors and publishers; the American government embraced the European Recovery Program, designed to help the European nations recover from the war and reintegrate Germany into the European community; and the American public and government supported the international trial of major war criminals at Nuremberg.

Notes on Photographs and Map

All of the above photographs were obtained from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, MD or from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) website. All of the photographs obtained from NARA were taken with a digital camera and had to be cropped of surrounding content using Adobe® Photoshop®; in some cases, small portions of the photograph were lost. The original photographs were sepia toned and were made black and white using Photoshop®. All photographs were taken by the United States Army Signal Corps, and Signal Corps identification numbers are given for all photographs except those obtained from USHMM, which did not provide that information.

The map of the congressional visit was obtained from the Leverett Saltonstall Collection at the Massachusetts Historical Society. It too was photographed using a digital camera; that photo was cropped using Photoshop® so that only the map is visible. The map was printed on yellowed paper and the copy of the map was made black and white using Photoshop®.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Eisenhower's April 19, 1945 request for a congressional mission to view the concentration camps:

RETURN THIS COPY TO LT.COL. LEE, ADC
ORIGINATOR'S FILE No.

SHAEF MESSAGE FORM

CALL	CIRCUIT No. NR 21	PRIORITY	TRANSMISSION INSTRUCTIONS
SPACES WITHIN HEAVY LINES FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY			
FROM (A)	ORIGINATOR	DDE/nmr	DATE-TIME OF ORIGIN
SHAEF FWD	Supreme Commander		19 April 1945
TO FOR ACTION			191215R
AGWAR			
TO (W) FOR INFORMATION (INFO)			MESSAGE INSTRUCTIONS
	SECRET		GR
	EYES ONLY		156
(REF NO.)	(CLASSIFICATION)		
FWD 19461	SECRET EYES ONLY		

WE CONTINUE TO UNCOVER GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMPS FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS IN WHICH CONDITIONS OF INDESCRIBABLE HORROR PREVAIL. FROM EISENHOWER TO GENERAL MARSHALL FOR EYES ONLY. I HAVE VISITED ONE OF THESE MYSELF AND I ASSURE YOU THAT WHATEVER HAS BEEN PRINTED ON THEM TO DATE HAS BEEN UNDERSTATEMENT. IF YOU WOULD SEE ANY ADVANTAGE IN ASKING ABOUT A DOZEN LEADERS OF CONGRESS AND A DOZEN PROMINENT EDITORS TO MAKE A SHORT VISIT TO THIS THEATER IN A COUPLE OF C-54s, I WILL ARRANGE TO HAVE THEM CONDUCTED TO ONE OF THESE PLACES WHERE THE EVIDENCE OF BESTIALITY AND CRUELTY IS SO OVERPOWERING AS TO LEAVE NO DOUBT IN THEIR MINDS ABOUT THE NORMAL PRACTICES OF THE GERMANS IN THESE CAMPS. I AM HOPEFUL THAT SOME BRITISH INDIVIDUALS IN SIMILAR CATEGORIES WILL VISIT THE NORTHERN AREA TO WITNESS SIMILAR EVIDENCE OF ATROCITY.

DL

EYES ONLY

DISTRIBUTION : c/s DOD DIR. 5200.10, June 29, 1960 DECLASSIFIED NE by WGL date 7-5-67	COORDINATED WITH : THIS MESSAGE MUST BE SENT IN CYPHER IF LIABLE TO INTERCEPTION INITIALS THIS MESSAGE MAY BE SENT IN CLEAR BY ANY MEANS INITIALS	Precedence URGENT ORIGINATING DIVISION SHSC NAME AND RANK TYPED, TEL NO. Lt.Col.E.R.Lee,ADC 4170 AUTHENTICATING SIGNATURE <i>E.R.Lee</i>	THI or TOR APR 19 1945 12 27 TIME CLEARED 676 517
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Appendix 2: United States Army Visitors' Bureau Itinerary of the Congressional Mission to Germany (four pages):

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY
AG VISITORS' BUREAU

CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE

SENATORS

Alben W. Barkley	-	Kentucky
Walter F. George	-	Georgia
Elbert D. Thomas	-	Utah
Kenneth S. Wherry	-	Nebraska
C. Wayland Brooks	-	Illinois
Leverett Saltonstall	-	Massachusetts

REPRESENTATIVES

Ewing Thomason	-	Texas
James P. Richards	-	South Carolina
Ed V. Izac	-	California
James W. Mott	-	Oregon
Dewey Short	-	Missouri
John M. Vorys	-	Ohio

ACCOMPANYING OFFICERS

Major General Wilton B. Persons	Chief, Legislative & Liaison Division, Office Chief Staff.
Major General Lowell W. Rooks	Deputy G-3, Supreme Hq AEF.
Brigadier General John M. Wier	Director, War Crimes Office, Judge Advocate Department.
Colonel Robert H. Thompson	War Department Representative.
Colonel J. A. Hall	War Crimes Branch, ETO.
Colonel Max Boyd	PRO, Headquarters USSTAF.
Colonel Robert L. Snider	Ass't Deputy Director of Operations, USSTAF.
Lieutenant Colonel John K. Beeson	Ass't to Director of Intelligence, USSTAF.
Major Carl A. Schaubel	Chief, Visitors' Bureau ETO
Major William W. Bodine, Jr.,	Visitors' Bureau, ETO
Major E. J. Corrigan	Pilot, C - 54.
Captain L. G. Haynie	Co - Pilot.
1st Lt J. B. Dickerson	Navigator
1st Lt I. V. Hoffman	Engineer
Captain Gerald D. Quayle	Pilot, C - 47
1st Lt Glenn C. Tott	Co - Pilot
1st Lt Lloyd D. Robson	Navigator

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

ITINERARY OF CONGRESSIONAL GROUP

- Sunday
22 April - Departed National Airport, Washington, D.C., in C-54 for 4,000 mile flight to European Theater of Operations via Bermuda and the Azores.
- Monday
23 April - Arrived Orly Airfield, Paris, France, after twenty-two hours elapsed flying time. Met by representatives of American Embassy and Visitors' Bureau, European Theater of Operations, United States Army, and billeted at the Ritz Hotel.
- Tuesday
24 April - Departed Orly Airfield in C-47 for flight to Weimar, Germany. Lunched with Brigadier General Frank A. Allen, Jr., Director, Public Relations Division, Supreme Hq., Allied Expeditionary Force, and drove to Buchenwald Camp to inspect scene of Nazi atrocities. Returned to airport and talked with recent liberated Allied prisoners of war who were being flown to France. Flew to Weisbaden, Germany, and were billeted for the night at Rose Hotel. Dinner with General Omar N. Bradley, Commanding General, Twelfth Army Group.
- Wednesday
25 April - Attended daily briefing at Twelfth Army Group Headquarters and inspected damaged German towns of Frankfurt, Bonn, Cologne and Aachen from the air. Landed at Reims, France for conference and luncheon at the Hotel Lion d'Or with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, toured Oise Base Installations under command of Brigadier General Charles O. Thrasher and visited famous Reims Cathedral. Flew to Paris for night.
- Thursday
26 April - Members of Committee visited points of interest in Paris area. Inspected Displaced Persons Reception Center operated by French at Gare d'Orsay and went to 48th United States General Hospital to talk with liberated American prisoners of war. Interview with General Charles DeGaulle and dinner with United States Ambassador Jefferson Caffery.
- Friday
27 April - Flew to Le Havre, France and were met by Brigadier General Joseph L. Philips, Commanding General, Northern District, Normandy Base Section. Inspected reception camp and hospital at airfield and drove to Camp Lucky Strike for Repatriated Allied Military Prisoners (RAMF) where American ex-prisoners of war were interviewed. Returned to Paris for briefing by Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee, Commanding General, Communications Zone. Dinner with General Lee at George V Hotel.
- Saturday
28 April - Flew to Brussels, Belgium and were met by Brigadier General Fenton S. Jacobs, Commanding General, Channel Base Section. Drove to Antwerp, Belgium and inspected port, installations, V-1 and V-2 damage by automobile and boat. Returned to Brussels to meet United States

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R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

Ambassador Charles Sawyer. Flew to Paris for briefing by Brigadier General Eric F. Wood, Chief, Prisoner of War and Displaced Persons Division, US Group Control Commission.

- Sunday
29 April - Open day with exception of Committee Meeting for dinner at Ritz Hotel, to be briefed by representatives of USSTAF and Ninth Air Force for trip to Ruhr devastated areas.
- Monday
30 April - Flew to Kirchhellen, Germany, inspecting air force targets at Gladbach, Neuss, Dusseldorf, Duisburg, Mulheim, Essen, Oberhausen, Bottrop and Gelsenkirchen from the air. Drove to Buer and Dorsten to see synthetic oil plant of Hydrierwerke Scholven A.G. and inspected Krupp Armament Works at Essen. Flew to Frankfurt, Germany, for visit with fighter-bomber group of Ninth Air Force. Flew to Weisbaden, Germany, and were billeted at the Rose Hotel for the night.
- Tuesday
1 May - Flew over Kassel, Germany, to view damaged works of Henschel and Sohn and landed at Nordhausen, Germany, to inspect concentration camp and underground factory at Neider-Sachswerfen. Flew to Merseburg, Germany, to see damage done to Leuna synthetic oil plant of I.G. Farben from the ground, and flew over industrial areas of Gotha, Schweinfurt and Ludwigshaven before landing at Mannheim, Germany. Drove to Heidelberg for dinner and night with General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, Sixth Army Group, at Schloss Hotel.
- Wednesday
2 May - After short tour of Heidelberg University, drove to Mannheim where committee split into two groups. Group I flew to Erlangen, Germany, to meet General George S. Patton, Commanding General, Third US Army, and flew to Cham, Germany, but because of bad weather could not land and continued to Nurnburg and later returned to Erlangen for night. Group II flew from Mannheim to Goppingen, Germany, where members inspected concentration camp and lunched with Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, Commanding General, Seventh US Army, this group drove to Augsburg and Dachau to view atrocity camp and went on to Munich to spend the night as guests of Major General Robert T. Frederick, Commanding General, 45th Infantry Division.
- Thursday
3 May - Group I flew to Moosburg, Germany, for lunch with Major General James A. Van Fleet, Commanding General, III Corps and later flew to Dachau to be conducted on inspection of camp. Group II returned to Goppingen by automobile after tour of Munich and flew to Mannheim to inspect auto works. Both groups returned to Paris by plane for night.
- Friday
4 May - Open day in Paris.

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R E S T R I C T E D

RESTRICTED

- Saturday
5 May - Flew from Paris to London, England, but could not land because of bad weather conditions and returned to Paris for night.
- Sunday
6 May - Flew from Paris to Bovington Airfield, England and were met by Visitors' Bureau, United Kingdom Base. Toured London and were billeted for night at Claridge and Savoy Hotels.
- Monday
7 May - Flew to Paris and departed for return trip to Washington, D. C.

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RESTRICTED