

The Dachau Indexing Project

by Nolan Altman

Thanks to the combined efforts of volunteers from JewishGen and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., researchers will be able to search a database of approximately 120,000 prisoners who were imprisoned at Germany's Dachau concentration camp. The searchable database will include Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners that entered the camp between 1933 and 1945. Due to database size, records will be available incrementally as the work proceeds. Approximately 37,000 records are currently on line with another 20,000 awaiting final data validation

Dachau: The First Camp

Less than two months after Adolf Hitler seized power in January of 1933, an old munitions plant at Dachau, Germany, was outfitted to imprison political enemies of the Nazi regime. Beginning in March of 1933, Social Democrats, Communists, monarchists and other members of prohibited political organizations and trade unions were the first to be imprisoned in Dachau, beginning in March of 1933. Dachau's importance, as the first concentration camp, was that it gave the Nazis the opportunity to create a model camp that would be used when building subsequent camps across Eastern Europe. The Dachau model included separate areas for prisoners and administrative staff, used spaced guard towers and electrified fences. Dachau was also used by the SS to train soldiers for other camps. As the Germans continued to advance through neighboring countries in 1938 and 1939, the population of Dachau began to reflect a mix of ethnic Europeans. Prisoners arrived from Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Belgium, Holland and France. When Germany advanced into Russia in 1941, thousands of Russian prisoners of war were sent to Dachau to be shot. In total, more than 200,000 prisoners from over 30 countries went through Dachau.

Life In The Camp

When prisoners arrived at Dachau, they were given a prisoner number and a colored triangle that was to be worn on their clothing. The colored triangles were used for identification by guards, and inadvertently by the prisoners. The triangle designation led to a social hierarchy amongst the prisoners. The following list describes the colors used:

- Green Common criminals
- Black Communists, Socialists, Gypsies and asocials
- Blue Slave laborers from occupied countries
- Purple Jehovah's Witnesses
- Pink Homosexuals
- Red Political prisoners

For Jewish prisoners, two yellow triangles were used to make a six pointed Star of David. Combination stars were used for prisoners who were both Jewish and a member of any of the groups above. Therefore, a half yellow and half

black Star of David meant that prisoner was both Jewish and a Communist. Since Dachau was primarily a labor camp, prisoners did not have their numbers tattooed on their arms. Tattooing was done in death camps, such as Auschwitz, where after prisoners were stripped of all clothes and personal belongings, the tattooed number was the only means of identification.

Prisoners were used as cheap labor. In some cases, they were hired as laborers by private firms, their "wages" going to the camp. A number of subsidiary camps were set up near Dachau, including Kaufering and Mühldorf, where the prison labor became essential to Germany's ability to produce munitions for the war effort. Originally, prisoners were fed three meals a day for the work they produced. As the war progressed, and resources became scarce, prisoners suffered from extremely long workweeks and were fed little to eat. A prisoners' daily allotment might be a piece of bread and some watery soup. The deadly combination of food shortages and inhuman working conditions led to mass



Fig. 1 - Front gate at Dachau camp

infections and malnutrition. Most of the 30,000 registered deaths at Dachau were from starvation, exhaustion, sickness or torture.

Liberation

As WW II was coming to an end and the Russians advanced on Germany from the east, the SS evacuated the Eastern European concentration camps. Any living prisoners were marched further and further west into Germany. Thousands died during these marches from the cold and sickness or were murdered from not keeping up. Dachau became grossly overcrowded. Just before liberation, the camp which was originally designed for 5,000 prisoners saw a population in the main camp and its subsidiary camps of 67,000. A typhus epidemic during December of 1944 killed thousands. On April 28th, 1944, the SS abandoned Dachau. The next day, April 29th, the US liberated the camp. Unfortunately, even food and medical

help could not save many prisoners who still died due to sickness and advanced malnutrition.

The Dachau Indexing Project

When the US troops liberated Dachau, they found the German's prisoner records. US Occupation forces compiled the prisoner lists from the captured documents and brought both sets back with them to the US. (The originals were sent back to Germany in the 1950's.) Along with other Holocaust records, the prisoner lists were microfilmed and sent to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. In 2001, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum purchased the records, which include millions of names. Amongst these records are the Dachau lists with approximately 120,000 prisoners, half of which were Jewish and half of which were not. The lists were digitized and it is from those digitized lists that approximately 40 volunteers from 10 countries are helping to create an on-line searchable database of all the available Dachau information. The project is being coordinated by JewishGen, and the USHMM. CDs of the raw data are available for sale from JewishGen at their web site. The



Fig. 2 - Dauchau gate house

Dachau Indexing Project is the first of hopefully many projects to make captured information available on line for relatives, researchers and other interested parties.

The Dachau Lists

The prisoner registers list the following information: Family Name, Given Name, Date of Birth, Place of Birth, Last Place of Residence, Street (or other address), Prisoner Number, Category of Prisoner, When Arrived and From Where and Disposition of Prisoner. A review of the lists reveals some interesting historical facts. Some prisoners were designated the category of "NN". Under the "Nacht and Nebel Decree", prisoners in occupied territories who resisted Germany's rule were deported to camps in Germany and were said to have disappeared into the Night and Fog. No one knew where they went or what happened to them. Another prisoner category is "Inv. Tsp." or Invalid Transport. These were prisoners who were aged, insane or incurably ill. Deemed "undesirable" by the Nazis, they were transported to asylums or hospitals and executed. Another

interesting find was that there are a number of prisoners who were born in the USA. These American born prisoners lived in the overrun countries and were imprisoned well before the US entered WW II.

How I Got Involved

JewishGen (<www.JewishGen.org>) is an invaluable resource for family history and learning about Jewish genealogy. The many searchable databases and "how to" information files that can be accessed from the JewishGen site were made available through the efforts of other volunteers. The site also lists projects in progress and looks for volunteers to help complete them. I got involved with the Dachau Project last year as a data entry volunteer. A few months later, I was asked to be a data validator. I am now Project Coordinator for this effort. This article is the result of research I have done on Dachau and from the experience of working with the Dachau records since December 2001.

NAME			
Kurt	19.1.06	Wien	15109
Paul	Wien	Margarethenstr. Sch.DD	23.9.38 n.Bu.
Kurti	12.9.92	Guta	127797 ..
Josef	Guta	Sch.DG	23.10.11.44
Klausner	29.9.05	Hessisch-Odenkr. 36435	gest.26.2.45
Rudi	Lehe	Berlinerstr. Sch.DR	3.11.42 v.Mn.
Küpper	17.9.05	Hamburg	14026
Richard	Seib	Geberstr. Sch. 2 x KL	26.9.38 n.Bu.
Kister	8.10.05	München	33083
Hermann	München	Hohensellernstr. ADR DR	27.9.39 n.M.
(1 x in Lager als AZ 12034 von 10.4.37 - 9.10.37)			
Kister	10.6.92	Reinewitz	21326
Max	Wolgast	PSV DR	gest.13.11.40
Kister	11.2.22	Herrnberg	152631
Gornelius	Herrnberg	Sch.Dell.	2.11.41 n.Bu.
Kister	31.1.03	Stade	27259
Josef	Ordingen	Freiburgerstr. PSV DR	14.9.41 v.Mg.
Kistner	29.8.98	Wallhof	21386
Josef	Wallhof	Sch.DS	2.11.41 n.Bu.
Kistner	4.4.14	Eisenberg	14974
Max	Silpitz	ergg.	Sch.DR
(Zug. 18.6.38, 27.9.39 h.M. sek. 15.8.40)			
Küttner	19.3.09	Schwab.Hall	11 524
Friedrich	Schwab.Hall	Unter Liburgerstr. Sch.DR	Zug.25.5.40
Küttner	3.5.02	Aich	19256
Johann	Aich	b.Karlbad	Sch.DD
Kühweg	7.9.05	Krumau	388
Johann	Mug au	am Bahnhof	Sch.DD
(27.9.39 n.Fl. sek.2.3.40)			
Kufel	7.5.91	Gut Eichenau	3092
Anton	Lubitz	Sch.P.	Zug.14.4.40
Kufel	2.2.99	Panki	3143
Wladislaw	Waltenau	Sch.P.	25.5.40 n.M.
Kufelinski	17.1.11	66137	Litmannst.
Wajlech	Litmannst.	Brunneng.	Sch.P.J.
Kufer	28.9.04	München	11062
Jakob	Althaus	-	-
Kufer	6.11.14	-	19391
Josef	München	AZR DR	19391
Kufer	14.6.18	Venissieur	76061
Marius	Delevant	r.Pressensen	Sch.Fr.
Kuffler	8.7.99	Ogerahelm	17822
Ju. us	Ogerahelm	Brucknerstr.	AZR DR
Kufinski	15.8.07	Schroda5	10579
Ludwig	Zerkow	Kr.Schroda	Sch.P.
Kufner	6.8.94	Neuern	19013
Josef	Eisenstein	-	Sch.DD
(Uh. 14.12.38)			
Kufner	23.10.07	Münzburg	20286
Josef	Münzburg	PSV DR	10.10.40 v.Mg.
Kufniak	12.6.21	Rzeszow	145573
Bronislaw	Rzeszow	Boguslaski	Sch.D.
			gest.27.12.40
			16.3.45 Gr.R.
			befr.Da.

Fig. 3 - Camp records of prisoners

Project data is available to the public at <www.jewishgen.org/databases/holocaust>.

How You Can Help Too

JewishGen is still looking for volunteers who wish to help with the project. A familiarity with Microsoft Excel and an ability to send and receive files through e-mail is required. If you wish to help please contact me at nta@pipeline.org.