

UNRRA

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Histories of Individual Camps

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ANNEX (c)
HISTORY OF A POLISH CAMP
WILDFLECKEN

U. N. R. R. A.

U.S. ZONE GERMANY.

HISTORY REPORT NO 30 - HISTORIES OF INDIVIDUAL CAMPS.

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U. N. R. R. A.

U.S. ZONE GERMANY.

HISTORY REPORT NO. 30.

HISTORIES OF INDIVIDUAL CAMPS.

c: POLISH CAMP WILDFLECKEN,
(DISTRICT 3).

BY: K. HULME,
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
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JUNE 1947.

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HISTORY OF A POLISH CAMP

On August 2nd 1945, one of the first complete teams sent out of Julbuville, a total of 12 persons from six different countries, stopped on a rutty road in a deep forest at ten o'clock in the night, to look for lights, signs or even footprints which might indicate the presence of the Polish camp that should have been within a stone's throw of the truck's halting place. From Munich UNRRA Hq. where we were told that our camp was "somewhere up in the bush", we had come by guess and by God to this forkroads in a forest where the northernmost tip of Bavaria presses up between Thuringia and Hesse.

"Wildflecken should be exactly here" said our French director beaming his flashlight among dark trees. It was within a few hundred yards of where we peered, but Hitler had camouflaged his former training camp so well with planted forest, that we might never have found our assignment had a jeep not come along and led us to it.

Though we had spent the past ten days pushing our truck all the way from the Cherbourg peninsula to this wild spot in the middle of nowhere, we felt new life as we rolled through the camp gate. We were "in the field" at last. We could hardly wait until morning to see our first real DP. There were 20,000 of them up the hill in the woods back of the billets, but we didn't know that then. Munich had been as vague about Wildflecken's population as it had been about its location. "About two thousand Poles" Munich had answered to our eager inquiry.

There were not only twenty-thousand Poles, but also the remnants of a spearhead team whose director had disappeared into space.

The first task was the amalgamation of the two teams and the creation of that intangible force called "team spirit" which was one of the glories of UNRRA's field days and the support that carried us through months of round-the-clock toil. We started with a combined total of 21 team members; before 18 months would have gone by, we were to see 62 UNRRA officers pass through that team of whom, by February 1947, only 8 of the original members remained. International cooperation had first to be learned at home, on the team, before we could tell the conflicting nationalities in our DP population how to get along together. We went through all the phases of national cliques and clans - the French resistance, the Belgian bloc, the English enclave and the Dutch defiance, while the odd-lot Americans, Venezuelans, Swiss and Mexicans, too few to make even a minority group, drifted like wandering minstrels from clan to clan attaching briefly to one or the other as the sympathies dictated.

The difficult road of UNRRA's early field days was strewn with personnel casualties. We were the United Nations in a test tube. If our small experiment could work, one could assume that the same would happen on a larger scale in some distant Utopian future. We held this hope in our hearts and tried desperately to understand each other's national idiosyncrasies. Many rose up to this tall challenge. Many fell by the wayside. After 18 months of the same team in the same camp, the statistics on the tombstones read something like this: 5 ran away from the team without orders, 6 were taken by District, 5 were transferred, 10 resigned, 9 were terminated, and 2 were arrested by the military authorities.

While this crucible testing was going on, we were learning our way around a camp which covered about 12 square miles with some 25 miles of unguarded perimeter; which baked 9 tons of bread daily for its ~~15~~¹⁶,000 inhabitants and had to bring in with broken-down trucks each week - 52 tons of potatoes, 6 tons of fresh vegetables, 8 tons of meat, 5 tons of dried beans, 4 tons of fats and $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons respectively of sugar and salt. Before the end of August 1945, our first month in the field, we repatriated to Poland 8,562 DP's in five separate transports and received 1,573 new DP's from four other camps, the first shipment arriving in the dead of night at a railhead 65 kilometers distant from Wildflecken. With the same trucks we had pushed across France from Jullouville, we shuttled back and forth from camp to the railhead for 2 days and one night, bringing in our weary and ill DP's and some of us spent the night beside the railroad tracks with the remaining DP's, helping them to get comfortable for sleep on the ground beside huge bonfires of railroad ties. Much of the dross was burned out of the team by the time we added up the statistics of that first month in the field.

When we entered the camp, Army was in control in the form of a Captain, but he "took off" at the end of the first week, leaving us a handsome large office equipped with mahogany desks empty of all documents, reports or even carbon copies of letters which might have given us a clue to what had gone on in the camp prior to our arrival. He left a cheerful young Lieutenant up in the Supply Area so at least the food lines continued to operate smoothly while we struggled with the giant task of organizing the services necessary to a city of 15,000 inhabitants.

There was an embryonic Polish Committee which had been formed at the end of June 1945 by order of the Senior Polish Liaison officer attached to 3rd Army. The three Committee members, including a chief, had been nominated by the Polish Commander of the camp, not precisely the democratic self-government which our books had prescribed, but a system which nevertheless worked, so we let it alone for a while. Its chief, a "diamond-in-the-rough" manufacturer from Lodz spoke only one word of German - "schön" - and since he was always replying "Tak Tak" (yes, yes) to our requests, we named him Tak Tak Schön, which was easier to pronounce than his 14-letter name with 5 z's in it. We turned our attention first to forming a police force.

With Army in control, the exterior guard of the camp was assured by a Tank Bn. stationed in the ammunition dump just outside the camp gates. External security was good under these hardy combat men, good for the Germans whose cattle were a constant temptation to plundering Poles. Within the ^{camp} ~~exp~~, however, about 19, 950 Poles were occupied with hunting down the some 50 traitors from the concentration camps, fellow countrymen who had acted as "capos" in Dachau and Buchenwald, serving the Nazis instead of suffering with their own people. Denunciation was rife, shots rang through the woods often and at least twice a week someone came into the office to report finding a body under a bush. We asked our Captain to arm the skeleton police force that manned 40 guard posts in and around the camp. Twelve carbines were authorized - for the warehouse guards, the main kitchens, the police station, etc. Shots still rang out at all hours of the day, but now it was only our Polish police seeing how their carbines worked. Shortly after the creation of this first interior police, a catastrophe occurred which gave us

a solid argument for greatly extending the police force. A Polish woman was accidentally killed by an American guard when she tried to go through the guard lines and failed to understand his GI call to halt. He tried to stop her on the run. We decided then, in accord with the Security Guard officer, to double all the GI sentries with one unarmed Pole who would act as interpreter and call out orders in a language understood by our DP's. Immediately our Polish police jumped to 250 men in 65 guard posts within and around the camp, including the Main Gate, the Bakery, the Stockade. We still had only 12 carbines but our DP police was learning security technique from the GI guards, unconsciously preparing for the time when they would have to take over alone. The doubling continued under two Tank Bn. units and under Division when the former pulled out, until November 5th 1945 when Army handed over to UNRRA full responsibility for the internal administration of the camps and took away all its guns in the weird belief that somehow we could accomplish with clubs what they had accomplished with a full-strength Tank Bn. fully armed. Impassioned pleas to higher levels restored the carbines for security reasons, which we were able to recite in terms of murder, rapine and cattle-rustling.

Internal security, especially in an all-Polish camp, was a problem that haunted us day and night and for which there was never any permanent solution. In the beginning, Polish Guard and Provisional Labor Companies, organized and equipped by Army, lured away one half of our newly organized police force, not only the bodies themselves but also the fine Wehrmacht overcoats and felt-lined boots with which we had clothed the bodies in preparation for the coming winter. Five times in the first 18 months, we had to change our entire police force. Three to four months seemed to be the cycle of its rise

and fall - a promising beginning with every small pickpocket run to earth and arrested, a rising incidence of warehouse thefts unsolved and, finally, the policemen themselves involved. We needed no sixth sense to warn us when we were approaching the end of a police force's usefulness. We could hear the unreported stolen cows and sheep mooing and bleating in blockhouse basements when we made our inspection rounds. Sometimes we could keep the Police Chief, carrying him over to the new organization which greatly simplified our problem. Sometimes however, we lost just our Police Chief and were left with a large body of policemen minus the brain. Two of our Police Chiefs who gave us an unusually long cycle of faithful and reasonably honest service were imprisoned by Army authorities for illegal possession of side-arms, confiscated pistols which they had "forgotten to turn in" to the UNRRA Director.

By the time we formed our third police force in the summer of 1946, we were scraping the bottom of the barrel and the summer repatriation drive was in full swing, taking what remained of our best policemen back to Poland. However, many of those who earlier had been lured away by Army to Guard Companies and Provisional Labor Companies now began to trickle back into camp, weary of the strict routine and hard work down Nurnberg way. We had new police uniforms waiting for them and a promise of helmets to come. We re-formed our police with some of its original elements and were right back where we had started one year ago except that we had an aristocratic young Polish officer as Police Chief, a special importation from Bamberg strongly vouched for by our Polish Liaison Officer. He came just in time. On August 1st, 1946, all troops pulled out of our area and the newly formed Constabulary had not yet appeared to startle the countryside into obedience with their

flaming orange scarves and Martian vehicles. The DP police under its princeling chief provided the sole security for this interim period, a heyday of raiding the camp's Black Market and shooting up its schnapps stills, until the Constabulary finally came along to join in the fun. The two forces representing internal and external security worked together so harmoniously that we finally had to paint OFF LIMITS TO ALL UNAUTHORIZED MILITARY PERSONNEL on our Main Gate and request the Constabulary not to come unannounced into camp except when in hot pursuit.

None of our perennial problems with the DP police was simplified by the presence adjoining our camp of the largest ammunition dump in the whole of Germany, Hitler's prize cache of poison gases, land mines, booby traps, machine guns, sidearms and ammunition of all calibre strewn over acres of ground so deep that you waded literally to the knees in the stuff in the broken-down warehouses hidden in those woods. Experts from the States and Great Britain came in our early days to investigate the possibility of detonating or rendering harmless this suburb of Hell; they said it would take a year to de-activate the dump and recommended that the gases be gotten out first. We lived for more than a year under this constant threat which, if accidentally set off by the Germans or the DP's would, according to our local Military Government, have killed every living thing in three counties including the grasshoppers. Our Poles many of whom had worked there as slave laborers under Hitler, went in and out of the dump fearlessly, knew their way through all the gruesome systems of interlocking bunkers stuffed with explosives and brought back to camp the ammunition necessary for their hidden weapons. Cartridges of any calibre could be bought for one cigarette from the kids in Wildflecken's streets.

While going through these never-ending and never-changing cycles of police forces, we were similarly engaged with the Polish Committees. In the beginning there was Tak Tak Schön, appointed by the Liason Officer attached to 3rd Army. We asked him to form a Committee which would represent the choice of the people and, at the same time, provide one member to work in close liason with each department head of UNRRA - Welfare, Supply, Public Health, Bille-ting and Movements, etc. The camp with its some 65 blockhouses each containing an average 200 inhabitants, was a natural for a free election system. Tak Tak Schön began by having each blockhouse elect a Block Leader which gave us immediately a group of 65 men chosen by the people and answerable to UNRRA. He repatriated to Poland before the final elections but he had given us the organizational start and the natural momentum of Polish politics carried us through to a successful finish.

The elected delegates of the block-houses, with their deputies, became the provisional legislative body and called itself the Council of the Committee. On 18th August 1945, the Council put forth its first three resolutions:

- 1 - "To transform the camp into a town and arrange it like a town-municipality in Poland;"
- 2 - "To give this town the name '~~durzy~~ Durzyn' from the race of Slavs called 'Durzyney' which in the V and VI centuries after Christ was living on the territory of northern Bavaria and later driven away to the East by the Germans";

3 - "To confirm the organizational status of the autonomous authorities at Durzyn as a constitution".

We read the resolutions and waited through several secondary elections for the final one which would produce the man with whom we could deal directly. The Council of the Committee first nominated from each block a Municipal Councillor "of Polish nationality of spotless past who knows the Polish language in speaking and in writing and who is no less than 24 years of age".

On 26th August 1945, the elections of the Municipal Council took place. Every inhabitant of the camp who was of age had the right to vote. Sixty-one elected councillors emerged from this first round. On 1st September 1945, the 61 members of the Municipal Council elected the Municipal Commission, consisting of seven members, and, immediately after, this Commission unanimously elected the President of the town - a world-known economist and former member of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) who had frequented the salons of Warsaw and Paris before the war.

The banquet which the new President gave to celebrate his sweeping victory made the eyes of the invited UNRRA team pop. The platform of the new party was toasted with impassioned speeches which promised suppression of Black Market, of schnapps stills, of cattle-rusting and hen-house maraudings whilst platters of prime roast beef and delicately baked chicken circulated up and down the 30-foot banquet table over the tops of brandy bottles spaced at 10-inch intervals. The Golden Age of Wildflecken was ushered in.

Our new President was a delicate small man with sensitive face and a mind like a steel trap, quick and strong. He spoke French fluently. Contact between him and our French director was direct linguistically and as indirect from every other point of view as the progress of a wary fox. The President wanted everything for his people. UNRRA wanted everything from his people. We needed manpower desperately for all the growing projects. We could get it easily for any educational or cultural project, but we were thinking then of the thousand men we needed daily to go into the forest and cut the 32,000 cubic metres of wood required for our winterization program. We were thinking of the technicians necessary for every public service feeding a city of 15,000 people. We had no nearby German city supplying us with lights, water, sewage disposal. We were dependent on ourselves alone for these vital services and we needed Poles to man the transformers, pump station and sewage disposal plants which Hitler had left behind, fairly intact, but now still in the hands of those same Germans who had served him so well, whom we had to replace with DP's just as soon as we could train them to do the job.

Our weekly meetings with the President/ were sessions of intensive horse-trading. He would promise a garbage-disposal squad if we would make a special issue of clothing to the Concentration Camp group, numbering 350 of his faithful constituents. He would promise the wood-cutters if we would double their cigarette ration. Incredible manhours were spent in discussion, with the President's Man Friday taking notes on every UNRRA promise and the UNRRA secretary taking notes on every Committee commitment. In travail was born the functioning municipality of

"Durzyn" - Assembly Center 91-252, the largest Polish Camp in all Occupied Germany.

The functioning municipality was not yet a month old when Army came upon the scene once again, in the form of a full Colonel of 79th Division who immediately created a team of officers parallelling the UNRRA team and "tookover" administration of the camp in a manner that frightened UNRRA and the DP's into the same corner and made them blood brothers for life. This military occupation of an UNRRA camp was inaugurated by an inspection of a Brigadier General who laid down six orders which were to go into effect immediately under the command of the Colonel:

- 1 - An armed guard to be placed immediately before the door of every blockhouse to see that the 200 inhabitants arose at 08:00 hours and maintained it in sanitary condition;
- 2 - Immediate construction of a prison surrounded by barbed wire into which would be put all DP's who dropped paper in the streets, concealed blockhouse sweepings in basement corners, etc; these malefactors to be confined without food;
- 3 - All Poles to be put to work immediately and any inactive person seen in the streets subject to immediate arrest;
- 4 - The Polish Committee to be suppressed immediately since the new CO did not wish to deal with an organization "functioning on Soviet lines";

- 5 - At least 1,500 Poles to be persuaded to repatriate every 12 days, and if they would not go willingly, then life would be made correspondingly miserable to make them change their minds swiftly;
- 6 - Immediate VD examination to be made of every woman in the camp, with slide, and immediate inoculation for typhus, typhoid and smallpox for everyone, with diphtheria inoculation additional for children under 15 years.

This was in mid-September 1945. Our patient constructive efforts with our DP's, "helping others to help themselves" were laid aside as we took orders and counter-orders from a full "chicken Colonel" and in secret soothed the injured feelings of the Polish Committee who sent a delegation with a statement which read in part: "Our camp is occupied more rigorously than were concentration camps during the war or German cities since the peace". The team came together like a fist closed for fight and once, in the dark of the night just the way it happens in movies, a Field Supervisor came through from our headquarters in Bamberg, the first visitor from the outside world since we had lost ourselves in that remote Bavarian bush. He gave us courage and counselled patience. The "occupation" lasted 51 days. On 5th November, Army handed over to UNRRA complete responsibility for the internal administration of Dp camps and we began, not where we had left off before the Army-control interlude, but where we had begun in the beginning, because so many projects had been suppressed or destroyed utterly. Army's talent for relief work, we concluded, could hardly be rated topflight.

Simultaneously with police and municipal self-government organization, the services and workshops were being born. Our vast former SS training camp was like the Roman Colisseum when the Caesars fell from power - a source for incredible and continuous plunder by all the surrounding countryside. In the brief period after liberation, before Army first took over the camp, the Germans had come in trucks from as far as 60 miles to load up with building materials, electrical fixtures, furniture and tools. It was only a matter of weeks, but tons of stuff were carted away. The Major who took over command in June 1945 began his great task of recuperation by issuing an order to Burgomeisters of the surrounding villages and towns that all stolen material must be returned by the Germans. When UNRRA came on the scene the recuperation was still going on. UNRRA officers went daily into the small towns, identifying Wildflecken material and ordering it back to Wildflecken. One of the first retrieved items was a fine saw-mill which we re-installed in the camp in the spot from which it had been lifted, thus giving rise to one of the most essential services for the forthcoming ~~x~~ winter - the wood-cutting program. To give our population the amount of wood per person required by directives, we had to cut 32,000 cubic metres before mid-October when, according to the natives, the first snows would fly.

Trucks serviced the sawmill and since we had only four aged Fordsons in mid-August, motor maintenance became a vital and instant necessity. The first repair shops came into existence with the machine-shop equipment which we hauled back from hidden places in German barns 50 miles away. The UNRRA drivers organized the shops as well as the tool-recuperation parties which equipped them, and so great was their ~~xxx~~ zeal that soon we had Opels, Adlers and

Mercedes sedans towed into camp to serve the team members whose precious shoe-leather was wearing thin. (We were building up big headaches for the period of law and order which followed later, when we had to register these "recuperated" cars and explain to Military Government how we had come by them; but we were too pressed to worry about that then.)

So many services were growing simultaneously, the camp was like a boom town with goods flowing in from lawful requisitions, (such as the furniture from Hof ~~x~~ which came as a result of an agreement made with the Army to take over material from evacuated German military installations) and from lawless seizure. Army taught us the phrase "moonlight requisitions" which meant simply walking into German houses and taking what we ~~x~~ needed. If we had not "cut corners" in this fashion in the early days, we could never have ~~xxx~~ set up the camps for the coming winter, since normal supply channels did not begin to function for the remote and isolated camps until some months had gone by, and then they functioned spasmodically with "NON AVAILABLE" stamped in red on our most crucial requisitions.

We used everything but bloodhounds in our hunt for electrical materials. Prior to our arrival in the camp, it had served as a temporary shelter for 20,000 Russians. What the liberated Germans had not removed previously, the Russians took when they went out. Of the 6,000 light sockets required for the entire camp, only a few hundred remained. We hunted sockets, switches, and copper wire everywhere as well as parts for the 4 transformers within the camp which had to reduce the 20,000 volts received from Wurzburg (big city 100 kilometers distant) into the usable camp current of 400 volts. A few hardy UNRRA souls penetrated the

ammunition dump, with permission from Army, and gathered up vast quantities of electrical material, enough to found an Electrical Shop within our own camp where repairs of every electrical nature could be made, including those on the radios which we later brought home from our "moonlight requisitions".

In late September 1945, a vexing civic morals problem gave rise to our biggest building-material procurement. Within the camp but isolated from the central blockhouses, was a large PW Sector where Hitler had kept Allied prisoners during the war, principally French. These low barracks were "sub standard" and could not be used as living quarters for our DP's. We abandoned them to nature and presently they became the trysting-place for amorous Poles who could find no privacy in the crowded blockhouses of the camp. Lighted cigarette ends were dropped around the dry wood buildings and we had so many spectacular fires in this area that it was decided to demolish completely the enticements of the PW Sector. By order of the UNRRA Director and with permission from Army, the prisoners' barracks were razed and we were now the happy possessors of vast quantities of lumber, bricks, electric wiring, pipes and plumbing materials, - urgently needed supplies which then were not available through any channels of UNRRA or of Army. We recovered so much plumbing installation that we were able immediately to set up a Plumber Shop in the camp, thus rounding out neatly ^{or} a series of essential workshops.

As fast as the workshops were established, the Polish Committee, by now developed into a Tammany-like octopus with tentacles touching every aspect of camp life, supplied us with the technicians required. By the first of October 1945, 2,918 persons, or about one-fourth of the total population, were working. We

estimated that we had 30 days to go to complete our winterization program before the first snows.

Every camp in Germany was entered in this race against time, in that last quarter of 1945, which was our first 4 months in the field. What was established in that period was the enduring foundation of a self-dependent, self-governing DP camp and everything that followed after, during the years 1946 and 1947 was but an elaboration and perfecting of the organization achieved before Christmas of 1945. In an all-Polish camp such as ours, the task was further complicated by repatriation which was our prime obligation to promote and encourage. From mid-August until 19th October 1945, we sent off eight transports to Poland carrying a total of 11,354 repatriates, more in those three months than the entire year 1946. We waved goodbye to our key workers in droves and sought their replacements in the equivalent number of incoming Poles from other camps, hiring them often right out of the boxcars before they had been trucked up into camp if we noted that they spoke English and carried a typewriter, a sewing-machine or a carpenter's kit in their luggage. Our first employment program was carried out visually. When we saw an operating table being unloaded from a boxcar, we knew we had a new doctor for our fast-growing medical service. When we saw an upright piano, we knew we had an addition to our camp orchestra. The entire team met every incoming transport, each department head seeking the specialized workers he needed and especially the tools of his trade which were hired right along with the worker.

Before the end of the year 1945 we had established a kindergarten with 100 babes registered, an elementary school with 627 pupils, a high school with 75 pupils and various university-

level adult classes in languages, philosophy and sociology. About 60 teachers and professors worked fulltime in our schools and the "Education and Culture Department" of our Polish Committee was in correspondence with other Polish camps all over Germany, trying to lure their best intellects to Wildflecken. We had three different theatres operating full blast, one of which was famous over the entire Zone - the "Stara Banda", a vaudeville company whose chief inspiration was a married couple, originally vaudeville troupers from Warsaw who wrote the librettos, designed the costumes, painted the settings, rehearsed the troupe and acted the principal roles in a series of theatrical events which would have made the fortune of a Broadway producer and which made so much money for our Polish Committee that it became difficult to handle in its plutocratic independence.

The Medical and Nursing departments were busy setting up the four hospitals and polyclinic which serviced the camp, organizing School Health programs and Well Baby Clinics and giving the prescribed VD examination to the 8,781 adults over 15 years of age in the camp. Before the end of 1945, 131 babies had been delivered in our Maternity Hospital, the beds in the TB hospital had been increased from 20 to 45 and a total of 736 tuberculin tests had been made on children under 15 years with tuberculin^g brought back from Institut Pasteur in Paris by one of our French nurses on furlough, since none was available in the entire American Zone.

The "NON AVAILABLE" stamp checkered ^o_A medical supply requisitions, and while our UNRRA drivers were foraging the countryside for machine-shop-tools, our UNRRA nurses were on the hunt for thermometers, bed-pans, baby scales, breast pumps and syringes, purchasing these when they found them with anything the Germans would accept, generally silk stockings, cigarettes or coffee and

foodstuffs received in packages from home. We worked for more than a year with a Rube Goldberg baby scale created by one of our Canadian nurses from weird objects found in the Machine Shop and we examined nearly 5,000 women for VD with the total of 6 rubber glove-fingers which were sent in response to our requisition for 2,000. Our Medical Officer was a travelling salesman, forever on the road in quest of medicines and equipment, forever following hints and rumors of a new dump of captured German medical supplies suddenly thrown open to first-comers, and when he returned to the team with such priceless items as forceps, scalpels and hypodermic needles, we fêted him as on a birthday.

The first mass requisition we ever received in the total requested was stove-pipes and stoves, carloads and carloads arriving just as the first snows fell but in time, nevertheless, to complete the winterization of the blockhouses with a stove in every one of the 2800 rooms where our DP's lived, cooked, dried laundry and workers' boots and heated babies' milk 24 hours around the clock. With the advent of the stoves, another workshop was born - the Central Heating X Section which later developed into the chief servicing unit for transports to Poland - "a stove in every boxcar and a sand-box under every stove".

Transport was the universal obsession of UNRRA in all of the days of its field existence, but it was a nightmare in the autumn ~~of~~ of 1945 when we had so much to accomplish before the famous snows of our part of the world (called in Baedeker "the poor man's Alps"*) would block us in for several months. By mid-October, we had built our truck fleet up to 45, with the aid of our Colonel who belonged to the richest motorized outfit in the ETO - the 79th Division. Forty-five 2½ ton GMC's looked assuring on paper, but we needed 20 of these trucks daily for camp service, for rations distributions to the 12 kitchens stretched along a mile-long street,

for garbage disposal, fuel to the kitchens and utilities services, which left us only 25 for wood-hauling when and if we did not need some of those 25 to take care of sudden incoming and outgoing DP transports or sudden orders to pick up 14,000 Red Cross Food Parcels in a warehouse 100 kilometers distant. We estimated that we must have a minimum of 70 available trucks daily if we were to bring in the remaining 24,000 cubic metres of wood from the forest and the 1500 tons of potatoes allocated to us for our winter reserve from all the outlying German villages. We also had hanging heavy over our heads the possibility that we would suddenly be called upon to pick up the 3 months winter food reserve for 15,000 persons that Army had recommended and authorized and which was being slowly accumulated in some unknown warehouse probably 100 or more kilometers distant from our camp. We knew that when and if the call came, we would require a minimum of 125 trucks to haul in the 3-months reserve.

We watched the skies and worked on our Colonel and were thankful when God sent us an early premonitory flurry of snow which enabled us to secure a Negro trucking company to accelerate the wood-hauling and some electrical saws which permitted us to double our daily cut of wood. Our Colonel was so moved by our prophecies of disaster that he even ransacked his own outfit for hand-saws and axes, which brought us no thanks from his Captains and Lieutenants who themselves were under the same orders to get their wood cut before winter set in.

With thoughts of winter and of a thousand small tin stoves red-hot in all the blockhouse rooms came naturally the thought of fire - fighting apparatus to help us quell prevention. The Army had sent its fire-fighting apparatus to help us quell the spectacular fires

of the old PW Sector before it was razed, but we knew Army would soon be going out and that we must organize a Fire Brigade of our own. The discovery of a rich cache of asbestos fire-hose in one of our warehouses gave us the starting material. Axes we would have plenty when the wood-cutting program finished. All we needed was a fire-wagon. Once again the resourceful UNRRA drivers came to the ~~me~~ rescue with a light German truck which they had "found", almost in working order. The Poles selected for firemen insisted that this be painted bright red and bought this non-available color themselves in their own Black Market to give style to their vehicle. When we saw the scarlet beauty they had created, all hung with red buckets and gleaming-edged axes, we naturally planned a ceremony for the inauguration of the Fire Brigade. The UNRRA Headquarters Building situated on a hill toward which all the steep roads from camp converged, was the proper setting for the event. The flat parking-space before the Hq., walled on three sides with handsome stone blocks, was where the Fire Brigade procession could wind up with a flourish to receive the salute from our Colonel and the assembled UNRRA team. The camp band was on hand on inauguration day as well as the President of the Polish Committee with notes for his speech fluttering in his hands. The band struck up the Polish national anthem as the gorgeous scarlet fire-wagon curved down the hill toward where we waited. Maybe the Polish driver thought he was already on his way to a fire. He accelerated on the downgrade, failed to make the left turn soon enough into the flat cobbled parking-space and crashed into the downhill side of the enclosure knocking down three trunk-sized blocks of yellow granite. Our beautiful fire-wagon looked like a red lobster flung against a stone wall. Every part of it was

broken to bits but the driver and the cheering firemen escaped without a scratch. Our ~~Sir~~ Colonel, unaccustomed to Polish anti-climaxes, thrust his swagger-stick under his arm and walked off speechless while we comforted our dismayed firemen and promised to try to find them another fire-wagon. Meanwhile, we told them, they might as well organize themselves into snow-removal squads which we would be needing very soon.

On 11th November 1945, five days after Army had pulled out of the DP operation, the first heavy snowfall transformed our hills and forests into a veritable fairyland and when we gazed upon the man-made mountain of sawed wood up in our Central Supply Area, we blessed our departed Colonel who - even if he had attempted to suppress our Polish Committee and prod every man to his feet by 8 A.M. including the tuberculous cadavers from concentration camps - had, nevertheless, made possible a stock of wood which would see us through until the first thaws of mid-March.

There was one urgent task to accomplish before the snow blocked us off completely from the outside world. We knew we could not deliver the daily wood and food supplies around our vast camp unless we had a snow-plow to keep our cobbled boulevards clear of drifts. We found a broken snow-plow in one of the warehouses which we had not had time to explore in the busy days of the Army occupation, and in another shed we unearthed a rusted German half-track. If we could mend these two elements and stick ~~up~~ them together, we would have our snow-plow. UNRRA drivers took care of the half-track, cannibalizing the shot-up wrecks of German tanks which strewn our woods to find the necessary spare parts. We had a welding-machine to restore the broken plow, but no welding rod was available anywhere. After hunting and begging half around

Germany in vain, we finally came back to our own partially-explored warehouses and began again the patient search for the welding-rod that should logically have been secreted somewhere, since the welding machine had been found in situ just where Hitler had left it.

In our search we turned up hundreds of pairs of Wehrmacht skis and canvas ski-boots with flexible wood soles (material which our Welfare pounced upon for winter sports for the Boy and Girl Scouts) and we discovered an entire warehouse stuffed with cardboard targets, mansized and man-shaped with realistically painted faces under identifiable ~~xx~~ Allied helmets, and bales of target-practice plans, recognizable color-prints of Wildflecken's surroundings with the staked targets painted in at measured intervals; these latter the Poles carried joyously back to blockhouses to use as wall-paper to brighten their rooms. Then at last we found several bundles of welding rod.

The snow-plow was welded back to usefulness, attached to the clattering caterpillar and all through the winter this mammoth contrivance grumbled along the camp roads consuming enormous quantities of precious gasoline but maintaining our lines of communication open for trucks, ambulances and sedans. Occasionally the Tank Battalion men stationed in the Ammunition Dump outside our camp gates came humbly to beg a loan of our snow-plow to rescue one of their own half-tracks buried in a drift, and we always tactfully suggested to their Ordnance which rare spare-parts we would accept in return for the snow-plow service.

Thus by hook and by crook, by cunning and by force, we prepared ourselves and our DP's for the first UNRRA-care winter in Germany and it turned out to be one of the most severe in the history of Mitteleuropa. By Christmas the roads were iced so that

no truck could roll and we delivered the UNRRA Christmas food to our 15,000 DP's on sleds made by the DP children from the sawed-off tops of iron bedsteads. For six days we were totally cut off from the outside world, including the warehouse-world which supplied us with flour, so there was no bread for that week, but UNRRA talked itself valiantly through the dilemma so there were no riots or other unseemly incidents.

The months of snow and ice seemed endless. The Supply Officer secured by his own special necromancy a pile of tanned sheepskins which were tailored into fur-lined jackets-with-hoods for the women of the team, while the men wore cast-off fur-lined garments of the Air Force which were handed down to the UNRRA people who were not too proud to accept. (Much later we were all going to receive clothing-cards negotiable in the Army Clothing Store, but we had to hunt our clothing for that first winter just as we had hunted every other item which enabled us to live through it.) The winter ended on the 27th March when a train of 40 box-cars pulled into Wildflecken bringing 1,000 DP's to us, the first shipment of the total 13,100 which were to be sent to us from all points in Germany during the year 1946. On May 11th the first 1946 repatriation transport to Poland was readied with some 200 repatriates willing to go. The annual cycle of incoming and outgoing had begun again.

During these months of hectic activity with every department and public service being organized simultaneously, we had had no time to sit back and take stock of what, if anything, we had accomplished. Though the team met three times daily for meals, each section was in the dark about the activities of all the other sections and the officers in Welfare thought they were doing all

the work, whereas Transport, Supply, Medical and Utilities were convinced that only their departments were working days and nights and Sundays too. Then came the 30th of May, a holiday in the American Zone and an event which our DP's decided to celebrate with an all-out demonstration in honor of the American Army, of UNRRA and of their own progress after nearly one year of UNRRA care. Although we did not realize it, our DP's were going to show us in their own inimitable fashion^o_A the results of our labor with them and for them

For many days before the holiday, all workshops were closed to UNRRA officers by the DP's in charge of them. There was mysterious bustle all through the camp and many shops were working nights, with blankets hung at workshop windows so no UNRRA officer could look in and see what was going on. An air of awesome secrecy prevailed which made us exceedingly nervous, considering that we had invited for the event the Colonel of our local tactical unit as well as ranking officers from the Fifteenth Infantry Division. Memories of the Fire Brigade fiasco made us all uneasy. Not even the UNRRA officers who spoke Polish could find out what the DP's were up to.

At dawn on Decoration Day, a prefabricated reviewing stand appeared on Eisenhower Square, formerly Adolph Hitler Platz, in the center of our barracks town and from nearly every window in our 70 blockhouses American flags were hung. The flags were made of paper, cloth or cardboard and some of them had ten stripes and some of them had the starry blue field upside down, but the general effect was brave and stirring. The Color Guard of Fifteenth Infantry was due at 10 A.M. but we had two hours of celebration before this signal event. Our DP program masters handed us the schedule for the

day, a series of 25 events neatly typed in English under the caption: "Programme of the celebration of the Allied Armies' soldier holiday and the festival to honor the people fallen in the fight with Na²₁-Germans that will take place on the Thursday 30th of May 1946."

At 8 o'clock there was solemn High Mass and right after there was "the unveiling of the Commemorative Plaque and the laying of the crowns down". The plaque was set in a garden spot before the Polish Committee. The flags of America and Poland were painted brightly on it and a tribute to all who had fallen in the fight against Nazi tyranny. Every group in the camp, from Boy Scouts to the Society of Engineers marched in solemn formation and laid upon the memorial plaque a great wreath of flowers twined with fern and pine. Immediately after the speeches and national anthems, the Fifteenth Infantry marched in and our memorial services moved into the wider spaces of Eisenhower Square (which we noted our Poles had re-named Liberation Square for the day). Our DP Police presented arms and saluted the National and Regimental colors of the Fifteenth Infantry as its Colonel commanding and our own Polish Liason Officer entered the field. An American bugler played "To the Colors" while the peculiarly moving ceremony of the salute was acted out on the wide parade ground with 14,000 DP's and 18 UNRRA proudly watching their Polish police perform smartly with one of the crack combat outfits of the ETO.

Then there was the parade, starting in a very un-Polish manner, exactly on the dot of 10:30 as scheduled. We stood with Army officers on the flower-decked reviewing stand and watched the result of our labors march by - Scouts, teachers, and school pupils, the women's basketball squad and the men's track athletes,

the Education and Culture Department, the Public Health Department, the Hospitals and the Society of Former Prisoners of Concentration Camps. It seemed impossible to realize that a little less than one year ago these sturdy sun-tanned Poles had been gaunt placeless beings just released from concentration camps and slave-labor corrals, that they had been living precariously off the devastated land of their former conquerors and wondering in despair if they would ever get home again or to any place resembling home where they might rest a while and piece together their shattered lives.

The Central Heating Department marched by disguised as a stove with real smoke pouring from its chimney. The Sewing Shop paraded a float on which stood a great dressmaker's dummy and all the little seamstresses followed with big cardboard scissors painted silver and wearing as boutonnieres on their white blouses miniature flannel booties and bonnets reminiscent of the hundreds of layettes they had already produced. The Bakery Department carried spectacular loaves baked in the shape of men and monsters six feet tall. The Technical Workshops bore the symbols of their trades - monkey wrenches, planes and T-squares of Gargantuan size and the UNRRA Canteen had dummy tubes of toothpaste, tins of shoe polish and jars of hair pomade on the tops of tall poles. The Theatre Company's float with living statues moved past like a miniature stage complete with spotlights and stagehands. The "Social Guardians" of our Old Folks' Home paraded their orphan grannies all dressed up in new coats and warm shawls. Kindergarten babes wore paper hats shaped like daisies and mushrooms and they laid bouquets on the reviewing stand as they toddled past. Bringing up the rear of the procession was our Fire Brigade, ensconced now in a sedate

but reliable Army truck with all the hooks and ladders and the same big drum of "recuperated" asbestos hose which had had such a brief and stunning début six months before.

Some of the UNRRA officers had tears in their eyes as the parade ended, the way parents look when their children graduate. We stood at stiff attention while the camp band ~~px~~ played its peculiar Slavic version of "Star Spangled Banner" and then we picked up the magnificent bouquets of hothouse tulips and roses that the various contingents had laid at our feet as they had marched by.

"They've come quite a ways from where we saw them a year ago", said our visiting Colonel.

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