

'MURDER PLANT'

SEIZED IN REICH

Estimated 20,000 Put To Death By Nazi Executioners

With U.S. 1st Army in Germany, April 9 (AP)—A Nazi "murder factory," where an estimated 20,000 political prisoners, Jews and slave laborers were put to death, was discovered in an insane asylum near Limburg by the 1st Army, Allied officers disclosed today.

A story of death and torture and ghoulisn feasts by drink-sodden executioners was told by the investigators, Capt. Brinkley Hamilton, a British officer attached to an American infantry division, and Lieut. W. R. Johnson, of Loveland, Colorado.

The asylum had been located previously by Lieut. George Walker, of Deshler, Ohio, and Capt. Alton H. Jung, of San Antonio, Texas, after their suspicions were aroused by tales told by German residents of the village of Hadamar, 4 miles north of Limburg.

Three Arrests Ordered

They questioned German officials of Hadamar and on the basis of their reports Major Harvey M. Coverly, of Sausalito, Cal., ordered the arrests of three Germans who ran the asylum—a 70-year-old doctor, a 45-year-old chief woman's nurse and a middle-aged chief warden.

The asylum, the officers learned, was one of six "plants" set up by the Nazis inside Germany to dispose scientifically of slave laborers who were unruly or had outlived their usefulness to the German war machine. They gave this account of the slaughter house:

German civil authorities themselves estimated that 15,000 victims
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Nazi 'Murder Plant' Found; Deaths Of 20,000 Estimated

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were gassed and cremated, and another 5,000 killed by drugs or poison and buried in communal graves near the asylum walls.

Crazed Inmates Raised Terror

After residents of Hadamar complained repeatedly of the stench of burning bodies and the Bishop of Muenster protested, the Nazis switched from gas to hypodermic injections, and from cremation to mass burial.

The killings continued up to March 21—eight days before the arrival of the American armor.

They were described as "mercy killings" authorized by a 1939 Nazi statute. Political prisoners and slave laborers—particularly Russians, Poles and Dutch—who became too weak to work were first starved, then declared "hopelessly ill," and slain.

Terror was added to the place by 300 crazed inmates who were allowed to run free in the awesome underground dungeons.

A Tough-Looking Man

"Nobody would believe it," Johnson said. "It had underground chambers with dripping water, bats flying around and little crazy men jumping out at you at every step. . . .

"The director in charge was a big tall Nazi surgeon, about 70 years old, a graduate of Heidelberg, with saber scars on his face. He was gray-haired but I never saw a tougher-looking man in my life. The chief nurse—her job was to put the death needle into women patients—was about six feet tall and built like a football player. She was as ugly as a witch. The head keeper was a mousey-looking middle-aged man who had been promoted from driving victims to the asylum to the actual job of doing away with them.

"It was the head keeper who gave us the first real tipoff on how the place operated. He told us the asylum never held more than 500 patients and showed us that there were only 481 graves in the cemetery. There were three fresh, empty graves and when we asked him about them he said, 'We always keep three graves ahead.'

Only Sane People Killed

"Captain Hamilton noticed then that the graves were seven feet or more deep and bulb-shaped. Most German graves now are only a few inches deep. . . . We learned that instead of one body in each grave there from six to twenty. . . ."

The English officer, a veteran of twenty years at London's Bow Street police station, said it was "bloody-awful business—worse than anything I ever heard of." He said he learned that on one day they took 500 Russians into the place and not one came out alive.

"When we first walked through it the insane inmates, laughing and screaming, followed us around in packs," Hamilton said. "There were dwarfs and stupid giants, but all seemed harmless. Only the sane people there were killed.

SS Men Provided Help

"Each morning the surgeon director, the head keeper and the head nurse held a conference and decided on those to be killed during the day. . . . The head keeper gave the men a narcotic which in their weakened conditioned quickly killed them. The head nurse did the same for the women. When the head keeper wasn't around, one of his assistants did the job.

"One assistant said the doctor was regarded as a kind man because if one of the victims fought against taking the hypo needle the surgeon would not let the attendants beat him into submission. He just let the man go without food until he was too weak to object."

The investigators said the "murder factory" started operating sometime in 1941 and that the gas chambers and crematorium were operated by SS men sent from Berlin.

A Drinking Orgy

"After their ten-thousandth killing, the SS men had a drinking orgy," Hamilton said. "They cleaned out the skulls of some of their victims and used them as drinking cups. Townspeople and former employes at the asylum testified to this."

The officer said some of the victims were "young children who were half Jews."

"Most of the victims appeared to be Russian men and women workers who couldn't stand the strain of hard work and little food on the German farms and in the factories," he said. "One nurse in the asylum defended the killings, saying it was better for these people to be put away because they were sick and useless, even to themselves.

Pneumonia Blamed

"There also were many Poles and some Dutch killed. I don't know whether they killed French or Belgians—but we found no evidence to prove they did.

"The medical director of the district had to prepare reports on the deaths. These people would seal them and send them in complete secrecy to Berlin. Those were his orders. In most cases the cause of death was given as pneumonia or dysentery.

Major Coverly, who listened as the two officers told their story, broke in:

"Yes, and the day after we found the asylum three of the patients still there were so weak they died. The cause of their death was given as 'sleeping sickness.'"

"A Doctor Of Honor"

Throughout the period of executions by drugs, which began after the furor among the townspeople over the gas killings had died down,

the director in charge of the asylum carried out to the letter the legal principles set down by the Nazi euthanasia law that the victims be diagnosed by a reputable physician as "incurably ill." Under the Nazi party starvation technique this only required the interval of time necessary for the ailing workers to break down from lack of food.

Confronted by the evidence and testimony on the operations of his "murder factory," the surgeon, Captain Hamilton said, only replied:

"I have always been a doctor of honor."