

The outside look of the camp

Hermann Noell, one out of few German prisoners in Bisingen describes in a report for the French Military Government in Hechingen 1945/46 what the concentration camp looked like:

“The camp consisted of a large wet meadow, surrounded by a dangerous barbed wire fence which was secured by sharp obstacles, now and then interrupted by watch towers. On the towers and in the barracks armed SS-men watched the inmates. At first the prisoners (...) had to sleep in poor tents on the moist meadow, later on they were put into barracks, i.e. bad horse stables. There were eight barracks for all inhabitants. (...) In six of them there were shared dormitories; along the walls they had erected racks on which they put three boards on top of each other; always three prisoners had to sleep on one board, although there was just room for one man. In the beginning there were no blankets, later on there was one blanket for three men. Often they fought hard over this blanket and comradeship got destroyed. True friendship was not to be established though, as the leaders of the camp opposed it.”

Labor in the oil shale-works

Hermann Noell: “Every prisoner who could stay upright had to work no matter if they did or did not want to. The majority of the inmates were made to quarry shale on a terrain which was close-by and get oil out of those stones. This job was hard, very hard and was controlled by SS- and OT-men. (...) The physical energy needed was much higher compared to what was gained by the short rations of food. Therefore failure and collapse was predictable. The intention of the SS-men was to drain all energy out of the prisoners and then just leave the victims with their misery. If one collapsed due to weakness and hunger they would not be left lying, no, they were beaten to death. (...) The initiative was mostly with SS-men, sometimes with the OT-men.” (OT=Organisation Todt)

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