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German People Must Answer for Crimes Rep. Luce Tells About Horrors of Buchenwald

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SOMEWHERE IN GERMANY, Apr. 26.—It is hard for the ordinary people of the Democracies really to believe that torture can be the policy—the state policy—of a modern European nation. And yet physical torture, the torture of men and women of their own country, and of all countries, for their political and religious convictions has been the carefully pursued policy of the Nazi state.

At the Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar, I have seen one of the many places in Germany where the Nazi put this horrible policy into effect. I have seen at Buchenwald how thousands of the political prisoners of the Nazis have been beaten, gassed, burned, and slowly, very slowly, been allowed to starve to death.

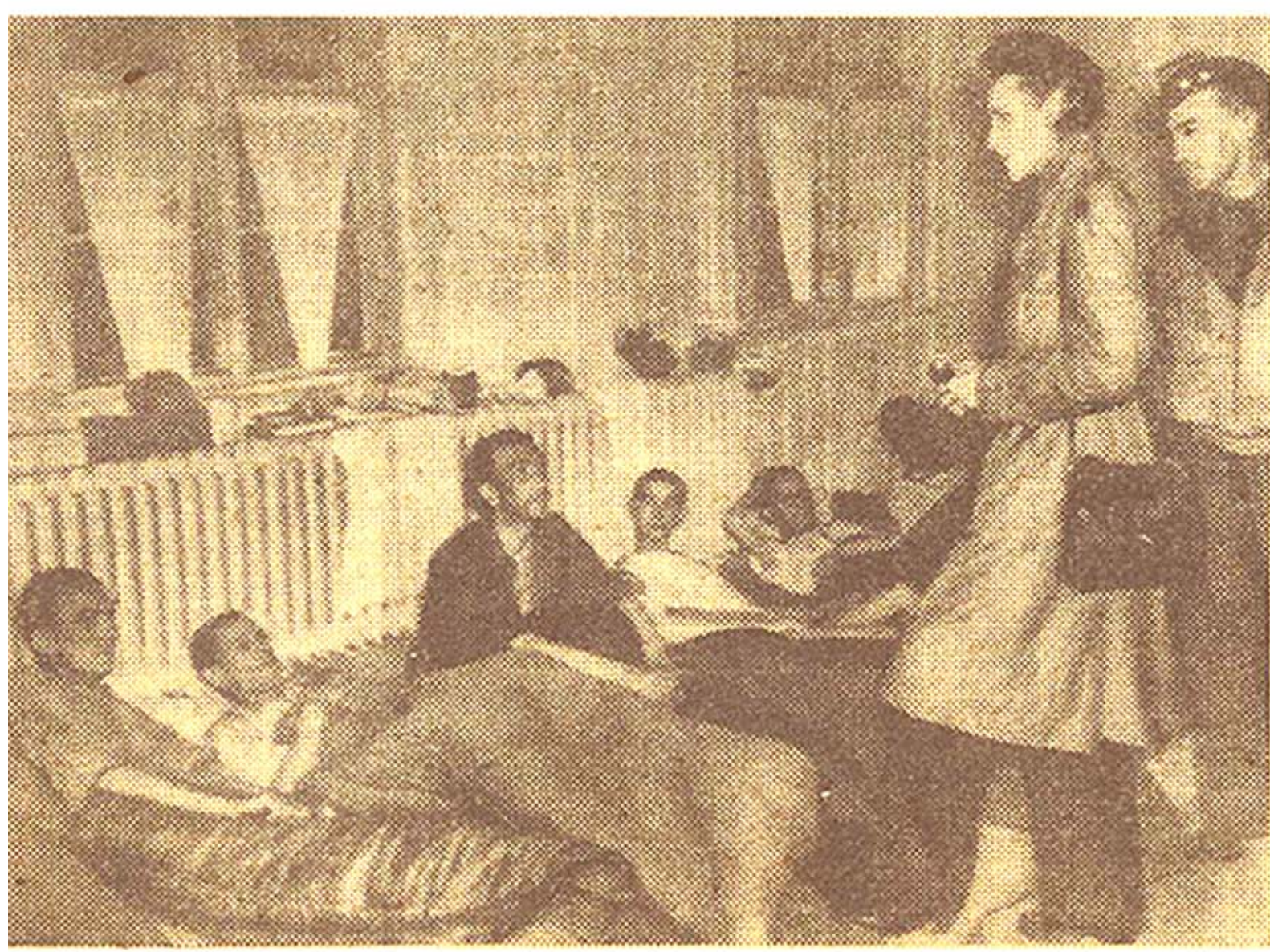
In days to come, many Germans, and perhaps some of the peoples of the Allied countries will arise to say that accounts of Nazi atrocities were either greatly exaggerated or were sheer propaganda. Well, I am one person, and among many others, who will be able to say that she has seen examples of these atrocities with her own eyes.

Starvation Policy

At Buchenwald I have seen crematories, rows upon rows of burning ovens, still full of splintered, charred human bones and skulls and blackened corpses. I have seen cartloads of horribly emaciated corpses, starved and tortured bodies, piled like kindling wood in the courtyard outside the crematory, waiting to be fired when the Americans came. I have seen the rooms where men have been beaten and strung up by the neck to die for some small breach of camp discipline.

I have talked to the prisoners left there by our own people, because they were still too weak to be moved, and heard from their own starved lips what they endured, how they were made to slave 12, 16 hours a day, in underground factories making German weapons, eating a bowl of thin potato soup, a handful of bread a day, until they died.

Horrors of Buchenwald



Rep. Clare Luce is shown here visiting the tuberculosis patients in the prison hospital at the notorious Nazi death camp at Buchenwald. This "hospital" was formerly the SS bro-el.

It was policy, Nazi policy, to work them and starve them and then throw them into furnaces when they could no longer struggle to their feet. Dead men carry no tales. Well, the 51,000 dead of Buchenwald are talking now, and they are telling the people of the Democracies that they will have died in vain, unless we know and believe what excruciating sufferings they endured.

Let me tell you the thing I saw that angered me most at Buchenwald. It was a little French boy. He was 8½ years old. His growth had been stunted by starvation. His shoulder blades stuck out like little propeller fins under his thin shirt, and his bare little feet could barely shuffle along to carry the bundle of bones which is all that little boy was.

He had been a political prisoner of the Nazis at Buchenwald for two years. Why? What had been his crime?

Curfew Crime'

He had been caught by the Gestapo agents playing with some little friends in the streets of Paris 10 minutes after curfew. And he and his little friends had been picked up, for this crime, and put into a truck and sent to a concentration camp.

His friends had died. But he was a rough little boy, and very brave, and he had been able to work almost as hard as older men in the stone quarries at Weimar. Now he hoped to go home, though he didn't know where his mother was, and they never had known what had become of him that night he disappeared, playing in the street outside his house.

The responsibility for these terrible crimes visited upon hundreds of thousands of innocent men and women, and children, too, in many such camps as Buchenwald—this responsibility falls squarely upon the German people. They bear it in the eyes of God. But not until they are willing to bear it, and have been made to bear it in the eyes of their fellow men, can we admit Germany and its people into the decent family of nations.