

WAR PRISONERS' AID OF THE WORLD'S COMMITTEE OF YMCAs
347 Madison Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

OFLAG 64 - GERMANY

The personnel and program of war prison camps change frequently. The following information regarding Oflag 64 is compiled from letters written by prisoners or reports of visitors to the camp, so it portrays what has been true, perhaps is still true, or may again be true in case changes have occurred.

This camp was known as Oflag 21-B until its present number was assigned in the summer of 1943. At one time it was a camp for French officers. Then, as a result of shifting of camp population late in 1942, it became about 90% British (including Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans). Now a group of American officers are also quartered here.

The camp is situated on the slope of a small hill facing south, and is really a Polish barracks consisting of six blocks, single storey, about 100 yards long, with approximately 180 persons living in each block. Reports from official sources indicate that the men appear to be quite comfortable. They divide their barracks into separate messes of eight people, using their double-tier beds as partitions, and with lockers screening them from the central passage. Also, they have constructed stoves on which to cook food from the Red Cross parcels.

Around the barracks is a garden of about seven acres with good soil for growing vegetables. Inside the camp there is also a sports field. When the British were transferred here in 1942, they brought from their former camps an adequate supply of sports equipment. During the winter, our Geneva office furnished additional supplies, including football boots, Indian clubs and hockey sticks. When our Secretary visited the camp in February 1943 many of the officers were skating. Americans and Canadians asked for baseball or softball equipment for use later on.

Each morning an Australian field chaplain holds prayer services in the camp chapel, which is equipped with a small manual reed-organ. The choir rehearses during the week for the three services held each Sunday. Geneva has helped the chaplain secure hymn books, prayer books Bibles and New Testaments, and also some theological books for his own studies. He has also asked for further music for the choir. At the suggestion of our Secretary, the Commandant promised to see what could be done to arrange for the British Catholic priest in a nearby camp to come here regularly to hold services for his fellow-churchmen.

In the so-called "White House", several rooms are available for common use, including a theater-hall, a library, two study rooms and a class room. Further class rooms were desired, as some of the courses in the comprehensive study program were being held in the dormitories. Studies range from Geology to Advertising and Advanced Mathematics. The Arts, Science, Law, Economics and Languages are all represented in the camp school curriculum. The theater-hall was used for the first time last Christmas, and other productions have since been enjoyed. The German Welfare Officer of the camp arranges for a

silent film show every week, and a sound film every month. In a separate building a gymnasium has been fitted up. The camp orchestra, which numbered fifteen instruments early in the year, has increased in size, and their performances add much to the life of the camp.

Last February there were about 1600 library books in camp, 400 of them being in a reference library. Many of these were brought by the British prisoners from their previous camps. Additional book supplies have been sent from our Geneva headquarters. Our Secretary was greatly interested in the unique "shadow library" established here -- a catalogue of all privately owned books which are available for borrowing. There were about 1000 of these at the time, most of them study books.

In June 1943, the Senior American Officer at Oflag 64 wrote to Geneva for camp supplies to meet requirements of newly arrived Americans. A large consignment of sports gear, indoor games, stationery, and musical instruments went forward to serve these men. At the same time, Geneva requested that our New York office ship basketball shoes needed at the camp, which were then unavailable at the headquarters supply depot.

The War Prisoners' Aid of the Y.M.C.A. will continue its usual service in visiting this camp, and provide materials for the educational, recreational and religious life of the men insofar as it is humanly possible to do so.

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