

Inadequacy of Air Raid Protection

The principal prisoner of war camps in Essen were Kraemerplatz, Raumerstrasse, Bottropstrasse, and Noegerathstrasse. There is no substantial controversy with respect to the prosecution's description of the conditions prevailing in these camps as to air raid protection and it is fully supported by the evidence. Originally, the French prisoners of war were housed in Kraemerplatz. They were transferred to Bottropstrasse in March, 1942. That camp was destroyed in an air raid in 1943, and the prisoners were then moved to Noegerathstrasse where they remained to the end of the war notwithstanding that the camp was hit at least six times in air raids, twice severely. Bottropstrasse was in the area of the Cast Steel Factory and Kraemerplatz was immediately adjoining. Noegerathstrasse was some distance away but was close to the main line of a railroad. The proximity of these camps, particularly the first three, to the 80-odd Krupp factories in Essen, rendered them extremely dangerous. The responsibility for the selection of the camp sites and their equipment was upon the firm, subject to the approval of representatives of the Stalag. In September, 1939, after the outbreak of war, the Krupp officials immediately anticipated that the Krupp buildings would be bombed. This affirmatively appears from the testimony of Schroeder, a Krupp official.

Nevertheless, the prisoner of war camps were located in about as dangerous places as could be found. Presumably, the location was due in part at least to the fact that proximity to the factories would prevent loss of working time in going to and from the camps. However this may be, it is certain that the camps were located in an area that was subject to bombing attacks; that these became increasingly severe as the war progressed, and that never at any time were adequate shelters provided. In 1941, at Kraemerplatz, there existed air raid shelters in the form of slit

trenches.. The Stalag protested that these facilities offer shrapnel proof protection for 220-225 men at most, whereas the total complement of the camp at that time was 450. Correction of the situation was delayed by the firm because "of the possibility of moving the prisoner of war camp." The number of inmates had reached 600 by a year later and so far as appears from the credible evidence the request of Stalag had not been complied with.

A railway tunnel served as the air raid shelter at Noegerathstrasse where between 1200 and 1500 prisoners lived. The tunnel was sufficient to accommodate about two-thirds of that number. Noegerathstrasse was practically destroyed by an air raid in 1944. Nevertheless the French prisoners of war remained there. On June 12, 1944, the medical officer in charge of the camp protested to Dr. Jaeger, senior camp physician, that there were 170 men living in a "damp railway tunnel not suitable for permanent accommodation of human beings." The medical treatment was given out of doors and those living in the plants were forced to go for sick call to a burned out public house; that Medical orderlies were sleeping in a men's ~~laboratory~~ ^{lavatory} and that drugs and wound dressings were lacking." The same conditions existed three months later. On September 2, 1944, Dr. Jaeger wrote the defendants Ihn and Kupke, among others, that the camp "is in a terrible condition. The people living in ash bins, dog kennels, old baking ovens and self made huts. The food is barely sufficient. Krupp is responsible for housing and feeding. The supply of medicine and bandages is so extremely bad that proper medical treatment was not possible in many cases. This fact is detrimental to the prisoner of war camp. It is astonishing that the number of sick is not higher than it is and it

moves between 9 and 10 percent. It is also understandable that there is not much willingness to work when conditions are such as they are mentioned above. When complaints are made that many of the prisoners of war are absent from work for one or two days, the camp can be blamed to a great extent for having insufficient organization."

As a result, two barracks were built for the prisoners. There has been no substantial attempt on the part of the defense to deny that the accommodations at Noegerathstrasse were not as described. The insistence is that the French prisoners of war themselves insisted upon remaining there because of the protection against air raids which the railroad tunnel afforded them, notwithstanding that another camp for their accommodation had been built at another location. The testimony of Borschmeyer, the representative of the Stalag, a witness for the defendants, describes the situation and gives the results. He stated:

"This camp was rebuilt several times. When, one day, it was again completely wiped off the map - and I think on the day of the air raid or at the latest the day after this air raid - I visited this camp, together with Dr. Lehmann whom I used to accompany through the camps in cases like this, and on this occasion Dr. Lehmann said he could not take the responsibility for rebuilding the camp which, if you are superstitious, you might say had its fate cut out for itself, that it was over and over again destroyed whilst the adjacent camp was hardly ever hit -- he told me he could not take the responsibility for rebuilding this camp in the same place. Another camp was prepared, which I visited at that time, which from the point of view of space and in every other respect was without fault. When I told the prisoners of war that they would be transferred to this new camp the spokesman of the French prisoners of war came to me and requested me - I should even say he entreated me - to leave his fellow prisoners in the camp in the Noegerathstrasse, although the camp had been completely destroyed. And the unfortunate people lived in the most primitive possible conditions, and his reason was this: Immediately adjacent to the camp there was a railroad shelter with an extremely strong layer of cement on top,

"and in this railroad underpass which was not open to traffic any more, Krupp had set up a large straw depot, and there the prisoners of war found shelter. The best possible shelter was in this railroad underpass, and they could lie there during the whole night. And that was the reason the spokesman gave me for his fellow prisoners of war wanting to remain at the Noegerathstrasse camp under those primitive conditions, rather than to move into a new and nicer camp. He told me literally, the 'railroad tunnel is our life insurance.' I repeated this to Dr. Lehmann, who immediately stated his willingness to let the prisoners of war stay in Noegerathstrasse, and to rebuild the camp once more, I believe for the sixth time."

The witness further testified that the Frenchmen volunteered to rebuild the camp themselves and did so. The railway tunnel referred to could accommodate but approximately half the prisoners. The others lived in the plants of the Cast Steel Factory which was a target for increasingly severe air raids.

We do not think that the testimony of Berschmeyer presents a defense to the violation of the obligation of the Krupp firm to furnish adequate air raid protection to the prisoners of war. Quite apart from the fact that it was illegal to employ them at all for war work, and to employ them in so dangerous an area, it was the duty of the employers to see that these prisoners were properly housed and furnished with adequate air raid protection. They were helpless and in a very real sense they were wards of their masters.

As before said, the Russian prisoners of war began to arrive in Essen in 1942. They were located in Raumerstrasse, Hafenstrasse and Herderstrasse. A report by Eichmeier to the defendant Lehmann, of an inspection of camp Herderstrasse, on October 13, 1942, offered in evidence by the defense, states among other things:

"Air raid precaution implements are missing altogether. Air raid slit trench for both guards and prisoners is also missing."

With respect to Raumerstrasse, it was reported on October 16, that Stalag representatives had made an inspection and that they had found "there are no air raid installations for the guards or the prisoners of war. One could not help gaining the impression that the space needed for same was not considered in the planning."

On January 15, 1943, the defendant Lehmann reported to the Housing Administration that "yesterday Captain Fiene of the local guard area called me and said that slit trenches for the protection against splinters would have to be provided as soon as possible in the prisoner of war camps." Hafenstrasse camp was completely destroyed in a raid in March, 1943, and at that time still lacked even slit trenches as air raid protection.

In January 11, 1943, the defendant Lehmann reported as follows:

"On Saturday, 9 January at 22.30 the district guard officer, Hauptmann (Captain) Dahlmann, rang me up and told me that the guards in our POW camps in Raumerstrasse were only just able to suppress a revolt among the Russian POW's on the occasion of the air-raid on Essen. In the opinion of Hauptmann (Captain) Dahlmann the reason why the POW's become restive is that in the Raumerstrasse camp there are no slit trenches. He urgently requests that such trenches be dug in order among other things not to disturb the surrounding civilian population in case of serious trouble."

A copy of this report was sent to the defendants Loeser, Krupp, Ihn and Kupke, among others.

It further appears from a defense document that the prisoners lacked even enough sand to put out phosphorous bombs which fell around the camp.

The defense evidence was to the effect that there

was available to the prisoners at Raumerstrasse "a passageway underneath the railroad tracks" which they used as an air raid shelter. At this camp, there were from 1200--1500 prisoners and the witness admitted that the passageway could not accommodate that number so that during an air raid the remainder had to stay in camp and use slit trenches which finally had been built as the result of the report of defendant Lehmann above set forth.

Discrimination in the matter of air raid protection is also shown by the testimony of the defense witness Marquardt who worked in one of the numerous factories in Essen, utilizing the labor of concentration camp inmates and French prisoners of war, as well as of other nationalities. In the summer and fall of 1944, air attacks had become increasingly frequent. The devastating effect had been fully demonstrated. As counsel for the defense says the factories of the Gusstahlfabrik had indeed become a battleground. Protection during working hours was no less essential than in the camps. Marquardt testified that at that time the German employees used a new air raid shelter which had been built for them. The concentration camp inmates used a "day room" in the factory, formerly used by the German employees, which had been reinforced with protective walls and a concrete ceiling. The French prisoners of war were compelled to use a tunnel which they had dug in a slag heap outside the camp.