

GERMAN BRUTALITY TO WAR PRISONERS

Official Evidence Shows Specially Severe Treatment Accorded to
British Officers—Irish Could Not be Cajoled
By Kaiser's Officers

The published accounts of the treatment accorded to British prisoners in Germany are fully borne out by official evidence contained in a Foreign Office white paper. One of the most interesting documents is a report by Major C. B. Vandeleur, of the 1st Cameronians, who escaped from Crefeld. The following is his description of his journey into Germany from Douay after his escape:

All along the line we were cursed by officers and soldiers alike at the various stations, and at Mons Bergen I was pulled out in front of the wagon by the order of the officer in charge of the station, and, after cursing me in filthy language for some ten minutes, he ordered one of his soldiers to kick me back into the wagon which he did, sending me sprawling into the filth, mess at the bottom of the wagon.

I should like to mention here that I am thoroughly conversant with German, and understood everything that was said. Only at one station on the road was any attempt made on the part of German officers to interfere, and stop their men from cursing us. Up to this time I had managed to retain my overcoat; but it was now forcibly taken from me by an officer at a few stations further on.

A Second Black Hole

Finally we arrived at Cologne. Fifty-two prisoners were in the wagon with me when we left Douay. It is difficult to indicate or give a proper idea of the indescribably wretched condition in which we were in after being starved and confined in the manner stated for three days and three nights.

As is well known, one of these wagons is considered to be able to accommodate six horses, or forty men, and this only with the doors open so as to admit of ventilation. What with the filth of the interior, the number of people confined in it, and the absence of ventilation, it seemed to recall something of what one has read of the Black Hole of Calcutta.

On reaching the German-Belgian frontier, the French prisoners were given some potato soup. The people in charge of it told us that none was for us, but that if any was left over after the French had been fed we should get what remained. This is in accordance with the general treatment of British prisoners by the Ger-

mans who always endeavor to attend to our necessities last, and to put us to as much inconvenience and ill-treatment as possible. We subsequently got a little soup and a few slices of bread among twenty-five British prisoners in the same wagon with me.

I am strongly of opinion myself that this brutal treatment of British officers and men on their way to a place of internment is deliberately arranged for by superior authority with the object of making us as miserable and despicable as possible. The French officers were treated quite differently.

Barbarous Methods

I would especially call attention to the barbarous way in which British soldiers are being treated in the various laagers by the Germans. The information given below has been obtained from the British orderlies who came to Crefeld as servants, and also from English and French medical officers who had been in the camps, which in many cases were composed of tents.

The men all had their greatcoats—and in many cases their tunics as well—and their money taken away from them, and are in great need of clothing, and particularly underclothing. The men state that they slept on straw which had not been changed for months, and was quite sodden and rotten.

I was also informed by them that the feeding arrangements for the British soldier were very bad indeed, and as the men had no money to supplement their rations they were in a half-starved condition, which their appearance corroborated.

I also wish to state that —, who arrived at Crefeld about December, told me that all the Irishmen at his camp were collected together shortly before he left, and were harangued by the commandant, who stated that the Emperor was aware of the down-trodden state of Ireland, and now wished that the Irishmen should be placed in a separate camp, where they would be better fed and treated differently from the Englishmen. He further stated that subsequently they went in a body to the commandant, and said they did not wish to have any different treatment from their compatriots.

The American Ambassador in Berlin bears witness to the ill-treatment meted out to British prisoners.