

..... A NEW CHIEF

The prison has a new chief! Like all new brooms this one wants to prove he can sweep better than the old one! It is a success and the reaction is like a small revolution in the traditional world of the prison.

On large important looking office forms are printed new rules and regulations for all of the cells. From now on the cup must be placed on the right side in the cupboard, never on the left. The wood knife must be placed with the blade pointed inward, never outward. For one reason or another the bag with tooth powder has been omitted on the new office forms!

Take away the tooth powder!!!

Since we are dangerous criminals anything as sharp as a mirror cannot be tolerated. A cleaning broom is a terrible weapon; the handles are cut off from one to half a meter!

Everyone gets a "prison haircut" and the heads are shaved.... peeled off....rutabaga fashion!

All new regulations are controlled with German efficiency! First by the guard, then by the chief guard and at last by the head man of all the prison guards! God help the prisoner that has his cup on the left side in the cupboard! It is a surprise that nobody realizes that the "short shafted" scrub broom is an excellent weapon!

But why use primitive stuff? Our toys are shells, day and night!

THE TOY FACTORY

It is getting toward Christmas. We can't help notice a little of the holiday traffic. During the night when, the supervisors are absent, the munitions factory converts into a more peaceful production! Little boys and girls will be getting presents for Christmas. The stores are almost empty of any kind of toys and the factory is stocked with materials and people that know how to make use of same! Both prisoners and civilian employees are in full production making toys. They are making fine toy cannons, tricycles, toy wagons from expensive materials only to be found in the munitions factories. It is a perfect plan of corruption and swindle that could only be devised in prison! It is carried out with such daring it overwhelms us. If anyone had searched the guard the day before Christmas a large toy model canon would have been found under the overcoat! The goat watches over the bucket of oats!!!

We learn from the newspapers brought into the factories about the heroes of Stalingrad that have forced the German people to tighten their belts more than ever. The motto is "Jeder mann eine festung"! Every man is a fortress!

Here at the factory I presume it would be the case of a "toy fortress"!

It is the night before Christmas Eve at the "Chain Factory". Our friends among the civilian workers have been active in preparing for us a little happiness for Christmas.

The celebration will take place at the dinner at noon and we are as curious as small boys. The administration demonstrates its displeasure by serving rutabaga soup a shade thinner than usual. But our friends do not disappoint us. Every man has been given a day's ration of tobacco. It amounts to a couple of cigarettes and half a roll of chewing tobacco for each person. In addition they come up with a couple of pieces of cake and apples for each of us. We know with the great shortage of food where the gifts come from. Thus the gifts are warmly appreciated. Perhaps the highlight was a large tray of "openfaced" sandwiches with Norwegian ham, that one of the workers brought in from the Seamen's Church in Hamburg!

The foreman of the shift, Otto, had brought instruments with him from home. The old traditional Christmas Carols are played and we sing....Our voices fight to outdo the noise from the machines that fabricate the shells! On behalf of the Norwegians, Christian thanks the German civilian workers for their kindness. " We shall never forget the Christmas party you gave us this year."

When the administration found out about the Christmas party at "Halle 10" that night all of the civilian workers received a strict reprimand because of their "friendly action with the enemy"! It came too late..the Christmas party was already a wonderful memory!

Christmas Eve will be celebrated "at home"... in the cell! Orders have come to the prison that even at Christmas time a prisoner must be made to feel he is in prison. A small extra ration, we have heard, arrived at the kitchen, but will not be for us. It will be the usual everyday fare, perhaps a bit less than that, just to emphasize the Holiday time. The guards are more unfriendly than ever and slam the doors shut without saying Good Night! Lights out at 6 P.M.

In the dark we munch on a dry piece of bread. Otherwise we just "let prison be prison"..tonight! Our minds are far away, to a place where there is no rationing nor any "sourpuss guards"! Excuse the materialism, our stomachs are empty....Right now the dominant factor in my mind is....pork roast!

THE GROUP OF COMRADES

We have become a close knit group of friends. We are twenty working under the same roof twelve hours a day. The monotony and humiliation, hope and belief have chiseled out a certain special type of people...in spite of age or social standing. We have opened our hearts and become forthright with an open mind, and with some of the direct intensive and reactive feeling of a child. Let us take a free night shift hour to meet some of them.

By my side is Viggo, airplane pilot, our biggest optimist. I met him for the first time at Akershus in 1941. Since then we have steadily run into each other on our way through German prisons. Viggo always has good news. During all these years there never was a doubt in his mind that the

war would soon come to an end. His fountain of optimism never dried out. His strength came from a gregarious, good nature with a firm belief in the future. People of this type, with this spirit, have the ability and strength to start something new. It was not a coincidence that Viggo became a pioneer in aviation in our country. He is a man of peace and in every day life not really a supporter of the moral "fight for everything you love, die if need be"! My experience is that his type of people will be the first to fight when there is a real reason! At times he is disgusted with the German morals and he says indignantly "This is a helluva country, if I ever, later in life have to cross this county it will be at least 24,000 feet above sea level!"

Then comes our good friend, civilian worker Fritz, good natured and quiet. He gives us a pinch of tobacco from his own small ration, or he has cleaned out the cigarette stumps from the ash trays on the streetcars.

The atmosphere becomes a little more forgiving!

Far down the hall stands "our honor and our might", Arne, President of the Norwegian Shipowners Association. He finishes the grenade shells with a dexterity and skill that one might wonder if he has been doing this work all of his life! Arne is the senior among us and has celebrated both his fiftieth birthday and silver wedding in prison. The celebrations were considerably less formal than under normal conditions, but the spirit of the guests could never have been any more heartfelt and sincere. The "president", that is the name he goes by here, has lost about one third of his normal weight, but he has not lost his "jovial self"! He is a bit conservative in our discussions but he is a real fine comrade. That is what counts here.

Side by side with the president works the able bodied sailor and the cabin boy, Roald and Kjell, one from way up North, the other from the East (Østlending), both barely twenty years old, happy and witty like most sailors. They sing and tap dance, flirting with little Russian girls from the window. Both of them had set their course for England. Unfortunately they landed in the wrong harbor! But they did bring along their good humor.

Olaf, Nils and Ingvald, laborer, farmer and craftsman, have their roots in Norway. They are "landlubbers" and do not have the bubbling humor of the sailors. They are most quiet and considerate. Olaf was working in a ski factory when he was arrested after the invasion in 1941 and was sentenced to ten years in prison. He represented the Norwegian youth in sports. For several years he belonged to the elite of the world's skiers and reached the top of his career when he won the Holmenkollen seventeen kilometer in 1940. Forthright and friendly...and completely void of any primadonna ideas! Strong as a bear and always ready to give a hand when his comrades needed help. The Norwegian sports youth could hardly have been better represented in this type of competition, where courage and endurance were put to a test.

Nils is a farmer, a well built, determined fellow. A natural for caring for animals and doing the chores on the farm. Twice he suffered from attacks of pneumonia, both times he recovered by sheer determination to live. After the last bout he was sent home to Norway....we looked at this as a sign

of strong will power!

Ingvald was a master craftsman of the old school. To him God ranked first, secondly his wife and then came his vocation. One Sunday morning he was assigned to make a flower box for the factory. He handled the saw with the skill of an expert. Tears came to his eyes. The saw in his hands brought many fond memories!

Behind a huge oven a play is produced by two unusual actors. Both of them in the upper half of thirty years old. One of them gesticulates wildly with his arms and speaks very fast. The other listens intensely and respectfully. The language is Italian, with an occasional Norwegian phrase from the Saga. It is the Norwegian newspaper editor Christian giving a lecture to Professor Georg! They cultivate languages together, every free time on the night shift is used for study. One week they converse in French, the next English. This week it is Italian week! They also allow time for the languages used in prison, German and Norwegian. These two actors are without much in common but they have become fast friends.

Georg is a "tsjekker" (Czech) and a Doctor of Law, besides being somewhat of an expert in languages. He is fluent in ten living and two dead languages. He has learned to speak perfect Norwegian!

Christian was a philologist and with an ear for languages. He was a Conservative politician, editor and politician. Georg was a Socialist of the far left wing...and he calls himself a "Soviet Patriot"! Christian is religious, Georg an atheist. Christian is warm and temperamental, Georg quiet and realistic.

It must be the intense search for knowledge, liberty and freedom that brought friendship to these unlike individuals. Is the war also a factor?

This completes the circle in our working area. In the corner of a glassed enclosure sits our four civilian workers almost asleep. A sign hanging on the door says:

"Alle Räder rollen fürden Seig".. "All wheels are rolling for victory!" What victory?

WE MEET AGAIN

Only a handclasp, no more time for anything else. We are on our way to separate work stations. But the grip was firm, and warm enough to recall pleasant memories.

Nearly eleven years ago we met in Kristiansand at Gimlemoen, Paul from Arendal and a soldier. I was "sivilist" (a civilian). We became friends. It was a controversial time with Quisling as Minister of Defense and the Battle of Menstad was not forgotten. We were both stunned and outraged over the misuse of military power. At that time we looked at the military as an enemy of the working class which included all of the social programs in the country. We printed a "Soldier's

Newspaper"...not many kind words! The commandant would not stand for the critical articles we produced. We were arrested and sentenced to twenty-four days in jail. It created a real donnybrook and many columns of newspaper articles. There were especially two that were aggressive and called for the army to be alert. One of them, a journalist, the other a newspaper editor, called us "Norwegian Traitors"! That hurt, even for the most "redglowing youth"!

(Translator's notes. Remember that Quisling later became the Norwegian traitor and Hitler's mouthpiece in Norway. He was executed by the Norwegians at the end of the war.)

The sentence was changed from twenty-four days to eight days on bread and water which at that time seemed like an eternity to be in solitary confinement! Every day a line was scratched on the cell wall until at last there were eight lines. It is strange to think of today when we count in months and years instead of days and weeks!

Paul and I were employed in different newspapers. As the years went by we met time after time at meetings, stipendiums, journalist classes and other meetings. We always met some place.

Then came the war with the first call to arms. I was elected "tillitsmann" (probably supervisor) and was in the office waiting for the supervisor from the machine gun section. Who else should show up but my friend Paul. This time there would not be any "soldiers newspaper"!

Then we met in a German prison. No wonder our handshake was more than a casual one!

The other actors from the first act of the play?

The commanding officer I met again in 1939. We started private discussions for peace that brought good results. His name is Otto Ruge, chief of the Norwegian military forces during the war in Norway. At this time he is in prison in Norway. The editor and the journalist that were so deeply concerned for their homeland? One became the editor for a newspaper the Norwegian Nazis took over, the other became a "Storm Trooper" (SS) war correspondent!

A new line of solidarity is projected across many of the old lines of divisions. Differences of opinion still exist, of course, and will surely keep on for a long time. Our hope is that our backs have been trained to be erect and we are able to tolerate criticism without getting a scar for life.

GOOD DAYS

The Ruhr district is heavily bombed. For us this means a "happy" shortage of raw materials. We get a few quiet months of spring, the best time we have ever had. Off and on a small load of raw materials trickles in but never enough for more than a few hours of production during the day. The rest of the day we pretend to be sweeping floors, just enough to keep in motion when a supervisor makes an appearance. "Immer Bewegung" is the most important phrase now! (Always in motion!) A special break in our every day life is our connection with the outside world which now comes at

regular intervals. One of our friends employed by the factory has taken upon himself the dangerous mission of being the liaison between us and the Pastor and Hiltgunt. He brings us packages, some with books and some with food. We sneak a look at each other! The little good behavior we have left says we should open the packages of books first! We don't! The spirit is willing but the flesh is hopelessly starved.

The food packages are torn open first....one fat herring, one loaf of bread, a pat of margarine, a bit of chocolate and then tobacco and a bottle of cod-liver oil! We take our turn on the toilet and enjoy everything in peace. What a treat! A full stomach for the first time in one and a half years.

We are munching on chocolate! It is of American origin. Nothing seems impossible in this impossible world....

Then the packages with books. The most unusual requests are fulfilled, textbooks in Russian, English novels, books of art, et cetera. Christian and I have become working partners by "our" oven. Every free time is used for studies. Viggo, Christian and I are getting lessons in Russian from Georg. He is very patient and he needs to be! I would never have realized the important and enormous difference between "tchs" and "tschj" and getting our tongues to recognize this fact!

We are dedicated students, working very hard and before we know it the dawn of a new day has arrived. We return to prison.

Unfortunately our studies come to an abrupt end. Big events and orders to be transferred to a new prison ended our Russian classes.

ATCHE AND OTTO

A new German prisoner has come with us. He looks like a newcomer, erect posture and quick movements. We grill him to get the news.

"Are you a newcomer?"

"Not exactly a greenhorn!"

"How long?"

"Ten years!"

Atche is thirty years old and worked in a paper mill in Hamburg. He was twenty years old when he was sent to prison. He was a member of the Communistic Youth Organization and among those that were active in resisting the Nazi takeover.

He was shot in the chest when he was arrested, patched up sufficiently so he could appear in court

to receive a sentence of fifteen years in prison. He survived one year in concentration camp and nine years in prison. Nothing has broken his spirit. He is true to his ideals. He is a good comrade and one that demonstrates that it is possible to survive!

Otto is not a prisoner but he is our friend. He is the foreman in our work section and has done us many favors. He is a cabinet maker by profession. He is about forty years old. He has always been a Social Democrat and still is. He has been our contact person between the Norwegian Seamen's Pastor and Hiltgunt.

The small items he brings give happiness, but are not really the most important thing. He treats us always as people and friends. He does not shy away from demonstrating his loyalty to us.

One hundred marks were stolen from a French civilian worker. The prison authority is alarmed. Whoever could have stolen the money except one of the prisoners? The decision is made that all of the prisoners at the factory, one hundred sixty men, are to be stripped for examination. It becomes a very intimate body search in view of all. The head of the guards come to Halle No. 10. Otto refuses to have his prisoners inspected. The Danish and Norwegian political prisoners are never subjected to this type of search, nor are the German political prisoners.

"Before I submit my boys to this I will pay out the money myself or you can put me in prison!" says Otto.

The head of the guards is boiling mad. It is the principle of it, all prisoners must be treated alike. Otto and the guard are talking so loud that we can hear them. It ends with the guard and Otto leaving the hall. The air is filled with excitement. Otto re-enters smiling.... No inspection! Otto had indicated to the guard he would tell the authority of the highly illegal transactions the guard had been guilty of! That was enough for the guard, he gave up! It was the first time we had been treated as human beings!

NIGHT

A glorious full moon, a myriad of stars, a fresh breath of spring in the air. April night at the ammunition factory. The air of peace! But inside in the work area everything is hermetically closed. The machines are noisy, ovens spew out grenades, a heavy chemical air pollutes the environment. The spirit is very low tonight.

We stand like two fighting cocks tonight, Christian and I. What will the subject of conversation be tonight? Neither one of us will open up. Do you ever feel the need to pray?

It was unexpected! Questions of religion are generally taboo. Nobody wants to be a reformer. All have plenty of time to think.

"Yes and no," the thought of death brought religion closer. The answer was given unwillingly and my friend does not attempt to explore the subject any further.

But it was an opening for a serious talk about a special feeling we both have had and perhaps have solved in our own way...the fear of death. Can one experience this more than once in a lifetime?

There may be minutes or hours when your inner feelings are, so to speak, raised to another level, when the possibility of dying becomes an absolute fact. All bridges are burned behind you and only the totally unknown lies ahead. The sweat breaks out, the body shivers, face to face with life's most serious moment - death.

It is not so much the fear of what is to come but a terrible struggle with all the problems of life. It is more of a fight for life than a struggle of death. Life streaks by with intense clearness. Big and small events are considered.

I am not able to explain how religious people react. For many of us it becomes evident in these minutes or hours that we have attempted to do our best at home and at work to live a happy life, at peace before death.

One eventually gains a peace of mind. The enemy has been defeated. The fear of death is over. Come what may!

It is heartbreaking to witness prisoners condemned to death just before the execution. The fear of death has been overcome. No evidence of fear of death. The fight is over. Death, where is thy sting?

"What day is it tomorrow?"

"Friday."

The night before Good Friday 1943. We are silent the rest of the night.

I suspect that the thoughts of my comrades go to the Garden of Gethsemane, perhaps also to the Good Friday two years ago, when Christian, condemned to death, along with his comrades, were sent to Høyanger to pick up unexploded English mines.

My thoughts go first to the Norwegian mountains where the spring snow becomes a hard crust in the frost of the night. Within a few hours the morning sun comes through. Millions of diamonds sparkle from the crusted spring snow. This is the way we experienced nature once upon a time. We will once more experience this. We hope, we believe, no, we KNOW that there will come a time when Good Friday of this world with tears and blood has come to an end. We shall again begin to live.

While I am occupying my mind with a bright future the grenades glide automatically through my hands. Every seventh minute another case is pushed to the fire of the oven. If only the fire would

destroy them! I shove in the last one.

It is morning...another day...

The worst experience at our work station is not the heavy work nor the polluted air, even though at times several will faint. This we can overcome.

The terrible thing is the horrendous products we are producing. We hate the work station, in spite of the fact that it gives us certain "advantages" compared with the prison. The practice of "selling" political prisoners to the German ammunition industry is the height of shamefulness.

I hear these questions asked: "Why didn't you refuse and register a protest like so many free people did then they were requested to do work contrary to their belief?"

The answer was simple enough: We are prisoners. Prisoners are not free people!
One example illustrates the whole situation:

Our friend the engineer is condemned to death, sentence "reprieved" to fifteen years in prison because he had refused to take charge of a Norwegian ammunition factory where he once worked. He is now a slave in a German ammunition factory!

Those who consider comfort the most important part of life think he is plain stupid! The result in the end is the same except on a considerably lower plane! Why not accept a much better job, without argument, in the same kind of work in Norway?

The engineer has no regrets. We agree with him. Better to be a slave than offer your services as a "free man"!

HAMBURG ON TARGET

One can feel it in the air, so to speak, that something is about to happen. Almost a year since the last visit of the "Tommys"! Nevertheless preparations are made against huge air attacks. From the civilian workers we learn that enormous air defense has been constructed in St. Pauli, "The Holy Geist" it is called. The propaganda is fierce, it will be impossible for the enemy to penetrate the German air defense! Then came the night of July 26. It was an avalanche! For more than one week the large arrowhead of the Allied headquarters were directed at the center of Hamburg.

We had witnessed many previous air attacks from our windows. Nothing could compare to what we now experienced. It is a fantastic drama of death staged right before our eyes. In our fourth story cells we have "orchestra place" watching the thousands of planes that are bombing the city of a million inhabitants. The air is tense from the Allied bombs mixed with the thunder from the defense artillery and intense noise from machine guns. The bombs shriek through the air. It is like a branch of Hell! The air defense of Hamburg is not only being penetrated, it is completely destroyed. The planes are circling overhead without being hindered by the flak from the ground. The dropping of

colored lights outlines the targets. With great precision district after district is pulverized.

The masters of the air are on Wings!

It is morning, but not a sign of another day! The sun does not have the power to penetrate the heavy blanket of smoke engulfing the city. This darkness of "dusk" lasts all day long. It is Sunday and we are in our cells. In the courtyard is a mass of streamers of tinfoil. The Germans are scared, they think it is witchcraft that has descended on them. Later on we learn that the tinfoil made all of the sight instruments ineffective. The instruments were coordinated by sound, the foil disrupted the entire system.

They returned in the afternoon. This time they also dropped "printed bombs"! Millions of pamphlets are dropped over the city. All we have to do is to put our hands through the bars and we get them. We lie on our cots and enjoy ourselves reading British propaganda. In a German prison!

The reaction is so great that even this old prison with its moth-eaten guards is shaken. Not a whole lot, but a little! We are allowed to keep our clothes in the cell, the doors are not locked. Only a small bar holds it shut and if need be the "kalfaktor" will be able to let us out. Even the meanest and the most overbearing guards walk quietly through the doors. They have become remarkably smiling and friendly.

We have no power and no water. We cannot flush the toilets in the cells, instead deep pits are dug in the yard. Our stomachs are disciplined to function together on command! Morning and night we line up over the pits, row after row, and gossip over the events of the night and day. The main subject is the heavy bombing, the soup for dinner is another subject. The prison also makes food for the civilians now, but the cook skimps as usual. Thick soup is almost as great an event as the rain of bombs.

Tuesday another attempt is made to get us out to the ammunition factory. Marching to the urban station we are engulfed by a swarm of fleeing citizens, a mass of people, mostly women and children with a small bag of the most necessary items under their arms. A suffering human train that goes on and on....At the station are people sitting and standing for their turn to get on the train. Some have been sitting here for days. For these people the war has become something different than uniforms and medals. We notice here a little of what the newspaper calls "the proud stand of the people"!

There are signs of sorrow, their faces are stained from crying and fright. We are told that eighty thousand people lost their lives in the last bombing attacks, most of them the first day. Nobody had expected bombing of such dimensions.

There is a struggle within us between the heart and the mind....We are easily influenced by these unfortunate people. But then our thoughts go to Rotterdam, to London and our own open small cities and villages that were pulverized by the German bombs. We are faced with a war of total

brutality.

But we are not in doubt of who selected the weapons!

We are marching back to the prison.

We succeed the next night. We are able to get to the factory. Many of the civilian workers were killed. The survivors have been ordered to dig out the dead from the ruins. A small sheet of papers is the metropolis's only newspaper. It will be published as needed. There is no news from the bombing, no need for that. Mussolini has been kicked out! That is the big news! Rumors are thick, we feel a great wave of optimism. But the sirens are blaring again and that brings us back to reality. We are ordered to seek shelter in the coal cellar.

In the yard are many bunkers that are not being used. Alas, we are not important enough to occupy them. Our shelter room is a pile of coke under the barracks. The whole basement is filled with steam pipes. Ever so little shakeup and we would be done for...suffocated from steam...No doubt about that. Nobody wants to talk about that!

The bombardment is stronger than ever. The lights go out, we are in complete darkness in the pile of coke. It is impossible to stand up because of the low ceiling. Our spirits are very low. Hell's fire and suffocating coal fumes, through the door sharp glimpses of explosions. Smoke and fire.

At four o'clock in the morning it is all over. In the working barracks stand ovens, machinery...quietly...We leave the factory for the last time.

The suburban railroad has been put out of commission. We start our march toward the city, a two hour march toward smoke and fire.

"Never again, never again," my sidekick is mumbling with lackluster eyes staring at the burning of his hometown.

Do you remember the phrase "never a war again"? Our parents used these words after having survived the First World War. Their children would be saved from another war. It was our friend the "Check" that made these remarks. It was the will of the people. This will had to give way for a stronger and brutal power.

In spite of all we will fight again. The Chain Factory was accomplished to produce one special chain....This one managed to bind together comrades from many different countries.

"The Tommies" have been hard on the prison this time. Several of the guard buildings are on fire and the yard is covered with firebombs. But the prison is standing.

The word gets out, the prisoners will be evacuated. Under these circumstances it is impossible to run a regular prison! The "little family" sits together in the cell for the last time. We do have some

memories after nearly two years in Hamburg, memories of solidarity and friendship. Is there any truth in the rumors that the war is nearly over, or are we to continue to spend more years of our lives behind the walls? Nobody knows. We only know that we will survive.

Through the window bars we can see a storm coming, like a carpet of greyblue, clouds of thunder cover the sky. It is getting closer. The lightning floods the skies like dragon teeth, the thunder is deafening. Torrential downpour and hail ...

Thor, the God of Thunder is showing his power.

Was this only thunder we are hearing? No, it must be an air attack also. But where is the alert alarm?

Suddenly we hear signals from small whistles coming from the streets. Voices with the fear of death cry out: "Alarm! Alarm! The regular warning sirens do not function". The hoarse voice sounds like a hopeless cry for help, the fear of death. This is the age of technical science.

We witness the drama from the window...Lightning and canons alternate with the fireworks. The thunder and the bombs are competing...It is a gigantic dual performance by nature and "people power"! It is a drama seldom seen by this world!

Many of the protective anti-aircraft batteries have now been knocked out. The air is dense with smoke and filled with shrieking noises from the huge exploding bombs and crackling fire bombs. The airplanes are directly above us and the fire bombs are beginning to land in the courtyard.

From the central area we hear the call: "All prisoners must evacuate"! The "Kalfaktor" opens the doors and down the hallways flee eight to nine hundred prisoners with a combined prison sentence of five thousand years, trying to reach the first floor. There are only two guards to look after us. A firebomb comes through the roof and lands in the central area. Some clothing starts burning but everything here is brick and concrete so the fire does not spread.

Surprisingly enough there is no panic among the prisoners. Nobody gets real excited. By and by, as the "bad weather" subsides, there is even a spirit of "gemütlichkeit" (cheerfulness)! We feel our way around in the dark and find many comrades from other sections of the prison that we have had not contact with in many months, although we have lived under the same roof.

It is morning before we get into our cells again.

"Happy Birthday," says Svein, the keeper of the almanac.

August 3rd....

We will never forget the birthday of King Haakon in 1943!

It was to be our last night in Hamburg.

Twenty to thirty men are ordered out to assist in putting out the fires. It is in the middle of the night, but nobody is called out by name. Nobody counts the prisoners! Just get out of the gates! The house is burning, furniture is thrown out of the windows. God knows only why! Later in the morning there is a knock on the heavy prison gate. It is a happy young man from Kristiansand with a life sentence in prison. He had helped out fighting the fires and the guard forgot to get him inside prison again!

The gate keeper looks at him with suspicion! It is a bit unusual that people ask to be admitted to prison! Nor is it usual that Hamburg is in ruins!

The young fellow looks very trustworthy and is let in at last, to a well deserved rest after a most strenuous night of hard work. We know it is difficult to get out through these gates....But to have to beg to get in...is something else!

TOWARDS THE NORTH

We are crowded into a truck and turned through the gates for the last time. Goodbye to the city that once was Hamburg. The direction is fine. We are headed North! To Rendsburg, only a few miles from the Danish border.

The institution is old and "mossgrown", one of the old Danish Kings built it as a prison ages ago. His initials still stand on the gate. The prison guards have long ago "seen their better days"!

All the young guards have been called into military service. The old guards have dusted off their uniforms. The leader, "The Chief of the Guards", pardon me! Walks around with the air of a fearless tin soldier in a "foot length coat" and with a shining long saber at his side. It is a real comical institution!

For the time being six of us are quartered in a fairly large room. Through the barred window comes a fresh "sea breeze" from the Kiel Canal. Our eyes follow the railroad cars that travel over the Kaiser Wilhelm Bridge. In a few hours they will cross the Danish Border!

So near...and yet so far away.....

We are a long way from the tumult of a large city and the thunder of cannons. The cows and the noisy chickens wake us up in the morning. This old prison has wooden floors! It is a wonderful feeling after two years of shuffling around on a stone floor! Our farmer friend from Jaeren has suddenly discovered why his chickens at home produce so few eggs when he installed a stone floor in the chicken coop at home!

Never again will his chickens parade on a stone floor if he can help it!

The prison walls are as high as ever. The barred windows the same and the rules and regulations a bit more "finicky", but in the corridors are flowers standing in neat lines of flower boxes. Both surroundings and the people have a smattering of Danish friendliness. We get the feeling of living in the times of long ago....The guards have Danish names: Jessen, Hansen, Pedersen. This alone is enough to brighten our existence!

The "kalfaktor" sticks his head inside the door opening..."Two centimeters of chewing tobacco for the cheese tonight!" While we reflect over the proposition we watch an old guard that carefully sneaks along the tomato plants in the yard. His eyes are on the lookout from left to right, while one tomato after the other disappears in his pockets!

We have come a long way towards the North....But not far enough!

The large contingent of new prisoners has raised havoc with the prison routine. An invasion of such dimensions has no place in a respectable old prison like this! Suddenly the number of inmates has more than doubled, and for the time being there is no work or clothes for us.

It does not bother us at all. We get along just fine in our own clothes, we organize the days O.K. without any help from the prison administration. Lectures are given, others will exercise and a bit of everything. First of all we talk to each other. We will soon enough come into a period when we get isolated again.

But this wonderful way of living lasts only a few weeks. The spirit from Hamburg is catching up with us! Guards are transferred to look after us!

The rams are separated from the ewes...We that have long prison sentences are placed in solitary confinement. The others are "volunteered" to other work areas. Our German Communist friend will be sent to a workcamp in Southern Germany together with the "tsjekker" professor. It is with great sadness we say farewell to these friends. We have shared the good and the bad times over the past few years. Perhaps we shall never meet again.

ALONE AGAIN

The door is slammed shut behind me. Alone again between four thick prison walls. It is a year since the last time....I survey my new apartment. Really not very different that my other cells. Same little square! However, there is a wood floor and the toilet is not in the middle of the room...Instead there is an old fashioned pail that is kept in a small corner closet. One can sit down with the feet outside the closet almost like an outmoded "outdoor John"! Only the air is somewhat different!

The feeling of being a caged animal has completely disappeared. Prison life has taken its toll, I am not uncomfortable being alone. As a matter of fact I enjoy the privacy instead of being forced to be with other prisoners every hour of the day. One gets time to examine oneself and keep account of one's inner self. It is like a retreat in peace. It is necessary. It is good for the soul and it clears the air.

Instinctively my thoughts go back to the first time I experienced solitary confinement. At that time the small square of a cell reminded me of a piece of Hell! I begin to understand, in a small way, the prison philosophy that my first teacher lectured on!

In the cell is a loom. After a while I am able to operate it fairly well. I weave paper mats to be used on floors of the airplanes...presumably to keep the feet of the pilots warm. The colors are outrageous; it is clippings from old wrapping paper. It is not that simple to operate a large loom with paper as material. First of all it requires complete patience. It would give grey hair, even to an old experienced prisoner...if he has any hair...That has also been cut off!

Fifty knots on one meter long paper strip is not unusual.

Suddenly one day arrives first class material in nice colors. We can thank the Italians for this. When Italy surrendered their flags were no longer permitted to show on their warships. They were lowered and cut into strips. From now on they will serve as floor mats on German airplanes. The Germans gained something after the Italian capitulation!

According to prison regulations the work at the weavestool is twelve hours a day...Sunday as well as Monday...No free time at all. Fortunately the hearing gets so sharp that one can detect the steps of the guards in the hallways. One can "feel it" when the guard is checking through the "spyhole" in the door. By careful listening one can manage to goof off a few hours per day to read and write.

Most of this manuscript up to now came about in this cell thanks to the good quality of the toilet paper. As a rule it is unused paper for newspaper, it makes me feel the urge to use my little stump of a pencil that I hide on myself. Once in a great while we get thin silkpaper. It serves its original intent better, but is impossible to write on!

During our airing period our cells are ransacked. God help anyone having illegal items! I carefully