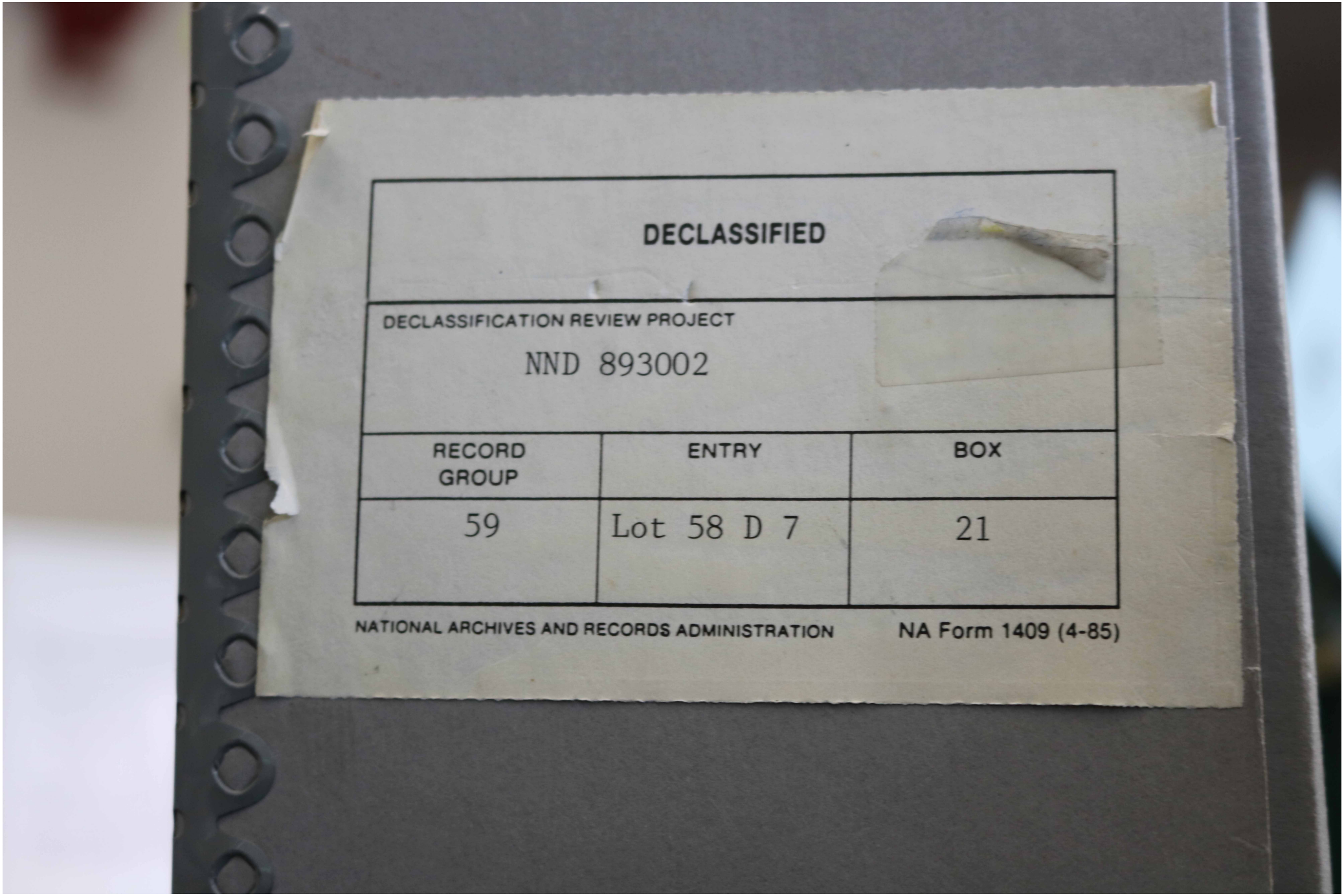


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REPORT ON ALIEN ENEMY INTERNMENT CAMP
STRINGTOWN, OKLAHOMA, SEPTEMBER 21-23, 1942.

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I. INTERNMENT CAMP COMMANDER: Colonel Bertram Frankenberger.

Adjutant: First Lieutenant E. M. Jacobson.

Stockade Officer: Captain Nicks.

Medical Officer: Lieutenant Colonel Anderson.

Company Commanders:

Company 1 - Captain R. Burns.

Company 2 - First Lieutenant G. A. Durland.

Company 3 - Captain J. T. Carrol.

II. CAMP VISITED BY:

Mr. W. Bruppacher, Representative of the Swiss Legation in charge of German interests; Mr. G. H. Martin, Representative of the International Red Cross Committee.

Accompanied by: Mr. P. W. Herrick, Special Division, Department of State.

At the time of the visit the camp was also being visited by Brigadier General L. F. Guerre, Director, Internal Security Division, Eighth Service Command.

III. PERSONS DETAINED IN THE CAMP:

390 persons classified as German nationals were interned at the camp. The internees were divided into three companies comprising the following:

Company 1 152 internees. 151 from the United States and one from Panama.

Company 2 116 internees. 34 from Costa Rica, 30 from Panama, 13 from Guatemala, 31 from the United States, and 8 Jews from Panama.

Company 3 122 internees from the United States.

The Spokesmen for these companies were the following:

Company 1 Guenther Weiske.

Company 2

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Company 2 Ingo Kalinowski.

Company 3 Franz Wirz.

Hans Mueller was the spokesman for the eight Jews from Panama in Company 2.

IV. HOUSING:

No additional buildings have been built to quarter the internees. The same two buildings described in the report made by Mr. Whitney Young of the Special Division, Department of State, on his visit to Stringtown on June 25 to 28, 1942, are used to house all the internees. With the decrease in the number interned at the camp from over 500 to 390 as a result of repatriation, the crowded conditions described in Mr. Young's report no longer exist and only in a few instance was it found necessary to use double deck bunks which were being removed on the last day of the inspection upon instructions from General Guerre since it was believed that the wooden fixtures used to convert the bunks into double deckers were probable breeding places for bed bugs and other vermine. It is felt that the number of internees at this camp should at no time exceed 500.

The internees sleep in large dormitories with the exception of a small number who are quartered in the cell block in the basement of one of the two buildings. It was intended to remove the internees from the cell block but when asked to move to the dormitories, these internees stated that they preferred their quarters in the cell since they said they had more privacy there. One to three men sleep in these cells ~~of~~ which are of various sizes. One cell was used to confine one of the internee who had escaped several weeks prior to the visit who had been apprehended in Milwaukee and returned to the camp.

The main dormitories, where the majority of the internees are quartered, appear to be comfortable. There is ample space in each of these rooms so that the internees can store their clothing and other belongings. A number of tables and chairs were built by the internees which they use to read, play cards, write letters at, et cetera. Each dormitory is a large airy room with windows on three sides. There is plenty of light at all times of the day. The internees complained that some of the windows were either broken or would not close in these rooms causing a bad draft. General Guerre gave instructions to have the closing mechanisms on all windows repaired and to furnish the internees with glass and other materials necessary to repair the windows which were broken. It is believed that the appearance of the dormitories would be greatly improved if the walls could be painted. Colonel Frankenberger stated that a clause in the lease precluded the possibility of painting the interior of these buildings

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but that he would look into this matter and if possible would have this clause changed.

At Mr. Bruppacher's request the heat in both buildings was turned on to determine whether all the hot air registers and radiators were in working order for the coming cold weather. A number were found to be out of order and instructions were given by General Guerre for their repair.

The complaints brought by the German Government in a recent cable to the Swiss Legation at Washington with regard to the crowded living quarters at Stringtown are now believed to be completely remedied and the representative of the Swiss Legation expressed his satisfaction with present conditions.

V. WASHING AND TOILET FACILITIES:

With the decreased number of internees and with new additions and other improvements, toilet and bathing facilities now appear to be adequate and satisfactory. The flush toilets that were out of order have now all been repaired. A complaint made by the German Government that the toilets were located in the dormitories is unfounded. Each toilet is in a separate room which is completely walled off from the rest of the dormitory. The vents in the wall of the toilets which give access to the dormitories will be closed up and the windows in the toilets on the dormitory side which were broken will be repaired. The windows are to be painted black so as to make the separation between the toilets and dormitories more complete and the doors communicating to the toilets from the dormitories which it was noticed did not close properly will be repaired. The representative from the Swiss Legation expressed his approval of the toilet facilities.

A portion of the former convicts' laundry which is located in a separate building within the enclosure has been set aside as a laundry for the internees. The other part of this building is used as a recreation hall. Since the previous visit made by a representative of the Swiss Legation the washing facilities have been greatly increased. Three steam tubs have been installed as well as twenty-four other additional wash tubs. Some forty-eight wash boards have been procured. It is now believed that the laundry facilities are adequate and satisfactory. No complaints were made in this connection.

In addition to the regular washing facilities several of the internees have organized their own laundry business and charge fellow internees a nominal price for doing their laundry.

VI. FOOD AND COOKING:

The internees expressed their complete satisfaction with regard to the food they were receiving. They have

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several professional cooks among them, who, the authorities at the camp stated, are able to prepare the food more satisfactorily than the army cooks. The representatives of the International Red Cross and the Swiss Legation took several meals with the internees and commented on the quantity and quality of the food they received at these meals.

The kitchen facilities have now been expanded and there are a total of six ranges instead of the two previously reported. Two of these six ranges are, however, out of order. General Guerre gave instructions to have these two ranges repaired immediately. The internee cooks requested to be furnished with a baking oven to bake their own bread which they stated they had done at other camps where they had been detained. They further requested to be issued pumpernickel flour as they said they preferred this type of bread. General Guerre asked the Camp Commander to look into the possibility of obtaining a baking oven and to requisition one if it was obtainable at a reasonable price. The internees in the kitchen requested a number of kitchen utensils such as butter cutters, lemon squeezers, et cetera, and General Guerre gave instructions that these items be requisitioned. The internees also asked that mess jackets and aprons be issued to them since they stated that their regular issue of uniforms was being spoiled in the kitchen. These items will also be issued to the internees. The representative of the Swiss Legation asked that a Red Cross kit be set up in the kitchen in case accidents should occur there. This matter was brought up with Colonel Anderson, the medical officer in charge of the camp, who gave instructions to have such a kit made up and placed in the kitchen. The internees also asked that the silver ware be replaced or be replated. A number of knives, forks, spoons, et cetera, were inspected and found to be in very poor condition. They were of an inexpensive quality and were badly corroded. Instructions were given by General Guerre for the requisitioning of a new set of silver ware.

The seating capacity in the mess hall is now sufficient and all internees can eat there at one sitting. In addition to the regular mess hall, an additional mess hall has been opened and could be used if the number at the camp should be increased.

The representative of the Swiss Legation stated that the kitchen facilities and the mess hall are now satisfactory.

VII. MEDICAL FACILITIES:

The new hospital which was under construction at the time of the previous report was made on Stringtown is now complete and has been in operation since the middle of August. It is situated outside of the internment stockade in a separate enclosure. The internees are taken to the hospital under guard at certain times of the day upon their

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request for medical treatment. The hospital is a one story wooden structure which has a capacity of fifty beds. There are two wards, one of which is used entirely for the internees and the other for the troops at the camp. In addition to these wards there are a number of private rooms which are used for the seriously sick. The hospital has a fully equipped operating room, X-ray equipment and two dental units. Lieutenant Colonel Anderson, the physician in charge of the hospital is assisted by a lieutenant in the Army Medical Corps and by a Dr. A. T. Smith, one of the internees who is paid 80¢ a day for his work in the hospital, as are the other internees who work there as orderlies. There is also an army dentist on duty at the hospital and two non-commissioned officers who are assigned to the examining of eyes and the fitting of eye-glasses.

At the time of the visit there were sixteen internees confined at the hospital. Four of these men were seriously ill and one was to undergo an operation in a few days. The others in bed at the hospital were suffering from the usual minor ailments such as colds, sore throats, et cetera. Mr. Bruppacher, the representative of the Swiss Legation, interviewed a number of the internees at the hospital and in particular Dr. Karl Vollmoeller, with whom there has been considerable correspondence with the Legation of Switzerland. Dr. Vollmoeller, a former tubercular case, had requested through the Swiss Legation to be sent to Switzerland on account of his health. Upon instructions from Colonel Anderson, Dr. Vollmoeller has been confined at the hospital for several weeks undergoing special diet, care, and examination. Dr. Vollmoeller told Mr. Bruppacher that since his stay in the hospital he had gained some eleven pounds and that his general health had improved. A medical report on Dr. Vollmoeller's condition was shown to Mr. Bruppacher who stated that he was satisfied with the care this internee was receiving.

Lieutenant French, the dentist at the hospital, stated that some 208 internees had been treated in August and that about 157 of these internees were continuing to receive treatment. Plate work is furnished to the internees at no charge, however, if they request bridge work, a modest charge is made. All internees receive the same dental treatment that is given troops at the camp.

The non-commissioned officer in charge of eye examinations stated that according to his records, 130 internees had been examined for glasses and of this total 118 had to be fitted for glasses. These eye glasses had been requisitioned and were expected to be received shortly. They will be furnished to the internees gratis.

Colonel Anderson stated that the general health of the internees at the camp was good and that there was no epidemic. He said that there had been an outbreak of athlete's foot but that this infection was now under control and that foot baths containing disinfectant had been placed in each of the shower rooms.

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The representatives of the Swiss Legation and International Red Cross Committee said that they were satisfied with the medical facilities at the camp and that they would mention this fact in their reports.

VIII. CLOTHING AND BEDDING:

All internees at the camp have been issued green uniforms as soon as their civilian clothes in which they were apprehended were worn out. They have also been issued shoes, socks, and underclothing. Winter uniforms and underclothing are in stock in the camp and will be issued as soon as the cold weather sets in.

The internees complained of the green dye running out of their uniforms when they werewet. A similar complaint was previously made at Camp Meade and it is hoped that a satisfactory dye can be obtained which will not run. The internees stated that the shoes and clothing issued to them did not fit them. The larger men particularly complained of this fact. It was obvious that they had cause for complaint since quite a number of internees were seen wearing uniforms which they could not button and which were too small for them in every other respect. Colonel Frankenberger said that the small sizes of shoes and clothing had been sent to Stringtown since it was originally intended that the Japanese would be interned there. The possibility was suggested to him that he might be in a position to exchange some of the smaller sizes of clothing with camps where Japanese are interned. The Quartermaster stated that he believed that he had ample supplies of the larger sizes of winter clothing. An effort should be made to issue correct sizes of uniforms to these internees.

Some of the internees complained of the condition of their shoes and of the fact that no facilities existed for their repair. Colonel Frankenberger explained to these men that shoe repairing equipment had just been received and that a shoe repair shop was to be set up within a few days. A cobbler among the internees was to be put in charge of repairing shoes and was to be paid 80¢ a day for his work.

The internees in one of the two buildings complained that their mattresses were infested with bed-bugs and roaches as well as were the walls of the dormitories. This same complaint had been made during the previous inspection made by a Swiss representative and was brought up by the German Government in its telegram listing complaints of conditions at Stringtown. An exterminator was employed in July who has been making periodical visits to the camp to spray the dormitories, cellers, et cetera. Upon inspecting the dormitories bed-bugs were still found to be in the mattresses and in the wooden fixtures used to convert the single bunks into double decked bunks and in the wooden tables and chairs. General Guerre gave instructions that new mattresses be issued the internees by the

Quartermaster

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Quartermaster and that the old mattresses be fumigated and aired before being replaced in the camp warehouses. As mentioned previously, the double decked cots were dismantled in order to do away with the wooden fixtures in which there were bugs and a coat of creosote was to be applied to all tables and chairs to kill the bugs in them and to prevent them from reentering into the wood. Instructions were also given to have these internees moved out of their dormitories for several days at a time in order that these could be thoroughly fumigated. It is believed that these measures will be successful in exterminating these bugs and in preventing them from reentering the dormitories.

The internees requested that an additional sheet be issued to them since they only had one. While this extra sheet was issued to the internees upon instructions from General Guerre it was pointed out to the representative of the Swiss Legation that army troops at the camp were issued no sheets and slept in blankets.

IX. CANTEEN:

The canteen continues to operate very much the same as previously reported. The internee in charge of the canteen is paid 80¢ a day for his work. He is assisted by three other internees who work a half a day and who are paid on this basis. An inventory of some $500 worth of merchandise is carried on the shelves which includes cigarettes, tobacco, toilet articles, and soft drinks. Gross sales amounted to $3,300 during the month of August.

X. MAIL:

No changes have been made in the number of letters and postal cards that may be sent each week. The internees asked to be permitted to send domestic mail to their families in white envelops instead of using the regular internee stationary. Instructions were received from the office of the Provost Marshal General at Washington permitting the use of white envelopes a short time after this request was made. The representative of the Swiss Legation stated that the Company Spokesmen had informed him that the length and the number of telegrams and letters to the Swiss Legation were restricted. Mr. Bruppacher was informed that no restrictions were made regarding the length or the number of letters to the Swiss Legation but that no instructions had been received regarding telegrams to the Legation sent by the spokesmen. Mr. Herrick told Mr. Bruppacher that this matter would be taken up with the appropriate authorities in Washington and that he believed that the necessary changes would be made in this regard. Some complaints were made regarding the delays incurred in receiving mail which appeared to be caused by the censorship. Several particular cases were mentioned. An internee by the name of Probst mentioned that he had not heard from his wife who is detained at Asheville since July 16. Another internee showed the representative of the Swiss Legation several envelopes showing that it had

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taken some six weeks for mail to reach Stringtown from Milwaukee. The Swiss representative was informed that the question of the delays in the mail would be taken up with the authorities at Washington.

In discussing the delays in the mail Mr. Bruppacher stated that letters from the spokesman and other internees at Stringtown as well at the other internment camps took at least two to three weeks to reach the Legation and that replies from the Legation took a similar length of time to reach the internees. He added that in some instances these delays amounted to six weeks. Mr. Bruppacher was informed by Mr. Herrick that these delays would be made the subject of a thorough investigation.

XI. RECREATION AND EXERCISE:

The former prison laundry which is a separate building within the enclosure has now been converted into a recreation hall with the exception of a small part of that building which the internees use for their own laundry. The internees have constructed a stage in the recreation hall and theatrical performances are given every other Saturday night. The hall is completely furnished with tables and chairs and can seat a majority of those interned during theatrical performances. A sixteen piece orchestra has been organized. Musical instruments have been donated to the internees by the War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. A piano was purchased by contributions raised in the camp.

The internees have organized classes in English, Spanish, drawing, and photography. Lectures on various subjects are given by professors among the internees three times a week. A lending library has been set up in the basement in one of the main buildings and now contains some 1800 English books and 100 German books. Most of these were given to the internees by the War Prisoners Aid of the Y.M.C.A. The internees requested to be allowed to have more German books since a good number among them were unable to read English. The internees are allowed to subscribe to various English magazines and newspapers. They receive some 60 copies of the Tulsa World and 40 copies of the New York Times daily. The internees are allowed to have their own radios and to listen to standard broadcasts. Short wave sets, however, are prohibited.

The internees recreation outdoors is somewhat limited due to the lack of space within the enclosure and it is felt that additional space should be made available to them. This fact was brought up by the representative of the Protecting Power who was informed that this matter would be brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities. The internees play a few games within the enclosure such as horseshoes. They have erected a fist-ball court. Others walk around the enclosure for their exercise. The representatives of the Protecting Power told the authorities

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at the camp that the German Government had complained of the lack of physical exercise at the camp. General Guerre gave instructions to the authorities at the camp to organize calisthenics. This matter was brought up by the representatives of the Protecting Power with the Company Spokesmen who believed that this would be a good idea and that many would volunteer for these exercises.

XII. WORK:

Opportunities for work for pay outside the stockade have been made available to the internees but very few volunteered to work since they stated that in so doing they believed that they would be assisting the United States in its war effort. It was explained to the Company Spokesmen that the Stringtown Camp was not a military encampment and that the troops stationed there were only those needed to guard them. The internees were apparently under the impression that there were a large number of troops at Stringtown and that it was used as a military training camp. Upon being assured that this was not so, the spokesmen took this matter up with other internees and on the next day they reported that a large number of the internees in each of their companies would volunteer to work. There is at present only a limited amount of work that can be done around the camp which is mostly landscaping and improving the roads which in all probability will be completed shortly provided a good number will volunteer for work. It is believed that if possible land should be made available to the internees so that they can plant their own vegetable gardens. It is believed that opportunities for work should be made available to the internees at all times.

The internees complained that the few who had been working were exempted from kitchen police duties upon instructions from the Camp Commander. They believed that this was unfair. It was explained to them that this exemption from kitchen duties was made as an inducement for them to work and that when a sufficient number of them will have volunteered for work this regulation would be changed. The internees further complained that those who had been working were able to purchase a bottle of beer after work each day. They requested that beer should be made available to all. It was pointed out to them that those who worked were permitted to buy beer for the reason that they were working near the post exchange which sold beer which was not available at the camp canteen. They were further told that the question of supplying beer at the camp canteen would receive consideration provided they showed their willingness to cooperate fully with the camp authorities, which they had not done in the past.

XIII. CAMP ORGANIZATION AND DISCIPLINE:

The internees have been organized along army lines into three companies each of which is headed by a spokesman who is elected by the other internees. It is further intended that each of these companies will form its own

squads

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squads and platoons in charge of elective officers who will be responsible to the internee Company Commander. This organization has so far not materialized. A week prior to the visit the internees petitioned Colonel Frankenberger through their spokesmen to be permitted to elect a batallion leader or one spokesman for the entire camp. This request was granted but the spokesman was never elected as the internees apparently were unable to come to an agreement on any one man in the camp.

The three spokesmen have so far been unable to organize the camp activities satisfactorily and it is apparent that they lack the confidence of their fellow internees. In the camp there are several different factions which are continually hindering one another. According to the spokesmen, themselves, the camp is divided intotwo distinct groups. Those who wish to be repatriated and those who do not. These groups are evenly divided in numbers. Those who wish to be repatriated have nothing to do with the others since they believe that they are not loyal Germans. The so called loyal Germans have threatened and intimidated all the others who are afraid that their names will be reported to the German Government as anti-Nazis. Included in these two main groups there are Germans from some of the other American republics who have formed their own clique and do not have much to do with the Germans who were apprehended in the United States. Then there are the eight Jews from Panama. At first the situation of this later group was miserable and these internees were intimidated. They have now been moved to separate quarters in one of the buildings and upon being interviewed, stated that they are no longer threatened but are merely ignored.

It appears that the Germans who desire to be repatriated control the camp. Two of the Spokesmen are from this group. Those who have announced their intentions of not returning to Germany are excluded for the most part from the regular camp activities such as the theatrical performances, games, et cetera. These non-repatriates were the only ones who volunteered to work. They stated that more of their group would have volunteered for work but that they feared threats of the others. One internee who had been working claimed that he had been badly beaten up one day by several other internees and that his life was continued to be threatened. The non-repatriates requested that they be sent to a different camp with other Germans who did not wish to be repatriated. They were informed that such segregation was not possible.

The question of the different groups in the camp was discussed at length by the representatives of the Swiss Legation with General Guerre and it was decided that the situation might be ameliorated by organizing the camp into two companies instead of three. This reorganization will take place shortly.

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In view of the above conditions at the camp the internal discipline among the internees was very poor and the morale of the internees was at a low ebb. The representative of the Swiss Legation pointed out some of the faults to the spokesmen and urged them to try to organize the camp and to cooperate more fully with the authorities. The attitude of the Spokesmen was extremely hostile and they appeared most discontented on the first day of the visit. It can be reported that their attitude changed remarkably on the last day of the visit and it is believed that the visit of the representative of the Swiss Legation will considerably help this unfortunate situation. This internal [illegible] situation has naturally presented a most difficult problem for the authorities at the camp to solve since it has been impossible for them to receive much cooperation from the internees up to the present time.

An incident occurred on July 31 which caused a certain amount of excitement among the internees. On that day a United States Marshal arrived at the camp to take custody of an internee by the name of Diebel for removal to the State of New York for a hearing. As this internee was being taken from the camp a number of his fellow internees crowded around him and caused a demonstration consisting of boos, hisses, shouts of "Heil Hitler", Nazi salutes, and derogatory remarks concerning the United States Army. Several weeks later on September 1, fifteen internees, who it is believed took part in this demonstration, were confined separately at the camp. The identity of the guilty ones was believed to have been established by a duly constituted board after an investigation, however, the spokesmen claimed that the fifteen men were innocent of all charges. Soon after the confinement the spokesmen took this matter up with Colonel Frankenberger whom they told that they would obtain signed confessions from the guilty ones in order to obtain release of the fifteen who had been confined. The spokesmen, however, were unable to obtain these confessions and consequently these fifteen internees remained confined. The spokesmen complained that they had not been informed that demonstrations of this nature were against camp regulations and were not so informed until August 10 after this incident had occurred. They further stated that if they had known that such a demonstration was against regulations it would no have been held and that they did not believe that any derogatory remarks had been made about the United States Army. The Spokesmen claimed that these fifteen men were only being confined for political reasons since nothing was made of this incident until an article appeared in the press reporting it and they said that they felt that if punishment was to be made it should have been administered immediately after the offense instead of a month later.

The condition of the confinement of these internees was discussed with Colonel Frankenberger by the representative of the Swiss Legation to whose satisfaction these conditions were explained. This confinement consisted of segregating the men in a separate barrack room, the door

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of which was not locked. They took their meals separately and were allowed to exercise. At the time of the visit ten of the fifteen men who were to be confined for thirty days from September 1 had already been released and upon instructions from Colonel Frankenberger the remaining five were to be released on September 26, five days before the expiration of their sentence.

XIV. COMPLAINTS:

Complaints made by the internees and action taken in regard to them are believed to be fully covered under the various headings in this report. Two complaints raised by the German Government, however, have not been mentioned. The German Government apparently was informed by Germans who were repatriated that Stringtown was a former negro prison. It was explained to the satisfaction of the Swiss representative by the Quartermaster who had been associated with the prison board in Oklahoma prior to his induction into the army that Stringtown was a former trusty prison which housed few negroes. The Swiss representative in turn informed the internees of this fact. The other complaint mentioned by the German Government was with regard to locking the internees in the buildings at night. This complaint no longer had any basis since with the installation of flood lights around the enclosure this practice was discontinued.

XV. IMPRESSIONS:

It is apparent that conditions at Stringtown have improved since it was first inspected by a representative of the Swiss Legation in June and there is reason to believe that with time this camp should cease to be a problem. The main difficulty at the camp is the lack of harmony among the internees and their failure to cooperate with Colonel Frankenberger and his officers.

P. W. HERRICK