

The White Buses



Prisoners being driven away from Neuengamme concentration camp on Swedish Red Cross buses. Drawing by Per Ulrich, a former prisoner from Denmark.

Aus: Per Ulrich: *Tegninger fra tyske koncentrationslejre. Tegnet paa Stedet*, Kopenhagen 1945, S. 33.

It was [...] very moving to experience how the prisoners' mood [...] lifted, how their faces lit up, how the spark of hope ignited inside them.

Count Folke Bernadotte about his visit to the "Scandinavians' camp" at Neuengamme on 30 March 1945.

The Danish prisoners received parcels and letters from their relatives every day.
Statement by SS Blockführer Heinrich Ruge before the British Military Tribunal on 13 April 1945.

We were not allowed any contact with other prisoners, but we still threw food across the fence to them.

Per Ulrich aus Dänemark, ehemaliger Häftling. Interview, 1991.

Of course we took breaks. They had to relieve themselves, and that was a problem, because you were not allowed to go too far away from the bus. If you did, the Gestapo would start to scream because they thought the prisoners might escape. But, of course, there was absolutely no risk of any of them trying to escape.

Sten Olsson, bus driver from Sweden, in an interview in 2004.

It was wonderful. We felt as if we had arrived in Paradise.

Ernst Nielsen, former prisoner from Denmark, in an interview in 1999.

"Block 1 Journal"

Freitag 30-3-45				
Bestände: 563 - 441 - 122 (Hagerup)				
[Vom der Lagerschreibstube auf Grundlage des Grossopps 20-3-45 festgelegt]				
45960	Denis		(verl. d. 17)	
	entl. aus dem Rev.		K	1
	Zug v B17		(Rev. Entl.)	1
76795	Hansson K.E.		K	
	563	441	122	
	+1	+1	-1	
	-1	-1		
	<u>563</u>	<u>442</u>	<u>121</u>	
	Abs. d. nichtdän. Kerlast. (zu B17)		K	119
	563	442	121	
	<u>119</u>		<u>119</u>	
	<u>444</u>	<u>442</u>	<u>2</u>	
	Rev. Aufn.			1
76780	Hansen			
	444	441	3	K
	Zug v B2			2
77521	Jørgensen			
77568	Junker			
	444	441	3	
	+2	+2		
	<u>446</u>	<u>443</u>	<u>3</u>	
Samstag 31-3-45				
	Abg auf 2			3
76484	Andersen		K	
77104	Jensen		K	
76779	Døssing		K	

The Danish prisoner Laurits Gudmund Damgaard began working as a clerk in the "Scandinavians' Camp" in March 1945. The records shown here were made by him between 30 March and 20 April 1945. They formed the basis for the daily entries into the camp register.

(MDF)

Block Registers

4. 9. 45				Mittwoch, 28. 3. 45.				
Verlegt		Rollen		Appell	Soll	Ist	Kom.	Rev.
von	nach	Ins	aus					
726/01.22	421/01.25 2/01.20 398/Transport/ 3400/Rev. 01.22	74004 54315 96963	72740 30911 57811 72612 70821 41702 40030 60250	Morgens	368	146		222
				Mittags				
	3014/01.22 18953/ " " 41279 " "			Abends	360	144		216

Donnerstag, 29. III. 45								
Verlegt		Revisi		Appell	Soll	Ist	Kom.	Rev.
von	nach	ins	aus					
78735/01.21.4		50881 59536 54586 59581 94200 74472	36742 47247 53247 72527 22540 47204	Morgens	357	141		216
68/Hann. v				Mittags				
69582/01.20				Abends	428	214		214
60776 " "								
60777 " "								
+ 4 Reiter								

The Scandinavian prisoners often spoke German and they were the first choice of the SS when it came to allocating special jobs. Some of them were appointed as "clerks" and had the task of recording new arrivals, departures, and deaths. Because they were transferred to the "Scandinavians' Camp" in March 1945 and later rescued as part of the "White Buses" operation, some Scandinavian prisoners were able to prevent these documents from being destroyed and took them with them to Scandinavia.

(ANg)

Excerpt from the Block 2 Register

Block 2. Montag, 26. 3. 45.

Appell	Soll	Ist	Kom.	Rev.	
Morgens	988	862		126	
Mittags					
Abends	984	854		130	

Der Blockführer:

Block 2. Dienstag, 27. 3. 45.

Appell	Soll	Ist	Kom.	Rev.	
Morgens	984	852	2	130	
Mittags					
Abends	1116	576	318	222	

Der Blockführer:
Hoffmann

Block 2. Mittwoch, 28. 3. 45.

Appell	Soll	Ist	Kom.	Rev.	
Morgens	368	146		222	
Mittags					
Abends	360	144		216	

Der Blockführer:
Wurst

The "register" for Block 2, one of the four prisoners' blocks in the western brick building, shows that up to 931 prisoners were "present and correct" in March 1945, the highest number being reached on 3 March. But from 28 March 1945 the number of prisoners in the block fell by more than half as a result of the block's incorporation into the "Scandinavians' Camp". In the late evening of 27 March, the SS ordered all Danish and Norwegian prisoners to move into the brick building. The SS had approximately 2,000 extremely weak prisoners transported to satellite camps in Hanover and Watenstedt/Leinde (Salzgitter) by the Swedish Red Cross. These prisoners had been kept in the brick building up to that point. The prisoners felt betrayed by the Red Cross, who they had hoped would help them.

(DHM)

Block 6: Excerpt from the Register

D. 79508	ERIK	CARL	SØRENSEN	✓	22/11-04	16.
" 509	^{ERIK} KURT		— " —	✓	17/7-23	
" 510	GUNNAR		— " —	✓	26/3-23	
" 511	CARL		— " —	✓	3/2-97	
" 513	NIELS		— " —	✓	19/1-27	
" 514	SUEND	WARSEN	— " —	✓	22/10-21	
" 515	TAGE		— " —	✓	11/4-16	
" 516	WILHELM		— " —	✓	3/1-20	
" 517	FREDERIK		SOLBERG	✓	8/5-22	
" 518	JOHN		STEFFENSEN	✓	25/4-12	
S 519	KJELL		SUADICANI	✓	2/10-15	
" 520	KRISTIAN		SVENDSEN	✓	13/10-18	
" 521	STEEN		— " —	✓	28/6-20	Swings 1944
S 522	JOHANNES		SCHÜTT	✓	15/4-00	
" 523	KJELD		STAUNSTRUP	✓	20/1-20	
" 524	ROBERT		STOURUP	✓	16/5-95	HJEMSEN 1944
" 525	PREBEN		THAYSEN	✓	11/3-14	
" 526	JØRN		— " —	✓	19/10-21	16.

On 19 April 1945, one day before the evacuation of all prisoners kept in the "Scandinavians' Camp", there were 26 Danes and 15 Norwegians present in Block 6. Danish prisoner Viggo Hedgaard took the book with him to Denmark when he was rescued on the White Buses and presented it to the Museum of Danish Resistance in Copenhagen in 1972.

(MDF)