

A VISIT TO DACHAU

Robert W. Case

Although most Americans have heard or read about Dachau, few people know that the camp was established in 1933 to "imprison political rivals without judicial sentence for an undefined period of time." That was until the SS, under the capable direction of **Heinrich Himmler**, began arresting communists, social democrats and union members. Until this time, the prison was under the control of the Bavarian State Police. In summary, once the SS took control, they proceeded with a wave of terror that had not been known in Germany ever before. The best estimate of the number of deaths in Dachau is approximately 230,000, but no one really knows, as many deaths were not "registered". The vast majority of the deaths were due to typhus, starvation, exposure, mistreatment, medical experimentation, and finally, execution. Contrary to popular belief, the crematorium was used solely to incinerate dead bodies, and the gas chambers, although somewhat identical to those at Auschwitz, were used only to fumigate the prisoners and their clothes, and were never used for extermination of the inmates. This is well documented by several sources.

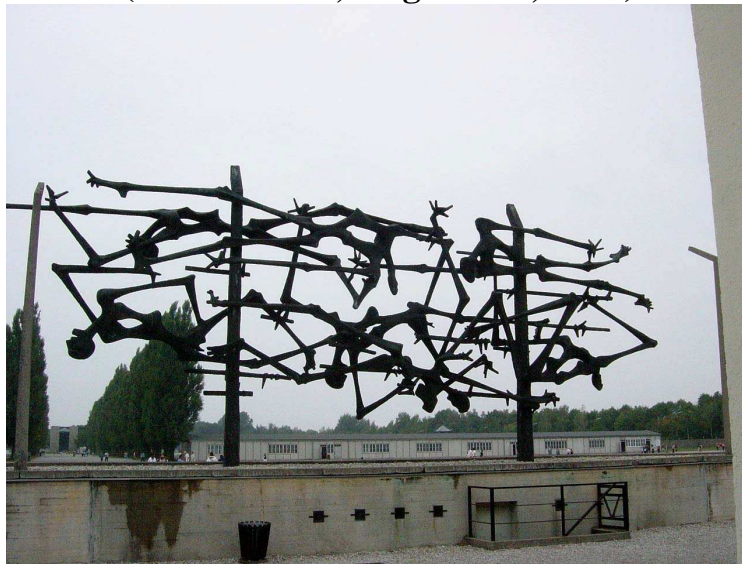
Dachau is a 30 minute ride by an ultra-modern train, and tourists from all over the world visit. One thing that astonished us was all the souvenir stands surrounding the camp, and street peddlers plying their trade. On arrival, we were not prepared for what we were about to see. The camp has been "sterilized" – i.e., the ovens and the gas chamber (**Baracke X**) is nowhere to be seen, markers delineate the area where the barracks were, and the main officers barracks is now a museum with many pictures of the camp. The SS photographers took many of the pictures. There is also a section concerning the foundation of the 3rd Reich, and many books and documents illustrating the careful and meticulous record keeping of the Nazi's, which, in the end, proved to the world what animals they really were.

Dachau was liberated by the American troops on April 29, 1945. Their first impressions was one of "glaring chaos"-thousands of ragged skeletons, bodies, rotting corpses, and filth everywhere.

Our experience can best be summarized by the inscription on the memorial in French, English, German, and Russian:

***"May the example of those who were exterminated here between 1933-1945
Because they resisted Nazism help to unite the living for the defense of peace
and freedom in respect for their fellow men."***

**Sculpture of intertwined skeletons symbolizing the passion of prisoners.
(Glid Nandor, Yugoslavia, 1968)**



Memorial “-Never Again “

Memorial to the Unknown



(Visitors placed the stones)

Watchtower & Barbed Wire surrounding the Camp

