

AL Bonsey

My conscientious 1915-18

Preliminary remarks by Rudolf Hermanns

By a lucky chance came a biographical Schildung of staying in the POW camp Dülmen from the First World War in the city archives Dülmen. Since the elective groups Archaeology of Johann Gutenberg school for several years to carry out excavations in the area of the former camp, we will be happy attacked the suggestion of city archivist Dr. Friedrich-Wilhelm Hemann on, the English language version report of AL Bonsey about his wartime particular his stay to translate in Dülmener bearing the English lessons. On the one hand insights into the everyday camp life beyond traditional norms and regulations could be hoped that the excavations should come to good. On the other hand was in English classes the opportunity to not only make dry textbook material for teaching basic but laboriously appropriated vocabulary and grammar once virtually usefully enriched with local flavor apply. A volunteer working group of 9th grade went outside the classroom with enthusiasm to work and not only translated the passage Dülmen concerned, but also the rest of the pages closely written 44th

The report of an English prisoner of World War I needed, so that we can classify him right today, an introductory comment that calls the special conditions of the time from 1918 in remembrance.

Through the British blockade of the sea lanes Germany had been cut off from important trade routes. The need for warfare raw materials, but also many commodities, particularly food lacked, especially since the economy had been converted to war production. In Germany prevailed since the winter of 1916-17 famine ("Turnip Winter"), which many people were killed. Ration cards should distribute the few foods justice: For example, 250 grams of meat and 250 grams of bread were issued at the county level - if this amount were available. The amount of food for prisoners of war was precisely defined. There was food lists the War Ministry and the pension office Hilstrup for the area of the VII. Army Corps, but these foods existed largely only on paper!

Smaller work details how the K 5 "Gymnasium" in Dülmen could report after Hilstrup that Steckrüben- or potato stocks had been created, so you came well over the winter. The calculations of K 5 show that at the beginning of the war large amounts of meat and sausages were purchased from private butchers in Dülmen. Thereafter, a Garnissionsschlachtereie in Dülmen took over the supply.

During the war years he had tried to find substitutes for food and consumer goods, as corn flour was used for bread making, for example. Cotton Textile manufacturing lacked equally dramatic.

The addressee of the report of AL Bonsey was the British Ministry of War, which questioned every returnee from German captivity exactly. Bonsey was in the uncomfortable situation of having to justify his capture by the Germans. He led to the unreliability of the fighting alongside the British Portuguese. The Germans had broken through the front line and Portuguese, the

English rolled up from behind.

After the Hague Land War Convention of 1907 POWs enlisted personnel were obliged to work. A quarter of the earnings they received as "reward work" often in storage fees paid. This allowed them to buy in the sale barracks small things of everyday use.

Weekly allowed a parcel from the homeland are received, the prisoner was allowed to write two letters a week - the International Red Cross took care of transporting the mail. By an unfortunate coincidence Bonsey got his packages until he was already in the winter in the camp Münster and I was sick in the hospital.

Since this is a report, we know little about the social-communicative level and the "inner life" or the thoughts of the AL Bonsey. It is the look of a soldier who is unwittingly fall into "enemy hands" and has come to terms with it.

Translation trying as close as possible to the text. Many terms from the military area difficult doing the work. The time-related sentence structure - position of the predicate or the adverbs - astonished the translator sometimes.

The Dülmener stock ("Dullmen Camp")

As we all stood on Ausladebahnhof, we got our prisoner number and were counted again. Then we went to POW camp that was about five kilometers from the railway station. For 14 days we got to eat very little, so that we had become becoming weaker. That's why some of us kept the march to the camp not, they came later after.

This POW camp was in Dülmen ("Dullmen") in Westphalia. It was almost a new warehouse. Previously there had been a pine forest, the pine trees had been cut down, however, and used for the construction of wooden barracks. The soil was very sandy here, six to eight centimeters deep sandy.



Entrance to the POW camp in Hausdülmen.

When we got to the camp, we were first led to a large barracks, our names and prisoner numbers were registered there. Then we searched for smaller items that we had with us, as pocket knives, safety razor and photos. They actually took away everything. We had only our

old, dirty khaki uniforms, in which they had captured us. Upon arrival at the camp, we must have looked like a poor, dejected society. In this barrack we stayed for 48 hours under quarantine to prevent diseases should break out among us. After these two days, we were taken to the bathing hut and all of them could take a shower-bath. That was good and refreshed us, because it was the first washing, we had after the three weeks of our imprisonment.

The barbers also came and cut our hair short, we looked really bald. The most surprising in the bathing-hut had been the fact that we had to wash ourselves with sand. Soap did not exist, because the Germans were very short of soap. The sand was very rough on the body, but it does not scratched very - it was my first experiment, to wash myself with sand. When we tried to dry off, we had to use towels, which consisted of twisted paper and just looked like towels, but we quickly noticed the difference because they took not so good on the water like regular towels. But that was probably the best substitute, the Germans could find for towels, like all things, a substitute had been found, even for food.

After spending time in the bathing-hut - showers and hair cutting - we were taken to a fenced with barbed wire storage area. The barracks were very good. The worst thing was the food. We could not get enough to eat. We already had to starve for three weeks.



The hair of the prisoners were cut short in order to prevent the spread of vermin.

Every morning we had a roll-call appeal by six clock. For that we had to come out of our barracks and before the guardhouse march past in our storage area. After that we could take our "breakfast", as they called it. This was at seven clock, there was a pint of "coffee", as they called it. This "coffee" consisted of roasted chestnuts, which had been pushed into flour. That was the "coffee" -flour. Something to eat for breakfast, there was not.

Something to eat there for lunch. We were then given a pint of soup. This soup consisted of cabbage with some fresh peas and grains that looked like Kanarienfutter, the other part consisted of water. We were happy when we found a small piece of potato in it. So we had to "tea time" get along at six clock. Then there was a pint of this "delicious" coffee. Then nothing.

And that was all what we got to eat the same "menu" every day, while we were in this camp. We walked around and searched potato peels out of the garbage cans to supplement our food rations because we were famished and were happy about every bit of food that we could find. There was not much in the dustbins, but we were happy with what we found. When we were still fighting in France with our troops, we had sometimes gone hungry. But as in this camp we have never gone hungry. We learned what was hungry.

While we were in this camp, they inoculated us against smallpox, cholera and yellow fever, five or six times in the first fortnight. Only in his arms and then in the chest. They called us out of our barracks and could take us in rank and file. The German doctor came the series with his syringe along and stabbed us with the needle, as he saw fit. I thought they were trying to inject various pathogens to see how they worked. We thought at that time all.



The "Lausoleum", the quarantine and delousing barrack of the camp.

Guardsmen were everywhere, in our area (Group II) and in the outer bearing. The outer area of the camp was surrounded with the usual barbed wire. At night, the camp was lit by spotlights, consisting of arc lamps and hung on eight-meter high pole. So they had us at any time under guard.

After three weeks in this camp I fell ill with dysentery. They took me to the hospital, where I stayed for one month. The hospital was located in the rear part of the camp.

The only treatment that I received against this disease, was a little opium, so I could sleep. They had to carry me to the hospital and have to lie down in bed, in such a weak state I was. The food was no better than in our camp area.

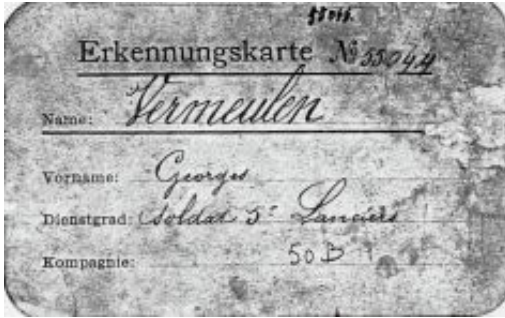


The hospital group consisted of a separate system with four hospital barracks, a surgical ward, outbuildings and laundry barrack.

It had no flavor and consisted almost entirely of water. My condition was getting worse. The sanitary conditions in the hospital were indescribable. As sick as I was, I had to get out of bed to go to the toilets, as well as I could. Fortunately, the toilets were only a few feet away in a

passageway. The stench and the flies were here almost unbearable early May.

The old German pastor came to visit almost every day, but he did not speak English, but I was glad to see him and was able to understand his words. At the end of the fourth week I was released, but I was so sick that I could barely walk or stand for a long time. With a fellow I had to go back to my barracks. When we were called to roll call the next day, they called from a list name on. My name was also there. They said I would have reported me willingly for the mine work, because our little group had intended to work in the coal mine. When they called my name, I stepped out of line a step forward, as is customary in the British army, if you want to speak at the parade with an officer.



An identity card of the POW camp of Dülmener

The owner of this identification card of the Belgian cavalry Paul Vermeulen, fell on March 6, 1918 in a prisoner of war. About warehouse in Belgium he came to Dülmen, later to Minden. On 18 December 1918 he returned to Belgium, where he was not even twenty years old, died on June 5, 1919 at the hospital Leopoldsburg.

us. In this way, at least we got a mouthful of food on that day. He gave some of us even from his cigarette, which he had in his pocket. So our journey took another happy outcome.

It was about four clock against when we reached Dortmund, a very large city with many mines and blast furnaces, which we could see as we were on our way to our bill. Our German guards soon lost their way, as they had never been in Dortmund, but after some time we arrived at the mine. We were amazed to encounter even more British prisoners of war there. They were advised late 1914 after the Battle of Mons in captivity. These guys were very happy to see us because we were able to tell them how things stood, and the war had developed. They knew only what the Germans had told them about it from their perspective. We were taken on the colliery site directly to a barracks that was our guest.

There were many prisoners of war, French, Belgians, Russians, Romanians, and all had in this huge mine work, either underground or in another part of the bill. Our little group was divided into three groups and parked at different shifts. My first film was the "early shift", as they called it, she started at five clock in the morning. We were always called at 4:30 clock and were given a small piece of black bread and a pint of "coffee", whose taste we already knew from Dülmen ago. At a quarter to four o'clock we had to muster and then we were ready to work all day in the coal mine.

(Translation: pupils of the 9th school year, E - English Course)

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