

Undated instruction of the SS of the Buchenwald concentration camp on the tasks of the senior block prisoner

The senior block prisoner ensures that the camp order and the instructions of the camp leadership are implemented by all prisoners of his block. He is responsible for their implementation, for order and cleanliness, as well as for the furniture in his block. Subordinate to the senior block prisoner is the room service, assigned to him for the execution of his tasks. The service of the senior block prisoner begins even before general reveille. He sees to it that no one leaves his bed, let alone the block, before reveille and that, at the waking signal, every inmate immediately gets up from his bunk. It is the self-evident duty of every prisoner to wash himself and his clothes, and to make his bed. Under his direction the coffee and the helpings to which the inmates are entitled are distributed. At the first whistle signal for morning parade, about three-quarters of a hour after reveille, he makes his block fall in, convinces himself that no one is left behind in the block and, at the second whistle signal marches them to the parade ground. Marching must be in absolute silence and tidy order. On the parade ground he makes the block halt, dress by the right and count. He makes sure that the number of prisoners which he has already reported to the senior camp prisoner is actually present and then - if his count tallies with the report made to the senior camp prisoner - makes his report to the block commander. If his total does not tally with that reported to the office before the parade, he must instantly report this to the senior camp prisoner. On no account must he report to his block commander different figures from those reported to the senior camp prisoner.

Once the parade has been inspected and the command "Work squad fall in" has been given, he goes to the place assigned to him. His tasks during the falling-in and the departure of the work squad are:

Closing off the camp to prevent any work-shy prisoners sneaking back into the camp and there hanging about without working, ordering service at the notice boards, counting service at the desk of the labor service leader, etc. His post is assigned to him by the senior camp prisoner.

Once the work squad has moved off he will, as a rule, go to the office. There he is told the timetable of his service for the day in question. The possibilities are: service in the kitchen, where the senior block prisoner has to supervise the correct operation of the room service during the issue of food and helpings, and the return of the

cleaned saucepans; service with the money dispensers, when he has to ensure the smooth procedure of pay-out. If assigned to service on the camp roads, he makes sure that no one hangs about in an unauthorized manner between the huts and that the roads are clean and in good order. Before assuming his service he goes to his own block and convinces himself that everything is in order in the block. Beds must have been made impeccably, lockers, day and sleeping quarters, wash room, toilet and ante-room must be clean.

During the day no one except the room service is permitted in the block. The senior block prisoner is responsible also for the observance of this regulation. When working time is finished, he sees to the hand-out of the food and to quiet and order during mealtime and free time. He has to concern himself with the orderly receipt of the prisoners' personal and bed linen and to ensure the smooth exchange of linen in the room. In the event of new arrivals to the block, it is the task of the senior block prisoner to instruct them, familiarize them with the camp order and initiate the filling of the forms required for new arrivals.

At the evening whistle he has to convince himself that all prisoners are in the block and by lights-out (second whistle) he should have counted the complement. If a prisoner is missing, he has to report at once to the senior camp prisoner, who sets the rest into motion. The senior block prisoner is also responsible for quiet at night. During that time no one is permitted to leave the block, show himself at a window or turn on the light.

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