

Sexual Slavery in the Concentration Camps

by Ken Lawrence

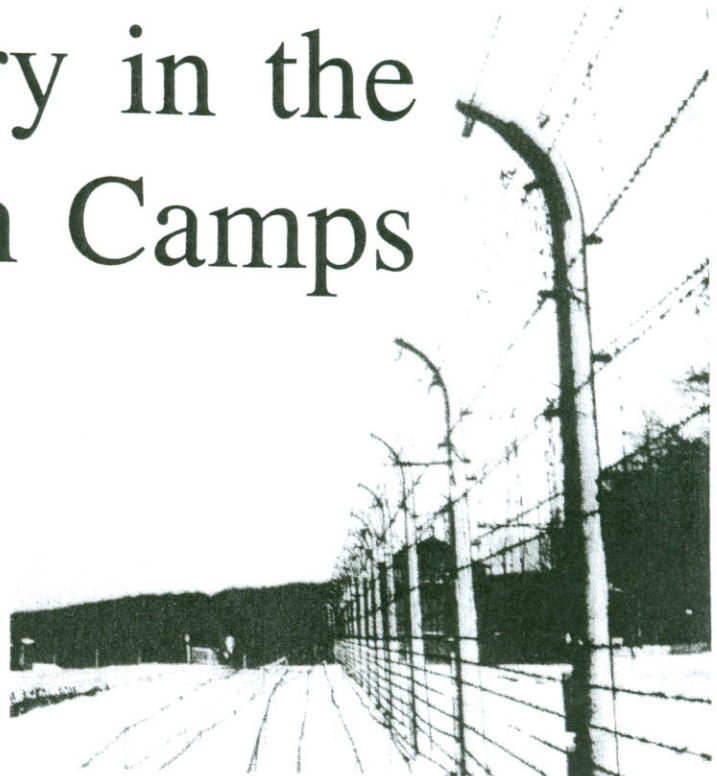
All mail from German concentration camps is disquieting, because it reminds us of the Nazi regime's cruelty. It seems that no matter what degree of barbarism occurred, postal and philatelic evidence has survived to tell the story.

The parcel tag shown here is a drab document, with no stamps to enhance its visual appeal, but it illustrates one aspect of concentration camp life reported in a former inmate's memoir. Without that information, it could be a puzzler.

The tag accompanied a four-kilogram parcel sent from the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück, located near Fuerstenberg in the Mecklenburg region of northern Germany, to a former Ravensbrück inmate, Wanda Kasmikowska, at concentration camp Buchenwald, located near Weimar, Thuringia, in southern Germany. As a piece of official mail sent by the Ravensbrück administration, it bears no postage.

Buchenwald was a concentration camp for men. What was Wanda Kasmikowska doing there? The answer is found in the memoir of former Buchenwald inmate Eugene Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*. In the summer of 1943, S.S. chief Heinrich Himmler ordered that "Special Buildings" (brothels) be established at each men's concentration camp, including Buchenwald.

Eighteen to twenty-four girls were shipped from the women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück to each camp where a brothel was established. Each group was supervised by two women non-



One of the most notorious Nazi concentration camps was Buchenwald, located on a mountaintop just six miles from Weimar, the traditional home of German culture since the Middle Ages.

coms of the SS, who frequently behaved like camp followers themselves. The girls were all volunteers — they were promised that they would be discharged in six months.

No doubt the daily reality of concentration camp life was enough to persuade those young women that a six-month indenture of sexual service was worth enduring as a way to get out.

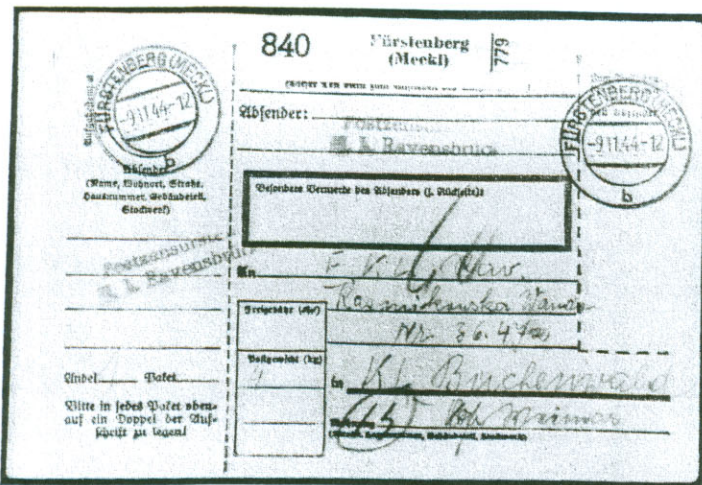
The Nazis had two purposes in mind: to corrupt the male political prisoners, who were invited, sometimes ordered, to visit the brothels, and to provide "recreation" for the S.S. officers.

According to Kogon, the underground camp organization instructed prisoners not to patronize the brothels, both to avoid compromising their political activity and for social reasons.

It was regarded as shameful that wives and mothers sent money they could ill afford, only to have the prisoners pay out two marks admission to the brothel. But at the very outset camp headquarters has compelled the senior camp inmate at Buchenwald to visit the building. The least that could have happened to him if he had refused would have been his removal from office, which might have created much trouble in camp. He yielded, after holding out for two days, and never went back a second time. By and large, all political prisoners hewed to this line, so that the objective of the SS was foiled.

But S.S. officers often could be found there at advanced hours of the night, according to Kogon.

He wrote that Princess Mafalda, daughter of the king and queen of Italy who died at Buchenwald during an air raid on August 24, 1944, had been one of the sex slaves. A lock of her hair was smuggled out of the camp and sent to her relatives.



This parcel card from women's concentration camp Ravensbrück to a woman inmate at men's concentration camp Buchenwald is a silent witness to sexual mistreatment in Nazi Germany.