

# Lily Offenbacher Shares Her Knowledge of the "Euthanasia" Program with the U.S. Coordinator of Information (September 1941)

## Source

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514  
REPORT

By: Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Lily Offenbacher, 4002 - 43rd Street, Woodside, Long Island City, is a Jewish widow of a man who was connected with Der Goetz, a Catholic newspaper in Munich, edited by Dr. Fritz Goetz and supported by the Jesuits and in strong opposition to the Nazis in 1900-1930. It was, therefore, the object of an immediate attack when the Nazis came into power in March 1933. Dr. Goetz was murdered in prison.

Mrs. Offenbacher has been recommended to us by Mr. Fluogge and was interviewed by Mrs. Stewart. She seems very reliable and her statements seem to be correct. She herself is still rather nervous as she had been in prison shortly before she left Germany. She gives the following information:

She left Germany in June. I went to Lisbon by airplane and continued the journey by boat. I could not leave Germany before because I had to nurse my sick mother who died in the meantime. I also wanted to bring my aged father with me and we had endless difficulties with our passports.

During the last two years I have continually tried to get information about German war industries. I have reliable information about Munich and its surroundings. I think my information might be valuable for the U.S. because during the air attacks on Munich last August and September and again on the 28th of November not a single military object was hit. I have learned since that there were reports outside Germany that the attack was intended for the city; if such a plan existed it failed completely. The objectives hit included the restaurant "Stern" in the residential section at the rear of the town; the house of an iron monger, Hamel, whose house is opposite the Sternrestaurant where the Nazi party had its first meeting place. If the Bruu was the aim it was a glass miss. In Munich several bombs fell in the English Garden and the Haterick Kino.

The most important places besides the U.S.W. (which seemed not to be encouraged at all) are the big munitions factory in Wolfenbuttel; the Linde Gas Machine factory, Spellingwerk, both in Isarthal south of Munich and near factory at the Getriedhof and last but not least, the big munitions factory Friedrich Beckel in Hittel Sendling. The factory in Hittel Sendling makes important parts of guns and cannons, mainly mechanical springs, etc.

The Wolfenbuttel factory was built in 1935 and is completely underground. Only railroads and cranes are on the surface and they are well hidden between the high trees of the surrounding woods. Workers working there are mostly convicts released from the penitentiary after having served part of their sentences and being bound over for the rest ...

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They are living on the premises which are surrounded by barbed wire fences. The factory which is said to be the biggest in south Germany is situated behind the River Isar and Lohsch. It is forbidden to reach the land there when rising on the river. I did it all the same.

The Linde Gas Machine factory has been extremely busy since the beginning of the war. They are said to manufacture small gas bombs used as charges of bigger bombs. There were also rumours that these gas bombs had been used in the conquest of French forts. Another persistent rumour was that some kind of poison gas was produced there which made whole groups of persons unconscious. All the French prisoners who were spread all over the country and who were generally considered to be very well treated, answered questions about the way in which they had been taken prisoners by saying that they did not know what had happened, but had awakened in Munich after a deep sleep. This detail was corroborated by tales of German soldiers who said they had seen cattle grazing before forts falling down without reason visible from the outside.

There is also a completely new munition factory near the Getriedhof in the disguise of small houses of a housing estate. They are an exact replica of settlement houses of the police force in the vicinity of the churchyard. Very few people realize the true nature of this group of buildings.

The big military air field is not any longer in Schleissheim but in Rim.

There is also a dummy factory in Puchheim, the next station after Forsting. Here a garbage dump is made to give the impression of a factory by the installation of electric fires. As far as I know, no bombs have been dropped there yet.

There is also an airplane trial station east of the railway station of Baternburg where there is a big camouflaged hangar.

Mrs. Offenbacher will make up sketches of the places about which she informs. She has also evidence that actually thousands of inmates of homes for the mentally defective were put to death. They seem to have been used instead of guinea-pigs for a vivisectional experiments on the effect of gas. The usual course of events was that the patients who were certified for mental diseases were taken for a bus ride to an unknown destination or to Lins where there is a big home for mental defectives. A few weeks later the relations received an urn with their ashes, and the institutions from which they were taken received the patients' clothes. These clothes were, according to unambiguous evidence of nurses and doctors, contaminated with the smell of gas. Mrs. Offenbacher knows more details about this and evidence on the German home front which she hopes to use for publications, she has little news. She is ready to give this additional information also to us if it is any use for publications by a British organization. She is most interested in military training, preferably in the air force in one of the British forces which accepts foreigners. She has a great experience in motorizing and is the holder of several prizes for motor races.

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REPORT ON MERCY KILLINGS

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Mrs. Offenbacher (Olsen) completes her report:

I forgot to mention that a particularly well constructed air raid shelter was built on the corner of Collegenstrasse and Prinzregentenstrasse near the Prince Karl Palais (the former Austrian Legation). Most of the important state functions take place in the Prince Karl Palais.

As I told before I have conclusive evidence about the so-called "Mercy" killing. In July 1940 the first rumors went around that Jewish insane persons were not any more accepted in lunatic asylums. The relatives of these patients who were already in this institution could not get information on the whereabouts of the patients. The only answer they got on repeated requests was that all the patients had been sent to Eggenling, which is an institution for insane people, or to Lins, another institution of the same kind. Owing to the strain of the last years in Germany many families had relatives in lunatic asylums. Therefore, the fate of these people was discussed everywhere. One rumour spoke of their being shipped off to Poland. Everybody thought such an uprooting of patients whose only comfort lies in a certain daily routine and in regular habits was very cruel. I was very much interested in the fate of these patients and therefore tried to get some details. I visited a friend of mine who was a patient in a private sanatorium. She was neither nervous or neurotic, but she was very delicate and had lived for many years in the private sanatorium where she was well cared for. She was very upset and told me that a Jewish insane man had been fetched in a bus. They had been told that this man had ...

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been brought to Eggenling. The man who fetched the patient had spoken to no one and had made a very disagreeable impression on everybody. The patient himself had been in the sanatorium for years and was very popular. <sup>My friend</sup> nicht-also-dach-mann-tach (I am not an Aryan, but foolish all the same.) Because of his popularity his male and female nurses tried to visit him in Eggenling on their days off. They <sup>were</sup> ~~were~~ not <sup>admitted</sup> ~~admitted~~ at all and looked troubled when they came back. My friend told me that this man was the only patient who had disappeared in this way and that all the other Jewish patients had been dismissed four or six weeks before the bus appeared to fetch them. It is known that the head physician is an ardent Nazi. It was, therefore, very likely that he knew of what was coming and wanted to save his patients, probably mainly in order to have them as paying guest again. Several persons tried to find out what had happened to patients whom they had sent to private sanatoriums. In one case one Aryan doctor who inquired about a Jewish relative, received a letter from the matron of the private sanatorium telling him that his relative had been sent away on order of the Government. She was not able to give any other information but would pray for the patient of whom she was very fond. One day in July or August 1940 he received a death certificate of his relative together with the urn with her ashes. He was not able to get any more information about the reason of her death. The matron of the sanatorium did not know anything but the fact of her being taken away and then receiving the urn. Several of my friends have had the same experience. First we heard that only the Jewish insane persons disappeared, but from the middle of September 1940 onwards, my Aryan friends got similar news about their relatives.

These ...

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(Continued)

These Aryans usually belonged to the poorer classes. The State had normally to bear the expenses for their stay in the lunatic asylums. I heard also of a paying Aryan patient disappearing in the same way, but that seems to be an exception. Nobody could understand how these persons were killed because there was really no lack of food. I heard in February 1941 of a bad case of malnutrition in a lunatic asylum which led to death, but that was a single case. Normally the food situation was good. There was, therefore, a readiness to believe that the reason for these deaths was a military one. Everyone seemed to believe that they had been killed in experiments where they had taken the place of guinea-pigs in order to try the effect of poison gas. These rumours were corroborated by the evidence of the nurses and doctors of the institution who told of the same story that they had received the clothes in which the patients had left in, turned inside out, e.g. that means the vest or shirt outside, the coat or dress inside, as if these clothes had been taken over the head of the person in a hurry. All the clothes had a very disagreeable, sweet smell of gas. What shocked me most was that no one who was not connected with one of the victims seemed to realize how horribly inhuman it was. Some quite nice people to whom I spoke said to me that they thought it was quite sensible to take the burden of support off the State and to gain valuable knowledge for winning the war at the same time. Only when I told them of particularly cruel individual cases they seemed to understand that something inhuman had happened.

Here are some of the cases: A Jewish mother had refused to immigrate in order to be able to see her son in a lunatic asylum ...

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asylum every fortnight during the visitor's hour. Her son was killed.

The wife of a very well-known Jewish man in Kuntich who had fits of Kleptomania, was for years every time such a fit was recognizable, sent to Eggeling for a short time. She always came back to her family and lived a normal life until the next attack was due. Her husband had just sent her for a few days to Eggeling when she was taken away. Some weeks later he received the death certificate.

Another patient to whom I am distantly related was just undergoing an insulin cure and was considered to be nearly cured when she disappeared and her relatives got a death certificate. Another case ended better for the patient. A girl who noticed that something unusual was happening when the bus appeared to take her and her fellow patients away escaped. Her escape was not noticed and she lived quietly with her parents when they received her death certificate and urn with ashes.

The events were the same in all asylums. Nurses who were discharged because of lack of patients compared notes and had all the same facts.

I have never seen death notes in the paper of the kind Schirer reprints, but I think the reason is that the Jews are not allowed to put any advertisements of any kind in the newspapers, and my friends were either Jewish, or very poor.

There was also another kind of "Mercy" killing. Its victims were those heavily wounded soldiers for whom the State would have ....

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have had to care for all their lives. I think who me and a few other friends of hers were called by her husband to the hospital where he was a patient. He was very ill and having to have been brought from a ward where every night one of his fellow patients had died. He employed his wife to take him out of the hospital and to take him home as he said he would require no further care that he was completely ill. His wife used to talk to me and other friends and they always tried to take him home but she never did. She signed a declaration that neither she nor her husband would claim any support in future from the State.

Slightly wounded soldiers were very well treated by the State but were rather neglected by the public. This shows the war business of the public. Nobody even offered a seat in a street car to a wounded soldier or given other signs of sympathy which were the normal thing during the last war.

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