

Concentration Camp Money

'Lagergeld' Used to Pay Prisoners for Their Work

BY JENNIFER ANNE WHITE

Far from being the “death camps” as you have heard so often, places like Auschwitz, Dachau and Buchenwald were not in the business of extermination. They were work camps, critical to the German war effort. But did you know that the Jewish workers were compensated for their labor with scrip printed specifically for their use in stores, canteens and even brothels? The prison monetary system was conceived in ghettos such as Lodz, carried to camps such as Auschwitz and Dachau and still existed in the displaced person camps that were established by the Allies after World War II. Here is the story of the money the “court historians” do not want you to even suspect existed.

Piles of incinerated corpses were indicting images at Nuremberg, used to prove that the German-run concentration camps during World War II were intended for purposes of exterminating the Jews of Europe. However, a plethora of documentary evidence, long suppressed, shows that prisoners were relatively well-treated, compensated for their hard work and allowed to purchase luxuries to which even the German public did not have ready access. This is not the image of abject deprivation that the Holocaust lobby would like you to entertain.

The irrefutable proof is the existence of a means of exchange for goods and services: Money. There were at least 134 separate issues, in different denominations and styles, for such notorious places as Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Oranienburg, Ravensbrück, Westerbork and at least 15 other camps. (See *Paper Money of the World Part I: Modern Issues of Europe* by Arnold Keller, Ph.D., 1956, pp. 23-25 for a complete listing.)

A monetary system was also in existence in the ghettos, most notably Theresienstadt and Lodz, which produced beautiful notes (veritable works of art) that make U.S. currency look dull.

There are numerous dealers in rare currency and numismatics who specialize in selling “concentration camp money” or “Holocaust money” as it has been sometimes called. But the very fact of its existence does not seem to have raised questions—as it should have—about what really did (and did not) happen inside the so-called “death camps” where the Holocaust scrip was circulating in the first place.

This scrip was not negotiable outside of the camp for which



The above collage, taken from the cover of *Das Lagergeld der Konzentrations- und D.P.-Lager: 1933-1945* by Albert Pick and Carl Siemsen, shows just a sample of the money printed for camps and ghettos. The predominantly-white note on the right says: “Jewish Money Only legal as a means of payment for Jewish work within the ghetto Sokolka. City Treasury of Sokolka, The Mayor.”

INFAMOUS & HIGH-QUALITY CAMP MONEY

DACHAU

“... [W]e must remember that like most other Concentration Camps, Dachau also functioned as a work camp. This explains the appearance of paper tokens printed in 1944. . . . Dachau’s tokens were of three different values: 1, 2 and 3 marks. The prisoner’s identification number is written on the front of this green note, alongside the date when it was issued, January 31, 1945. In fact, all of Dachau’s tokens list the prisoners’ identification numbers.” Stahl, pp. 18-19.



A Dachau camp note.

AUSCHWITZ

“At a death camp it would seem that there was very little need for money.” (*The Shekel*, Vol XVI, No. 2, March-April 1983, p. 43.)



An Auschwitz camp note.

THERESIENSTADT

Print-runs for Theresienstadt Kroner

Denomination	Size	Color	Qty Printed
1 Th. kr.	100x50mm	Green	2,242,000
2 Th. kr.	110x55mm	Rose	1,019,000
5 Th. kr.	120x58mm	Blue	530,000
10 Th. kr.	125x63mm	Brown	456,000
20 Th. kr.	135x66mm	Green	319,000
50 Th. kr.	140x77mm	Dk. Green	159,000
100 Th. kr.	150x77mm	Red-brown	279,000

See: *The Shekel* Vol XVI, No. 2, March/April 1983, page 33.



These beautiful Theresienstadt notes, complete with watermarks, demonstrate the high-quality artwork and printing of the money.

LODZ

Colors of the different types of currency in Lodz.

In print runs in 1940, 1942 and 1944:

- 50 Pfg. Violet
- 1 RM Olive-green
- 2 RM Light Brown
- 5 RM Dark Brown



Lodz ghetto money.

Information from *Das Lagergeld der Konzentrations- und D.P.-Lager: 1933-1945* by Albert Pick and Carl Siemsen.

it was issued. This decreased the chance of a successful escape and made it impossible for the general public to purchase some of the rare luxuries available in the camps. According to Albert Pick in *Das Lagergeld der Konzentrations- und D.P.-Lager: 1933-1945*:

Inmates were not paid for the work but were given “coupons” now and then to buy things in the “Kantine”. . . . As the war progressed badly and the number of workers declined, the KZ worker potential became important. Offers of “premiums” and other advantages were made to the inmates, tobacco was offered and even visits to bordellos. . . . In order that these scrips could not be used outside the camps, special money was printed.

Letter from Prisoner No. 11647 Block 28/3 Dachau XIII on September 8, 1940 to his relative in Litzmannstadt (Lodz):

I must write you something about myself. I am very well. In the canteen I buy honey, marmalade, cookies, fruit and other food. If you worry about me, you’ll indeed be committing a sin. I have more reason to worry about you. . . . (*Letters from the Doomed: Concentration Camp Correspondence 1940-1945*, Richard S. Geehr.)

There was a payment schedule at Theresienstadt utilizing Th. kr. (Theresienstadt kroner) as the unit of exchange. (*The Shekel*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, March-April 1983 p. 29). The breakdown looked like this:

- Working men, according to their jobs: 105-205 Th. kr.
- Working women, according to their jobs: 95-205 Th. kr.
- Part-time workers: 80 Th. kr.

- Caretakers: 70 Th. kr.
- War-wounded and holders of the Iron Cross, First Class degree or higher: 195 Th. kr.
- Prominente (doctors, professors, scientists, well-known cultural artists and politicians): 145 Th. kr.

To put this in perspective, a cup of coffee cost 2 Th. kr. The circulation in Theresienstadt was such that it was necessary to print over 5 million notes. See *Papirove Penize Na Uzemi Ceskoslovenska 1762-1975*, Second Edition, 1975, Hradek Kralove, trans. by Julius Sem, pp. 134-135.

The first worker's camp to have its own scrip was Oranienburg. Before using the camp scrip they used German currency in nearby towns, but the authorities decided to centralize. Currency was exchanged for camp money, less 30%. (*The Shekel*, Vol XVI, No. 2, March-April 1983, p. 40. "Concentration Camp Money of the Nazi Holocaust" by Steven Feller.) Similarly at Buchenwald:

Each prisoner was allowed up to 10 marks per week to be used for the purchase of cigarettes at the camp canteen, other canteen purchases, brothel visits, or credit to a savings account. The regulations went on to specify that a visit to a brothel would cost 2 marks for which 1.5 marks would be kept by the SS and 0.5 marks would be used for "expenses." (*Ibid.*, p. 41.)

Was there a similar situation at all of the other camps—at least those that issued currency? As this includes Auschwitz, it would be shocking indeed to even consider marmalade and cigarettes being purchased in this "death camp." Even the existence of money in camps gives us a look at what life was really like there, yet this information has yet to make it to the History Channel. ❖

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FIRST KNOWN CAMP TO USE LAGERGELD

Oranienburg was the first known camp to have lagergeld for its prisoners. The issues for this particular camp were in 5 pfg. (green), 10 pfg. (blue) and 50 pfg. (brown) and 1 mark denominations. (Printed 1933-August, 1934, when the camp closed.) Unlike Theresienstadt, these notes were fairly plain without multiple colors and watermarks. Yet, even these demonstrate the care and attention given to the design of money for the workers.

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