

This is a true but not well known Holocaust story.

In 1979-1980 I visited Wayne State University in Detroit. During one of the events that was attended mostly by Jews, I met a professor of geography Fred Dohrs. Actually, it was an Israeli math professor, Leonid Dor, who worked there at that time, who brought me to Fred and asked him to tell me his World War II story.

During the war, Fred Dohrs was an USAF intelligence officer stationed in Italy. In the headquarters where he served at that time people knew that Jews of Europe were being exterminated and were aware of the totality and magnitude of what was going on. So they wanted to do something about it. 17 officers who served there signed a joint letter to Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, General Eisenhower. They informed him about the extermination of Jews and stressed that the extermination camps were not protected by artillery or any other anti-aircraft means. It was enough to bomb the crematoria where bodies were being burned and railways leading to the camps to stop the murder of children, women, everyone. They did not ask to put the camp on the list of targets or arrange for dedicated sorties. They knew that it won't be allowed (why?) They had a very modest request. They wrote that the allied planes bombed targets beyond the camps, and actually flew over them on the way back. Frequently, they carried unused bombs. Therefore they asked to be allowed to drop these bombs on the camps. This was quite safe for the pilots and would save numerous lives.

And so, the letter was sent, but the answer was not forthcoming. Fred Dohrs then phoned Eisenhower's headquarters. He spoke with the Supreme Commander's personal secretary. She was very excited (she read the letter) and told him: "I can assure you that Eisenhower has read the letter. I put it on top of his morning correspondence just before he entered the office, but he did not respond".

The reply did not come!

I feel an obligation to pass this story further.

Epilogue. Later, Eisenhower's troops liberated some of the death camps. Eisenhower saw them and was deeply shocked. In the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., "great Eisenhower" is remembered as someone who understood the significance of documenting these atrocities for the posterity. He summoned US Army photographers who took pictures, and thanks to them we now know about what had happened.

I wonder what he felt when he saw the horror and remembered the letter that asked for his tiny help. Remorse? Or did he just create an alibi for himself in case that this call for help from Italy would resurface? But it didn't, and Eisenhower became a hero.

What a horrible story!

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1 May 2017