

Melb. Echo Of Nazi Horrors Must Be Probed

(FROM TRUTH'S MELBOURNE OFFICE)

SEVERAL Polish Jews now living in Melbourne have made a series of amazing charges against one of their countrymen, now a tailor in Bourke St., Melbourne. They allege the tailor tortured them and was partially responsible for many deaths while they were together in the infamous Auschwitz II concentration camp, Birkenau, Poland, when it was under command of Joseph Kramer, later hanged as "the Beast of Belsen."

THE tailor, Heinrich Bontschek, who came to Australia more than two years ago, admits he held a position of authority in the horror camp, but denies the charges, the makers of which have been interviewed by members of the C.I.B. This week he said to Truth: "I am the best tailor in Australia. Other tailors know it. They are jealous. They are plotting to drive me out of business."

Truth publishes the story of the amazing allegations made against Bontschek, and his denials, because we consider it a matter of grave public importance, requiring immediate impartial investigation.

Bontschek said he had approached the Jewish Board of

Deputies to arbitrate in the matter.

"If they give a decision against me, and I am sure they won't, then I will leave Australia," he said.

Said one of the persons making the allegations to Truth: "I would kill him if

it were not for my wife" . . . and. . . . "I would kill him if I thought I would get a light gaol sentence."

Bontschek says he has received no threats.

The parties involved are all, more or less, recent arrivals in Australia.

The charges are of such a grave nature that it is obvious that if the allegations are malicious and unfounded those

malicious and unfounded those making them should not be allowed to remain in this country. If, on the contrary, they are substantially true, Bontschek's presence here should not be permitted for a week.

Truth this week interviewed six people who, having been warned of what they were doing, signed statutory declarations solemnly declaring they were in Auschwitz while Bontschek was there as "Capo."

Broadly their allegations against Bontschek are:

- In the camp he held a position known as Capo (a concentration camp internee

placed in a position of trust by the Nazis).

- He gained favor with the Nazis by ill-treating members of his own race.
- Some of them say he bashed them personally without reason.
- He deprived people of food when they were starving.
- He forced them to work when it was unnecessary.
- He treated them more harshly than the Germans did.
- He obtained the best for himself in the camp while they starved.
- He flogged prisoners until they became so weak they were unable to work and consequently were sent to the gas chambers.

These six people have made sworn statements before a justice of the peace. Names of the six people are withheld for the present, but their concentration camp numbers, which are tattooed on their arms are:

145101, 82125, 87335, 46769, 133159 and 75288.

Truth called on Heinrich Bontschek at his office in Bourke St., Melbourne, this week, and interviewed him in the presence of his brother, Scholem Bontschek.

Heinrich Bontschek said he was ordered to take the position of "Capo" at the camp

was ordered to take the position of "Capo" at the camp. "I am the best tailor in Australia," he said. "Other tailors know it. They are jealous. They are plotting to put me out of business."

He said he had heard of the allegations made against him as long ago as three months after he arrived in Australia. They were not true, he said.

Bontschek said that as the "Capo" of a section, the Germans would beat him if anything went wrong in his section. He passed on a hiding to the man responsible to "stop him doing silly things" because all the Jews in the camp might be punished for one man's mistake.

JEWISH INQUIRY

Bontschek denied that any prisoner he had beaten had become so weak he would have to be taken to the gas chambers. He also denied that more people were sent to the gas chambers from his section than from any other.

It was untrue, said Bontschek that he had withheld food from prisoners.

When Truth asked why, if, as he said the allegations were untrue, Bontschek had not taken action for slander, Scholem Bontschek said that if they were given the names of the people making the allegations action would be taken.

"We can produce credentials and statements from people who were in the camp with my brother and who will support our version of affairs," said Scholem Bontschek. "If the Jewish Board of Deputies decides against my brother, we will leave Australia."

Before Truth left it was agreed that Truth should telephone Scholem Bontschek that night and make arrangements for him to produce documents and witnesses who would give his brother's side of the story.

Truth telephoned and arranged to talk to him next day after he had spoken to his solicitor. Next day, he told Truth his solicitor had advised Heinrich Bontschek to say nothing further, as the matter was now before the Jewish Board of Deputies.

The substance of the charges is known to the Federal Security Service, but if any action has so far been taken, neither the public nor the accusers know anything of it.

Truth is of the opinion that a judicial or quasi-judicial inquiry should be instituted at once to investigate the allegations outlined in statutory declarations held by Truth, which

form a prima facie case requiring explanation.

If Bontschek is a victim of error or malice, he should be given an opportunity to confront his accusers.

If the allegations are unfounded, then action should be taken against the persons making them.

If the allegations are found to be correct, then Bontschek should be deported from Australia with the absolute minimum of delay.



Heinrich Bontschek, who denies allegations that as "Capo" in the infamous Auschwitz concentration camp, he beat and tortured fellow prisoners.