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**Anti-Semitism (2): The Goethe Oak**

**Lead: The Nazi concentration camp Buchenwald was built around a clearing on the back slope of a mountain once enjoyed by Germany's finest poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: The village of Weimar in central Germany was for generations one of the great cultural centers of Europe. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was the Mecca for home numerous artists, writers and musicians. Even today Weimar**

**draws those who value the arts and the life of the mind. In 1918, after World War I, Germany's constitutional assembly was held in Weimar and there was founded a new republic designed to leave behind the old Empire that had foundered in hubris and war. This parliamentary republic was known as the Weimar Republic. It ended when Hitler became chancellor in 1933.**

**One of the great enlightenment thinkers and one of Germany's finest writers was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. He arrived in Weimar in 1775, and resided there for the rest of his life. It was often his habit to walk up into a wilderness area just northwest of Weimar to muse and to**

**work. It was one of Goethe's favorite spots and it is said that under a huge oak tree in a sloping glen on the backside of the mountain away from Weimar, he wrote his poem *Wanderer's Night Song*.**

**In a supreme irony, just eight kilometers from this great shrine of learning and German culture, this home to Germany's finest writer, in 1937 the Nazis constructed one of their largest and earliest concentration camps. Buchenwald, which means "beech tree forest," was built on that pleasant slope that once inspired Goethe and the camp enclosed his famous oak.**

**The huge deciduous perennial**

**clearly visible in photographs of the camp beside the prisoners' laundry building, was called "Goethe's Oak" by the Buchenwald prisoners. The tree was damaged in an allied air raid in 1944, and today, "Goethe's Oak" exists as a preserved stump. Buchenwald, and hopefully the spirit of Weimar and that of its most famous resident, was liberated by U.S. Army forces on April 11, 1945.**

**Research by Ann Johnson, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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