INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLY CAMPS

Nazi Germany’s concentration camp system originated in 1933–1934 as an improvised response to cope with tens of thousands of opponents to the Nazi regime. The approximately 100 early camps (frühen Lager) appeared during the regime’s consolidation of power. Most closed, however, with the emergence of an SS police system under Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler; the remainder were consolidated under the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL). Administrations outside the Nazi paramilitaries played important roles in their foundation. The new regime quickly recognized the camps’ potential for persecuting not only opponents but also so-called outcasts from the “national community” (Volksgemeinschaft); embryonically, many exhibited the radical antisemitism that became the essential feature of Nazi rule. For many detainees, called Schutzhaftlinge or Polizeihäftlinge because they had been taken into “protective custody” (Schutzhaft), detention in 1933 inaugurated an ordeal in camps and prisons lasting until 1945.

Before introducing the early camps, it is necessary to provide some brief political background to the Nazi dictatorship. The global slump of 1929 destabilized Weimar democracy. After the last elected government’s fall in March 1930, Reich President Paul von Hindenburg appointed a succession of Reich chancellors under the Weimar Constitution’s Article 48, which permitted presidential rule by decree in event of national emergency. The second appointee, National Conservative (German National People’s Party, DNVP) Franz von Papen, overthrew the elected Social Democratic Party (SPD) government of Prussia, Germany’s largest state (Land, pl. Länder), on July 20, 1932, and appointed in its stead a Reich commissar. This coup ironically facilitated Prussia’s subsequent “synchronization” (Gleichschaltung) by the Nazis and furnished a model that the Nazis applied elsewhere after the March 5, 1933, national election.

When a backroom deal brought Adolf Hitler to power with Papen as vice-chancellor on January 30, 1933, Nazi Reich Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick inaugurated a crackdown on leftist opposition in advance of the election. Issued on February 4, 1933, the “Reich Presidential Decree for the Protection of the German People” permitted the ban of accounts with the Left. Since August 1932, the Nazis had warned that, upon gaining power, they would dispatch German Communist Party (KPD) hardliners to concentration camps.1

In February 1933, Papen assumed the office of Reich commissar in Prussia, while Nazi Hermann Göring held the post of Reich commissar for the Prussian Interior Ministry. Papen and Göring quickly synchronized Prussia, replacing county and police presidents (Regierungsrats- and Polizeipräsidenten) with Nazis and nationalists, establishing a rudimentary political police under Rudolf Diels, and deputizing Nazi and nationalist paramilitaries (SA, SS, and Stahlhelm) as police auxiliaries (Hilfspolizei). In their new role, the SA and SS, who had already committed atrocities during the Nazi “struggle for power” (kampfzeit), acquired a license to torture and kill. Appointed minister president and interior minister of Prussia on April 11, Göring merged these functions and, on April 26, founded the Prussian Secret State Police Office (Geheime Staatspolizeiamt, Gestapo), with Diels as its head.

“PROTECTIVE CUSTODY”

Conveniently labeled a Communist plot, the Reichstag fire of February 27, 1933, furnished the pretext for mass arrests. On February 28, the cabinet promulgated the “Reich Presidential Decree for the Protection of People and State,” or the “Reichstag Fire Decree,” which suspended individual liberties under the 1919 Weimar Constitution, including the right of personal freedom (Article 114).2 Although it did not specify Schutzhaft, authorities justified the arrests on this basis. The pace of roundups accelerated after the March 5 election. Despite the first arrests, the KPD ban, and voting chicanery, the Nazis managed a Reichstag majority only in coalition with the DNVP. In the Länder parliaments and city senates where they did not gain majorities, the Nazis deposed the governments of Baden, Bavaria, Saxony, and Württemberg, and of the Hanseatic cities of Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck, between March 5 and 11. In each case, the roundups or the establishment of camps ensued immediately afterward. On March 24, with its KPD members either in custody, in exile, or underground, the Reichstag passed an Enabling Law (Ermächtigungsgesetz), thus giving Hitler quasi-legal backing for a four-year dictatorship. With the bans in June and July 1933 on the SPD, Bavarian People’s Party (BVP), Center Party, DNVP, and other parties, the Nazis established a one-party state.

The new regime built upon but transformed the previous German practice of protective custody. Originating in the Revolution of 1848, Schutzhaft had a dual legal and semantic meaning. On the one hand, Schutzhaft signified arrest for personal protection. On the other hand, it meant taking seditious elements into custody during emergencies. The second meaning derived from the Prussian Siege Law of 1851. During World War I, the Reich patterned a similar ordinance after this law to quell mounting war opposition. Although the 1919 constitution established safeguards against political...
arrest, KPD members and foreign nationals were taken into Schutzhaft during Weimar’s first turbulent years under Article 48 but released after the passage of the emergencies. As Jane Caplan points out, the previous practice of Schutzhaft framed how non-Nazi bureaucrats understood political detention in the political setting of 1933. For conservative civil servants, protective custody seemed a temporary and acceptable remedy for dealing with the supposed leftist threat.8

The Nazis transformed the scope and scale of political detention. Creating a perpetual emergency, they seized opponents for unlimited duration and persecuted Communists from the start.9 In 1933–1934, protective custody did not necessarily preclude legal prosecution but facilitated continued detention in the event of judicial acquittal or sentence completion. By early 1934, the Gestapo exclusively controlled Schutzhaft in Prussia, a monopoly Himmler later extended throughout the Reich. By this time, the regime further broadened the scope of detention, with the creation of police preventive custody (Vorbeugungshaft) on November 24, 1933.6 This category provided for the indefinite incarceration of criminal recidivists (Berufsverbrecher) by the Criminal Police (Kripo). A few common criminals had already entered the camps in 1933, but, thanks to Vorbeugungshaft, many thousands more were detained by the late 1930s. Otto Geigenmüller’s legal dissertation (1937), dedicated to Himmler, demonstrated how broadly the Gestapo applied protective custody. Dismissing anyone as a “political dummy or pighead” who denied its “necessity,” Geigenmüller observed that it afforded the means to combat groups allegedly detrimental to the “national community.”7 As Robert Gellately suggests, the elasticity of Schutzhaft and Vorbeugungshaft enabled the police to conduct Nazi social engineering through the limitless expansion of criminal categories.8

The number of detainees taken in 1933–1934 is difficult to determine with precision. Caplan estimates that there were some 50,000 detainees in the regime’s first months and that the arrests may have exceeded 100,000 by 1934. More conservatively, Johannes Tuchel holds that some 30,000 opponents were dispatched to camps in 1933. In August 1933, the exile paper Neuer Vorwärts reckoned that some 80,000 individuals had already been placed in Schutzhaft, of whom up to 45,000 had been sent to concentration camps.9 Three factors confounded the estimates. First, a person taken into protective custody sometimes spent only hours or a single day in jail before release. Second, former detainees were subject to re-arrest. For example, a BVP official in Bamberg, Georg Banzer, was taken into Schutzhaft three times between March and June 1933.10 Finally, the SA and SS Hilfspolizei sometimes seized individuals without police authorization.

**SITES OF IMPROVISATION**

In accordance with Weimar’s federal system, which the new regime was then in the process of dismantling, local officials and Nazis founded early camps at state and local, not national, levels. The clustering of detention sites around the industrial areas of Berlin, Hamburg, the Ruhr, and Saxony underscored that the first targets of persecution were the working-class parties.11 Because some areas seized relatively few opponents, not every state set up camps, only Baden, Bavaria, Oldenburg, Prussia, Saxony, Thuringia, Württemberg, and the Free Cities of Bremen and Hamburg. As the review below of what Tuchel calls the Prussian and Dachau “models” indicates, the patterns of camp establishment and consolidation varied by locality.12

Early detention sites fell into three broad categories: protective custody camps (Schutzhaftlager), concentration camps (Konzentrationslager), and torture sites (Folterstätten or Folterkeller). The first type consisted of wings or blocks of existing prisons, penitentiaries, and pretrial detention centers, usually separated from common criminals. Practically every local court prison (Amtsgerichtsgefängnis) briefly held a few detainees who were then released or removed elsewhere. If a “camp” is defined as a detention site holding 10 prisoners for 10 days, then some entries in this volume indicate that the estimate of 30 Schutzhaftlager is low. Although most closed by the fall of 1933 and the winter of 1934, a few continued to operate for a longer period, most notably the München-Stadelheim prison, which held female detainees until January 1936.13 As Nikolaus Wachsmann shows, persecution in prisons did not cease with the disappearance of protective custody sections. Instead, prison conditions noticeably worsened, in line with Nazi propaganda against Weimar’s allegedly soft treatment of criminals. By the mid-1930s, the prisons emerged as the central sites for political persecution, as they incarcerated thousands of individuals convicted of trumped-up political offenses.14

In 1933, most concentration camps were structures pressed into service by bureaucrats and local Nazis on a space-available basis. Except for Papenburg/Emsland and Dachau, the approximately 70 concentration camps established in 1933 generally did not have barbed wire, barracks, and guard towers. Practically any type of structure served for confinement, the foremost being factories bankrupted during the Depression, and institutions and buildings the state already deemed multipurpose, namely, workhouses and, especially in Saxony, castles. Germany’s first concentration camp was Nohra, established on March 3 at a school by Thüringian Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel. Stretching the limits of improvisation, the Bremen police, for instance, installed a concentration camp aboard a disused barge at Ochtum sand in September 1933.15 The camps’ heterogeneity extended to the staffs, because the Länder police, SS, and SA supervised most in succession or combination. Occasionally the Stahhelm and, in one case, the National Socialist Women’s Association (NS-Frauenschaft, NSF) oversaw camps. Most early camps closed before the IKL’s establishment in July 1934, but many were recycled as detention sites under other authorities in the Nazi era, as, for example, Colditz, which became a notorious Wehrmacht prisoner-of-war (POW) camp. The majority of early camps were not “wild camps” (wilde Lager). This misleading term, coined by DIELS after 1945 in order to disclaim responsibility for them, implied an absence of governmental oversight.16 As
Tuchel demonstrates, even those camps approximating this appellation, like Oranienburg, founded by the SA at a brewery near Berlin on March 21, 1933, eventually came under state control.\footnote{17}

The confusion over wild camps stemmed in part from the torture sites. In Nazi barracks and brewpubs (Lokale), the Hilfspolizei tormented individuals under the guise of interrogation (Verhör). Helmut Bräutigam and Oliver C. Gleich have estimated that Berlin alone held 150 such sites, where the SA continued their war against the Left that had begun in the streets: now one-sidedly, behind closed doors, and with impunity.\footnote{18} Seizing the KPD national headquarters, the Karl-Liebknecht-Haus, the SA renamed it after their hero, Horst Wessel, and used it for torturing prisoners.\footnote{19} Sites like Berlin (General-Pape-Strasse) and Köln (Mozartstrasse) blurred the categories of Folterstätte and camp.\footnote{20}

**THE PRUSSIAN MODEL**

In the first months of 1933, the Prussian police arrested over 40,000 opponents, thus posing an urgent incarceration problem. In mid-March, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior directed the Regierungspräsidenten to search for detention sites. Nearly 30 were established by March 31 and many more in April and May. Most closed in the summer and fall of 1933, in part because of numerous releases but also on account of local complaints about murder and torture. In the summer of 1933, Prussia organized a network of “state” and regional camps for then just under 15,000 detainees.\footnote{21} The centerpiece was Papenburg/Emsland, but it also included “assembly camps” (Sammellager) in the former prisons at Brandenburg, Lichtenburg, and Sonnenburg and regional camps in workhouses and prisons at Benningenhausen, Brauweiler, Breitenau, Glückstadt, Gollnow, Moringen, and (briefly) Quednau. Brauweiler and Moringen had women’s protective custody sections; Moringen eventually emerged as the Reich’s “unofficial” camp for women.

By August 1933, the SS staffed most Prussian camps. This change followed Himmler’s appointment as ministerial commissar for Deputized Police Officers of the Gestap by his SS subordinate, SS-Gruppenführer Kurt Daluege, acting in his capacity as a Prussian Interior Ministry official.\footnote{22} A divided chain of command complicated the Prussian model because civilian camp directors (Lagerdirektoren) shared responsibility...
This untenable situation often resulted in the more fanatical commandants having their way in administrative disputes.

Papenburg headquartered four subcamps, Börgermoor, Esterwegen II, Esterwegen III, and Neusustrum. In a departure from improvised confinement, each subcamp was designed to hold 1,000 detainees in wooden “barracks camps.”

Spearheaded by Göring’s state secretary, Ludwig Grauert, this complex embarked upon a massive land reclamation project in the impoverished Emsland region along the Dutch border.

To the Ministry of the Interior’s discomfiture, Papenburg’s SS fomented deadly conditions for the prisoners almost from the beginning. In November 1933, the Prussian police dismissed the SS at gunpoint and replaced them with other units, most notably the SA.

Even this consolidated “system” was problematic. In defiance of the Prussian Ministry of the Interior’s July 1933 ban against the opening of new camps, the Düsseldorf Regierungspräsident and local Nazis founded Kemna at Wuppertal-Barmen. The Gestapo also established an interrogations camp at Columbia-Haus, located beside Berlin’s Tempelhof Airfield. Although Oranienburg never fit into the Interior Ministry’s scheme, strenuous SA protests forestalled its closure.

In order to discipline the guards and dissociate himself from the camps, Göring issued four orders in the spring of 1934. First, he suspended the creation of new camps. Second, he obliged the SA and SS staff to become Prussian civil servants.

Third, he transferred all Papenburg camps except Esterwegen to the Prussian (later Reich) Justice Ministry’s control. Papenburg’s SA thus became Justice Ministry officials who contributed, as Wachsmann observes, to the bureaucracy’s nazification.

Finally, Göring appointed Himmler Gestapo inspector, which fostered the introduction of the Dachau model to Prussia. The Prussian model exhibited the administrative tensions between conservative bureaucrats and the Nazi formations. By yielding authority over Prussian camps to Himmler, Göring not only distanced himself from the detention sites he had done much to create but opened the way to camps without bureaucratic or judicial constraint.

**THE DACHAU MODEL AND IKL**

Characterized by permanent camps outside legal supervision, unsparing brutality toward inmates, and torturous labor, the Dachau model furnished the IKL’s conceptual framework. The March 9, 1933, coup in Bavaria brought about Himmler’s appointment as Munich police president, the first in a series of appointments through which he amalgamated Germany’s police forces. As Bavarian prisons and workhouses filled with detainees, Himmler announced on March 20 that the former munitions factory at Dachau would become Bavaria’s permanent camp for 5,000 prisoners.

The continued existence of small men’s Schutzhaftlager in northern Bavaria and Munich’s prisons until the summer and fall of 1933 demonstrated that Dachau’s hegemony did not come about immediately. From its opening on March 22 until April 11, the Bavarian State Police guarded Dachau until the SS assumed control under commandant Hilmar Wäckerle. The next day, April 12, the SS murdered 4 Jewish prisoners from Nürnberg, Dr. Rudolf Benario, Ernst Goldmann, Arthur Kahn, and Erwin Kahn, the first of some 52 deaths recorded at the camp by July 1, 1934.

With Wäckerle under investigation for homicide, Himmler named Theodor Eicke Dachau’s second commandant. Eicke drew up draconian regulations—called the “Disciplinary and Punishment Order”—that stipulated extreme penalties for the slightest infractions and the treatment of inmates as incorrigible enemies. Punishments included 25 blows by bullwhip or cane (aggravated by the Prügelbock, a wooden apparatus for fastening the victim in place), isolation in dark cells, and for certain offenses, execution.
The June 30, 1934, “Night of the Long Knives,” during which the SS purged the SA leadership on Hitler’s orders, and in which Eicke was an important participant, cleared the path for a virtual SS monopoly over the camps. When Eicke officially became the inspector of concentration camps in July 1934, he restructured the Prussian and Saxon camps at Columbia-Haus, Esterwegen, Lichtenburg, and Sachsenburg. By August 1, 1934, the Reich held just over 5,000 detainees, so he closed Hohnstein (Saxony), Osthofen (Hesse), Bonzen (Prussia), and Oranienburg, in addition to Sachsenburg’s subcamp network. By this time, Prussia’s total camp population exceeded Bavaria’s by just over 100 prisoners, a reflection of Göring’s mass amnesties in 1933–1934, on the one hand, and of Eicke’s near-absolute unwillingness to release prisoners, on the other. Fuhlsbüttel in Hamburg, Bad Sulza in Thuringia, Kislau in Baden, and the Moringen women’s camp never came under Eicke’s jurisdiction, although some of their detainees were dispatched to IKL camps in the late 1930s. Between 1936 and 1939, Eicke reorganized the IKL, with the closing of Columbia-Haus (1936), Esterwegen (1936), Sachsenburg (1937), and Lichtenburg (as a men’s camp, 1937; as a women’s camp, 1939) and the founding of permanent camps at Sachsenhausen (1936), Buchenwald (1937), Mauthausen (1938), Flossenbürg (1938), and Ravensbrück (1939). Esterwegen’s “sale” to the Reich Justice Ministry in 1936–1937 partially offset SS expenditures for Sachsenhausen.

The Prussian and Dachau models starkly contrasted in their approaches to camp labor. Although Jews and “Bonzen” (“bigshots” or “fatcats,” a Nazi pejorative applied to Weimar politicians but most often to SPD leaders) were singled out for humiliating details in the early Prussian camps, most detainees were assigned economically useful tasks such as road building or land reclamation. Except for the deployment of a few skilled prisoners for SS needs, the Dachau model stressed labor as torture. Segregated into special companies, Jews, Bonzen, and Jehovah’s Witnesses faced unremitting harassment. To the new sites the IKL staffs brought the practices honed at Dachau, where in 1933 the gravel pit became a site for murder, meaningless work, and punitive exercises euphemistically termed “sport.” As Michael Thad Allen argues, Eicke’s approach, implemented by protégés like Rudolf Höss, undermined attempts by the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) in 1942 to deploy camp labor productively in war industries. At Höss’s Auschwitz, this form of labor expedited genocide.

Starting in 1933, the Nazi media represented the camps as centers of political “reeducation” whose ostensible aim was the preparation of former Marxists for eventual return to the “national community.” Figuring into this propaganda was the need to “sell” the camps as acceptable to law-abiding Germans and to deflect rumors about violent conditions, especially at notorious sites such as Oranienburg. The depiction of the 1933–1934 mass amnesties as rehabilitation demonstrated that the slogan “Work Brings Freedom” (Arbeit macht frei) reflected the regime’s early misrepresentations of terror. By March 1933, the Manchester Guardian had already reported the gruesome treatment of leftist and Jewish prisoners. The regime thus cast the April 1, 1933, anti-Jewish boycott as collective punishment for “atrocity news” (Greunachrichten). By 1934, detailed prisoner testimonies circulated outside Germany, after exiled political and religious organizations established listening posts and publication centers near the Reich’s borders. In light of negative international publicity, the regime permitted foreign journalists and luminaries to “tour” the camps, including French journalist Jules Auguste Sauerwein (Sonneburg, 1933), the British Society of Friends’ Elizabeth Fox Howard (Moringen, 1935), and the International Committee of the Red Cross’s Carl J. Burckhardt (Esterwegen, 1935). With advanced warning, the camp administrations put on a show, in one case having guards masquerade as patients in the prisoners’ infirmary.

THE PRISONERS

In 1933–1934, the camps’ population primarily reflected the collapsed Weimar system. Approximately 80 percent were Communists, 10 percent were Social Democrats, and the remaining 10 percent belonged to other parties or trade unions or did not have political ties. For Weimar-era Reichstag deputies,
statistics compiled by Martin Schumacher show that of the 241 members arrested in 1933, 93 were Communists; 98, Socialists; 7, liberals; 37, political Catholics; 5, conservatives; and 1 from a minor party. These figures were skewed somewhat because many KPD deputies had already fled into exile. Some exiles’ wives and children were also taken hostage (Geisel) in the camps. Called “family arrest” (Sippenhaft), this form of detention continued during the war years. Among the detained political opponents were members of Weimar-era paramilitaries, the KPD’s Roter Frontkämpferbund (League of Red Front Fighters, RFKB), the democratic Reichsbanana Schwarz-Rot-Gold (Reich Flag Black-Red-Gold, RB); the RB’s Eiserne Front (Iron Front, EF); and the BVP’s Bayernwacht (Bavarian Guard). Corrupt Nazis and members of the outlawed National Socialist “Black Front” (Schwarze Front) entered the camps increasingly in 1933–1934. Especially after the “Night of the Long Knives,” SA and Stahlhelm members were taken into Schutzhaft for a time.

A small number of foreign nationals became Schutzhaftlinge. In April 1933, Saxony alone detained 9 Austrians, 106 Czechoslovaks, 2 Frenchmen, 2 Soviet citizens, and 24 Poles. Diplomatic intercessions gave some, like Hungarian citizen Stefan Lorant in Munich, conditional hope for release. This assistance was not always timely, as foreign nationals were among the first murder victims.

The early camps also persecuted nonpolitical opponents and Nazi-defined outcasts, but not yet on the scale or with the intensity of the IKL. For noncooperation with what they viewed as an evil regime, the Jehovah’s Witnesses were sporadically persecuted in 1933–1934 and were dispatched to Sachsenburg, Osthofen (Hesse), Lichtenburg, Fuhlsbüttel, and Dachau, among other sites. National persecution of the Witnesses followed the March 1935 introduction of military conscription.

At the behest of Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, the Reich seized some 10,000 beggars and vagrants in September 1933. As Wolfgang Ayass demonstrates, these arrests were connected to the establishment of the Nazi Winter Relief Work (Winterhilfswerk, WHW), and they anticipated the intensive campaign against “asocials” (Asozialen) that began in 1937, called “Reich Forced Labor” (Arbeitszwang Reich, AZR). Although space considerations obviated lengthy detention for most, the Prussian police established Gumpertshof (Meseritz) in Posen, where economically marginalized people were reeducated through labor. Separately, the succession of Oldenburg camps at Eutin, Holstendorf, and Ahrensbück detained “hobos.”

TREATMENT

Detainee treatment differed by camp type. While torture took place in the Folterstätten and concentration camps, the Schutzhaftlager afforded nominally better circumstances because the guards were usually professionals. In these camps, coping with boredom and stress was paramount. While boredom could be overcome through reading, intense political discussions, and walks, the stress stemming from the uncertainty of protective custody and family concerns was unrelenting.

The pre-IKL concentration camps exhibited a broad range of treatment. Often the conditions noticeably worsened with a change of guards or in retaliation for protests. Generational differences sometimes played a role, because youthful SS and SA delighted in humiliating imprisoned World War I veterans, especially those displaying their decorations. As many as 500 to 600 prisoners were murdered or died in custody in 1933–1934, but some camps, such as Glückstadt, did not record any deaths. By contrast, Papenburg recorded 11 deaths during the months of September and October 1933 alone. As Hans-Peter Klausch observes, the estimate of early camp deaths is difficult to determine because some prisoners died of injuries in civilian hospitals weeks or months afterward.

In 1933–1934, prisoner self-administration and internal stratification were embryonic. At Börgermoor, the prisoners...
elected their camp representative. At Dachau, Eicke appointed prisoner sergeants and corporals (the forerunners of camp elders, block elders, and Kapos) who oversaw each company and were directly answerable to the SS company commander, a hierarchy that was incorporated into the IKL’s “Special Orders.” At Hohnstein and Lichtenburg in 1933, prisoner-functionaries had small privileges, but these did not compare with the elaborate hierarchies through which the IKL later practiced divide and rule, a phenomenon first noted by Buchenwald survivor and sociologist Eugen Kogon. Indeed, the “triangle system” that Kogon connected with this hierarchy, through which the SS categorized arrests by color-coded triangles, favoring certain categories over others, was not standardized until 1937. Until the late 1930s, the national composition of the inmates remained comparatively homogeneous, with the important exceptions of Jews and a few foreign nationals, but the prisoners differed by arrest category. The SS-imposed “racial” hierarchy did not fully emerge until the mass arrest of foreigners and outcasts during World War II.

As Jürgen Matthäus argues, during 1933–1934, most Jews were arrested for political reasons. Jews, however, with few exceptions, were singled out upon arrival as targets for torture and murder. In SS camps, for instance, they were segregated in special companies that performed excremental details. At Börgermoor in the fall of 1933, they were compelled to work on the Sabbath and high holy days. As demonstrated in the case of Max Tabaschnik at Königstein in Saxony, some were the objects of Nazi extortion schemes. In IKL camps, Jews held for “race defilement” (Rassenschande) were segregated in their own companies for special torment, endured verbal abuse, performed low crawls, and by one account, broke rocks with 16-pound sledgehammers. In the mid-1930s, German Jewish “returnees” (Rückwanderer) were also dispatched to what were euphemistically termed the “educational camps” (Schulungslager) at Esterwegen and Sachsenburg. Their detention lasted from a few weeks to several months, and release only followed the signing of papers guaranteeing immediate emigration. The Gestapo and the IKL vastly escalated this practice, in line with the regime’s goal of Jewish emigration, during the mass arrests of Jews that followed the November 9–10, 1938, Reich Pogrom, also known as Kristallnacht.

PROTEST, DISSENT, AND ESCAPE

Protest, dissent, and escape took place in the early camps. In 1933, the men detained at Moringen and Lichtenburg staged hunger strikes, but the authorities retaliated with collective punishment. KPD-dominated secret cells developed in many camps, like Börgermoor, which provided mutual assistance. The bitter rivalry that split Germany’s leftist parties in World War I and Weimar carried over into the camps, however, and was expressed through social ostracism and occasional denunciations to the SS. The first two escapees were Hans Beimler from Dachau and Gerhart Seger from Oranienburg, who fled, respectively, in May and December 1933. A number of escapes took place in the Saxon camps, where friendly locals helped escapees cross the Czechoslovakian border.

At several camps a notable protest occurred during the November 12, 1933, Reich plebiscite. The regime seized upon the Schutzhaftlinge’s right to vote for propaganda purposes, but Börgermoor, Esterwegen III [aka Papenburg III], and Sachsenburg overwhelmingly rejected the regime. Except for Börgermoor, this dissent prompted collective punishment. In other camps during this plebiscite, prisoners quietly spoiled ballots or refused to vote. One Kislau prisoner accused the German press of misconstruing his camp’s vote as support for the regime. Except for the Jehovah’s Witnesses, little opposition marked the “elections” of August 19, 1934, endorsing Hitler’s self-appointment as Führer, and of March 29, 1936, for the one-party Reichstag list, because the authorities tied voting to the possibility of release and to the threat of punishment. After the IKL takeover, opposition often took the less provocative form of mutual aid.

Some cultural activities existed in the early camps. For the guards and detainees, they manifested divergent meanings. As part of reeducation, prisoners in camps such as Moringen were expected to attend religious services. In the spring of 1933, the nonbelieving congregants discovered another use for these services—secret meetings—until the first commandant discovered what they were doing. The first camp “library” appeared at Börgermoor, to which prisoner Armin T. Wegner lugged his massive book collection after transfer from Oranienburg in September 1933. Wegner subsequently opened libraries at other camps where he was dispatched. While the stocking of these libraries with Nazi publications seemingly served reeducational goals, reading gave the detainees something to do. Music likewise assumed multiple meanings. The demand for singing Nazi, nationalist, or antisemitic songs was a ubiquitous feature of reeducation and, for Jews especially, of ritual humiliation. Noncompliance resulted in beatings or worse. But the prisoners also sang Marxist songs such as “The Internationale” (“Die Internationale”) and composed their own songs (Lieder), the most famous of which was the “Börgermooled” (popularly known as the “Moorsoldatenlied”). In a striking fragment of early camp memory, a songbook compiled at Sachsenhausen in 1942 reproduced four songs from Papenburg, brought by Esterwegen detainees when the new camp opened in 1936, and one from Lichtenburg. The Sachsenhausen camp Lied, written by Esterwegen prisoners, referenced the Emsland. From Sachsenhausen, these ballads spread elsewhere in the wartime camps.

LEGAL INVESTIGATIONS

Although the Reich and Länder Justice Ministries investigated and tried early camp staff for homicide and brutality in the mid-1930s, Hitler dismissed the cases or quashed the verdicts. The best known case was the Hohnstein Trial, in which Reich Justice Minister Franz Gürtner had urged the defendants’ punishment. Hitler’s interventions not only endorsed his followers’ radicalism but signaled that the camps operated outside
judicial authority. His decisions thus exemplified what Ernst Fraenkel famously termed the "dual State" (Doppelsstaat), in which the dictatorial "prerogative" state (Machtstaat) emerged alongside and in lieu of the "normative" state (Normenstaat). In a token gesture in November 1934, the Os- nabrück State Court forestalled the amnesty of one Esterwegen commandant by crediting time served under arrest as part of his sentence. The signal that camp guards operated in a zone outside the law was not lost on the IKL, as the homicides con- tinued and the conditions became systematically brutal during the mid- to late-1930s. So long as the Reich cared about inter- national opinion, however, interest in the plight of famous pris- oners acted as a brake on the IKL in isolated cases, such as that of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Carl von Ossietzky.

The Allies, West Germans, and East Germans investigated and prosecuted some early camp offenders after the war. The defendants brought before Western Allied and West German courts mostly had career tracks that spanned from 1933 to 1945. At the International Military Tribunal, the prosecution indicted the SA as a criminal organization. While acknowledg- ing its role in the concentration camps, the tribunal acquit- ted the SA on the basis that its power had been eclipsed by the June 1934 purge and that its members could not have been privy to a common conspiracy after that date. Some denazification hearings also involved early camp staff. As demonstrated by the case of Moringen’s Lagerdirektor Hugo Krack, they did not necessarily produce convictions, how- ever. A large trial of Kenna’s personnel took place in 1948 before Landgericht Wuppertal (state court) and resulted, be- fore appeal, in some death sentences. Several proceedings, including one conducted by the British, involved Esterwe- gen guards, although the indictments also included wartime offenses.

With their privileging of the Communists as Hitler’s first victims, the East Germans aggressively prosecuted early camp perpetrators. In the Soviet Zone and the German Democratic Republic, 26 cases encompassing more than 200 defendants exclusively addressed charges deriving from the 1933–1944 pe- riod. This total does not include cases in which the defendants were also charged with crimes taking place after 1933–1944. With seven trials for 87 defendants, the most important camp involved in these proceedings was Hohnstein.

The early camps were heterogeneous, operated under sev- eral governing authorities, and manifested a greater range of prisoner treatment than the IKL. The first roundups also re- flected the collapsed Weimar system that the Nazis had sought for 14 years to destroy. Certain features of the early camps persisted under the IKL, in the process paving the way for more destructive policies: the expansion of detention cat- egories in 1933 furnished the police an instrument for advanc- ing the regime’s social and racial agendas, while camp operation without legal oversight promoted an SS-police sys- tem crucial to the organization of genocide. The radical anti- semitism that facilitated the Holocaust was already evident in the regime’s first camps.
INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLY CAMPS


2. “Die neue Verordnung: Endlich ein Anfang zur Vernichtung der roten Mordbanden; Todesstrafe für Mordhandlungen in der UdSSR, 1934); Another useful compilation that includes Jehovah's Witnesses' testimonies is URF, ed., [Title here], Series 1, WLA, Section 2, Eyewitness Accounts. The GAZJ contains numerous Jehovah's Witness testimonies from the early camps. The most important published testimony collection is...
14 THE EARLY NATIONAL SOCIALIST CONCENTRATION CAMPS


12. Tuchel, Konzentrationslager, pp. 117–120, 143.


15. NZ, September 13, 1933, as cited in Lothar Wieland, Die Konzentrationslager Laugafot II and Ochtumand (Bremerhaven: Wirtschaftsverlag NW, 1992), p. 62.


17. Tuchel, Konzentrationslager, pp. 43–44.


22. Daluge, PrMdl, June 7, 1933, in NWStA-M Reg. Arnsberg I PA 633, as cited in Tuchel, Konzentrationslager, p. 73.


32. RMdI, August 1, 1934, in BHStA-(M), MA 106299, 23, as cited in Droebisch and Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939, p. 203, table 22.

33. RMdI/PrMdl, III A 3312 II-23 II/35, Btr.: Fortfall der Reichszuschüsse für Schutzhaftlager, March 5, 1936, in BHStA-(M), MA 67403, 106300, 90, reproduced in Droebisch and Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939, p. 197.


67. TMWC, 1:83, 274.


71. See, for example, the Third Hohnstein Process, LG Dresden StKs 64/49 2 gr.56/49, against Johann Felix Sikora and 31 Others, in DDR-Justiz und NS-Verbrechen, 7:335–392.
On October 3, 1933, a concentration camp was opened in the community of Ahrensbükk, located in the territory of Lübeck, in the Free State of Oldenburg. The concentration camp was set up to relieve the overcrowded prisons of Eutin and Bad Schwartau, which had been turned into "protective custody" camps (Eutin, since March 1933; Bad Schwartau, since June 1933). The concentration camp was situated in the management building (erected in 1883) of an old sugar mill in the village of Holstendorf. The building, located on the periphery of the community center, had been the headquarters of the chemical factory Dr. C. Christ AG since 1908. On November 1, 1932, it was leased by the state government, which turned it into a camp for the Voluntary Labor Service (FAD). The concentration camp, established by the Regierungspräsident and senior SA leader Johann Heinrich Böhmcker, was to hold between 50 and 70 protective custody prisoners. The intent was to use these prisoners to continue the FAD's uncompleted road project. In December 1933, the concentration camp building in Holstendorf was turned into a state high school, and the prisoners were moved to a closed-down shoe factory in the center of Ahrensbükk at 15 Plöner Strasse. From 1936, the building became the main office of the Genossenschafts-Flachsroste GmbH. This cooperative supported the Nazis' autarky efforts by replacing the production of cotton with linen.

Between October 3, 1933, and the dissolution of the concentration camp on May 9, 1934, at least 94 prisoners, including 12 civilians from Ahrensbükk, were kept in protective custody at the Ahrensbükk concentration camp. The majority (45) admitted to being members of the German Communist Party (KPD) or were members of the Fighting League against Fascism. Among the prisoners were 13 members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and also some prominent opponents of the so-called coordination policy (Gleichschaltung) from the German National People's Party (DNVP). Even Böhmcker's opponents from within the party were taken to the concentration camp. In addition, there were senior (police) officials, decent state administrators, who did not comply with the arbitrary directions of the Nazi leadership. The second largest group of protective custody prisoners were the "undesirables," and from late September 1933, those designated work shy, asocials, and the beggars in this part of the state were subject to special persecution.

There were a number of special characteristics of this early concentration camp. To begin with, the immediate cause for the establishment of the Ahrensbükk concentration camp at the beginning of October 1933 was the arrest of the people whom the Nazis considered enemies of the community. Also, the establishment of the concentration camp was the result of the Regierungspräsident's personal initiative. Among other things, it served as a place for the creation of work for unemployed SA men whom Böhmcker appointed as auxiliary police. In order to maintain this "private" army, he arranged for the arrest of wealthy alleged opponents of the Nazi regime. When, after their release, some of the prisoners took action to recover improper fines, the head of the Oldenburg Gestapo was forced to admonish Böhmcker, and to tell him that protective custody involved security measures, but not the imposition of penalties. In order to use protective custody prisoners as forced laborers and to reduce the costs of the concentration camp, Böhmcker bypassed legal regulations. As a government lawyer informed him on March 19, 1933, neither the Oldenburg Compulsory Law of May 10, 1926, nor the Reich Law for the Imposition of Protective Custody of December 4, 1916, nor the Reich Emergency Decrees allowed for the use of those taken into protective custody for "hostile acts against the state" as forced laborers. To resolve this issue, Böhmcker issued wide-ranging regulations dealing with the use of protective custody prisoners in the Lübeck administrative area. "For health and moral reasons" they were to be engaged in "light cultivation work"—consisting of eight hours of work with regular rations.

Böhmcker decided on Holstendorf because here the prisoners could continue the FAD project. The FAD project had begun in November 1932 as a government project run by the youth section of the SPD's militia organization, the Reichsbanner, and then continued as an SA project in April 1933 but had not been completed yet. The Ahrensbükk concentration camp thus became a kind of forced labor camp. In contrast to other early concentration camps, which did not engage in regulated labor employment, the Ahrensbükk prisoners were compelled to work, which was paid for by the Reich government.

The account for protective custody costs in the ledger at the Eutin State Treasury Department lists the following deposits: on December 22, 1933, compensation from the Reich of 840 Reichsmark (RM); and a supplementary grant on July 10, 1935, of 1,709,99 RM. In addition, payments were made by local communities for the completed roadwork. By "supplementary recognition of the district management of the Labor Service District Nordmark," the prisoners of the "Concentration Camp, Section Ahrensbükk" (according to the postmark of camp commandant Theodor Christian Tenhaaf) were registered as participants in the FAD from October 1933. The Lübeck District of the Free State of Oldenburg, which did not even have a population of 50,000, proved to be a testing ground in the persecution of those designated as opponents of the state system long before the Nazis' assumption of power in the Reich. For, on May 29, 1932, the voters had already brought SA-Oberführer Böhmcker to power by electing him Regierungspräsident. His reign of terror utilized the preliminary work done by democratically controlled state organs such as the judiciary and the police, which long before 1933 had collected information on political opponents, especially left-wing groups. Within a year, at least 345 inhabitants of the district, including 94 from Ahrensbükk and Holstendorf, were taken into protective custody, largely due to activities considered hostile to the state.

As a last point it should be noted that no prisoners died in the Ahrensbükk concentration camp. Mistreatment of prisoners...
did occur, however. Former concentration camp prisoners testified about them, among other occasions, at the trials of the camp commandant, Tenhaaf, and members of the guard force, which took place in 1949–1950 before the Lübeck regional court. Tenhaaf was sentenced to three years and six months in a penitentiary.14


Archival material on protective custody and the Ahrensböck concentration camp is kept in the LA-Sch-H, chiefly in sections 260, 352, and 355. Section 352 contains material relating to the trials of the concentration camp guards. Important files dealing with the problem of labor employment and the establishment of the auxiliary police (Best. 36, Nr. 2822; 136, Nr. 18630) are kept in the NStO in Oldenburg. (Ahrensbück became part of Prussia in 1937.) In the StA-Br are files on the regulations, decrees, and ordinances of the Free State on the leasing and reconstruction of the concentration camp building.

Jörg Wollenberg

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES

1. LA-Sch-H, Abt. 355, Nr. 266, p. 41.
2. LA-Sch-H, Abt. 260, Nr. 17893.
9. AS-Eu, Nr. 3482; cf. AFl, Nr. 174, 28.7.1933.
12. LA-Sch-H, 260, Nr. 17893.

ALTENBERG

Starting in April 1933, the district court prison in Altenberg, Saxony, served as an early “protective custody” camp. On April 12 it held 106 prisoners under SA guard.

SOURCES This entry follows the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993); a listing can also be found in “Änderung und Ergänzung des Verzeichnisses der Konzentrationslager und ihrer Aussenkommandos gemäss § 42 Abs. 2 BEG,” in Bundesgesetzblatt, ed. Bundesminister der Justiz (1982), 1:1572. The Alt Daber early camp is recorded in Steffanie Endlich, Nora Goldenhagen, Beatrix Herlemann, Monika Kahl, and Regina Scheer, Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn: BPB, 1999).

Two primary sources (files 1156 and 1183) for this camp can be found in the BLHA-(B), Bestände Brandenburg, Rep. 2 A, Regierung Potsdam, I Pol.

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ALT DABER

On April 28, 1933, the SA-Standarte 39 converted a children’s home at Alt Daber, in the municipality of Wittstock, Brandenburg, into an early concentration camp. Under command SA-Sturmbannführer Koch, the guards consisted of SA-Sturmbann II/39. In early May, Alt Daber held 36 detainees who were dispatched to agricultural and forestry details. Alt Daber was disbanded on July 11, 1933, and its prisoners transferred to the huge early concentration camp at Oranienburg.

SOURCES This entry follows the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993); a listing can also be found in “Änderung und Ergänzung des Verzeichnisses der Konzentrationslager und ihrer Aussenkommandos gemäss § 42 Abs. 2 BEG,” in Bundesgesetzblatt, ed. Bundesminister der Justiz (1982), 1:1572. The Alt Daber early camp is recorded in Steffanie Endlich, Nora Goldenhagen, Beatrix Herlemann, Monika Kahl, and Regina Scheer, Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn: BPB, 1999).

Two primary sources (files 1156 and 1183) for this camp can be found in the BLHA-(B), Bestände Brandenburg, Rep. 2 A, Regierung Potsdam, I Pol.

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Baden's second concentration camp was established on land belonging to the former royal estate of Ankenbuck, located in the Brigach valley between Bad Dürrheim and Villingen in the Black Forest. Ankenbuck was acquired in 1884 by the so-called State Association for Workers' Colonies (Landesverein für Arbeiterkolonien), which was a private organization within the Inner Mission of the Protestant Church of Baden. The aim of the association, which counted relatives of the grand duke among its members, was to improve the lives of "beggars, tramps, and released prisoners, fit for work but alienated from it." Between 1884 and 1919, Ankenbuck annually took in beggars, and released prisoners, fit for work but alienated from it. Between 1884 and 1919, Ankenbuck annually took in bestramps, and released prisoners, fit for work but alienated from it.

As a working colony is not the only parallel with Baden's most prominent political opponents were at least temporarily imprisoned at Ankenbuck. Among them were the Social Democrats Stefan Meier (who was to die at Mauthausen in 1944) and Philipp Mertzolf, as well as Communist Georg Lechleiter who after his release became editor of the illegal paper Der Vorbote. Lechleiter's resistance was later betrayed to the Gestapo. He was condemned by the People's Court (Volksgerichtshof) and executed in September 1942. Another Ankenbuck prisoner was Communist and social scientist Karl August Wittfogel, who after emigrating to Britain published his experiences, although he only reports on his imprisonment in the Esterwegen camp complex.

Ankenbuck's exclusively political prisoners had to do garden, farm, or handicraft work inside the grounds of the former estate. They also were engaged in improvement projects outside the camp, for example, road paving, clearing ditches, or even regulating a nearby stream. As guards were equipped with a carbine, pistol, and truncheon, escape was a risky business. The only documented attempt, by the painter Joachim Karl Wittfogel, who after emigrating to Britain published his experiences, although he only reports on his imprisonment in the Esterwegen camp complex.

Information on medical care, the frequency of letter exchanges, or even visits by relatives or priests is not available, nor is it clear whether any local companies profited from prisoners' work.

On June 23, 1933, the former Communist member of the Freiburg Town Council, Kurt Hilbig, organized the only documented political demonstration by Ankenbuck inmates. At mealtime, Hilbig informed inmates about the death of Klara Zetkin and asked them to stand for a minute's silence to honor her. Although guards had not been in the room, Hilbig's role in this demonstration was soon known by the new camp commander, Biniossek, who had Hilbig beaten in the dormitory by three of the camp guards. Hilbig then had to spend a fortnight in a cell in the local Villingen prison.

In December 1933, a large number of prisoners, 34 in all, were released. Soon after, 40 to 50 prisoners from the Heuberg camp, which had been closed down, came to the South
Baden concentration camp. On March 16, 1934, Ankenbuck's remaining inmates were either sent home or transferred to Kislau. From then until the beginning of World War II, Ankenbuck once again functioned as a working colony specializing in the care of released criminals. As their number was very low, the estate was also used for warehousing by the Organisation Todt (OT) during the war. In 1946, Ankenbuck was sold to the town of Villingen, which turned it into a model farm. In the 1970s, Ankenbuck was acquired by the Federal Republic and has since become privately owned. Nothing remains at Ankenbuck that suggests its previous use as a concentration camp, nor is there any evidence that former Ankenbuck personnel have ever been brought to court. It is only documented that the first camp commander, Franz Konstantin Mohr, underwent a denazification trial.


**NOTES**

1. Sometimes also written “Ankenbuk”; but as the letterhead of the association has it “Ankenbuck,” this last version seems to be correct. GLA-K, 309, Zug. 1987/54, Nr. 570.

2. D.I, May 11, 1933, p. 3.

3. Lydia Warrle, Bad Dürreheim: Geschichte und Gegenwart (Sigmaringen, 1990), p. 262.

**ANRATH BEI KREFELD**

In early April 1933, the Düsseldorf branch of the Prussian State Police formed a men’s “protective custody” camp inside the penal institution at Anrath bei Krefeld, Rhineland Province, Prussia. Prussian Justice Ministry officials and possibly SA served as guards. Together with other Rhine-land prisons such as Köln Klingelpütz, the Anrath camp's establishment came in response to the rapid overflow of ad hoc detention facilities in the Düsseldorf area after the March 5, 1933 election. Housed in the empty women's ward, the 700 to 1,000 detainees were primarily Communists and a few Socialists from the Ruhr and Rhineland. Among them were Social Democrat Fritz Strothmann and Communist Willi Dickhut. Arrested on March 1, 1933, Dickhut had already spent four weeks in detention at the Solingen police prison, where he was tortured before being transferred to Anrath.²

Anrath was hardly a secure facility. The detainees were sometimes unruly, as, for example, when they chanted leftist harangues on May Day in 1933. To the slogan “Long live the Revolutionary Proletariat!” Dickhut remembered one warder shouting, “Never under fascism!” Repeated singing of “The Internationale” prompted the tightening of security measures. Visitors also smuggled contraband into the camp. By this method, Dickhut obtained the Marxist publication Von Kanton bis Shanghai, 1926–1927 (From Canton to Shanghai), disguised under a false cover.³

On July 28, 1933, Prussian Gestapo Chief Rudolf Diels ordered a three-day denial of noon rations for Communist detainees, which was particularly onerous for those at Anrath, who were about to embark for the Emsland camp complex. Diels’s order came in retaliation for the vandalization of the Hindenburg Oak (Hindenburg-Eiche) at Berlin’s Tempelhof Field in June 1933. Adolf Hitler dedicated the tree in the Reich president’s honor during the Nazi May Day festivities.⁴ On August 1, 1933, Anrath prisoners entrained for the new Prussian “State Concentration Camp” at Papenburger Börgermoor.⁵ The Schupo (Municipal Police) transferred them to SS custody at the Dörpen railway station, over 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) from Börgermoor. The Anrath camp’s closure was part of the consolidation of Prussian concentration camps in the summer and fall of 1933.

**SOURCES** This entry builds upon the standard work about the early concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). On the reorganization of Prussian camps, see Johannes Tuchel, Konzentrationslager: Organisationsgeschichte und Funktion der Inspektion der Konzentrationslager “1934–1938 (Boppard am Rhein: H. Boldt, 1991).

Primary documentation about Anrath bei Krefeld begins with an entry in the ITS list of German prisons and concentration camps: Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schmitt, eds., Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 1:116. An important testimony about the protective custody camp is Willi Dickhut, So war’s damals . . . Tatsachenbericht eines Solinger Arbeiters 1926–1948 (Stuttgart: Verlag Neuer Weg, 1979). Although Drobisch and Wieland claim that there were SA guards at Anrath, Dickhut mentioned only Justice Ministry officials. On the Hindenburg Oak, a contemporary report is available in NV, August 6, 1933. Rudolf Diels did not reflect on his retaliatory order in his memoirs, Lucifer ante Portas: Zwischen Seering und Heydrich (Zürich: Interverlag AG, 1949). For information on Anrath prison after the
early camp, a brief report is available in Zentral Wuppertal Komitee, Mitteilungen über den Gestapo- und Justizterror in Westdeutschland und den Kampf zur Befreiung der Eingekerkerten und der Hilfe für ihre Familien (Amsterdam, 1936). It is reproduced as Testaments of the Holocaust, Part I, Series 2, Reel 153, Opposition, Resistance, Terror, 1934–August 1941.

Joseph Robert White

NOTES
2. Ibid., pp. 185–190.
5. Dickhut, So war's damals, p. 191.

BAD SULZA

After the closing of the Nohra concentration camp on April 12, 1933, it became ever more urgent to establish a new concentration camp in Thüringen. The reason for this was the increasing political opposition from workers’ organizations.

At the end of October, the choice was made for a camp in the small sanatorium town of Bad Sulza, about 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) from the state capital Weimar. The site chosen was a former hotel built in 1864, which operated as such until 1914. During World War I, the hotel functioned as a hospital. After that, various small businesses operated from it. Several tenants occupied the front section of the building. To the rear was a courtyard, enclosed by two two-story buildings on the longitudinal side and a two-story building on the lateral axis.

The prison camp was located in the rear section of the first floor. In the side wings there were three dormitories, each with approximately 45 sleeping places. In the rear building on the lateral axis was a day room with its own exit to the roll-call square. The rooms for the prisoners were equipped with long, rough wooden tables and with similar benches. The somewhat larger dormitory had high bunk beds, with three bunks, each with a horse’s blanket and straw sack. The washroom had long iron tubs and cold water. Similarly, the toilet was for mass use. In the left wing of the second floor, there were three rooms, each of 12 square meters (129 square feet), which could hold a maximum of 12 women.

A total of 121 men were sent to Bad Sulza between November 2, 1933, and December 10, 1933. In addition, at least 12 women were interned at the camp.

Until the late summer of 1934, the majority of prisoners were suspected of illegally working for the workers’ parties. After that time their number decreased. Many were sentenced to prison terms. From the end of 1934, the prisoners were mostly “whiners and agitators” (Meckerer und Hetzer) and so-called economic parasites (Wirtschaftsschädlinge). A few members of national associations such as the Stahlhelm, the Jungdeutscher Orden, and the Schwarze Front were held for a short time in “protective custody” in 1934 and 1935. From the spring of 1936 on, the number of prisoners who had been convicted of “planning to commit high treason” increased. Above all, it was mostly Communists who, after their prison terms, were sent to the Bad Sulza concentration camp for protective custody. Beginning in 1935, Jews were brought to the camp for the slightest reason; the same applied to Jehovah’s Witnesses. In early March 1937, Thüringen criminals, having been arrested as part of an operation across the Reich, were sent to the camp.

At most, 12 women could be interned in the female section. Until the fall of 1934, the majority of female inmates were incarcerated for political reasons. The youngest inmate, Gisela Worch, daughter of the Social Democratic mayor of Langwiesen, was 16 years old. She had been arrested with her mother in November 1933, and both were brought to Bad Sulza concentration camp. Gisela was released in November 1934. Her mother had committed suicide in October 1934 in the Gräfentonna women’s prison.

The women had to work in the kitchen. They had to do the dishes and clean the large cooking pots and the kitchen. They had to help the camp cook. They had to wash clothes and press them. The female section was dissolved on July 1, 1936. The women were sent to Moringen-Solling, the Prussian concentration camp for women.

The prisoners wore civilian clothes or converted jackets of the Bavarian police. Their clothes were marked with yellow stripes that were sewn on the sleeves and the backs.

The camp’s history falls into two phases. The first lasted from November 2, 1933, to April 1, 1936. The Thüringen minister of interior was in charge of the camp, and he also...
issued the protective custody orders. The camp was financed by the state of Thüringen.

The SA was always present in the prison area. They were there as guards during the night, and the prisoners had to report to the guards. In addition, there were two SA guards who were responsible for the day room. During this period, there were large fluctuations in the prison numbers. They varied from 25 to 120; there was a particularly small number of prisoners in the camp in 1935. The camp command consisted of members of the State Police (Landespolizei); the guards were almost exclusively SA members who had volunteered or had responded to a recruitment campaign.

The second period begins with the takeover of the camp by the SS on April 1, 1936. The SS command consisted of five SS leaders who were permanently based in Bad Sulza. Three of them lived in the camp. The guards were rotated in fortnightly cycles from the Prussian concentration camp at Lichtenburg and the Sachsenburg concentration camp.

The Thüringen Ministry of the Interior assumed the costs of running the camp, including the costs of the command office. The SS guards were paid by the SS. From April 1, 1937, on, the camp came under the control of the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL) and thereby under the control of Theodor Eicke. The IKL took responsibility for all costs. The number of inmates varied from 100 to 160.

The SS completely withdrew from the prison cells and, as in other concentration camps, introduced a system of prisoner self-administration. In addition, there were room supervisors (Stubendienst) and a camp elder (Lagerälterster).

The camp commandants were Polizei-Hauptwachtmeister Carl Haubenreisser, from November 2, 1933, to April 1, 1936, and SS-Sturmbannführer Albert Sauer, from April 1, 1936, to July 15, 1937. (Haubenreisser later served with the Criminal Police [Kriminalpolizei] in Prague. The Soviets arrested him in October 1945 and imprisoned him until January 1950. He died in West Germany in 1987. Sauer went on to serve in Sachsenhausen and later as the commandant of Mauthausen and Riga-Kaiserwald. He went missing on May 3, 1945.)

The admissions register has about 1,000 entries with continuous numbering. Some prisoners, however, were incarcerated in Bad Sulza several times. Roughly 850 prisoners were interned in Bad Sulza throughout the history of the camp. Admission numbers were used in everyday camp life. They were not required for mail but were recorded on the discharge papers.

The waiting room, where prisoners waited for the arrival of their nearest relatives, was located on the ground floor. An application for a visitor’s pass had to be submitted to the camp commandant. In general, only adults were permitted to visit the prisoners. However, exceptions are known; children accompanied by their mothers were allowed to visit their fathers. There were no predetermined visiting days. The visitors could bring fresh clothes, shoes, and sewing equipment but no food. Letters were handed out once a fortnight and could be sent once a fortnight.

The prisoners had to work in the Bad Sulza quarry in Laniätzal. About half of the prisoners were members of the quarry work detail (Arbeitskommando “Steinbruch”) whose two- to three-kilometer (less than two miles) march led them through the town of Bad Sulza. A smaller squad worked at the Kurpark and the salt works. The prisoners maintained facilities and roads. There was a tailor’s workshop, a cobbler’s workshop, a locksmith’s workshop, and office work (Jungenlager). These squads had only a few prisoners. Prisoners from the camp did not work in factories or for other organizations.

Contracted physicians cared for the Bad Sulza concentration camp inmates. In 1933–1934 it was Dr. Sternberg from Niedertrebra, and in 1934–1937, Dr. Schenk from Bad Sulza. No prisoners died in the camp.

In Bad Sulza, the Nazis introduced a penal system. There was a cell with no windows where prisoners were held under arrest. In the quarry, the prisoners had to shift stones that weighed hundreds of pounds. For serious infringements there was public whipping; the prisoner was strapped to a trestle and received 25 blows. The SS had brought the trestle from the Lichtenburg concentration camp. The few Jewish prisoners had a particularly bad time. They had to do their work while running and were always punished by means of some sport.

With the increase in militarization and the preparations for war, the Nazis also wanted to secure the home front. The capacities of the concentration camps were increased as part of this process. In southern Germany, the Dachau concentration camp already existed near Munich, and in 1936 the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin was opened. What was missing was a concentration camp in the middle of Germany, so construction began on a new concentration camp on the Ettersberg near Weimar—the Buchenwald concentration camp.

The facilities at the Bad Sulza concentration camp were to be used for the new camp. The SS transported the approximately 106 prisoners on July 9, 1937, to the Lichtenburg concentration camp and the camp’s equipment to Buchenwald. The work was not done by the prisoners but by the SS. On July 15, 1937, the mayor of Bad Sulza was informed by telephone to turn off the water. The camp closed on that day.

The Buchenwald concentration camp opened on the same day—July 15, 1937. The Bad Sulza prisoners were sent from the Lichtenburg concentration camp to Buchenwald on July 31, 1937, and all put in the same block.

**Sources**

The primary sources for the files of the Bad Sulza concentration camp can be found in the THStA-W. Other primary sources are the VdN files from the archive THStA-W, the dependencies of the TStA-R, TStA-M, and THStA-G, and
the BA-B. There are also files in the TStA-Go relating to the state prison Ichterhausen (Landesgefangnis) and in the TStA-M relating to the Untermassfeld Prison. References can also be found in the smaller city archives.

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BAMBERG

With the March 9, 1933, Nazi takeover of Bavaria, the Wilhelmsplatz State Court Prison in Bamberg, Oberfranken, became a “protective custody” camp.1 Between March and July 1933, it altogether held more than 140 detainees, of whom at least 42 were released. Wilhelmsplatz was one of at least nine small protective custody camps in northern Bavaria, which included the camps of Bayreuth (St. Georgen), Coburg, Hof, an der Saale, and Straubing in Oberfranken, and the camps of Aschaffenburg, Hassenberg bei Neustadt, Hassfurt, Schweinfurt, and Würzburg in Unterfranken (after 1935, Mainfranken). According to press reports, Bamberg detained 62 Bavarian People’s Party (BVP) members; at least 42 Communists, Social Democratic, Reichsbanner, and trade union leaders; as many as 7 Jews; 1 Stahhelm member; 1 Jehovah’s Witness; and 1 person who defied the regime’s dairy pricing scheme; and 1 for reasons unknown.2 On March 10, the Bamberg Criminal Police arrested 17 Communists and Reichsbanner officials, seizing “on this occasion numerous writings, partly in Russian.”3 By March 22, the Bamberg concentration camp at Wilhelmsplatz held 20 detainees, and by March 27, the population doubled to 40.4 Not every leftist remained in custody: secondary school teacher Fritz Reuss, arrested for harboring Marxist sympathies, won release after his colleagues vouched for his classroom conduct and character.5 Bamberg also held political prisoners from other towns, including Forchheim, Hassfurt, and Hofheim, who were either in transit to other concentration camps or held as a measure to relieve the overcrowding of small court prisons.

The arrest of Manfred Stoll illustrated early Nazi anti-Semitic persecution in Bamberg and also how some early detainees sometimes stood trial for political reasons. On April 1, the date of the regime’s anti-Jewish boycott, called in retaliation for putative Jewish defamation of German national honor, the Bamberger Tagblatt newspaper announced: “Yesterday, the son of master baker Moses Stoll, Adolf-Hitler-Strasse 35 [before March 24, 1933, Lange Strasse], was taken into protective custody. The reason given is that the arrested person had made slanderous statements about the Reich government.” Stoll came before the Bamberg Special Court one week later. Although Prosecutor Bächler demanded a two-year sentence, the court imposed five months against Stoll for spreading “atrocity stories.”6

Jehovah’s Witnesses also faced early persecution in Bamberg. On April 10, Bamberg’s special commissar, SA-Oberführer Heinrich Hager, banned their public activities, and the police shut down the 28-member meetinghouse, without making arrests. The new Bavarian interior minister, Adolf Wagner, one of Hitler’s most reliable chieftains, employed special commissars to implement especially radical measures. The Jehovah’s Witness ban exemplified the special commissars’ function in Bavaria’s Nazi synchronization (Gleichschaltung). When Otto Prüfer, a Jehovah’s Witness, convened a meeting in defiance of Hager’s decree, the Bamberg Political Police placed him in protective custody on July 18.7

Despite Dachau’s foundation on March 21, the first Bamberg transport to the concentration camp only took place in late April. Meanwhile, the Bamberg police dispatched five detainees to the workhouse at Bayreuth (St. Georg). A press release from the state court implied that the first transfer, on March 24, was a disciplinary measure, as the unnamed detainee in question was “an unruly inmate.” Four Communists, Geyer, Keim, Riedel, and Seelmann, were sent to the same workhouse on April 7.8

The first Bamberg transport to Dachau occurred on April 24. Five Communists, Barth, Böhm, Hermann, Moritz, and Nossol, boarded an assembly train that held 135 additional prisoners who had been dispatched from Oberfranken. On May 12, 12 additional detainees from Bamberg joined a 150-prisoner transport to Dachau. The Bamberg contingent consisted of 3 political prisoners from Forchheim, 3 from Hassfurt, 5 from Hofheim, and only 1, Jewish student teacher Willi Aaron, from the city of Bamberg. Aaron had already languished for months at Wilhelmsplatz and died of what was recorded as a heart attack at Dachau on May 21. His death of an alleged heart attack prompted a lengthy but misleading report about Dachau to appear in the Bamberger Tageblatt, which boasted about the “excellent health conditions of the prisoners.” During the departure of the May 12 transport, protestor Johann Schüpfertl shouted the slogans “Red Front” and “Hail Moscow.” He was arrested on the spot. As the Bamberger Tagblatt reported, “Even before the transport Schüpfertl had behaved provocatively outside the state court prison.” By May 19, 10 people from Bamberg were in Dachau and Bamberg; Wilhelmsplatz held just 5 detainees.9

The June 22, 1933, national ban of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) resulted in the internment, eight days later, of six Bamberg city council members, Dennstät, Dotterweich, Göttling, Grosch, Schlauch, and Vater, in addition to trade unionist Firsching. On July 3, City Councilman Bayer (arrest date unknown), Grosch, and Schlauch, with 13 other Social Democrats, were transported to Dachau. The Bamberger Volksblatt (BV) newspaper claimed that the transport of other Social Democrats from Wilhelmsplatz to Dachau pended a decision about their health.10

Bamberg’s leading BVP members also faced Nazi intimidation. The BV’s paramilitary, the Bavarian Guard (Bayerwacht), was an early target. In connection with the beating death of Wiesheier, an SA man, 20 Bavarian Guardsmen from Gaitzganz were taken into protective custody at Bamberg on May 23.11 The July 1933 trial of Wiesheier’s accused assailant, Lorenz Schriefer, caused a local sensation and resulted in a death sentence for Schriefer.12 BVP county manager Georg
Banzer was detained on three occasions. His first arrest came on March 11, when he spent the day in custody while the police searched the Bavarian Guard leaders’ houses. His next detention took place between March 22 and April 6. His third stint, which lasted from June 26 to July 5, took place as part of the Bavarian Nazi regime’s ban on the BVP.13

On the date of Banzer’s third arrest, the Bamberg police also took into custody 16 local and 1 national BVP leaders. Among them were Reichstag member and Prelate Johann Leicht as well as Bavarian parliament member and Bamberger Volksblatt director Georg Meixner. From 1920 to 1933, Leicht headed the BVP faction in the Reichstag. After his detention ended on July 5, he continued to serve in the Catholic Church but refrained from politics. Meixner’s detention resulted from the publication of articles critical of National Socialism. His arrest prompted an immediate change in the BV’s political orientation: on behalf of the publisher, St. Otto Verlag GmbH, the archbishop of Bamberg, Jakobus, published two open letters on June 30, 1933, that professed the paper’s loyalty to the new regime and exorted the detained director to join him in producing a “pure Catholic,” that is, allegedly apolitical, paper. Separately, the paper announced that the director forfeited his Landtag (parliament) seat. After his release, Meixner’s name continued to appear on the paper’s masthead until September 12, 1933.14 In late June, ties to the BVP resulted in the detention of two Roman Catholic priests, Curate Martin Förtsch from Hohengüßbach and Father Schütz from Burgebrach. Schütz’s detention came on Special Commissar Hager’s order.15

**NOTES**


2. *BT*, March 11, 23, 24, April 1, May 8, 13, 18, 20, 24, June 10, 23, 26, 27, 28, July 1, 13, 18, 21, 1933; *BV*, March 11, 13, 27, April 7, 18, May 13, 24, June 28, 1933.


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**SOURCES**


Primary documentation for this camp begins with the Bamberg prosecutor general’s report to the Bavarian State Justice Ministry, March 11, 1933, in the KZ and Haftanstalten collection, in BA-B, SAPMO-DDR, reproduced in Drobisch and Wieland. The Bamberg press provides numerous reports about Wilhelmsplatz prison. Until July 29, 1933, the *BT* was a National Conservative paper and the official publication for the Bamberg State Court, after which it became the official organ of Oberfranken’s Nazi Gauleiter Hans Schemm. Until April 4, 1933, the *BV* was also an official paper of the Bamberg State Court. It remained the local BVP paper until June 30. Finally, the ITS lists the Wilhelmsplatz prison in *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem*, ed. Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schmutz (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitauendteins, 1990), 1:215.

Joseph Robert White

**ENdCyclopedia Of CAMPS And Ghettos, 1933-1945**

BAYREUTH (ST. GEORGEN)

On March 8, 1933, following the promulgation of the Reichstag Fire Decree, Saxony police detained German and Sorbian political opponents at the Bautzen prison complex (Bautzen I and II). On April 24, 49 Bautzen “protective custody” prisoners were transferred to Kupferhammer, located in the same town at Talmars. The camp derived its name from the metalworking factory on which it was situated, Kupfer- and Aluminium-, Walz-, Draht- and Hammerwerke C.G. Tietzens Eidam (Copper and Aluminum, Roller, Wire, and Hammer Factory of C.G. Tietzen's Son-in-Law). Collaborating in this camp's establishment were the Saxon state criminal office, the Bautzen town council, and the SA, with the assistance of the Deutsche Bank branch office. The camp leader was SA-Sturmführer Wenzel, and the guards were members of SA-Standarte 103. By May 10, Kupferhammer held 402 prisoners; 368 remained two weeks later. Wenzel allegedly misappropriated prisoner rations for the benefit of his nearby poultry farm.

After its dissolution on June 26, 1933, the police transferred Bautzen's remaining prisoners to the remand jail at Dresden (Mathildenstrasse) and the early SA camp at Hohnstein Castle. Released prisoners were temporarily dispatched to the workhouse at Aussere Lauenstrasse 33, which later became Dr.-Maria-Grollmuss-Strasse 1.


The main primary sources for Kupferhammer are located in the SHStA-(D), and the AVB-StFA-B (formerly the Sächsische Hauptstaatsarchiv, Aussenstelle Bautzen), as cited in Drohisch and Wieland. The Dresden file consists of correspondence from the Ministerium der Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten. Brief mention of the Bautzen early camp is also made in “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,” NV, August 27, 1933, p. 4.

Joseph Robert White
BENNINGHAUSEN

On March 29, 1933, the Regierungspräsidenten of Arnsberg and Lippstadt ordered the director of the provincial workhouse at Benninghausen, Dr. Hans Clemens, to provide space for a “protective custody” camp. SA-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Pistor was commandant, and Oberlandjäger Scheffer headed the SA guards. Benninghausen's population totaled 346 prisoners, mainly Communists and Social Democrats from neighboring towns, such as Dortmund, Hamm, Lippstadt, and Siegen. The prisoners, most admitted in two large waves on April 25 and May 11, 1933, included several Jews and 2 females. Before its dissolution on September 28, 1933, 169 prisoners were released. The remaining 177 were transferred to other camps, the majority (145) to the large early concentration camp at Papenburg in Emsland. The largest prisoner transport took place on July 29 and 30, after which Benninghausen's population was reduced to 31 and then just 9 inmates.

At Benninghausen, the guards beat, stabbed, and humiliated the prisoners. With hair shorn in the form of Mohawks, the prisoners had to present themselves as “Indians of the Iroquois tribe.” One Jewish prisoner was forced to dance Native American style in the institution's community hall. Some detainees were confined to the existing cells for the mentally ill, where their legs were chained to the wall. In despair, two prisoners apparently hanged themselves.

In late July, Landrat Malzbender addressed a group of prisoners entraining for Papenburg. His speech was a good illustration of early Nazi misrepresentation of the concentration camps. The Lippstadt Patriot newspaper summarized the speech:

Before the train's arrival Landrat Malzbender made a short speech to the transport at the Benninghausen railway station. Presently he explained that the new concentration camp, into which the prisoners were being moved, was no Siberian-patterned cudgel and torture institution. The National Socialists leave the building of such institutions to the Russian Communists. In the first place the concentration camp should be an educational establishment for Communists. He, the Landrat, knows that a portion of the prisoners got mixed up with the misery of the past 11 years in the criminal path of Communism. It is to be hoped that the educational effect in the concentration camp, together with steadily advancing reemployment in Germany, will bring the majority of prisoners once more to the ways of order. Then it will be possible for those who have turned their backs on Communism to be returned to their families. The rest will continue to feel the strong fist of the National Socialist State.

Before and after World War II, Benninghausen was the subject of several criminal investigations and proceedings. In 1934, a released Communist prisoner brought a complaint against the camp staff before the Schwelm administrative court. The accuser claimed that the guards had stabbed two of his comrades. Director Clemens, a Stahlhelm member, disclaimed responsibility for the guards' actions, and nothing came of the investigation at that time. Between 1947 and 1952, the Paderborn courts tried the 16 Benninghausen guards. A court sentenced the guard Erich Schulte, described as a sadist, to five years in a penitentiary and three years of loss of honor.

A second defendant, Friedrich König, received two years' confinement. The specific judgments against other defendants are not available, but most were acquitted or sentenced to short terms of confinement.

SOURCES


As cited by Möller, primary documentation for Benninghausen begins with the Gefangenenbuch für Polizeigefangene D8, WAA-M, ALVW-L. Also available are the postwar proceedings brought against the Benninghausen guards. A prosecutorial investigation against SA-Oberscharführer Bernhard König, April 1950, is listed as Js 449/50 in NWStA-D. As cited by Drobisch and Wieland, Benninghausen is mentioned in the ITS, Dokument-Gruppe PP 603; and in BA-B, SAPMO-DDR. The file is St 62/5/20. As cited by Epkenhans, the Westphalian press ran several stories about the Paderborn trials, but the prosecution and court citations for these proceedings are not readily available. She cites WP, August 19, 1947, May 25, 1951, and April 10, 1952; WR, April 10, 1952; and the LP, July 29–30, 1933, and May 23–24, 1951. The 1933 Patriot story is reproduced in full in Lippstadt, 1933–1945.

Joseph Robert White

NOTES


BERGISCH GLADBACH

[aka STELLAWERK]

The wild concentration camp “Stellwerk” was established in Bergisch Gladbach on the night of June 28–29, 1933. During a raid ordered by the Nazi Party (NSDAP) district leadership in the Rheinisch-Bergisch rural district, SA and police arrested many Communists in the district city of Bergisch
Gladbach, located east of Cologne. According to NSDAP district leader Walter Aldinger, the local police had been cooperating “with party offices in an exemplary way” since the Nazi seizure of power. Since all cells in the town hall were occupied, the detainees were taken to the disused brickwork Stellawerk. It was located in the Heidkamp quarter in the southern part of the city and had been closed since the Great Depression. The former director of the factory had been a Nazi sympathizer even before 1933. The prisoners at Stellawerk were subject to brutal interrogations and torture by the SA. The SA men knew their victims from the “time of struggle” (Kampfzeit) before 1933. They took out their personal revenge on the prisoners. During the so-called interrogations, the prisoners were supposed to confess that they had been active in revived underground Communist activities in Bergisch Gladbach. The mass distribution of dissident leaflets in the area around the paper mill J.W. Zanders in Bergisch Gladbach was the immediate reason for the establishment of a “wild” concentration camp under the control of the local SA.

Stellawerk held not only prisoners who had been Communist functionaries and sympathizers but also those erroneously suspected of being Communists. Not only detainees arrested in the raid on June 28–29, 1933, were interned in the camp. Soon thereafter, other Communists from Bergisch Gladbach who had been arrested before June 22, 1933, and initially held in the Siegburg penitentiary, were brought to Stellawerk. The exact number of prisoners at Stellawerk is not known. The Cologne Criminal Police estimated the number between 40 and 60 after interviewing perpetrators and victims in 1947.

If the prisoners did not give the desired confession during the interrogation and sign a prepared statement, they were usually severely mistreated. SA men dragged the refusing prisoners from the porter’s lodgings, where the interrogations occurred, across the factory grounds to large ring ovens. Here they beat the prisoners with thick cudgels and coal shovels and trod on them with hobnailed boots. Many prisoners suffered open wounds, bruises, broken ribs, and concussions. On several occasions, prisoners who had been beaten until they lost consciousness were taken from Stellawerk to the hospital. In one instance, a physician had a perilously wounded prisoner transported to the Evangelical Hospital in Bergisch Gladbach. An SA man wanted to hang the prisoner. The doctor at the hospital is said to have cried out at the sight of the prisoner: “The Führer cannot have wanted this!” The severely injured prisoner had to be treated in the hospital for 10 weeks. The NSDAP district leader tried to cover up the SA crimes by later sending the prisoner a statement for his signature. The prisoner explained to the police after the war that the declaration was to the following effect: “We have learnt that you are insured by the Winterthur-Insurance for 30,000 Reichsmark (RM) against accidents. We are prepared to prove that you lost consciousness and 60 after interviewing perpetrators and victims in 1947.”

Sturmbannführer Schreiber, appointed special commissar for the Rheinisches-Bergisches rural district (Sonderkommissar für den Rheinisch-Bergischen Kreis) by the senior SA leader in the Rhine Province, Gruppenführer Steinhoff, was responsible for the arrests on June 28–29, 1933. At the time, Schreiber was in command of the SA Battalion III/65 (SA-Sturmbann III/65) in Bergisch Gladbach. Schreiber, born in 1901, volunteered toward the end of World War I but never saw active duty. After the war, he joined the Free Corps in Upper Silesia. In 1910 he joined the NSDAP and the SA. The interrogations at Stellawerk were led by SA-Scharführer and Director of Intelligence (Nachrichtendienstleiter) Alex Naumann. Naumann, born in 1901, also volunteered in World War I and was also a Free Corps soldier in Upper Silesia. Naumann joined the NSDAP and the SA in 1932. Stellawerk camp was guarded by SA men from Bergisch Gladbach, Bensberg, Porz, and Köln.

Family members of the prisoners brought them food and also spent much time close to the camp, trying to obtain information about the prisoners.

Stellawerk was closed in early July 1933. After a walk-through, Cologne-Aachen Gauleiter Josef Grohé ordered its closure on the grounds that the camp was too close to a residential area. The residents had complained about the screams of the tortured prisoners. A few prisoners were released, but the majority remained in “protective custody” and were taken to the local prison in Cologne or other SA camps. Some prisoners were sent to the newly established Hochkreuz camp in Porz on July 14, 1933. Some SA members, who interrogated and beat inmates in Porz, had already practiced their foul work at Stellawerk. On June 27, 1934, the higher regional court Hamm sentenced 17 Communists arrested in Bergisch Gladbach to prison terms of up to several years for “planning to commit high treason.”

After the end of the war, several former Stellawerk prisoners brought charges against their tormentors. The Cologne state attorney’s office commenced investigations. On December 7, 1949, the Cologne regional court closed the proceedings against one of the accused on the grounds that he had already been convicted in August 1947 for his participation in the mistreatment of prisoners at the Porz concentration camp and had been sentenced to five years in prison. He could not be convicted again for the same crime. Two other accused were acquitted.


There is little archival material on the Stellawerk camp. The most important sources are the files of the Cologne state attorney’s office at the NHSHaA(D), which contain records of preliminary proceedings. A few scattered references to the collaboration between police and SA during the
BERGKAMEN-SCHÖNHAUSEN

At the beginning of March 1933, many “protective custody” camps of various sizes were installed throughout the Reich. These early or “wild” concentration camps, established according to local needs and administered by the SA, the SS, or the police, existed almost without exception for a short period of time only and served as provisional holding camps for the opponents of National Socialism until later on when the concentration camps would open, operated under the central administration of the SS.

One of the early concentration camps of 1933 was the Bergkamen camp in the former mining community Bergkamen, in the Unna rural district on the eastern part of the Ruhr district. In February 1933, a wave of arrests rolled through the Unna rural district. The center of the arrests was in the north of the rural district. Large parts of the population in the mining communities in Bergkamen, Rünthe, Herbring, and Bönen opposed National Socialism. The miners and their families were supporters of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) or, because of the high unemployment caused by the ongoing economic crisis, the German Communist Party (KPD).

In light of these circumstances, the number of those arrested in these locations grew daily. The accommodation of the protective custody prisoners quickly caused the police stations serious problems, as the available number of cells was soon insufficient.

On March 22, 1933, the former mayor of Pelkum, Hans Friedrichs, turned to the Unna rural district administrator and pointed out the difficult situation. With absolute clarity he explained that in his opinion “only the quick establishment of concentration camps” would provide effective relief.

Mining assessor Wilhelm Tengelmann, who was appointed only a few days later by Prussian Minister of the Interior Hermann Göring as the new Unna rural district administrator, took up the idea soon after he commenced duties on March 27, 1933. Tengelmann, a convinced Nazi and friend of Göring and Heinrich Himmler, had worked for the Gelsenkirchen Bergwerk AG (Gelsenkirchen Mining Corporation). As a mines inspector, he was a member of the head office of the Bergwerk Monopol (Mining Monopoly) in Kamen. He recalled publicly that the large hall owned by the Schönhausen welfare building in Bergkamen, which belonged to the mining monopoly, had been used a few weeks earlier for a short time as a holding station for political prisoners. He asked the mining director in charge, Ernst Fromme, who held him in high respect professionally, to be allowed to use this building as a provisional camp.

The Schönhausen welfare building had been built in 1911–1912. It was built to serve the needs of local mining families. It was a two-story building with somewhat lower side wings. In early 1933, a kindergarten had been established in the building. There was a sewing school and a home economics school. The hall had a small stage. There were about 170 square meters (203 square yards) of open space. This was often used for meetings and performances. It was also used for theater and light displays as well as a gymnasium. The whole site, which would now be used for other purposes, included a playground and a sports field. It was surrounded with a man-high hedge and a barbed-wire fence.

The rural district administrator gave the responsibility for administration and security in the planned camp to the SA, SS, and Stahlhelm members of the united Kamen-Bergkamen Auxiliary Police (Hipo). The Kamen-Bergkamen Hipo had existed since the end of February/beginning of March 1933. It was under the command of Willy Boddeutsch, a local of Kamen. He was already in charge of guard squad accommodation in Zechen. Boddeutsch took over the role of camp commandant. His deputy and the real camp administrator was Ewald Büsing, a local of Bergkamen. He was also the deputy leader of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) local branch. The camp and administrative headquarters occupied the left wing of the welfare building. The guards had their own assembly rooms and rest rooms.

The first prisoners were delivered to the camp in the early morning of April 12, 1933. The majority of the people who were brought in large numbers to Schönhausen on this day and in the following weeks and months, and held in the most deplorable of prison conditions, were members of the KPD and its support organizations. Later on, they were mostly members of the SPD, the Reichsbanner, and the Eiserne Front (Iron Front, EF) as well as trade unionists. There were also a few women and male Jews interned as protective custody prisoners. A glance at the prisoner list of the Bergkamen camp shows that from April to October 1933 more than 900 people were held in the camp. The duration of their internment varied. Some were held for a short time only and later transferred to other prisons.

Women were separated from men in Bergkamen. They had their own rooms and usually were quickly transferred to other prison institutions. The men were held in a large holding area in the hall, where they were constantly under guard. The guards had a good view of the prisoners from their position on the stage and a small logelike rise. The prisoners did not have beds; they had to sleep on the floor. Stools were the only furniture in the prison rooms. Sanitary conditions were completely inadequate; there were only a few toilets and lavatories.

It is not known how the prisoners spent their time. What is known is that each day they had to perform drills under the gaze of the guards for hours, or they had to perform military games. Women were used as seamstresses or for cleaning.
Much worse than the prison conditions were the cruel mistreatment, torture, and constant persecution that many of the prisoners had to endure from the guards and camp administrators. Later these conditions would be documented by the witnesses.

The welfare building turned out to be totally unsuitable to hold a large number of people for the longer term. Most of the prisoners remained only temporarily in this camp and were transferred to other prisons. Many of the transports were sent at first usually to the central prison in Freiendiez/Lahn and Wittlich/Mosel as well as the prison camp Brauweiler in Pulat fi rst usually to the central prison in Freiendiez/Lahn and Esterwegen.

In the autumn of 1933, the Prussian Ministry of Interior and the State Police (Staatspolizei) came to the conclusion that in many places the local protective custody camps had fulfilled their purpose and were no longer required. It was decided to close the small camps and support the construction of large new camps under the responsibility of the SS.

Dr. Heinrich Klosterkemper, the new Unna rural district administrator—his predecessor Wilhelm Tengelmann had been summoned to Berlin as commissioner for economic issues (Beauftragter für Wirtschaftsfragen)—advised the Bergkamen camp administration on October 20, 1933, that following a general order of the Minister of the Interior, the concentration camp was to be dissolved. A few days later, on October 24, 1933, Bergkamen was closed. The prisoners who were there were either released or transferred to the concentration camps at Papenburg and Oranienburg (Brandenburg).

On October 28, 1933, the Unna rural district administrator asked the local press to publish a declaration that announced the dissolution of the Bergkamen camp. It also contained a clear warning: “Those people, who do not accustom themselves to the new order and act as enemies of the state, will in future be sent to the state concentration camps in the Bürgermoor.” The Schönhausen welfare building in Bergkamen underwent a thorough renovation during the next few weeks, and in the spring of 1934, it was returned to its original use.


There is a file on the Bergkamen concentration camp in the NWStA-M. These files are located in the collection “Kreis Unna—Politische Polizei” and were researched for the first time by Martin Litzinger in 2001–2002. These files deserve special attention, as they contain the camp’s complete prisoner list, which holds important biographical data on each prisoner. There are no other known archival sources on the Bergkamen concentration camp.

There were as early as 1933 isolated newspaper reports in the Unna district on the Bergkamen concentration camp. The reliability of these contemporary reports is questionable, given the statements, and they should be used with great caution.

Martin Litzinger
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**BERLIN (GENERAL-PAPE-STRASSE)**

On the grounds of a former military barracks on General-Pape-Strasse in Berlin, there are cells in several buildings that once (March 1933–December 1933) were used as a “wild” concentration camp. The cells served as accommodations for the Nazi Party’s (NSDAP) Storm Troopers (SA). It is suspected that altogether 2,000 prisoners were held, tortured, and murdered in the SA prison on Papestrasse.

The majority of the prisoners were political opponents of the NSDAP: Communist and Social Democrat functionaries and members as well as members of the trade unions. Among the prisoners were politically active members of the nearby Lindenhof settlement and “leftists” from neighboring apartments known as the “Red Island” (Rote Insel). In addition, a large number of Jews (mostly lawyers and doctors) were taken to the Pape-Strasse prison. Clearly, the SA wanted to “cleanse” Berlin of Jews. Some women were also incarcerated there.

Among the first prisoners was Leo Krell, who was sent to the prison on March 16, 1933, and who received prisoner number 45. He was a journalist and was arrested that day. He was so brutally mistreated that a few days later, on March 21, 1933, he died in a public hospital. Friedrich Klötzer, prisoner 1842, entered the prison eight months later on November 28, 1933. One can assume therefore that until December 1933, when the SA transferred from Pape-strasse to new quarters in the center of Berlin, the estimated number of 2,000 people held at Pape-strasse, both male and female, is realistic.

Survivors’ reports consistently mention the brutality of the SA guards and the severe injuries that often resulted in the death of the tortured prisoners, as the following example shows: Dr. Arno Philippstahl, a Jew, was arrested on March 21, 1933, in Berlin-Biesdorf. He was first taken to the local police station, and during the course of the day, possibly already injured, he was taken to the SA prison on Papestrasse. He was severely mistreated there and on April 2, 1933, died in a hospital as a result of his injuries. Krell had died in the same hospital. Several other men died in the Pape-strasse camp itself, such as architect Paul Hipler (July 29, 1933); Kurt Kaiser (April 13, 1933), because he had insulted the Führer; the Communists Max Krausch (July 3, 1933) and Ewald Vogt (August 21, 1933); Max Lukas, who had no political affiliations; the tobacconist Kurt Miesske (July 31, 1933); and many others.
There are no reliable sources identifying the prison commander. A publication in 1952 suggests that there were two former military officers, a Captain Weiss and one Major Schneider, in addition, a “Commander of the Pape-strasse Military Barracks” by the name of Rossbach was mentioned. The only additional information to be gained concerned SA-Sturmführer Erich Krause, head of the interrogation office. He was born on January 6, 1905, in Berlin and is accused of being brutal. This accusation was raised in December 1950 when investigations were made by the Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime in the German Democratic Republic. Krause was a member of the guard in the SA prison and was later a member of the protective police. He was also a public servant. Sturmbannführer Fritsch was certainly a member of the guard, as he was responsible for the SA field police depot.

The guards came from the barracks of the SA Berlin-Brandenburg field police. Most of the guards were young men between the ages of 18 and 25. At least some of the guards were members of the infamous group “Rabaukensturm,” which was based on Zieten Strasse in Schöneberg. The field police formed the core of the Feldjägerkorps, which was formed on October 1, 1933. It later became part of the protective police on April 1, 1936. By this means the SA men became public servants. The former members of the Feldjägerkorps thus became the motorized street police, known as the “white mice.”

One of the peculiarities of the Pape-Strasse camp was that the SA men were involved in violent, perverted sexual acts. They equally mistreated both men and women. In one case it is reported that women were tied to a vaulting horse and in front of other women were raped by the SA men. In a 1988 interview, Gerhard Gossa reported not only being beaten in the face but also having had an acid injected into his urethra, which resulted in severe pain until his death in 1997.

The prisoners had to undergo many tribulations between interrogations: on a cellar wall a target was placed at which a few SA men practiced pistol shooting with live ammunition while the prisoners were forced to stand for hours at the wall and to turn around. In effect, they became live targets. In an interrogation cellar, which had a thin cover of straw on the floor, the prisoners were beaten with riding whips, cudgels, and fists in order to extract confessions or simply to torture them. Lit cigarettes were pressed against the soles of the feet and fists in order to extract confessions or simply to torture them. A popular pastime of the guards was to cut the prisoners’ hair with blunt scissors. In several cases, swastikas were cut into the hair. This brutal treatment often resulted in injuries to the head. The prisoners were also forced to cut each other’s hair.

The imprisoned men and women not only heard the screams of those tortured; often they had to watch the other prisoners being beaten in front of them, seeing them collapse as they lost consciousness or were beaten to death. It is possible that the prisoners were buried in the cellars, as freshly covered holes were found there.

Paul Tollmann, a youth, with the help of individual SA men was able to avoid being transported to the Oranienburg concentration camp on the fifth day of his imprisonment. He was able to hide in a pile of straw, then to escape unrecognized. The escape of a builder is also known.

The SA prison remained in existence until December 1933 when the SA unit shifted to quarters in the center of Berlin.

Alfred Geguns is the only known case of someone who was arrested because of crimes against humanity. After the war, clerk Alfred Johler recognized him as the man who “had beat him with his fist and had injured his eye with a ruler.” With the assistance of the Berliner Zeitung (BZ) newspaper, on October 1, 1947, an appeal was made for more witnesses who could say something about the man who was able to obtain work without disclosing his Nazi Party and SA membership. According to press reports, Geguns admitted that in 1933 he interrogated 40 people. It is not known whether he was convicted. According to available information, there were no further investigations or convictions for crimes committed in Pape-strasse.

**Sources** This entry is based on Kurt Schilde’s contribution to Kurt Schilde, Rolf Scholz, and Sylvia Walleczek, SA-Gefängnis Papestrasse (Berlin: Overall Verlag, 1996), which contains reports that were collected from prisoners. Characteristic of the Papestrasse prison, more information can be obtained about the victims of National Socialist terror than on the SA men who were the guards. In the course of several years of preparation, the authors were able to obtain written and oral information in several interviews with former prisoners or their family members.

In their research the authors came across the book by Jan Petersen, Unserer Straße: Eine Chronik; Geschrieben im Herzen des faszistischen Deutschlands 1933/34 (1947; Berlin, 1963), in which—as was subsequently discovered—the author described events in the military barracks with scarcely believable precision. He was provided with details from his colleague Werner Ilberg, who had been a prisoner.

Important sources of information are local historical publications: among others, Emil Ackermann, Wolfgang Szepansky et al., Erlebte Geschichte: Arbeiterbewegung und antifaschistischer Widerstand in Tempelhof (Berlin, n.d.); memoirs such as those by Werner Neufliess, “Mein Leben,” Gespräche in Israel 7: no. 3 (1989); and biographies such as Dorothee Ifßand, “Er war uns Helfer, Berater und Freund im besten Sinne: Dr. Arno Philippsthal und Familie, Marzahner Str. 10,” in Juden in Lichtenberg: mit den früheren Ortsteilen in Friedrichshain, Hellersdorf und Marzahn, ed. Thea Koberstein and Norbert Stein (Berlin: Hentrich, 1995). We also used contemporary publications such as the Braubuch über Reichstagsbrand und Hitler-Terror (1933; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg Verlag, 1978) or the publication by the German Red Assistance, Ihr seid nicht vergessen! Gedenk- und Erinnerungstage (Paris, 1937). National Socialist propaganda was also helpful, such as Julek Karl von Engelbrechten, Eine braune Armee entsteht: Die Geschichte der Berlin-Brandenburger SA (Munich and Berlin, 1937); specialist literature such as that by Hans Buchheim, “SA-Hilfspolizei, SA-Feldpolizei und Feldjägerkorps und die beamtenrechtliche Stellung ihrer Angehörigen,” in Gutachten des IfZ (Munich, 1958), vol. 1; and an analysis of newspapers and magazines from 1933. An example is “Wer kennt diesen Mann? Zeugen aus...

The most archival source is the report by Fritz Ball on his experiences in the prison. It is part of a larger study and is included in the archives at YV (Nr. 01/41). Parts were published in Kurt Jakob Ball-Kaduri, Das Leben der Juden in Deutschland im Jahre 1933: Ein Zeitbericht (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1963). Other, mostly biographical information are the AAK, FES, ADGB, BLHA-B, various departments of the BA-B (Zehlendorf—former BDC; SAPMO-DDR and others) in GStAPK, as well as the AVVN-VdA, and the AfcTAW-B.

Kurt Schilde
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES


BERLIN-CHARLOTTENBURG
(MAIKOWSKI-HAUS)

During the Weimar Republic, the Berlin district of Charlottenburg was known predominantly as a middle-class area and as Berlin’s cultural center. On the other hand, the area between the city rail system (S-Bahn), the Spandauer, Berliner Strassen (later Otto-Suhr Allee), and Bismarckstrasse/Kaiserdamm formed the Charlottenburg working-class district.

On the border of this working-class district, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) opened a People’s House at Rosinenstrasse 3 (later renumbered 4) on May 1, 1902. The front building consisted of an office and living quarters. Through an inner courtyard with gardens one reached a building that stood transverse to the front building. This was the actual People’s House, consisting of a multistory building designed for meetings of up to 1,200 people. During the next two decades, the People’s House was a popular meeting spot of the workers’ movement in Charlottenburg. In October 1921, the Konsum Cooperative acquired the People’s House and turned it into a department store. The SPD kept only a few offices.

With the other working-class district, the Nazis attempted to conquer the “red district” of Charlottenburg. The SA-Sturm 33, based in Charlottenburg, was headed by Hans Maikowsky and was known as the “Sturm of the Assassins” because of its many violent clashes with political opponents.

On January 30, 1933, the SS organized a torchlight procession through the Berlin government district to honor the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Reich chancellor. To demonstrate the new power, on its return march to Charlottenburg, SA-Sturm 33 made a detour along Wallstrasse (later renamed Zillestrasse), one of the strongholds of the Charlottenburg

Three SA-men take Stefan into another room. He has to undress fully and bend over a chair. Two pairs of strong fists firmly hold him. The third man repeatedly pushes a stick into his anus. Stefan writhes in agony. His forehead is covered with cold sweat. They lift him. They pour a bucket of cold water over his head. . . . For Stefan and his fellow prisoners, a night and a day of severest mistreatment followed. Sturmführer Kuhn constantly wanted to hear new names, especially from the women prisoners. He was not without success. Around midnight the cellar was already filled with twenty SAP officials covered in blood. . . . Stefan was then stretched out naked on the torture table. . . . Countless blows rained down on his testicles. For months after Stefan’s testes were three to four times the normal size. . . . Stefan was tied to a bundle with his hands and arms tied to his back. By means of a thick rope and a pulley affixed to the ceiling he was lifted up as dead weight. His bare soles just at the right height for the bullies. They fetched rubber truncheons. The beatings rained down endlessly on the soles of his feet. Each blow felt as if it hit his bare brain. 

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Oskar Hippe remembers a specially constructed torture chair overutilized while he was interrogated: “While one of the SA men sat on my neck, the other got a square-shaped wooden block with a screw fixed at one end which also functioned as a joint. The wooden block was placed over the hollow of the knees. It felt as if one was held in a bench vise. A third put a wet floor cloth over my bottom and with a steel rod, covered in leather, the blows began.” Most of the time a doctor appeared in the cell during the evenings to give minimal care to the mistreated but primarily to determine whether the SA men could continue with the torture.8

There were fatalities in the Maikowski House. Walter Harnecker, subdistrict head of the Charlottenburg branch of the German Communist Party (KPD), and Walter Drescher, member of the Communist Homes’ Protection Squad (Häuserschutzstaffel), were beaten to death. Communist Youth Front (Jungfront) comrade Hans Schall died from his injuries after they chopped off both his hands.9 Walter Chall, a worker, was first interrogated in the Maikowski House and mistreated there. Afterward, during the night of September 22–23, 1933, he was shot by SA men at Tegeler Heide. A criminal investigation by the Berlin state prosecutor into the matter was stopped because of the intervention of Prussian Prime Minister Hermann Göring in June 1934.10 In their memoirs, former prisoners repeatedly mention the names of Berthold Hell and Helmuth Kuhn, leader of SA-Sturm 6/1 (former Sturm 33), as the SA members who were responsible for the severe mistreatment of prisoners.11 SA guards were posted inside the building as well as at the entrance gate. On the basis of witnesses’ statements, it is possible to document a 10-month period of existence of the camp, lasting until January 1934.12

SOURCES Stefan Szende’s memoirs are an important source on the history of Maikowski House. They are titled Zwischen Gewalt und Toleranz: Zeugnisse und Reflexionen eines Sozialisten (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlaganstalt, 1975). Jan Petersen’s memoirs, Unsere Straße: eine Chronik, geschrieben im Herzen des faschistischen Deutschlands 1933/34 (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1974), and Oskar Hippe’s memoirs, Und unsere Fahne ist rot: Erinnerungen an sechzig Jahre in der Arbeiterbewegung (Hamburg: Junius, 1979), are essential reading for the history of the Charlottenburg workers’ quarters in 1933.13

Archival sources on the history of Maikowski House are to be found in the building files, land registry files, judicial files, and the Berlin SA files held by the LA-B. The files of the VVN in the BA-B and the documents of the Prussian Ministry of Justice in the GSTAPK are equally informative.

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NOTES
2. Group Order Nr. 27 13.5.1933, LA-B, A Rep. 244-03 Nr. 47.
4. General Secretariat VVN, in BA, DY 55/V241/7/25, Bl. 145.

BERLIN-KÖPENICK

The district of Köpenick is located in southeast Berlin. Its connection with the early stages of Nazi terror is the “Köpenick Blood Week” (Köpenicker Blutwoche). The excessive violence by the SA in Köpenick started in the beginning of March 1933. The acts of violence reached a peak during the week of June 21–26, 1933, the “Blood Week,” when many citizens of Köpenick were taken by the SA from different parts of the district, then tortured and murdered.

During the night of March 20–21, 1933, Social Democratic Party (SPD) district representative Maria Jankowski was arrested at home by the SA and, together with previously arrested Johann Flieger (SPD) and Werner Heber (a Communist student), taken by car to the Sturmlokal Demuth at Elisabethstrasse 23. Here they were interrogated by the leader of the SA-Sturm 2/15, Herbert Scharisch. In between interrogations their heads were bent over a black-red-gold flag, and they were beaten at least 80 times by SA men, armed with cudgels, on their naked behinds and abused in other ways. They were released the next morning on condition that they would report daily to the Sturmlokal and would bring a list of SPD officials. However, their injuries were so bad that they had to spend a week in the hospital.1

From June 21, 1933, the Nazi Party (NSDAP) began to separate itself from its coalition partner, the German National People’s Party (DNVP), on the grounds that it had been infiltrated by the Communists. The SPD was banned on June 22. It was under these circumstances that the Köpenick...
SA, with the support of the Gestapo, planned an operation of massive arrests of its political opponents. During the night of June 20–21, the Köpenick SA leaders met at the Köpenick local court prison at then Hohenzollernplatz 5, where they agreed to organize a campaign of terror against members of the SPD, the German Communist Party (KPD), the Fighting Circle of Young German Nationals, the members of the Workers Youth Organizations, the unions, certain persons unaffiliated with any party, and Jewish civilians. The violence escalated when Anton Schmaus, son of union official Johann Schmaus, shot three SA men in self-defense. Thereupon, hundreds of opponents of the regime were arrested and mistreated. At least 23 people were murdered or died in hospital because of their injuries. The SA arrest stations and places of interrogation in Köpenick were located at the SA pubs (Lokale) Demuth, Seidler, and Jägerheim and the SA quarters at Wendenschloss and Müggelseedamm. The coordinating center of the arrest operation was in the local court’s prison. SA-Standarte 15 had established its headquarters in a few rooms of the court in May 1933. At the beginning of the arrest operation, the SA also requisitioned the jail. The construction of the court and prison building dated back to 1901. There were prison cells for 9 female and 43 male prisoners.

Many of those held by the SA in the local court’s jail had been tormenting earlier in one of the other SA arrest stations mentioned above. Their torture continued in the “prayer room,” formerly used as prison chapel, and in the cells. According to a statement by SA-Mann Richard Skibba, the personal data of those delivered to the prison were recorded and the prisoners put in cells that held 20 prisoners each. He himself put a list of the prisoners’ names on the cell doors and made sure that none of the prisoners sat down. What happened next in the local court prison is summed up in the judgment of the Berlin Regional Court in Plönzke and others.—Köpenick Blood Week, dated July 19, 1950:

They were taken out of their cells at short intervals, about every 5 to 10 minutes, and were beaten with sticks in the corridors and especially in the so-called prayer room. The mistreatments were such that the anti-fascists were beaten until they totally lost their ability to walk and their consciousness. The arrested Jewish civilians were forced to undress completely in order to be examined to determine whether they were “Aryan” or “non-Aryan.” They were then beaten in a most cruel way—on their genitals. The hair of the captured anti-fascists was cut off with pocket knives and in part done in such a way that tufts of hair in the shape of a swastika remained on their heads. Minium (a red paint-er’s dye) was used to paint the swastika onto the bloody heads of the mistreated persons. Numerous victims had their testicles and noses cut off. The torture practices were such that in the prayer room there were pieces of flesh and parts of brains lying about and large pools of blood which flowed out of the door of the room. The numerous anti-fascists in the prayer room were forced to conduct military exercises and to march around and simultaneously sing the German national anthem. While doing so, they were mistreated with sticks and rods.

According to the autopsy report of worker Franz Wilczek, who was tortured in the local court prison and died in the hospital on June 30, 1933, he had been forced by the SA to drink a strong acidic poison. The cause of death was blood poisoning resulting from the “expansive” putulant injuries to the skin.

The corpses of Karl Pokern (Rotfrontkämpferbund), Johannes Stelling (SPD), and Paul von Essen (SPD) were retrieved in July 1933 from nearby ponds. They had been shot by the SA in the jail of the local court. To conceal their murders, the SA had put the bodies in sacks, sewn them tight, and sank them in the ponds of the SA quarters at Wenden Castle.

At the staff quarters, Herbert Gehrke coordinated the entire operation. In recognition of his services to the “national revolution,” he was promoted, effective July 1, 1933, to Obersturmführer and in August 1933 to Standartenführer. The following Köpenick SA units participated in the operation: SA-Sturm 1/15 commanded by Sturmführer Friedrich Plönzke, 2/15 commanded by Bruno Demuth, 3/15 commanded by Alexander Friedrich, the Nachrichten-Sturm (Intelligence Company) N1/15 under the leadership of Toldi Draeger, and the Reservesturm (Reserve Company) 5/15 under the command of Hans Berlemann. Reinforcements were provided by the Charlottenburg SA-Sturm 33 (Maikowski-Sturm).

There were several public complaints in July 1933 about the behavior of the SA in Köpenick, and the local Ortsgruppenleiter of the NSDAP, Kaiser, the mayor, Karl Mathow, and councilor Janetzky concluded that the “public situation in the city district of Köpenick . . . has deteriorated to an extraordinary degree as the result of the conduct of the SA and the public is in a state of great unrest.”[10] No one dares to say anything anymore about the terror because if they do they are threatened that they will also be “finished off.”[11] Herbert Gehrke was then instructed to cease further action and to bring the SA terror in Köpenick to an end.

Between 1947 and 1951, there were several trials before the Berlin Regional Court in which SA men who had participated in the crimes were convicted. The largest trial was the so-called Plönzke-Trial in which 61 people—only 32 of whom were present—were charged with crimes against humanity. On July 19, 1950, 15 of the defendants were sentenced to death and 13 to life imprisonment, and the remainder received sentences of between 3 and 25 years.

Sources The events of the “Köpenick Blood Week,” including the events in the local court jail, have been the subject of extensive historical examination. A good overview is to be found in the exhibition catalog of the memorial

Files and other sources are held in the AHM-K. The trial files are held by the LA-B. The trial judgments are published in the multivolume documentation series by C.F. Rüter, ed., DDR-Justiz und NS-Verbrechen. Sammlung ostdeutscher Straf­urteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen (Am­sterdam/Munich, 2002–2005). An extensive description and analysis of each trial is to be found in the manuscript by André König, “Die juristische Aufarbeitung der ‘Köpenicker Blutwoche’ in den Jahren 1947–1951 und der Verbleib der NS-Täter im DDR-Strafvollzug,” which is held in the AHM-K.

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5. Preussisches Justizministerium, GStAPK, I. HA Rep. 84a Nr. 53357, p. 11.


11. Ibid.


BERLIN-KREUZBERG
(FRIEDRICHSTRASSE NR. 234)

In the summer of 1932, the brothers Hermann and Paul Guthschow put part of their building at Friedrichstrasse 234 at the disposal of the SA-Sturmbann III/8. The SA used the floor under the roof of the apartment and office building, which included several inner rear courtyards, for sports exercises and drills. In January 1933, an additional SA quarters with a kitchen, overnight facilities, and day rooms for more than 30 men were established at this site. From at least the end of March to May 1933, the building acquired a sorry reputation and was referred to as “Blood Fortress” (Blutburg) beyond the borders of Berlin.

The SA used a number of cellars and storerooms, as well as a former stable, as an early concentration camp. Here the prisoners were interrogated, mistreated, and—to the extent they were still able to do so—forced to practice drills and work in the camp. One of the innumerable torture methods consisted of standing for hours in a cell filled with water. The only way the prisoners could sleep was on straw spread on the floor. They were fed inadequately with bread, beets, potatoes, and coffee made of barley.

The SA mostly took members of the workers’ parties and their organizations to this early concentration camp, but also Jews and others of divergent opinions.

Friedrichstrasse often was neither the first nor the only place of detention. In many instances, the prisoners had already been arrested and beaten by the SA at an SA clubhouse. They were then taken in larger groups to Friedrichstrasse 234. There were also prisoner transports between the Berlin Police Headquarters on Alexanderplatz and Friedrichstrasse. At one point, about 70 prisoners were led, with their arms held high, through the center of the city from Police Headquarters to Friedrichstrasse under the guard of armed SA men. During the march, one of the prisoners, out of fear and despair before the expected torture, threw himself in front of an oncoming bus.

The SA harassed Jewish prisoners in many cases in a particularly cruel manner. They were beaten more brutally, were locked up in a special room, had to clean the toilets in the courtyard with their hands, and had to let SA men examine their genitals.

The SA even abducted minors to this place. In the case of a 7-year-old boy and that of then-15-year-old Friedrich Friedländer, SA men tried to find out the whereabouts of their parents in order to arrest them.

Some of the prisoners died from the consequences of their mistreatment, as shown by contemporary reports.

The events at Friedrichstrasse 234 were observed and controlled at the highest level. Karl Ernst, the leader of the SA-Group Berlin-Brandenburg (SA-Gruppe Berlin-Brandenburg), visited Friedrichstrasse after the committal of around 100 prisoners on March 5, 1933. In the presence of SA men and policemen, he had the prisoners line up in the courtyard and forced them to perform a number of various exercises. Those who gave up because of exhaustion were clubbed down with truncheons.

Armed SA men guarded the prisoners inside the building complex and before the entrance door to Friedrichstrasse. The prisoners could be held for up to two weeks. The SA often issued discharge papers with the condition that from then
on the released person must report daily to the Sturmbann III/8 office.\(^{11}\)

Those primarily responsible for the early concentration camp were SA-Sturmbannführer Wilhelm Dörge and his adjutant, Sturmführer Kurt Buchmüller.

Because of the location in the center of the city and the establishment of the camp in a Berlin apartment building, people in the neighborhood also knew about the large number of arrests and the mistreatment of prisoners. The screams of the tortured prisoners could be heard all along Friedrichstrasse.\(^{12}\)

In March, the SA permitted foreign journalists access to the camp. They took photos of the prisoners. In one picture, an SA man armed with a pistol and a rifle guards a group of men standing with their backs to the wall and arms raised high.\(^{13}\)

After the closure of the camp, some rooms at Friedrichstrasse 234 continued to serve as the headquarters of the SA-Sturm. The building was demolished in 1956.\(^{14}\)

On the basis of an appeal through the press and the resultant witness statements, a Soviet military tribunal sentenced Kurt Buchmüller to 25 years of imprisonment on January 6, 1947. He was released from prison 7 years later on January 16, 1954.\(^{15}\)

**SOURCES** A detailed report by contemporary witnesses on prison experiences in Friedrichstrasse 234 can be read in “Letzter Tag in Deutschland,” WWB (vol. II: 13, March 30, 1933): 382-385. Further information is to be found in: Hans-Rainer Sandvoss, *Widerstand in Kreuzberg.* Schriftenreihe über den Widerstand in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945 10; Widerstand 1933-1945, 2nd ed. (Berlin: GDW, 1997), 30, 31, 231.

The most extensive and important collection of sources are the police and judicial investigation files in the case of Kurt Buchmüller. They are held in the BA-DH.\(^{16}\)

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**NOTES**


2. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1, p. 34.


4. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1, p. 61; Ernst Testis, *Das Dritte Reich stellt sich vor...* (Prag: Litera, 1933), p. 25.

5. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1, p. 45 Rs; Angeklagter Hitler: Protokolle, Augenzwängen- und Tatsachenberichte aus den faschistischen Folterkellern Deutschlands (Zürich: Mopr-Verlag, 1933), pp. 5–6.


10. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1, p. 56; Testis, *Das Dritte Reich*, p. 6.

11. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1, p. 25.


13. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1, p. 36 Rs; *Der braune Tod über Deutschland* (Paris: Comité d’aide aux victimes du fascisme hitlerien, ca. 1933).


15. Verfahren gegen Kurt Buchmüller, in BA, ZB II 2903 A. 1., o.A.
location in March 1933. On March 24, 1933, the leader of SA-Gruppe Berlin-Brandenburg, Karl Ernst, declared Hedemannstrasse 5 to be the central detention site for the eastern part of Berlin. Hedemannstrasse 6 was a twin building, but there were no SA offices in this building. Houses number 5 and 6 were connected to each other by way of an internal courtyard through which access was gained to the upper floors of both buildings, and they probably shared a common staircase. Rooms were occupied by the SA.

The room in which the prisoners were held only had straw on the floor. The “interrogations” and torture took place in two other rooms. Booty of the “national revolution”—Communist and Social Democratic flags, signs, and pictures—hung on the walls of another room. Prisoners who lost consciousness were brought back to life in a bathroom where water was poured over them.

Helmut Krautmann writes about his arrest on April 13, 1933: “When I entered the arrest room, there were about fifteen to seventeen prisoners there, some of whom had clear signs of torture and beatings. Some of the prisoners could no longer stand and the slightest movement caused them to groan in pain. . . . I myself was almost beaten unconscious.” Walter Stiller from Pankow was beaten up every hour on orders of Julius Bergmann because he had complained that he had been mistreated in an anteroom. The SA had even prepared “punishment regulations” for Hedemannstrasse: “there were marvels blows, twenty-five to fifty on a covered or naked backside. There were ‘running’ blows from head to soles. There were ‘rubdowns’ with naked fists and fists with knuckledusters. There was ‘coordination’ whereby the prisoners had to beat each other.” The SA men beat the prisoners on their “genitals and backsides”; they forced a prisoner, close to unconsciousness, to drink a bowl full of spit; pills were given that caused pain and diarrhea; hair was pulled out in clumps; and fake executions took place.

The prisoners received provisional medical care by an SA doctor, sometimes in return for money. The doctor also ordered transfers to the hospital. Depending on the seriousness of the injuries, he decided whether the prisoners should stand to attention when the call to salute was made, whether they should perform the salute lying down, or whether they did not have to make the greeting at all.

The SA conducted its own investigation concerning Jewish businessman Leon Sklarz at Hedemannstrasse 5 in April 1933. A note written by the SA-Subgroup East contains the following: “We don’t intend to quickly release this scoundrel. Before we hand him over to the police or the courts we will force him to open up about things which he no longer chooses to remember.”

There were deaths in Hedemannstrasse. Paul Pabst, a Communist laborer, jumped from the third-floor window of Hedemannstrasse 5 on April 23, 1933, and died on the spot. Communist official Heinz Brandt recalls that “lifeless bodies were taken on a stretcher to be ‘executed’ in the courtyard” and that shots were heard the next moment. Hans Spiro, a 17-year-old worker athlete, was mistreated in Hedemannstrasse in April 1933, and in May of the same year his corpse was pulled from the Spree Canal with his throat cut.

Karl Ernst was head of the SA-Subgroup Berlin-East until his promotion to head of the Group Berlin-Brandenburg in March 1933. He was replaced by Richard Fiedler, who previously had been Standartenführer of the SA-Standarte 6 Berlin-Mitte. As subgroup leader, the early concentration camp at Hedemannstrasse 5 and 6 lay within his area of responsibility. Witnesses remember Julius Bergmann as head of the “interrogations,” who gave the command for the number of beatings and set their rhythm. The building was used by the SA as a concentration camp until at least September.

After the war, the General State Attorney’s Office of the German Democratic Republic instituted proceedings against Julius Bergmann for crimes committed at Hedemannstrasse. He was sentenced to death by the Berlin District Court on February 3, 1951, and executed on August 30, 1952.

SOURCES

Heinz Brandt in Ein Traum, der nicht entführbar ist: Mein Weg zwischen Ost und West (Munich, 1967) describes the author’s experiences at Hedemannstrasse. Also useful are the books by Kurt Bürger, Aus Hitlers Konzentrationslagern (Moscow: Verlagsgenossenschaft ausländischer Arbeiter in der UdSSR, 1934), and Hans-Rainer Sandvoss, Widerstand 1933–1945 [alternative title, Widerstand 1933–1945, Kreuzberg] (Berlin: GDW, 1997).

The SA files and construction and land registry files in the LA-B are essential reading for the history of Hedemannstrasse. The files of the VVN, the files of the former BDC, and the files of the state attorney’s office of the German Democratic Republic are held in the BA and are also of significance. In the GStAPK are the files of the Gestapo and the bequest of Kurt Daluje, which provide further information on Hedemannstrasse.

NOTES

1. File Julius Bergmann, BA, SA (former BDC) D 0018.
4. Ibid.
8. File Julius Bergmann, BA, SA (former BDC) D 0018.

**BERLIN-PLÖTZENSEE**

In March 1933, the SA established a “protective custody” camp inside the Berlin-Plötzensee penal institution. On April 3, 1933, 60 SA men accompanied approximately 200 Plötzensee detainees to the new Prussian concentration camp at Sonnenburg. This transfer amounted to approximately four-fifths of the Plötzensee camp’s initial population of 250. In September 1933, at least two transports of detainees left Plötzensee for the new Brandenburg concentration camp. The second September transport included Polish citizen Roman Praschker, Nazi propagandist Kurt Lüdecke, and anarchist Erich Mühsam. According to the *Vossische Zeitung* newspaper, the prison held 350 detainees in October 1933. Under the direction of Oberdirektor Vacano and the supervision of professional warders, Plötzensee continued to hold political detainees until at least 1936. Details of Vacano’s subsequent career are not known. Former Nazis and nationalist prisoners featured prominently among the groups detained at this institution.

Although nothing is known about their treatment in March–April 1933, the detainees taken later that year experienced decent conditions. Their treatment initially stood in contrast to Plötzensee’s convict population. Under Vacano, the punishment of criminals intensified, in keeping with the new regime’s crime-fighting rhetoric. The *Daily Herald* later quoted Vacano as announcing that “we must make prison unpleasant for the prisoners.” The *Vossische Zeitung* claimed that the prisoners’ upkeep cost 40 pfennigs per day, half of which came from their own pockets. At a hypothetical 4 Reichsmark to the dollar, the prison thus allotted less than U.S. $0.03 per day to the prisoners. Convicts worked and performed close-order drill; they could not smoke or receive care packages. Those confined in the third, “panoptical” building, the political detainees, were exempt from work and drill. Their privileges also included permission to smoke and to obtain parcels. Their cell furnishings included tables, retractable beds, desks, and study lamps.1

Roman Praschker characterized Plötzensee as “very humane.” Entering the camp on July 1, 1933, he had already been in custody since April, when the SA took him to the Horst-Wessel-Haus, a former Communist party building, for allegedly disseminating “atrocity stories.” For three weeks the SA tortured him, before sending him to the Alexanderplatz jail. At the Berlin-Moabit holding center from May 15 to July 1, he awaited trial before a Nazi special court (*Sonderricht*), but his case never took place. At Plötzensee, Praschker encountered many Nazi prisoners, including Kurt Lüdecke and members of Otto Strasser’s outlawed Schwarze Front (Black Front). He also met Erich Mühsam, who had been sent there from Sonnenburg.6

Lüdecke described Plötzensee as an institution where “the prisoner had a few privileges, however modest.”7 Blaming Nazi rival Ernst “Putzi” Hanfstängl for his arrest, his imprisonment probably had more to do with his criminal record. Despite his dishonest reputation, his report about Plötzensee may be corroborated with other accounts. In the police wagon from Alexanderplatz to Plötzensee in July 1933, Lüdecke encountered a “swarthy, broad-faced little man full of witty remarks” who turned out to be Friedrich Ebert, a Social Democratic Member of the Reichstag (MdR) and son of the Weimar Republic’s first president.8 (It is not known how long Ebert remained at Plötzensee.) In the prison, Lüdecke’s chief concern was appeasing the “trusty” who, under a guard’s supervision, dispensed food and other favors: “Though I loathed his visage and manners, I soon capitulated to the chief trusty of my station and paid him ‘dues’ to get my papers and books and run my errands.”9 Otherwise, the protective custody wing was relatively tolerable: “Yes, here was Prussian order: bedding changed twice a month, a fresh towel every week, and rules for everything—church services, prison library, writing, visitors, cell-cleaning, and so forth.”10

![An aerial view of Berlin-Plötzensee prison, an early camp, taken in the mid-1930s.](image-url)
For most of the time, Lüdecke occupied a solitary cell. When the wing was overcrowded, he briefly shared it with Artur Mahravan, founder of the Order of Young Germans (Jungdeutsche Orden) and the small German State Party (DSP). After Mahravan’s transfer to another cell, Lüdecke got permission to have a day companion, Schwarze Front member Günther Kübler. For several days before their separate transfers to Brandenburg, they passed time conversing, reading, and playing chess.\footnote{11}

Although a German nationalist, the police accused Mahravan of spying on France’s behalf. The SA tortured him at the General-Pape-Strasse early camp before sending him to Alexanderplatz. Immediately after his transfer to Plötzensee, Mahravan met the editor in chief of the illegal Communist daily Rote Fahne, Alfred Fendrich, who passed the latest rumors about the terror. While in Plötzensee, Mahravan wrote portions of “a dramatic Faust epic.” Upon his release, the Gestapo confiscated this intended “protest against the present tyranny.” Mahravan’s connections in the Reich president’s office facilitated his release in September 1933.\footnote{12}

After 1933, the distinctions between political and criminal prisoners blurred to the detainees’ detriment. Prisoners’ attempts to spread news about the declining conditions incurred severe punishment. Walter Köppe allegedly smuggled a letter outside Plötzensee with the assistance of “short-hand typist” Hildegard Freund. The Nazi Party organ, Völkischer Beobachter, denounced it for containing “the meanest and dumbest atrocity stories.” For the offense, Köppe received 15 months’ imprisonment and his accomplice 8 months.\footnote{13} By May 1934, political prisoners joined the criminals on work details. As part of their reeducation, they sang Nazi songs and, losing their segregated compound, shared cells with criminals.\footnote{14} By August 1936, the food situation worsened to the point that prisoners “search[ed] waste baskets for moldy scraps of bread.”

To deflect potentially embarrassing questions, the institution appointed the Schwarze Front’s Major Schulz as prisoner “representative” to visiting foreigners.\footnote{15}

Among the detainees at Plötzensee in this period was Communist MdR Ernst Torgler. Torgler was the only German defendant in the Reichstag Fire Trial in the fall of 1933. After his acquittal on the charge of high treason, the police placed him in protective custody. He remained briefly at Moabit before the transfer to Plötzensee on January 14, 1934. Torgler was released from custody on December 1, 1936.\footnote{16}

Between 1933 and 1945, Plötzensee executed 1,574 political opponents. As part of Prussia’s Nazi-era restoration of the death penalty, Plötzensee’s first criminal executions took place in May 1933. Customarily, German prisons erected gallows on prison grounds before each execution and rang a bell at the time of death. In August and September 1933, Praschker heard the bell ring five times, although Lüdecke recalled only one such occasion.\footnote{17} In 1936, in order to restrict unauthorized news, the prison discontinued the practice of striking the bell. In 1937, in response to a Justice Ministry decree, Plötzensee established a permanent, guillotine-equipped death house, which further increased death penalty secrecy by removing executions from the view of the general inmate population. The institution’s first political execution took place on June 14, 1934, with the hanging of Richard Hüttig. Among Plötzensee’s wartime victims were members of the Red Orchestra and July 20 resistance groups.


Primary documentation for Plötzensee begins with SAPMO-DDR, Zentralparteiarchiv Bestand I, file 2/345 at BA-BL. This camp is briefly mentioned in Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Spada), 7 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Petra Nettlbeck, 1980). Photographs of the Plötzensee complex are available in Birgitte Oleschinski, Gedenkstätte Plötzensee, ed. GDW (Berlin: GDW, 1994). Valuable eyewitness testimony may be found in Roman Praschker, “Brandenburg,” in Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt; Ein Buch der Greuel; Die Opfer klagen an (Karlsruhe: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934), 134–140; Kurt G.W. Lüdecke, I Knew Hitler: The Story of a Nazi Who Escaped the Blood Purge (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1938); and Artur Mahravan, Politische Reformation: Vom Werden einer neuer deutschen Ordnung (Gütersloh: Nachbarschafts-Verlag Artur Mahravan, 1949). Although Lüdecke’s report on Plötzensee is reliable, his statements about leading Nazis must be used with considerable caution. After Plötzensee and Brandenburg, Lüdecke escaped Oranienburg concentration camp in early 1934 and arrived in New York days after the “Night of the Long Knives.” Because of
his Fascist views, the United States refused to grant him citizenship, interned him during World War II, and deported him to Germany in 1947. Nazi and non-Nazi press reports documenting Plötzensee and Sonnenburg may be found in Dan, April 8, April 12, 1933; DH, May 19, 1934; VB, January 9, 1934; and VZ, October 14, 1933. The VZ’s feature reproduced lengthy extracts from an interview with Vacano and gave a mise-en-scène of Plötzensee’s major compounds. The article afforded the director an opportunity to promote the regime’s harsh approach to criminals. Publication information in RF, July 12, 1932, February 5, 1933, identified Fendrich as editor in chief. Plötzensee prison is listed in Das nationalsozialistische Lager system (CCP), ed. Martin Weinmann, with Anne Kaiser and Ursula Krause, prepared originally by ITS (1949–1951; repr., with new intro. matter, Frankfurt am Main: Zweijundtausendeins, 1990), 1:262.

Joseph Robert White

NOTES

8. Ibid., p. 686.
9. Ibid., p. 687.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., pp. 689–690, 692–693.
12. Mahraun, Politische Reformation, pp. 94–98, 100, 110–111 (quotations on p. 110); RF, July 12, 1932, and February 5, 1933; Lüdecke, I Knew Hitler, pp. 689–690.
14. “German Convicts Must Sing Nazi Songs Now.”
16. "German Convicts Must Sing Nazi Songs Now."

BERLIN-PRENZLAUER BERG [AKA WASSERTURM]

The densely populated district of Prenzlauer Berg was a stronghold of the Berlin workers’ movement, where the Nazi Party (NSDAP) only managed to attain a below-average result of 22.1 percent in the parliamentary elections (Reichstags- zahlen) of November 1932. Even before 1933, the district witnessed bloody confrontations between supporters of the workers’ parties and the NSDAP. As of February 22, 1933, members of the SA took advantage of their new role as auxiliary police to arrest, rob, and ill treat individuals of the opposing political camp.

The waterworks, which had been built in 1856 and expanded over the course of the following decades, was put out of operation in 1914, as it could no longer accommodate the increasing water requirements of the city. The closure did not mean, however, that the 1.7 hectares (4.2 acres) water tower grounds were left unused. The water tower as well as the caretaker’s rooms were used as living quarters. Both of the deep reservoirs as well as Engine Room II served as storage and warehouse space.1 A recreational park was opened on the grounds for the local population in 1916.2 When it was seized by the SA for its purposes in 1933, the water tower area was an inhabited, lively, and popular place for the neighboring population to relax.

“During the first weeks of the political changes, the SA ran its own concentration camp on the grounds of the water tower, where people who had been handed over to the SA on charges of subversion were held in detention,” stated Dr. Thomas, the chief public prosecutor of the Berlin Court of Appeal, in his indictment of March 1935 dealing with the “Water Tower Case.”3

The prisoners were locked up in the older and larger of the two engine rooms, Engine Room I.4 The approximately 1,000 square meters (1,196 square yards) large building originally housed the power plant and boiler. For the most part, it had stood empty since 1914. Engine Room I was chosen by the SA as a suitable location for a concentration camp since there was sufficient space to accommodate prisoners, conduct interrogations, and carry out torture. In addition, its prominent and central location in the district—the widely visible water tower is the symbol of Prenzlauer Berg—enabled the SA to demonstrate its newly attained position of power and to stir up anxiety within the population.

The exact date upon which the concentration camp was set up cannot be ascertained. Its existence can only be verified for an approximate period of three to three and a half months from March to June 1933.5 Due to inadequate sources and the late assessment of the history of the camp, only 19 persons could be identified by name as prisoners. This number offers no basis upon which an estimation of the total number of detained persons might be reached. According to statements by former prisoners, individuals were detained from anywhere between one day and two weeks. Their reports describe
interrogations, brutal maltreatment, and forced labor. Members of workers’ parties were frequently arrested at home or on the street by SA men and brought to the Prenzlauer camp.

Jews were also imprisoned here, which is consistent with the fact that the district’s synagogue and Jewish school were only around 200 meters (219 yards) from the concentration camp and the fact that there was a background of growing anti-Jewish repression, such as the April 1933 centrally orchestrated boycott of Jewish businesses, doctors, and lawyers.

The prisoners were guarded by members of the SA in the engine room. The SA conducted patrols around the buildings and along the surrounding wall. A sentry was also kept at the entrance to the gatehouse. Karl Ziegler, a contemporary witness of the events, recalled that Engine Room I was filled with benches upon which sat prisoners facing interrogation, maltreatment, labor, or a similar fate. According to statements by former prisoner Werner Rosenberg, there was also a room that served as a sleeping area in which the prisoners spent the night on sacks of straw. According to the inmate Ernst Förstner, “two buckets of food” for the detained persons were supplied by a nearby restaurant frequented by the SA. There were no public sanitary facilities on the grounds of the water tower or in the engine rooms, which had stood empty for over 15 years.

Observations by eyewitnesses make clear that the inhabitants of Prenzlauer Berg were well aware of the existence of the concentration camp. In interviews conducted in the late 1970s, residents of houses bordering the water tower area reported that they could see the concentration camp prisoners and that their cries of pain were quite audible.

Information about the responsible SA members can be gathered from copies of investigation, statement, and indictment reports of District Court VII of the Greater Berlin District and the chief public prosecutor’s office of the regional court in the “Water Tower Case” of 1934 and 1935. The Water Tower Case dealt with a number of crimes committed by the SA on the water tower grounds, such as theft, the accepting of stolen goods, and aiding and abetting the infiltration of the party by Communists. The former concentration camp and the unlawful detentions and grievous bodily injuries perpetrated there were only mentioned in passing and were in no way part of the criminal sentencing. It is therefore most probable that this case was primarily an internal SA purge. It followed the reorganization of the SA and the considerable reduction of its membership in the wake of the “Röhm Putsch” of June 30, 1934.

Nevertheless, records show that Ernst Pfordte was the senior commanding officer of the Prenzlauer camp. He was born on July 30, 1902, and became a member of the SA and the NSDAP in early 1932. Testimony and contemporary witnesses described Pfordte’s tendency toward extreme brutality and criminality, which led to “excesses under the influence of alcohol.” This was corroborated in further judicial inquiries against Pfordte on charges of bodily harm, which were held in the Berlin Regional Court in August 1934 and September 1935. Also responsible for the events at the water tower was Willi Protsch, head of the Prenzlauer Berg SA Unit 4 of the East Berlin Brigade. No records have survived of the verdicts by the regional court, and the final results of the process remain uncertain. It is a fact, however, that Protsch had been previously convicted before this judicial inquiry, and a second inquiry before the Berlin Regional Court was opened in 1934 to deal with charges of murder and robbery as well as perjury. It would appear that both Protsch, whose SA file ends with the Water Tower Case, and Pfordte, as a result of legal proceedings against him and possible sentencing, were barred from the SA. As for other members of the SA involved in events at the water tower, only names without biographical data or background information could be found.

On June 20, 1933, Der Angriff reported on the official opening of the SA recreational club on the water tower grounds by District Mayor Dr. Krüger and SA-Oberführer Fiedler. Engine Room I, the former concentration camp, was turned into a dining room and lounge for up to 1,200 SA members. The SA recreational club was, disbanded in the autumn of 1934 at the latest as part of the reorganization of the party troops, the grounds were to be redeveloped into a public park. To this end, Engine Room I was demolished in June 1935, and all evidence of the area’s past as a concentration camp was covered up.

Sources
This entry is based on the article by Irene Mayer, “Das Konzentrationslager am Wasserturm: Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin,” in Instrumentarium der Macht: Frühe Konzentrationslager 1933–1937, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Berlin, 2003). Archival sources concerning the waterworks and Engine Room I can be found in the BPA and in the LA-B. More information on the prisoners is provided at the VVN-B district group Prenzlauer Berg as well as in documents of the Verfolgungsstätten des Naziregimes in the LA-B. Sources about the responsible SA members can be gathered from leaflets by the political opposition; copies of investigation, statement, and indictment reports of District Court VII of the Greater Berlin District; and the collection of documents set up by the SA Berlin-Brandenburg at the LA-B.

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trans. Stephen Pailavici

Notes
4. Interview with Karl Ziegler, August 20, 2002.
7. SA-Akte “Willi Protsch,” BA-Bl, BDC, SA-P, Protsch,
Willi, February 9, 1899, p. 39; folder “KZ Wasserturm,” VVN-B, district group Prenzlauer Berg, pp. 82, 84.
8. Interview with Karl Ziegler, August 20, 2002.
10. Ibid., p. 86.
15. Ibid., p. 38.
16. Namensregister der Geschäftsstelle 88 des Landgerichts Berlin, BA-BL, A Rep. 358-02, MF 3909, Bd. 503; Ermi-
    169.
    3872, Bd. 169.
18. DAN, June 20, 1933.
20. Folder “Wasserturm,” BPA.

BERLIN-SPANDAU

In Spandau, an industrial suburb of Berlin, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the German Communist
Party (KPD) had numerous followers and maintained party offices and meeting points. On the other hand, Spandau, with
its distinctive petit bourgeois milieu, belonged to those city districts in Berlin where the National Socialists achieved their
biggest electoral successes in 1932–1933.

Since the beginning of the 1930s, the SA had grown strongly in Spandau. In the fall of 1933, its strength is re-
ported to have been around 6,000 men. In Spandau, the inde-
pendent Sturmbann 14—since June 1933 promoted to a
regiment with the designation II/14—split up into a number
of SA-Stürme. By 1933 a well-developed network of Nazi
Party (NSDAP) local branches and the SA existed. Of par-
ticular importance were the SA clubhouses and SA quarters,
which in the various districts served as initial gathering
points, communications centers, social meeting points, sleep-
ing areas, and a demonstration of power and operational bases
for marches and attacks.

Many of these facilities, with the support or toleration of
their operators, served as detention and interrogation sites for
political opponents and others out of favor with the govern-
ment shortly after the National Socialists assumed power. At
this time, the organization of the Spandau SA also reflected
the infrastructure of terror. The use of existing party struc-
tures facilitated the installation of an apparatus to persecute
political opponents and groups out of favor with the govern-
ment that was largely independent and unchecked by the po-
lice and judiciary. These facilities were located primarily in
heavily populated areas; it was not concealed from the popula-
tion when people were there, and it was possible to find out
what the SA did with them.

In addition, the local SA also occupied public facilities.
People were detained and abused in the following Spandau SA
facilities:

- SA quarters “Drechsel” (also referred to as
  “Drechslar”) at Wilhelmstrasse 20, which was the
  clubhouse of the Spandau SA-Sturm 107;
- Spandau city hall, Carl-Schurz-Strasse, which had
  served as regiment guardhouse (Standarteundwache) of
  the Spandau SA since 1933; detention cells located
  in adjoining building;
- SA office (Büro) on Breite Strasse 66; building at the
  rear of a courtyard (Hofgebäude). This site was also
  known in Spandau as the “blood basement” (Blatkeller)
  or “GPU basement” (GPU-Keller) (for
  the Soviet secret police);
- Restaurant Hohenzollernkasino, Wegscheider
  Strasse/Grafenwalder Weg, clubhouse of the SA-
  Sturm II/14;
- Restaurant Hornemann, Brunsbütteler Damm/
  Nennhauser Damm, clubhouse of the SA-Sturm
  “Seeburg”;
- Restaurant Lindengarten, Hakenfelder Strasse/
  Michelstädter Weg, SA-Caserne (SA-Kaserne) of
  SA-Sturm 98 (later: II/14);
- Restaurant Mönning, Schönwalder Strasse 57b;
- Restaurant Pepitas-Rah, Streitstrasse;
- Restaurant Drei Linden, Seegefelder Strasse 80;
- Restaurant Schwindelschmidt, Neuendorfer
  Strasse 51.

Generally these sites were in no way suitable for the im-
prisonment of people. While the Spandau SA illegally occu-
pied some of these facilities, others were privately owned by
restaurant operators or commercial tenants.

The use of clubhouses as detention centers was the con-
tinuation of SA terror—like that already carried out on the
streets with extreme brutality before 1933—with different,
expanded means. The purpose of the Spandau SA's detention
and interrogation centers consisted primarily in controlling,
imimidating, or eliminating actual or potential opponents of
the Nazis. In addition, they served as bases from which to at-
tack the workers' movement and to destroy its organizations
which influenced many areas of life (living, culture, educa-
tion, athletics, etc.). With the imprisonment of functionaries,
left-wing parties would also be put out of action on the local
level. Through the use of torture, information about planned
actions and persons in hiding was also extorted. Because of
its close-knit network of bases—established over a period of
many years—and by being firmly embedded in the local com-
munities, the Spandau SA had detailed knowledge about the
meeting points of its opponents, the structure of their organi-
zations, and their political activists. In addition to politics,
The majority of those imprisoned at Spandau during the first months of 1933 were political opponents from the ranks of the Communists and Social Democrats but also occasionally Jews falling victim to racist attacks. Usually, they were people who only played a minor role on the political stage.

During the persecution of political opponents, SA-Sturm 107 in Wilhelmstadt, with its base at the SA quarter Drechsel, a restaurant in the Wilhelmstrasse, as well as the SA-Standarte II/14, which in June 1933 had moved its quarters into a wing of the Spandau city hall, stood out.

The pub Drechsel was in the Spandau petit bourgeois district Wilhelmstadt, across from a church and a police station, whose chief sympathized with the SA and largely tolerated the illegal detentions and abuses.

It was a freestanding two-story building. On the ground level were the lounge, kitchen, and toilets, and on the first floor were plank beds for accommodating SA men. Hence, a certain number of SA men were always in the building. In addition, a laundry was located in the basement. In the courtyard of an adjoining building, there was a shed. The victims, who were taken there, were provisionally detained in bathrooms or in the courtyard; on the first floor, interrogation and abuse rooms were set up. The building was not suitable for extended imprisonment of people, which explains why the majority of prisoners were set free after a few hours or a day. The Spandau SA brought others to the central facilities in the city, for example, to the General-Pape-Strasse or to the Oranienburg concentration camp.

Not until June 1933 did the SA-Standarte II/14 set up a “guardhouse” in the building adjoining city hall, with which the Spandau SA demonstrated its desire for a state function to the outside world. In it were offices as well as a few small detention cells. In July 1933, when the Communists organized a large leafletting campaign, the Spandau SA struck again. This time the Drechsel was not the center of detention, interrogation, and abuse but rather the regimental guardhouse in the city hall, which was much better suited. The prisoners were initially detained here before most of them were taken to the Oranienburg concentration camp.

The July persecutions took place at a time when the persecution of political opponents had already been systematized and professionalized. Events in Spandau reflected that the actions of the SA were no longer welcome. The SA was no longer wanted as an instrument of persecution. Thus, detention and interrogation facilities such as Drechsel and the regiment guardhouse in the city hall were disbanded.

No records were kept on the inmates of the unauthorized Spandau concentration camps, so their numbers can only be estimated roughly. During sudden arrest campaigns, it is estimated that dozens of prisoners were arrested and taken together to an SA gathering place. If one assumes the SA terror lasted several months, with varying degrees of intensity, a total of several thousand prisoners were detained at least briefly (several hours to one day). Prisoners were seldom detained longer than one day in facilities such as Drechsel. Thus, no prisoners were used for slave labor in Spandau.

Murders of prisoners, so-called executions, were apparently planned at the Drechsel but never carried out, due to police intervention. Following a Spandau SA wave of terror on March 3, 1933, the police felt compelled to free the SA prisoners in order to prevent an escalation of violence. On March 11, Erich Meier, a functionary of the Communist youth club in Spandau, was killed. Meier, described as charismatic and politically popular with young people, was especially hated in National Socialist circles. The young man was brutally abused at the Drechsel before being shot by SA members on a field near Spandau.

Two of those responsible for the events at the Drechsel were legally called to account in 1951: SA-Obersturmführer Gerhard Steltner and SA-Hauptsturmführer Hans Horn. In the first proceedings of September 1951, the 10th Criminal Court of the Berlin Regional Court sentenced Steltner to three years and six months in prison for crimes against humanity. Horn was sentenced to one year in jail. Due to a procedural error the sentence had to be rescinded, and in a second process, Steltner was sentenced to a minor prison term, whereas Horn was acquitted.

**Sources**

In 1987, an essay on the unauthorized concentration camps and torture basements in Berlin in 1933–1934, summarizing the previous research and adding new insights, was published. In it knowledge about the situation in Spandau is discussed. It has been established that in Berlin there were 150 locations where people had been detained and abused by the SA and the SS—see Helmut Bräutigam and Oliver C. Gleich, “Nationalsozialistische Zwangslager in Berlin I: Die ‘wilden’ Konzentrationslager und Folterkeller 1933/34,” in *Berlin-Forschungen II*, ed. Wolfgang Rübbe (Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1987), pp. 141–178. In his essay about the Spandau SA in the years 1926–1933, Gleich goes into more detail about the unauthorized concentration camps in Spandau: Oliver C. Gleich, “Die Spandauer SA 1926 bis 1933. Eine Studie zur nationalsozialistischen Gewalt in einem Berliner Bezirk,” in *Berlin-Forschungen III*, ed. Wolfgang Rübbe (Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1988), pp. 107–205.

The essential information on the SA terror in Spandau and specifically on the detention facilities and the unauthorized concentration camps can be found in the 1951 court case files for Gerhard Steltner and Hans Horn in the regional court of Berlin: Reference 1 P K Ls 21/51. They are stored in the LA-B under the shelf mark B Rep. 058 Vorl. Nr. 458.

Helmut Bräutigam

Trans. Eric Schroeder

**Berlin-Tiergarten (Universum-Landesausstellungspark)**

The Universum-Landesausstellungspark (Universe State Exhibition Park, (Ulap) was located in the center of Berlin.
numerous persons were arrested in their homes by SA Auxil-
ment counselor Rudolf Diels, which detailed the events at the
opponents of the regime—Communists, Social Democrats,
Communists, Social Democrats, and intellectuals—to the Ulap for interrogation and mistreatment. The All German Workers
between March and November 1933, the SA brought
slept with. When they replied “none” they were
beaten with rubber truncheons. Another Nazi
was ordered to sing the German national anthem. They
He was then beaten by one of the Nazis with a rubber
Despite the arrests and mistreatments, the Ulap developed
The lawyer Günther Joachim had been practicing in Ber-
other prisoners. It was said that the Jews were to re-

were between 70 and 80 arrested people there, all of whom had been picked up in the same
way. Upon entering the room they all had to stand to
attention facing front and an order sounded: “stand

were arrested in their homes by SA Auxiliary Police and driven off in a “truck.” The report continues

They were taken to Ulap via the Lehrter Railway
station. There were between 70 and 80 arrested people there, all of whom had been picked up in the same
way. Upon entering the room they all had to stand to
attention facing front and an order sounded: “stand
straight.” Any attempt to lean against the wall or to
make even a hand movement was answered with a rubber truncheon. Next, the lawyer Joachim was asked
how often he had put Nazi members in jail through trials. He answered: “None.” The immediate reply was:
“You pig. You shit. You’re still lying.” He was then beaten by one of the Nazis with a rubber truncheon on the
mouth and in the face. . . . In the meantime, the lawyer’s brother, who is a doctor and
does not belong to any party, was also beaten until he
collapsed. The same happened to the lawyer Fried-
länder, whom I know, and to three Jewish doctors,
who were told: “we will now give you medical treat-
ment.” The lawyer Joachim and the other Jews were then asked how many Christian girls they had
slept with. When they replied “none” they were
beaten again with rubber truncheons. Another Nazi
came and said: “Do you really want to dirty yourself with these pigs?”, and he asked: “Who among you are
Communists?” The Communists thereupon reported
themselves. The two strongest among them were sele-
ced and forced to work over the Jews with rubber truncheons. When one of the Communists, who had
been beating the attorney J. [Joachim], saw him col-
lapse because of the blows to his head and only con-
tinued to hit him on the greatcoat, he was ordered to
resume hitting him on the head. When the beating
was over, all the Jews were put up against the wall and
ordered to sing the German national anthem. They
were then taken to another room. After a short pe-
riod again a number of Communists were summoned
and told to take from the Jews any money they had.
The money was used to buy food and drink for the

The lawyer Günther Joachim had been practicing in Ber-
lin since 1928 and was known as a defense counsel for Social
Democrats and Communists. He was arrested by the SA Aux-
iliary Police on the morning of March 18, 1933. On instruc-
tions from the police presidium, he was taken on March 20,
1933, to the state hospital on Scharnhorst Strasse, where he
died on March 29 as a result of his injuries. According to the
autopsy report, “there were traces of extensive bleedings in
the skin and fatty tissue, a watery saturation of the brain
and its membranes, heart and kidney modifications as well as a
slimy pustulent catarrh of the lungs.” As charges were
brought by his brother, Dr. Fritz Joachim, the general state
attorney with the Berlin Regional Court opened up criminal
investigations. On May 23, 1933, after consultation with Prus-
sian Minister of the Interior Hermann Göring, the investiga-
tions were suspended under reference to the amnesty decree
of March 21, 1933.

Despite the arrests and mistreatments, the Ulap developed
into the main base of SA-Sturmbann (Storm Unit) II of the
Standarte (Regiment) 16 (Tiergarten and Moabit). In addi-
tion to the operational office, there was a canteen and an
assembly room. In October 1933, there were evening gatherings
at which the Sturmbann (on Tuesdays), the noncommissioned
officers (on Thursdays), and the Sturm (on Fridays) got to-
gether, while on Sundays the Ulap grounds were used for
training.

The history of the Universe State Exhibition Park
can be read in Helmut Engel, Stett Jersch-Wenzel, and Wil-

Useful are the construction files and the files of the gen-
eral state attorney with the Berlin Regional Court as well as
the SA files contained in the LA-B. Further information is to
be found in the files of the Prussian Ministry of Justice, the
Geheime Staatspolizei, and the State Secretary Grauert in
the GStAPK.

Irene Mayer
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES

1. Gestapo, Events etc. 1933, GStAPK, I. HA Rep. 90
   P Nr. 71, pp. 20–21.
2. Prussian Ministry of Justice, GStAPK, Rep. 84a Nr.
3. Ibid., pp. 2, 41.
4. To II/I6 2.10.1933, LA-B, A Rep. 244-03 Nr. 22.
BOCHUM

In the spring of 1933, SA-Standarte 17 at Bochum converted “Gibraltar,” an abandoned mine, into a “protective custody” camp. Closed since 1925, Gibraltar was located at Oveyenstrasse, near the Kemnader Stausee. SA-Standartenführer Otto Voss appropriated the site from the Stahlhelm in order to establish an SA leadership school, which was completed in June 1933. The prisoners consisted of an unknown number of trade unionists, Social Democrats, and Communists. The miners’ union secretary, Hans Mugrauer, accounted for the SA’s eagerness in erecting the camp: “In the eyes of the Nazis it [Bochum] was a ‘red bastion.’” Among the prisoners were Communist Party member Emil Schevenerdel and trade unionist Fritz Viktor. Detainees performed hard labor, but the details are not known.

Word spread about Gibraltar by official and unofficial means. The Bochumer Anzeiger newspaper published a photograph of it in June 1933, which revealed the two-story brick complex surrounded by SA, but did not explicitly identify it as a camp. An inset accompanying this picture showed Standartenführer Voss. Although not imprisoned there, Mugrauer learned about Gibraltar’s reputation while under SA torture. “To whom the Nazis would do evil,” he recalled, “they dragged to ‘Gibraltar’—soon a dreaded word.”

The date of dissolution is uncertain. Although one witness maintained that Gibraltar was closed with the opening of Voss’s leadership school, another claimed that it continued to operate until December 1933 or February 1934. Prisoners not released were dispatched to the Emsland camps at Börgermoor and Esterwegen.

SOURCES

This entry follows the standard account of Bochum-Gibraltar, Johannes Volker Wagner, Hakenkreuz über Bochum: Macht greifung und nationalsozialistischer Alltag in einer Revierstadt (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1983). Maps, a photograph, and excerpts from the Wagner text may be found at the city of Bochum website, www.bochum.de/leidenswege. The camp is excerpted from the Wagner text may be found at the city of Bochum website, www.bochum.de/leidenswege. The camp is

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1. Hans Mugrauer, “‘Deutschland erwache’—Rückblick auf die Vorgänge um die Vernichtung der Weimarer Republik,” GWM 26: 7 (July 1975): 422.

BÖRGERMOOR [AKA PAPENBURG I]

On June 22, 1933, 90 skilled detainees from Düsseldorf (Ulmenstrasse) [aka Ulmer Höh] arrived at Börgermoor, Gemeinde Hümmingen, Emsland, the first of four subcamps of the State Concentration Camp Papenburg (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg) established for wetlands cultivation. Occupying two existing barracks, the Ulmer-Höh prisoners erected the “barracks camp.” Designed to hold 1,000 prisoners in 10 barracks, Börgermoor assigned accommodations numerically in groups of 100. Thus prisoner 166, Rabbi Max Abraham, slept in barrack 2. Detainees wore green, 1918-vintage municipal police (Schupo) uniforms with numbers on armbands. The Börgermoor early camp came under four administrations: Osnabrück Schupo (until July 15, 1933), SS (July 15 to November 6, 1933), Prussian police (November 6 to December 20), and SA (December 20, 1933, to April 25, 1934). Thereafter, the detainees proceeded to Esterwegen, and Börgermoor became a Prussian (later Reich) Justice Ministry penal camp. Pending the SS takeover, the commandant, Sturmbannführer Wilhelm Fleitmann (Nazi Party [NSDAP] No. 166930, SS No. 2030) and 20 SS trained guards, inhabited the camp. Prisoners were housed in five barrack complexes surrounded by SA, but did not explicitly identify it as a camp. An inset accompanying this picture showed Standartenführer Voss. Although not imprisoned there, Mugrauer learned about Gibraltar’s reputation while under SA torture. “To whom the Nazis would do evil,” he recalled, “they dragged to ‘Gibraltar’—soon a dreaded word.”

Primary documentation for Bochum-Gibraltar begins with Hans Mugrauer, “‘Deutschland erwache’—Rückblick auf die Vorgänge um die Vernichtung der Weimarer Republik,” GWM 26: 7 (July 1975): 421–429. In his report, Mugrauer testified about the Nazi assault on the Bochum trade unions. After his release from an undisclosed Bochum torture site, Mugrauer went into Czech and then Swedish exile. Another source, cited by Wagner, are the papers of Franz Vogt, held at the Internationaal Instituut voor sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Vogt was a Social Democratic deputy of the Prussian Landtag (parliament) who, like Mugrauer, went into exile following SA torture. Like Mugrauer, it is not clear whether he was personally imprisoned at Gibraltar. His papers document the Nazi persecution of Bochum’s trade unionists. As cited by Gleising et al., the BA published photographs of the Gibraltar camp and of Voss on June 12, 1933.

Joseph Robert White
roll call. SS-Scharführer Johannes-Peter Kern (NSDAP No. 96828) also tormented prisoners. In the 32 cell arrest bunker, he made long-standing occupants beat initiates and taunted semiconscious victims with questions such as, “Are you awake?”

Kern prepared a violent reception for the Oranienburg transport that arrived on September 13, 1933. The transport consisted of “Jews and bigwigs,” including Friedrich Ebert, son of the Weimar Republic’s first president, Ernst Heilmann, a Social Democratic Party (SPD) Reichstag member, and Erich Wegner, a novelist who protested against the “Jewish Boycott” to Adolf Hitler. In each barrack, the SS made Ebert and Heilmann introduce themselves as “traitors to the Fatherland.” Later Kern forced Heilmann to crawl on all fours and bark like a dog. Because of continuous harassment, Heilmann attempted suicide by advancing upon a guard who shot him in the leg. The SS made Jews hand-clean latrine pits on the Sabbath, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur. Sally Silvermann, a Jewish detainee from the first transport, publicized the Oranienburg group’s ordeal after release. Embarrassed by the press accounts, the Prussian Ministry of Interior reassigned the Jews and prominent inmates to Lichtenburg on October 17, 1933.

Most detainees worked in land reclamation. While marching to work, the SS required them to sing. In October 1933, Langhoff’s Kommando sang “Ich hatt’ einen kamera-den.” When asked why they chose this song, they reported hearing unofficial news about the murder of Otto Egerstedt at Esterwegen II. The SS did not stop their mild protest. At work, prisoners divided into 30- to 40-man teams, overseen by guards and civilian foremen. While some dug peat, others pushed wheelbarrows. As Nikolaus Wasser described, the labor exacted a heavy toll: “The work in the Ems marsh was very hard. Everyday, we had to break up the muddy moor. It began with digging a ditch, 10 meters long, 1.10 meters wide, and 1.20 meters deep (approximately 33 feet by 3.6 feet by 3.9 feet). Through the urging of the guards and the use of terror, we reached the limits of our strength. The food and the sleep permitted us could not renew our strength, so it was harder for us to perform the work from one day to the next.”

As the singing episode demonstrated, Börgermoor inmates asserted limited autonomy. In late July 1933, they “elected” Karl Schabrod, Bergische Volksstimme’s editor, camp spokesman. Despite some Communist–Social Democratic (KPD-SPD) tensions—the camp was 80 percent Communist, and they resented some SPD “bigwigs”—witnesses praised Börgermoor’s strong comradeship. Mutual aid assumed many forms, including French and Esperanto classes. Prisoner initiative emerged foremost in the “Circus Concentrationary” (Zirkus Konzentrazani). After the “night of the long bars,” Langhoff, a Düsseldorf actor, secured Fleitmann’s permission to hold the circus. On August 27, 1933, a Barker called the audience into the ring. Inside, talented prisoners performed gymnastic and acrobatic exercises, danced the “moor ballet,” impersonated females, shadowboxed, crowned, and sang. The show culminated in the debut of the “Börgermoorlied.” Anonymous composed, this first concentration camp song electrified the prisoners and SS. Fleitmann banned it two days later because the final stanza and refrain struck a subversive chord: “Thus for us there is no lament / Winter cannot last forever / Someday we will gladly say / Home, you are mine again. [Last refrain:] Then the moor soldiers / will no longer dig with the spades / in the moors!”

One Sunday in late September 1933, 20 wives from Düsseldorf arrived unannounced to visit their husbands. Refusing an order to deposit care packages and leave, they waited outside for 90 minutes while the SS confined the prisoners to barracks. When the women rejected the offer to see their men individually, the SS let them enter as a group. Jean Kralik presented his wife, Lyia, two baskets, one of which contained a photograph with the “Börgermoorlied” written on the back. Civilians soon sang the Lied (song) in Düsseldorf.

In October 1933, poor staff discipline, including Fleitmann’s involvement in a barroom brawl the previous August, prompted SS and Prussian Ministry of Interior investigations. Rudolf Diels, chief of the National Headquarters of the Secret State Police (Gestapa), ordered state prosecutor Günther Joel and 50 Berlin police to remove the SS. On November 4, Fleitmann’s “Free Corps,” armed with firearms and hand grenades, shot at Joel’s men while prisoners took cover in the barracks. The rumor that the SS feitlingly considered arming prisoners is unconfirmed. The mutiny ended the next day, when SS-Gruppenführer Fritz Weitzel ordered the Papenburg SS to stand down. The SS left Börgermoor on November 6.

Under Prussian police, the prisoners conducted secret and public political activities. On November 7, every barracks quietly commemorated the Bolshevik Revolution. The November 12, 1933, Reich Plebiscite occasioned open dissent, however. In conversations that started with the coded message “Moritz has said,” the camp underground urged prisoners to vote “No.” Of 1,050 ballots cast in the camp (police included), fewer than 20 supported the regime. The police ordered penal exercises but otherwise refrained from retaliation.

Under Obersturmführer Waldemar Schmidt, the SA treated the prisoners properly. On December 22, 1933, Börgermoor’s population declined with the Christmas amnesty of 380 prisoners. Releases continued in the coming months. On April 1, 1934, Neusustrum’s population arrived in the camp. Börgermoor’s remaining 467 detainees entered Esterwegen II on April 25, 1934.

On November 4, 1934, the Meppen civil court fined Fleitmann 150 Reichsmark (RM) because of the bar fight, but the Osnabrück state prosecutor dismissed the judgment after Fleitmann’s appeal to Hitler. Fleitmann remained in the SS but was demoted to Untersturmführer and for a time served on the SS cadre branch staff (Stammabteilung), which amounted to career limbo. Attached to a Luftwaffe construction unit in wartime, Fleitmann died in Soviet captivity on November 14, 1944.
According to historian Hans-Peter Klausch, the SS reassigned Kern, probably for disciplinary reasons, to SS-Sturmabteilung Bad Oeynhausen on October 15, 1933. In an indication that Emsland service did not always compromise SS careers, he was promoted to Untersturmführer in 1936. The Oldenburg prosecutor indicted him for torturing Börgermoor inmates, but he committed suicide in 1949 before trial.12

### SOURCES


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**BÖRNICKE [also MEISSNERSHOF]**

On May 26, 1933, Günther Freiherr von Rheinbaben, provisional rural district administrator of Osthavelland, reported to the district president of Potsdam: “In the community of Börnicke a concentration camp for fifty protective custody prisoners is being established and will begin operation on June 1, 1933.” In the same report, he announced that after “full completion of the camp,” the “protective custody” prisoners “will be enlisted for forest and road work.” The “concentration camps [must be created] in every administrative district under the direction of the SA, where the necessities exist. . . . The accommodation in prisons, as it has been the case until now, has not proven to be practical.” A subcamp was set up in Meissnershof, a farm located not far from Havel between the industrial towns of Henningsdorf and Velten. SA-Standarte 224 under Standartenführer Harry Rasmussen-Martensen assumed leadership of the concentration camp. Rasmussen, a 22-year-old businessman’s son who did not finish high school, took pride in the 23 injuries, 5 serious, he sustained in SA service. By 1930, he had already been a member of the SS for three months. Rasmussen was under the influence of Sturmbannführer Heinrich Krein, a brutal farmer 8 years his senior who directed the Meissnershof subcamp. Sturmbannführer Philipp from Nauen ran the Börnicke concentration camp as camp leader.

By May 15, 1933, as an inquiry from the International Nansen Office for Refugees German Branch (Internationales Nansen-Amt für Flüchtlinge, Vertretung für Deutschland) shows, Börnicke detained political opponents, such as Communists, Social Democrats, union members, and victims of racial persecution from police jails or city detention centres.
centers. Former prisoners also confirmed the camp’s composition.

Prominent prisoners included the former Social Democratic rural district administrator Wilhelm Siering, the secretary of the German Agricultural Workers’ Association (Deutscher Landarbeiterverband) in Nauen, and the director of the Nauen area waterworks, who was a Reichsbanner official.

Located in a former regional cement factory that had belonged to the rural district, the concentration camp consisted of a manufacturing hall with a damaged roof and cement floors for the prisoners, as well as an administrative building where the SA guards and the torture cells were located. At Meissnershof the 60 prisoners were locked in a basement.

The general public already had access to information on the conditions in Börnicke. A report headlined “What’s Going on in a Concentration Camp” appeared in the Saarland newspaper Deutsche Freiheit on June 27, 1933. This report, written by prisoner Oskar Sander and smuggled out by relatives who had visited him, describes the conditions and torture.

Sander reports:

At the moment, there are around eighty prisoners [in Börnicke]. In the sleeping room, a cold concrete building resembling a shed, straw serves as the only form of bedding on which the prisoners had to lay, fully clothed without cover or washing. The food is terrible and insufficient. The prisoners must either perform difficult work in the camp or are “rented out” to entrepreneurs. . . . On May 30, fifty-year-old O. Sander from Falkensee was first forced to jump up and down in the forest, then he was placed on a sandheap and shots were fired over his head, and finally he was stripped in the washing room and beaten to such an extent that he lost consciousness several times.

Other testimonies underscored the guards’ harsh and arbitrary behavior. Characterizing them as “the biggest sadists and rogues,” prisoner Johann Langowski recalled that in the interrogation room the guards whipped the victims and beat their hands and feet. At this camp, he continued, the guards were “able to release their sadistic impulses, even commit murder, without incurring responsibility.” To his comrade Karl Pioch, prisoner clerk Kurt Perl recalled how the SA exorted money from desperate Jewish prisoners in exchange for promises of release.

After only two months, District President Dr. Fromm ordered the closure of Börnicke and the transfer of its remaining 79 prisoners to Oranienburg concentration camp. Fromm demanded these measures since “incidents that are known in the entire region around Börnicke, Meissnershof, and Nauen have created tremendous unrest.” The transferred prisoners included Paul Albrecht, Hans Bodar, Emil Marzilger, Fritz Fenz, Walter Fenz, Otto Fournont, Otto Heese, Franz Rettlich, Jakob Schweigert, and Heinz Wiechert. Following dissolution, the SA continued to use the camps as training facilities.

The shutting down of Börnicke concentration camp must also be seen in the context of the attempt to discipline the SA by the consolidation of the Fascist dictatorship. As a result of the killings of prisoners (Polish national Michail Kukurudza, artist Karl Thon, Communist official Richard Unger mann, Ernst Walter, and Lippmann, a Jew from Nauen), the gangster killings of Strasser’s people (Grenzius and Kollwitz), the rape of women from Berlin and Velten, and the terrorization of the population (camp residents as well as the random checks on the local streets), Osthavelland’s population increasingly turned against SA-Standarte 224 and the entire SA leadership.

In a letter on August 30, 1933, the Berlin-Brandenburg SA leadership placated Fromm: “On almost all sides it concerned claims and statements which . . . upon finding out the truth always emerged as being considerably different accounts. These matters from the first wild days of the Revolution should not be treated like this.” In August 1933, the uncertainty in the population led the Prussian Ministry of the Interior to order an investigation by the Hennigsdorf State Police Office. Its results formed the basis for legal proceedings against Heinrich Krein, who on August 14, 1934, was sentenced to two years and six months in prison for rape by the Fourteenth Grand Criminal Court of the Berlin Regional Court.

In 1948, in accordance with the Soviet Military Administration’s Order No. 201, the crimes in Börnicke concentration camp became the subject of proceedings at the Potsdam Regional Court. SA members Alex Wendt and Karl Lemke (in absentia), as well as former Communist prisoner Hermann Lausch from Nauen, were convicted of crimes against humanity under Allied Control Council Law No. 10, Articles 1c and 2a. Günther von Rheinhaben, who fled to Lüneburg at the end of the war, was exonerated by the local denazification appeals court in 1948.


The most detailed and meaningful primary sources for Börnicke concentration camp are to be found at the BLHA-(P). The file “Schutzhaftlinge” (BLHA, Rep. 2 A Regierung Potsdam I Pol. No. 1183) contains Potsdam County’s administrative council reports to the named higher authorities about the carrying out of protective custody. In addition to information about Börnicke (setup, number of prisoners, closure, and transfer of prisoners to Oranienburg), there is also information about escape attempts by prisoners, the inquiry from the International Nansen Office for Refugees about the whereabouts of the Russian prisoner Palyga, one of the first prisoners at the Börnicke camp, and an administrative council report about the murder of two former SA men near Nauen. The volume *Die politische Lage im Regierungsbezirk 1933* (same inventory, Pol. No. 1171) contains the August 1933 investigative reports from the State Police Office Hennigsdorf about the incidents in the Börnicke camp and Meissnershof subcamp, as well from Fromm’s letter to the SA-Group Berlin-Brandenburg (Gruppe Berlin-Brandenburg) regarding “Vorfälle im Kreise Osthavelland” and their answer. In these documents, classified secret, the crimes at Börnicke and Meissnershof are described in detail, as well as the motives of the state authorities in proceeding against SA-Standarte 224. The file “KZ Oranienburg” (BLHA, Pr. Br. Rep. 35 G) comprises the manuscript “KZ Börnicke,” SED local group reports by named surviving prisoners (“Konzentrationäre”), as well as reports based on personal experience written in 1946. It is possible that the filing of these recollections in the file “KZ Oranienburg” led to the erroneous assumption that the Börnicke camp originated as a branch of the Oranienburg concentration camp. These reports then served as enquiries into the personal files (VdN) in collection Rep. 401. These files served as evidence of persecution, which formed the basis for the payment of an honorary pension. This compensation was paid by the rural district social insurance where the persecuted lived. The files contain portrayals of the persecutions. At the BA-DH, the personal files are interesting sources, left behind by the Abteilung IX/12 of the MfS and organized by name. The proceedings against Hermann Lausch, a prisoner-turned-murderer, can be found in Bestandsignatur VgM 10166, file 1; against SA man Wendt, in ZA 3327, Obj. 4; against SA man Karl Lemke, in ZB 1375, Obj. 4; and the file on rural district administrator Günther von Riehenbaben, in ZB II 6264 A.6. With respect to organization, the Nazi Party (NSDAP) membership cards supplement the perpetrator biographies. Heinrich Krein’s SA personnel file, in the collection of the BDC, provides information about the 1934 internal SA proceedings against him and contains his conviction in the criminal matter of rape. Also in this collection is Harry Rasmussen-Martensen’s personnel file, with his personal sheet from November 27, 1934. The 1933 editions of *DF* and *HE* can be found in the newspaper collection of the SSB-PK. An interesting account from the former district water director, one of the prominent Börnicke prisoners, is kept at the Nauen city museum. Published primary sources begin with Bezirksleitung Potsdam der SED—Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der örtlichen Arbeiterbewegung, *Ausgewählte Dokumente und Materialien zum antifaschistischen Widerstandskampf unter Führung der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands in der Provinz Brandenburg, 1933–1939* (Potsdam: Druckerei Märkische Volksstimme, 1978), which includes a document from BLHA on the camp’s foundation, two photographs of Meissnershof by Walter Fenz (Documents 84 and 85), and testimony by Johann Langowski (Document 88). Karl Pioch’s *Nie im Abeins* (Berlin [East]: Militärverlag der DDR, 1978) contains Kurt Perl’s secondhand account. Börnicke is also listed in “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,” *NV*, August 27, 1933.

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**NOTES**

1. BLHA-(P), Rep 2A Reg., Potsdam I No. 1183, p. 28.
2. Ibid.
3. BA BDC, SA-Personenakte Rasmussen-Martensen.
4. Ibid., p. 387.
5. BLHA-(P), Rep. 401 VdN file No. 86, Johann Ahlers.
6. For Siering, see *HE*, June 27, 1933; for the Sekretär des Landarbeiterverbandes, see *HE*, May 11, 1933; the county water director’s memoirs are in Woinar’s possession.
13. Ibid., p. 408.
15. Ibid., p. 444.
16. BA BDC, SA-Personenakte Krein, p. 55.
17. For Wendt, see BA-DH, ZA 3327 Obj. 4, 4; for Lemke, see BA-DH, ZA IV 3429, file 27; for Lausch, see BA-DH, VgM 10166, file 1.
18. BA-DH, ZB II 6264 file 6, p. 6.

**VOLUME I: PART A**
BRANDENBURG AN DER HAVEL

In 1933 the Brandenburg an der Havel concentration camp was one of four official State Concentration Camps (Staatliche Konzentrationslager) in Prussia. The other camps were Papenburg in the Osnabrück district, Sonnenburg in the Frankfurt an der Oder district, and Lichtenburg in the Merseburg district. The genesis of the camp stemmed from a suggestion made by the Brandenburg police administration to Potsdam district president (Regierungspräsident) Dr. Fromm on May 26, 1933. It was suggested that the old prison at the center of Brandenburg could be converted within a matter of days into a concentration camp for 150 to 200 prisoners. The building at Nikolaiplatz 4 could accommodate up to a maximum of 600 prisoners.

The prison, whose sanitary conditions were appalling, had been closed in December 1931 after a new prison had been constructed in Brandenburg-Görden. On August 10, 1933, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior decided to reopen the former prison as a camp for “protective custody” prisoners. At the end of August 1933 the Brandenburg Police Academy established the camp and approached the Oranienburg concentration camp with a request for details on camp administration and regulations for the guards and inmates. The Brandenburg city council considered the issue of the camp's establishment at a council meeting on August 16, 1933. The minutes of the council meeting are as follows: “The Prussian Ministry of the Interior is to be advised that the Council is in agreement with the establishment of an assembly camp [Sammellager] in the old prison on the condition that the state does not intend to use the prison to accommodate prisoners permanently.”

A report on August 24 in the Brandenburger Anzeiger headed “Brandenburg Concentration Camp: The First Prisoners Arrive Today” dealt with the arrival of the first 90 inmates. It further reports: “The protective custody prisoners are to be kept busy inside the prison for the time being; this will give them opportunity to consider in quiet their former actions and statements, to learn discipline and improve their ways.” There were about 1,000 inmates in the camp between September and November 1933. For the most part, the prisoners were from the Potsdam district but also from the Berlin-Plötzensee prison and from the eastern parts of the Reich.

Most of the time, a day in the camp began for the prisoners at 4:10 A.M. A contemporary report describes the conditions in the camp as follows:

The prison has 12 dormitories each with an area of 160 square meters (191 square yards). There are 12 lavatories which can only be reached from the stair well. The sleeping quarters in the cellar are so damp that bread will be covered in fungus within 12 hours; the air is musty even with open windows. The prisoners are allowed 30 minutes a day of fresh air. . . . The prisoners have to wait to go to the toilet—they can only go when they are accompanied by a guard. . . . There are about 15 buckets in the lavatories which have to suffice for 600 men. . . . The protective custody prisoners sleep on straw sacks which lie on the worm infested floor. Not every protective custody prisoner has a sheet; some only got a towel after weeks. . . . Sometimes the prisoners don’t even have cutlery, there is absolutely no soap. . . . In the five weeks to which this report relates the prisoners were only allowed to bathe twice, the second time only after lice were confirmed at Station 2.

Mail was delivered once a month, and the incoming and outgoing letters and postcards were censored. According to a contemporary observer, the prisoners ate mostly peas and beans with a lot of water; there was little meat with the result that “many prisoners felt that their hunger was only satisfied for about 30 minutes.”

The inmates at the Brandenburg concentration camp were tormented, mistreated, and terrorized. Werner Hirsch, member of the German Communist Party (KPD) and editor in chief of the Communist Party’s organ Rote Fahne, reported on his prison experiences: “We were beaten on average once or twice daily and many of us were beaten during the night. . . . In Brandenburg we were usually beaten with a barbaric instrument, something worse than the pizzles, rubber truncheons, or belts normally used by the SS and SA. It was a sort of leather hose filled with steel shavings. Just about every blow to the naked body or on the thin shirts we wore or trousers broke open the skin. The beatings ended, at least in my cell, only when I lost consciousness and had collapsed somewhere in a corner.”

The Communist city councilor Getrud Piter was taken to Brandenburg on September 22, 1933, and tortured by SS men in such a way that she died from her injuries the next day. A prisoner later stated that even an SS member had stated in dismaying: “Such pigs, such scoundrels. This woman was beaten day and night but she remained so steadfast as to reveal nothing about who her comrades were. She was beaten worse than
a dog. . . . The commander was worse than a wild animal. . . .

Bleeding from her many wounds, she was hung from the window in her cell by those monsters in an attempt to conceal the traces of this sadistic attack.15

Roman Praschker, a pharmacist of Polish origin, was admitted to the Brandenburg concentration camp on September 8, 1933. He later recalled the torture that the SS applied to Jewish prisoners:

“In my cell there were four other Jews. I was the fifth. Every morning, before we left the prison to exercise, us Jews had to clean the stairs from the fourth floor down to the cellar as well as the toilets. This was done under strict supervision and accompanied by ‘individual treatment.’ There remained down blows to the face, we were kicked and punched. It was a serious misdemeanor if, while cleaning the steps, a drop of water fell on the step below. . . . Then there were the exercises! We had to do jump like frogs (Fröschen), jump around for hours in a squatting position without a break and until we were about to collapse! Temporarily, a ‘Jewish haircut’ (Judenfrisur) was introduced. We Jewish prisoners had half of our heads shaved bald.”16

He also stated that they had to sing the following song countless times a day: “I am a Jew, can’t you tell from my nose? / In bold curves it sweeps ahead. / In the war I was as cowardly as a hare. / But I am your man for bargaining! / I am a pig, but I don’t eat pork! / I am a Jew and always will be a Jew!”17

Prominent prisoners in the camp were author Erich Mühsm, lawyer Hans Litten, and Communist Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Theodor Neubauer.18

The SS provided the guards at the Brandenburg concentration camp. The commandant of the camps was SS-Hauptsturmführer Fritz Tank.19 His deputy was a man called Schmidt.20 The director of the Brandenburg Police Academy, who simultaneously was the official director of the concentration camp, gave the SS guards a free hand in the operation of the camp.

On the order of Hermann Göring, a mass release of prisoners from the concentration camps was initiated at Christmas in 1933. It was thought that this was possible because the internal political situation in Germany had stabilized, and the National Socialists were firmly in control. The concentration camps were also thought to have had their educational effect.21 Between 300 and 500 prisoners were released from Brandenburg.22 The camp was dissolved on January 31, 1934, and the prisoners brought to the Lichtenburg, Papenburg, and Oranienburg concentration camps.23

The old prison in Brandenburg was to have an even more somber fate. It was used in 1940 as part of the “euthanasia” program “T4” as a killing center. A total of 9,772 people were murdered there in the autumn of 1940.24


Archival material on the Brandenburg an der Havel concentration camp is to be found in the Ast-BH, 21.13–121, and in the BLHA-(P), Rep. 2 A Reg. I Pol. Nr. 1183, pp. 16, 465–554, Nr. 1090, and 35 G KZ Oranienburg Nr. 8, p. 189.

Irene Mayer trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES


13. DNW, November 16, 1933, cited in ibid., p. 113.

BRAUWEILER

Brauweiler was an early National Socialist detention center for opponents of the regime. The Brauweiler Provincial-Work Institute was located in a former Benedictine abbey, which had in part already been used as a prison between 1920 and 1925.

The first Communists from the Cologne administrative district were taken into “protective custody” (Schutzhaft) immediately after the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933. On March 13, 1933, the chief administrative officer of Cologne ordered that detention space in the Brauweiler Provincial-Work Institute be kept available for police prisoners.

Within the penal administrative region of Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Hamm, the Höherer Polizeiführer West was named special commissioner for the allocation of protective custody prisoners. Under the aegis of the Höherer Polizeiführer West, Brauweiler became one of the central detention centers for political opponents of the Nazis from the Ruhr valley and especially from the district of Unna. At the beginning of April 1933, the Höherer Polizeiführer West turned to Ernst Scheidges, director of Brauweiler, with a request to expand the number of prisoners held at the Institute. Scheidges in turn went to his supervisor, the chief of the Düsseldorf government, not only to ask that the additional 60 prisoners be added to the 193 already in Brauweiler, but also to suggest imprisoning an additional 300 in the Institute’s jail, and another 300 in its detention center, contingent upon the equipment being made available and the question of costs being sorted out. The Düsseldorf administrator forwarded this suggestion to the Höherer Polizeiführer West. But even before these questions could be sorted out—the Cologne police headquarters ultimately allotted the Institute 1.50 Reichsmark (RM) per prisoner per day—the first prisoner transport arrived from Unna on April 15. With this transport, the number of prisoners rose to 260. Additional transports followed. At the end of May 1933, 795 people were being held at the Provincial-Work Institute. Brauweiler had thus become the largest detention center in Rhineland-Westphalia for protective custody prisoners. In October 1933, the number of prisoners held at Brauweiler peaked at 895. Fluctuation of the number of prisoners at the Institute was considerable, with four months being the average term of detention.

While the first prisoners were almost exclusively Communists, Social Democrats and trade union members also had been brought to Brauweiler since the end of April 1933. On May 3 the number of these two types of prisoners was 100. On August 20, 1933, two well-known Social Democrats, Karl Zörgiebel and Otto Bauknecht, were brought in. Zörgiebel had been chief of police in Cologne from 1922 to 1926, in Berlin from 1926 to 1930, and in Dortmund from 1931 to 1933; Bauknecht had been chief of police in Cologne from 1926 to 1932.

The cells in Brauweiler—each measuring 3.75 meters long by 2.10 meters wide (12 feet 4 inches by 6 feet 11 inches)—were occupied by at least three prisoners. Military-style discipline, beatings, humiliation at the hands of the guard personnel, and sentencing to mindless inactivity marked the daily existence of the prisoners. Visiting days for family members, contact by mail (censored by the Institute administration), and the possibility of participating in Sunday Mass and conversing with ministers at the Institute hardly alleviated this situation.

When it became apparent in April 1933 that Institute personnel could not properly guard the prisoners, the director of the Institute added 6 SA men to his staff from the neighboring community of Brühl. At the beginning of May, the number of SA assistant police, chosen because they were unemployed and unmarried, was increased to 15. These SA guards were then replaced in July by approximately 30 SS personnel. Another sign of the transition from “improvised” protective custody camp to formal concentration camp was the expression “Brauweiler concentration camp,” which appeared in a document from the Prussian minister of interior in July 1933. Henceforth, the letterhead of the Institute leadership bore the phrase “The Director of Brauweiler concentration camp.” Furthermore, beginning in early May 1933, Scheidges, the first director of the Institute, no longer signed correspondence. Instead, he signed “on behalf of” the acting director, Kirchsieben. Eventually, in March 1934, Albert Bosse, a member of the Nazi Party (NSDAP), succeeded Scheidges as director.

In December 1933, approximately half of the prisoners in Brauweiler were released. Every former prisoner had to sign a...
“Note of Obligation” (Verpflichtungsschein) upon his or her release. In signing this note, the former prisoner promised not to file any legal claims stemming from the period of detention. The signatory also promised not to engage in “activity hostile to the state” in the future. Minister President of Prussia Hermann Göring ordered the camp closed at the beginning of March 1934, even while 285 people were still being held there. The male prisoners were taken to the Papenburg concentration camp, the females to the regional factory (Landeswerkhaus) at Moringen. Those taken to Papenburg were stigmatized as “parasites [Schädlinge]” on the German national body “whose change of heart” was not foreseeable. Between March 1933 and March 12, 1934, when the camp was closed, more than 2,000 people, among them 81 women, had been imprisoned in Brauweiler.

The Brauweiler Provincial-Work Institute remained a site of persecution even after its formal closing. Following the promulgation of the “Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseases” on July 14, 1933, many people (referred to as “corrected” [Korrigenden]) were forcibly sterilized by the Institute physician on the authority of the Institute’s director. After Kristallnacht in November 1938, more than 300 Jews were taken to the Institute for “safe custody.” From there they were sent to the Dachau concentration camp. During World War II, Brauweiler functioned as an auxiliary prison and torture site for the Gestapo Sonderkommandos Kütter and Bethge, operating in and around Cologne. In 1940 and 1941, Dutch and Belgian prisoners, as well as Germans and non-Germans who had fought on the side of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, were detained in the cell block of the Institute. These prisoners were transported from Brauweiler to other prisons and concentration camps. Between 1940 and 1944, several members of the “Edelweiss Pirates” from Cologne, a defiant youth organization who clashed with the Hitler Youth and Nazi bigwigs, were also detained. In addition, between April 20 and September 14, 1944, 277 Poles, mostly prisoners of war from the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa), were held in Brauweiler. Members of the Gestapo would beat these prisoners unconscious during interrogations. Furthermore, in 1944, French prisoners of war, who belonged to the Action Catholique, were detained in Brauweiler, as were Belgians and Russians. In September 1944 these foreign prisoners were transported to various concentration camps. Those designated as “corrected,” and others detained at Brauweiler, were transferred to the Sachsenhausen, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, and Ravensbrück concentration camps, as well as to the “youth protective camp” of Moringen. All told, in September 1944, 497 prisoners were transferred out of Brauweiler; how many of these died before the end of the war is not clear. Beginning on September 24, 1944, people from the vicinity of Cologne were detained in Brauweiler as protective custody prisoners, meaning those the Gestapo accused of belonging to the Communist resistance or who they suspected of being connected to the Hitler assassination plot of July 20, 1944. Among the latter was the former mayor of Cologne and later federal chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The Gestapo Sonderkommando Kütter and Bethge tortured and murdered people in Brauweiler until shortly before the war ended. Bosse, the director of the Brauweiler Provincial-Work Institute, took his own life in March 1945.

**SOURCES**


The following information about records comes from the essays cited above by Josef Wisskirchen (for the years 1933 and 1934) and Hermann Daners (for the following years until 1945): ALVR, Archivbeartungsstelle Rheinland, Abtei Brauweiler, Nr. 8148, 8164, 8214, 8215, 8228, 10537, 13076, 13121, 15080, 15113, 15114; NWStA-M, Bestand Kreis Unna, Polizeiarchiv, N. 14–16, 47, 56–60; and NWHStA-(D), Landgericht Köln, Sondergericht, Rep. 112/8565, as well as various files from the collection RW 34.

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**BREITENAU**

On June 16, 1933, the Kassel police president opened a “concentration camp for political prisoners in protective custody”—according to the official designation—in a part of the Main Building (a church) in Breitenau. The regional state governor of Hessen—for the Federation of Local Government—and the Kassel police president entered into a contract pursuant to which the former stated his agreement to grant to the police rooms in the Breitenau institution to be used as “a concentration camp for prisoners in protective custody and as lodgings for the police guards.”

The establishment of the camp, “to be used by all police in the government district of Kassel,” occurred largely because the existing police cells, court cells, and remand centers could not handle the mass influx of “protective custody” prisoners that occurred after March 1933. The SA quickly established “protective custody centers” in which mostly officials of the German Communist Party (KPD), other anti-Nazi organizations such as the Social Democratic Party’s (SPD), Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (Reich Flag Black-Red-Gold), and trade
unionists were locked up and often beaten, tortured, or mistreated in other ways.

Breitenau held 470 political prisoners between June 16, 1933, and March 17, 1934, the date the camp ceased to operate. They were men of every age, but the majority were young and middle-aged.

The provincial government’s president was required to report to the minister of interior by the end of September 1933 on the political affiliations of the prisoners. At this point in time, there were 170 prisoners in Breitenau. According to the report, 126 were members of the KPD, 9 were members of the SPD, and 35 were classified as “others.” There are indications that in a number of cases the persecuting authorities made errors in categorizing the prisoners in this way. However, the numbers confirm the well-known fact that the Communists were the first to bear the full force of persecution in Adolf Hitler’s newly established state.

Under the category of “other” were subsumed those who opposed or disagreed with the regime, who deviated from the program, and above all Jewish citizens from town and country. “Geh’ mit Jüdinnen spazieren, sonst wird man Dich konzentrieren!” (Go walking [only] with Jews; otherwise, you will be put in a concentration camp!), jeered the Nazi newspaper in Kassel in July 1933, as it denounced a German citizen by name as a Jew who had been seen with a non-Jewish girl.³

Next to prisoners who were predominantly anti-Nazi for political reasons, there were also prisoners at Breitenau who had fallen victim to the widespread and state-supported phenomenon of denunciation. Most of them were fellow citizens exposed as Jews—the denouncer always kept in tune with the times. However, the files reveal that in the first months cursing Hitler and his satraps was enough to get one into Breitenau.

Unknown are the circumstances that twice resulted in small groups of SA men being brought to Breitenau for “assaults.” They were held in separate quarters from the other prisoners.

The Breitenau concentration camp was clearly under state authority, namely, that of the Kassel police president, which still had not been completely undermined by the SS or SA; the guards belonged, at least at the start, to a trained, serving senior police constable. Although SS men took over command of the camp in practice from August 18, 1933, on, the early Breitenau concentration camp can still be regarded as a state-controlled and -constituted camp.

Many prisoners had the impression that they were employed in a makeshift and somewhat senseless way. One result of this labor practice has survived to this very day (even though without the inscription chiseled at the time: “Built in 1933, the year of the national elevation, by inmates of the concentration camp Breitenau”).³ In October 1933 (at the time when Breitenau held the most prisoners), the prisoners were required to construct a “memorial in honor of the SS” (at nearby Fuldaberg). But this kind of work was not the main work of the prisoners: As its reports show, the Breitenau institution profited considerably from the prisoners’ labor. The State Work Institution Breitenau, contractually responsible for boarding, lodging, and providing work for the protective custody prisoners, stated in its annual report for the financial year 1933 that 23,027 of the 51,955 workdays were accounted for by the protective custody prisoners. The report emphasized that the prisoners were not recompensed either with wages or in kind for their labor.⁴ In addition to work in the institution—whether in the institution’s workshops for the production of matting or in building maintenance work, also done “for the most part with the assistance of the political prisoners in protective custody”—the prisoners worked on the institution’s estate or for private farmers, on the construction of roads, and clearing land in Fuldaberg.³ Breitenau prisoners were also put to work on strengthening the banks of the river Fulda.

A former prisoner reported that the food was not as bad as in the prisons or in remand custody. Accommodation was in halls or large rooms, at first in the nave of the former monastery’s church and later in the so-called Landarmenhaus (State Poor House). Bedding included a straw pillow, a straw sack, a sheet, and a blanket. The prisoners were divided into two groups in order to separate the “especially radical elements” from the rest. Family members could make short visits on Sundays but only in the presence of a guard.

Punishment could be the “removal of bed linen”: then the prisoner had to spend the night on a wooden bunk. A few prisoners in Breitenau are known to have been repeatedly mistreated and severely abused.

At first, the Kassel Auxiliary Police, consisting solely of SA members, guarded the protective custody prisoners. Many reports, especially those based on the memory of former prisoners, give the impression that the SA guards, perhaps under special command of individual brutes and bullies, attempted to continue in Breitenau the raw terror that followed the Nazi assumption of power in March and April 1933. The torture sites Wassersporthaus, Bürgersäle, Karlshof, and others in the government district of Kassel were now relocated to Breitenau and continued to operate under police and state protection. Admittedly, there were SA men who did not participate in the terror and mistreatment of prisoners. One is said to have resigned from a squad because of the mistreatment, while another is reported to have been moderate in his behavior. In any case, the brutes and bullies set the tone. Not least, their manner and conduct, and/or word thereof filtering back to Kassel, may have strengthened the Kassel police president in his resolve to recall the SA guard unit after eight weeks.

On August 8, 1933, the SA guard unit was completely recalled. With the support of the Kassel provincial government’s president and the consent of the Prussian Ministry of Interior, an SS guard unit, commanded by an SS officer, replaced it.⁶ The new unit was quartered in rooms of the former State Charitable Institution (known as the Zehntscheune, or Tithe Barn, during the period when Breitenau was a monastery)

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³ The new unit was quartered in rooms of the former State Charitable Institution (known as the Zehntscheune, or Tithe Barn, during the period when Breitenau was a monastery).
and remained in Breitenau until the dissolution of the camp. The majority of the SS Kommando, if not all, were members of the infamous Kassel SS-Sondersturm Renthof, specifically formed and trained for acts of violence (Aktionen) to mistreat, beat, and torture prisoners. The further careers of a few members of this Sondersturm illustrate that the type of person required by the SS state as a concentration camp supervisor (note: noncommissioned officers and not officers) was to be created and perfected here, in courses and at special institutions as in Merkers. The members of these commands were capable of mistreating prisoners and of acts of cruelty. In this respect, the circumstances that led to the recall of the SA guard unit apparently did impose a special restraint on the new guards at Breitenau.

In order to sift out the hard-core political opposition, there was a thorough examination of the prisoners, as a result of which there began in the autumn of 1933 a phased release of groups of prisoners. Ninety prisoners remained and were transferred to larger concentration camps.

“Considering the favorable results of the Reichstag election, particularly in the concentration camps” (in fact, voting took place in the Breitenau concentration camp on November 5, 1933), Hermann Göring, as head of the Secret State Police, declared an amnesty in which 5,000 protective custody prisoners would be released in two stages. Beginning in October 1933, week after week prisoners left the camp—the number of SS guards was also reduced—until its closure on March 17, 1934. Following the war, no trials took place regarding events that occurred at the Breitenau concentration camp.

SOURCES The most important sources are found in the ALWH (Landarmen- und Korrektionsanstalt Breitenau 1874-1949 [1976], above all, Best. 2); in the HStA-M (above all, Best. 165: Regierungspräsident Kassel); and in the IHStA-W (Dokumentation des biographisch aufgebauten Forschungsprojektes zu Verfolgung und Widerstand in Hessen; Spruchkammerakten).


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NOTES
1. The contract was reproduced in several identical copies, for example, HStA-M, 165/3878.
2. HStA-M, 165/3982, vol. 11.
3. HStA-M, July 12, 1933.
5. Ibid.


BRESLAU-DÜRRGOY

In Breslau (Wrocław) a concentration camp for political “pro tective custody” prisoners existed from April 28 to August 10, 1933. Here hundreds of political opponents of National Socialism were interned in a warehouse of a fertilizer factory located in the Dürrgoy section of the city.

Subsequent to the Reichstag fire on February 27-28, 1933, mass arrests of leading activists of the German Communist Party (KPD), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Socialist Workers’ Party (SAP) began in Breslau. At first, the protective custody prisoners were brought to the police presidium, which soon became overcrowded. When another large wave of arrests of more than 200 persons followed on April 10, the decision to establish a concentration camp had already been made. The initiative to establish the camp came from SA-Obergruppenführer Edmund Heines, who had held the office of Breslau police president since about the end of March. Not infrequently, Breslau-Dürrgoy was referred to as Heines’s “private camp.” The maintenance of the camp was the responsibility of the Breslau police presidium.

On April 28, 1933, the first 120 protective custody prisoners were brought into the new concentration camp in Dürrgoy in a triumphal procession preceded by a band. Shortly afterward an official visit by journalists was arranged. Among the prisoners were prominent personalities such as attorney and charter member of the SAP Ernst Eckstein, the former Breslau mayor, the former police president, former rural district administrators, newspaper publishers and editors, physicians, actors, former city councilors, a former judge of a higher regional court, and university professors. Toward the end of June 1933, officers of the Breslau State Police Office and the Breslau SA-Auxiliary Police (Hipo) arrested the former provincial president of Lower Silesia, Hermann Lademann, who was living in Berlin, and transported him to the Dürrgoy camp. While in protective custody in Berlin, former Reichstag President Paul Löbe (SPD) was tracked down by the Breslau SA and, without the knowledge of the Berlin Gestapo, carried off to Breslau-Dürrgoy.

The number of camp inmates varied greatly. Aside from the arrival of new groups of prisoners from the overcrowded police prison (40 new prisoners in early June and another 100 in mid-July), there were releases (28 inmates at the end of May and a further 35 at the beginning of June). Altogether the camp had about 200 inmates during its early days and somewhat more than 400 during the last weeks of its existence.

Typical for the Breslau camp were the SA-staged macabre “welcome spectacles” for prominent prisoners. There were
regular “processions” through the inner city in which the populace of Breslau participated. The prisoners, with fools caps on their heads, were led through a gauntlet of SA men, while Police President Heines delivered speeches. Frequently prisoners were forced to extend “greetings” to the crowd, while others had to wave red flags or had to present bouquets of thistles and shrubs. All this was accompanied by music played by a “sham” band. Hour-long standing at attention in the courtyard and drilling were also part of the “welcome rituals.” Whoever could not stand up under the torture and collapsed was dosed with castor oil. Shortly after arrival the inmates’ hair was cut; especially notable figures and SPD, KPD, or labor union officials were left with tufts of hair.

At first the inmates had to work inside the camp: building barracks for new prisoners, constructing a 4-meter (13–feet) high barbed-wire barrier around the camp, sinking tall lighting poles, and digging a second well. Later on the inmates had to dredge a silted lake outside the camp, which was to be converted into an open-air bathing facility for the citizens of the Strehlen suburb. One group of prisoners had to participate in the construction of various police or SA buildings throughout the city.

The inmates frequently worked 9 to 12 hours a day. The arbitrary schedule of work and rest periods caused continuous nervous tension in the inmates, especially since work frequently began at 3:00 A.M.

The transition from work to torture often occurred quickly: the “bedbug detail” (Wanzenkommando) had to clean the arrest cells at the police precincts; the “shithouse gang” (Scheissbaukolonne) had to clean out the latrines and to transport their contents in wheelbarrows to neighboring fields. The inmates were forced to sweep the dusty camp streets, to polish the commandant’s motorcycle, to remove horse dung with their bare hands, and to remove political slogans from houses and bridges in the city. One inmate had to trot for hours through the camp with grain bundles under his arm and then had to collect all ears and pieces of straw that had dropped off. A popular amusement of the tormentors was to drag flags of black, red, and gold through the dirt and then have them washed by the prisoners. Three inmates were assigned to care for the pigs kept in the camp. They frequently were forced to grab the animals by the front legs and to address them as “comrade.”

Most feared, however, were the physical “education measures.” Beatings on all parts of the body with rubber truncheons and riding crops were everyday occurrences. Up to five times a week there were nightly, often hour-long, “fire alarms.” On these occasions the inmates had to leave their sleeping places and were compelled to do forced marches, undergo roll calls, and lie on the ground while singing. There were also nightly “hare hunts” (Hasenjagden). That was the name of the “game” in which the drunken Heines shot at prisoners while they were forced to “escape” inside the camp. The greatest horror was caused by “special interrogations.” Inmates were taken from the camp to the local Nazi headquarters, where they were psychologically and physically tortured by the Hipo in a variety of ways.

It has not been documented how many died in Breslau-Dürrgoy. Two contemporary reports assume that the attorney Eckstein was tortured to death in the camp.

The camp guards were primarily young SS and SA men subordinate to Heines and members of the Stahlhelm and city police likewise appointed “auxiliary policemen.” The camp commandant was SA-Sturmbannführer Heinze, and SA-Sturmführer Göbel was the deputy commandant (also called work commandant). Heines was removed (probably in July 1933) because of complaints about prisoner maltreatment and a blackmail attempt that had become common knowledge. The SA-Standartenführer Rohde became the next commandant. The barracks commandant, SS-Scharführer Simonowski, drew attention to himself because of his cruelty. Furthermore, three medical orderlies were employed, called “medical sergeants” (Sanitätsfeldwebel) by the prisoners.

Inside and outside the camp there was resistance against the deprivation of liberty and the degrading treatment of prisoners. Individual complaints by the inmates were mostly unsuccessful and resulted in special sanctions. Opportunities for common resistance were hardly exploited. Solely in regard to the “national socialistic schoolings” in the form of readings from Hitler’s Mein Kampf were the inmates united. They sabotaged the desired effect by engaging in intense discussions, which proceeded in a “not desired direction,” so that the Nazis realized the inefficacy of the schooling evenings.

The complaint of the wife of former Breslau Mayor Mache was successful, resulting in the removal of the camp commandant, Heines. He had, as was customary, attempted to blackmail prisoners. Many inmates were forced, under threats, to make parts of their salaries available to the camp—from Mache the demand was for the above-average sum of 500 Reichsmark.

In Berlin, the wife of former Provincial President Lüdemann fought determinedly for her husband’s release. Accompanied by an attorney, she had been able to visit him briefly in
the camp and subsequently had lodged a complaint at the Reichs Chancellery about the maltreatment of her husband. Also, the American ambassador was brought into the picture. Because of her letter of complaint, Mrs. Lüdemann was likewise placed in protective custody and brought to Breslau. There, however, she remained in the police prison.

Paul Löbe is of the opinion that Mrs. Lüdemann’s protest ultimately resulted in improvements in the camp and eventually triggered its closure. Then Gestapo chief, Rudolf Diels, however, mentions the American journalist Lochner, who had drawn his attention to the conditions in Breslau in connection with Löbe’s kidnapping. Thereupon it had been his personal concern to do something to oppose the “power-drunk and popular SA-Leader” (Heines) and to help bring about the disbandment of the camp.

During the night of August 10–11, 1933, 343 inmates were sent in railroad cars to Osnabrück and from there were transported to the Emsland moor camps. The remaining 60 to 80 inmates were brought to the Breslau Police Presidium, where most of them were released.

**SOURCES** The information about the Breslau-Dürrgoy camp is based above all on preserved witness reports and the contemporary press. An especially valuable document is the diary of Breslau printer Helmut Friese. He was imprisoned in the Dürrgoy concentration camp from May 1 to August 10, 1933, because of “production and distribution of subversive literature” (BA-B, NJ1033). Former Reichstag President Paul Löbe left further recollections as a former Dürrgoy camp inmate. See Löbe, *Der Weg war lang. Erinnerungen*, 4th ed. (Berlin: Arani, 1990), pp. 221–230. The same applies to Kurt Skupin, a member of the Reichsbanner who was brought to Dürrgoy in April 1933 and transferred to Bürgermoor in August. See: Personal communication to Karol Fiedor, Obóz koncentracyjny we Wrocławiu w 1933 r. (na podstawie pamiećników byłych więźniów), in Słaski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka, Jg. XXII (1967), Nr. 1–2, pp. 170–190, 183–184.

**NOTES**

1. STP, April 11, 1933.
3. STP, April 30, 1933.
8. Bericht Friese; Fiedor, Obóz koncentracyjny, p. 182.
9. MG, August 3, 1933; Löbe, *Der Weg war lang*, pp. 224, 227–228; Bericht Friese; NV, August 13, 1933.
10. Bericht Friese; Fiedor, Obóz koncentracyjny, p. 181.
11. Bericht Friese.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.

**COLDITZ**

On March 21, 1933, the penal and psychiatric institution at Colditz Castle in Saxony became a “protective custody” camp. Officially labeled a “workhouse,” it held Communists, Social Democrats, and some nationalists. Under the commandant, Polizeikommissar Wagner, approximately 100 SA men from Standarte 139 guarded the camp, with 2 policemen and 2 SS men. The chief interrogator was Polizeileutnant Joseph Knöpke. Other Colditz guards included SS-Mann Kolditz, SA-Scharführer Barthel, SA-Scharführer Hemeter, and SA-Mann Grünzig. By April 15, Colditz had over 300 prisoners, a number that grew by August 1933 to 700. According to prisoner Otto Meinel, this population included 78 workhouse inmates. In total, 2,311 protective custody detainees passed through Colditz.

Colditz played a central role in the consolidation of Saxon camps. In late March and April 1933, political opponents in Leipzig and Dresden were dispatched to Colditz. The dissolution of early camps at Pappenheim bei Oschatz and Hainichen in May and June 1933 led to additional transfers. Meinel’s transport in early June included many Reichenbach prisoners. As late as November 1933, prisoners from Dresden (Mathildenstrasse) continued to enter Colditz. The Colditz guards employed music in the pursuit of reeducation and torture. Every evening, the prisoners participated in nationalist sing-alongs that included the “Deutschlandlied” and various Nazi marches. Those who refused to sing were beaten. The guards at Colditz had a song written...
expressly about this situation. Titled “Der Posten,” by Alfred Schrappe, the first, fourth, and seventh stanzas read:

1. Who watches over us by day and night? 
   Who is it, who guards our sleep? 
   The sentry! 
   He circles us with every step, 
   He goes with us during the walks, 
   Whether with or without steps. 
   The sentry! . . .

4. Who lets you smoke for money? 
   Who is it who gives you the word? 
   The sentry! 
   Who teaches you to turn to the right and the left? 
   Who praises you, if you succeed? 
   From whom will you always learn well? 
   From the sentry! . . .

7. Who leads you inside to the commissar, 
   If you are finally released? 
   The sentry! 
   Who presents you with packets and letters? 
   Who finally leads you through the gate? 
   Everyone sing aloud in choir, it is 
   The sentry! . . .

The prisoners debunked this ideal portrait. Wearing civilian clothes, they slept on straw-covered floors in rooms holding between 20 and more than 40 occupants. Even the castle church housed prisoners. The guards banned communication between the 17 prison wards. Vicious treatment by the guards led to numerous suicide attempts. When Fritz Weisse slashed his wrists in an unsuccessful suicide attempt, the guards responded by prohibiting knives except as eating utensils. Meinel commented: “The surest way to prevent suicide, the humane treatment of prisoners, was not tried!”

Detained in Dorfstadt and then Falkenheim prison in March 1933, Meinel was dispatched on June 2 to Colditz, as part of an 89-person transport. As they entered the gate, the SA directed the transport’s last 4 members to the palace, where they were supposed to pick up “two long tables.” Once inside a darkened room, SA guards assaulted the prisoners Paul Albert, Willy Baumann, Albert Leidel, and Kurt Herold with rubber truncheons.

On three occasions, the guards tortured Meinel. In the first case, SA guard Dietrich slapped him senseless. In the second, he was conducted to the shower room and placed on a stool where a guard, Grünzig, knocked him unconscious. In the third, SS-Mann Kolditz beat him in similar fashion. After discovering that three neighboring prisoners shared his surname, Meinel, whose given name was Paul Otto, devised a ruse to elude additional torture. After disguising his appearance with a haircut, he had his cell mates address him by his middle name. The guards “never found the sought-after Paul Meinel in the camp again!” Meinel was transferred to Sachsenburg on July 29, 1933.

Right-wing prisoners were also tortured at Colditz. The beating of landowner Wilhelm Gratz prompted SA-Scharführer Hemetner to brag, “See, it’s not only the proletarians who get beaten by us! Here is the big landowner Gratz. He owns about twenty horses and about two hundred pigs. The scoundrel offended the SA!” Other maltreated nationalists were Geringswalde mayor Wilhelm Orphall and Stahlhelm member Max Fiedler.

Walter Liebing documented resistance inside Colditz. Transferred from the Leipzig protective custody camp in September 1933, he served as camp elder (Lagerältester), which gave him a say over labor assignments. One of his tasks was to accompany supply details in town. While picking up sausage, he met a young saleswoman, whose brother was in Dachau, who gave him a quarter-pound of liverwurst. Inside the sausage, Liebing discovered a small “ampule” with a note from the district Communist underground, naming the reliable prisoners inside Colditz. His cell mates “Bylak” [sec] and Heinz Bausch were on the list.

Liebing also went on tobacco supply runs. From an elderly female tobacconist, the SA purchased tobacco for sale to the prisoners. On the pretext of reducing their supply trips, she suggested the guards have the “Communist swine” recycle the packets. She could then refill them with a larger supply of the “cheapest weed.” According to Liebing, the SA thrashed prisoners who did not cooperate in this scheme. The tobacco merchant turned out to be a Communist, which led Liebing to devise a two-way communications system. Liverwurst-embedded ampules carried messages into Colditz; empty cigarette packs contained notes to the outside. Bylak became adept at inserting tissue-paper notes inside the empty packs, without disturbing the manufacturer’s tax stamp (Banderole).

The group’s delicate handling of empty cigarette packs and the daily consumption of liverwurst attracted SA attention. Liebing discovered too late that a new prisoner, Zahnke,
was spying on his group. To give the spy an alibi, the guards took Zahnke to a room one evening and simulated his torture. The lack of bruises on his body, however, belied the screams heard during the night. Zahnke's mysterious absence at morning roll call led the SA to pronounce him dead by suicide, a conclusion Liebing rejected. On the basis of Zahnke's reports, the SA punished the prisoners, including Liebing. He was dispatched to the police hospital in Leipzig, a move he took as a protective gesture by certain police officials.11

Communist prisoner Rolf Helm was held briefly at Colditz. Arrested in March 1933, Helm remained at Dresden (Mathildenstrasse) until November 3, 1933, when he was dispatched to Colditz with a 40-member transport. Upon arrival, the SA tormented the new detainees, who performed deep kneebends and other penal exercises while being struck with rubber hoses. For the new arrivals, "individual treatment," a code word for torture, soon followed. Released from custody on November 17, Helm was never able to understand this "privilege."12

Two international delegations visited Colditz in 1933 and 1934. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) weekly in Prague, Neuer Vorwärts, mocked these efforts of the "Goebbels Ministry of Lies" to whitewash the camps, by recounting the testimony of an anonymous foreign imprisoned at Colditz. Before the arrival of "foreign journalists" in 1933, the prisoners were warned that their discreet statements would result in retaliation. The visiting reporters heard the same monotonous response: "Everything is in the best order with us, we have nothing to expose."13 Accounts of the second visit, an international delegation of jurists from Prague, are not immediately available, but it was standard practice for camp administrators to stage-manage prisoner interviews.14 It is not known whether any postwar legal proceedings took place against the Colditz staff. On May 31, 1934, Colditz became a subcamp of Sachsenburg.


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NOTES
2. Ibid., p. 148.
3. Ibid., p. 151; "Besuch im Lager: Gefangene müssen Komödie spielen," NV, October 8, 1933.
6. Ibid., pp. 146, 150–151.
8. Ibid., pp. 154–155.
10. Ibid.
13. "Besuch im Lager."

COLUMBIA-HAUS

Starting in July 1933, the first prisoners were delivered to the so-called Columbia-Haus camp, a former military institution on the Tempelhof Field in Berlin, which stood unoccupied at that time. From December 1934, the prison came under the jurisdiction of the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL) as the "Columbia concentration camp." It differed fundamentally from all other concentration camps in that the Berlin Secret State Police Office (Gestapa) used this concentration...
camp for prisoners whose court investigations were not yet concluded and who therefore were not yet supposed to be taken to other concentration camps. This was a substation of the Dachau house prison (Hausgefängnis) in the Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8. A transport ran regularly between both detention sites.

The prisoners consisted primarily of political detainees, mostly functionaries of the German Communist Party (KPD), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Socialist Workers’ Party (SAP). In total, approximately 10,000 men were held prisoner there through the fall of 1936. On average, more than 400 inmates were kept in the overcrowded prison cells at a time.

The actual number of prisoners who were murdered at Columbia-Haus is not known. Three known murder cases from November 1933 can presumably stand for many others. SS guards murdered Michael Kirzmiernczik on November 20, 1933, and attempted to disguise his death as suicide. On November 24, 1933, Communist Erich Thornseifer was tortured with a cane and riding whip so severely that he had to be brought to the state hospital on the same day. He died there on November 26, 1933. On November 27, 1933, the SS murdered Karl Vesper (KPD), a mechanic who had been imprisoned on November 8, 1933. The murder of four Communist top officials—John Schehr, Rudolf Schwarz, Erich Steinfurth, and Eugen Schönhaar—is connected to Columbia-Haus as well. The Gestapa at Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8 subjected these men to interrogation and torture multiple times throughout the day. They were murdered in Berlin-Wannsee on the evening of February 1, 1934, during a transport, which supposedly was to bring them from Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse back to Columbia-Haus.

The first commandant of Columbia-Haus (Leiter des Columbia-Hauses) on record is Walter Gerlach, who served in this position until December 1, 1934. This man, born in 1896, had belonged to the Nazi Party (NSDAP) since 1930 and was a member of the SS from 1931. As SS-Obersturmbannführer, he was named commandant of Columbia-Haus on August 1, 1934. Dr. Alexander Reiner succeeded him. The only preparations that this dentist—born in 1885, a member of the NSDAP since 1931 and member of the SS since 1932—had before taking over the Columbia concentration camp on December 1, 1934, was a mere eight-day visit to the Dachau concentration camp. In the following year, SS-Hauptsturmführer Karl Otto Koch arrived. He was born in Darmstadt in 1897; as of March 1931, he was a member of the NSDAP, and from September 1931, a member of the SS. He served as commandant from April 21, 1935, to April 1, 1936. Heinrich Deubel was the last commandant. He was born in 1890 and joined the SS one year after joining the NSDAP in 1925. Deubel was relieved of his duties on September 22, 1936, because Inspector of the Concentration Camps Theodor Eicke viewed his apparently too lenient treatment of the prisoners as “unsuited” for the camp. Following this, Max Koegel served as commandant until September 1, 1936, without ever being formally appointed to this position. Koegel was born in Füssen in 1895 and first became part of the NSDAP and SS in 1932. Between July and November 1936, Kurt Eccarius was appointed to the headquarters of the Columbia concentration camp. He was born in 1905 and had been a member of the SS and NSDAP since 1929. For the commandants of Columbia-Haus, this position was the beginning or intensification of a career that was distinguished above all by the readiness to unscrupulously fight against opponents of the National Socialist system.

The earliest actual information on the social backgrounds of the members of the guard staff is found in the second schedule of responsibilities of the Gestapa from January 1934, in which is cited: “SS-Kommando Gestapa: SS-Brigadeführer Henze; Kommandohaus: Berlin SW 29, Columbiastr. 1/3.” There is only fragmentary information on this unit. Until the turn of the year 1934–1935, the SS-Bodyguard Regiment Adolf Hitler (SS-Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler) provided the guard staff. In March 1935, supervision was provided by 55 SS men who were housed in the residential building of the prison complex. This changed on April 1, 1935, when the SS-Guard Force Oranienburg-Columbia (SS-Wachtruppe Oranienburg-Columbia) was created, which shortly thereafter was renamed SS-Guard Formation V Brandenburg (SS-Wachverbund V Brandenburg). Their quarters were located in the Oranienburg Castle, while only the members of the headquarters—made up of almost 20 SS men, including some SS-Führer and SS-Unterführer—remained in Columbia-Haus. At the beginning of 1936, 30 members of the SS-Death’s Head Formation Brandenburg (SS-TV) were assigned to the headquarters of the Columbia concentration camp. Many members of the SS guard force later served in leading functions in other concentration camps.

The cover of the May 23, 1935, issue of the Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung—which was published in exile in Prague—featured the photo of Hans Bächle in full SS uniform next to the headline “The Confession of an SS-Man.” Along with a report on the inside were also sensational pictures from Columbia-Haus. Bächle, already a member of the NSDAP in 1931, joined the SS guard force in 1934 and later was sent to Columbia-Haus headquarters. In April 1935 he met with two prisoners, Hausmann and Wiendeck, who were both close colleagues of the former Silesian Gauleiter and Provincial President Helmut Brückner, who was also imprisoned in Columbia-Haus. Hausmann and Wiendeck met each other through Dr. Josef Römer, former head of the Free Corps Oberland and later co-leader of the Uhlig-Römer-Resistance Organization. Bächle told Hausmann, Wiendeck, and Römer that he was prepared to help them escape. The SS man rented a car in which he and two of the prisoners fled from Columbia-Haus and drove to Czechoslovakia on the night of April 20, 1935. Römer stayed behind because he ultimately decided not to flee. The escape was assisted by the fact that on April 18, 1935, Commandant Reiner was relieved of his duties after the murder of two prisoners and because of prevailing uncertainty among the SS guard staff caused by these events.

To make room for the extension of the Tempelhof airport, the Columbia concentration camp was closed on October 1,
1936. The prisoners were taken to the new Sachsenhausen concentration camp located north of Berlin. On November 16, 1936, a teletype message of the Gestapo wrote off the history of Columbia-Haus, stating succinctly, “The Columbia concentration camp in Berlin-Tempelhof was closed on November 5, 1936.” Sachsenhausen is thus documented as the successive camp to Columbia-Haus.

Only very few trials were held for the crimes committed in Columbia-Haus. In 1948 the 10th Grand Criminal Court of the Berlin Regional Court held a hearing against SS guard Karl Pfitzer. He was accused of cruelty toward prisoners. The accused was active as a cook in Columbia-Haus until September 1933, where he abused this position of power, beating defenseless prisoners in the face with a ladle during the serving of meals, stomping on them with his feet, or showing prisoners’ heads against the wall. He received a prison sentence of four years.

In 1964 a preliminary proceeding for murder was pursued by the Central Office of State Justice Administrations (ZdL). But because both of the accused SS members had in the meantime died, the trial was stopped in the same year.

Another attempted prosecution of the ZdL against the now-dead commandants Alexander Reiner, Karl Koch, Walter Gerlach, and Heinrich Deubel also failed. Further investigations ceased. In addition, there were trials against a few people who had held leading positions for crimes in the other concentration camps. This is how in 1947 Eccarius received a lifelong sentence of forced labor from a Soviet military court for crimes committed in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. After serving this sentence in Siberia, the Coburg Regional Court sentenced him to four years in prison in 1962.


There are no coherent archived written records on the Columbia concentration camp. Still preserved is the “Sisterttenkladde” from December 29, 1933, to January 18, 1934, a book that lists all detainees and includes many entries of prisoner names (BA, R 58/742). An exemplary collection of memoirs and reports from prisoners can be found in the WL and in the VVN-BdA, in the ABI, and in the VVN-BdA. The archives of the state attorney’s offices at the Berlin and Cologne regional courts and the ZdL all contain information on the legal proceedings against the personnel of the Columbia concentration camp. The BDC was also consulted for this project.

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NOTES

1. BA-B, BDC personal files of Gerlach.
2. Ibid., personal files of Eccarius.
4. Ibid., NS 19/1472.
5. IfZ, Dc 01.06, 51.
6. ITS, Ordner Allgemeines 6-7a.

DRESDEN (MATHILDENSTRASSE)

In March 1933, the police utilized the remand prison of the Dresden court of appeals at Mathildensstrasse as a “protective custody” camp. An undetermined number of prisoners from the dissolved early camp at Bautzen (Kupferhammer) were transferred to this jail on June 26, 1933. Known as “Mathilde” or the “little Mathilde castle,” it functioned as an early camp until 1934.1


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DÜSSELDORF (ULMENSTRASSE)
[AKA ULMER HOH]

On February 28, 1933, the remand prison at Ulmenstrasse 95 in Düsseldorf became a “protective custody camp.” Called “Ulmer Höh,” the camp held approximately 300 prisoners, mainly Communists, Social Democrats, trade unionists, and intellectuals. Although professional policemen originally guarded the prisoners, SS, SA, and Stahlhelm deputies replaced this force after the German national election of March 5, 1933.1 Responsibility for this camp was given to the Düsseldorf police president, SA-Obergruppenführer Fritz Philip Weitzel, and the leader of the city’s SA, Standartenführer Lohbeck. Among the guards was an SS man named ter Heiden.2

Prisoner treatment ranged from strict to arbitrary and brutal. Under police supervision, the prisoners chatted and smoked on their 30-minute morning walk around the prison yard. By contrast, the SS forced them to march military style and took the opportunity to kick and beat them. They also tortured the detainees in two rooms set aside for the purpose. Among the victims was Albert Mainz.3

Wolfgang Langhoff was one of Ulmer Höh’s first protective custody detainees. Arrested on the morning after the Reichstag Fire, February 28, 1933, the noted actor and director believed that his case would be resolved in time for that evening’s theatrical performance. With 40 others he passed the first four days in a holding cell, in which everyone slept on straw mattresses on the floor. The detainee population quickly swelled to 200 prisoners.4

At Ulmenstrasse the SS established a brutal regime. Either from astonishment, uncertainty, or amusement, the police looked on and elected not to intervene as the SS beat or kicked the prisoners. Outraged, Langhoff registered a complaint with Weitzel: “In my name and in the name of the protective custody prisoners of Hall A of the Düsseldorf remand prison, I protest herewith against the inhumane treatment which the SS guards are meting out to us. We are political prisoners and desire to be treated as such. The hygienic condition of our accommodation is impossible. There exists the danger of illness and lousiness. I ask you to order that mistreatment by the SS be stopped immediately.”5

The SS guards dressed down Langhoff because of the letter and transferred him to a four-person cell. To combat boredom, the group played skat, did deep kneebends, and ran in place. When the guards went on Sunday leave, the whole cell block took the opportunity to sing. In the distance, a lone guard on duty could be heard barking, “Stop! Enough with the glee club!”6

Visiting SS personnel also harassed the prisoners. On May 26, 1933, an SS officer and his driver inspected Langhoff’s cell. Langhoff remembered the day as coinciding with the Schlageter Memorial Day, a Nazi holiday. The SS looked at the inmates “as if they were in the zoo.” After establishing Langhoff’s profession, the officer derided him in obscene language. The SS officer then announced that the prisoners should be “bumped off” at the Düsseldorf torture site, Oberhausen. To his driver, he said, “Here you still don’t have the right methods!”7

By contrast, Langhoff cultivated a good relationship with an unnamed SA guard. In exchange for cigarettes, the guard sneaked contraband into Ulmer Höh for the prisoners. The smuggled goods included Karl Tucholsky’s satire Deutschland, Deutschland über alles. Unaware that the new regime had banned this work as unpatriotic, the SA man said: “Yes, yes, that is a nationalist thing, which he [Langhoff] must read!”8

The SS tortured Langhoff at Ulmenstrasse. Conducted to a special room, he was presented with a “yellow card” listing the names of associates to be denounced. Refusing to go along, the SS beat him with rubber truncheons and rifle butts. After the first blows, they tried to make him denounce his secretary and, in a typical Nazi allegation against leftist opponents, divulge the whereabouts of hidden weapons. Leaving him alone for 30 minutes to think it over, they beat him again when he still did not cooperate. At some point he lost his bearings and the blows ceased to hurt, he claimed. While Langhoff was recovering in a cell, Weitzel asked him in a mocking tone, “Are you ill? Have you hit yourself?” The compromised SA guard who sneaked in contraband for cigarettes put Langhoff in a cell by himself, brought bedding and water, and later arranged a visit with the police physician, Dr. Simon. The doctor threatened to inform Prussian Ministerpräsident Hermann Göring, the founder of the Gestapo, about the assault. It is not clear whether Simon acted on this threat.9

The Stahlhelm also seemingly disapproved of SS methods. After viewing Langhoff’s injuries, two Stahlhelm guards offered to photograph him in preparation for a future disciplinary action. Looking at his wounds, one exclaimed, “Here you see the handwriting of the Third Reich!” These guards apparently did not make good their offer.10

In July 1933, the authorities transferred Langhoff to the early concentration camp at Börgermoor. By late May rumors already circulated at Ulmer Höh about a planned concentration camp in Emsland. Within one month’s time, 50 prisoners with experience in the building trades were transported to the moors to build the camps. Before his transfer, a new prisoner told Langhoff about the torture of an artist named “Little Karl.” In a cellar elsewhere in Düsseldorf, the SA brutalized

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immediately after the closure of the protective custody camp.

Produced in the late 1930s, documented Ulmer Höh during and on a spurious treason charge.

August 11, 1933, Schwesig was sent to Ulmer Höh to await trial after which he was dispatched to police headquarters. On August 11, 1933, Schwesig expressed the monotony and frustration of confinement.

Schwesig’s cycle of charcoal drawings, produced in the late 1930s, documented Ulmer Höh during and immediately after the closure of the protective custody camp. One drawing, Spaziergang, showed prisoners walking around the yard, with a guard standing in the center. Although the guard’s unit is not clearly indicated in the drawing, the prisoners did not march during the exercise period, which contrasted with the SS-imposed routine. With Recher und Krag, Ulmer Höh, 1933, the drawing of a pitcher, cup, and table, Schwesig expressed the monotony and frustration of confinement at Ulmenstrasse.

He returned to this theme in the sketch Zellenkrieg Nr. 12 (Ulmer Höh I), which shows a pitcher in his cell. During his time at Ulmer Höh, the highly publicized Reichstag Fire Trial took place in Leipzig. Schwesig recounted the prisoners’ reaction to news that the principal defendant, Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov, had publicly rebutted Nazi accusations of a Communist plot: “Dimitrov’s words before the court warmed us in winter, even as the heating pipe did nothing to relieve our miserable freezing.” After his release from Wuppertal-Bendahl prison in November 1934, Schwesig fled to Belgium. There he organized anti-Nazi art exhibitions, which included the Schlegelkeller and Ulmer Höh series.

In the summer of 1933, most Ulmenstrasse detainees were dispatched to the cluster of early Prussian concentration camps in Emsland, Börgermoor, and Esterwegen.

NOTES

1. Wolfgang Langhoff, Die Moorsoldaten: 13 Monate Konzentrationslager, foreword by Werner Heiduczek (Zürich: Schweitzer Spiegel, 1935; repr., Köln: Röderberg, 1988). This memoir was one of the first camp testimonies. Langhoff devoted over 100 pages to Ulmenstrasse. Karl Schwesig’s cycle of sketches, Schlegelkeller, foreword by Heinrich Mann (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1983), is another primary source. Although prepared in the late 1930s, Schlegelkeller was not published in book form during Schwesig’s lifetime. Fortunately, the manuscript was held in the United States for safekeeping during World War II. Some of the Ulmer Höh series is documented in Schwesig’s Ausgewählte Werke, 1920–1935: Ausstellung vom 17. September bis 19. November 1988 (Düsseldorf: Galerie Remmert und Barth, 1988). The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum owns Schwesig’s nine-drawing series Rosenmontag. The ninth graphite in this collection is Zellenkrieg Nr. 12 (Ulmer Höh I). As cited by Drobsch and Wieland, another testimony for this camp is the unpublished manuscript of Albert Mainz, “Esterwegen—KZ Lager III.”

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COURTESY OF GALERIE REMMERT UND BARTH, DÜSSELDORF

“First Night: The Questioning Continues,” illustration by Karl Schwesig (1898–1955), an artist persecuted by the Nazis, who in the late 1930s depicted the Düsseldorf-Ulmenstrasse (Ulmer Höh) camp and the Schlegel Brewery torture site (pictured here) in a series of drawings.
ERSFURT (PETERSBERG) AND FELDSTRASSE

In February 1933, the Erfurt police prison at Petersberg became a “protective custody” camp. Initially holding 44 detainees, Petersberg continued to function as an entry point for the Nazi regime’s political opponents until at least November or December 1933. The number of prisoners dispatched from there to early concentration camps increased considerably over time. In slightly rounded figures, 20 percent of the Petersberg population was transferred elsewhere in June (38 of 182); 70 percent in August (137 of 198); and nearly 80 percent in November (203 of 257). The camp was under police direction, but the commander’s name is not known.

In April 1933, the overcrowding of the Petersberg’s police prison prompted the Erfurt State Police Office to establish an early concentration camp at an abandoned metalworks factory located at Feldstrasse 18. The orders came at the behest of Kriminalkommissar Böning. The camp leader was Polizeiwachtmeister Böttcher, and the guards belonged to the SA. Feldstrasse held approximately 120 prisoners, and they were forced to work in gravel pits. The SA removed some prisoners from this camp to be tortured elsewhere. In at least three cases, this maltreatment resulted in the death of the prisoner. First, Communist editor Josef Ries was taken to Blumenthal, a local restaurant, and beaten to death on June 28, 1933. Second, Communist prisoner Heinz Sendhoff was removed to a wooded area in the same woods as Sendhoff and murdered on July 15, 1933. Schapiro was a businessman accused of distributing the illegal Communist publication Feldstrasse was dissolved on September 9, 1933, and its remaining prisoners were transferred to the early SS camp at Esterwegen.

Both camps had active underground organizations. At Petersberg, prisoner self-help took the forms of morale strengthening by Communist leader Alfred Neubert, with illicit assistance by the German Communist Party’s (KPD) organization Rote Hilfe (Red Help). At Feldstrasse, Communist prisoners entered into dialogue with their erstwhile Social Democratic rivals in order to promote anti-Nazi solidarity.

**SOURCES** This entry follows the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). The Erfurt early camps are listed in Stefanie Endlich, Nora Goldenbogen, Beatrix Herlemann, and Regina Scheer, *Schutzhaft: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,* Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999. This compendium also records the deaths of Sendhoff, Ries, and Schapiro.


**NOTE**


**ESTERWEGEN, IKL**

Between June and September 1934, the SS converted the Esterwegen camp at Gemeinde Hümmling from a Prussian to a Dachau model camp. Erected in August 1933 as a State Concentration Camp Papenburg’s (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg) subcamps, Esterwegen furnished labor for Emsland cultivation. As commandant, Heinrich Himmler appointed Dachau’s guard commander, SS-Standartenführer Hans Loritz (Nazi Party [NSDAP] No. 298668, SS No. 4165), on June 29, 1934. Effective August 1, Loritz implemented Inspectorate of Concentration Camps’s (IKL) “Special” and “Disciplinary and Punishment” Orders, thus bringing the camp into conformity with Dachau. With the establishment of SS-Guard Formation Ostfriesland (Wachverband Ostfriesland), Esterwegen’s remaining SA joined Papenburg’s Pioneer-Standarte-Emsland in September 1934. In January
On April 1, 1936, Sachsenburg's former commandant, SS-Obersturmbannführer Karl Otto Koch (NSDAP No. 475586, SS No. 14830), became this camp's last commandant, as Lo-ritz assumed command at Dachau. Esterwegen held between 300 and 500 detainees until the summer of 1936, when its population rose to approximately 1,000. Political detainees wore field-gray uniforms with red stripes; criminal recidivists wore blue uniforms with green stripes. Prisoners displayed colored markings on breast and back, red for politicals, yellow “BV” (Berufsverbrecher) for career criminals, yellow for Jews, and black for Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Special Order defined three detention categories, prisoner organization, and camp offenses. The first category consisted of model prisoners, whose obedience, political views, and denunciation of associates theoretically qualified them for release after three weeks. The second was composed of prisoners requiring three months’ additional confinement. The SS reserved the third category for incorrigibles: leading politicians, “intellectuals,” Jews, “people’s enemies,” criminal recidivists, and former Nazis. Every barrack formed a company, with SS company leader, “Prisoners’ Sergeant,” and detainee “Corporal Leader.” Camp offenses included political agitation, mutiny, and sabotage.²

SS-Gruppenführer Theodor Eicke’s dictum “Tolerance means weakness” framed the penalties. Criticizing the regime or absenting oneself resulted in 25 cane blows before and after 14 days’ isolation. Receiving assistance from the German Communist Party’s (KPD) Rote Hilfe Deutschlands (RHD) carried the maximum bunker confinement of 42 days. Sabotage incurred punishments ranging from 8 days’ isolation to death. Agitation or mutiny resulted in death by hanging or shooting.¹

Most detainees cut peat in the wetlands, but Jewish “returnees” and Jehovah’s Witnesses underwent what was called “education.” Their details consisted of a 40-member “sullage gang” (Tanchchohulone), in which they handled excrement, underwent punitive “sport,” and participated in sand-carrying details, in which they pushed wheelbarrows at a furious pace. On February 12, 1936, after Swiss Nazi leader Wilhelm Gustloff’s assassination by a Jew, Jewish detainees endured seven hours of punitive labor and exercises.³

Music played a role in prisoner harassment. Anonymously composed, the “Esterwegen Lied” was popular among the SS: “Whether work or sport is forced from us/still a cheerful land always resounds.” This song subsequently appeared at Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz. “Returnee” Paul Stargardt and Jehovah’s Witness Arthur Winkler recalled how work details were made to sing. In 1935, political detainees who refused to entertain a visiting army delegation by singing the “Börgermoorlied” lost four days’ noon rations.f

In the March 29, 1936, Reichstag “election,” most prisoners voted for the NSDAP. Robert Neddermeyer recalled that the camp underground urged their doing so in order to avoid retaliation. The Jehovah’s Witnesses was the only group that refused to comply.⁶

From 1935 to 1936, Esterwegen recorded 28 deaths. Listed among the causes of death were 10 shootings and 1 suicide, but not included were prisoners who subsequently died of gunshot wounds, such as Otto Peters, or victims of SS mistreatment, like Louis Schild. The reports also contained evident forgeries. Officially “found dead,” Paul Löwy was taken to the forest south of Sachsenhausen. “Returnee” Hans-Peter Klausch, five more prisoners died in local hospitals.⁷

Esterwegen’s conditions prompted domestic and foreign protests. In July 1935, Father Bernhard Lichtenberg of St. Hedwig’s Catholic Church in Berlin-Charlottenberg received a report describing murders at Esterwegen. Affixing his signature to the report, he personally delivered it to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, where officials rebuffed his additional demand to meet with Hermann Göring. The report reached Eicke and the Gestapo’s Dr. Werner Best. Arrested in wartime for sympathizing with Jews, Lichtenberg died en route to Dachau in 1943. In 2005, Yad Vashem named him a Righteous Gentile.⁸
The imprisonment at Esterwegen of Weltbühne editor and pacifist Carl von Ossietzky galvanized international opinion. Held in this camp from March 1934 to May 1936, Ossietzky contracted tuberculosis, thanks in part to the moor labor for which he was certified by the camp physician. Beginning in 1935, he remained in the infirmary, where Sturmmann Albert Lütkemeyer once threatened his life. In reports to Himmler and Göring, Eicke and Reinhard Heydrich justified Ossietzky’s continued detention, despite the greater publicity that arose from his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in November 1936.9

In 1935 and 1936, Corder Catchpool, Carl Bürckhardt (International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC]), and a Dutch delegation attempted to visit Ossietzky. As the British Quakers’ representative in Germany, Catchpool visited him in June 1935. In October 1935, Loritz granted Bürckhardt permission to see Ossietzky only after considerable pressure. As Bürckhardt recalled, the prisoner’s face was swollen, and his leg was broken. Representing the exiled Zentral-Wuppertal-Komitee, Clara Enthoven, H. van Zutphen, and Father N. Padt asked to see Ossietzky on May 22, 1936, but Koch dismissed their request. On Göring’s orders, the police moved him a few days later to Berlin’s State Hospital of the Police, Scharnhorststrasse 13, where he remained until his death on May 4, 1938.10

As Eicke’s “exemplary prison camp,” Esterwegen was a springboard for IKL careers. After Dachau, Loritz commanded Sachsenhausen from 1940 to 1942. In January 1946, he committed suicide in Allied custody. After a short stint at Sachsenhausen, Koch was Buchenwald’s first commandant from 1937 to 1942, then commandant at Lublin-Majdanek in 1942. Following a corruption investigation, the SS executed him in April 1945. Unterscharführer Gustav Sorge was a Papenburg SS guard who returned to Esterwegen from 1934 to April 1936. In October 1936, the regional court Bonn sentenced him to life in a penitentiary plus 15 years for 67 murders and 20 attempted murders, including the Esterwegen deaths of Schild, Friedrich Ravensgaard, and an unnamed detainee. In February 1934, master baker Bernhard Rakers joined Papenburg VI/Oberlangen’s SA staff. From 1934 to 1936, he headed Esterwegen’s prisoner kitchen, earning the name “slave driver.” Becoming Rapportführer at Auschwitz III-Monowitz in 1944 and Lagerführer at Buchenwald/Weimar (Gustloff-Werke) in 1945, he was sentenced to life in a penitentiary plus 15 years for 7 murders in 1953 by the regional court Osnabrück. Known as “Sharpsheeter,” Lütkemeyer was an Esterwegen guard from 1934 to 1936. At Neuengamme in 1943, he served as Schutzhaftlagerführer. In Neuengamme Case 8, the British executed him on June 26, 1947.11

In June 1936, Eicke ordered Esterwegen’s closure. On July 12, the first 50 prisoners departed to construct Sachsenhausen. The remaining 900 prisoners followed by September 5. Although Konstantin Hierl’s Reich Labor Service (RAD) contended for the property, the SS sold Esterwegen on September 23 to the Reich Justice Ministry, where it became Papenburg’s seventh penal camp. The SS applied a portion of the 1.05 million Reichsmark (RM) proceeds to the financing of Sachsenhausen.12


Until 2005, when it was scheduled for closure, the Bundeswehr utilized Esterwegen as a military depot. In 1980, it erected a memorial plaque at the site.


*ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945*


Joseph Robert White

NOTES

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945


ESTERWEGEN II [AKA PAPENBURG II]

On August 11, 1933, Esterwegen II, State Concentration Camp Papenburg’s (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg) second “barracks camp,” admitted 450 Breslau-Dürrgoy prisoners.1 Erected by Bürgermoor Gemeinde Hümmelting detainees along the Coastal Canal’s (Küstenkanal’s) southern bank, the subcamp was designed to hold 1,000 inmates who worked in wetlands cultivation. It reached full strength on August 14, after which its adjacent twin, Esterwegen III, began admitting prisoners. Esterwegen III was located to the west of this camp and therefore farther away from the Küstenkanal Bridge, the link between the camps and the moors. Bürgermoor was approximately 13 kilometers (8 miles) to the west and north of the canal.2 In early August, Papenburg’s
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Chief camp commandant, SS-standartenführer Paul Brinkmann, dispatched three SS officers to Esterwegen II: Sturmführer Heinrich Katzmann (Nazi Party [NSDAP] No. 113151), Sturmführer Ludwig Seehaus, and Sturmführer Emil Faust (NSDAP No. 151165). At first, Katzmann and Seehaus shared command, after which Katzmann directed Esterwegen II and Seehaus headed Esterwegen III. Until he assumed command of Neusustrum in late September 1933, Faust served as Esterwegen II’s adjutant but moved freely between the camps. Like Brinkmann and Börgermoor’s sturmbannführer Wilhelm Fleitmann, SS-Group West’s chief (SS-Gruppe West) Obergruppenführer Fritz Weitzel nominated Katzmann, Seehaus, and Faust for Emsland service, according to historian Hans-Peter Klaus. Esterwegen II’s brutality contributed to the Prussian Secret State Police Office’s (Gestapa) decision to dismiss the SS from Papenburg.\(^1\)

From November 6 to December 20, 1933, the Prussian police controlled the camp.

Esterwegen II’s first tasks were the completion of prisoner accommodations and the construction of Esterwegen III. According to prisoner “A.E.,” the daily rations, divided among 1,000 men, consisted of 50 kilograms (110 pounds) of peas, 150 kilograms (330 pounds) of potatoes, and 11 kilograms (24 pounds) of meat.\(^4\) As Börgermoor detainees contacted Esterwegen II’s inmates during work assignments, they organized modest food relief until the guards stopped the practice.\(^5\) The long distance between Esterwegen II and its work assignments necessitated the use of field trains. Called the “Moor Express,” transport like this one continued to operate during the Prussian Justice Ministry’s penal camp phase, as can be seen in a photograph album by SA-Mann Walter Talbot from 1935.\(^6\) According to anonymous testimony from Esterwegen II, a prisoner’s daily work quota consisted of digging a ditch 18 meters long, 80 centimeters wide, and 90 centimeters deep (59 feet by 2.6 feet by 3 feet).\(^7\) Until their reassignment to Lichtenburg on October 17, 1933, Jewish prisoners installed pipes for the camp’s water supply and experienced constant abuse.\(^8\)

In the barracks, Katzmann and Faust harangued prisoners. According to Clemens Lessmann, they thrashed a detainee who threatened Adolf Hitler’s life.\(^9\) On August 11, 1933, when a 195-member transport from Altona arrived, they struck leading Reichsbanner (RB) members and leftists with rubber truncheons.\(^10\) When Barracks 7 prisoners assaulted a Nazi informant, Katzmann, Faust, and 12 more SS took revenge in what was called “Italian Night,” September 13, 1933, which amounted to all-night clubbings and penal exercises. The alleged ringleader, Fritz Erichsen, was placed in the 32-cell arrest bunker, where he was forced to ingest castor oil, a torture employed by Italian Black Shirts in the early 1920s.\(^11\)

Three murders took place at Esterwegen II, including the first recorded killing at the Papenburg concentration camp. The cases showed the perpetrators’ determination to settle Weimar-era scores and how wetlands cultivation furnished opportunities for killing enemies with few witnesses. The first victim was Jewish prisoner Hans Alexander. On September 2, 1933, Faust told two SS, Willy Kleingünther and Rudolf Podschwadek, to escort him to the moor. The SS shot Alexander and ignored prisoner entreaties to call for an SS field medic. SS-Mann Georg Bonengel then administered a fatal pistol shot.\(^12\)

The second victim was Richard Danisch. Accused of supporting the Polish insurgency in Upper Silesia in the early 1920s, he had already endured 10 days in the arrest cells, thanks to Podschwadek. He subsequently reported to the infirmary, where the camp doctor, Dr. Alfred Zwecker, recommended his urgent transfer to Brandenburg for medical purposes. But citing Danisch’s political activities, Papenburg’s senior physician, Polizeioberrat Grunow, countermanded Zwecker’s order. On October 10, Podschwadek and Bonengel, along with SS-Mann Hermann Köster, shot Danisch en route to the wetlands.\(^13\)
The third victim was Altona's former police president, Otto Eggerstedt. On August 11, Altona's new police president informed Brinkmann of Eggerstedt's imminent arrival and about his previous political activities: “Through personal agitation he [Eggerstedt] has promoted Social Democratic interests with special emphasis throughout the whole province [of Schleswig-Holstein] and has administered his office as police president as an exponent of his party.” The Nazis blamed him for Altona’s “Bloody Sunday,” a July 17, 1932, street battle between the SA and Communists. Upon arrival, Katzmann announced to Eggerstedt, “Well, you are the pig from the bloody Sunday in Altona.” Thus began Eggerstedt’s torment in this camp.14

On October 8 or 9, the first attempt to kill Eggerstedt ended in failure because Scharführer Theodor Groten fired and missed. On Saturday, October 12, Brinkmann visited Esterwegen II, and the staff immediately organized a 300-man detail (Kommando), to which Eggerstedt was specifically summoned, for leveling ground in the forest south of camp. In a departure from routine, the Kommando set off after prisoners had already returned for their regular Saturday afternoon rest. Groten, Kleingünther, and Scharführer Martin Eisenhut conducted Eggerstedt to a worksite away from other prisoners. Groten shot him twice with a carbine, after which Eisenhut fired a point-blank pistol shot. The prisoners’ immediate return to camp then put the lie to the Kommando’s pretext for entering the forest to begin with. In 1933, the Prussian Justice Ministry investigated Groten and Eisenhut, but State President of Prussia Hermann Göring closed the case. In 1949, the regional court Osnabrück sentenced Groten to life in penitentiary, primarily because of Eggerstedt’s murder. Katzmann, however, was not held accountable for this or other killings. In 1951, the regional court Osnabrück sentenced him to four years’ imprisonment for 15 counts of “bodily injury,” including 11 severe cases.15

Two escape attempts took place at Esterwegen II. Imprisoned Silesian miners dug a tunnel beneath barracks 9 and 10, but an informant betrayed their plan before it could be implemented. Another Silesian prisoner, Werner Hesse, fled on September 1, 1933, but was rearrested near Hamburg, placed in Esterwegen III, and murdered on September 26.16

Armed with machine guns, Wilhelmshaven and Osnabrück Municipal Police (Schupo) units arrived at Esterwegen II on November 4, 1933. Although Katzmann locked down the barracks, the SS surrendered without incident on November 6.

From December 20, 1933, to April 30, 1934, SA-Sturmbannführer Heinrich Remmert became commandant. On December 22, two days after the SA handover, a Christmas amnesty reduced the population by 380 detainees. Under Remmert, the camp entered another violent phase. For mistreating prisoners at Esterwegen, the regional court Osnabrück sentenced him to 15 months’ imprisonment in November 1934 and preempted a complete dismissal of the verdict by crediting him with time served in investigative custody. Remmert subsequently became camp leader at Lichtenburg. Just as Börgermoor’s 467 remaining inmates entered the camp on April 25, 1933, Esterwegen II had 373 prisoners.17

From May to June 1934, SA-Obersturmbannführer Engel commanded Esterwegen II and III. On June 20, 1934, he consolidated the two camps by moving the prisoners to Esterwegen II. Carl von Ossietzky, originally held at Esterwegen III, addressed a letter to his wife on July 13 from Esterwegen II.18


8. NStA-Os, Rep. 430, Schmieder, Aktenvermerk, October 17, 1913, in Klausch, Tätergeschichten, p. 98.


On August 14, 1933, Esterwegen III in Gemeinde Hümmling, Emsland, became the third subcamp of the State Concentration Camp Papenburg (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg). After their camp opened three days earlier and even as it was still being outfitted, Esterwegen II prisoners started building this prisoner “barracks camp.” Under SS-Gruppenführer Ludwig Seehaus (Nazi Party [NSDAP] No. 9154; SS No. 705), Esterwegen III admitted detainees when Esterwegen II reached full capacity. Built to Esterwegen II’s west and along the Küstenkanal’s (Coastal Canal’s) southern bank, the camp’s distance from the canal bridge necessitated a longer march than its twin in order to reach Emsland reclamation sites. Violence at Esterwegen III, which resulted in three murders and one suicide, in addition to fights with locals, helped to spur the Prussian Secret State Police (Gestapo) Office’s removal of the Papenburg SS in November 1933.3

In early August, SS-Gruppenführer Fritz Weitzel, head of SS-Group West (Gruppe West), assigned Seehaus, Sturmführer Heinrich Katzmann, and Sturmführer Emil Faust (NSDAP No. 151165) to Esterwegen II. Until Esterwegen III’s opening, Seehaus shared Esterwegen II’s command with Katzmann. According to historian Hans-Peter Krausch, Weitzel nominated these future commandants for Emsland duties, but the evidence concerning Seehaus is circumstantial. Like Weitzel, Seehaus was a Hessian, a locksmith, and an “Old Fighter,” on which basis Krausch argues that Weitzel probably knew of him. Before he became Neusustrum’s commandant on September 27, 1933, Faust was Esterwegen II’s adjutant but played an unofficial role at Esterwegen III.2

Three hundred prisoners arrived the first day, including a 240-man transport from Köln Bonner Wall and others from Silesia. In a development unusual during the SS phase, 5 SA men who were escorting Breslau detainees joined the staff. On August 15, a 150-prisoner transport came from Düsseldorf, and subsequent transports in September originated from Moringen. After completing the camp, the prisoners toiled in the wetlands. As was the case at Esterwegen II, remoteness from work assignments required the use of the “Moor Express,” an open field train running north of the Küstenkanal. Photographic evidence from 1935, taken by SA-Mann Walter Talbot when most Papenburg camps belonged to the Justice Ministry, showed that these trains were commonplace.1

Especially for Jews, “bigwigs,” and prisoners from Hesse, Seehaus imposed a harsh regime. He compelled detainees to wear signs describing their alleged “crimes,” such as “I have shot an SA man!” or “I am a Jew.” With Faust’s input, he established a punishment column that anticipated Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL) practices, called the Abteilung z.b.V. (Special Duty Detachment). Under the successive command of SS-Mann Fritz Vogel and Truppführer Hans Leuchter, it consisted of 40 leading leftists and Jews who performed exhausting labor. With pocketknives, the SS carved swastikas onto Abteilung z.b.V. detainees’ heads.4

As was the case at Esterwegen II, the staff murdered certain detainees in a bid to settle scores. The first murder took place on September 15, 1933, when Abteilung z.b.V. member Erich Bergmann, a Communist blamed for killing an SA man in 1932, was shot in the moors. On September 26, the SS murdered another Abteilung z.b.V. prisoner, Werner Hesse, a Silesian transferred from Esterwegen II following an escape attempt. An anonymous prisoner from Esterwegen II opined that this succession of two murders in 11 days engendered a grisly competition between the camps’ guards, because Esterwegen II’s second murder followed shortly afterward.1

On October 25, 1933, after undergoing torture in the 12 cell arrest bunker, Fritz Böhm hanged himself. Three days later, the SS murdered Alfred Kleindienst, ordered to carry wood to a cottage, his guards, including an SA man, gunned him down as he did so. After the working parties heard the news and were ordered to sing on the train, they chanted: “On Hümmling’s fields one finds his corpse, on Hümmling’s fields one finds his death!” After Seehaus found out about this
protest, he unleashed what Paul Krüger described as “Walpurgis Night,” a nightlong round of beatings and penal exercises.6

On August 15, Jewish detainee Alfred Benjamin entered Esterwegen III from Düsseldorf. On behalf of the Committee for Jewish Refugees in Amsterdam, he later described how the prisoners dug 15 cubic meters (530 cubic feet) of earth daily on a starvation diet; suffered rheumatism and other ailments due to cold and polluted marsh water; and slept in unheated barracks during autumn. Except when working in the Abteilung z.b.V., the SS segregated Jews from others. Sick Jews could not secure treatment in the infirmary. On October 17, 1933, Benjamin was one of the 150 “Jews and some Marxist functionaries” that the Prussian Ministry of Interior dispatched to Lichtenburg.7

During the police takeover, the Special Duty State Police Group Wecke (Landespolizeigruppe Wecke z.b.V.) arrived at Esterwegen III. Under Walter Wecke’s command, it set up mortars near the perimeter. His group thus came closest to fulfilling Gestapo chief Rudolf Diels’s original proposal for deploying artillery against the SS. Esterwegen III staff did not resist but burned the administration building and camp records before evacuating on November 6, 1933.8

Three days after the police removed Seehaus from command, the SS promoted him to Obersturmführer. As an Old Fighter, he earned the Gold Party Badge in 1935 but was released from the SS later that year without explanation. His dismissal from Esterwegen III was the likely reason. Serving with a field police detachment in Belarus, he was shot by partisans on May 20, 1945, and died the following day.9

Like Börgermoor, Esterwegen III overwhelmingly rejected the November 12, 1933, National Plebiscite, which took place under the police administration. According to detainee Franz Holländer, approximately 800 prisoners cast “No” ballots, against 34 “Yes.”10 Unlike Börgermoor, however, the police retaliated by forcing the prisoners to perform penal exercises in the snow. Prisoner Paul Eelßein, member of the German Communist Party (KPD), remembered seeing posters supporting the new regime’s “leaving” the League of Nations before the plebiscite.11 After the vote, a policeman accused Eelßen’s group of voting against the regime. With tongue in cheek, Eelßen denied the charge: “We have not voted No, we say, we have all voted Yes. He said, I was present during the count, in the entire camp only 12 [sic] men voted Yes, and you are already 11, so you will not say to me that you voted Yes. We said, No, everyone voted Yes, that the whole concentration camp voted Yes, and therein we expressed in to tongue in cheek, Eelßein denied the charge: “We have not voted No, we say, we have all voted Yes. He said, I was present during the count, in the entire camp only 12 [sic] men voted Yes, and you are already 11, so you will not say to me that you voted Yes. We said, No, everyone voted Yes, that the whole concentration camp voted Yes, and therein we expressed in the clearest way the good relationship between Führer and people.”112

From December 20, 1933, to April 30, 1934, SA-Obersturmführer August Linnemann ran Esterwegen III. Two days after he assumed command, 380 prisoners were released during the Christmas amnesty. On April 25, 1934, Esterwegen III’s population stood at 322.13

By March 25, 1934, Carl von Ossietzky entered Esterwegen III, where he was prisoner number 384. Editor of Weltbühne and renowned pacifist, Ossietzky had been in “protective custody” since March 1933 and remained at Esterwegen until May 1936. In contrast to IKL regulations, which strictly curtailed prisoners’ letter-writing privileges, he was able to compose lengthy letters to his wife, Maud, during the SA phase.14

From May to June 1934, SA-Obersturmbannführer Engel commanded Esterwegen II and III. On June 20, 1934, he merged the camps by moving prisoners to Esterwegen II. From July 34 to September 1936, when the camp became part of the IKL system, Esterwegen III became SS accommodations.15


Primary documentation for Esterwegen III begins with its listing in Das nationalsozialistische Lagerrystem (CCP), ed. Martin Weinmann, with Anne Kaiser and Ursula Krause-Schmitt, prepared originally by ITS (1949–1951; repr., with new intro. matter, Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 1:103. Erich Kosthorst and Bernd Walter, Konzentrations- und Straftafenlager im Emsland 1933–1945: Zum Verhältnis von NS-Regime und Justiz; Darstellung und Dokumentation (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1985), reproduce an article from the EZ, December 23, 1933. Klausch, Tätergeschichten, cites or quotes extensively a wealth of archival sources and published testimonies: the BDCPFs of Seehaus


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2. BDCPFs of Seehaus, Heinrich Katzmann, and Emil Faust, cited in Klausch, Tätergeschichten, pp. 127, 130, 184, 222.


7. P III h. No. 280 (Esterwegen-Papenburg), Alfred Benjamin, “KZ Papenburg und Lichtenburg: Bericht für das Comité für jüdische Flüchtlinge,” in Testaments to the Holocaust, Series 1, Section 2, Reel 56.


12. Ibid., p. 90.


**EUTIN**

On June 18, 1933, the women’s section of Eutin prison in Oldenburg became an early concentration camp.1 Established by the Landesteil Lübeck (Lübeck region) Regierungspräsident SA-Oberführer Johann Heinrich Böhmcker, the prison had already served as a “protective custody” camp since the Nazi takeover, as indicated by the detention of Social Democratic Landtag (parliament) member Karl Fick between March and September 1933.2 Eutin held 10 to 20 male detainees in June 1933, then 43 in September.1 Of 345 detainees taken into custody in Landesteil Lübeck in 1933 and 1934 (Eutin and Ahrensböck-Holstendorf), there were 141 Communists, 46 Social Democrats or Reichsbanner members, 3 union members, 18 so-called asocials, 12 right-wingers, including 5 Nazis, 2 officials held for misconduct, and 2 Jehovah’s Witnesses. The police logs did not indicate a reason for arrest or political prisoners in contempt: “From now on all these obstructionists are to be processed ruthlessly, without consideration for position, age, sex, and political attitude. They are to be viewed as saboteurs of the National Socialist reconstruction and therefore have no place in one national community, which is inspired by the unanimous will to bread and freedom. Their destruction serves people and Fatherland.”

Böhmcker’s protégé SA-Sturmführer Theodor Tenhaaf commanded Eutin and related camps. Tenhaaf joined the NSDAP (member number 177428) and SA in 1929. Imprisoned in 1917 for fencing stolen goods and falsifying records, he allegedly participated in the August 1932 bombing of a Socialist consumers’ association in Eutin. Despite accusations by Eutin’s mayor Otto Stoffregen, he eluded justice with his patron’s protection.11 Joining Tenhaaf’s staff on October 2, 1933, was SA-Scharführer Siegfried Beilisch, who served as camp accountant until the dissolution of Eutin.12 Until early October 1933, Eutin had eight staff members. The administrator of Landesteil Lübeck’s protective custody camps was Gerichtsassessor Heinz Seetzen (NSDAP number 273275). Seetzen advanced to the rank of SS-Standartenführer and in occupied Russia commanded Sonderkommando 10a in Einsatzgruppe D and subsequently Einsatzgruppe B.13

Böhmcker used Eutin to settle political scores. Among his rivals and critics was the former mayor and Nationalist Party member Stoffregen, who was arrested on July 25 for “political activity.” His release, on August 4, 1933, came after losing a 3,000 RM allowance. The authorities arrested Dr. Genf for allegedly complaining about local government, for which he paid a 50 RM fine. Nazi Ortsgruppenleiter Ontjes got into similar trouble with Böhmcker, but the authorities fully refunded his bail after he apologized.14

The murder of SS-Mann Karl Radke showed how Weimar-era political feuds carried over into the early Nazi camps. Radke was killed in a street fight with the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold on November 9, 1931, the eighth anniversary of the Beer Hall Putsch. After the Nazi takeover, the police targeted Reichsbanner members, including youth leader and Social Democratic reporter Adolf Burhke, for arrest and torture. The local press fanned the flames by reminding readers that Radke’s killer had gone unpunished for almost two years. On August 24, 1933, after reporting the arrest of three additional suspects, the *AFL* opined that Radke’s murderer possessed “blind, fanatical hatred.” On August 20, 1933, Tenhaaf and guard Walter Tiesch (NSDAP member number 113416) thrashed the lead suspect, Ernst L. of Stokkelsdorf, with a whip and rubber truncheon. When another guard offered to shoot him, Tenhaaf and Tiesch replied: “No, first he should go up against the walls, a bullet would be too good for [him].” A policeman threatened to shoot Ernst L. if he talked about this ordeal. After two weeks in Eutin, L. was transferred to Lübeck prison.15

Beginning on July 19, 1933, the Eutin camp administration assigned detainees to moor clearance at nearby Lindenbruch, a former labor camp for the unemployed. As captured in a photograph, the prisoners marched daily through Eutin on the way to the work site. On July 2, 1933, *AFL* reported that the prisoners were expected to place an estimated 22 tons of arable soil at the 2.5-hectare (6.2-acre) work site while
working in “God’s free, beautiful Nature.” The same article boasted about this assignment’s purported role in reeducation, explaining that by working for the national community, “this element” learned to “obey necessity, not their urges.” Böhmcker assigned Eutin prisoners to this “light cultivation work” for six hours a day, from 6:00 a.m. to noon, “because of health and moral grounds.” Böhmcker directed that the two escorts, Tiesch and “Laborer T.,” carry Model 98 rifles with 10 rounds each. Inside the prison, the detainees were expected to perform two additional hours of daily chores. On September 3, 1933, AFL announced that the prisoners had restored “2.2 [hectares] of land.”

Tenhaaf transferred his command from Eutin to Holstendorf on October 3, 1933. As he indicated to Böhmcker on September 20, 1933, the influx of “undesirables” in the previous month necessitated the search for a larger camp. In the meanwhile, he dispatched the prisoners to two road-building assignments at Neukirchen and Nüchel. Communist prisoner Otto Ehler experienced these institutional changes. Already imprisoned on political grounds when the Nazis came to power, he was placed in protective custody at Eutin in June 1933. After toiling at Nüchel, Ehler was finally released with Ahrensök’s closure in May 1934.

None of Eutin’s prisoners died in protective custody. Böhmcker died of a heart attack in 1944, and Seetzen committed suicide in 1945. Between 1948 and 1950, the Lübeck Landgericht (State Court) tried Tenhaaf, Tiesch, and Beilisch for “crimes against humanity.” In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.’” In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years. In 1949, the court pronounced Tenhaaf “guilty in eleven cases for ‘crimes against humanity.”’ In 1948, Tiesch received a three-year prison sentence, but he was released after two years.

Prisoner cards for Beilisch, Seetzen, Tenhaaf, and Tiesch and Böhmcker’s Nazi Party court proceeding. As reproduced or cited by Stokes, important local press accounts on Eutin include Regierung Eutin, and Regierung Lübeck. The LA-Sch-H Bestände are 260 (Landeskasse Eutin and Regierung des Landesteils Lübeck in Eutin), 320 (Kreis Eutin), 322 (Landgericht und Staatsanwaltschaft Lübeck), 355 (Amtsgericht Eutin), and Regierung Eutin. LA-Sch-H 320 contains the testimony of Otto Ehler. LA-Sch-H 320 includes witness testimony by Ernst L. and the trials of Tenhaaf (4a KLs 8/48), Tiesch (14 Ks 11/49), and Beilisch (2 Ks 7/50). LA-Sch-H 355 includes the Eutin prison records. NStA-Ol has two important collections: 205 (Revierabteilung der Ordnungspolizei Bad Schwartau), no. 631, which includes Böhmcker’s letter to the Bad Schwartau police, dated June 17, 1933, and 133 (Ministerium der Justiz) has statistical material concerning rations at Eutin prison. The ASt-Eu 2481 (Polizeidienst in der Stadt Eutin) includes a letter from Mayor Stoffregen to Böhmcker, accusing Tenhaaf of the August 1932 bombing. The BDC collections, now available at BA-BL and, in microfilm, at the NARA in Washington, DC, hold personnel files and party cards for Beilisch, Seetzen, Tenhaaf, and Tiesch and Böhmcker’s Nazi Party court proceeding. As reproduced or cited by Stokes, important local press accounts on Eutin include AFL, March 14, July 2, July 28, August 24, September 3, and September 22, 1933. The Lübecker Nachrichten, June 17, 1948, and the LFP, May 17, 1949, contain stories about Tiesch’s and Tenhaaf’s respective convictions. A photograph identified as prisoners marching to Lindenbruch in 1933 appears in Jörg Wollenberg, “So fing es an: Arbeitslose im Arbeitsdienst: Vom Freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst zum Konzentrationslager,” in Ahrensök: Eine Kleinstadt im Nationalsozialismus; Konzentrationslager—Zwangsarbeit—Todesmarsch, by Wollenberg with Norbert Fick and Lawrence D. Stokes (Bremen, 2000), pp. 64–169. Eutin is listed in Das nationalsozialistische Lagerwesen (CCP), ed. Martin Weinmann, with Anne Kaser and Ursula Krause-Schmitt, prepared originally by ITS (1949–1951; repr., with new intro. matter, Frankurt am Main, 1990), vol. 1:97; and in “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,” NV, August 27, 1933.

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7. The protective custody population estimate was derived by dividing the detainees’ ration days by the number of days per month. It is based upon “Bericht des Vorstehers der Gefängnise-Verwaltung O 4 (Amtsgerichtsgefangnis), Eutin, an Minister der Justiz, Oldenburg, Aug. 14, 1934,” NStA-Ol, 133 (Ministerium der Justiz)/592, reproduced in Stokes, *Kleinstadt und Nationalsozialismus*, p. 533. The report separates ration days into “Without Protective Custody” and “With Protective Custody,” which necessitates an initial calculation to isolate detainee daily rations from other prisoners.


**FUHLSBÜTTEL**

[AKA HAMBURG-FUHLSBÜTTEL]

As of March 1933 the State Police (Stapo) in Hamburg arrested political opponents of the Nazi regime. Those arrested were either brought to the Wittmoor concentration camp set up in April 1933, held in pretrial custody at the police station, or sent to the Fuhlsbüttel prison.¹

The Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp opened officially on September 4, 1933, as part of a large prison complex, following the formal transfer of command and surveillance to the SS and SA. The camp’s particular function was to persecute and suppress political opponents of the Nazi regime as well as to intimidate the general public.

Initially, the concentration camp fell under the jurisdiction of the Hamburg State Judicial Administration (Landesjustizverwaltung) and Correctional Service (Strafvollzugsbehörde).
The president of the Correctional Bureau (Strafvollzugsamt) was the direct superior of the camp commander, while the Hamburg minister of justice (Justizsenator) was the highest official in charge of all concentration camp personnel and camp affairs. The extent of administrative involvement with the camp was unique in Nazi Germany. On December 1, 1933, the concentration camp was put under the control of the Stapo. The political police used this concentration camp, on the one hand, as a sort of remand prison, when they intended to bring an accused person before a court and therefore conducted further interrogations. On the other hand, prisoners were kept in this camp for an indefinite period of time as a way of fighting political opponents and rendering them harmless. From the beginning, the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp was also a torture site of the Stapo.

First and foremost, members of Social Democratic and Communist resistance groups as well as well-known opponents of the Nazi regime from all of northern Germany were interned at Fuhlsbüttel. From 1934 on the Stapo increasingly arrested Jehovah’s Witnesses, whom they also viewed as political opponents, and sent them to the Fuhlsbüttel camp. Jews followed from 1935 on after the pronouncement of the Nuremberg Laws. By 1933, individuals who were not political opponents of the Nazis were also sent to the concentration camp such as those considered “asocials,” “community aliens,” “harmful to the Volk,” “abnormal,” and “dangerous.” Among others, this group included homosexuals, beggars, and prostitutes.

At first the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp was solely for men, but from August 1934 on, women were also detained in a special section of the camp.

Ten prisoners died in Fuhlsbüttel in the months from September 1933 to January 1934 alone. They died from torture by the political police and mistreatment by the guards.

One of the murdered individuals was Social Democratic editor Dr. Fritz Solmitz from Lübeck. In March 1933, the Lübeck Gestapo arrested him for being an active anti-Fascist and a Jew, and he was taken publicly through Lübeck in a hay cart. Along with other Gestapo prisoners, Solmitz was transferred to Fuhlsbüttel in May 1933, where he was severely mistreated by the guards. Solmitz secretly kept a diary during his imprisonment by writing on thin cigarette paper and hid these notes in his pocket watch. They have been preserved as a unique document testifying to the inhumanity of the guards. The notes of Solmitz end shortly before September 19, 1933, the day of his violent death.

Terror was a part of the Fuhlsbüttel prisoners’ everyday life. The SS guards let their lust for vengeance and their sadism run wild. Beatings with pizzles, whips, rubber truncheons, chair legs, and steel rods were commonly employed to degrade, humiliate, and torture prisoners or to force confessions from them. At night the guards, some under the influence of alcohol, would roam through the stations and beat up prisoners.

The prisoners, in particular those in solitary confinement, could count on being beaten into unconsciousness by the guards at any time of the day. Prisoners were sometimes put “in irons” for a week with their hands and feet chained together behind their backs.

In the basement of the prison, two “kennels,” that is, iron cages, had been installed in the detention cells. A prisoner would be fastened for many days to the iron bars of the cage in the position of a crucifixion, while the guards would beat him repeatedly. Other prisoners would have their arms locked to an iron pole, then be hung at a height of two meters (almost seven feet) or more for many days at a time.

Prisoners were systematically driven to death, and murders were covered up as suicide. The Gauleitung (Nazi Party Province Administration), the State Judicial Administration, and the Stapo all knew of these crimes and helped cover them up.

The systematic terror was supposed to keep prisoners in a constant state of fear and excitement, to humiliate them, to take away their privacy, and to break their will.

Paul Ellerhusen (born in 1897) was appointed camp commandant in September 1933. He was adjutant and confidant to Gauleiter Karl Kaufmann and had been a member of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and SA since March 1927. As camp commandant he was in charge of the camp administration and the camp employees.

Ellerhusen was considered an alcoholic and a rather idle person, and he treated the prisoners in a rampantly brutal way. At the end of 1934 he was arrested in connection with the “Röhm-Putsch,” the murder of SA Chief of Staff Ernst Röhm and others. Gauleiter Kaufmann successfully petitioned Heinrich Himmler for Ellerhusen’s release, but he could not resume his position as camp commandant.

Johannes Rode (born in 1889), secretary of the Criminal Police (Kriminalsekretär), who had become a member of the NSDAP in May 1933, succeeded Ellerhusen in July 1934. While Rode, who had worked for the Hamburg police since 1919, prohibited arbitrary cruelty toward prisoners by the guards, he nevertheless claimed the right to bully and beat “protective custody” prisoners as he liked and at his own discretion. He particularly targeted Jews, homosexuals, transvestites, and prostitutes.

By the end of 1933, 80 members of the SS and SA had been employed as guards for the newly set-up Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp. Almost all of them had long been unemployed. Many of them were still young and often poorly educated. Several of them were fanatical supporters of National Socialism and had previously been convicted for participating in violent political battles during the Weimar Republic or other criminal offenses. To them, working in the camp was primarily a continuation of their political struggle.

From August 1934 on, some of the guards at Fuhlsbüttel were women, who worked as employees of the Gestapo in the women’s section of the concentration camp. Their behavior toward the prisoners did not differ from that of their male colleagues.

For the “defense against agitation and atrocity propaganda,” Heinrich Himmler ordered that the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp be renamed Police Prison Fuhlsbüttel.
(Polizeigefängnis Fuhlsbüttel) in 1936. This did not affect the actual character of the camp nor the composition of its staff. It existed as such until April 1945.

For the hundreds of former persecuted individuals, the names of the male guards at Fuhlsbüttel became synonyms for despotism, cruelty, and blackmail. Many reported to the names of the male guards at Fuhlsbüttel became synonyms for despotism, cruelty, and blackmail. Many reported to the state attorney’s office and testified as witnesses to the cruelty toward prisoners and the extortion of statements from them. In August 1948, the first guard from Fuhlsbüttel to be tried by a Hamburg court was found guilty of “crimes against humanity” and received a prison sentence. A series of other trials followed. Until 1952 at least 19 former guards of the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp as well as Commandant Elmershusen were tried and received prison sentences. All of them were pardoned during the 1950s.

The trial against the deputy of Fuhlsbüttel’s first commandant, Willi Dusenschön, was conducted in the early 1960s and was the only trial for murder carried out by a Hamburg court against former staff of Fuhlsbüttel. The end of the trial in October 1962 created a stir when the court acquitted Dusenschön. The numerous crimes Dusenschön had committed fell under the statute of limitations.


Because the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp was administered by the city of Hamburg from 1933 to 1956, the collections of many city authorities (among others, the State Judicial Administration and Police Authorities) in the StA-HH provide extensive sources on the history of this early concentration camp. After the war, British and German courts held the members of the guard staff accountable. The prosecution and trial records are available at the PRO and the StA-HH.

**NOTES**


5. Verachtet—verfolgt—vernichtet.


8. Ibid.

**GLÜCKSTADT**

In March 1933, the Altona police presidium, with support from Gauleiter Hinrich Lohse, established Schleswig-Holstein’s first concentration camp at the Glückstadt workhouse. Founded in 1870, the workhouse originally served as Schleswig-Holstein’s prison, but its mission was expanded during the Weimar period to include an institution for alcoholics. Joachim Hampe became the director in 1923 and was still in charge during the time of the concentration camp. As a former imperial army officer, he imposed a strict regimen on the institution, as evidenced by two photographs, one of Hampe with his staff, most of whom wore gendarmerie uniforms, a second showing the inmates’ spotless sleeping accommodations.5 Commanded by SA-Sturmführer Schöning, the guards consisted of six SA men from Sturm 24/213 (Glückstadt). Nazi mayor Wilhelm Vogt oversaw the guards’ appointment. The prisoners addressed guards by police, not SA, titles. One guard, Paul Gravert, died of natural causes while on duty. Some 731 political detainees from all parts of Germany died at this camp. According to the Gedenkbuch “Kola-Fu,” Glückstadt attempted to reeducate political detainees. The prisoners wove mats, bags, and fishnets or worked on the 50-hectare (124-acre) farm. A small number were assigned to private contracts. Prisoners were compelled to read Nazi
newspapers and to parrot Nazi positions on Socialist or Communist propaganda. They were also required to participate in Protestant religious services. As part of his reeducation, Communist prisoner Wilhelm Passing painted a portrait of Martin Luther. Undermining the prisoners' reeducation was access to the anti-Nazi publication *Blick in die Zeit*. Prisoner Friedrich Hansen's subscription to this weekly paper, which was still published in Berlin during the Nazi regime's first year, prompted Hampe to query his superiors about appropriate reading material.¹

Prisoner testimony presented the Glückstadt staff in mixed terms. According to prisoner Waldemar Vogeley, the guards Schülz and Paulsen were "two wonderful people."² Richard Hansen of the exile organization Sopade in Copenhagen reported that prisoners were not harmed, according to information furnished by newly released inmate Friedrich Hansen.³ In fact, a small number did suffer maltreatment. On Gestapo orders, Communists were denied a midday meal for three days in August, in retaliation for the alleged vandalism by leftists of the German Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Tempelhof on May 1, 1933. Among the camp's torture victims were Johannes Klünder and Fritz Wollert. Karl Scheer was sexually abused, but the perpetrator's identity is not known.⁴ The camp also had a bunker for close arrest.

Two important events at Glückstadt concerned the food relief of certain prisoners and the November plebiscite. Upon arrival, detainees from Eckerndörfer received what prisoner Heinrich Reumann called "grub packets."⁵ These parcels included the little smoked fish popular in northern Germany, *Kieler Sprotten*. It is unclear who initiated this effort or precisely when it took place. On November 12, 1933, Glückstadt participated in the Nazi plebiscite. Twenty-four prisoners spoiled their ballots, but there was no retaliation.

According to the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung* newspaper, eleven Elmshorn prisoners were released on December 15, with the remaining 13 from that community dispatched to the Kuhlen concentration camp.⁶ Among the Elmshorn prisoners were Ernst Behrens, a Socialist town council member and poet.

Although the majority of Glückstadt's prisoners were released in December 1933, most of those remaining in custody were dispatched to the Papenburg, Esterwegen, and Osnabrück early camps.⁷ The transfers began in June 1933 but increased greatly during the autumn months. Glückstadt concentration camp was officially dissolved on February 26, 1934, but the institution remained a workhouse throughout the Nazi period. Schönig subsequently headed a forced labor camp for Poles and Eastern workers (Ostarbeiter) at this facility during World War II.


As cited by Möller, primary sources for Glückstadt begin with LA-Sch-H, Abteilung 320 Steinburg No. 189. This file includes Hampe's query about Friedrich Hansen's reading material. The order for the camp's dissolution is found in AStGl, No. 2048 II. Several photographs are also located in the same archive, as reproduced in Gerhard Köhn, Reimer Möller, and Walter Wilkes, eds., *Alt-Glückstadt in Bildern*, vol. 2 (Glückstadt: n.p., 1984). Unfortunately, this volume does not specify individual photo credits. Richard Hansen's report is found in AdsD-FES Best.-, Emigration Sopade, Folder 48. Möller conducted oral history interviews with Glückstadt detainees, including Heinrich Reumann and Waldemar Vogeley. He also accessed prisoner case files, such as Karl Scheer's, available at the VVN-AH. Additional information on Glückstadt and Director Hampe comes from the *GF* (December 20, 1923; April 9, December 23, 1933), as cited by Möller and Paul; *LANz* (December 8, 1933), as cited by Möller; and the *SHZ* (August 16, December 20, December 27, 1933), as cited by Möller and Jenner. A listing for Glückstadt is found in *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (CCP)*, ed. Martin Weinmann, with Anne Kaiser and Ursula Krause-Schmidt, prepared originally by ITS (1949–1951; repr., with new intro. matter, Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 175. ²

Joseph Robert White

**Notes**


Beginning in March 1933, the Zentralgefängnis (central prison), formerly a fortress at Gollnow (later Goleniów, Poland), a small town not far from Stettin (Szczecin), served as an internment center for “protective custody” prisoners from the surrounding area. In April 1933, the prison increasingly assumed regional importance when Stettin Police President Eldor Borck ordered that the prison at Gollnow be used extensively for protective custody prisoners, since local police detention centers were overcrowded. As a result, the president of the Correctional Bureau, Dr. Wilhelm Mosler, declared that he was willing to make 110 spots available in the Zentralgefängnis for political prisoners. The total prison capacity amounted to 621 male prisoners. An entire four-story wing of the building, the so-called E-wing or North wing, was now available to the police. The original inmates were subsequently transferred to other prisons. Women taken into protective custody were not held at the Zentralgefängnis but rather at the local prison in Gollnow.

On April 11, 1933, the first 40 prisoners were brought by truck from Stettin to Gollnow, and in the coming days, another 33 arrived from Stargard. Nineteen additional prisoners arrived on April 20, and another 51 prisoners from Stettin were interned in Gollnow on May 5. All told, there were around 200 people whose names are known that passed through Gollnow’s central prison as protective custody prisoners. As not all departures and arrivals were recorded, however, it is assumed that many more people had been prisoners in Gollnow for longer or shorter periods. The average age of the prisoners was 35, and most were craftsmen and manual laborers.

On April 13, 1933, the Pommersche Zeitung newspaper reported the internment of Stettin’s Communists in Gollnow and took this opportunity to emphasize the necessity of a Pomeranian concentration camp due to “the increased activity” of the German Communist Party (KPD). In fact, since the middle of April, a possible location for a Pomeranian concentration camp was intensively being sought. From its initial use, the Gollnow Zentralgefängnis had been considered an interim arrangement.

Nevertheless, the head of the penitentiary endeavored to work out guidelines for the handling of protective custody prisoners in Gollnow, about which the police administration was informed a few days after the prisoners’ arrival. According to these guidelines, the police authorities that ordered the arrest of a prisoner could issue visiting passes for immediate relatives. Visitors were allowed twice a month, letters every 10 days. If necessary, the prisoners could also receive dental treatment from the institutional dentist to be paid for by the responsible police administration.

The prisoners were detained in single cells equipped with a mattress and a toilet bucket. They could only communicate with each other upon coming and going to their recreation period. Many of them knew each other from their joint activities in the KPD, Rotfrontkämpferbund, Rote Hilfe Deutschlands (RHD), Revolutionäre Gewerkschaftsopposition, Erwerbslosenstaffeln, Kampfbund gegen Faschismus, and other political groups. Despite the solitary confinement, they found various ways to communicate with and support each other. When the prisoners were forced to listen to a radio broadcast speech by Adolf Hitler on May 1, 1933, they did not stand up at the playing of the national anthem, and they began singing “The Internationale” in the corridors. The prisoners submitted a written request to the director of the penitentiary asking for a march in the courtyard in honor of May Day, but it was not granted.

A group of prisoners succeeded in producing an illegal newspaper and distributing it among fellow inmates. Two copies existed, and it carried the title “Signal—Organ of the Proletarian Protective Custody Prisoners in Gollnow” (Fanal—Organ der proletarischen Schutzhaftgefangenen in Gollnow). During the recreation period, it would be passed around from cell to cell. According to an account from Hans Geffke, one of the publishers, the paper’s main concern was to “continue the struggle in the spirit of the party and the antifascist struggle behind prison walls and at the same time to give all comrades instructions on how to behave in solitary confinement.” It reported, for instance, that books and papers could
be officially exchanged through the sentry and also encouraged political discussion with cell neighbors: “It's easy: one writes down a discussion question and gives it to his neighbor at the beginning of free period. During the next free period the other returns his answer and posts a new question. The discussion over the question continues until it is settled.” Suggestions for “sample questions” follow, for example, the reasons why massive political protests did not take place when Hitler took power. A tap alphabet for conversation from cell to cell was also developed and explained. In addition, there were tips on dealing with guard personnel and employees. Judicial officers employed in the penal institution guarded the prisoners. By and large it does not appear that there was much abuse of prisoners at the hands of the guard personnel. Former prisoner Karl Lawonn reported that the officers operated with the motto “Calm in the prison, everything clean, don't bother me and I won't bother you.” They were lazy and did not wish to be bothered. SA auxiliary police supported the guards, but they mainly remained in the background.

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It became worse when the prison newspaper, after a short time in circulation among the cells, fell into the hands of guard personnel while being passed on. All cells were searched, and the prisoners were ordered into the hall of the cell building to be interrogated by the prison police officer. The investigation, however, was unsuccessful: the culprits were not found and did not turn themselves in. As a punishment, visits, letters, and packages were banned for all prisoners; smoking and borrowing books were also forbidden, and all private books were taken away from the prisoners. Many prisoners protested these measures by going on a hunger strike. In order to end the reprisals, Geffke came forward as publisher of the paper one week later. He was put in a completely dark cell, and criminal proceedings were initiated against him. On June 1, 1933, the director of the penitentiary lifted the ban on visitors and packages that had been imposed on the protective custody prisoners. Visitor permits would only be allowed in urgent cases with immediate family members, and visits could last no longer than 15 to 20 minutes.

The paper Fanal also ended up on the desk of Rudolf Diels, head of the Secret State Police Office (Gestapa), who immediately informed all district presidents (Regierungspräsidenten) about the emergence of the “inflammatory communist newspaper.” All heads of prisons and concentration camps should be on their guard against “a revival of communist agitation.” Surveillance and control measures were intensified.

In the middle of May 1933, the Gestapa in Berlin announced to the Stettin district presidium the transportation of political protective custody prisoners to the central concentration camp at Sonnenburg. Due to prisons overflowing with protective custody prisoners, the penitentiary directors had increasingly put pressure on Regierungspräsident Konrad Göppert. On May 22, 1933, he inquired at the Gestapa “when the promised transport of prisoners to Sonnenburg internment camp can be expected, as the overcrowding of prisons in the district has led to conditions that must be described as simply intolerable.”

A week later Gestapa Chief Diels personally called Regierungspräsident Göppert and requested a list of names of 150 Communist prisoners from Stettin and the surrounding area who could soon be transferred to the Sonnenburg concentration camp. As a result, a transport of “Gollnowers” was prepared. This concentration camp now became the central internment site for political opponents of National Socialism in Pomerania. The penitentiary at Gollnow was, however, still used as a prison and “transit station” for protective custody prisoners beyond June 1933. Most of these prisoners were transferred to the Papenburg and Sonnenburg concentration camps and in some cases to Lichtenburg and Brandenburg.

### SOURCES

Extensive material on the organization of the internment of prisoners at Gollnow can be found in the files of the Stettin district presidium at the APSz, Szczecin Notary, President’s Department (APSz, Rejencja Szczecińska, Wydział Prezydialny). At the BA-B there are personal accounts from former Stettin KPD functionaries, some of whom were inmates in the protective custody section at Gollnow Zentralgefangnis. Original publications about the history of the central prison in 1933/34 are not available.

Andrea Rudorff

### NOTES

1. APSz, Rejencja Szczecińska, Wydział Prezydialny Nr. 12045, p. 591; ibid., Nr. 12047, p. 17; ibid., Nr. 12041, p. 591.
2. Ibd., Nr. 12047, p. 17; ibid., Nr. 12041, p. 591.
3. BA-B, R 58/2518, pp. 33; APSz, Rejencja Szczecińska, Wydział Prezydialny Nr. 12045, p. 437.
4. PZ, April 13, 1933.
5. APSz, Rejencja Szczecińska, Wydział Prezydialny Nr. 12045, p. 379.
8. Erlebnisbericht Karl Lawonn, BA-B, Sgy/30/1070, p. 18; APSz, Rejencja Szczecińska, Wydział Prezydialny, Nr. 12045, pp. 543, 619.
12. Ibid., p. 74.
13. APSz, Rejencja Szczecińska, Wydział Prezydialny Nr. 12045, p. 619.
14. Ibid., Nr. 12045, pp. 93, 95.
15. Ibid., Nr. 12045, pp. 101, 159, 963, 985, 999.
GOTTESZELL

When in March 1933 political opponents were arrested in all of the Reich, “approximately 1,700 Communist and Social Democratic functionaries were taken into protective custody in Württemberg between March 10 and 15.” These arrests took place on orders from the Württemberg Ministry of the Interior. The Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State (Reichstag Fire Decree), issued on February 28, 1933, provided the legal basis for the arrests. Due to overpopulated prisons, the Ministry of the Interior ordered in mid-March 1933 that an autonomous concentration camp for men be built on the Heuberg in Setten am kalten Markt (see Early Camp Heuberg), as well as a separate “protective custody section” for females with the same function at the Gottesszell women's prison. One can assume that it was simply not profitable to construct an autonomous camp for the small number of female protective custody prisoners—there were merely 50 to 100 in comparison with the large number of men.

This corresponds to previous knowledge about how female protective custody prisoners were dealt with in other parts of the Reich: in the first years, no autonomous concentration camps were set up for women with the exception of Moringen. Accordingly, women were placed either in separate protective custody sections in prisons similar to that in Gottesszell, which were used as concentration camps, or they were sent to small sections set up separately for female prisoners within already existing concentration camps for men in 1933–1934. The only autonomous early women's concentration camp with a centralized structure was the Moringen provincial workhouse (Provinzialwerkhaus) in the region of Hildesheim. As of June 1933, Moringen had become the central women's camp for Prussia and central Germany and later for the entire Reich.

In a letter from the police presidium of Stuttgart, Württemberg State Office of the Criminal Police (Lande criminalpolizeiamt), dated March 17, 1933, the decision was announced that women, held in protective custody in local prisons since the wave of arrests, were to be transferred to the local branch Weimarstrasse of the Court Prison I Stuttgart (Gerichtsgefängnis I Stuttgart-Zweigstelle Weimarstrasse) on April 28, 1933, provided the legal basis for the arrests. Due to overpopulated prisons, the Ministry of the Interior ordered in mid-March 1933 that an autonomous concentration camp for men be built on the Heuberg in Setten am kalten Markt (see Early Camp Heuberg), as well as a separate “protective custody section” for females with the same function at the Gottesszell women's prison. One can assume that it was simply not profitable to construct an autonomous camp for the small number of female protective custody prisoners—there were merely 50 to 100 in comparison with the large number of men.

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In November 1933, six women were still in protective custody at Gottesszell. The last women were released from this section of Gottesszell on January 21, 1934. Their release brought an end to existence of the concentration camp section of the Gottesszell women's prison.

The Political Police, part of the Württemberg Ministry of the Interior, was responsible for the protective custody section in the Gottesszell prison. Then, on April 28, 1933, orders came for the formation of an autonomous Württemberg Political Police Office within the Ministry of the Interior, which would be responsible for protective custody prisoners. The Ministry of Justice, however, retained its responsibility for the penitentiary.

With regard to this separation between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice, one can assume that the Ministry of the Interior indeed had the authority to imprison and release women but could not directly intervene in the Ministry of Justice's jurisdiction in specific cases dealing with prisoners in jail. This can be concluded from various documents that the Ministry of the Interior addressed to the protective custody camp Heuberg and the Gottesszell penitentiary, which deal with the treatment of protective custody prisoners.

There was a clear arrangement between the Ministries of Justice and of the Interior with regard to financing the camp. The Ministry of the Interior covered the costs of all expenditures for prisoners who were interned in state penitentiaries or local prisons. Included in these costs was the procuring of necessary clothing, medicine, and treatment by dentists or other medical specialists.

In March 1933, Government Councilor (Regierungsrat) Henning was the director of the Gottesszell state penitentiary and therefore also director of the Gottesszell concentration camp. Earlier, he had been director of the Moringen workhouse. Soon, however, he was transferred from this position. His successor as director of the prison and concentration camp was Siebert, a man who kept a tight rein on operations and who did not differentiate between criminal and political prisoners.

During the time of the concentration camp's existence (March 31, 1933, to January 21, 1934), between 60 and 80 women had been imprisoned in Gottesszell. The duration of imprisonment ranged from less than one month to the entire time the prison was in operation. The youngest woman was 20 years old at the time of her incarceration, while the oldest was 54. The reason for this particular age range was involvement in political activities, which all of them had in common.

Of the 39 female prisoners for whom information is available, it can be proven that 21 were members of the German Communist Party (KPD). The same can be assumed for many others. Membership in the KPD was the primary reason for internment. Whereas around 3,000 men in Württemberg alone were arrested in the first months after the National Socialists assumed power, the arrests of women were limited in many cases to those who had held leading positions within political parties, primarily the KPD. Often, married women
had organized resistance with husbands who had been well-known KPD functionaries, and they were arrested at the same time.

In a series of cases the arrest and imprisonment of women served as a way to extort information about the activities or the whereabouts of their husbands. Religious or social grounds for internment in the Gotteszell concentration camp—in the sense of “racial general prevention” (rassischen Generalprävention) as formulated by historian Ulrich Herbert—are not known at this time.

Some women lost their jobs because of their time in Gotteszell. Other women suffered for years afterward from health problems that were a result of their imprisonment. Several women emigrated due to their persecution. The evidence shows that 10 women continued to fight actively against the National Socialist state. This led to further persecution in prisons and penitentiaries, in the women's concentration camps Moringen, Lichtenburg, and Ravensbrück, and, in the case of Gertrud Schlotterbeck and Emmi Ramin, to their execution.

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The protective custody section was set up in a separate part of the Gotteszell women's prison. These premises had previously been used for regular prisoners. In their function as part of the concentration camp they were also divided into spaces for sleeping and “recreation.”

Women were not allowed to work and were therefore not integrated into the employment programs of the prison. Accordingly, these women had to find a way to keep themselves busy on their own. Gertrud Leibbrand stated, “Whoever could sought handicraft from their relatives. Most women knitted. One could not stand being idle all day long. We kept ourselves busy in other ways, of course. For example, I initiated a stenography group. Paula Acker (née Löfl er) tried to teach some Spanish to those who were interested. If I'm not mistaken, we also had a group for those interested in literature, however I can't swear to that.”

The women in Gotteszell chose the song “Thoughts Are Free” (“Die Gedanken sind frei”) as their anthem, to which both Leibbrand and Julius Schätzle attest.

Leibbrand wrote in one of her letters, “We not only sang the song ‘Thoughts are free, who can guess them’ . . . (as Julius Schätzle writes). It was our song and we sang it especially when bad news from outside dampened our spirits. It almost always helped to turn disheartenment into courage.”

On May 1, 1933, the women in Gotteszell sang this song while getting together for a special occasion: a breakfast with somewhat wilted flowers and a piece of red fabric was transformed into a celebration.

After the authorities caught wind of this action, the women were interrogated while the guards looked for the red flag that allegedly had been used. All the prisoners remained silent until Lotte Weidenbach leaped onto the table, lifted her skirt to reveal her petticoat, and shouted: “This is our red flag.”" Puzzled, the guards left the room.

**NOTES**

2. AKr-SH, Bl37/1.
4. Ibid.
6. AKr-SH, Bl 137/Schutzhaft allgemein, p. 39.
7. AKr-RM, A 5 Oberamt Schorndorf 6220 Schutzhaft, p. 50.
8. The basis for these statements are the author's evaluations of the reparations files of those prisoners in the Gotteszell concentration camp known by name.
9. All citations of Gertrud Leibbrand come from letters to the author on August 29, 1998; February 16, 2001; and October 19, 2002.

**GRÄFENHAINICHEN**

In 1933, the SA formed a “protective custody” camp in Gräfenhainichen, Prussian Saxony. The camp was situated in the abandoned Stolzenberg factory, which was located at a railway crossing. The number of political prisoners and camp personnel is not known. In August 1933, the camp was closed.

**SOURCES**

This contribution on the Gotteszell concentration camp is based on Marcus Kienle's book Gotteszell—das frühe Konzentrationslager für Frauen in Württemberg (Ulm: Verlag Klemm & Oelschlager, 2002) and an article with the same title in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., Terror ohne System. Geschichte der Konzentrationslager 1933–1945 (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), pp. 65–79.

Former prisoners are quoted directly for the first time after the war in Julius Schätzle, Stationen zur Hölle: Konzentrationslager in Baden und Württemberg 1933–1945, ed. Lagersgemeinschaft Heuberg-Kuhberg-Welzheim (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1974).

Lina Haag, a former prisoner of Gotteszell, described her experiences there in Eine Handvoll Staub, (1985; Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995).

A few scattered records exist on the concentration camp. A few documents in the records of the RMdI in the BA-B make references to Gotteszell. Further references to most of the prisoners of the Gotteszell concentration camp can be found in the records of post-1945 indemnification of victims of Nazi rule. The original files of the reparations process are located in the StA-S (Bestand: Wü 33) for South Württemberg and in the StA-L (Bestand: EL 350) for North Württemberg.

An important resource are prisoners’ reports from different perspectives, located in the archive of the VVN in Stuttgart and in the archive of the DZOK in Ulm.

The most important references with regard to oral history were provided by Gertrud Leibbrand, who passed away in 2003, in her correspondence with the author during the years 1998–2001.

Marcus Kienle
trans. Lynn Wolff
and the detainees dispatched to the large early concentration camp at Lichtenburg.

**SOURCES** This entry is based upon Stefanie Endlich et al., *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation*, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999), which also records a memorial to political opponents held at this camp. Other than the memorial plaque, Endlich does not cite other sources in connection with Gräfenhainichen.

One available primary source for this camp is its listing in the German Social Democratic exile newspaper article “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,” *NV*, August 27, 1933.

**NOTE**


**GREATER NÜRNBERG CAMPS**

In March 1933, the directorate of the Bavarian State Police in Nürnberg-Fürth established at least two and possibly three “protective custody” camps in Nürnberg and Fürth, in Gau Central Franconia. The known camps were the Nürnberg pretrial detention center at Fürther Strasse and the “emergency prison” (Notgefangnis) at the Polizeidirektion (Police Head Office) in Fürth. The third suspected camp was the Nürnberg Rathauswache (City Hall Guard Post), located at Rathausplatz, then called Adolf-Hitler-Platz. The Nürnberg SA also established at least five torture sites: the SA headquarters at Breitegasse; the Hotel Deutscher Hof at Frauentorgarten 29; Georgenstrasse police station; Nürnberg Castle; and Arbeiteramtswagenwache (Workers Benevolent Association), Hallplatz 4, an erstwhile emergency aid center. By April 3, 1933, Greater Nürnberg held 978 protective custody prisoners, including local politicians, Jews from Nürnberg and Fürth, and numerous leftist. In late March 1933, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, then chief of the Munich Political Police, assumed control of the police directorate and, through his newly appointed subordinate SS-Oberführer Johann von Malsen-Ponickau, arranged for the removal of Greater Nürnberg’s detainees to Dachau concentration camp. An immediate consequence of Malsen’s appointment, noted the *Fürther Anzeiger* newspaper, was the roundup of “50 of the worst Muscovites [Communists].” Three major convoys of police wagons departed for Dachau in April 1933.

The Nürnberg pretrial detention center operated under the supervision of Oberregierungsrat Hop. One protective custody prisoner, Willi Gesell, had already been held there for Communist activities beginning on February 20, 1933, well before the Reichstag Fire Decree and the March 9, 1933, Nazi takeover of Bavaria. Nürnberg’s former Socialist mayor Hermann Luppe, prosecutor Dr. Alfred Rosenfelder, physician Dr. Theodor Katz, Communist youth organizer Dr. Rudolf Benario, and Arthur Kahn were also confined at the pretrial detention center, as well as Staudt, a local Socialist politician, and Riepekohl, a local editor. Prisoners could read newspapers and books, take walks, and have access to Protestant and Catholic clergy. The detainees shared cells with common criminals but quietly exchanged information among themselves on walks. The police arrested Luppe on March 18, 1933, and brought him to the police barracks at Bärenschansstrasse, where he was held in an officer’s quarters for two days. On March 28, Luppe entered the pretrial detention center, where he remained until his release on April 25, 1933. At the time of his arrest and while in custody, he experienced comparatively decent treatment. According to historian Hermann Hanschel, the claim that Luppe suffered humiliating treatment at the SA’s hands at the time of his arrest appears to be apocryphal. Upon release, the police expelled the Luppes from Nürnberg. They relocated to Berlin, where the former mayor endured further arrests and harassment.

In contrast to the pretrial detention center, the Fürth emergency prison had primitive accommodations and brutal conditions. Two noncommissioned officers, SS-Scharführer Faschingbauer and SS-Scharführer Bräu, were in charge. Further research is needed to establish their career tracks. The detainees included Wilhelm Galsterer, Ernst Goldmann, Anton Hausladen, possibly Hausladen’s wife Kunigunde, Karl Pfeiffer, and Richard Schumann. All but possibly Goldmann were Communists. The accommodations, as Pfeiffer recalled, consisted of approximately 25 “field beds” with two prisoners per bed. Galsterer reported that he was tortured while in Fürth. Schumann’s ordeal in Nazi custody only started with confinement in this camp. He remained a prisoner in Dachau, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, and related camps until his liberation in 1945.

Pfeiffer furnished testimony about the Rathauswache camp. Arrested on April 21, he was tortured at the Georgenstrasse police station, then dispatched to the Rathauswache, where he spent four days. On April 25, the Polizeidirektion Nürnberg-Fürth transferred him to the emergency prison with 15 other detainees under SA guard. It is not clear whether the others were also held at the Rathauswache. It is not clear whether Rathauswache was a protective custody camp or a temporary detention site.

Composed of prisoners from both confirmed Nürnberg camps, the first major Dachau transport took place on April 11. The transferred detainees included Benario, Gesell, Goldmann, Katz, Rosenfelder, and Schumann. Because they were Jewish, the SS shot Benario, Kahn, and Katz on the following day. Together with a Jew from Munich, they were the first murder victims recorded at Dachau. The second transport included Galsterer and Lehrburger. The site of Lehrburger’s detention in Nürnberg is not known. The last major transport occurred on April 26 and included the last 96 detainees from Fürth. Among the Fürth prisoners were Anton Hausladen, Pfeiffer, and a Jewish student named Rosenbusch. The SS and SA beat the prisoners on the way to the wagons. En
route to Dachau, Pfeiffer offered Rosenbusch part of an orange, which prompted the Bavarian State Police to strike him. While doing so, they condemned him for showing kindness to a “Jewish pig.”

A key figure in Polizeidirektion Nürnberg-Fürth was Kriminalrat Ottomar Otto. A veteran of Bavaria’s 1919 counterrevolution against the short-lived “Soviet Republic,” he had closely monitored local Communist activity for almost a decade. In the summer of 1933, Otto established a special duty SA-Sturm (SA-Sturm z.b.V.) in order to torture political suspects. Under the successive commands of SA-Sturmbannführer Eugen Korn and SA-Sturmführer “Braun” (a pseudonym assigned by German prosecutors at his postwar trial), SA-Sturm arrested Communists in advance of the September 1933 Nazi Party rally, the first held after the regime’s takeover. On August 17–18, Korn’s unit murdered Oskar Pfläumer at the Workers Benevolent Association (Arbeitersmarterwache). A Jewish detainee, Schmitz, sustained such severe injuries in the Sturm’s hands that he died three days after transfer to Dachau, on August 29, 1933. The Nürnberg Castle was a favorite torture site for Korn’s unit. The SA beat victims in its cellar, oblivious to the tourists within earshot. Pfläumer’s murder prompted a legal investigation by Bavarian Justice Minister Dr. Hans Frank. Despite strong evidence, Adolf Hitler quashed the legal proceedings against Korn. In spite of Otto’s role, the ministry’s investigation did not focus upon him. Otto remained with the political police and committed suicide in April 1945. Korn died in 1946. In 1948, Oberlandgericht (Higher State Court) Nürnberg-Fürth tried other members of SA-Sturm, including Braun, but the judgments and sentences are not readily available. On-site research is needed to determine whether any Sturm victims were held at Nürnberg’s prettrial detention center.

Further research is also needed to ascertain the degree of Franconian Gauleiter Julius Streicher’s culpability in the early arrests. Streicher’s dispute with Mayor Luppe certainly contributed to the latter’s detention. In 1925, Luppe brought a libel action that resulted in the Nazi publisher’s brief imprisonment.11 A conflict shortly before the Nazi takeover between Streicher and Nürnberg’s SA leader SA-Obergruppenführer Wilhelm Stegmann resulted in Stegmann’s dismissal on Hitler’s orders. On three occasions in the spring of 1933, the police arrested him on the trumped-up charge of attempting to murder the Franconian Gauleiter. According to historian Eric G. Reiche, the Stegmann dispute may have spurred the Nürnberg SA in 1933 and 1934 to exaggerated displays of loyalty through political violence.12 Although Streicher later asserted, in a letter to Rudolf Hess on October 12, 1933, that he ordered the SA to avoid anti-Jewish violence for fear of international repercussions, the targeting of prominent Jews during the regime’s first months contradicted this claim.13 Although Streicher specifically denied in this letter responsibility for the arrest of 50 local Jews, a Jewish prisoner observed in 1934: “Most Jews [at Dachau] had been arrested in Nürnberg and Central Franconia.”14 The same anonymous source listed other Jewish prisoners from Greater Nürnberg at Dachau:

Dr. Hans Max Cohn, Eric Gans, Max Gottlieb, Heinrich Heilbrunn, Siegfried Klein, and Martin Stiebel.15


Primary documentation for Greater Nürnberg camps begins with the BA-BL, SAPMO-DDR KZ- und Haftanstalten Collection No. 8, as cited by Drobsch and Wieland. The testimonies of Willi Gesell, Georg Hausladen (the son of Anton and Kunigunde), and Karl Pfeiffer are available in Schirmer, *Das andere Nürnberg*. Helpful testimony about the Nürnberg Untersuchungsgefängnis can be found in the posthumous autobiography of Hermann Luppe, *Mein Leben*, comp. Mella Heinsen-Luppe (Nürnberg: Selbstverlag des Stadtrats zu Nürnberg, 1977). The papers on which it was based are found in Nachlasse Luppe, available at the BA-K and AS-N. Anonymous but valuable testimony about Jewish prisoners from Nürnberg at Dachau can be found in “Als Jude in Dachau,” *Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt* (1933) Ein Buch der Greuel; Die Opfer klagen an (Karlsbad: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934).

**NOTES**

1. On Breitegasse, Hotel Deutscher Hof, and Nürnberg Castle, see ASstaLG-NF, KLs 110/49, 250/48, and 287/47, as cited by Eric G. Reiche, “From Spontaneous to Legal Terror: SA, Police, and the Judiciary in Nürnberg, 1933–34,” *European Studies Review* 9:2 (1979): 261nn. 8, 13; 263n.61; on Georgenstrasse, see the testimony of Karl Pfeiffer in Her-


7. Pfeiffer testimony, in ibid., p. 106.


15. Ibid., p. 82.

GUMPERTSHOF

In October 1933, the Merker-Meseritz district administrator established an early concentration camp for itinerant Ger-
Purpose, younger and older prisoners were housed separately, on the theory that the young prisoners would be more susceptible to Nazification if isolated from their elders. The SA forced the prisoners to perform penal exercises, conducted torture under the pretext of interrogation, and directed all but the most serious cases of injury or illness to a cellar for warehousing without medical treatment. The SA used an administrative office and a special bunker for interrogations. Prisoners were also compelled to work in woodcutting and latrine details. Jews and intellectuals were singled out for humiliation and brutal treatment.

The outlawed German Social Democratic Party (SPD) continued to assist Hainewalde’s prisoners. For example, the Prague-based Socialist newspaper Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung reproduced the photograph of a Hainewalde detainee. A sympathetic SA guard had smuggled the image out of camp, which revealed a prisoner in terrible condition. Zittau’s underground Communist organization also smuggled propaganda into the camp that let the prisoners know their suffering had not been forgotten: “We know that you have remained loyal to the cause of the working classes with unfaltering courage, in spite of all the terror and despite the harassment to which you have been exposed. . . . We know very well—and also the working classes know—what you have suffered. If we send you this greeting despite all difficulties of illegality inside the concentration camp, take it as an avowal of our undivided solidarity with you.”

The camp administration imposed strict conditions for release from custody. On pain of arrest, released prisoners signed a declaration swearing not to discuss conditions in Hainewalde. According to another declaration, dated August 5, 1933, the released detainee promised not to associate again with “Marxist parties.” Well-known screenwriter, playwright, and novelist Axel Eggebrecht recalled a rumor that the prisoners would be released on May Day, but it turned out not to have any foundation.

Eggebrecht was held at Hainewalde from April to May 1933. A resident of Berlin, he was visiting his father in Leipzig at the time of his arrest, March 5, 1933, which coincided with Germany’s election day. After a month in jail, he was delivered to Hainewalde. As the prisoners entered the gate, a guard ascertained that Eggebrecht was a World War I veteran. Eggebrecht soon realized, however, that his military service meant little to the guards. Stereotyped as an intellectual, he was ordered to work in a humiliating labor command. “Aha—the scriptwriter from Berlin!” Sturmführer Jirka exclaimed, “I have something extra fine for you—the shit detail!”

Eggebrecht’s bunk mate, a Jewish prisoner named Benno Berg, experienced a rare moment of humor after a reeducation session. A Nazi Kreisleiter lectured the detainees on the Jewish threat, quoting the stock phrase, “The Jews are our misfortune.” After the speech, he inspected the prisoners and stopped in front of Berg. In response to the Kreisleiter’s questions, Berg gave his name and birthplace: “Berg, from Reichenberg, Bohemia.” Not realizing that the prisoner was Jewish, the Nazi announced: “A Sudeten national comrade! Bravo! All of you will come to us again!” Eggebrecht added: “The big shot’s fat hand struck the ‘non-Aryan’ appreciatively on the shoulder. ‘For myself, you are the model of the true SA man! Heil Hitler!’ Hand raised, he strutted away.”

Eggebrecht was interrogated but not tortured. In this regard his experience contrasted with other Hainewalde prisoners. Eggebrecht recalled the interrogator’s interest in how he had gotten mixed up with the Communists, after growing up in a “good home.” His release came through his father’s intercession with an influential Saxon official, Professor Apel. Eggebrecht’s father wrote him about Apel’s interest in his case. Sometime later, his father visited him at the camp. Exclaiming that the conditions were “unworthy” of his son, the father added that he should be patient, because “it won’t last much longer!” Several days later, Eggebrecht was released after signing a promise not to circulate “atrocity stories.”

In 1948, the Bautzen State Court sentenced 39 guards to penitentiary terms for their role in the maltreatment of Hainewalde prisoners. The trial was conducted under the auspices of the Soviet occupation, but further details are not known.


Published in Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt, 1934

Nazi propaganda photo of prisoners and guards at the Hainewalde early camp.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945

Primary documentation for Hainewalde begins with File No. 4842 and 4852 in the SHStA-(D), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, as cited by Drobisch and Wieland. Additional primary documentation may be found in the AVB-StFA (formerly the SHStA-B),Amtshauptmannschaft Bautzen, No. 7542, as cited in Drobisch and Wieland. An important personal account is Axel Hauptmannschaft Bautzen, No. 7542, as cited in Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *Zwischenbilanz einer Epoche* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag GmbH, 1975). Eggebrecht’s camp testimony constituted a small portion of his autobiography. As a screenwriter, he faithfully recaptured the guards’ poor German. Hainewalde was also mentioned in the National Socialist and exile press. See “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,” NF, August 27, 1933. As cited in Drobisch and Wieland, it was mentioned in the OlsTZ, March 28, April 15, and August 30, 1933, and an unspecified issue of the AJZ (Prague). Photographs of the castle, the latrine and woodcutting details, and certain SA leaders, including Standartenführer Paul Unterstab, and the reproduction of the release document for Fritz Seiler may be found at the “Mahnung gegen Rechts” Web site.

Joseph Robert White

NOTES

1. These figures are listed in AVB-StFA, Amtshauptmannschaft Bautzen, no. 7542, as cited in Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), p. 87.


5. Ibid.


HAINICHEN

On April 4, 1933, Amtshauptmann Döbel ordered the formation of a labor camp in a community and sports center located at Öderanstrasse in Hainichen, Saxony. Ortsgruppenleiter Georg “Zuff” Ziegler was the commandant, and Friedrich Zill served as his deputy. The guards were from SA-Sturm 5/139, later supplemented by SA-Sturmbann II/148 from Colditz. Despite the nomenclature, Hainichen was an early concentration camp for leftist detainees. Its population fluctuated from an initial 50 prisoners to 144 by April 12, then to nearly 300 before its dissolution on June 13, 1933.

Hainichen prisoners were divided into three arrest categories. These categories depended upon the degree of suspected involvement with leftist political parties: nonmembers, who were supposed to be immediately released; party members, who faced detention for an indefinite period; and party officials, who were considered to be the most serious cases. Although the SA occupied a community center, the prisoners were made to sleep on a garbage heap. After Hainichen’s closure, the detainees were dispatched to early concentration camps at Colditz and Sachsenburg.

SOURCES


Primary documentation for this camp, as cited by Drobisch and Wieland, consists of File No. 551 in ASt-Lsn. The camp is also listed in the German Social Democratic exile newspaper, NF, August 27, 1933.

Joseph Robert White

HAMBURG (STADTHAUS UND UNTERSUCHUNGSGEFÄNGNIS)

In March 1933, the Hamburg “townhouse” (Stadthaus) police headquarters at Stadthausbrücke 8–10 and the neighboring remand center at Holstenglacis 3 became “protective custody”

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camps. Under 14-year police veteran Kriminalinspektor Peter Kraus, the institutions operated as camps at least through November 1933. Although the total number of detainees is not known, the Stadthaus and Holstenglacis held many Communists, Social Democrats, young leftists, trade unionists, and Jews. Among the Social Democratic detainees were Gustav Dahrendorf and Karl Meitmann. In May and June 1933, according to prisoner Heinrich Braune, there were about 150 prisoners.1

Instrumental in arresting, interrogating, and guarding the prisoners were the Special Duty Detachments (K.z.b.V.). Established on March 24, 1933, the unit consisted of 310 SS, SA, and Stahlhelm police deputies.2 The unit was disbanded on January 4, 1934. Its commander, Polizeioberleutnant Franz Kosa, garnered fulsome praise from Hamburg Gauleiter Karl Kaufmann. In a letter dated July 21, 1933, Kaufmann wrote: “You have dedicated the greatest prudence and sacrifice to the difficult task according to K.z.b.V.’s mission assignment, so that it is actually thanks to your energy and determination, if the Kommando’s previous work has contributed to a decisive defeat of Marxism in Hamburg.”3

At the Stadthaus, K.z.b.V. tortured certain detainees. One prisoner under interrogation, Gustav Schönerr, died after falling or being pushed out of a five-story window. K.z.b.V. had several interrogation sites within the Stadthaus complex. According to an anonymous prisoner’s account that circulated in some Hamburg churches, the Stadthaus had separate rooms for the interrogation of Socialist and Communist prisoners, each outfitted with pictures of the respective parties’ heroes. Lenin’s portrait decorated the Communists’ room.4 Another detainee, Albert Peldszus, learned that torture took place “in the second-story room.”5 His account supported the anonymous prisoner who identified the place as “Room 203.” Based on the report of his late comrade Communist Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Matthias Thesen, Fuhlsbüttel detainee Willi Bredel claimed in his novel Die Prüfung that the torture site was “the feared Room 103.”6 Other prisoners recalled that torture took place at K.z.b.V.’s headquarters, located in a building adjacent to the Stadthaus called Grosse Bleichen.

In Die Prüfung, Bredel reveals the pattern of torture. The interrogation subject anxiously awaited summons in overcrowded basement cells. The professional police would politely question him about his political activities. After denying the allegations, he would be returned to the cells, only to be summoned by K.z.b.V. K.z.b.V. would conduct him to the special room, make him stand facing the wall, beat him unconscious, and revive him with cold water, all the while berating him as a Communist, leftist sympathizer, or Jew. After this ordeal, he would be transferred to Holstenglacis, pending a decision on his fate. In broad outline, Bredel’s novelistic account of the Stadthaus accords with Stadthaus testimonies.7

Not every Stadthaus detainee suffered torture, however. Several witnesses, such as Socialist Karl Schmalbruch and Braune, reported hearing about mistreatment or seeing injured prisoners but did not personally experience violent interrogation. It is not clear whether their nonviolent treatment resulted from cooperation or whether the Communists were singled out for special harassment. Nevertheless, many Social Democratic and trade union witnesses reported nonviolent treatment. Twice held at the Stadthaus in 1933, Braune “was treated completely differently” during interrogation. Con- fined to a “mass cell” with 30 to 45 detainees, Peldszus was not beaten at the Stadthaus but experienced maltreatment later at Fuhlsbüttel. The police detained Peldszus for having a fight with an SA man in the early 1930s, for which he had already served a year’s imprisonment. Another Socialist, Ernst Bähr, was delivered to the Stadthaus from the Holstenglacis prison for interrogation in a “cellar room.” Although questioned for two hours, he was not harmed. As he explained, “The arrests were not carried out so entirely brutally in the first years of National Socialism as later—the regime was not yet so solidly established.” By contrast, prisoners with affiliations to Communist groups such as the Kommunistische Jugendverband (Communist Youth Association) or Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus (Fighting League against Fascism), like Helmut Heins and Herbert Baade, suffered torture.8

The Holstenglacis prison functioned as a way station for the early concentration camp at Fuhlsbüttel. The detainees recuperated from wounds suffered at the Stadthaus, shared experiences, and sang songs to combat boredom.9 The prison’s physician, Schädel, cared for many victims and got into trouble with the Nazis for submitting frank reports about K.z.b.V. activities.10 Certain detainees remained at Holstenglacis in preparation for show trials, such as Schmalbruch, who was tried in November 1933 as part of the Socialist Workers Youth trial and sentenced to four months’ imprisonment.11 The prison also served the purpose of judicial terror. Approximately 1,850 prisoners were executed by gallows and guillotine between 1933 and 1945. The first three executions took place between August 1933 and January 1934.

Among the execution victims taken into custody during the protective custody camp phase was Fiete Schulze, a member of the German Communist Party (KPD) arrested in the spring of 1933. His confinement documented the transformation from protective custody camp to political prison. While at Holstenglacies, he carried on a censored but nevertheless illuminating correspondence with his wife and other relatives. His letters showed that some prisoners could communicate with relatives, receive parcels, and see visitors. The censors let pass Schulze’s occasional Stalinist remarks, such as crediting the First Five-Year Plan for transforming the Soviet Union or commenting to his daughter about the “conditions of dying capitalism.” The Hanseatic Higher Regional Court condemned Schulze to a triple death sentence plus 240 years, because of his participation in the October 1923 Hamburg Uprising. His execution took place on May 6, 1935.12

Information on whether any Hamburg police or K.z.b.V. members faced postwar criminal proceedings in connection with prisoner maltreatment is unavailable.


Primary sources for this camp begin with two documents from STA-HH, as reproduced in Büttner and Joachmann. These papers consist of the regulations governing Nazi police deputies from March 16, 1933, and Kaufmann's letter to Kosa dated July 21, 1933. Prisoner testimonies by Herbert Baade, Ernst Bähr, Heinrich Braune, and Helmut Heins, and testimonial summaries for Albert Peldszus and Karl Schmalbach, can be found in ÖTV, Bezirksverwaltung Hamburg, ed., *Dokumentation Stadthaus in Hamburg*. This collection also reprints the leaflet containing anonymous prisoner testimony, culled from A-Osta-H 461a. Also included are reproductions of the investigative reports that ÖTV conducted in support of the memorial site, as well as photographs of witnesses and Stadthaus blueprints. A useful contemporaneous fictional account of the Stadthaus, the Untersuchungsgefangnis, and Fuhlbißtelt is Willi Bredel’s *Die Prüfung*. It was the first novel about Nazi concentration camps. While generally accurate, Bredel erroneously places Fuhlbißtelt officers SA-Brigadeführer Paul Ellerhausen and SS-Sturmführer Willi Dusenschön in charge of K.z.b.V. In Bredel's account, their names and Ellerhausen's rank slightly differ. While Bredel used mostly composite characters for the prisoners in his novel, he reproduced the actual names of the perpetrators, so the inaccuracy in this case reflects problems with secondhand testimony. An excellent collection of prisoner letters from the Holstenglais prison is Fiete Schulze, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus dem Gestapo-Gefängnis in Hamburg*, introduction by Erich Weinert (Berlin [East]: Dietz Verlag [East], 1959; Dietz Verlag, 1959). Weinert unfortunately did not elaborate on the provenance of these letters, other than to report that they were found in Gestapo files.

NOTES


7. Ibid., pp. 49–62.


9. On singing, see Bredel, *Die Prüfung*, p. 67.

10. “Anonymes Rundschreiben.”


HAMMERSTEIN

Beginning on June 28, 1933, around 250 “protective custody” prisoners were detained in a former military training area at Hammerstein (later Czarne, Poland), located in the Prussian district of Schneidemühl. The camp at Hammerstein was one of the official concentration camps recognized and financed by the Prussian Ministry of Interior. The property itself belonged to the Prussian Finance Ministry, which in April 1933 had the grounds’ suitability as a concentration camp for political prisoners evaluated by the Schneidemühl district presidium. At the site, which also included a military training section, a forest rangers’ farm, residential buildings, garages, a retraining center, and vacation lodgings, two empty barracks, each with a capacity for 100 men, were determined suitable for
prisoner accommodation. As a result, the Prussian Finance Ministry made the grounds available to the Interior administration, and the Prussian Ministry of Interior made money available for the expansion. The local government in Schneidemühl, in cooperation with the police, the rural district administrator in Schlochau, the fiscal authorities in Neustettin, and the structural engineering office (Hochbauamt) in Schlochau, assumed responsibility for the construction of the camp. Construction contracts were given to local construction workers, some furniture items were extracted from the inventory at the military training camp, and other items were delivered by the Berlin and Königsberg police administration as well as by the Norddeutsche Lloyd supply administration. The expansion of the barracks into a prison camp cost 5,800 Reichsmark (RM). The Schlochau rural district office was responsible for the routine administrative work, while the Schneidemühl police directorate oversaw the economic management of the camp.1

Citing its proximity to the Polish border, the president of the State Financial Office in Stettin objected to the construction of the concentration camp: “With consideration for the protection of this area in case of complications, in my opinion this site should be kept free of unreliable persons.”2 The Neustettin headquarters (Kommandantur) also raised serious reservations about filling the camp with Communists, because it felt significantly more exposed to the threat of espionage.1 The Schneidemühl district president, however, supported the building of a concentration camp but did speak out against the suggestion by the Prussian Ministry of Interior to expand the camp’s capacity up to 1,000 men. The renovation of more empty barracks would cause a lot of expenses; in addition, they would be difficult to guard due to the tree and shrub population, and the military training courses would no longer be practicable “in a military acceptable manner.”3

Little is known about the prisoners in Hammerstein. There are only short accounts from two former prisoners, Paul Schulz and Otto Gerdlke.5 It can be assumed that most of the prisoners came from the small cities and communities of the Posen-West Prussian borderland and were admitted to Hammerstein on the orders of the rural district police departments (i.e., in most cases the rural district administrator) after they had already spent some time imprisoned in the local police stations or local prisons. Later, prisoners from East Prussia and Pomerania also were interned in the camp. Primarily, the prisoners were Communists and other opponents of National Socialism. The type of work they had to carry out is not known, but as the camp existed for only one and a half months, it is assumed that they primarily took part in construction work. In a report before the camp was opened, the district president drew attention to the fact that although there were enough eating utensils, they were “in a condition requiring cleaning. But in my opinion, the necessary cleaning can be carried out by the prisoners themselves.”6

The provisional Polizeidirektor of Schneidemühl drew up camp rules for Hammerstein, according to which the prisoners had no right to lodge complaints, and if they tried to escape, they would be shot immediately. Once a month the prisoners could write a letter to relatives, but receiving visitors was forbidden. The prisoners were prevented from having any direct contact with the outside world. There were different levels of designated penalties for disobeying camp rules. In addition to inflicting certain random punishments during the daily routines, like punitive service (Strafdienst), or showing up to report, there were also various detention punishments: mild detention (up to three weeks), in which prisoners were kept in solitary confinement but could use books and writing instruments; medium detention (up to three weeks), in which prisoners were held in uncomfortable conditions with only water and bread; and severe detention (up to 14 days), in which prisoners were kept in a dark cell. On the fourth, eighth, and every third day thereafter the prisoner had a so-called good day, on which he or she received a bed, full rations, and access to fresh air.7

There was no systematic murder of prisoners at Hammerstein. Some prisoners, however, did die as a result of torture. Several witnessed the death of the Jewish prisoner Siegmund Salinger, who succumbed as a result of physical abuse at the hands of the SS. Prisoners would also be pulled from their barracks at night and shot while “trying to escape.” We also know of the June 30, 1933, murder of Russian revolutionary Wladimir Kottow, who—along with prisoners Paul Prüfert and Paul Schabe—was murdered by the SS on the way from Hammerstein to Sonnenburg.8 In the first two weeks, Polizeileutnant Gieraths ran the camp. He was supposed to train and instruct SS-Sturmführer Furbach and the SS guards. Later, SS-Sturmführer Furbach was named camp commandant, and the camp was handed over to the SS. Up to that point, 10 Polizeiwachtmeister had reinforced the SS guard commando. Later, only SS men were active as guards. Usually they were unemployed men from the area. They were hired on as auxiliary police, under the immediate supervision of the district president, and paid accordingly.9 The original plan to use SA personnel as camp guards was dropped on the expressed wish of Kurt Daluge, director of the police department in the Prussian Ministry of Interior, as only the SS should now undertake the guarding of all concentration camps. According to statements from former prisoners, camp commandant Furbach and SS-Truppführer Adrian and Deutsch stood out because of their cruelty. Heinz Adrian’s violent outbursts, also known as “re-education methods,” even led to protests from the foreign press and resulted in his demotion to a “simple” SS-Scharführer and transfer to Sonnenburg concentration camp.10

Little is known about everyday life in the camp, but it is doubtful that an independent prisoner culture developed because the camp existed for only a short time, and most of the prisoners did not know each other from earlier political connections.

In the course of the Prussian Ministry of Interior’s attempt to centralize the concentration camps, Hammerstein was abandoned. The dissolution of the camp probably took place on August 8, 1933, but in any case before August 14,
1933. The prisoners were either released or transferred to the concentration camps at Sonnenburg or Lichtenburg. After dissolving the concentration camp the site was used as a police training ground and as an SA sports school; beginning in 1939, it became a prisoner-of-war camp. In 1948, supervisor SS-Truppführer Adrian was sentenced to death by the District Court Schwerin German Democratic Republic [GDR] for abusing prisoners. Primarily, however, this concerned prisoner abuses in the Sonnenburg concentration camp, where he later worked.

**SOURCES**


A comprehensive source base on the construction of the camp is located in the files of the Schneidemühl local government, which are kept in the APP. Occasional notes on Hammerstein can also be found at the BA-B (Sammlung von Häftlingberichten) and in the AAN (Akten des Polnischen Konsulats in Stettin).

Andrea Rudorff
trans. Eric Schroeder

**NOTES**

2. Ibid., pp. 28–29.
3. Ibid., pp. 20–31.
4. Ibid., pp. 32–33, 37–38.
6. APP, Regierung Schneidemühl, p. 25.
7. Ibid., p. 64.
8. BA-DH, KL/Hafta/Sammlung Nr. 17, KL Hammerstein, Reports from former prisoners; AAN, Konsulat der Republik Polen in Stetting, Mikrofilm B-4045, pp. 24–26;
10. Ibid., p. 61ff.
12. APP, Regierung Schneidemühl Nr. 500, p. 91; Drobisch and Wieland, *System*, p. 135.

**HASSENBERG**

The Hassenberg "protective custody" camp existed from April 13 to July 10, 1933. At Hassenberg, opponents of Nazism from the city of Neustadt near Coburg were interned and suppressed. The rural district of Coburg is located on the northern edge of Bavaria. Until 1918 it was an independent duchy in a confederation of three small Thuringian states (Sachsen-Coburg-Gotha). After a plebiscite in 1920, it joined Bavaria. The small city of Neustadt on the edge of the Thuringen Forest, which had approximately 10,000 inhabitants, was rather petit bourgeois and proletarian in contrast to the seat of the duchy Coburg. The majority of the population worked in factories or at home, mostly in the toy and doll industry. They were mostly Protestants in the Thuringen tradition. During the Weimar Republic the workers' parties Social Democratic Party (SPD) and German Communist Party (KPD) played a dominant role in the political and social life in Neustadt.

In the process of consolidating political power, the National Socialists there began to persecute political opponents in March 1933. This included SPD and KPD functionaries and their closely allied associations and clubs, others who were out of favor for political reasons, and individual Jews. At first all political opponents were held in the prison or in specially set up rooms in the town hall or the police caserne in Coburg. They were guarded by SA commandos who supposedly severely mistreated some of the prisoners.

By April 1933, the synchronized Neustadt city council started to make plans for its own protective custody camp, most likely because Coburg's capacity to intern political opponents reached its limits. The right place was found in the former women's prison in Hassenberg, about eight kilometers (five miles) from Neustadt. The building in which the camp was established was situated on a hill in the village of Hassenberg (later part of Sonnefeld, Coburg rural district) and was visible from afar. For years the prison had been considered a symbol of the state's power. However, this is only partially in accordance with its history. It was established toward the end of the seventeenth century as the castle of a Franconian nobleman. It had three floors. In the middle of the nineteenth century a fourth floor was added, and from 1870 it was used as a prison for women. From the beginning of the twentieth century, it was used as a textile and toy factory; during World War I, part of it was used as an internment camp for civilian prisoners. In 1933, it was owned by a Neustadt small businessman who produced glass wool and similar products in the building. The top floor remained available to be rented by the town of Neustadt.

The rooms on the top floor were used from the middle of April 1933 by the National Socialists to hold their political opponents. A report by the Neustadt police stated: "On 13 4 APR 1933 by the National Socialists to hold their political opponents. A report by the Neustadt police stated: "On 13
April, the 13 prisoners from Neustadt held in Coburg in protective custody were transferred to Hassenberg near Coburg. The Neustadt council has rented rooms in the former castle to intern protective custody prisoners. An SA commando from Neustadt near Coburg will guard the protective custody prisoners. Six of the prisoners were SPD members, five were members of the KPD, and the political affiliations of the remaining prisoners remain unknown. It is not known whether they were subjected to physical or mental torture, but it can be assumed that the common background of the victims and perpetrators kept the mistreatment in check.

An article in the Coburger Nationalzeitung (CoNZ) on April 15, 1933, gives an idea of how the National Socialists saw the prison. To some extent they considered the imprisonment of their opponents in Hassenberg like a stay in a sanatorium. “The rooms are in every way suitable for their current use. An SA guard unit from Neustadt takes care of security and order. ... Perhaps now Messieurs Geuss and his companions can reflect in Hassenberg on how they have sinned against the workers over the last years. Other than for the loss of their freedom, the prisoners are in good shape and even ‘Reichsbanneronkel’ (Reichsbannerwinkel) Bender praises their treatment and their food, which is the same as for the guards.” Whether the protective custody in Hassenberg really was so harmless, as claimed in the CoNZ, cannot be answered.

All in all, probably between 20 and 25 opponents of the Nazis from Neustadt were interned in Hassenberg. They were held for a few weeks. The aim of the National Socialists was to cut them off from political life while the dictatorial National Socialist rule was consolidated. The Hassenberg protective custody camp was dissolved on July 10, 1933. The last 6 prisoners were released with restrictions on where they could live. A few days earlier, at the beginning of July 1933, those Nazi opponents who were regarded as politically more dangerous had been transferred to the Dachau concentration camp, which had become the main concentration camp for south Germany. Here awaited them a longer, more torturous imprisonment. A few of them were allowed to return home only in December 1933.

Toward the end of the Third Reich, the rooms of the Hassenberg camp were used once again by the Nazis. During the last months of the war in 1944–1945, prisoners from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp were held in the attic of the former castle to develop instruments essential to the war effort for the Reich Postal Research Institute (Reichspostforschungsanstalt).

HASENBERG

On May 16, 1933, the SA formed an early concentration camp in a vocational secondary school at Havelberg in Potsdam. The approximately 95 prisoners performed forced labor, first on roads and then in the establishment of the early concentration camp Perleberg. The detainees were officially transferred to the latter camp on May 31, 1933.

SOURCES

This entry is based upon the standard work on the early Nazi camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

As cited in Drobisch and Wieland, primary documentation for Havelberg can be found in the Regierungsbezirk Potsdam Polizeipräsidium, which is available in the BLHA.

Joseph Robert White

HEINERSDORF

In early April 1933, the former sport school at Heinersdorf Castle in Prussia/Liggnitz was converted into an early
It has been reported to us that on the night of the 5th and 6th of April of this year, officials of the SPD and the trade unions, who are in protective custody, were taken from the local police and court prison to the camp of the SA at Heinersdorf and maltreated. Among these cases of ill-treatment, Mr. Israel and the brothers Kurt and Georg Moser are supposed to have suffered particularly severely.

Most honored Mr. President, we politely request that care be taken that such cases not happen again in the future, and that the sternest investigation is ordered in the cases of last night.

Please permit us to assume that you share our view that it is not permissible to maltreat defenseless prisoners in protective custody.1

Two Czechoslovakian nationals were confined at Heinersdorf, which prompted their government to lodge an official complaint.

SOURCES This entry is based upon the standard work on the early Nazi camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

Primary documentation for Heinersdorf can be found in the Reichsministerium des Inneren papers at BA-BL (R1501). This collection includes the Grausurt letter, reproduced in Drobisch and Wieland (p. 174).

Joseph Robert White

NOTE


HEUBERG [AKA STETTEN AM KALTE MARKT]

After the Reichstag election on March 5, 1933, Reich Minister of the Interior Dr. Wilhelm Frick appointed Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Dietrich von Jagow as Reich commissar for the Württemberg police force. Dr. Frick determined that the maintenance of safety and order was no longer guaranteed in the state of Württemberg, where Eugen Bolz, member of the German Center Party (Deutsche Zentrumspartei) was acting as prime minister.

Von Jagow began his service on March 10 by forming an auxiliary police force, drawn primarily from members of the SA and SS as well as members of the Stahlhelm. During the night of March 10 and into the next day, the first statewide wave of arrests began in Württemberg. As can be gathered from a secret situation report of the Württemberg Political Police of July 1933, “approximately 1,700 Communist and Social Democratic functionaries were taken into protective custody in the days from March 10–15, 1933.”2 Due to the fact that the prisons were overfilled, in mid-March von Jagow gave Stuttgart Police President Rudolf Klaiber the orders to set up a “closed concentration camp for political prisoners” on the military training area Heuberg near Stetten am kalten Markt.

On March 20 and 21, “protective custody” prisoners from most of the local prisons and larger municipal prisons in Württemberg were taken to Heuberg.2

Already by mid-August it was decided that the Heuberg military training area would be reinstated to full military use, and therefore the Heuberg concentration camp was supposed to be closed by the end of the year. This is why those in charge in Stuttgart decided in October 1933 to prepare the fortress of Oberer Kuhberg as a successor concentration camp.

While releasing prisoners before Christmas, the Heuberg camp was permanently vacated over the course of the month of December. During the second half of December, the remaining prisoners from Baden in the Heuberg camp were taken to the Ankenbuck concentration camp (a former state-owned country estate between Bad Dürreheim and Donaueschingen) and Kislau Castle (near Bad Schönborn in the Karlsruhe area). The remaining 264 prisoners from Württemberg were sent to the Oberer Kuhberg near Ulm. The prisoners in Heuberg came from similar backgrounds as those of other early camps from the time of the “seizure of power.” Since the camp only operated in 1933, political prisoners, especially members of the German Communist Party (KPD) and its affiliated organizations, made up the vast majority of the prisoners. In addition, there were members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and a few members of other parties, such as the German People’s Party (DVP) and the German Democratic Party (DDP). In 1933 it was for the most part still too early for the internment of Catholic priests. As in other early camps, Jewish prisoners were interned not only because of their beliefs and backgrounds; they were also, always, political prisoners. There are references to imprisoned Jehovah’s Witnesses (“Ernste Bibelforscher”), but no further information about them is available.

There are likewise few references to other groups of prisoners, like Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), beggars, and “asocials.” Various reports mention criminals, but one can assume that their imprisonment at Heuberg was limited to that of singular cases.

In total, between 3,500 and a maximum of 4,000 men from Württemberg, Baden, and Hohenzollern were held prisoner for a certain period of time in the concentration camp. The
Heuberg camp was thus the largest concentration camp in the Reich at the beginning of the takeover.

The camp was under the control of the Stuttgart police presidium and, from the end of April 1933, was controlled by the independent section “Württemberg Political Police,” and thus it was always part of the Württemberg Ministry of Interior and therefore a state-run institution.

The guards were from the Württemberg municipal police and the SA men recruited as auxiliary police, who in many cases only first received any training—and a meager preparation at that—upon deployment to Heuberg on the grounds of the SA Sportschule, where they were housed. Former Polizeioberst Gustav Reich led the camp after its opening but handed over the power to former Major Max Kaufmann after only a few days. In April Nazi Party (NSDAP) Kreisleiter and SA-Führer Karl Gustav Wilhelm Buck became camp commandant.

During the 12 years of National Socialist rule, Buck served as commandant in several camps (Heuberg, Kuhberg, Welzheim, Schirmbeck). After the war, he was sentenced to death. The sentence, however, was not carried out, and Buck was released from prison in 1955.

Although there is no written documentation and only very sparse and contradictory information exists, the daily routine in the camp was probably as follows: Wake-up at 5:00 or 6:00 A.M. (probably summer/winter). Afterward, washing at the water troughs in the yard and breakfast. At 6:30 (in winter probably an hour later), departure for work. The way to work has been variously described, which is probably due to the different places of employment. The path to work could be as long as one and a half hours. Prisoners worked primarily in road construction, in clearings, and in building roll-call areas for the military. Sometimes the prisoners came back at noon and received a bowl of soup before marching back to work. Around 5:00 or 6:00 P.M. they washed at the water troughs and had dinner; there was an irregular and not standardized roll call, then afterward leisure time in the living area. Quiet hours began around 9:00 P.M. The evening roll call was often incalculable; many times no end was in sight. It could happen that the prisoners were made to stand outside in the freezing cold until well into the night or forced to do knee-bends in the snow. The night’s sleep was disturbed from time to time by unexpected attacks from the guards.

The work experience in the Heuberg concentration camp varied among prisoners. Many viewed work as a way to escape the boredom of camp life. Those who were physically fit felt that work in the Heuberg concentration camp was a privilege, since there was not enough work for everyone despite propaganda to the contrary. Many prisoners were simply not up to the physically demanding work of laying down streets and clearing trees. For those who were not used to this physical work, it became torturous.

Work was especially used as a means of oppressing and degrading the prisoners of the “celebrity block” (Prominentenblock). They were explicitly not permitted to do “meaningful work”; rather, they had to do punitive labor from time to time. Emptying baskets of pebbles only to recollect the stones, pulling out grass, or splitting wood with dull saws and axes are all examples from the wide range of Sisyphean tasks, which also are known from other early concentration camps. Those in charge used work not only as punishment but also as a way of demonstrating power and humiliating the prisoners.

Cruelty and torture had been part of the everyday life of the Heuberg camp ever since the change in camp leadership from Kaufmann to Buck in mid-April. Roughly two forms of mistreatment can be distinguished at this time: against the body and against the psyche of the prisoners. The body was beaten with wooden clubs and belts and stomped on with police boots. Prisoners were beaten into unconsciousness in the attic or in the “beating cell” (Schlagzelle); they were chased up and down the stairs and tortured at the water trough. The threat of being shot to death led to nervous breakdowns and irreparable psychological damage.

In addition, prisoners were constantly humiliated, which amounted to further psychological attack. The prisoners were made to feel their own powerlessness in order to recognize the power of the rulers. Some prisoners were left with a swastika on their heads after being shorn of their hair; and little swastika-shaped noodles were placed in the soup. A high point of the absolute disregard for any acceptable bounds was illustrated on the occasion when certain prisoners were forced to clean the toilets with toothbrushes.

Violence was exercised unexpectedly and was seldom attributable to a concrete act for which the prisoner could count on a punishment. Many were tortured and humiliated daily and others, virtually not at all. Arbitrariness dominated, and the treatment was often dependent upon the mood of single members of the guard force.

Only one case of murder in the concentration camp has been proven. However, there are clues to a series of other fatalities in the camp. In Heuberg, the death of prisoners was not a clear goal, even if prisoners were threatened daily with death. The murder of Simon Leibowitsch, a Communist of Jewish descent, who succumbed to the results of gruesome torture in Heuberg, demonstrated in September 1933 what would later on be the order of the day in other concentration camps.

SOURCES This text is based on Markus Kienle’s book Das Konzentrationslager Heuberg bei Stetten am kalten Markt (Ulm: Klemm & Oelschläger, 1998) and the author’s article of the same title in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., Terror ohne System: Geschichte der Konzentrationslager (Berlin: Metropol, 2001), pp. 65–79.

After the end of National Socialism, a few prisoners of the Heuberg concentration camp put their experiences down in writing. Notable above all are Erich Rossmann, the former SPD leader in Württemberg, Ein Leben für Sozialismus und Demokratie (Stuttgart: Wunderlich, 1946); Georg Bayer, Dabei bis zu den Pyramiden von Miramas (Tübingen, 1979); and Werner Gross, whose life story was written by Joachim Schlör, In einer Nazi-Welt lässt sich nicht leben: Werner Gross; Lebensgeschichte eines Antifaschisten (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1991).
Julius Schätzle, himself a prisoner of Heuberg, wrote an account of the early concentration camps in Württemberg and Baden: Julius Schätzle, Stationen zur Hölle: Konzentrationslager in Baden und Württemberg 1933–1945 (commissioned by the camp community Heuberg-Kuhberg-Welzheim; repr., 1974). This account is based on testimonies by former prisoners immediately after the end of the war.

A complete inventory of files on the Heuberg concentration camp does not exist. All of the records, which were reviewed for the author's research, are scattered in various archives, of which only a small selection is cited here. A complete index can be found in the author's aforementioned book.

The Heuberg concentration camp is mentioned in the documents of the Reich Ministry of Interior (RMdI) in the BA-B. The ‘secret situation reports of the Württemberg police,’ which contain important basic information about the Heuberg concentration camp, are also located there. Further references to the majority of prisoners of the Heuberg concentration camp can be found in the reparations files, which originated after 1945 within the framework of the trial for compensation of those persecuted under National Socialism. The original files of the reparations trial for Südwürttemberg are located in the StA-S (holding: Wü 33), and for Nordwürttemberg in the StA-L (holding: EL 350).

The main part of the available files are the records (Oberamtsakten) that were created in 1933 on the level of rural district head offices (Oberämter), which are located in the StA-L and StA-S as well as partly in the archives of the rural districts (Kreisarchive). Besides edicts and decrees of the Ministry of Interior, for which the rural district head offices were the recipients, prisoner lists are still available for a few rural district head offices. These lists, which were written down at the instruction of the Ministry of Interior, contain details on the composition of the prisoners, their times of arrest, and their origin. These details had to be ascertained, and copies remained in the records of the rural district head offices. Prisoner reports of varying character are kept in the VVN archive in Stuttgart and in the archive of the DZOK. A “special edition on Konzentrationslager Heuberg/Kuhberg (Sonderheft Konzentrationslager Heuberg/Kuhberg)” containing additional important information can be found at the ZdL.

NOTES

2. AKr-RM, A6 Bü Po.

HOHNSTEIN

On March 14, 1933, the SA established a “protective custody” camp at Hohnstein Castle. Located on a mountain peak in Saechsische Schweiz, the castle had served as a youth hostel during the 1920s. The early camp had 439 detainees on April 12, 1933, and 600 in August 1933. In total, Hohnstein had 5,600 prisoners by August 1934. The predominantly Communist prisoner population also included Social Democrats, Jews, Christians, and intellectuals; a few Czechoslovakian, French, and Polish citizens; and one person of African descent. Approximately 400 teenaged and 109 female detainees were also imprisoned at this camp. In May, June, and August 1933, Hohnstein admitted prisoners from dissolved Saxon camps at Struppen, Königshöhe, Königstein, and Bautzen (Kupferhammer), and Hainewalde. Additional detainees came from the Sachsenburg concentration camp and the Bautzen prison complex. Several persons arrested during the Night of the Long Knives entered the camp in June and July 1934. A total of 140 people died at Hohnstein. Among the suicide victims were Emmeric Ambross, Kurt Glaser, Gerhard Schubert, and Pastor Rudolf Stempel. In September 1933, the SA murdered Eugen Frisch, editor of the Volkszeitung für Vogtland, during a transport to Hohnstein.¹

SA-Sturmbannführer Rudolf Jähnichen was camp commandant, and his deputy was SA-Sturmbannführer Friedrich. The adjutant was SA-Sturmführer Heinicker. The 90-member guard force included the SA-Stürme 5, 14, 22, 23, and 25 from Dresden SA-Standarte 100. The guards devised novel methods to torment detainees, including an apparatus for water torture.² Certain staff members were accused of sexually molesting male and female prisoners.³

The SA forced detainees to perform penal exercises and sing nationalist or Nazi songs. New arrivals were normally held in House IV and put through two weeks of unceasing abuse.⁴ According to an anonymous account, the detainees performed “callesthenics, knee bends, and military exercises: drop, stand up, drop, stand up . . . and in the stomach only a little bit of water and a little piece of bread.”⁵ Compounding the prisoners’ misery was a shoe shortage, which forced many to exercise in stocking feet. According to Otto Urban,
imprisoned at Hohnstein from November 1933 to June 1934, “sport” did not cease with initiation, because Sundays were reserved for camp exercise. Neither the physically infirm nor wounded veterans were exempt. 6

Another anonymous prisoner, identified as a Social Democrat, described a typical day during the camp’s early months. At dawn the prisoners gave the Hitler salute and offered a prayer for the Fatherland. After breakfast, they sang the “Horst Wessel-lied” and exercised. After three hours of work, they ate a noon meal of bread and soup. Twice weekly meat was served with this meal. After completing two more hours of penal exercises, the prisoners had an indoctrination class, with more singing of the “Horst Wesseli-lied.” The day closed with the singing of the “Deutschlandlied.” 7

After completing the two-week initiation, Hohnstein inmates performed forced labor. The early detachments hauled sand and wood from nearby forests into the camp or constructed barracks inside the castle. 8 In order to build roads connecting the castle and town, the camp imported 250 prisoners from Sachsenburg, including Urban, on November 29, 1933. 9

A few detainees worked or remained inside the camp. These prisoners wore special armbands color-coded by function: foreigners (red), skilled craftsmen (green), camp elders (yellow), the sick (blue), and camp functionaries (white). For security concerns, “Reds” were not permitted on external work details. It is not clear what work they performed. “White” included musicians, canteen attendants, or “staff swings.” Otto Urban defined a swing as a “boy, cleaner, chamber servant, or however you will call it.” “Whites,” “Greens,” and “Yellows” had the run of the camp, and only high-ranking SA issued orders to “Whites.” Hohnstein prisoners all wore a crew cut, except for “Whites.” On January 22, 1934, Urban became a swing for Jähnichen, Friedrich, Heinicker, Küchler, Schupp, and Flott. 10

At a given time, Hohnstein held between 25 and 44 female detainees, whose ages ranged from 16 to 60. The women were confined to a single room. Many were hostages taken after their husbands escaped the Reich. Most of the women worked in the camp laundry; two exceptions were Frau Schulz and Eva Knabe, who painted portraits for the camp staff. Hohnstein’s lack of female guards contributed to the concerns about sexual misconduct by the staff. 11

Hohnstein had two bunkers and a standing cell for close arrest. Located beneath Houses I and IV, the bunkers had low ceilings without fresh air or illumination. Banker inmates subsisted on bread and water. According to Urban, SA guards Walther and Sauer dispatched a swing, Miede, to a bunker after discovering his notes about Hohnstein guards. In the standing cell, a prisoner could neither lie nor sit down. A 22-year-old woman endured six days’ confinement in this cell. 12

Hohnstein’s most prominent visitor was Saxon Gauleiter Martin Mutschmann. In the company of almost 100 dignitaries, he participated in the ritual humiliation of a prisoner, the Saxon Social Democratic minister Liebmann. Mutschmann brought a transcript of Liebmann’s address to the Saxon parliament especially for the occasion. The minister was forced to read it for the Nazis’ amusement. After the spectacle ended, the guards beat him. 13

On June 30, 1934, during the Night of the Long Knives, a small number of right-wing prisoners were sent to Hohnstein. Among them was Saxon Stahlhelm leader Prince Ernst Heinrich of the Wettin family, who was held for five days. After receiving a uniform, he was placed in “honorary custody,” presumably because of his title. Upon release, the camp billed the prince 176.50 Reichsmark (RM) for five days’ detention. 14

Hohnstein prisoners resisted in several ways. First, the local underground organization, United Climbing Detachment (VKA), quietly exchanged information with and distributed illegal newspapers among Hohnstein prisoners assigned to road details. The police caught VKA members Kurt Bretschneider, Alfred Richter, and Karl Täubrich, however, and placed them in the camp. Second, in the clerk’s office, the former editor of the Dresdner Volkszeitung (DrVZ), Sieber, sneaked detainees’ mail past camp censors. Finally, in the event of a “mass liquidation,” certain prisoners planned a mass escape, with the goal of fleeing to the nearby Czechoslovakian border. Although this plan was never implemented, approximately 30 prisoners successfully escaped from Hohnstein. 15 After each flight, the SA imposed two weeks of penal exercises and a smoking ban on the camp’s remaining prisoners. In June 1934, Jähnichen discontinued the smoking bans because the collective punishment hurt the canteen, which enjoyed a monopoly on tobacco and alcohol sales. 16

Under the new SS Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL), Hohnstein was closed on August 25, 1934. It is not known where the remaining detainees were dispatched, but Sachsenburg was the most likely destination.

In spring of 1935, the state court of Dresden convicted Jähnichen and 24 others for the torture of Hohnstein detainees. Under pressure from Gauleiter Mutschmann to reduce or dismiss the sentences, Reich Justice Minister Franz Gürtner commented: “Such oriental sadism as these atrocities could find no explanation or excuse, even in the most bitter struggle.” 17 In an example of Nazi antisemitism’s effect on the German judicial system in the months before the enactment of the Nuremberg Racial Laws, Gürtner proposed the lowering of Jähnichen’s prison sentence. He reasoned that Jähnichen’s torture of the Jewish prisoner Ambross, who subsequently committed suicide, was excusable because the victim in question was a “race defiler.” Gürtner’s pleas for punishing the Hohnstein guards fell on deaf ears. Hitler dismissed all Hohnstein-related verdicts and proceedings. 18

Between 1946 and 1949, the Soviet Military Administration and the German Democratic Republic tried 83 Hohnstein guards in four legal proceedings. Most defendants were sentenced to lengthy terms of confinement. The highest-ranking administrators, including Jähnichen, were not among them, although the Soviets executed Heinicker without trial in 1950. 19

**Sources** This entry builds upon the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Gün-

Primary documentation for Hohnstein begins with the testimony of Otto Urban, “Burg Hohnstein,” in *Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt: Ein Buch der Grenel: Die Opfer klagen an* (Karlsbad: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934), pp. 217–238. As a swing, Urban was unusually well situated to report on the camp administration. His account revealed the guards’ debauched behavior, one possible source of postwar misconceptions about Nazi perpetrators. A second, anonymous testimony appeared in *SPORT*: *Wie er in den Sportkommandos der Konzentrationslager getrieben wird...* Bericht eines jungen Arbeiters über Hohnstein,” in *Lernen Sie das schöne Deutschland kennen: Ein Reiseführer, unentbehrlich für jeden Besucher der Olympiade*, ed. Paul Prokop (Prague: Prokop, 1936). German Communists smuggled this *Tarnschrift* (disguised anti-Nazi publication) into Germany during the 1936 Berlin Olympics. The anonymous Social Democrat’s account was published in World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, *Braunbuck über Reichstagbrand und Hitler-Terror*, foreword by Lord Marley (Basel: Universumsbucherei, 1933), pp. 289–290. Another helpful testimony is Prinz Ernst Heinrich von Sachsen’s *Mein Lebensweg vom Königsschloss zum Bauernhof* (Munich: List, 1968). As cited in Drohsch and Wieland, documentation on the Hohnstein population includes File No. 4842 in the SHStA-(D), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten. As cited by Schmeitner, the August 1933 population figure may be found in File No. 8186, also in SHStA-(D), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten. On Eugen Frisch’s death, see “Unsere Totenliste! Die Opfer der gemordeten Mörder,” *DF*, July 19, 1934. The Gürtner correspondence can be found in documents 783, 785–788, and 3,791 PS, reproduced in the International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals* (Nürnberg: Secretariat of the IMT, 1949), 26:321–327 and 33:56–63. Useful reports on Hohnstein’s female detainees are Käte Kenta’s articles, “Konzentrationslager für Frauen,” *DNW*, January 23, 1936, pp. 100–104; and “Im Konzentrationslager für Frauen,” *DNW*, February 20, 1936, pp. 236–238. The second is an excerpted brochure, which appears to be a fictional synthesis of eyewitness accounts. The exile weekly magazine, *DNW* published numerous anti-Nazi articles of various political views in the period from April 6, 1933, to August 31, 1939. The VVN published two accounts of resistance at Hohnstein, *Widerstandsguppe Vereinigte Kletter-Abteilung* (Berlin [East]: VVN-Verlag, 1948) and *Von der Jugendburg Hohnstein zum Schutzhaftlager Hohnstein* (Berlin [East]: VVN-Verlag, 1949), which are excerpted in *Damit Deutschland lebe: Ein Quellenwerk über den deutschen antifaschistischen Widerstandskampf, 1933–1945*, ed. Walter A. Schmidt (Berlin [East]: Kongress-Verlag, 1958). Schmidt does not explain whether these sources were primary or secondary. The imprimatur and early publication dates strongly suggest that they were probably written by former Communist detainees. The 21 sentences issued in the Arlet trial (Case No. Az 1 gr 111/48) may be found in Der Generalstaatsanwalt der DDR, Ministerium der Justiz der DDR, ed., *Halt der beiden deutschen Staaten zu den Nazitreffen und Kriegsverbrechen: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin [East]: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1965). Following East German practice, only the defendants’ first names and last initials are provided. As cited in Weinke, the trial of Hohnstein guard Helmut Haupold is Case No. 1 Ks 35/46. The remaining two trials against Hohnstein defendants, cited by Weinke without case numbers, were Kurt Stachowski alias Staak, et al. (1949), with 30 defendants, and Felix Sikora, et al. (1949), with 31 defendants. The Hohnstein camp is listed in “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangeane,” *NV*, August 27, 1933, which placed the camp population at 600.

Joseph Robert White

NOTES


KISLAU

Kislau Castle, which was to become Baden’s first concentration camp, is situated about 20 miles north of Karlsruhe. In the eighteenth century it was used as a residence by the bishop of Speyer and, after secularization, as a state prison. On April 23, 1933, the local Nazi daily, Der Führer, announced the establishment of a “protective custody” camp for North Baden on the castle grounds, while the manor house continued to be used as a men’s workhouse (Arbeitshaus), as it was for the previous 50 years. There was a close relationship between the two institutions. This is illustrated by the fact that they not only shared a common interim administration; they also shared a rather lax division of inmates—for example, political prisoners and inmates of the Arbeitshaus labored together at some of Kislau’s several workshops. Even the Baden administration had problems differentiating between the two institutions and continued to send political prisoners to Kislau long after the protective custody camp had been closed down. During its existence, the concentration camp remained under the jurisdiction of the Baden Ministry of Interior, even though most other concentration camps at the time came under the control of the Inspectorate of Concentration (IKL).

Baden’s first concentration camp was established as a protective custody camp for political adversaries. However, it also served as a model camp and place of detention, especially for Social Democrats and Communists, whose Gauleiter Robert Wagner regarded as his personal enemies. Wagner used the shooting of two policemen by the Freiburg Social Democrat Christian Nussbaum, who had panicked during a police visit to his home, as the pretext to arrest most members of the regional political Left. On May 16, 1933, seven prominent Social Democrats, among them the country’s former ministers Adam Remmele (Interior) and Ludwig Marum (Justice), were brought to Kislau from Karlsruhe, where they were paraded on the back of an open truck. Their journey along the main street of Karlsruhe was met by a howling and hissing mob of spectators. The regional Nazi papers commented that “Das Wandern ist des Müllers Lust” (“Hiking is the Miller’s Pleasure”), a quotation from an old German folk song, which alluded to the former profession of Adam Remmele. The few people who protested about this public humiliation, such as Albert Nachmann, a lawyer and former partner of Marum, risked joining their colleagues on the truck. Marum and his comrades made up 7 of the 65 political prisoners who arrived at camp Kislau during May and June 1933. This was roughly the average number of inmates held at the camp at any one time, although in 1937 the total peaked at 173. Due to the camp’s limited capacity, several prisoners had to be sent to the Heuberg camp at Württemberg and later even to Dachau. Meanwhile, Kislau also became a transit camp for Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and others viewed as undesirables by the Nazis, who had served sentences in state prisons and were “being sent into ‘protective custody’ ” at Dachau, Sachsenhausen, or Buchenwald. In December 1934, returning German Foreign Legionnaires were temporarily imprisoned at Kislau as potential French spies and underwent questioning as well as indoctrination for 4 to 12 weeks. As a result, the former Legionnaires worked alongside the other inmates in the camp’s workshops, making baskets, brushes, shoes, and clothing or alternatively working in the kitchens and gardens or farming Kislau’s 270 acres. Although the products were of interest to local companies in neighboring Ginsheim and Bruchsal, there is nothing to suggest that any firms or institutions profited from the labor of prisoners. The working day at Kislau lasted from quarter past seven in the morning until bedtime at eight o’clock. Camp inmates had about one and a half hours of spare time. They could write and receive letters once a fortnight and receive visits once a week.
from a single family member, a priest, or a local Bruchsal physician. Remmele was even released on parole for several days to attend the funeral of his wife.

Kislau was neither the model camp Nazi propaganda made it out to be nor a camp with a high mortality rate. The only documented death was the murder of Marum on the night of March 29, 1934, on the orders of the Gauleitung. Among the executioners sent by Wagner were the vice-commander of the camp, Karl Sauer, and the leader of the guards, Heinrich Stix. Together they strangled Marum in his cell and then hung him from a window bar to make the murder look like a suicide. Nazi officials claimed that the former minister had suffered from depression, as he could not hope to be released from Kislau. However, Marum’s family and friends never accepted this version of events and had the corpse secretly examined by a physician who was able to ascertain the real cause of Marum’s death. The perpetrators also helped to undermine the official version of events by talking about their crime in public.4

On the night of the murder, camp commander Franz Konstantin Mohr (1882–1950) was away on holiday. Mohr, who was a former member of the colonial troops in southwest Africa and who later retired from the police as a captain, seems to have been on bad terms with the SA and SS guards whom he detested for being brutal and primitive. This attitude was already in evidence at his previous post, Baden’s second concentration camp, Ankenbuck. Mohr went to Kislau on June 7, 1933, and stayed there until his move to the Administration of Justice in 1937. For the last two years of this period, he was also director of the workhouse. The reason he gave on his application to the Baden administration for wanting this move was: “I don’t want to spend the rest of my youth among the beggars, tramps and Jews imprisoned here.”5 While some of the prisoners described Mohr as comparatively humane, working relationships between officials and the administration seem to have suffered due to his overbearing behavior.

Commander Mohr’s relationship with the 18 SA and SS guards of the concentration camp was tense. However, these Nazi activists were not the only guard personnel at Kislau. At the various work sites, political prisoners normally encountered guards who had worked and even lived at the workhouse for decades. Some of these guards, who were comparatively older, seemed to have been less watchful and turned a blind eye to inmates’ dealings in tobacco.6 At least one spectacular escape from the camp was documented. In October 1933, the Communist functionary Robert Klausmann not only escaped imprisonment but also managed to flee to France. In reaction to this, the camp commander proposed installing higher fences but could not obtain the necessary resources for such a move.7
The Marum murder was brought to court at Karlsruhe in 1948. The main perpetrator, Sauer, received a life sentence, while his two surviving accomplices both served long terms of imprisonment. Mohr as well as the Kislau guards merely had to undergo denazification.

**SOURCES**

Kislau was subordinated to the Baden Ministry of Interior, the source material of which was nearly completely destroyed at the end of World War II. However, fragments can be detected in other record groups such as the Ministry of State or the Ministry of the Attorney General, which are preserved at the GLA-K (GLA 231/28351; 237/36353 and 508/425–429; 309/4807–4824 as well as 309/Zug. 1987/54). The prisoners’ files from Kislau’s times as a state prison in the nineteenth century till the end of World War II are deposited in their own record group (521/Zug. 1982/48), and those of the guards can be found among the personal documents of Baden’s judicial officers (240/Zug. 1997/38). Further information on them can be obtained from their denazification files (e.g., 465a/51/12/14998; 465a/51/68/664; 465a/51/68/863; 465a/51/69/84). Camp commander Franz K. Mohr’s career can be reconstructed from his different personnel files (444/Zug. 1983/65; 465e/1164; 466/12819).

Angela Borgstedt

**NOTES**

1. *Dfu*, May 16, 1933; *DA*, May 17, 1933.
4. GLA-K, 465a/51/69/84; 465a/51/68/864; and 480 EK 7700.

**KÖLN (BONNER WALL)**

The detention center at Bonner Wall 114–120 came into being on the grounds of a former prison fortress dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. Originally used as a military detention center, the building had already served as a prison in the 1920s until it was shut down due to economic reasons in 1930. The Bonner Wall was located at the southern edge of the inner city, flanked by a railroad line. The use of the building for the accommodation of political prisoners between 1933 and 1934, however, was not concealed from the population.

On March 4, 1933, the Cologne police presidium put the Bonner Wall into operation on a “provisional basis.” The authorization was triggered by the mass arrest of Communist functionaries after the Reichstag Fire. More detention space was evidently needed for housing “protective custody” prisoners after the Cologne prison Klingelpütz (see Early Camps/Köln (Klingelpütz)) became overcrowded and could no longer take in any political prisoners.

No exact information exists on the number of prisoners and staff at Bonner Wall. While during the 1920s up to 400 people were supposedly interned on the premises, a report from 1946 speaks of 200 detention places. This corresponded to the capacity of the central fortress building. The capacity limit appears to have been reached for the first time in mid-April 1933 at the latest. Thus, prisoners from Bonner Wall had to be transferred to out-of-town prisons. As protective custody prisoners were coming and going during the following months, several hundred men may have passed through the prison.

Generally, prisoners remained incarcerated for several weeks before they were deported to camps such as the Brauweiler workhouse (Arbeitsanstalt), the Emsland moor camps, or the Sonnenburg camp. Some of the prisoners were handed over to courts at the initiation of proceedings or temporarily to the local Gestapo office for interrogation. Thus, the police prison at Bonner Wall served as a kind of assembly camp for the Cologne area. From here, political prisoners were allocated to local institutions and larger, national camps.

In the early months of the Nazi regime, terror in the Cologne area was mainly directed at members of the German Commu-
nist Party (KPD) and its suborganizations. Thus, this group comprised the majority of prisoners at Bonner Wall. From late June 1933 onward, after the Social Democratic Party (SPD) had been banned, Social Democrats were also incarcerated. According to eyewitness accounts, the Cologne police also sent several Jewish residents of Cologne, who previously had been victims of antisemitic riots by SA and SS, to the police prison in early April. In exceptional cases, members of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) would also be taken into custody at Bonner Wall for “behavior damaging to the Party.” There are no indications that female prisoners were interned at Bonner Wall.

Detailed information about the prison staff is lacking. Evidently, the local detention site at Klingelpütz provided personnel to take care of cooking and medical attendance for the prisoners. The Cologne police were in charge of guarding the prisoners; it remains unclear whether the camp received support from the local auxiliary police. The police prison appeared, however, to be accessible to members of the NSDAP and its suborganizations. Evidence suggests that besides the police, members of the SS and the National Socialist Factory Cells Organization (NSBO) delivered and interrogated prisoners at Bonner Wall.

Indeed, the police prison was not a torture site per se, for “detailed interrogations” were generally carried out in the Gestapo office at the Cologne police presidium on Krebsgasse, where most abuses and extortions of statements took place. According to contemporary witnesses, prisoners at Bonner Wall were nevertheless assaulted, primarily by party formations. In view of the high fluctuation of inmates, it is not very likely that a permanent prisoner aid organization came into being. As in many other protective custody sites in 1933, however, it seems that the prisoners at Bonner Wall informed one another about the situation outside the prison walls, talked about their experiences with the police and the party, and coordinated their statements. This was evidently aided by the prison’s construction, which allowed some cells to hold 15 prisoners. After Klingelpütz stopped admitting protective custody prisoners in the early fall of 1933, the police prison at Bonner Wall temporarily became the central protective custody site in Cologne. When the camp system was centralized, however, it too was shut down on March 26, 1934. The remaining prisoners were moved to Klingelpütz, where they presumably awaited transfer to pretrial confinement or transportation to other prison sites.

After 1945, the State Attorney’s Office neither investigated the Bonner Wall police prison’s role as a camp for political prisoners nor the reported prisoner abuses. Judicial authorities in Cologne initiated several investigations and conducted trials dealing with police arrests and terror measures after the Nazi seizure of power. They concentrated, however, on events at the Cologne Gestapo office in the former police presidium and did not include Bonner Wall.

**NOTES**

1. For the early history, see NWHStA-(D), Regierung Köln Nr. 8090; NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/216; KöSa, December 3, 1930; HAsK, Best. 903/94, p. 114.


3. Amtliche Bekanntmachung vom 04.03.1933, in NS-Dok, NsStPvK.

**SOURCES**


The nature of the sources accounts for the few references to Bonner Wall in the secondary literature. Original records exist only from the time of the Weimar Republic: NWHStA-(D), Regierung Köln Nr. 8090; NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/216–219. Since the Cologne district president, the Cologne police presidium, and the local Gestapo office hardly left any relevant documents behind, the prison’s role during the Nazi period is poorly documented. The reports of the Cologne Gestapo to the Gestapo (NWHStA-(D), Düsseldorf Gerichte Rep. 22/216), in records of the rural district office (NWHStA-(D), Landratsamt Köln Nr. 365), but primarily in accounts of former protective custody prisoners. Books by former prisoners are relevant sources: Deutsche Kommunistische Partei (DKP)/Ortsgruppe Bergisch Gladbach, ed., *Antifaschisten aus Bergisch Gladbach berichten* (Bergisch Gladbach, 1979). Also testimonies from postwar trials in Cologne: NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231. In addition, there are relevant collections of contemporary witness interviews at the HAsK (Best. 1344) and the NS-Dok (Best. Z). Due to the complex situation with regard to sources, it is possible that new material will be discovered in the future. Additional information might possibly be found in the prisoner files of the Cologne general state attorney (NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 132) or in the records of contemporaneous political trials against Communists and Social Democrats.

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*trans. Eric Schroeder*

5. See Bericht vom 12.7.1919, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/216, p. 150.


7. Staatsanwaltschaftliche Vernehmung des Peter G. vom 09.10.1934, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 112/16692, p. 78; NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/241, p. 3; Aussage des Ludwig F. vom 09.04.1952, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/460, p. 95; DKP, Antifaschisten aus Bergisch-Gladbach berichten, pp. 9, 41, 185. References also in ALVR, Pulheim-Brauweiler 15113 and 15114.

8. See DKP, Antifaschisten aus Bergisch-Gladbach berichten, p. 41; and the various references in HAStK, Best. 1344.

9. See the prisoner lists in NWHStA-(D), Landratsamt Köln Nr. 365; and NS-Dok, Z 10029.

10. Statement of Helene F. vom 08.08.1946, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/120, 4R; HAStK, Best. 1344/118.


14. See note 13 and NS-Dok, Z 10013.

15. NSDAP-Reichsleitung an Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt, Abt. III vom 16.01.1934, in BA-B, R 58/2047, p. 103; Aussage des Josef B. vom 12.11.1931, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/460, 30R.

16. Amtliche Bekanntmachung vom 26.03.1934, in NS-Dok, NSStPVK.


KÖLN (KLINGELPÜTZ)

The Cologne “Klingelpütz,” the central court prison for Cologne since 1838, not only served as a regular penitentiary under the Nazis but also temporarily functioned as a detention site for political “protective custody” prisoners during the period of mass arrests following February 28, 1933.

The Cologne penitentiary’s administration and the correctional bureau, which at this time still supervised the penal system in the southern Rhine province, were responsible for accommodating the new prisoners. The police apparatus, however, was not without influence over prison conditions. A higher police leader in the West (Höherer Polizeiführer im Westen) had been appointed a coordinating position for the Rhineland and Westphalia provinces in October 1932. Not only did he collect data on organizations, personnel, and activities of the leftist workers’ movements; he was also, as a February 11, 1933, decree from Prussian Minister of Interior Hermann Göring stipulated, special commissar in charge of allocating protective custody prisoners to individual detention sites. He also attempted to provide unified guidelines for the treatment of prisoners. These special responsibilities were soon rescinded, however, and taken over by the interior administration in June 1933.¹

The use of Klingelpütz as a protective custody prison began on March 1, 1933. On this day the penitentiary reported the admission of 170 “radical left-wing” political prisoners.² After further arrivals, the prison reached its highest occupancy in April 1933 with around 350 prisoners, before leveling off in May and June to an average number of 220, including 10 to 20 women. As an additional 800 to 850 prisoners and detainees were being held at Klingelpütz, and the prison at this time was designed for 975 inmates, constant overcrowding prevailed. The local judiciary administration reacted by moving regular prisoners to the local jails or suspending the sentences of minor offenders, demanding a ban on admittances for further protective custody prisoners or requesting relocation from Klingelpütz to other detention sites.³ Some of the prisoners were also transported to the Brauweiler camp northwest of Cologne.

The protective custody prisoners at Klingelpütz did not come exclusively from the municipal area. A large number came from the cities around the Cologne region. According to several surviving lists of names from the administrative district, the prisoners were almost exclusively members of the German Communist Party (KPD) and its suborganizations, the Communist Youth (Kommunistische Jugend), the Red Labor Union Opposition (Rote Gewerkschaftsopposition), Red Help (Rote Hilfe), or the Fighting League against Fascism (Kampfbund gegen den Faschismus). After the first wave of arrests, ordinary KPD members, members of workers’ sports clubs, or representatives of clubs and culture organizations associated with the KPD occasionally were interned.⁴ Members and functionaries of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Free Unions (Freie Gewerkschaften) were in the minority. In the second week of March, however, several prominent Cologne Social Democrats were sent to Klingelpütz. As symbolic figures of the SPD and the “Weimar system,” they had previously been arrested and at times been severely abused by SA and SS units. Among them were former Cologne police chief Otto Bauknecht, city councilors Dr. Ernst Friedorf and Johannes Meerfeld, editor of the Rheinische Zeitung Hugo Erfurth, and Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Wilhelm Sollmann.⁵ Occasionally, members of the Catholic milieu were also interned. In addition to the politically active university professor Benedikt Schmittmann, several people in leading positions in local authorities or businesses during the Weimar Republic were detained on the basis of usually groundless accusations of corruption.⁶

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945
The prison administration incarcerated all prisoners in the C-wing of Klingelpütz, which had been made available by relocating other prisoners and crowding cells with multiple occupants. Prison officials took over supervising the prisoners and in principle were supposed to follow the traditional penitentiary rules. Due to the increased workload, however, four assistants were hired. In contrast to other penal institutions, such as in the Düsseldorf district, for instance, neither state police officers nor the auxiliary police had significant influence on conditions in the protective custody wing. Indeed, a security detachment consisting of a regular police officer and eight auxiliary policemen was created at the prison in early March. Yet they were only to be put into action in cases of unrest inside the prison or outside attacks.

Due to the deployment of penal institution officers in the protective custody wing, violent outbursts and harassment of the prisoners appear not to have occurred. At least in the accounts from contemporary witnesses, there are no references to mistreatment. Medical treatment for the prisoners was also ensured at Klingelpütz, while the lack of sanitary conditions can be primarily explained by the old age of the penitentiary. Traces of Nazi terror were always present, however, as the local Gestapo consistently brought prisoners to the penitentiary with clearly visible injuries. In addition, the prison sickbay admitted victims of abuse by Nazi Party (NSDAP) units, for example, from the Braunes Haus on Mozartstrasse.

As far as prison conditions allowed, the protective custody prisoners used the time in Klingelpütz to catch up on the situation in the city’s workers’ quarters with the newly arrived prisoners, evaluated the political situation, and developed strategies for Gestapo interrogations. In early March, around 40 KPD prisoners collectively took action and protested against the unlawful imprisonment and revocation of their voting right for the upcoming Reichstag and local elections with a hunger strike. After talks with the prison administration, however, the strike ended after a few days.

While some of the few “prominent” prisoners were able to leave Klingelpütz after only a short time, most of the remaining prisoners spent several months in protective custody. In the course of the reorganization and centralization of the camp system, prisoners were released in a more systematic way. Thus, the better part of the protective custody prisoners from the Cologne rural district were set free in several waves, beginning in August 1933. Due to the increased workload, however, four assistants were hired. A state police officer headed the section. At his disposal were several guards and a few prisoners as trustees. The prison administration had no influence on the conditions in the “Gestapo wing” (Gestapoflügel). As the other parts of the complex were for the most part unusable after air raids, the administration gave up Klingelpütz and moved most of the regular judicial prisoners to the Siegburg and Rheinbach penitentiaries in November 1944. In contrast, the Cologne Gestapo's mass arrests led to extreme overcrowding in the Gestapo wing. A contemporary witness estimated that on average 500 prisoners were incarcerated here. In November 1944, this number rose to 800 prisoners, so that in some cases up to 14 people shared a single cell. The inmates were designated as “political” or “criminal” prisoners. Reasons for imprisonment were membership in a resistance group, “remarks hostile to the state” (staatsfeindliche Äußerungen), “crimes related to the war economy” (Kriegswirtschaftsverbrechen), or “gang formation” (Bandenbildung). The majority were foreign laborers who were imprisoned on “racial” grounds and often for minor offenses. They awaited further transport to a concentration camp or to the Gestapo office at Elisenstrasse, a major Gestapo execution site since 1944. Until early March 1945, several hundred Klingelpütz prisoners, most of them foreigners, were presumably killed this way. In the Gestapo wing, poor nutrition, catastrophic hygiene conditions, a typhus epidemic, and the physical terror of the guard personnel resulted in several fatalities. At the end of May 1945, the American military authorities found seven bodies in the inner courtyard of the prison, which evidently had been buried there in February 1945.

Similar to inmates of other Cologne camps, prisoners at the Klingelpütz Gestapo wing were evacuated to the right bank of the Rhine as the Allies drew closer. In the first days of March, prisoners still able to walk were transported by foot to the Wipperfürth and Hunswinkel labor education camps in the Upper Bergische region; around 80 prisoners, most of whom were ill with typhus, stayed at Klingelpütz. They were liberated on March 7, 1945.

After the war, there were several preliminary proceedings against members of the guard personnel and the prison physician at Klingelpütz. Due to a lack of suspicion or evidence, however, the investigations were discontinued. They focused on a complex of crimes, such as the use of Klingelpütz as an execution site for inmates and Night-and-Fog prisoners, or Gestapo crimes committed during the final period of the war. The internment of protective custody prisoners in 1933, however, remained unmentioned.

**Sources** Several general surveys of camp history and camp memorials make reference to the role of Klingelpütz during the Nazi period: Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie

Archival sources on the use of Klingelpütz as a protective custody prison are sparse. With regard to numbers of prisoners and their internment, however, there are accumulative files (Sammelakten) from the penitentiary and the Cologne correctional bureau: NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322 and 22/353. The prisoner lists of the Cologne rural district provide information on the political profiles of the prisoners: NWHSsta-(D), Landratsamt Köln Nr. 365. Neither the reports of the Cologne Gestapo to the Gestapa in Berlin (in B–A, R 58) nor the Cologne State Attorney’s Office reports to the Prussian Ministry of Justice—in NWHSsta-(D) Gerichte Rep. 21—specifically mention the protective custody prison at Klingelpütz. As far as the perspectives of former prisoners are concerned, there are sparse references in the records of the Cologne postwar trials—NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231—and in a collection of interviews with contemporary witnesses kept by the NS-Dok Cologne, Best. Z. A blend of memoirs, original research, and personal comments are provided by Ekkhard Häussermann, ed., “Die Henker vom Klingelpütz 1933–1945: Aus den Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen des Gefängnispfarrers Dr. Johannes Kühler,” KoRS, Nr. 61 (March 13, 1971) to Nr. 112 (May 14, 1971). Additional information might be found through a systematic inspection of the still existing prisoner files from Klingelpütz—NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/95 and 248/265–266—that specifically dealt with Klingelpütz. In addition, various proceedings on Cologne Gestapo crimes of the final period refer to the Gestapo wing (e.g., NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/492). The PRO, War Office 309/1145, provides information on the evacuations.

NOTES

1. On the activities of the Höherer Polizeiführer im Westen, see the references in NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/353; Landratsamt Siegkreis Nr. 44; Regierung Aachen Nr. 22757, p. 7, and Nr. 23886, p. 11. On the replacement of the Höherer Polizeiführer im Westen, see Rundschreiben der Landespolizei-Inspektion West vom 12.06.1933, in NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/353, p. 120, and ALVR, Pulheim-Brauweiler Nr. 8228, p. 12.

2. Oberstrafanstaltsdirektor Köln an Strafvollzugsamt Köln vom 02.03.1933, in NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322, p. 177.

3. See Oberstrafanstaltsdirektor Köln an Strafvollzugsamt Köln vom 02.03.1933 and Strafvollzugsamt Köln an Preussisches Justizministerium vom 11.05.1933, in NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322, pp. 177, 199, as well as the numerous references in NWHSsta-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/353.

4. See the prisoner lists in NWHSsta-(D), Landratsamt Köln Nr. 365.


8. Oberstrafanstaltsdirektor Köln an Strafvollzugsamt Köln vom 02.03.1933 und Verfügung des Strafvollzugsamtes Köln vom 03.03.1933, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322, pp. 177–178.

9. Oberstrafanstaltsdirektor Köln an Strafvollzugsamt Köln vom 15.03.1933, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322, p. 185; Vermerk des Oberstrafanstaltsdirektors Köln vom 18.04.1933, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/333, p. 35 as well as the reference in note 7.

10. See also the complaints of the Cologne SS about the supposedly too “mild” prison conditions at the state-run detention sites in the Cologne region: Nachrichtenführer 58. SS-Standarte an SS-Abteilung V vom 12.06.1933, in BA-B, R 58/3859, p. 6.

11. See, for example, Oberstrafanstaltsdirektor Köln an Strafvollzugsamt Köln vom 07.03.1933 und 13.03.1933, in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322, pp. 180, 182.


13. Oberstrafanstaltsdirektor Köln an Strafvollzugsamt Köln vom 07.03.1933 and 09.03.1933, both in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 22/322, pp. 180–181.

14. According to references in NWHStA-(D), Landratsamt Köln Nr. 365.

15. The Fernspruch des Landrates Köln vom 31.10.1933, in ibid., also refers to this.


17. Unless otherwise noted, the following details are based on the Ermittlungsakten in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/95, 231/492, 231/522, and primarily 248/265–266. There are slight variations in numbers and dates, depending on the source.

18. Bericht der Gestapo Köln vom 09.11.1944, in NWHStA-(D), RW 34/8, p. 1; Rundverfügung der Gestapo Köln vom 14.11.1944, in NWHStA-(D), RW 34/24. According to Häusermann, “Die Henker vom Klingelpütz 1933–1945,” Nr. 61 (March 13, 1971) to Nr. 112 (May 14, 1971), the Gestapo apparently approved of the establishment of a detention and torture center and—from May 1933 at the latest—maintained regular contact through separate liaison officials who came to Mozartstrasse to “hand over” and take back prisoners, examine confessions, and verify information.2

The first references for the use of the Mozartstrasse building as a detention and torture site can be found in March 1933. During the summer months, the Braunes Haus became the center of Nazi terror in Cologne.3 Among the prisoners were numerous functionaries of the German Communist Party (KPD) and its suborganizations; there were also ordinary supporters of the Communists who were apprehended for distributing leaflets or making dissident comments, as well as members of other left-wing oppositional groups. Social Democratic Party (SPD) Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Wilhelm Sollmann was the most prominent victim of the Cologne workers' movement. He recorded his experiences at Mozartstrasse in a memoir shortly after his release. Together with Hugo Efferoth, editor of the Social Democratic newspaper Rheinische Zeitung, he was repeatedly mistreated on March 9, 1933, and subsequently turned over to the Cologne police presidium.4

Since various Nazi groups and organizations took part in the arrests and did not always strictly follow political principles, not only political activists or members of the workers' movement ended up among the prisoners at Mozartstrasse. The SS and party intelligence services also brought ordinary citizens to the Braunes Haus, if they had attracted public attention for “indiscipline” (Disziplinlosigkeiten) or “defeatism” (Miesmacherei) or were considered Jewish.5 In addition, several members of the SA, SS, and NSDAP were brought to Mozartstrasse as punishment for embezzlement or other criminal offenses.6

The detainees were interned in a room in the basement that on average held 10 to 20 people.7 Generally, political prisoners were incarcerated until they signed a confession concerning their political activities or disclosed information about other dissidents. Afterward, they were released or turned over to the political police. Though most prisoners remained only a few days at the Braunes Haus, some had to spend several weeks in the so-called district cellar (Gaukeller). Thus, the Braunes Haus can be considered a combination of

KÖLN (MOZARTSTRASSE) [AKA BRAUNES HAUS]
The so-called Brown House (Braunes Haus), a building at Mozartstrasse 28 in Cologne, accommodated the Nazi Party (NSDAP) Province Administration (Gauleitung) Cologne-Aachen from October 1932 until November 1934. In 1933, it served for several months as a detention and torture center for opponents of the Nazi regime. The 1st Company of the Cologne SS (1. SS-Sturm Köln) provided the majority of the guard personnel, who were also housed in the building. The detention facility was under the command of SS-Regiment 58 (Standarte 58), established in April 1933, which belonged to SS-Upper West (Oberabschnitt West) under Gruppenführer Fritz Weitzel (1904–1940). In practice, however, the Braunes Haus was not just a self-contained SS facility; it was also used by other Cologne Nazi groups: in addition to the SS, SA patrols, the Gauleitung’s intelligence service, and the National Socialist Factory Cells Organization (NSBO) also brought in prisoners.1 At the same time, the Braunes Haus was part and parcel of the police terror system. The Cologne Gestapo had apparently approved of the establishment of a detention and torture center and—from May 1933 at the latest—maintained regular contact through separate liaison officials who came to Mozartstrasse to “hand over” and take back prisoners, examine confessions, and verify information.2

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interrogation site, torture site, and early concentration camp. As prisoners were constantly being brought in and transported to other sites, it is probable that the total number of victims reached triple digits. During the interrogations, abuse was common practice and could not even be avoided by confessing quickly. Violence was not only a means of extorting statements about the political opposition; it also aimed at the permanent intimidation and humiliation of dissidents. Thus, the prisoners were exposed to torture both before and after interrogation. Torture often was accompanied by degrading rituals: the SS forced prisoners to put on ridiculous costumes, to sing satirical songs about themselves, to destroy leftist writings or party material, to abuse fellow prisoners, or to jump into a sump where the prisoners had been poured. The torture did not stop at the physical destruction of political opponents: it led to self-inflicted wounds and attempted suicides among the prisoners who tried to avoid the suffering. At least one person died at Mozartstrasse. In view of this situation and the fact that prisoners in the basement at Mozartstrasse were constantly subject to surveillance, joint actions or detailed discussions among the prisoners were out of the question. Solidarity, however, manifested itself at certain times, for example, when prisoners helped each other after abuse, shared food, or gave each other moral support. The prisoner Ludwig Jacobsen, who did time at Mozartstrasse from mid-June to mid-July because he was a functionary of the left-wing German Communist Party Opposition (KPO), grew into the role of a trustee and “camp elder.” He gave newly arrived prisoners support and assistance in standing up to the terror. The personnel at Mozartstrasse consisted of several SS guards, a rotating torture commando of 3 to 10 SS men, and several men who performed arrests and interrogations. In addition to SS men, NSDAP functionaries took part in interrogations and abuses. Those substantially responsible included SS-Truppführer Josef Balzer (born in 1898) from the staff of SS-Regiment 58. He was both chauffeur and close confidant of Cologne Gauleiter Josef Grohé (1902–1987) and was involved in abuses, as was special duty SS-Sturmführer Arthur Ruhland (born in 1907), who led most of the questionings and stood out due to his exceptional cruelty. Their immediate superior was Adolf Marx (born in 1898), leader of the SS-Regiment and also a Cologne “old fighter,” who headed the local SS since 1931 and belonged to the local Nazi elites’ inner circle. His office was at Mozartstrasse, and he regularly inspected the detention center. Gauleiter Josef Grohé resided in the same building. In 1934, he stated in an internal party investigation that he knew nothing about the prisoner abuses in the district cellars. Due to the mere fact that it occurred in the same building, this is highly implausible.

Arrests and prisoner abuses ended at Braunes Haus after the Nazi leadership announced the completion of the “national revolution” and prohibited nonstate camps. According to a report from the Cologne district president, the “private” SA and SS prisons were disbanded by the end of July 1933. SS-Gruppenführer Weitzel oversaw the official closing of the detention site on Mozartstrasse; he visited the district cellar in late July (probably on July 27) and ordered the transfer of the remaining prisoners to the political police. The scale of prisoner abuses at Mozartstrasse, however, led to further investigations. At the behest of the NSDAP Reich Leadership, special duty Reichsinspekteur Wilhelm von Holzschuher examined the extent of the Cologne District leadership’s involvement in the terror at the Braunes Haus in late July 1934. In August 1934, an investigation by the Reich Leadership SS (Reichsführung) carried out by a representative in Cologne who interrogated witnesses followed. Apparently the widespread knowledge in Cologne of the events at Mozartstrasse was the starting point for the proceedings. Not only the victims and members of the workers’ movement but also the general public knew about the prisoner abuses; one could clearly hear the screams of the tortured on the streets, and numerous rumors circulated about the Braunes Haus. It was more important for the regime, however, that former or displeased “Party comrades,” some of whom had themselves been victims of abuse, turned to the party leadership with complaints or pressed charges. Based on these complaints, investigations were initiated against several Mozartstrasse activists. The consequences, however, were minimal. The State Attorney’s Office closed its proceedings. Holzschuher’s final report on Mozartstrasse cleared Gauleiter Grohé of any responsibility. Indeed, the central figures at the Gaukeller, Ruhland and Marx, and several other guards were expelled from the SS. At Grohé’s urging, however, the NSDAP Party Court abstained from imposing further sanctions. The responsible SS men were honored as “merited” and “unselfish” members of the “movement,” while the mistreated “Party comrades” were portrayed as “criminals” who had “crept their way into the Party.” As compensation for losing their SS posts, Ruhland and Marx were assigned positions in the party apparatus; Balzer was allowed to continue his career as Gauleiter Grohé’s adjutant and in 1942 even took over the provisional leadership of SS-Regiment 58. After 1945, the mistreatment of MdR Sollmann and the fact that a well-known athlete had been a member of the guard unit at Mozartstrasse both led to judicial proceedings in Cologne. The State Attorney’s Office and the Regional Court were able to reconstruct the events in the Braunes Haus; however, they could not identify direct participants, nor could they doubtlessly assign any of the reported abuses to specific perpetrators. The proceedings ended with dismissals and court acquittals.


The sparse documents of the Cologne NSDAP, SA, or SS that remain do not contain any direct references to the detention and torture site on Mozartstrasse. Two testimonies from victims, however, offer rather detailed information. For one, there is a short account by MiR Wilhelm Sollmann, which has been published numerous times. See, for example, Stadt Köln, ed., „... vergehen kann man die Zeit nicht, das ist nicht möglich ...“ Kölner erinnern sich an die Jahre 1929–1945; Zum hundertsten Geburtstag am 1. April 1981 (Cologne: HAsk, 1981), p. 64; Widerstand und Verfolgung in Köln 1933–1945: Ausstellung HAsK (Cologne: HAsK, 1974), p. 112. Furthermore, there is Ludwig August Jacobsen’s account So hat es angefangen. Ein Bericht aus den Tagen der “nationalen Erhebung” in Köln (Cologne: Kölner Volksbl.-Verlag, 1987). Jacobsen delivers not only a solid and differentiated picture of the conditions in the prison and prisoner abuses but also valuable information about his fellow inmates and the personnel at Mozartstrasse. References from other sources confirm the high level of accuracy and credibility. In addition to Jacobsen’s account, postwar documents from the Cologne courts—NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/12 and 231/241—as well as records of contemporaneous preliminary proceedings in the inventory of the Cologne special court—NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 112—are available. A trial against a former NSDAP member documented the rumors circulating about Mozartstrasse in Cologne. He had gathered incriminating material on the Cologne Gauleitung and also tried to document the prisoner abuses at Mozartstrasse. In 1936, he was convicted of “spreading horror stories” (Verbreiten von Graueltümern) and false accusations; see NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 112/15166 and 112/16692–16694. A systematic examination of the Cologne special court files might turn up similar finds. More detailed information on the perpetrators can be found in the collections of the former BDC in the BA-B. Information on Josef Grohé’s role can be found in his Spruchgerichtsverfahren (BA-K, Z 42 IV/1806 and 1806b).
12. Vernehmung des Max Sch. vom 28.7.1933 und Bericht des Christian H. from 16.10.1933, both in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 112/1148, pp. 2–20; and numerous references in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 112/3004, and BA-BL (BDC), OPG, Ruhlendorf, Arthur.
14. Jacobsen, So hat es angefangen, pp. 84, 120; NS-Dok, Z 1008 and Z 10037.
16. See note 13 as well as Gauleiter Grohé an NSDAP Oberes Parteigericht vom 03.01.1935 and Bericht der 2. Kammer des Obersten Parteigerichts vom 04.02.1935, both in BA-BL (BDC), OPG, Ruhlendorf, Arthur.
17. References in NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 112/5126 and 112/6177, BA-BL (BDC), SSO, Balzer, Josef.
18. NWHStA-(D), Gerichte Rep. 231/12 and 231/241.

KÖNIGSBRÜCK BEI DRESDEN

On March 22, 1933, the Saxon State Criminal Office ordered the establishment of a labor service camp for "protective custody" prisoners at Königsbrück bei Dresden. Situated in Hostel Stenz, Königsbrück existed until May 28, when the 71 prisoners were transferred to Hohnstein, a larger early concentration camp.

SOURCES
This entry follows the standard work on the early Nazi camps, Klaus Drobitsch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). The number of prisoners at Königsbrück can be found in Mike Schmitzner, "Ausschaltung—Verfolgung—Widerstand: Die politischen Gegner des NS-Systems in Sachsen, 1933–1945," in Sachsen in der NS-Zeit, ed. Clemens Vollnhals (Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenhauer Verlag, 2002).

As reproduced in Drobitsch and Wieland (p. 48), primary documentation about Königsbrück can be found in the files of the Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, located in the SHStA-(D).

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KÖNIGSTEIN

On March 15, 1933, the Königstein SA converted a workers' nature retreat on the Elbe River into an early concentration camp. SA-Sturmführer Erich Rossig headed the camp, and SA-Sturmführer Johannes Delin commanded the guard unit.

The number of guards is not known. On April 12, 1933, the camp population stood at approximately 215 prisoners. The prisoners included Communists, Social Democrats, and at least one Jew.

At Königstein, the guards forced the prisoners to conduct demoralizing and debilitating exercises. An anonymous prisoner left an account of this "sport": "We had to run on the double for three-quarters of an hour, then stood at attention for an hour without stirring, at the same time we were threatened with a revolver and beaten with rubber hoses, horselips, and carbines. Then we had to kneel for an hour, head facing the ground. If this drill were carried out sloppily we were kicked in the face and neck, namely with hob-nailed boots. Then we got another hour-long beating. Individuals were beaten half to death."

The five-day ordeal of Max Tabaschnik demonstrated the antisemitism, sadism, and greed of Königstein's guards. Born in Ukraine on April 20, 1893, Tabaschnik had lived in Germany as a stateless person since 1910. He practiced dentistry in Pirna near Dresden after World War I. On March 25, 1933, the police took him into "protective custody" at Pirna's Fronfest prison on suspicion of circulating atrocity stories against the regime, a common Nazi allegation against Jews. About protective custody, he observed, "From whom should I be 'protected,' or who from me?"

With other Fronfest prisoners, Tabaschnik was transferred to Königstein on May 5, 1933. The initiates were kicked and verbally abused, but the guard commander ordered Tabaschnik to step forward because he was Jewish. On the first day, while working in the stone quarry an SA guard ordered him to run. Remembering that others had been "shot while attempting to escape," he stood pat. While working, the guards shouted antisemitic epithets at him: "Isidor, Sahra [sic], garlic, onion!" When the others returned to the camp, Tabaschnik endured "extra training": "Forward march! Lie down! Stand up! Lie down!" After striking him several times, the guards played a joke, prepared in advance, by presenting him a certificate of permission for emigration to Palestine. The reverse bore Nazi slogans, however: "Germany awake! Perish Juda!"

Denied food and water, Tabaschnik was returned to the cellar. The guards disrupted his sleep by "pouring water over [his] feet." Rossig and Delin summoned him to the camp leaders' office at 10:30 P.M., where they demanded that he surrender the 100 Reichsmark (RM) in his possession. He did so and admitted to having an additional 250 RM at home but refused to let them have it, because he would not leave his wife and 10-year-old son in distress. Rossig nevertheless called Frau Tabaschnik at midnight to demand the money. Returned to the cellar before 2:00 A.M., he was roused three hours later, when Rossig wanted another 20 RM, allegedly in order to pay for the fueling of the quarry truck.

As his involuntary fast entered a second day, Tabaschnik watched the other prisoners eat lunch. A guard kicked him when he attempted to drink some water. By now, his thirst
was all-consuming. In the cellar, the guards made him do 150 deep knee bends. The guard adjutant, Baron von Pose, stood over him, screaming, “Faster! Faster!” He was exhausted after 80 repetitions. Delin exclaimed, “But he still has not licked up our spit!”—at which point the SA made him lick the ground. The camp cook then presented him with his first bread and water in two days, but only to drag out the torture, because the concoction consisted mainly of salt and pepper. When Tabaschnik refused to eat it, the “ruffian” punched and kicked him, forcing him to admit, “That is a rump steak, that is a little piece of apple, that is a glass of beer.” Afterward, he was made to sing Russian songs, as the guards danced Russian style. Before this session was over, Rossig and Delin told him, “Either you go to [the early camp at] Sonnenstein . . . or you die. One of the two.”

Tabaschnik’s third day began with the SA bringing him before a policeman. The SA announced that if he did not pay any more, the policeman would shoot him. Rossig later handed him a pistol so that he could commit suicide. Without food or rest for three days, he pulled the trigger but discovered that this was another joke at his expense, because the firearm was unloaded. Conducted to the quarry, the guards told him, “There is no Sunday for Jews.” After lifting heavy stones, he performed penal exercises. Two guards struck him in the chest and put their boots on his head, so that he ended up with “sand in his eyes.” When work resumed, he had to load huge stones onto a truck. The guards harangued him when he proved unable to do so. In camp, the guards gave Tabaschnik a rough-hewn Mohawk. Around his arm they placed a band in Reichsbanner colors—black, red, and gold. Although the publication of his testimony in a Social Democratic compilation suggested that he was a Social Democrat, he never explicitly indicated his political leanings. The Nazis probably labeled him as Reichsbanner because he was Jewish. In another extortion tactic, Delin asked about his business associates. The prisoner mentioned his dental goods supplier, Firma Zahndepot Timmel in Dresden, with which he had enjoyed a standing line of credit for a decade. The testimony never indicated whether Tabaschnik’s terrible appearance: “Your clothes are filthy—that’s from the work!”

On his fourth night at Königstein, Tabaschnik’s treatment began to change. The guards allowed him to rest undisturbed. On Tuesday morning, the SA sheared off his Mohawk, which he took as a sign of his imminent execution. Summoned to the camp leader’s office, Rossig instead prepared him for the visit of his wife and child. The camp leader listed some rationalizations to explain away Tabaschnik’s terrible appearance: “Your hair was shaved off—good, in the camp your beard was plaited! Your hand is bandaged—you injured yourself in the quarry! Your clothes are filthy—that’s from the work!”

The visit was painful for father and son. Werner Tabaschnik recalled: “I didn’t even think that he was our father.” Tabaschnik was released on May 10 and sent to recover in a Pirna hospital. Upon release, Rossig returned half of his 100 RM but threatened to kill him if he talked about Königstein. In late March 1934, the Tabaschniks illegally crossed the Czech border.

It is also known that guards stomped Communist prisoner Fritz Gumbert to death. Anonymous prisoner testimonies singled out SA-Mann Bienert and Truppenführer Fuhrmann as especially cruel. An account that ran in the Prague Sozialdemokrat alleged that these guards engaged in “sadistic orgies” of torture and sexual abuse.

Königsstein was dissolved on May 31, 1933. The remaining prisoners were transferred to the larger early camp at Hohnstein. It is not known whether Rossig, Delin, or other camp staff were tried after the war.

NOTES

1. “SPORT: Wie er in den ‘Sportkommandos’ der Konzentrationslager getrieben wird . . . Aus dem Brief eines Gefangenen aus Königstein,” in **Lernen Sie das schöne Deutschland kennen: Ein Reiseführer, unentbehrlich für jeden Besucher der Olympiade** (Prague: Prokop, 1936). This ostensible guide to the 1936 Berlin Olympics was a piece of camouflage containing several brief camp testimonies and an accurate map of concentration camps and detention centers. The account originally ran in longer form in World Committee for the Victims of German Fascism, **Braunbuch über Reichstagsbrand und Hitler-Terror**, foreword by Lord Marley (Basel: Universumbücherei, 1933).

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3. Ibid., pp. 95–97.
4. Ibid., pp. 97–98.
5. Ibid., pp. 100–101.
6. Ibid., pp. 102–103.
10. The accounts are reproduced in World Committee, Braunnbuch, pp. 290–291.

KUHLEN [aka RICKLING, FALKENRIED, INNERE MISSION]

On July 18, 1933, Segeberg rural district administrator Werner Stier established a small concentration camp outside Rickling (Gemeinde Rickling), at the Landesverein für Innere Mission (State Association for Inner Mission) in Schleswig-Holstein. This camp had several names, including Kuhlen, Rickling, Falkenried, and Innere Mission. Founded in 1875, the Landesverein was a psychiatric and relief institution owned by the Evangelical state church. By the time of the concentration camp’s foundation, the Innere Mission had come under the pro-Nazi German Christian movement (Deutsche Christen). In 1933, the Mission’s director was Dr. Oskar Epha. Intended to relieve overcrowding at Schleswig-Holstein’s first early concentration camp at Glückstadt, Kuhlen occupied the Falkenried barracks, one of several barracks established at Innere Mission for work relief during the Great Depression. The first detainees, recalled prisoner Albert Stange, refitted the civilian barracks as a concentration camp, including the digging of post holes for the camp fence.1 The Innere Mission’s deacon, Franz Schuba, handled camp finances through the Mission’s estate administration. Mission documents indicated the administrative relationship: “Landesverein für Innere Mission, Detachment Concentration Camp Kuhlen.”2 The Mission did not issue direct orders to the prisoners, however.

Kuhlen had a mixed SS and SA administration. The commandant was SS-Mann Othmar Walchensteiner. His deputy was Erwin H., an SS trooper from Neumünster. The remaining eight guards, called “camp police,” were SA members. The prisoners addressed the guards by police, not SA, titles, such as “Hauptwachtmeister.”3 For a brief period, Innere Mission contributed to the guards’ health insurance but ceased to do so after Oberlandjägermeister Denker of the Bad Segeberg police informed the deacon that it was not necessary.3 The Austrian-born Walchensteiner belonged to the Artamanen youth movement. He joined the Nazi Party in 1925 (membership number 1083), but his membership lapsed while he was studying at an Evangelical monastery for the deaconry.4 In the early 1930s, he reactivated his party membership. A letter from the Schleswig-Holstein Gauleitung (Nazi Party province Administration), dated August 5, 1933, praised his concentration camp work: “How valuable and how necessary is your activity in the interests of the National Socialist State.” The Gauleitung suggested that Walchensteiner’s name was under consideration for promotion as head of “one of the larger institutions.”5 This possibility failed to materialize; Walchensteiner headed the Innere Mission’s barracks for chronic alcoholics for approximately two years after the concentration camp’s closure. In the late 1930s, he served at Sachsenhausen concentration camp and at SS academies at Vogelsang and Krössinsee. After military service from 1939 to 1941, he was promoted to SS-Obersturmbannführer and served with an Einsatzgruppe in the Soviet Union. He was killed near Minsk on December 10, 1943, while holding the post of Gebietskommissar.6

In total, Kuhlen held 191 mostly political prisoners. Nearly all originated from Schleswig-Holstein, with the exceptions of 3 prisoners from East Prussia, Sweden, and Switzerland.7 No Jewish prisoners were interned in the camp. Of the 191 prisoners, the majority (133) came from Neumünster, Pinneberg, and Segeberg. The prisoners’ ages ranged from 18 to 63. Most detainees were Social Democrats and Communists, although at least 2 were held for alleged petty theft and spreading rumors.8 On August 31, 1933, the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung newspaper boasted that with the admission of 13 Communists and 7 Socialists to Kuhlen “a blow” had been struck “against Marxism in Bad Oldesloe and Altona.”9 The majority of detainees were imprisoned between 31 and 40 days, but no one remained in the camp for the entire time span. Although there were no deaths recorded, the prisoners suffered maltreatment. Walchensteiner had a reputation for harsh and arbitrary behavior.

The camp population exceeded available space. Although the Norddeutsche Rundschau newspaper reported that it could accommodate 60 prisoners when Kuhlen opened, reports in the Pinneberger Kreisblatt and the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landeszeitung subsequently alleged that space was available for 100 prisoners.10 As indicated by an Innere Mission report, prepared when Falkenried was still a civilian labor camp, the barracks were originally designed to house 40 people.11 After the first weeks, Kuhlen’s population exceeded the Nazi press estimates: the camp had 19 prisoners in July, 102 in August, 141 in September, and 115 in October. The presence of arrest cells contributed to the space shortage. Falkenried also had a library for political reeducation. The camp lacked an infirmary, however. As prisoner Christian Zabel recalled, the sick and healthy shared bedding space. Serious cases were transferred to local hospitals.12

The detainees performed agricultural labor for Innere Mission. In total they worked 75,000 hours for the Mission, against an outlay for the camp of slightly more than 9,000 Reichsmark (RM).13 Kreis Segeberg paid the Mission for inmate deployment, at a daily rate of 1.50 RM per person per day, but Deacon Schuba unsuccessfully attempted to secure a higher rate. The prisoners worked from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.14 After work, they sang Nazi songs.
On August 21, 1933, the *Pinneberger Kreisblatt* painted a highly idealized picture of detainee labor. Claiming that “the prisoners find themselves in an outstanding food situation,” the article cited a “camp administrator” who averred “that educational labor [shows] great early success. By one and large the prisoners are polite and willing to work.” One “of our Elmshorn prisoners,” the *Kreisblatt* continued, a legal counselor, performed kitchen duty before setting off for agricultural labor. In peeling potatoes, “he finds himself in the best society of a former mayor.” Former Communist Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Reinhold Jürgensen, depicted in the same article as “the pride of Elmshorn,” reported that he “feels well and gladly works in the fresh air.”

Visitors to this camp included the Elmshorn mayor and the Hamburg Swedish consul. Mayor Krumbeck inspected the prisoners from his town and contrasted the Nazis’ alleged humanity with the Communists’. After giving the Hitler greeting, he announced: “Lord God, we Nazis are so humane. Where would we be if the Communists had managed to gain control over the State?” Consult Jänson visited Kuhlen to interview Swedish citizen “P.,” an unemployed sailor who lived in Trittau. Conversing with the detainees alone in Swedish, Jänson discovered that P. got into trouble while joking with someone he thought was a friend, who in turn denounced him to the authorities. P. also complained that Walchensteiner threatened that the sailor would “never see his wife again” if he failed to carry out the commandant’s orders to the letter.

The Kuhlen detainees included the Zabel family, Adolf and sons Herbert and Christian, who entered the camp on August 18, 1933. Accused of being an “intellectual” who flouted the Nazis’ laws, the Zabel family included Adolf, Christian, and Herbert Zabel but does not cite Their’s report is dated Neu-

Kuhlen was formally dissolved in October 1933, and the prisoners were transferred to the Emsland camps. In a post-war account, director Epha attempted to distance himself from the concentration camp by claiming that he was in Berlin in the fall of 1933, lobbying at the Prussian Ministry of Interior for its dissolution. The Kiel Regional Court tried Erwin H. in 1948 in connection with his Kuhlen activities. Dissatisfied with the court’s lenient sentence (one year), the British occupation authorities ordered H.’s retrial, which resulted in a three-year penitentiary sentence. Credited with time served in an Italian camp at war’s end, the former camp deputy was released in July 1950.


Primary documentation for this camp begins with the ALIM, as cited by Jenner, *Konzentrationslager Kuhlen 1933*. Particularly valuable are the Mission’s 1932 report, File DD 410, which furnishes an estimate for Falkenried’s accommodations as a “free labor service camp” and the Mission’s accounting records. Jenner also reproduces some reports related to this camp from the LA-Sch-H. These include the 1948 proceedings against Erwin H.; Jenner does not cite a case number for this trial. Reproduced as the appendix to this volume is a Swedish consular report from Hamburg to the Berlin embassy, dated September 12, 1933, which is from FMAS-S(5). As cited by Jenner, information on Walchensteiner’s career may be found in his BDCPF. Jenner reproduces the testimonies of Adolf, Christian, and Herbert Zabel but does not cite an archival source. Christian Zabel’s report is dated November 30, 1933, but it is not clear when or where the other two reports were produced. Press reports for Kuhlen include a Socialist exile article, “Stätten der Hölle: 65 Konzentrationslager—80,000 Schutzhaftgefangene,” *NV*, August 27, 1933, which lists this camp as “Rickling.” Jenner reproduces many local press reports from the *HoCu*, October 14 and 17, 1933; *NdrRu*, July 18, 1933; *PKh*, August 21, September 23, and October 5, 1933; *SHZ*, August 17, 21, 28, and 31, 1933; and *SKTh*, September 7, 1933.

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**Notes**


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3. Innere Mission to Denker, September 9, 1933, ALIM, reproduced in Jenner, Konzentrationslager Kuhlen 1933, p. 84.


5. NSDAP Gauleitung Schleswig-Holstein to Walchensteiner, August 5, 1933, ALIM, reproduced in Jenner, Konzentrationslager Kuhlen 1933, p. 81.


16. Ibid.


**LANDAU [aka SCHUTZHAFTLAGER IN DER LANDAUER FORTKASERNE]**

On March 9, 1933, the National Socialists seized power in Bavaria and therewith also in the Bavarian Palatinate. The government, sustained by the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), was removed from office and fled Munich. As in Bavaria, Nazi sympathizers also celebrated this event in the Palatinate with mass rallies on March 10, 1933. Simultaneously, the new rulers began arresting political opponents, primarily members of the German Communist Party (KPD), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (RB). By March 11, 1933, 15 citizens of Landau had been taken into “protective custody” and brought to the local court prison. Nine of these individuals were Communists, 2 were members of the RB, 1 was a Social Democratic city councilor, and 1 was a member of the German Democratic Party (DDP). The latter 2 were Jews.

The number of protective custody prisoners increased rapidly as political opponents of the Nazis not only from Landau but also from the entire southern Palatinate and from Speyer were brought to the Landau local court prison. By April 3, 1933, their number had grown to 50 people, and the prison was completely overcrowded. As a result the political leadership in Landau sought out and found a solution to this problem: “When during the days of the National Socialist revolution many protective custody prisoners were delivered to the Landau local court prison, Obersturmbannführer Keim, special commissioner for the Landau district office, agreed with the provisional mayor of Landau that protective custody prisoners had to work.”

In order to enforce this decision, a working place for the Landau prisoners was set up in the second half of March 1933. From this point on, it was referred to as “protective custody camp in the Landau fort barracks” (Schutzhaftlager in der Landauer Fortkaserne). The prisoners had to clear away the torn-up cement floor of the military barracks of the fort and prepare the area as a sports field for the SA. The city council of Landau, represented by the welfare office, had to provide the necessary tools and aids for the job, as well as suitable work clothes for the prisoners. Also, the accommodations for prisoners and their guards (SA and SS men), which provided shelter during bad weather, were financed with state funds. In total the costs for the city of Landau amounted to 1,138.53 Reichsmark (RM).
The prisoners working in the Fortkaserne also received their meals there. They were, however, still housed in the Landau local court prison, where the SS picked them up, took them to work, and brought them back in the evenings.6

The local press reported extensively about the prisoners' work. On April 11, 1933, and again on May 18, 1933, the Landauer Anzeiger reported on the work of approximately 35 to 40 prisoners in an article replete with photographs under the title: “A sports field emerges from the stony desert: the work of the protective custody prisoners in the Landau Fort for the creation of an SA club house with a sports field.”7 The photographs show the prisoners working, preparing lunch, and having lunch with SA and SS men. The caption reads, “We can see from their happy faces that it tastes good.”8 Both articles represent Nazi propaganda of that time intended to play down the situation in the camps. They reveal little truth about the daily life of the prisoners.

Nevertheless, the conditions in the Landau camp still seem to have been bearable in comparison with many other camps. The prisoners received meals from the SA kitchen in addition to their prison rations.9 They were also allowed to receive visitors and move around freely with them in a designated area.10

Only one case of prisoner abuse in the Landau camp is known. In June 1933, an arbitrary action initiated by the SS and later stopped by the district leader took place against Landau's Jews. Jewish citizens were arrested and first brought to the “Schwan” hotel, an SS club house, and then imprisoned in a barracks at the Fortkaserne. The SS men abused the prisoners cruelly: “I was injured, beaten so severely in the Fortkaserne that I had to go to the hospital in Basel, Switzerland, for treatment and was unable to work for a year.”11

After the sports field was completed, the protective custody camp was dissolved. On July 15, 1933, the local press reported the release of the last protective custody prisoner.12 From mid-March 1933 to July 15, 1933, a total of 135 prisoners had been interned at Landau. The length of imprisonment varied greatly and ranged from a few days up to three months.13

The authorities had to deal with the camp's funding well into 1935. The city of Landau attempted to get reimbursed for the funds that they had spent on setting up and maintaining the prison. The city argued that neither the local police authorities nor the welfare authorities should have to pay for political protective custody.14 The Palatinate government in Speyer deferred all responsibility in a countermove: it did not even know of the Landau camp's establishment.15 In August 1933, the four Jewish prisoners in the protective detention camp received a request for payment from the city of Landau. They were supposed to pay a retroactive allowance for food of 10 RM per day.16 This form of refunding failed, however, due to the insolvency of the Jewish citizens.17 Also, SA-Regiment 18 (Standarte 18), which had benefited from the prisoners' work, was not willing to cover the costs, since it supposedly did not have the necessary financial means. In addition, the prisoners' work had been carried out on state property; since that area of land now supposedly possessed a higher value, no financial damage had been inflicted on the city of Landau.18

**NOTES**

1. LA-Sp, J 87, No. 4.
2. ASt-Ld, A II 3062, Schreiben des SA-Sturbannes II-18, Landau, an die Kreisleitung der NSDAP, 03.02.1934.
3. Ibid.
4. ASt-Ld, A II 3062, various orders and invoices.
5. ASt-Ld A II 3062, Schreiben des Städtischen Wohlfahrtsamtes an das Bezirksamt, 26.05.1933.
6. LA-Sp, J 74, No. 5375, Aussage von Johann Meyer; ASt-Ld, A II 3062, Schreiben des SA-Sturbannes II-18, Landau, an die Kreisleitung der NSDAP, 03.02.1934.
LANGLÜTJEN II

In February 1933, Hermann Göring decreed that auxiliaries from the ranks of the so-called national associations would reinforce the regular police. Göring's decree was also implemented in Bremen at the beginning of March. The government assembled the auxiliary police (Hilfspolizei) from the ranks of the SS, SA, and the Stahlhelm, which supported not only the municipal police (Schutzpolizei) but the Criminal Police as well. The Bremerhaven Hilfspolizei, brought into being on March 7 and, like its Bremen counterpart, equipped with rubber truncheons and wore a white armband with the inscription "SA men: they were armed with pistols, carbines, and rubber truncheons and wore a white armband with the inscription "Hilfspolizei." The police officers were in charge of the provisions for the prisoners and the SA, detailing the guards and controlling their schedules, reading the names of prisoners at roll call, and performing the morning exercises with them. Möller emphatically exhorted his police not to tolerate any excesses from the SA. To rule out from the beginning incidents such as those at Missler, the SA was not allowed to enter prisoner cells. These measures had little chance of success, however, for the SA people only reluctantly obeyed the police orders. Möller intervened and issued warnings when after only a short time he received complaints about individual SA men who carelessly performed their duty and conducted themselves defiantly vis-à-vis the police. Through his visits to the island, he received additional information: prisoners, who later characterized him as an upright and respectable officer, came to him and complained about the SA harassment, so that Möller forced the dismissal of the guilty. In this way, by around the end of October 1933, SA men, who had been in the interim newly recruited
from Bremerhaven, replaced almost the complete guard staff from the city of Bremen. With the new guards, there were few excesses worth mentioning in the treatment of inmates.

There are no definite references as to how space within the camp was divided. It can be assumed that guard units were accommodated in a separate living house that no longer exists, while the prisoners stayed in the casemates. As the camp was only designed for a maximum of 50 people, there may have been 7 to 10 rooms, 3 communal cells, and 4 provisional detention cells that served as single cells. These deep, dark, and damp basement rooms were located in the center of the embankment structure, in a narrow passage, rather far down, inaccessible, and difficult to ventilate. They primarily served to isolate those prisoners who refused to give evidence to the Gestapo. Hardly anything is known about the furniture of the cells, but they were probably similar to those on Barge 86 and also limited to the necessities: long tables with several seats and beds with thin straw mattresses arranged on top of each other.

As at Ochtumsand, separate kitchens were set up for prisoners and guard personnel; guards apparently also had a small canteen available to them. There are contradictory statements regarding provisions. They were probably rather modest but not nearly as bad, however, as in the later camps. The prisoners’ relatives, who were very well informed of the prisoners’ whereabouts, could send them mail and tobacco on a weekly basis. On the occasion of a visit to the island fortress in June 1933, the head of the Bremen Office in Bremerhaven (Bremisches Amt), along with a doctor, became convinced that the prisoners required medical treatment due to the dampness in the cells. In conversations with the Gestapo and others involved, he asserted that regular examinations were necessary.

On November 9 and at Christmas in 1933, the authorities granted amnesties that applied to the prisoners of both Bremen camps. Langlütjen II was closed on January 25, 1934, after only four months in operation. There were three deciding factors: (1) high costs, (2) relatively low numbers of prisoners, and (3) the dependency on the tides, which resulted in constant organizational and administrative problems. From that point on, only the Ochtumsand concentration camp was available for interning Bremen “protective custody” prisoners. This camp, however, was also closed on May 15, 1934. Those who up to that point had not yet been released were transferred to one of the new camps outside of Bremen, to Dachau, or to the Emsland moor camps.

The Bremen concentration camps of 1933 are not to be compared with the several “wild” camps that came into being around the same time and were controlled by the SA and SS; nor are they the equivalent of those camps that were to systematize the terror on the basis of “special regulations.” The Bremen camps were stopgaps, improvisations that developed from a lack of space in the first months of the dictatorship. Correspondingly, they still had characteristics from the transitional period: they did not have specific unified camp regulations, and no systematic program of terror was employed. In several areas the principle of chance prevailed.

On March 28, 1951, proceedings were opened before the Bremen Regional Court, which was to deal with the crimes committed “at Bremen and Langlütjen”; those proceedings, however, were soon referred to by the public as the “Missler trial,” as the camps Ochtumsand and Langlütjen came up merely in passing. Only under point 28 of the indictment does the Skrotzky case—the abuse and subsequent suicide of a prisoner on Langlütjen—receive mention. The defendant was a former SA Hilfspolizei officer who in the end was sentenced to eight months in prison (part of which he had already served) for bodily harm on duty concomitant with severe bodily harm in four cases. The remaining sentence was suspended. Those politically responsible for the camp, such as Police Senator Laue, for example, were not called to account.

**SOURCES** The source base is severely lacking, as several files were destroyed around the end of the war. This primarily refers to Gestapo files, which are of the utmost importance. Relevant material exists only in the StA-Br; there are the attorney’s files from the Bremen regional court, which concern the so-called Missler trial. These documents, which are otherwise very informative, remain sparse on the construction of the camp. The former prisoners primarily spoke of their suffered mistreatments after 1945—organizational or infrastructure problems were then of secondary importance. The history of both concentration camps had not been explored until 1992. Up to that date there existed highly contradictory information and rumors. In 1992, the author published the first relevant work: *Die Konzentrationslager Langlütjen und Ochtumsand* (Bremerhaven: Wissenschaftsverlag NW, Verlag für Neue Wissenschaft, 1992).

Lothar Wieland

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**NOTES**

1. On the auxiliary police in Bremen and Bremerhaven, see StA-Br, file “Löblich,” 8 KMs 1/51, vol. 1; and ASi-Br, file “Gestapo 1946–47.”

2. On the senate’s motives, see ZdL, collection “Verschiedenes,” Folder 207: Copies from the file “Schutzhaft politischer Gefangener” of the Senatsregistratur Bremen, primarily minutes of the senate meeting on July 18, 1933.

3. See various witness statements in StA-Br, file “Löblich,” 8 KMs 1/51, vol. 3.

4. Anklageschrift der Oberstaatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Bremen v. 26.9.1950, in StA-Br, 8 KMs, 1/51, Bd. 3.


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**LEIPZIG**

On March 10, 1933, the Leipzig Police Prison and related facilities became a “protective custody” camp. With the arrest of numerous leftists in Saxony after the promulgation of the Reichstag Fire Decree, the police president of Leipzig also sent detainees to the prison on Beethovenstrasse and to an annex of the police headquarters on Wächterstrasse. On
April 12, 1933, Beethovenstrasse by itself held 191 prisoners. Although the details are sketchy, the Wächterstrasse prisoners worked under SS and SA supervision in the erection of a shooting range. Some may have been held in a pub frequented by the SA. Although Leipzig remained operational as a protective custody camp until at least September 1933, the detainees were transferred to larger camps at Colditz Castle, Hainichen, and Sachsenburg.

The Leipzig detainees included Walter Liebing, Helmut Müller, and Arno Henschel. The three formed what Liebing later characterized as a “resistance group” inside the prison. In nine weeks’ detention in the “Gestapo cellar,” Liebing was subjected to “lengthy interrogations and tortures.” On approximately September 15, 1933, he and his comrades were dispatched to Colditz.¹


Primary documentation for this camp begins with File No. 4842 of the Ministerium für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten in the SHStA-(D), as cited by Drobsch and Wieland and by Schmeitzner. There is a listing for the Leipzig investigative prison in Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, Ursula Krause-Schmitt, and ITG, *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 1: 241. A brief personal account of Leipzig can be found in Walter Liebing, “Mutiger Widerstand im faschistischen Konzentrationslager Colditz,” in *Damit Deutschland lebe: Ein Quellenwerk über den deutschen antifaschistischen Widerstandskampf, 1933–1945*, ed. Walter A. Schmidt (Berlin [East]: Kongress-Verlag, 1958).

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**NOTE**

LESCHWITZ BEI GÖRLITZ

[AKA WEINHÜBEL]

As early as March 1933, the Görlitz SA established a so-called private concentration camp in the former town of Leschwitz, on the bend of the Neisse River. Official documents referred to the camp as Wein hübel. It was located in the unused Hossner cloth factory, which, according to Paul Schwerin, had been owned by a Czech. Prior to the establishment of the camp, the so-called Braun Haus (Schützengasse 6) in the center of Görlitz had been used for a number of purposes, including torture.

The camp population probably ranged between 1,300 and 2,000. According to contemporary documents, only around 300 prisoners from Görlitz and its surrounding area were permanently held in the camp. This suggests a large fluctuation in the prisoner numbers. The facility was not a large one, with the result that the prisoners were quartered together in confined spaces. They were political opponents of the Nazi regime, Communists (KPD), Social Democrats (SPD), and anti-Fascists without party affiliation.

The SA occupied the Görlitz community center (*Volkshaus*) on Mittelstrasse as well as the trade union center (*Gewerkschaftshaus*) on March 13, 1933. The SPD officials and unionists were arrested and taken to the Leschwitz concentration camp or the police prison. According to Karl Würzburg, on May 2, 1933, 70 members of the leftist parties the KPD and 120 members of the SPD were arrested. Schwerin refers to new arrestees, mostly KPD members from towns to the north and northwest of Görlitz such as Rothenburg, Weisswasser, and Niesky. In a letter dated June 3, 1933, reporting to the president of Liegnitz, there is an accurate list of the camp inmates, including the following information: (1) number; (2) first name and surname; (3) date of birth; (4) residence; (5) location of “protective custody”; and (6) cursory details of the reasons for protective custody. In the relevant files for July 1, 1933, it is recorded that 2 members of the SPD and 2 KPD leaders were taken from Neu-Tschöpeln bei Muskau as protective custody prisoners to the Leschwitz concentration camp.

The concentration camp was under the control of SA-Standarte 19, which had its base at Furtstrasse 3 in Görlitz. It was still located at this address in 1941–1942, the last telephone book to be published before 1949–1950. Memoirs also refer to the SA-Sturm 19. The commander was SA-Truppführer Ernst Krüger from the town of Kohlfurt (Węgliniec) to the northeast of Görlitz. He and his wife lived on the first floor of the former factory’s administration building. On the ground floor were the guards’ room and the kitchen, as well as a cobbler’s workshop, where the prisoners repaired the shoes and boots of their oppressors. According to Schwerin, the SA stole the furniture and kitchen utensils from the homes of the prisoners. In February 1938 there was a trial of former Leschwitz guards, in which Krüger and 15 others were called to account. There was no real productive work in Leschwitz. Ten to 20 prisoners worked on large farms in the area, guarded by the SA. The prisoners who remained in the camp peeled potatoes, swept the yard, worked on Krüger’s vegetable garden, or did other personal jobs for Krüger. A few had to do tasks that were clearly aimed at humiliating the prisoners. For example, sand had to be shifted without any obvious reason for the whole day from one corner of the courtyard to another. According to Alex Horstmann, the leading KPD comrades were not allowed to work on the farms, were not allowed to receive visitors, and were subject to mistreatment and torture.

Schwerin was transferred with his colleagues from the Görlitz police prison to the Leschwitz concentration camp on
June 26, 1933. The Brown rulers helped them along the way, beating them and kicking them. Camp Commandant Krüger was also present with sarcastic jokes and depraved insults. Pictures of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and August Bebel were obtained to mock the prisoners. For the amusement of the SA, the prisoners had to take part in so-called sport. The SA chased them up trees and then made jokes about the apes in the trees. Fritz Pohlig has described the interrogation room as the room of a “thousand fears.” There was a special rack where the unlucky prisoners were held while they received up to 25 lashes. Especially feared were the gallows. The prisoners were locked up while they received up to 25 lashes. A 17-year-old Jewish prisoner and one unknown Czech prisoner were murdered, and two prisoners committed suicide. Those two escaped their mistreatment—one prisoner slashed his wrists while under arrest, and the other hanged himself.

The camp inmates who wanted could go to the usual Sunday services in the local church, about 200 to 300 meters (656 to 984 feet) away, but under the supervision of uniformed SA guards. On other days, guarded by the SA, the prisoners returned from work, singing. Screams could be heard from the camp, which suggested torture. Religious care was only temporary in the Leschwitz concentration camp. According to contemporary reports, Görlitz Superintendent Georg Bornkamm was not impressed. As part of the Deutsche Christen movement, he wanted to bring Christians into the National Socialist fold. He protested against the inhuman terror at Leschwitz.

Krüger was eventually removed from his position as camp commandant because he incarcerated “nonpolitical citizens” in the camp. For example, he arrested a tradesman who he required for his personal use. In a letter dated August 10, 1934, Krüger, looking back, wrote that because of his sudden release from command, he was not in a position to hand over leadership to his successor Sturmführer Langner, in accordance with the regulations. According to Schwerin, Langner did not publicly betray any of the prisoners. The interrogations took place in the factory’s former administration building. A Gestapo man from Liegnitz (Legnica) and two SA Truppführers did the interrogations. Efforts were made not to use particularly brutal forms of torture. Did this have something to do with the imminent end of the camp? Contemporary records show that Leschwitz was dissolved on August 30, 1933, due to the constant and increasingly vocal protests from the local population. The protests reflect the population’s civil courage. Nevertheless, there are doubts whether that was the main reason for the closure of the camp. Perhaps the Nazis had plans that extended beyond the region. In any event, the report in the next sentence states that the prisoners were transferred to other concentration camps, mostly to Sonnenburg, Hainewalde, and Hohnstein in the Sächsische Schweiz.

The regional daily press reported relatively extensively in a number of articles on the trial of former personnel at Leschwitz. This was done in rather emotional tones. The former camp commandant Krüger admitted that he had joined the SA and the party in 1929 and was the longest-serving SA man who “looked after the camp.” Unlike most of the other guards, he admitted his deeds. On the other hand, he denied the existence of the gallows as alleged by the prisoners or that he buried two prisoners alive. The state prosecutor had argued for lifelong imprisonment. He was sentenced to 15 years. On March 6, 1948, the other guards were sentenced to terms of between 2 months and 8 years. Krüger was stripped of his citizen’s rights for life and the others for 10 years. All the convicted were sentenced accordingly. The Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes (VVN) called the people of Görlitz together on March 11, 1948, to a demonstration against the Nazi criminals in the Evangelical Vereinshaus. Former prisoners from Leschwitz, Stadttrat Horstmann and Kleinert spoke at the demonstration. More than a year later, on June 23, 1949, the press reported on another trial of a former member of the guard staff before the Zweite Grosse Strafkammer des Landgerichts Bautzen (Second Major Criminal Division of the State Court of Bautzen) in Görlitz.}

**Sources** A longer version of this essay appears as Roland Otto, “Rache an politischen Gegner und Privatinteressen: Das Konzentrationslager Leschwitz bei Görlitz,” in *Herrschaft und Gewalt: Frühe Konzentrationslager, 1933–1939*, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Berlin: Metropol, 2002), pp. 237–244. An older study by Ernst Kretzschmar, *Widerstandskampf Görlitzer Antifaschisten 1933–1945* (Görlitz, 1973), reproduces the most important extracts from the memoirs and provides a commentary. Kretzschmar puts more emphasis on the SPD resistance than was usual in the early 1970s. A chronicle of documents, which reproduces press and other articles from the archives, is Erich Koksch and Gustav Ohlig, *Chronikdokumentation*, vol. 2, *1918–1945* (Görlitz, 1984). As part of an eight-part series, there is a useful illustrated history of the town in *Görlitz unter dem Hakenkreuz* (n.p., 1982), which deals with the Leschwitz concentration camp. The pictures are reproduced from the city’s art collections.

One press article about this camp was published in the Nazi publication *NGA*, May 13, 1933. Press reports on the postwar trials may be found in the *LR*, 1948. Further details are to be found in a collection of newspaper articles compiled in 1948 at the RAG on the themes of justice and the proceedings.
other articles were published in 1961 and 1974. In RAG, there are only a few files that deal directly with the Weinhübel (Leschwartiz) concentration camp. A few files of the VVN touch on the subject. Memoirs of mostly Communist resistance fighters from the area deal with Leschwitz in more or less detail. Understandably, they are often emotional and reflect the tensions with the Social Democrats. Paul Schwerin’s report “Erinnerungen aus meiner 10½-jährigen politischen Inhaftierung” (unpub. MSS, RAG) is more informative. Useful are the still unpublished documents of the Weinhübler local historians Fritz Wünsch and Joachim Morgenstern. See also the files of the RAG, 1188, Konzentrationslager Weinhübel May 13, 1933 to August 11, 1934, Rep. IV, S. 6, Nr. 189, R34; F7.

Roland Otto
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES
2. Ibid.

LICHTENBURG

The Lichtenburg concentration camp, a so-called collection camp (Sammellager), was established in June 1933 in a Renaissance castle in Prettin an der Elbe, between Wittenberg and Torgau in the then-state of Prussia (province of Saxony, Government District of Merseburg). The camp existed as a camp for males until 1937; the prisoners were transferred in August to Buchenwald. Between December 1937 and May 1938, it functioned as the main women’s concentration camp for the whole of Germany. After May 1939 the women were taken to Ravensbrück. In its early period, Lichtenburg was the main concentration camp in central Germany.

Despite sanitation problems that led to the closure of an earlier prison on the site in 1928, the president of the district government and police president in Halle decided in 1933 to use the castle for 1,000 “protective custody” prisoners (Schutzhäftlinge). The impetus for the decision stemmed from the Prussian Ministry of Interior, which on March 17, 1933, issued an inquiry as to a possible site for a camp that could hold political opponents of the National Socialist regime. At the beginning of June, a prisoner detachment began work to prepare the castle for the prisoners. On July 13, it was announced that the camp had opened. It was overcrowded shortly after it was opened. There were 1,600 prisoners in the castle in July 1933, and in September there were 2,000. A directive of the Merseburg district president on July 7, 1933, stated the following: “The primary function of the Sammellager in Lichtenburg is to hold elements opposed to the state, who in the interests and preservation of state security must be held under arrest for a long period of time.”

The prisoners were brought to Lichtenburg from a variety of torture sites, police prisons, and judicial prisons—for example, from the police prison in Halle in June; from the Magdeburg barracks camp in the Magdeburg sports stadium Neue Welt in August; from the Emsland camp Börgermoor in the autumn and winter of 1933; from the Sonnenburg concentration camp in March 1934; and from the SS prison in Berlin, Columbia-Haus, in August 1934. Until the summer of 1934, the Lichtenburg concentration camp functioned primarily as a holding camp for prisoners from the early SA camps. For example, inmates from the early Oranienburg concentration camp were brought here after its closure in July 1934. This camp functioned for several years as the second main camp in the eastern section of central Germany.

Initially, the Lichtenburg concentration camp was secured by a regular detachment of the Schutzpolizei (municipal police). These guards were replaced in the middle of August 1933 by an SS detachment under the command of SS-Wachtruppenführer Edgar Entsberger. “We could observe in this unit how quite normal young men developed into sadists, killers and murderers,” wrote the former prisoner Walter Kramer, whose memoir is one of the most important witness testimonies on the camp. In September–October the camp was classified as a state concentration camp and reorganized according to Prussian requirements. These requirements envisaged that prisoners would be treated as if they were in prison. Civilian administration would be separated from the security and control provided by the SS. In reality, this practice failed, as can be seen from the example of Lichtenburg. The civilian camp directors, August Widder and Hans Faust, were no match for the infamous SS-Wachtruppenführer Edgar Entsberger, who was notorious for his brutality. Widder even feared for his life.

SS-Brigadeführer Theodor Eicke was in command of Lichtenburg between May 29 and July 1934. He established a political department (Politishe Abteilung) and by June 1, 1934, had reorganized Lichtenburg along the lines of the Dachau model, which envisaged an elaborate system of rules, mistreatment, and punishment. In June 1934, Heinrich Himmler transferred control of all civilian camps to the SS; at the same time, he took control of Lichtenburg from the Merseburg district president.

There were five SS commandants of the men’s camp between May 1934 and its dissolution in August 1937 (Eicke, Bernhard Schmidt, Otto Reich, Hermann Baranowski, Hans Helwig) and at least five camp directors. The commandants of
the women’s camp were Günther Tamaschke, until February 1938; Alex Piorkowski, until September 1938; and Max Koegel, until its dissolution in May 1939. In December 1935 there were 359 male SS guards. In July 1936, the SS-Totenkopfsturmbann “Elbe” (Death’s Head Battalion Elbe), which was stationed in Lichtenburg, had 538 men. The little Elbe town of Prettin only had a population, on the other hand, of 2,000 inhabitants. The SS wardresses who guarded the female prisoners between 1937 and 1939 were trained for service in Ravensbrück.

More than 5,000 names of Lichtenburg’s male prisoners are known. According to the political conditions, the numbers varied between several hundred and around 2,000. The variations were large.

The men’s camp was dissolved on August 18, 1937. Four months after its dissolution, the whole contingent of female prisoners in the Moringen women’s concentration camp was transferred to Lichtenburg. The first transport of 200 women arrived in December 15, 1937. Other transports followed, with the last on March 21, 1938. As with the men’s camp, the numbers increased rapidly, above the predetermined number of 600. In November 1938 there were 800 women. Other sources say 1,200 women. When the women’s camp was dissolved on May 15, there were between 900 and 950 women who were taken in several transports to Ravensbrück. It is estimated that there were 1,400 women in Lichtenburg, all told. The names of 1,115 are known.

If one looks at the reasons why prisoners were held at Lichtenburg, there is a changing picture over the course of the years. It reflects the stages and emphases of persecution by the National Socialist state between 1933 and 1939: in the initial phase the focus was on political opponents, and in later years this was expanded to the persecution of other groups who for various reasons were excluded from the National Socialist “people’s community” (Volksgemeinschaft).

In the initial phases, the prisoners were almost exclusively opponents of the National Socialist regime, mostly Communists but including Social Democrats and citizens who were active politically but not as part of any political group. A large number were Jewish prisoners. In the autumn and winter of 1933, targeted Jews and intellectuals were taken from the Emsland camps to the Lichtenburg concentration camp. “Unlike as in the prisons ‘Aryans’ and ‘Jews’ were differentiated in the camp,” according to the Jewish prisoner Ernesto Kroch, who arrived at the Lichtenburg concentration camp in 1936. For a while they were separately held under tight security. Between 1937 and 1939, Jewish women were allocated to the most difficult labor detachments. The Lichtenburg concentration camp clearly shows the antisemitic and racial characteristics of early National Socialist terror.

In addition to opponents of the regime, there were other groups who for a time were the majority of the prisoners in the camp. After the “Röhm Putsch” (Night of the Long Knives) of 1934, there were around 60 SA members held in July 1934. In June 1935, after the use of Paragraph 175 was intensified, there were 325 homosexuals registered among 711 prisoners. They especially suffered from mistreatment and discrimination. Other groups were the so-called asocials—beggars, alcoholics, and others who were rounded up because their lifestyles did not conform or because they had prior convictions and were punished with forced labor and taken to concentration camps—and preventive custody prisoners (Vorbeugungshäftlinge), people classified as “common criminals” (Gewohnheitsverbrecher), or “professional criminals” (Berufsverbrecher) who were transferred to concentration camps after they had served their time in prison.

A large proportion of the prisoners were Jehovah’s Witnesses (Ernst Bibelforscher), who were banned within Germany in 1935. They were a majority of the female prisoners. Most were classified as incorrigible and were held in a special punishment area. Reports relate that they were brutally punished because they refused to give the Hitler salute (Hitlergruss) and were not prepared to listen to Hitler’s speeches broadcast over the loudspeakers. “They attached fire hoses to the hydrants. In the evening when they demanded that we listen to the speech and when we refused they turned the hydrants on and turned the strong jets of water on us. Station
Four was soon under water, running down the stairs. If the water did not force you outside the door you were forcibly taken out to the court yard. Wet to the skin we had to stand for the duration of the speech in a cold October evening in the court yard. We were given fourteen days’ arrest and Station Four was given three weeks’ arrest. Seventy male and 424 female Jehovah’s Witnesses were held here. There were also a few female “Gypsies” in Lichtenburg concentration camp.

The female Lichtenburg prisoners included all important prisoner groups in the area under National Socialist control in the years 1937 to 1939, including Austria, which was annexed in March–April 1938.

The building greatly influenced the prison conditions in Lichtenburg: a worn-out, cold, damp structure with hygienic conditions from the Middle Ages, large dormitories in a Renaissance building, and tiny cells in a multifloor prison that had been added in 1872. In 1928 the authorities decided that Prussian criminals could not be held there because the conditions were so poor. The 1937 decision to establish a women’s concentration camp there following the transfer of the men to the “modern” Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald camps marks the lack of respect that the National Socialist regime had for its female prisoners in the prewar period.

Everyday prison life was hard. The prisoners were treated with great brutality by the SS. The new arrivals had to undergo a spiteful, humiliating procedure. The men were driven into the castle with cudgels and rifle butts. The women had to stand for hours at roll call. The men and women were threatened with death, told that they would only leave Lichtenburg in a coffin. The castle courtyard, which functioned as the roll-call square and exercise yard, was called by the prisoners the Death Curve (Todeskurve). Visits from relatives were permitted in the beginning; they could meet and speak with the prisoners in the courtyard, but they were separated by a 2-meter (6.6-feet) control distance. Later, even letter-writing became difficult. Food was of poor quality and deteriorated during the years, with the result that many prisoners did not have sufficient strength to do their work.

The prisoners were forced to do meaningless work, the sole purpose of which was to humiliate them. For example, there was “drawing water” (Wasserschöpfen) done at negative temperatures. On the other hand, the prisoners were caught up in a network of forced labor both inside and outside the institution: working in gravel pits, on farms, on drainage systems, or on community projects such as building city parks or the Prettin training ground; laying gardens in the castle grounds; and building. There was also handicraft work, for example, making wooden slippers, basket weaving, tailoring, shoe making, carpentry, electrical work, and book binding. The prisoners worked inside the camp, cleaning toilets, carrying coal, and doing other general tasks and cleaning work for the guards, the majority of whom were based in the castle.

Overcrowding was the norm. Up to 300 male and 140 female prisoners slept in the halls inside the old castle walls, sometimes under the damaged roofs, sometimes without heating. In the small cells in the Prussian prison, there were between 3 and 6 prisoners. Sanitary conditions were completely inadequate. For example, in one large dormitory there were two to five toilets, sometimes only a bucket.

As at Dachau, official visitors, National Socialist sympathizers, and foreign journalists were shown a fictitious show camp. Sometimes the SS were depicted as prisoners and the SS accommodations as the prisoners’ accommodations. For the prisoners, everyday life was determined by a system of torture and mistreatment: food deprivation, bans on letters, confiscation of spectacles and walking sticks, hour-long roll calls, being bound to posts, beatings, and whippings, some of which took place on a whipping block (from 1938 this punishment was also meted out to women). It has also been reported that prisoners’ heads were stuck in excrement. Yet there were cultural activities. There is said to have been a prison library, readings, musical evenings, and even a cabaret.

Part of the castle had been converted to a jail even when the castle was used as a prison. It had cells for special arrest: the Bunker. The prisoners called it the “paint room” (Farbe) because here they were beaten until they were red and blue. “One night a comrade was taken from our dormitory for interrogation. . . . When he returned three days later we scarcely recognized him. He had not eaten for three days and had been in the Bunker. His backside and his back had been beaten so that there was no white skin to be seen. . . . Our comrade often fainted because of the pain. The smell of pus permeated the area.” In the 12 unheated cells there was confinement in darkness (Dunkel-Arrest), and there was a standing cell (Stehzelle). A particularly brutal torture method that was first applied here was the Krummschliessen, where a prisoner’s arms were pushed back under the shoulder blades and held in place with chains; the twisted body was then affixed with rope to the bars of the cell. Murders committed in the Bunker were classified as suicides.

Prettin city registers recorded 14 deaths, including a woman who died as the result of SS mistreatment. There were almost certainly more deaths, including at least one female prisoner who died soon after her release as the result of her treatment in prison; others also died at home after their release, and a Prettin bricklayer was beaten to death by the SS because he had greeted the prisoners on the street with the “Red Front” greeting. Many Lichtenburg prisoners were to die later in Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück. Twenty deaths are documented in the archives of the memorial.

In postwar trials, the Lichtenburg concentration camp hardly rated a mention. The SS personnel were transferred to other camps where the conditions were worse. The result was that there were few trials of former Lichtenburg guards that attracted attention. The commandants of the camp died, if they survived the war, without being prosecuted. SS-Truppführer Edgar Entsberger was sentenced to five years’ prison in February 1936 for homicide and five counts of physical abuse; the historian Johannes Tuchel suspects that his conviction had something to do with Entsberger’s questioning of Hitler’s authority. A 1964 proceeding against Entsberger and three other SS men, as well as police members, for the
suspected murder of five Lichtenberg prisoners was halted in 1966, not because there was any doubt as to the deaths but because the prisoners’ participation in the acts could not be proven and a charge of accessory to murder was subject to the statute of limitations. In 1948, former SS-Wachmann Martin Schneider and in 1961 former SS-Hauptscharführer Wilhelm Schäfer were sentenced to death. The camp commandant Egon Zill—later based in Ravensbrück, Dachau, Natzweiler, and Flossenbürg—was sentenced in 1955 to life imprisonment but was released early. The camp commandant Heinrich Remmert was sentenced in 1966 to two years’ prison for crimes committed in Esterwegen and Lichtenburg. Other proceedings were halted.


The AG-L in the Museum Schloss Lichtenburg has collected copies of the most important archival records and has begun to compose a list of prisoners; there is a review of documents. Documents on the development of the concentration camp are primarily held in the LHSA-Me, BA-B (BA-Bl and BA-DH), AG-B, AG-R, GDW-B, DIZ-EL, as well as GAZJ. The autobiographical works that should be mentioned are: Lina Haag and Eine Handvoll Staub, Widerstand einer Frau 1933–1945 (1947; repr., Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995); Ernesto Kroch, Exil in der Heimat—Heim ins Exil: Erinnerungen aus Europa und Lateinamerika (Frankfurt am Main, 1990); Wolfgang Langhoff, Die Moorsoldaten (1935; repr., Berlin and Weimar, 1975); Irmgard Litten, Eine Mutter kämpft gegen Hitler (1940; repr., Frankfurt am Main, 1984); Fritz Kleine, “Lichtenburg,” in Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt; Ein Buch der Greuel, die Opfer klagen an (Karlsruhe: “Graphia,” 1934), pp. 182–212.

Stefanie Endlich trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES
2. In the KZ Lichtenburg. AG-L, G 831, p. 259, original document in AG-B.
3. Ernesto Kroch, Exil in der Heimat—Heim ins Exil: Erinnerungen aus Europa und Lateinamerika (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), p. 70.
4. Memoirs of Ilse Unterdörfer, GAZJ.

MAGDEBURG

At the close of May 1933, the SA established an “assembly camp” at Neue Welt Stadium in Magdeburg, Prussia. The republican paramilitary organization Reichshammer Schwarz-Rot-Gold (RB), was the stadium’s rightful owner. Despite the nomenclature, Neue Welt was an early “protective custody” camp. Formed at the behest of the Magdeburg police president, it was intended to relieve the overcrowded town jail of political detainees. The prisoners from another temporary camp, a gymnasium belonging to the river police, were also dispatched to Neue Welt. Magdeburg held approximately 200 leftist prisoners, including Social Democrats, Communists, trade unionists, and Reichshammer members.1

The Magdeburg police president’s adjutant, SA-Führer Gabel, held mock court for Neue Welt detainees. In this connection, some prisoners were conducted to nearby Dornburg Castle for torture. They remained in a cellar, into which they had been rushed at gunpoint, until their kangaroo trial. An account by Richard Stuwe, a Dornburg torture victim but not a Neue Welt prisoner, made clear that the prisoners were beaten bloody during their ordeal.2

The authorities dissolved the Magdeburg camp in August 1933, and the prisoners were transferred to Lichtenburg.

Primary documentation consists of eyewitness testimony by Richard Stuwe, which is available in Gerhard Vokoun, Herbert Matthias, Werner Dillmann, eds., Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung im Bezirk Magdeburg, part 2, 1917 bis 1945 (Magdeburg: SED, Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der örtlichen Arbeiterbewegung, 1970). According to Drobisch and Wieland, the AG-L also possesses a file, No. 249, on Neue Welt.

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2. Ibid.

MISSLER (WALSRODER STRASSE)

[AKA BREMEN-FINDORF]

To mark the first anniversary of the National Socialists’ coming to power, Bremen’s mayor, Dr. Markert, presented on March 6, 1934, a “current balance” of persecution and arrest:

From March 6, 1933 through March 5, 1934, a total of around thirty-six thousand new detainees have been processed by the Secret State Police; of these around 4,200 have been dealt with by the executive. Around 450 houses have been searched, around 420 people have been arrested in high treason proceedings, around 260 people brought before court. . . .

A total of 1,305 people have found themselves in “protective custody” from March 6, 1933 through March 5, 1934, and at this time fifty-five people are in protective custody at Ochtumsand concentration camp, five are in prison awaiting trial, thirty-seven are in prison, one person is in the hospital; all told ninety-eight people.

These numbers document the extent of persecution during the first year of the Nazi seizure of power. Most of the 1,305 people who found themselves in Bremen “protective custody” passed through the Missler concentration camp. How did it happen that of all places the Missler halls of Norddeutscher Lloyd on the Walsroder Strasse grounds, with four halls for 250 East European emigrants. During World War I, the building was used as a reserve sick bay. In 1919, it served as lodging for the “Freikorps Caspari,” which defeated troops of the Bremen Soviet Republic on February 4, 1919.

In August 1932, the four camps of the Volunteer Labor Service (FAD) came into being for members of the Reichsbanner, the Labor Welfare, Wehrwolf, and the Deutsch-Nationaler Handlungsgesilfen-Verband (German National Clerks’ Association). In accordance with a senate resolution, the emigrant halls were converted into a concentration camp at the end of March 1933.

The conditions at the Missler concentration camp were not concealed from the Bremen population. In addition to the numerous reports about Missler in both Bremen newspapers, information made its way outside through released prisoners and relatives who had visited. Mothers and wives publicly displayed the bloody laundry of tortured concentration camp prisoners, and some prisoners could inform their relatives about the conditions while on short-term leave due to a death in the family. In addition, the grounds were visible for residents of Bremen-Findorf, who became eye- and ear witnesses to mistreatment. Residents on neighboring streets (Walsroder Strasse and Hemmstrasse) had a direct view from their balconies and windows of events in the camp. At the beginning of May 1933, Laue had to investigate complaints in Missler with a senior public prosecutor. The Polizeisenator felt compelled to replace the SS guard unit with SA people. In
the senate file there is a short note from May 6, 1933: “SS guards relieved, replaced by SA.”

The senate’s press campaign as well as the numerous warnings and orders published in the daily papers did not have the desired success. On the contrary—with the publications the camp inmates were certain that the resistance would be continued despite all deterrents. The Nazi concept of reeducation did not work. At the beginning of July 1933, the Polizeisiebator proposed to dismantle Missler and transfer the prisoners outside of Bremen. On July 11, 1933, the senate protocol records: “in view of continuous communist machinations he [Laue] intends to abolish the concentration camp on Walsroder Strasse and house around fifty especially dangerous prisoners at Fort Langlütjen II . . . . The remaining prisoners will be appropriately enlisted for profitable work at the so-called Ochtrumsand.”

Only in September 1933, however, was the Bremen concentration camp moved to less accessible outlying districts. Langlütjen II concentration camp was closed on January 25, 1934. The inmates went to Ochtrumsand concentration camp, which had been established in September 1933 on a former Norddeutscher Lloyd barge. On May 15, 1934, this concentration camp closed its small holds, in which up to 100 prisoners had been held, guarded, and often abused by 30 SA men.

Laue was put on trial before the Bremen Spruchkammer in January 1949. He was sentenced as a “major activist” (Grusaktivist) to four years of special labor and was stripped of 25 percent of his assets. As Laue was given credit for three years and four months in internment, he was able to immediately resume his successful job as a businessman.

In March and April of 1951 several Nazi staff stood before the Grand Criminal Court of the Bremen Regional Court. Former members of the guard at Missler were pronounced guilty, sometimes collectively and sometimes individually, of doing bodily harm while on duty; to the extent that they beat with a rubber truncheon or kicked with boots, they were also pronounced guilty of causing severe bodily harm. The regional court proved in the “Missler Trial” that the 15 accused had abused 78 protective custody prisoners. They got off with sentences from six months to two years and six months. Because of time served in internment and labor camps, most of the accused were in this case immediately released as well.

NOTES

1. StA-Br, 3-s 1a, Nr. 27.
4. StA-Br, 4.65/17 (Polizeidirektion).
5. BrN, April 2, April 6, April 29, June 17, 1933; BNZ, July 7, July 23, August 13, 1933.
7. StA-Br, Senatsregistatur 1a Nr. 277, 64, Nr. 1.
8. StA-Br, Senatsregistatur 1a Nr. 277.
10. WeKu, January 20–25, 1949.
11. WeKu, April 17, 1931.

MORINGEN-SOLLING (MEN)

On April 8, 1933, the Hannoverian police opened a concentration camp at Moringen, located inside the existing provincial workhouse. Polizeioberleutnant Müller was its first commandant. Situated near the Solling River, northwest of Göttingen in Prussian Hannover, Moringen had successively served as an orphanage, penitentiary, and workhouse between 1738 and 1933. In the summer of 1933, it officially became a state workhouse (Landeswerkhaus), while maintaining its role as a detention site for political prisoners. Its correctional inmates (Korrigenden), who were criminals, beggars, vagrants, welfare recipients, alcoholics, and prostitutes, performed therapeutic labor. During the Great Depression, the correctional population dwindled. Except for political content and SS violence, the concentration camp, which the Nazis grafted onto Moringen’s multiple functions, followed a workhouse model of reeducation.
On March 15, 1933, Oberinspektor Gottschick of Hanover telephoned workhouse Director (Lagerdirektor) Hugo Krack, to inquire about the establishment of a 200-prisoner camp on the premises. Space was immediately available for 4 women and 10 men; indeed, two male detainees entered Moringen in March. Krack relocated the infirmary and the male nurse dorms, originally found in the men's long house, to the women's house, thus opening space in the infirmary for the camp. He announced that the detainees' daily charge would be 1.45 Reichsmark (RM).2

Although the male population averaged 321 detainees per month during its seven-month existence, turnover was rapid. The extant prisoners' medical files reviewed by historian Hans Hesse show that 59 were released after three weeks, 32 after one month, 30 following two months, and 31 after three months.1 Most detainees were Communists. According to Hermann Wenskowski, the first Jehovah's Witness entered Moringen in June 1933.3 Unlike male and female correctional inmates, who wore black uniforms, the detainees wore civilian clothing. The political prisoners were strictly segregated from correctional inmates.

Müller and 50 Hannoverian municipal police officers (Schupos) arrived on April 8. Augmenting their force were 30 SA, SS, and Stahlhelm deputies, mostly from Göttingen or Moringen. Patterned after asylum orders, Krack and Müller established the camp's House and Day Regulations (Haus- und Tagesordnungen), providing for political reeducation and nonviolent punishment, such as mail restrictions and isolation.4 Detainee labor was voluntary. A recurrent source of friction existed between Krack, who assumed the title of camp director, and the four successive commandants, because Krack demanded their deference. The first 100 male detainees arrived from Hannover on April 11.

Prisoners were encouraged to attend religion services in the institutional chapel. Initially few did so, but attendance jumped to 264 by April 30. Müller soon discovered that the prisoners were holding secret political discussions in the chapel.5

On May 1, 1933, the National Labor Day, the camp authorities put the detainees on public display and made them listen to Nazi broadcasts. On May 2, the day of the trade union ban, the Northeimer Beobachter newspaper boasted that Moringen’s “iron discipline” prepared detainees for admission into the Nazi Socialist Factory Cell Organization (NSBO).6 By May 31, 300 detainees had been released. Some 177 of the 264 prisoners, or 67 percent, worked in the workhouse or on external projects.7

On June 1, the Hannoveran police appointed Polizeihauptmann Stockhofe as the new commandant. On June 3, the first two female detainees arrived at Moringen, thus opening the “women’s protective custody detachment” (Frauenschutzhaftabteilung).8

On the evening of June 21, Stockhofe heard prisoners chanting songs of the German Communist Party (KPD). Drawn pistols silenced the detainees, but the guards were unable to stop the ensuing hunger strike. Organized by August Baumgarte, Johannes Engelke, Kurt Fröse, August Steffens, August Tünnermann, and Viktor Zudrowitz, 28 prisoners protested political reeducation and demanded improvements in food and working conditions.9 Stockhofe blamed the incident on the recent arrival of 15 Osnabrück detainees, accustomed, he claimed, to generous quantities of good food.10 Stockhofe’s press blackout did not prevent unofficial news about the strike from spreading beyond Moringen’s walls.11

To suppress the strike, Krack moved the women’s section to the women’s house, segregated the strikers in the emptied room, and ordered them to be deprived of water. For health reasons, Stockhofe and the workhouse physician, Dr. Otto Wolten-Pecksen, initially objected to the latter course. To Polizeimajor Bergin of the Hannoveran Schupo, Krack made clear that the consequences did not bother him: “We must not shrink away from the implementation of this measure, even if it yields around thirty-four deaths.”12 At 7:00 p.m. on June 24, Stockhofe closed the taps but opened negotiations with the strikers the next day. The protestors felt the immediate effects of Krack’s order, as Baumgarte recalled: “It was a hot summer. We had awful thirst. Soon the sanitary facilities also had no more water!”13 On June 26, the protest ended with the (unfulfilled) promise of better food. During the strike, Stockhofe, Wolten-Pecksen, and Krack force-fed a weakened detainee.14

In retaliation for the strike, the Hannoveran police curtailed mail privileges.15 Parcels were now accepted only on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. Effective August 1, prisoners could write two, two-page letters monthly to a single addressee on the second and fourth Tuesdays; letters addressed to prisoners were accepted monthly on the first and third Fridays and returned to sender if received on other days. Under the new regulations, prisoners could receive 5 RM monthly and exchange one washing packet per month.16 On August 1, SS-Sturmführer Otto Cordes assumed command of Moringen. Although Krack had demanded that Bergin replace the Schupo with SS staff during the hunger strike, the handover followed Heinrich Himmler’s appointment the previous June as ministerial commissar for deputized police officers of the Secret State Police Office (Gestapa). The guards consisted of 41 SS and SA, including 24 locals. Cordes secured new labor contracts, including rock quarrying and assignments at the German Air Sport League (DLV) and the Töneshof airport, but only 31 percent (117 out of 380) of the detainees worked in August. In collective punishment imposed upon Prussian detainees for the May 1, 1933, Hindenburg Tree incident, Moringen’s prisoners were denied noon rations for three days in early August.17

On September 1, SS-Sturmbannführer Friedrich Flohr became Moringen’s last commandant and imposed a harsher regime. Prisoners had to give the Hitler salute, wear military haircuts, and listen to Nazi broadcasts on a loudspeaker specially ordered in time for the Nürnberg party rally. Under Cordes, the SS tortured detainees in isolation cells, but Flohr restricted beatings to the “joy room” (Freudezimmer), in an unsuccessful attempt to muffle the screams. One prisoner,
Otto Bokelmann, died from torture at Moringen, and a second, August Witte, succumbed due to injuries sustained at police prison Leonhardtstrasse. Krack repeatedly complained to the Hannoverian police about SS violence. From July to October 1933, the Prussian Ministry of Interior and the Moringen staff discussed the camp’s future. On June 27, Krack urged the admission of more women, in the expectation that they were easier to control and could provide a niche for the underused facility. On October 12, the Prussian Ministry of Interior dispatched 80 men from Moringen to Papenburg, in exchange for 150 women. On November 1, Moringen became a women’s state concentration camp. On November 28, the Ministry of Interior sent the remaining 168 men to Oranienburg, thus closing the men’s camp. Krack headed the Moringen women’s camp from 1933 to 1938 and remained the workhouse director until 1944. In 1948, he resumed this post until retiring in 1954.

Cordes died at St. Mère Église in June 1944. In 1948, the Göttingen Court of Assizes sentenced Flohr to six years in a penitentiary for crimes against humanity. The Göttingen Spruchgericht also sentenced him to one and a half years for“For Frieden und Fortschritt,” in Antifaschistische Reihe, vol. 2, Hannoversche Frauen gegen den Faschismus 1933–1945; Lebensberichte, ein Beitrag zur Stadtgeschichte (Hannover: VVN-Bund der Antifaschisten-Niedersachsen e.V., Kreisvereinigung Hannover, 1982), pp. 40–45. Gassmann’s account also reproduces Stockhofe’s report to Bergin, dated June 24, 1933.

Joseph Robert White

NOTES
4. August Baumgarte testimony in Gerda Zorn, Stadt im Widerstand (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1965),

SOURCE:

As cited in Hesse’s publications, primary sources for this camp begin with the NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 84/82, No. 1–9 (No. 1 consists of Krack’s files on the men’s and women’s camps); NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 84/82, No. 1 (Verschiedenes, 1933–34, including Meldungen der Kommandanten des KZ Moringen), No. 3 (Krankenakten der Insassen des KZ Moringen), and No. 4 (Entlassungen); DBCPF for Wolter-Pecksen, Flohr, and Cordes; and the judicial proceedings against Flohr: BA-K, BA Z 38/419, Schwurgerichtsverhandlung gegen Flohr; NHStA-H, 721 Göttingen, Acc. 93/79, No. 38, Gerichtsverfahren gegen Friedrich Flohr; and BA-K, BA Z 42 VII/2164, Entnazifizierungssakte Flohr. Many of the patient files (Krankenakten) were lost at the end of World War II. The most important prisoner testimony for this camp consists of letters by Hannah Vogt, Moringen’s first female detainee, which contain information applicable to the men’s camp. Hannah Vogt, Hoffnung ist ein ewiges Begräbnis: Briefe von Dr. Hannah Vogt aus dem Gerichtsgefängnis Osterode und dem KZ Moringen 1933, ed. Hans Hesse (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1998). Hesse, Das frühe KZ Moringen, reproduces the memoir of Hermann Wenskowski, “Die antifaschistische Widerstandsbevölkerung im Harz” (unpub. MSS, Goslar, 1964). The testimonies of prisoner Karl Ebeling and August Baumgarte are located in Gerda Zorn, Stadt im Widerstand (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1965); and more of Baumgarte’s testimony can be found in Zorn, Widerstand in Hannover: Gegen Reaktion und Faschismus, 1920–1946 (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1977).


12. Quotation in Krack to Bergin, June 24, 1933, NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 84/82, No. 1, p. 92, quoted in Hesse, Das frühe KZ Moringen, p. 68.


MORINGEN-SOLLING (WOMEN)

On November 1, 1933, the state workhouse (Landeswerkhaus) at Moringen-Solling in Prussian Hannover became a women’s concentration camp. A Camp Director (Lagerdirektor) Hugo Krack headed the staff, which consisted of the chief overseer, Frau Rhener, and four unarmed members of the National Socialist Women’s Association (NSF). Although local SS escorted outside details, Moringen was never a camp administered by the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL). Averaging 90 female detainees per month, it held approximately 1,350 women between 1933 and 1938. Peaking at 450 in the fall of 1937, its population consisted of Communists, Social Democrats, regime critics, Jewish “returnees,” and most prominently, Jehovah’s Witnesses. With the introduction of Bavarian and Swabian women in February 1936, Moringen became the only women’s camp in the Reich. In 1937, some criminals and prostitutes entered the camp, instead of the workhouse, where they would have been female “correctional inmates” (Korrigendeninnen). Until 1937, the detainees occupied the second floor of the women’s house, then moved to a bigger space in the men’s long house. Called the “black maidens” (schwarze Mädchen) because of their uniforms, the female correctional inmates lived on the first floor of the women’s house. The administration strictly separated the two groups.

Beginning on March 15, 1933, Hannover planned to hold female detainees at Moringen. The “women’s protective custody detachment” (Frauenschutzhaftabteilung) opened on June 3, with the admission of Communists Hannah Vogt and Marie Peix. The female prisoners moved twice that month, first to a larger room in the men’s long house infirmary and then to the women’s house, while their former quarters were used for the isolation of those men who were conducting hunger strikes.

When Polizeihauptmann Stockhofe was commandant, Krack asserted exclusive control over the women’s detachment. Less deferential to him were commandants Sturmführer Otto Cordes (August 1 to 31) and Sturmhauptführer Friedrich Flohr (September 1 to November 28), whose SS guarded the section until November 1, 1933. The SS were strict with the women but—unlike their treatment of male prisoners—stopped short of torture.
On October 3, 1933, Prussian Ministry of Interior officials Janich and Schubotz inquired about the establishment of a 150-prisoner women's camp at Moringen. Since June, Krack had called for expanding the women's detachment. Calculating that detention would create a niche for the underused workhouse, he expected that holding female prisoners would obviate the need for guards and that daily confinement costs could thus be reduced from 1.45 to 1.35 Reichsmark (RM) per prisoner. On October 12, the Ministry of Interior ordered the transport of 80 men from Moringen to the State Concentration Camp Papenburg (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg) and dispatched 150 women to the camp. In a bid to secure employment for the camp, Krack offered to establish laundry services for the 4,000 prisoners at Papenburg. Papenburg's recent command shake-up may explain why he did not receive a response. During the 1933 Christmas amnesty, 102 women were released. When the Prussian Ministry of Interior closed Brauweiler in March 1934, Moringen became the only women's camp in Prussia.

In April 1934, Krack's “Service and House Regulation for the Women's Protective Custody Camp Moringen” prescribed a daily routine, which included work, exercise, and coffee breaks. It also provided for religious services, originally including the observance of Jewish high holidays, and for non-violent punishments, like deprivation of mail. The smoking ban reflected the regime's disapproval of tobacco use by German women. Particularly onerous were collective postal bans because with their husbands often in custody elsewhere and their children with relatives or in institutions, the detainees attempted to hold their families together through correspondence. Rehmer censored the mail, as evidenced by her trademark initial found on prisoners' letters. The library furnished Nazi propaganda, and listening to regime broadcasts was compulsory.

On August 19, 1934, the prisoners voted in a Reich plebiscite. According to Elizabeth von Gustedt, a former NSF Krankenhaus für forensische Psychiatrie). A memorial site was established in 1993.

Lack of privacy, family worries, and boredom took a hard toll. Some women, such as Ilse Rolfe (née Gostynski), volunteered for summertime agricultural work. In order to earn income for family support, many prisoners embroidered handbags, pillows, and other goods in the evenings. The intricate patterns attested to the considerable time on their hands. According to historian Hans Hesse, health records indicated that 77 percent of the prisoners gained weight in custody. This figure reflected Moringen's lack of work and edible, if monotonous, rations.

In the winter of 1936–1937, most prisoners worked for the Winter Relief Campaign (WHW). The absence of laundry facilities rendered impossible the cleaning of filthy clothes, and the availability of only two sewing machines slowed repairs. Many donations ended up as fuel for the stove. Detainee Gabriele Herz considered the overseers' mismanagement of WHW goods a scandalous waste.

The Jehovah's Witnesses refused to work for the WHW or other activities that supported the Nazis. In November 1936, Krack retaliated by segregating them in a hall and imposing a six-week postal ban. Ironically, the isolation stiffened their resolve and led to an intensification of their Bible studies. Responding to an anguished letter by Hans Thönes, Krack reported that Thönes's mother, Katharina, was well but not permitted to write for shunning WHW work.

After Heinrich Himmler visited Moringen on May 27, 1937, the Gestapo prepared for its closure. The desire to integrate women detainees into the IKL system figured in this decision. In transports dated December 15, 1937, February 2, 1938, and March 21, 1938, 514 Moringen women were sent to Lichtenburg. Many of the Jehovah's Witnesses later were sent to Ravensbrück. From 1940 to 1945, Moringen operated as a “Youth Concentration Camp.”

Before becoming workhouse director in 1930, Krack was a teacher. A member of the German Democratic Party (DDP) during the Weimar Republic, he joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and SA on May 1, 1933. Facilitating the release of some prisoners, he also ordered the sterilization of one detainee and occasionally threatened to denounce released prisoners or their relatives to the Gestapo. The prisoners' files revealed that the former democrat had little difficulty in appropriating Nazi language. Directing the workhouse until its closure in 1944, he served during World War II with the Armaments Detachment (Rüstungskommando) Hannover. Acquitted of Nazi activities by the Göttingen Spruchgericht in 1948, he resumed the directorship until his retirement in 1954. The Federal Republic awarded him the Federal Cross of Merit (Bundesverdienstkreuz) for alleged acts of resistance while Lagerdirektor. He died in 1962.

In 1966, the workhouse became the Lower Saxon State Hospital for Forensic Psychiatry (Niedersächsischen Landeskrankhaus für forensische Psychiatrie). A memorial site was established in 1993.

**Sources** This essay follows the careful scholarship of Hans Hesse, *Das Frauen-KZ Moringen: 1933–1938* (Moringen: Lagergemeinschaft und KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2002); “Von der

Joseph Robert White

NOTES


2. NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 84/82, No. 1, p. 189, cited in ibid., p. 127.

3. NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 84/82, Nos. 6, 7 (Personalblätter); NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 105/96 (Personalakten); and NHStA-H, Hann. 158 Moringen, Acc. 84/82, No. 2 (Belegungsstärke des Direktors), all cited in Hans Hesse, Das Frauen-KZ Moringen 1933–1938 (Moringen: Lagergemeinschaft und KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2002), pp. 41–45.


5. Sopade, IV (July 1937): 713.


**MÜNCHEN (ETTSTRASSE)**

In March 1933, the police prison at München (Ettstrasse) became a “protective custody” camp. Under Bavarian police, SA, and SS guards, it served as the clearinghouse for München-Stadelheim prison and the neighboring early SS concentration camp at Dachau. The protective custody population, which consisted of Communists, Bavarian People's Party (BVP) members, monarchists, and journalists, ranged between about 60 and 150 in the spring and summer of 1933. Other sections of the jail held common law prisoners.

Ettstrasse's superintendent, SS-Sturmbannführer Karl Ostberg, exemplified the National Socialist term “Old Fighter.” On March 1, 1933, the official Nazi newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter (VB)*, celebrated his thirteenth anniversary as a party member. His membership number was 1035. Serving in the List Regiment during World War I, the same unit as Adolf Hitler, he participated in right-wing politics immediately following the war. In 1924 these activities resulted in his dismissal as Ettstrasse's Oberwachtmeister. Originally joining SA-Sturm 1, Neuhausen-München, he became the Sturmführer of Sturm 18 in 1928 and Adjutant of SS-Standarte 1 in September 1930. In a bar fight with Social Democrats at Rammersdorf in December 1930, he sustained a head injury that necessitated a three-week recovery. For the SS, he worked as a public spokesman. In this capacity, he drew criticism from the *Münchner Post*, whose staff subsequently languished in his custody in 1933.

Ostberg was a fanatical antisemite. Stefan Lorant, a prisoner of Hungarian nationality, the editor of the *Münchner Illustrierte Zeitung* (MIZ), described in his diary the superintendent’s joy in tormenting Jewish prisoners: “Now that he has been made prison superintendent, he thinks himself Lord God Almighty. He is always prancing along the corridor in his SS uniform. Jews, to him, are like a red rag to a bull. He'd like to hang the lot of them.”

Generational and professional tensions surfaced between the youthful Nazi guards and older Bavarian police. The professional guards treated the detainees with respect and occasional leniency, in contrast to the younger and less disciplined SA and SS. Although the older guards seemingly sympathized with the new regime, they found bewildering the concept of protective custody. Lorant paraphrased a conversation among guards: “If a man does anything wrong, he should come up before the magistrate . . . and either be sentenced or discharged. But to lock people up and never tell them what they’re in the jug [under arrest] for—well, we’ve never heard of such a thing here before.”

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At Ettstrasse, the SS tortured prisoners. A case in point was Communist Reichstag deputy Hans Beimler, held at Ettstrasse from April 11 to 25, before transfer to Dachau. In one session, the SS hit him over 60 times with a rubber truncheon, poured water on his face, and then, when he did not dress himself quickly enough, beat him once more. As discussed below, the torture of Dr. Fritz Gerlich sparked an exchange between the Austrian and German press. Lorant was more fortunate. He credited not being tortured to a professional warder’s firm refusal to leave him alone with SS interrogators.5

Ettstrasse’s conditions reflected both the improvised use of this jail as a protective custody camp and the tensions between established and Nazi methods of prisoner treatment. The protective custody ward contained several cell configurations, but all were filthy and most were dark. Some prisoners remained in solitary confinement, while others shared space with two, three, or more detainees. Initially kept in close confinement, the prisoners were finally permitted to pace the corridor outside the cells in April 1933. To combat boredom when not permitted to exercise, some detainees played chess with partners in other cells by shouting the moves to each other. The corridor walks became known as the “bourse” because they afforded opportunities for exchanging information. Only on May 15 were the prisoners permitted to go outside. This privilege, they discovered, had been intended for the amusement of visiting Nazis, who took satisfaction in their misery. Because he was Jewish, a prisoner named Dr. Kahn was not permitted outside his cell.6

The better-off detainees augmented prison rations with parcels from home or purchases from the prison canteen. Prisoners who ran out of money depended on Ettstrasse’s Spartan and monotonous meals, as Lorant described: “On Monday we have vermicelli soup, on Tuesday potato soup, on Wednesday cabbage soup with dumplings, on Thursday rice soup, on Friday macaroni and Sauerkraut, on Saturday pea soup with a piece of stinking sausage, and on Sunday rice soup. . . . Supper is invariably the same every day. Watery soup and bread-crums. Although I always feel ravenous, I have never yet managed that evening meal. I can’t stand the smell of it.”7

Female protective custody inmates occupied a ward one floor below the males. Among them were the wives of Beimler and Lorant. Arrested on April 21, Centa Beimler-Herker was held at Ettstrasse for two days before being dispatched to Stadelheim, where she remained for three years. In the course of transfer to the early women’s concentration camp Moringen in January 1936, she was once more incarcerated at Ettstrasse. Niura Lorant was detained at Ettstrasse from May 19 to June 30, 1933. Because the cell had three prisoners and one bed, she slept on a straw mattress on the floor.8

Foreign governments and organizations worked on behalf of certain Ettstrasse detainees. Lorant, Walter Tschuppik, and Gerlich were politically moderate or apolitical journalists who were arrested, along with their colleagues, in March 1933. Unlike the Beimlers, who were Communists and therefore high priority, the non-Communist journalists remained in limbo at Ettstrasse until July 1933. Among the detainees were the publishers and staff of the Münchner Neueste Nachrichten (MNN), Süddeutsche Sonntagspost (SüdS), Münchner Post (MP), and MIZ. Arrested on March 14, Stefan Lorant was held at Ettstrasse until July 24, when he joined the journalists, editors, and publishers who had already been dispatched to Stadelheim. The Hungarian government worked tirelessly on his behalf. On September 20, he was sent back to Ettstrasse. The Hungarian efforts bore fruit when, on September 25, Lorant was allowed to return to Budapest.9

Tschuppik, editor of the SüdS, was a Czechoslovakian citizen of German nationality who similarly owed his freedom to international protest. An outspoken anti-Nazi, he was arrested on March 9. Aufruf (ASfM), a publication of the Prague-based League of Human Rights, pressed the Czechoslovakian government and the German embassy for his release. The publicity may have helped, because he returned to Prague in early November 1933. He then became a contributor to the journal that had agitated for his release.10

International pressure did not bring about the release of Fritz Gerlich, however. The Austrian newspaper Vorarlberger Volksblatt (VorVB) reported on May 19, 1933, that the respected Catholic journalist had not been murdered in custody as previously thought but had been blinded in one eye under torture; his other eye had been seriously injured; and he was not permitted contact with his wife. At Ettstrasse, the SS forced him to sign a denial of these allegations, which was published in the VB: “The determination that I am alive corresponds with the truth. It is untrue, however, that I am ‘blind in one eye and in danger of losing the other,’ ‘owing to kicks,’ with which my ‘eyeglasses were driven into my eyes.’ What is more I have never received such a kick and possess complete health and vision in both eyes. My wife has been repeatedly given permission to see and speak with me.”11

Gerlich was imprisoned at Ettstrasse and Stadelheim until June 30, 1934, when he was murdered during the “Night of the Long Knives.”12

Although Ettstrasse remained a holding and interrogation center throughout the Nazi period, its use as a protective custody camp effectively ended in the fall of 1933. It is not known whether any postwar proceedings arose out of the torture of prisoners at this camp.

In the SS, Ostberg rose to the rank of Standartenführer. He died on June 4, 1935.

**Sources**

This entry builds upon the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Droboch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

For München (Ettstrasse) the most important primary source is the diary of Stefan Lorant, *I Was Hitler’s Prisoner*, trans. James Cleugh (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1935). Originally published in English, it was smuggled out of Ettstrasse in two parts, the first by Niura Lorant and the
remainder by Lorant. The Munich edition of the VB contains tendentious stories on Superintendent Karl Ostberg and Fritz Gerlich. The SS weekly newspaper Das Schwarze Korps (SchK), contains Ostberg’s obituary and the funeral. The biweekly journal ASfM documented the efforts on Walter Tschuppik’s behalf. Upon release, he published his testimony in the November 15, 1933, issue. Hans Beimler was the first escapee from the Nazi concentration camps and published the first camp testimony, Im Mörderlager Dachau: Vier Wochen in den Händen der braunen Banditen, 2nd ed., foreword by N. Riedmüller (1933; repr., Berlin: Militärverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980). It was originally published in Moscow in 1933. Centa Beimler-Herker’s testimony deals briefly with her stints at Ettstrasse, in Hanna Elling, Frauen im deutschen Widerstand, 1933–1945 (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg Verlag, 1978).


NOTES
3. Lorant, Hitler’s Prisoner, p. 142 (entry of May 18, 1933).
4. Ibid., pp. 58–59 (entry of March 22, 1933).
7. Ibid., p. 191 (entry of June 16, 1933).

MÜNCHEN–STADELHEIM

In March 1933, the Bavarian Justice Ministry and the SA established a “protective custody” camp at the München-Stadelheim prison. The camp held approximately 100 male and female political opponents and hostages. Located near Giesing, Stadelheim was established in 1894. Four years later, overcrowded conditions led to the construction of a southern wing, known even in the Nazi period as the New Building. In addition to the protective custody camp, the Nazis used the prison as a penitentiary and execution center. In Munich, detainees were normally taken into custody at the Ettstrasse police prison and transferred either to Stadelheim or to the early SS concentration camp at Dachau. According to prisoner Hans Beimler, sick or injured Dachau prisoners were temporarily moved to Stadelheim in the spring of 1933. Male detainees were held in both the old and newer buildings.

The protective custody inmates shared cells with common criminals and imprisoned Nazis. According to Stefan Lorant, who kept a diary in Ettstrasse and Stadelheim, the male detainees were not allowed to work, except for making “paper bags” in their cells. The cells were designed either for solitary confinement or for three or more prisoners but “[n]ever two.” The latter policy was intended to forestall homosexual relations. Rebellious prisoners, such as a Communist who protested a Nazi religious service, were placed in a so-called dark cell. In daytime, prisoners were not permitted to lie down on the beds. Prisoners could borrow books from the prison library, however. According to Dr. Karl Alt, Stadelheim’s Lutheran pastor from 1934 to 1945, the authorities removed books offensive to the new regime, including the Old Testament.

Stadelheim had stern disciplinary regulations. Prisoners were subject to search at any time, and incorrigibles could be placed in chains. Penalties for disobedience ranged from simple warning to “close arrest.” On July 29, 1933, Lorant described “A typical day at Stadelheim”: “Rise at seven. Place bucket outside cell, fetch wash-basin, breakfast on thin coffee and a piece of bread. Eight-thirty to nine-thirty, exercise in the yard. Lunch at eleven-thirty, consisting of a plate of vegetables, including some potatoes, and a piece of bread. Supper at five-thirty, consisting of soup and a piece of bread. Then the folding bed is let down and we are left in peace for the night.”

Despite the strict regimen, the detainees secretly communicated between cells. The prisoners tapped Morse-coded messages on the walls, which their neighbors then relayed to the intended recipient. Lorant said: “There is not a sound to be heard all through the day. It is like being in a cemetery. But later, after the warder has done his rounds, a sound of knocking begins. . . . I cannot yet quite make out what all the raps mean, but some letters are already familiar.”

From mid-July until September 1933, Stadelheim held a small number of non-Communist journalists from Munich. Until late August, they were not allowed to communicate with each other, possibly because the regime was building a legal case against them. Among them were Lorant, the editor.
of the *Münchner Illustrierte Zeitung* (MIZ), Walter Tschuppik, the anti-Nazi editor of the *Süddeutsche Sonntagspost* (*SüdS*), and Dr. Fritz Gerlich, who published articles for various Catholic papers. On August 30, the authorities inexplicably placed the journalists together in one cell and released most via München (Ettrasse) within one month’s time.5

The case of Munich trade union leader Gustav Schiefer demonstrated the role that chance played in protective custody. Arrested on May 5, 1933, he was briefly detained at Ettrasse, then sent to Stadelheim. Schiefer attributed his “extraordinarily fortunate circumstance” of either being transferred to Dachau nor tortured to prison physician Dr. Geisendorfer. The two had known each other for many years, because Schiefer sat on the managing board of the local health insurance fund. Geisendorfer refused to permit Schiefer’s interrogation by the Bavarian Political Police no fewer than five times, explaining that the prisoner suffered from an intestinal rupture. Schiefer was released on health grounds on August 25, 1933.6

Although the men’s camp was closed in the fall of 1933, the women’s camp was operational until January 1936. After his release in November 1933, Tschuppik drew public attention to the women confined at Stadelheim, in an article for the Prague human rights journal *Aufruf* (*ASfM*). Among the prisoners were a newspaper editor’s secretary, Fräulein Feder, a Jewish legal counsel’s wife, Frau Kaiser. To these non-Communist prisoners should be added four Communists not mentioned by Tschuppik—Centa Beimler-Herker, Dora Dressel, Maria Götz, and Emma Stenzer. The exact number of female detainees is not known.7

Centa Beimler-Herker was the focus of international attention during her three years at Stadelheim. Her husband, Hans Beimler, fled Dachau in May 1933 and became the first concentration camp escapee. Already detained at Stadelheim, Beimler-Herker was informed that her release was contingent upon her husband’s surrender, which effectively made her a hostage. In September 1933, her sister Maxi was arrested and also placed in Stadelheim. Beimler-Herker participated in resistance activities. After hearing about Franz Stenzer’s murder at Dachau, she staged a hunger strike with other prisoners in order to agitate for her wife’s, Emma Stenzer’s, release. The female detainees were permitted to work outside their cells, which facilitated, Beimler-Herker later recalled, “a lively exchange of news” between the male and female camps. As a laundress, she surreptitiously circulated banned political publications among the prisoners. The German exile press took up Beimler-Herker’s cause. A visit by an international delegation to Stadelheim resulted in her improved treatment, but further details about this visit are not available. In January 1936, she and her sister were transferred from Stadelheim to the early women’s concentration camp at Moringen.8

During the “Night of the Long Knives,” SA-Stabschef Ernst Röhm was murdered at Stadelheim. On his first day as pastor there, June 30, 1934, Alt saw SS men surrounding the prison. Arriving from Berlin, they carried orders from Hitler to liquidate top SA leaders and certain regime opponents, including Gerlich. According to Alt, when the prison director, Dr. Robert Koch, protested Stadelheim’s use as a killing site, the SS put him on the telephone with Nazi Party secretary Rudolf Hess. Koch summarily dropped his objections. The newly appointed Inspector of Concentration Camps, SS-Brigadeführer Theodor Eicke, shot Röhm in his cell on July 1, after the former SA chief refused Hitler’s offer of committing suicide.9 Between 1933 and 1945, 1,035 persons were executed at Stadelheim, including numerous political prisoners. Alt described three execution methods: hangings, shootings, and beheadings by guillotine. The most common was hanging by slow strangulation. Perhaps in order to distance himself from personal responsibility for what transpired, Alt attempted to distinguish between Stadelheim and the concentration camps, alleging that “penal institutions had . . . nothing to do with KZ [concentration camp] methods.” In the 1930s, the hangings were so commonplace, he recalled, that the authorities dispensed with the customary execution witnesses except for a spiritual adviser.10

Little is known about the protective custody camp superintendant, Müller, or Stadelheim’s director, Koch. Alt described the latter as a “humane” individual concerned about the prisoners’ well-being, but his degree of culpability with the early protective custody camp is not clear. Alt’s predecessor as Lutheran pastor, Schönle, was an outspoken Nazi whose sermons stressed the “Aryan” origins of Jesus Christ. Witnesses recalled that two Roman Catholic priests, Fathers Sigisbert and Karl Kinle, treated the prisoners with great consideration.11 It is not known whether postwar legal proceedings were undertaken against any Stadelheim staff.


Primary documentation for München-Stadelheim starts with the diary of Stefan Lorant, *I Was Hitler’s Prisoner*, trans. James Cleugh (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1935). Originally published in English, it was smuggled out of München-Ettstrasse in two parts, the first by Stefan’s wife, Niura, and the remainder by Lorant. Lorant’s comrade Walter Tschuppik published several articles in the biweekly journal of the Liga der Menschenrechte (Prague), *ASfM*, about Stadelheim. The United States entered Gustav Schiefer’s statement into
evidence before the IMT at Nürnberg. The first concentration camp escapee, Hans Beimler, was held briefly at Stadelheim. His account, *Im Mörderlager Dachau: Vier Wochen in den Händen der braunen Banditen*, 2nd ed., foreword by N. Riedmüller (1933; repr., Berlin: Militärvetrag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1980), was published in Moscow. Centa Beimler-Herker’s testimony is available in Hanna Elling, *Frauen im deutschen Widerstand, 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1978). The international protest that attended Beimler-Herker’s confinement is available in “Frauen als Geiseln: Der Nazi-Terror schreckt vor nichts zurück,” *PT*, July 5, 1934, and *Das deutsche Volk klagt an: Hitler’s Krieg gegen die Friedenskämpfer in Deutschland: Ein Tatsachenbuch* (Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1936). Another important account of Stadelheim is Karl Alt, *Todeskandidaten: Erlebnisse eines Seelsorger im Gefängnis München-Stadelheim mit zahlreichen im Hitlerreich zum Tode verurteilten Männern und Frauen* (Munich: A. Gross, 1946). Quoting at length prisoners’ correspondence and religious poetry, Alt included drawings of Stadelheim during the Nazi years. His intentional or unintentional ignorance of the protective custody camp limits this source’s value. According to Drobisch and Wieland, papers relating to Stadelheim may also be found in the AG-D (testimony of Claus Bastian) and the BA-BL, SAPMO-DDR.

**NOTES**


4. Ibid., p. 285 (entry for August 11, 1933).

5. Ibid., pp. 277–278, 296 (entries for July 29, August 30, 1933).


SA and SS men, who were housed in a block of the larger barracks grounds alongside members of the Labor Service and prisoners, took on the task of guarding the camp. Approximately 200 SA and SS men, as well as members of the Stahlhelm, participated in ongoing educational and professional training courses. A large number of the SS men came from an SS unit in Ludwigshafen. “Most of the SS men were unemployed and hoped to become employed again through these courses and similar activities.” The participants in these courses were enlisted into guard duty in the prison camp. The SA and SS men were placed under Standartenführer Adam Durein.

The Neustadt camp is particularly relevant to historical research since the first preserved set of concentration camp regulations comes from there. This “camp regulations for political prisoners” from March 18, 1933, regulated the daily routine and lives of the prisoners in the camp. The times for labor service were precisely established. Prisoners older than 50 years, as well as prisoners who were not in proper physical condition, were exempted from labor service. Prisoners who did not work were allowed to spend two hours outside every day. Smoking was prohibited but was promised for good conduct during the time outside. The prisoners could receive visitors on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, for two hours each. Visitors were allowed to bring food, clothing, blankets, and reading material. Political magazines and books with Marxist content were exempt from this allowance. As the representative of the prison camp, Colonel Durein signed the camp regulations.11

In the labor service, the prisoners were deployed in the construction of an airfield near Lachen-Speyerdorf (later part of Neustadt an der Weinstraße)2 and also in work on the grounds of the barracks themselves, for there was most likely not enough work outside the camp.13 Guards frequently used this work to humiliate prisoners. Intellectuals in particular were forced to do this physical work, which they were not accustomed to, and they were mocked in the process.14 The guards never passed up an opportunity to torture and intimidate the prisoners: “The prisoners had to haul straw into the grounds of the barracks themselves, for there was most likely not enough work outside the camp.”

Physical mistreatment was the order of the day in Neustadt. Some of the prisoners were severely beaten with rubber truncheons and steel rods by the SA and SS men. These violent acts were carried out by bringing individual prisoners to a separate room where they were randomly beaten by several SA and SS men at the same time.15 One prisoner was forced to clean a backed-up toilet with only his bare hands. When he hesitated, an SS man kicked him in the backside and hit him on the head with a rubber truncheon. Another guard took his anger out on prisoners by threatening them with a truncheon and forcing them to stand upright and give the “Heil Hitler” greeting and sing National Socialist songs.16 Another prisoner reported about “running the gauntlet” (Spiersrutenlauf): the prisoner had to run through a cordon of SS men, and each one hit the prisoner with a rubber truncheon. Especially notorious for such punishments were the SS men from Ludwigshafen, against whom a trial was carried out after 1945 for crimes against humanity.17

After Nazi Party (NSDAP) Gauleiter Josef Bürckel visited the camp on March 18 or 19, 1933, and heard the complaints of prisoners, the mistreatment supposedly decreased.18

The most sensational incident in Neustadt occurred on March 16, 1933. Hermann Zahm, the Neustadt RB leader, had particularly aroused the ire of the guard staff because he was suspected of having taken part in an attack on two SA men in February 1933.19 From the first day of his imprisonment, he was beaten with steel rods and rubber truncheons and questioned again and again. Fearing further mistreatment, he jumped out a third-story window after only a few days. He suffered serious injuries to his legs, three dorsal vertebrae, and his head. He received treatment in a hospital for one year and four months, but he remained largely incapable of working.20 Another prisoner attempted to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a razor.21

The Neustadt barracks was supposedly closed in June 1933. After this point in time, prisoners from the Palatinate were taken to the Dachau concentration camp. The barracks were used by the Wehrmacht as of 1936.

**Sources** The most important sources on the protective custody camp in Neustadt an der Haardt are in the LA-Sp and consist primarily of files of the judicial authorities. Probably the most important source are the files of the trial against Eugen Huber et al., guards in the Neustadt concentration camp, for crimes against humanity, located in the files of the State Attorney’s Office in the Frankenthal Regional Court under the shelf marked J 72 No. 332 and 378. Additional important information on the Neustadt camp can be found in the files of the Court of Honor against Dr. Rudolf Hammann at the Higher Regional Court Zweibrücken J 71, No. 428. Both files contain extensive statements on the mistreatment of prisoners. One can consult the prisoner book of the local
prison Neustadt (under the shelf marked J 89 No. 1) for information about the numbers of prisoners and their social backgrounds. Other important sources can be found in the extensive collection of the Antifa-Archive of Hermann Morweiser in Ludwigshafen. The camp order of Neustadt, for example, can also be found there.

In addition, there are many articles in contemporaneous newspapers, above all in the LdAnz and in the NSZR. Downplaying the situation in the camps, they are, however, prime examples of the propaganda at that time as well and thus must be viewed very critically.

There is no monograph on the Neustadt protective custody camp. Hermann Morweiser reports about the camp and on the events surrounding prisoner Zahn in an article in dt from October 23, 1981, titled “Deported from the Rheinpfalz Camp to Dachau. The Provisional Concentration Camp in Neustadt Is Virtually Forgotten.” The booklet Neustadt an der Haardt 1933 bis 1945: Das Geheimnis der Internierung Camp in Neustadt Is Virtually Forgotten.” The booklet

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5. LdAnz, March 20, 1933; NSZr, March 23, 1933; LdAnz, March 30, 1933.
6. EDR, March 25, 1933.
8. Ibid.
14. NSZr, March 23, 1933.
16. LdAnz, March 30, 1933.
17. Ibid.
20. BHSa-An (N), MF 67 403, unpaginated.
22. Ibid.
26. Antifa-Archive Morweiser, article of March 17, 1933.
28. LdAnz, April 13, 1933.

NEUSUSTRUM [AKA PAPENBURG V]

On October 2, 1933, Neusustrum became the fourth and final subcamp of the State Concentration Camp Papenburg (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg). Commanded by SS-Sturmführer Emil Faust (Nazi Party [NSDAP] No. 151165), this 1,000-man “barracks camp” furnished labor for Emsland cultivation. Unlike Börgermoor and the two Esterwegen subcamps, Neusustrum was situated near the Dutch border, within the Sustrum and west of the Bourtanger Moors. As its numerical designation suggested, the Prussian Ministry of Interior once intended it to be the fifth subcamp. Hermann Göring’s state secretary Ludwig Grauert allocated the same financial resources for Neusustrum as for the two Esterwegen camps, 700,000 Reichsmark (RM), because he originally foresaw it being a 2,000-prisoner camp. The details of Neusustrum’s construction are not available, but the task probably belonged to the first inmates. Prisoner Gerd Nixdorf remembered the camp’s unfinished state from his arrival at the beginning of October 1933. Violence at this and other
Papenburg camps prompted the Prussian Gestapa (Secret State Police Office) to remove the SS in November 1933. Neusustrum heightened the level of violence, as three murders and one suicide took place there in a 10-day period.

On October 2, the first 240 prisoners arrived at the Lathen railway station from Anrath, Brauweiler, Köln (Bonner Wall), and Wuppertal-Barmen. Before they set off on an 11-kilometer (6.8-mile) journey by foot and field train to camp, Faust warned would-be escapees about his staff’s shooting prowess. His outburst was typical. Detainee Josef Hawlas, who entered the camp on October 19, recalled Faust saying to his group: “You pigs, shooting you down is the dearest wish of me and my comrades, the carpenter’s shop will make the coffins.” He continued: “All of you are very close to St. Peter. If you don’t believe it, then you will get out quickly. My comrades shoot well, as you have already learned for yourself.” Faust’s last statement alluded to the murders committed en route of Russian inmate Simon Koje on October 10 and of Recklinghausen Communist Wilhelm Wieden on the day of Hawlas’s arrival.

Two additional deaths occurred the next day, October 20. Former Polizeimeister Paul Guse committed suicide, enduring torture and penal exercises. In their rush to cover up their involvement, the SS recorded the time of death as “0715 hours in the afternoon.” At 2:30 P.M., in front of the commandant’s headquarters and at Faust’s behest, a guard ordered Jewish prisoner Isaak Baruch to run, then shot him as he obeyed. Shortly after these incidents, according to Fritz Schulte, the SS emptied the barracks in a nightlong beating similar to incidents at Bürgermoor and the two Esterwegen camps.

New prisoners underwent harsh rituals. According to Nixdorf, Faust announced that his staff would “smack them down.” The initiates then ran through a gauntlet of SS ranks and suffered blows “from all sides.” According to Peter Meter, the SS chose 10 prisoners from his group of detainees from Cologne’s Bonner Wall camp. They made them strip and race, with guard dogs chasing them.

At Neusustrum, music performed the dual roles of prisoner coping and SS harassment. Prisoner Kaufmann composed the camp’s song, “Exiled to the Emsland’s Far North.” In contrast to the “Bürgermoorlied,” it closed in a more somber tone: “We long for our wives / our joy at home— / we now look again inconsolably; / Freedom when will you return?”

The SS employed nationalistic music for reeducation and as an excuse for brutality. Rudolf Nagor remembered that the prisoners were forced to sing “Oh, Deutschland, hoch in Ehren” on the way into camp. Artur Korn recalled that when the guards demanded a song on return from work, one prisoner was too exhausted to comply. Struck with a “birchwood cudgel,” he nearly collapsed but got help from another prisoner, Paul. A detainee shouted, “Comrades, don’t let yourselves be provoked. They want a blood bath!” After striking Paul for intervening, the SS ordered him to beat the prisoner with the cudgel. When Paul refused, they thrashed him.

Like other Papenburg commandants, Faust received his Emsland assignment from SS-Group West (Gruppe West) chief Gruppenführer Fritz Weitzel. But according to historian Hans-Peter Klausch, he was transferred from his native Koblenz because of his poor disciplinary record. Faust served time in youth prison in 1914 and 1915 for theft and was prone to violent rages. Earning the Iron Cross Second Class in 1918, participating in Free Corps Förster-Löwenfeld from 1919 to 1920, and fighting Communists in the SS in the early 1930s explained why he had not been dismissed earlier.

Between the Free Corps and SS stints, he joined the French Foreign Legion from 1920 to 1924. According to Hawlas, the prisoners knew about this detail from Faust’s past. In early August 1933, he became Esterwegen II’s adjutant and helped to organize the notorious “Special Duty Detachment” (Abteilung z.b.V.) at Esterwegen III. The exact circumstances of Faust’s September 27, 1933, appointment as commandant are unclear.

At Neusustrum, medical attention was nonexistent. At Esterwegen II, Faust met Silesian prisoner and medical student “Dr.” Albert Thiel. After Neusustrum opened, he arranged for Thiel’s release and appointed him camp physician. Thiel’s extreme nationalism and brutality—Hawlas called him a “sadist”—made him an SS ally. In 1935, Osnabrück Regional Court (4 J 403/34) sentenced him to five years in a penitentiary and denied him a medical license for his actions at Neusustrum. Unlike other Nazi-era cases against early camp perpetrators, the regime did not quash this verdict because Thiel was a former detainee.

On November 6, 1933, the SS surrendered the camp to the Prussian police. Before doing so, they sabotaged the camp’s rations. As was the case at Bürgermoor, a rumor circulated of their intention to arm prisoners in preparation for resisting the police. About the takeover, Hawlas exclaimed, “Now the camp is occupied by the police. As a reward therefore the churches hold a service of thanksgiving, because this horde of people is gone!”

Faust’s violent outbursts continued after Neusustrum. The SS did not take action against him when he assaulted a Krupp director in 1935 but dismissed him in 1936 when his role in the Thiel case came to light. In World War II, he served in France with Organisation Todt (OT), but the Hauptamt SS-Gericht denied his Waffen-SS enlistment in 1944. Arrested by the British in July 1946, Osnabrück Regional Court (4 J 172/49) sentenced him to life in a penitentiary for crimes against humanity on November 30, 1950. Released in December 1965, he died on April 13, 1966.

From December 20, 1933, until April 1934, the SA administered Neusustrum under the command of Hans Giese. On December 22, 1933, 380 prisoners were released because of a Christmas amnesty, including German Communist Party (KPD) prisoner Albert Stasch. Under Giese, the killing of prisoners resumed once more. In early January 1934, the SA shot to death the Schmalkalden Volkstümme’s editor Ludwig Pappenheim and Düsseldorf’s KPD town councilor August Henning. Neusustrum’s closure on April 1, 1934, marked the first step in the Prussian Justice Ministry’s establishment of Papenburg penal camps. The “protective custody prisoners”
entered Börgermoor before proceeding with that camp’s population to Esterwegen II on April 25.16

As a penal camp, Neusustrum continued the regime’s persecution of outcast groups, including homosexuals convicted under Paragraph 175 and Jehovah’s Witnesses.17 From 1940 to 1945, it held Polish and Jewish penal prisoners.


NOTES


5. Quotations from testimony of Josef Hawlas, in USHMM, RG 11.001 M.20, RGVA, Fond 1367 Opis 2 Delo 33, Testimonies of Former Prisoners in Concentration Camps, March to October 1933, pp. 11–12.


7. Ibid.


**NOHRA**

The Nazi Party (NSDAP) received 11.3 percent of the votes in the Thuringia state elections in December 1929. That vote translated into 53 seats in the state parliament. The conservative parties and the NSDAP joined together to form a government. Hitler gave his blessing to the coalition only after Dr. Wilhelm Frick was assured of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education. Frick had been a close associate of Hitler since 1923 and was a convinced Nazi and a determined opponent of the Weimar Republic. He took part in the attempted putsch on November 9, 1923, in Munich and from 1927–1928 was leader of the NSDAP parliamentary group in the Reichstag. On January 25, 1930, Frick became the first Nazi minister in one of the German states. During the 15 months as a member of the government, Frick laid the foundations for National Socialism in Thuringia. On April 1, 1931, he was forced to leave the government following a vote of no confidence.

Hitler gained the majority of votes in the presidential elections in March–April 1932 in Thuringia—with 44.3 percent of the votes, he received 8 percent more than his average throughout the rest of the Reich. It seemed for the National Socialists in Thuringia that the time had come to decide their struggle for power. The elections on July 31, 1932, for the
sixth Thüringia state parliament gave the NSDAP the breakthrough. They gained 42.5 percent of the votes and 26 of 61 seats. Together with the Thüringian Farmers’ Alliance (TLB) they formed a coalition government. Head of government and minister of the interior was Fritz Sauckel. The TLB received a state council (Staatsrat), a ministerial office without portfolio. This Nazi-led ministry commenced operations on August 26, 1932. Between August 1932 and March 1933, Sauckel and other members of the government publicly threatened their political opponents over and over again. For instance, Sauckel announced on October 19, 1932: “We might become brutal beyond your imagination.” However, there are no direct hints of plans for camps in Thuringia.

By February 1933, the new power structures had been consolidated and were stable. For example, the industrial towns of Suhl and its surroundings and Meiningen in the Thuringia Forest, both areas heavily affected by the world economic crisis, developed from bastions of the workers’ parties into Nazi strongholds. Measures taken to repress the Communists and the Social Democrats were easier to push through in Thuringia than in the rest of the Reich.

Following the Prussian model, an auxiliary police (Hilfspolizei) was established in Thuringia on February 28, 1933. It consisted of members of the SA, the SS, and the Stahlhelm. The Hilfspolizei officers were armed with pistols. They continued to wear the uniforms of their respective organizations, but they were a white armband with the police star for the state of Thuringia on the upper left arm. They were only allowed on duty while under the command of the municipal police (Schutzpolizei) or a gendarmerie post. They had to swear an oath of allegiance and were subordinate to Minister of the Interior Sauckel. In the spring of 1933, the Hilfspolizei was a part of the state police force. There are no details about the number of Hilfspolizei in proportion to the police in Thuringia. All that is known is that 592 SA men served 732 days in supporting the Thuringia police and that 1,185 SS men served 31,758 man-days.

The National Socialists had formed part of the Thuringia government from 1930. Following the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933, several hundred Communists were quickly arrested. The district and regional court prisons were immediately overcrowded. In order to relieve the situation, the Thuringia Ministry of Interior decided to establish a concentration camp in the military-oriented Homeland School (Heimatschule) Mitteldeutschland e.V. on March 3, 1933. The Heimatschule Mitteldeutschland e.V. was founded in 1928. The first Nazi concentration camp in Germany was based at the former Nohra airfield, 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from Weimar.

The Heimatschule in Nohra consisted of two buildings that were connected by a low-rise building. The Volunteer Labor Service (FAD) was accommodated in the left building. The ground floor of the building on the right accommodated the school’s administration and a large refectory. The first floor was reserved for military sport training camps (Wehrsportlager) of the Stahlhelm. The concentration camp was established on the floor above the Wehrsportlager. It was divided into three large rooms, each of which was equipped with straw and blankets. The hygienic conditions were catastrophic, as there were too few toilets and washing facilities. At times, the camp was completely overcrowded. Several Hilfspolizei officers guarded the entrances to the rooms, as the Heimatschule was surrounded neither by barbed wire nor a fence or a wall. It was not isolated from the rest of the world. At first Nohra was referred to as an “assembly camp.” The term concentration camp is used in relation to Nohra for the first time on March 8, 1933, in a newspaper. The choice of wording had no relevance for the camp’s character.

The Thuringia Ministry of Interior was in charge of the guards and camp administration. The guards consisted of Hilfspolizei and selected students from the Heimatschule. They were supported by members of the SA and Stahlhelm. The supervisors of the Heimatschule were also in charge of the Nohra concentration camp guards. The Ministry of Interior established a police station in the school where the prisoners were interrogated. It was from here that the prisoners were transferred to other detention centers or released. The chief of the police station in the Heimatschule Mitteldeutschland—his name is unknown—can be considered the commander of the Nohra concentration camp.

On March 3, 1933, the first day of the camp’s existence, 100 prisoners arrived directly from the Weimar Schutzpolizei barracks, via the Weimar regional court prison or from various other regional court prisons. Many of the prisoners came from Thüringian industrial cities, which traditionally counted as “red” bastions. On the second day, the number of prisoners increased to 170. Around March 12, 1933, the camp reached its maximum number of prisoners, 220. In March 1933, a large number of prisoners were released, but on March 31 the camp still held 60 prisoners. The releases were offset by only a few new arrivals. On average, there were 95 prisoners in Nohra.

Nohra exclusively held Communists from the free state of Thüringia. Five of the 10 Thüringia Communist members of the state parliament were interned here: Fritz Gäbler, Richard Eyermann, Rudolf Arnold, Erich Scharf, and Leander Kröber. A large proportion of the Communist city councilors and other Thüringian Communist functionaries, such as the German Communist Party (KPD) local chairmen, the treasurers and the members of the Rot-Front-Kämpfer-Bund (RFKB), and activists of the Rote Hilfe Deutschlands (RHD) were also taken to Nohra. A few women were also held in the Heimatschule for a short period of time.

The prisoners did not work in the Nohra concentration camp. They were locked up in the dormitory during the day. This monotony and isolation was only interrupted by interrogations and the arrival of new prisoners. In the early days of the camp, new prisoners used to arrive every day. The prisoners had no contact with the outside world. In their memoirs, former prisoners mention that they were mistreated by the guards.

“Protective custody” in Thuringia was a form of police-administered protective custody; accordingly, the Communists were prisoners of the police. As a result, they were allowed...
to vote in the Reichstag elections. Nohra’s inmates voted on March 5 at the same polling station as other Nohra inhabitants. Thus, the KPD gained 172 votes in Nohra, whereas a few months earlier at the local elections in December 1932, it had only received 10 votes.

The Nohra concentration camp was one of the first to be closed; it lasted only until April 12, 1933. By then around 250 people had been interned in the camp.

The remaining 32 prisoners were taken on April 12, 1933, to the Ichtershausen penitentiary near Arnstadt. This prison already had a protective custody section. Therewith, the Nohra concentration camp was dissolved. By September 1933, just about all the former Nohra prisoners had been released from Ichtershausen. A few remained there until the Bad Sulza concentration camp was opened—among them were the two members of the state parliament, Richard Eyermann (Bad Salzungen) and Leander Kröber (Meuselwitz), who received the prisoner numbers 23 and 24 in Bad Sulza.

SOURCES

The very few archival files on the Nohra concentration camp are mainly to be found in the THStA-W. Other primary sources are the ViDi-N files in the THStA-W, the TStA-R, TStA-M, the THStA-G, and the BA-B. References can also be found in the smaller city archives.

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trans. Stephen Pallavicini

OBERFRANKEN AND UNTERFRANKEN CAMPS
Following the March 9, 1933, Nazi takeover of Bavaria, the police established at least 10 small “protective custody” camps in the northern Gaue of Oberfranken and Unterfranken (after 1935: Mainfranken). In Oberfranken, the Coburg local prison, Hof an der Saale state court prison, and Straubing penitentiary became camps, in addition to the Bayreuth (St. Georgen) workhouse, Bamberg Wilhelmsplatz state court prison, and Hassenberg women’s prison. In Unterfranken, the Aschaffenburg, Hassfurt, Schweinfurt, and Würzburg local prisons had protective custody camps. Aschaffenburg, Coburg, Hassfurt, Hof, Schweinfurt, Straubing, and Würzburg confined more than 600 detainees in March 1933. According to the Bamberg state prosecutor’s memorandum to the Bavarian Justice Ministry, March 11, 1933, Bad Kissingen’s local prison may also have held detainees, but additional information is needed to verify this claim.1

OBERFRANKEN CAMPS
In June 1929, Coburg elected the first Nazi-dominated government in Germany. Since 1930, its mayor was Franz Schwede, the Bezirksleiter and future Gauleiter of Pomerania. In March 1933, Schwede wasted little time in settling old scores against leftists and others critical of his three-year rule. On March 10, the police dispatched 15 Communists to the prison, together with some members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The prisoners included SPD city council members (Dürkopp, Christian Reichenbecher, Schneider, and Voyé); the business manager of the SPD-affiliated Coburger Volksblatt; Reinhold Scheller and several others, for harboring an arms cache at the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (RB) headquarters; agricultural officials Voll and Görner; and Jewish physician Dr. Engel, who was tortured in custody. On March 26, two consumer association leaders entered the camp.2 When the prison exceeded capacity, Schwede set aside the city hall’s “old hostel” for temporary confinement.3 The state hospital admitted several prisoners for the treatment of wounds sustained in custody. By April 5, Coburg prison released most detainees, but 13 were transferred to Hassenberg.4 The local prison continued to take in protective custody prisoners, such as cattle dealer Ludwig Goldmaier, a Jew from Lichtenfels arrested on April 19 in a probable case of economic persecution. By mid-May, 14 Coburg citizens went to Dachau, with 12 transported to the camp on May 18.5 In a speech before the city council on October 13, 1933, Schwede took responsibility for the arrest of 84 citizens, 34 of whom went to Dachau. Invoking the Nazi slogan “Community benefit before private gain,” he vowed that those not working for or racially fit to belong to the national community would face similar treatment.6 In 1935, Hitler honored Schwede’s role in the town’s nazification by giving him a second surname, “Coburg.” On September 29, 1951, the Coburg Regional Court sentenced Schwede to 10 years’ imprisonment, in connection with the March 1933 persecutions. Amnestied in 1956, he died in Coburg on October 9, 1960.7

The Hof an der Saale prison held at least 260 detainees between March and June 1933. By March 12, the Hof police had arrested “hundreds” and detained at least 43 Communists and 8 Social Democrats. The Social Democrats included the Oberfränkische Volkszeitung’s editors, Döhler and Münchmener, town council member and trade unionist Arthur Mähr, and councilman Fraas. With their editors in custody, the Oberfränkische Volkszeitung laid off its 34 employees for one week. SPD Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Hans Seidel entered the camp on March 14, as did two SPD youth leaders.8 By March 21, the population swelled to 200, double its capacity, which led the prison to refuse the admittance of 4 Social Democrats from Plauen, Saxony. Arrested for convening “a secret conference” in Hof, Emmerich, Fritzsch, Nitzsche, and Steinkamp were dispatched to Grafenwörth, en route to Plauen.9 By March 31, Hof had admitted SPD council member Rauh, businessman Hermann Starer, agricultural unionists Drechsler and Weiss, and 5 “foreign Jews, of whom 4 are stateless.”10 Among those held for a prolonged period were Mähr, who remained in Hof until June 6, and Seidel, whose first detention lasted until April 13.11 Rearrested on June 30, 1933, with other SPD
leaders throughout Bavaria, he was transferred to St. Georgen on July 15 and released on August 29.12

In March 1933, the maximum security prison at Straubing held 200 detainees. On account of the massive influx, 50 detainees were housed in the prison gymnasium. Built at the turn of the twentieth century, the penitentiary had also housed a criminal psychiatric ward since 1917.

**UNTERFRANKEN CAMPS**

Already on March 1, one day after the Reichstag fire, the Aschaffenburg police placed local Communists under surveillance.13 Between March and May 1933, the prison held at least 31 political prisoners. On March 9, the police arrested 6 Communists plus 3 Social Democrats. Twelve or more members of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the SPD entered Aschaffenburg in the coming days. Among the political prisoners were Alois Brand, August Büttner, Josef Büttner, Georg Dewald, Fritz Fronhofer (briefly), Karl Griesemer, Josef (Sepp) Grimm, Matthias Haab, Xaver Haberl, Otto Kläre, Josef Koch, Valentin Köhler, Josef Kraus, Franz Kuhn, Josef Mensch, Eugen Ostheimer, Friedrich Panocha, Martin Pfarrer, Alfred Richter, Alois Schallenger, Johann Schwarzmann, Heinrich Siemen, Jean Stock, and August Volz. After the police banned Stock’s SPD paper *Aschaffenger Volkszeitung*, he entered the camp on March 15. Nine trade union secretaries, arrested by the SA for harboring weapons, were taken to Aschaffenburg on March 20. Released days later because of insufficient evidence, they were Johann Brummer, Otto Dietz, Albert Krimmel, Paul Lill, Adam Mantel, Karl Opel, Eugen Ostheimer, Sebastian Rollmann, and Leonhard Schäfer.14 Communist writer Kuhn entered the camp on March 29 and was let out on April 29. In an indication that Weimar custom still prevailed in Aschaffenburg, the authorities permitted political inmates to have family visits.

At least four Aschaffenburg detainees went to Dachau. Dewald was at Dachau from April 24 to May 18, after a brief stay at Würzburg prison. Communist inmates Koch, Richter, and Schallenger entered Dachau on May 8.15

On March 12, the Hassfurt prison admitted 15 Communists and Eiserner Front (Iron Front, EF) members. Two local councilmen, Süßmann and Georg Wirth, entered Hassfurt on March 17, but another, Baum, was released. Two Hassfurt prisoners went to Dachau as part of the April 25, 1933, Northern Bavarian transport. By early May, Hassfurt’s remaining detainees were sent to Bamberg before dispatch to Dachau.16

On March 11, 1933, the Schweinfurt prison admitted 40 detainees. Most were Social Democrats, including the mayor, Dr. Merkle, and councilmen Dietz, Goldmann, Groha, and Mauer. On March 24, 3 Jewish prisoners, Arthur Bildstein, Lehmann, and Max Dreyfus, were also taken into protective custody. Because Bildstein and Lehmann were horse dealers and Dreyfus was a banker, their arrests probably involved economic persecution. On May 8, the prison released Dietz, Goldmann, Groha, Mauer, and Merkle, but the June 22 SPD ban led to their rearrest on June 25.17

On March 10, 1933, the Würzburg prison admitted over 100 detainees. Among them were more than 50 Communists, 9 Social Democrats, RB members, and Bavarian People’s Party (BVP) leaders. On March 17, the editor of the Christian Socialist weekly *Neue Völk*, Vitus Heller, became a detainee. The editor of the Fränkischen Volksblatt (Frak’), Page, left custody on April 14, but his arrest date is not known. On April 19, a Jewish cattle dealer, Bernhard Goldener, was arrested, on the likely spurious charge of cheating local farmers. The Bamberg Special Court sentenced Siegmund Weissmann to an unspecified term of imprisonment for spreading news about the maltreatment of Jews in Würzburg prison. On May 5, 37 Würzburg detainees, including Communist leader Dr. Kellner, were sent to Dachau.18


Primary documentation for this camp begins with the Bamberg prosecutor general’s report to the Bavarian State Justice Ministry, March 11, 1933, in the KZ and Haftanstalten collection, now in BA-BL, SAPMO-DDR, as reproduced in Drobsch and Wieland. The ITS lists the Aschaffenburg, Bad Kissingen, Hassfurt, Hof an der Saale, Straubing, and Würzburg prisons in Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (CCP), ed. Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schmitt, prepared originally by ITS (1949–1951; repr., with new intro. matter, Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 1:178, 188, 205, 219, 221. As cited by Thum, a police report mentioning the transfer of Coburg prisoners to Hassenberg is the “Halbmonatsbericht der Polizei Neustadt bei
Coburg (1. Hälfe April 33),” in ASt-Ne/Co, XVI G 2, No. 2, p. 149. As cited by Albrecht, Schwede’s order allocating space at Coburg City Hall for detainees (A-7.870), his October 1933 speech before the city council (A-8.074), and his prosecution (Staatsanwaltschaft No. 80) may be found in the ASt-Ne/Co. As cited by Schumacher, Seidel’s name appears on an undated Gestapo List, in BA-P, RSHA St. 3/312, as cited in “Seidel, Hans” s.v., in Mdr: Die Reichsagsabgeordneten der Weimarer Republik in der Zeit der Nationalsozialismus, ed. Martin Schumacher (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1994).


OCHTUMSAND

In February 1933, Hermann Göring decreed that auxiliaries from the ranks of the so-called national associations would reinforce the regular police.1 Göring’s decree was also implemented in Bremen at the beginning of March. The government assembled the auxiliary police (Hilfspolizei) from the ranks of the SS, SA, and the Stahlhelm, which supported not only the municipal police (Schutzpolizei) but the Criminal Police as well. The Bremerhaven Hilfspolizei, brought into being on March 7 and, like its Bremen counterpart, equipped with rubber truncheons, service weapons, service identification, and armbands (which read “Hilfspolizei”), initially reached a strength of 25 men but grew to over 100 men by the end of April. From this group, which was originally supposed to secure bridges, water- and gasworks, the guards for the Bremen concentration camps Missler, Ochttumsand, and Langütten II were assembled. After the SS was found guilty of serious excesses in Missler, they were replaced by the SA in

NOTES


7. ASt-Ne/Co, Staatsanwaltschaft No. 80; and NPC, April 10, 1931, as cited in Albrecht, Avantgarde, p. 188.


10. “Frankische Nachrichten: Hof (Verhaftungen),” BV, March 27, 1933; quotation in “Frankische Nachrichten: Hof (Verhaftet),” BV, April 1, 1933.

May 1933, which then also provided the guard unit for Ochtumsand and Langlüten II.

Both the SA and SS, however, had only a supporting function, as the actual penal system was in state hands, those of the Bremen Schutzpolizei. Thus regular police officials had been assigned as superiors to the SS and SA at every camp, which often led to serious conflicts, as the National Socialists, who mostly came from ordinary backgrounds, only unwillingly submitted themselves to police commands, since they considered themselves the victors in the “national” revolution.

When a massive wave of arrests began in the fall of 1933, the new leaders were unprepared for the resulting organizational problems. From the beginning, one question kept coming up: where were the numerous political opponents, suddenly arrested, to be kept? The existing possibilities, which were the police prisons and other detention centers, had quickly exhausted their capacities. Due to the overcrowding, there was constant improvisation. On July 11, 1933, Police Senator (Polizeisenator) Theodor Laue announced that he was considering closing the Missler concentration camp and interning the prisoners at another location. A small number of prisoners were to be kept at the former fort Langlüten II across from Bremerhaven, while a larger number were to be kept at a yet-to-be-built camp on the embankment of the Ochtum, the Ochtumsand, a small tributary of the Weser on the heights around Bremen. The transportation of the prisoners to both new camps did not take place until several weeks after the resolution had been passed.

The Ochtumsand concentration camp was improvised to an even greater degree than the Missler camp in that the prisoners were housed on a former barge, No. 86, of Norddeutschen Lloyd, which had washed ashore on the embankment of the Ochtum in the heights of Altenesch. The ship, rented from the Bremen senate, had four storage rooms; the two in the middle were for the prisoners, and the ones fore and aft were used by the guards. The prisoners’ quarters received only basic necessities: beds pushed together in groups of four, a long table with chairs, and hooks on the wall for hanging clothes. A stairway led to the deck. In both rooms a total of around 100 prisoners could be penned up. As there was no heat, the rooms were cold and damp, corresponding to the seasons. Both groups of prisoners chose a respective room elder in addition to a camp elder as speaker for the collective. Communist municipal council member Hermann Prüser was the first camp elder and simultaneously elder for room one. On deck two kitchens were installed, one each for the guard unit and the prisoners (who also had to provide cooks). According to the kitchen plan, both groups would receive the same food, which was checked once a week by a police doctor.

To prevent escape attempts, a barbed-wire fence as high as a man was installed on the rails of the barge. A small tower on the foredeck superstructure ensured the guard posts a good overview of the entire camp. A shower installation was located midship, with more washing facilities as well as toilets and an equipment shed on land. The way off the ship led over a wooden plank and a tubelike footbridge made from planks.
and surrounded by barbed wire. The prisoners had to report at 7:00 A.M. for roll call and exercise, followed by the march to the work sites. Work was interrupted for an hour at midday when the prisoners received a warm meal. Around 5:00 P.M. the work troops returned to the barge. After the evening meal the prisoners had time for diversions, chess playing, or even to read the paper, which may be surprising at first but corresponded perfectly well with the ideas of Laue, who hoped to convince political opponents of the positive aspects of National Socialism.

For the guarding of Ochtumsand, which not only had a higher prisoner capacity than Langlütjen II but also offered prisoners more opportunities to escape simply because of its location, around 30 SA men and 3 policemen were detailed there from the Bremen police directorate. Although there were no written regulations governing the daily routine at Ochtumsand, it was strictly organized and regimented. According to the disciplinary regime, the prisoners had to "stand at attention" at every opportunity, "click their boots," and ask any guard for permission, for example, when they wanted to go to the bathroom. The smallest incident could have terrible consequences, as abuses—despite the presence of the Schutzpolizei—were also the order of the day at Ochtumsand. Most of the excesses happened in the sleeping room of the SA, where—in order to remove the possibility of screaming—a woolen blanket was first thrown over the head of the prisoners who were then dragged across a table and beaten with rubber truncheons.

On November 9 and at Christmas in 1933, the authorities granted amnesties that applied to the prisoners of both Bremerhaven camps. Langlütjen II was closed on January 25, 1934, after only four months in operation. There were three deciding factors: (1) high costs, (2) relatively low numbers of prisoners, and (3) the dependency on the tides, which resulted in constant organizational and administrative problems. From that point on, only the Ochtumsand concentration camp was available for internment Bremen "protective custody" prisoners. This camp, however, was also closed on May 15, 1934. Those who up to that point had not yet been released were transferred to one of the new camps outside of Bremen, to Dachau or to the Emsland moor camps.

The Bremen concentration camps of 1933 are not to be compared with the several "wild" camps that came into being around the same time and were controlled by the SA and SS, nor are they the equivalent of those camps that were to systematize the terror on the basis of "special regulations." The Bremen camps were stopgaps, improvisations that developed from a lack of space in the first months of the dictatorship. Correspondingly, they still had characteristics from the transitional period: they did not have specific unified camp regulations, and no systematic program of terror was employed. In several areas the principle of chance prevailed.

On March 28, 1931, proceedings were opened before the Bremen Regional Court, which was to deal with the crimes committed "at Bremen and Langlütjen" but which, however, was soon referred to by the public as the "Missler trial," as the camps Ochtumsand and Langlütjen came up merely in passing. Only under point 28 of the indictment does the Skrotzky case—the abuse and subsequent suicide of a prisoner in Langlütjen—receive mention. The defendant was a former SA Hilfspolizei officer who in the end was sentenced to eight months in prison (part of which he had already served) for bodily harm on duty concomitant with severe bodily harm in four cases. The remaining sentence was suspended. Those politically responsible for the camp, like Police Senator Laue, for example, were not called to account.

**NOTES**

1. On the auxiliary police in Bremen and Bremerhaven, see StA-Br, file “Löblich” 8 KMs 1/51, vol. 1, and ASt-Br, file “Gestapo 1946–47.”

2. On the senate’s motives, see ZdL, collection “Verschiedenes,” Folder 207: Copies from the file “Schutzhaft politischer Gefangener” of the Senatsregierung Bremen, primarily minutes of the senate meeting on July 18, 1933.

3. See the witness statements in StA-Br, file “Löblich” 8 KMs 1/51, vol. 1.


**OELSNTZ IM ERZGEBIRGE**

On March 9, 1933, SA-Standarte 183 in Saxony formed an early camp in the basement of the bank at Oelsnitz/Erzgebirge. The camp was established only a few days after this unit had attacked political opponents on the streets of Oelsnitz. Neither the camp population nor the guard strength is known. Among the victims was Communist Party member Dalmatius Konietzny, whom the SA murdered in the course of interrogation. Konietzny’s interrogator was a Nazi against whom he had previously brought a lawsuit for an injury suffered during a bar fight. His murder is an example of the SA’s settling of old scores in the early camps. The date of Oelsnitz’s dissolution is
not known. On December 7, 1948, the Chemnitz state court in the Soviet Zone of Occupation convicted 12 defendants for the brutal treatment of political prisoners at Oelsnitz. Two, including Edwin Eckhardt, received life sentences, and the remainder were sentenced to various lengths of confinement in penitentiaries or prisons.


Primary sources about Oelsnitz are available at the BA-BL’s collection of former East German papers. These documents include reports to the Rote Hilfe Deutschlands (Red Aid of Germany) and the Archiv des Generalstaatsanwalts der DDR, File No. 243-20-1975. The Oelsnitz trial is case number StKs 43/48.

Joseph Robert White

**OLDENBURG**

In March 1933, the SA, SS, and Stahlhelm established a “protective custody” camp in the police prison in the city of Oldenburg. Before the camp opened, the SA, SS, and Stahlhelm were publicly deputized as police near the Oldenburg horse market. The first 15 Communist Party detainees were admitted to the camp on the night of March 3; by July, there were 90 prisoners. In August, however, the camp population decreased to 60. The detainees resisted by sneaking illegal manuscripts for publication outside the camp. Oldenburg served as a clearinghouse for the neighboring early concentration camp and prison at Vechta.


Primary documentation for the Oldenburg early camp, as cited in Sommer, consists of files in the ASt-O, Best. 133, 136, 205, and 298. According to Sommer, the OSZ reported on this camp on April 15, June 29, and July 6, 1933. See also the ITS listing in *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem*, ed. Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 1:100.

Joseph Robert White

**ORANIENBURG**

The Oranienburg concentration camp was established as one of the first concentration camps on March 21, 1933, overshadowed by the Day of Potsdam. After the “Night of the Long Knives,” the SA-run camp was taken over by the SS in July 1934 and dissolved a little later. The Oranienburg concentration camp is not to be confused with the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, which was established by the SS in July 1936 on the edge of the town of Oranienburg.

Initially SA-Regiment 208 (Standarte 208) established the Oranienburg concentration camp without notifying the responsible authorities in Berlin beforehand. The first inmates were 40 prisoners who were dragged to the small town 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) north of Berlin on the evening of March 21, 1933. The first concentration camp in Prussia was thus situated on the grounds of a former brewery on a main road in Oranienburg. From September 1933, subcamps existed at the Elisenau manor in Blumberg near Bernau and in Börnicke. Only a few days after the establishment of the camp, SA-Standartenführer Werner Schulze-Wechsungen transferred control of the camp to the Potsdam district president. Henceforth the camp as well as the guards were paid from tax money. In total, the German tax payer paid 280,000 Reichsmark (RM) between August 1933 and July 1934 to sustain the camp. Internment in the camp was initiated not only by the police and party authorities but also by local administrative authorities. Only because of its location in the town, the camp proved to be a “transparent concentration camp.” The town of Oranienburg had the political prisoners perform communal work. The camp commander, SA-Sturmbannführer Werner Schäfer, compiled an apologetic “Anti-Brown Book” (*Anti-Braunbuch*), in which he characterized allegations about the Oranienburg concentration camp as “atrocious propaganda.” Repeatedly he invited German and foreign journalists to tour the camp. A radio program “reported” from the...
concentration camp. The local press wrote extensively about the new institution. Also, movie theaters showed propagandistic photos of the new concentration camp.

About 3,000 prisoners were deprived of their liberty in the Oranienburg concentration camp. The number of prisoners varied considerably. It rose rapidly until August 1933, from 97 to 911, but declined by the end of June 1934 to 271. The prisoners were mostly between the ages of 20 and 40, laborers, unemployed, from Berlin and from the area north of Berlin. Many were taken to Oranienburg after the dissolution of smaller Brandenburg concentration camps (including Alt Daber, Börnicke, Havelberg, and Perleberg) in June and July 1933. Prisoners from the concentration camps in Börgermoor, Lichtenburg, and Sonnenburg were interned at Oranienburg in September and October. Most of the inmates were members of the German Communist Party (KPD), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and smaller left-wing organizations such as the Socialist Workers' Party (SAP) and the German Communist Party Opposition (KPO). It is noteworthy that about 50 Jewish youths were also carried off to the camp from a home dedicated to advanced pedagogical ideas that was operated by the German Jewish Community Association (Deutsch-israelitischer Gemeindebund) in Wolzig. They had been abducted because of "Communist activities."

In addition to mostly working-class prisoners, a few celebrities were held in Oranienburg, including the son of the former Reich president, Friedrich Ebert; the director of the Reich Broadcasting Association (Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft), Dr. Kurt Magnus; the chairman of the Prussian SPD parliamentary group, Ernst Heilmann; the editor in chief of the official KPD organ Rote Fahne, Werner Hirsch; the pacifist writers Kurt Hiller and Armin T. Wegner; and SPD Member of Parliament Gerhart Seger. Seger managed to escape in December 1933, fleeing first to Czechoslovakia and later to the United States of America. His book on the terror in Oranienburg was one of the first books written about the conditions in a concentration camp from firsthand experience.

Usually, the prisoners were held for two or three months in the camp. The main goal for holding the prisoners was to prevent representatives of the workers' movement from being politically active. In principle, the killing of the prisoners was not intended. However, as the prisoners were exposed to the whims of their political opponents, some lost their lives. They became victims of mistreatment, torture, and lack of medical care. At least 16 prisoners, including the writer and anarchist Erich Mühsam, died in Oranienburg.

The guards at Oranienburg were recruited from the ranks of "proven" SA men, many of whom had previously been
unemployed. Their numbers increased from March to summer from 50 to 170 but declined to 74 by June 1934. The camp command was composed of men of petit bourgeois background who were born in the first decade of the twentieth century in agricultural areas and had not participated in World War I. They were active in radical right-wing organizations in the first years of the Weimar Republic and had later joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP).

SA-Standartenführer Schulze-Wechsungen initiated the construction of the Oranienburg concentration camp. A farmer by training, he had joined the NSDAP and SA in 1925. He had a prior conviction for a raid in 1932 on a Berlin allotment settlement, which was mostly used by Communists. The command was Werner Schäfer, a former member of the Free Corps “Olympia” and policeman, who had joined the NSDAP in 1928. At first SA-Sturmbannführer Hans Krüger was in charge of the “interrogation unit” (Vernehmungsabteilung). He was succeeded by SA-Sturmführer Hans Stahlkopf. Both revealed extreme brutality. Stahlkopf had joined the People’s Freedom Party (Völkische Freiheitspartei) in 1921 and had been a member of the Free Corps “Rossbach” from 1922 to 1927 and a member of the NSDAP since 1930. Between 1923 and 1931 he earned his living as the manager of a large farm. From May 1933, Stahlkopf was in charge of the Vernehmungsabteilung. Seger characterized him as “a stereotypical sneaky, especially disgraceful sadist.” After the Oranienburg concentration camp was dissolved, Stahlkopf became a member of the SS-Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. In 1935 he committed suicide.

Stahlkopf’s predecessor, Krüger, a farmer by training, had joined the right-wing radical organization Wehrwolf in 1925 and the NSDAP in 1930. For unknown reasons he was relieved of all his official duties in October 1933. Having joined the SS in 1938, Krüger was appointed Kommandeur der Sipo und des SD (KdS) for the District of Galicia after the attack on the Soviet Union. Here he significantly participated in the systematic murder of the Jewish civilian population. His career reflects the radicalization of terrorist capacity of the Nazi regime. Krüger was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Münster Schwurgericht in 1968. Dr. Carl Lazar, a Bernau physician and SA functionary who was in charge of the camp’s “medical unit” (Sanitätsabteilung), regularly tried to cover up the mistreatment and murders at the Oranienburg concentration camp.

Criminal acts at Oranienburg were ignored by the German judicial authorities. Complaints against guards never resulted in an indictment. Also, after 1945, none of the perpetrators at the Oranienburg concentration camp were brought to justice. Then again, people who during the Nazi period distributed information about the criminal acts committed at the camp were repeatedly sentenced to imprisonment for spreading “atrocities propaganda” by the Berlin Regional Court’s Special Court (Sondergericht beim Landgericht Berlin). No one would have dared to criticize the conditions in the camp, which were well known through press coverage, the radio, and rumors.


The main sources on the history of the Oranienburg concentration camp system are contemporaneous publications that deal with the conditions inside the camp: Gerhart Seger, *Oranienburg: Erster authentischer Bericht eines aus dem Konzentrationslager Geflüchteten* (Karlsbad: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934); Max Abraham, *Juda verrecke: Ein Rabbiner im Konzentrationslager* (Teplitz-Schönau: Druck- und Verlags-Anstalt, 1934); Werner Hirsch, *Hinter Stacheldraht und Gitter: Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen in den Konzentrationslagern und Gefängnissen Hitlerdeutschlands* (Zürich: Mop–Verlag, 1934). The most important unpublished sources on the history of the Oranienburg concentration camp only became accessible after German Reunification in 1989–1990. They are held today at the BLHA-(P), Rep. 35 G KZ Oranienburg Rep. 2 A Reg. Potsdam; the GStAPK, Rep. 90 P; and the BA-B, R 3001.

Bernward Dörner trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**NOTES**

2. BLHA-(P), Rep. 2 A Reg. Potsdam I Pol Nr. 1193, pp. 2, 7; and Nr. 1192, p. 72.
7. BA-DH, ZD 9209 A 13.
11. For example, *OBGZ*, March 29, 1933.
12. Photographs by the Emelka-Filmgesellschaft taken on April 13, 1933, were shown at movie theaters in Berlin and Oranienburg.
14. BLHA-(P), former Oranienburg Nr. 4 and Nr. 8.

*VOLUME I: PART A*
OSTHOFEN

The publication by Dr. Werner Best, a lawyer and National Socialist Member of the Hessen State Parliament, of an article in the autumn of 1931 caused a political scandal. In the article he specified the emergency decrees and proclamations that would be made, should the National Socialists seize power. The smallest infraction against the state authority was to be met with the death penalty. Immediately after he was named state commissar of police–Hessen, at the beginning of March 1933, he put his views into practice and created the Osthofen concentration camp, the first in Hessen. According to an ex post facto decree, dated May 1, 1933, all who were arrested by the police in Hessen for political reasons and “whose imprisonment had lasted more than a week or would last longer than a week” were to be taken to the concentration camp. The Hessen Central Police Office carried the responsibility for sending the prisoners to the concentration camp—that is, the political police, which had been separated from the general police by Best and which was later to be renamed the Gestapo (Secret State Police). There were precise rules governing the length of imprisonment, the prison conditions, and the grounds for arrest. As early as March 13, larger groups were sent to the concentration camp. Orders to take someone into “protective custody” were in the main issued by the district council offices in Hessen.

The first wave of prisoners was composed primarily of Communists. Among the earliest inmates of the Osterhofen concentration camp were leading officials of the Communist Party but also leading Social Democrats, trade unionists, and members of the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold (RB) and the Eiserne Front (Iron Front, EF). They were followed by Jewish civilians, especially those who were members of left-wing political groups. By August 1933 at the latest, Jews were arrested even if they did not fall under the detention provisions of the Reichstag Fire Decree (Reichstagsbrandverordnung). From the summer of 1933, members of the Center Party, Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Separatists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and others also increasingly became the target of the persecuting authorities.

Best named the Osthofen SS man Karl d’Angelo, who was also temporary chairman of the local Nazi Party (NSDAP) group, as the “honorary head of the Hessian concentration camp.” Although he was never accused of massive personal involvement in the mistreatment of prisoners, he did nothing to prevent severe violations of human dignity in the Osthofen concentration camp or to put a stop to the daily mistreatment and harassment of prisoners. After the Osthofen camp was dissolved, d’Angelo became head of the protective custody section in the Dachau concentration camp. He was, however, soon demoted by Theodor Eicke and dismissed from the camp guard detail on the basis that he was “as soft as butter” and completely unsuitable for service in a concentration camp. Despite this, he still had a career in Nazi Germany. He advanced to police president in Cuxhaven and later in Heilbronn. He died, presumably in a motorbike accident, in his Hessian home state on the Rhine.

In the first few months, the guard detail consisted of SS and SA men who had been appointed as auxiliary police as well as regular auxiliary police from Osthofen, Worms, and the surrounding areas. Former prisoners consistently point to the fact that a number of individual guards were feared for their beatings, and others were more humane. In the autumn of 1933, all the SA men were withdrawn from guard duty. They were replaced with SS men from the special units and guard detachments from Darmstadt and Offenbach. These men were particularly feared in the camp. After 1945, not a single guard was called to account for his actions at the Osthofen concentration camp.

Accommodations and hygienic circumstances in the empty former Jewish paper mill were extremely primitive. At the beginning, the prisoners slept on the bare concrete floor; later they built double wooden bunks as well as tables and benches. As it became colder, they were given a rough woolen blanket, in addition to their straw sacks. In autumn they built chimneys for small wood-fired stoves. These efforts, however, never warmed the drafty, wet, and cold factory hall. Many prisoners suffered from the cold, and some developed kidney and bladder problems, which continued to plague them for the rest of their lives. Despite the miserable conditions, not one prisoner died in Osthofen. Terror and disregard for any human dignity were, however, the order of the day. The Jewish prisoners particularly suffered from mistreatment and indignities. One Jewish prisoner was forced to eat pork on Yom Kippur, the most solemn of Jewish holidays. When at first he refused, he was beaten until he was unconscious. Other Jewish prisoners were put on a stand and were insulted and abused by the camp commandant and then chased for hours inside a barbed-wire enclosure. Almost worse than the living conditions was the attention given to hygiene. Only on rare and exceptional occasions were the prisoners given a bit of fluid soap to wash themselves and their clothes. As a rule, they had to wash themselves and their clothes with sand and cold water running from three taps in the open air. Altogether almost 3,000 prisoners, nearly all men, were held in the Osthofen concentration camp until it was closed. On average, the camp housed about 200 inmates at any time during its existence.

At the morning roll call, the prisoners were separated into working groups. They either worked on the camp’s own construction or were allocated to outside detachments. For example, there was a labor detail for construction and decorative work at the “Brown House” in Worms, while others had to clean the blood from the torture cells of the SA and SS. Local National Socialists, above all Karl d’Angelo, profited from the cheap or unpaid labor. Several prisoners had to work regularly in his printing establishment. This kind of work was only stopped when d’Angelo ran into difficulties with his superiors. Farmers and landowners could also use the prisoners for no charge for their harvesting. Often the work was used as a means solely to humiliate and victimize the prisoners. Jewish prisoners, for example, had to clean the latrine ditches with tins or with their bare hands. The Worms police president Maschmeier, who had been removed by the Nazis, was exposed to the mockery of the local population. He had to sit in the street in front of the concentration camp and grind coffee. Another prisoner, almost 2 meters (6.6 feet) tall, had to...
The state of Rhineland-Palatinate was formed from parts of the former Hessian, Prussian, and Bavarian states. In 1933–1934 Osthofen belonged to the state of Hesse, which included the provinces of Rheinhessen (later Rhineland-Palatinate), Starkenburg, and Oberhessen. The seat of government was Darmstadt. As a result, the relevant files are today in the HStA-D (Hessen Districts) and the Rheinland-Pfalz LA-SP (Rhein Hessen Districts). The collections in Darmstadt are in particular (HStD): G 15, Dieburg, G 15, Friedberg, G 15, Alsfeld, G 15, Erbach and G 15, Heppenheim: foremost “Schatzaufgelegenheiten” (protective custody issues) and the collections H5 (Reichsstatthalter-Reich Governor) and G 12A 25/8 (Hessian Police) as well as the collections in Speyer H 51, H 53.

The files of the Worms Police Office, which was responsible for the administration of the Osthofen concentration camp, were almost totally burned during the war. Apparently also destroyed were the files that were kept at the camp itself. In her novel The Seventh Cross (Boston: Little and Brown, 1942), first published in the United States in 1942, Mayence author Anna Seghers erected a literary “memorial” to the Osthofen prisoners. She tells of the escape of seven prisoners from the imaginary Westhofen concentration camp. However, there was never a concentration camp in Westhofen, but there was one in neighboring Osthofen. The story is fictitious but includes much information on everyday life in Nazi Germany, which Seghers obtained while in French exile, where she wrote the novel between 1937 and 1938, from eyewitness reports, newspapers, and information gathered from other exiles. So the story is both “true” and “fictional.”

In 1979 the Röderberg-Verlag Frankfurt published the first set of documents by Paul Grünwald on the Osthofen concentration camp, KZ Osthofen: Material zur Geschichte eines fast vergessenen Konzentrationslagers. This was followed by the “Projekt Osthofen” with the title Ostofen—Erinnerungen und Vergangenwürten, another set of documents by Angelika Arenz-Morch and Eike Hennig (Frankfurt, 1986). In Die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus in Rheinland-Pfalz, vol. 2, Für die Außenwelt seid ihr tot! ed. Hans-Georg Meyer and Hans Berkessel (Mayence: Verlag Hermann Schmidt Mainz, 2000), there are further contributions on the Osthofen concentration camp: Angelika Arenz-Morch, “Das Konzentrationslager Osthofen 1933/34” (pp. 32–51); Volker Gallé, “Karl d’Angelo—Lagerleiter des Konzentrationslagers” (pp. 69–79); Heribert Fachinger, “Leben und Alltag in einem frühen Konzentrationslager im Spiegel von Häftlingsberichten und Erinnerungen” (pp. 80–90); and Alexander Stephan, “Authentizität und Fiktion: Das KZ Osthofen und der Roman ’Das siebte Kreuz’ von Anna Seghers” (pp. 104–115). Alexander Stephan published Anna Seghers: Das siebte Kreuz; Welt und Wirkung eines Romans (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997).

Angelika Arenz-Morch

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES

1. HStA-D, G 24/360, Bl. 38.
2. Letter of the SS-Section Rhine to the SS-Administration, dated February 29, 1936, BA-B, former ZSA-P Film Nr. 8681, AN 407369–407370.
5. HStA-D, G 24/360, Bl. 75.
6. HStA-D, G 15, Friedberg, Q 290, Bl.16 and 17.

VOLUME I: PART A
On August 2, 1933, Papenburg became a Prussian State Concentration Camp (Staatliches Konzentrationslager Papenburg). Intended for reclaiming the vast Ems River wetlands, its four subcamps held 4,000 detainees by October 1933.\(^1\) Papenburg was the senior camp commandant’s (Oberlagerkommandant’s) headquarters and location of the hospital and railway station. In 1933, the subcamps were Bürgermoor (camp I of the complex) (opened July 15), Esterwegen (II) (August 11), Esterwegen (III) (August 14), and Neusustrum (V) (October 2). In early 1934, Brual-Rhede (IV) and Oberlangen (VI) opened as Justice Ministry penal camps. (The apparent misnumbering was intentional.)

The Reich Settlement Law of 1919 spotlighted Emsland cultivation. In 1923, Osnabrück county founded the “Emsland”–Society for the Facilitation of Wasteland Reclamation (Gesellschaft zur Erleichterung der Urbarmachung von Odelandereien) and slowly created settlements before the Nazi takeover. In 1933, the new regime greatly expanded these efforts for four reasons. First, new farms theoretically reduced food imports, eased Germany’s foreign exchange crisis, and promoted autarky. Second, new peasant settlements lent force to the nebulous “Blood and Soil” ideology. Third, with over 15,000 detainees in the summer of 1933, Prussia wanted to recoup incarceration costs through forced labor. Finally, the Emsland embarrassed Prussia. In 1934, the Prussian Justice Ministry’s Rudolf Marx contrasted its “desolate, endless marsh” with the neighboring Dutch Groningen province’s “fields, green meadows, and pastures.”\(^2\)

In February 1931, Adolf Hitler listed the “increasing” of arable soil as an immediate economic goal.\(^3\) On March 15, 1933, the Reich cabinet noted that hardliners of the German Communist Party (KPD) would “eventually” proceed to “labor camps.”\(^4\) Prussian Prime Minister and Interior Minister Hermann Göring then authorized the Emsland camps. On March 17, his state secretary, Ludwig Grauert, commissioned Osnabrück’s county president, Bernhard Eggers, to locate accommodations for 250 to 300 detainees.\(^5\) On April 4, Eggers was dispatched again to find sites for 3,000 to 5,000 prisoners. On June 22, 1933, 90 Düsseldorf (Ulmenerstrasse) inmates arrived to build Bürgermoor. On the same day, Grauert outlined the moor cultivation plan, which called for four camps scheduled to open, respectively, on July 15, August 1 and 15, and September 1, 1933. Only Esterwegen II and Neusustrum failed to meet Grauert’s timetable. Each camp would hold 1,000 to 2,000 prisoners, 100 prisoners per barrack, and have guard, administration, bathing, and kitchen buildings. A barbed-wire fence and guard towers would enclose them. Signifying their innovative design, Secret State Police Office (Gestapa) chief Rudolf Diels referred to them as “barracks camps.”\(^6\)

Papenburg underwent numerous staff changes. On June 7, 1933, the Prussian Interior Ministry’s SS-Gruppenführer Kurt Daluge secured Heinrich Himmler’s appointment as ministerial commissar for deputyed police officers of the Gestapa. Himmler detailed Gruppenführer Fritz Weitzel of SS-Group West (Gruppe West) to staff Papenburg. As Düsseldorf police president, Weitzel directed Ulmer-I-Hö, so it was not accidental that Bürgermoor’s first prisoners came from there. Weitzel named his protégé, Standartenführer Paul Brinkmann, Oberlagerkommandant, and assigned other officers who would become subcamp commandants: Sturmhauptführer Wilhelm Fleitmann (Bürgermoor), Sturmführer Heinrich Katzmann (Esterwegen II), Sturmführer Ludwig Seehaus (Esterwegen III), and Sturmführer Emil Faust (Neusustrum). Weitzel did not consider all of them suitable for command, however. According to historian Hans-Peter Klausch, the Papenburg SS commandants came from cities with strong KPD enclaves, had distinguished war records, participated in nationalist-racist organizations, joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and SS before 1930, and were enthusiastic street fighters.\(^7\)

In the fall of 1933, 11 suspicious deaths and international publicity concerning the treatment of Jews and “bigwigs” called the SS administration into question. The Prussian Interior Ministry moved 150 Jews and prominent prisoners from Papenburg to Lichtenburg on October 17. In the same month, Himmler directed SS-Court III (Gericht III) in Munich to investigate the camp, but little came of his effort to forestall outside interference.\(^8\) In November 1949, the regional court Oldenburg trial of Esterwegen II guard Theodor Groten established Brinkmann’s culpability in Otto Eggerstedt’s murder.\(^9\)

In October 1933, Diels visited Papenburg. Finding that the SS “move through this region like marauding Swedes in the Thirty Years’ War,” he sent State Prosecutor Günther Joel with 50 Berlin policemen to seize the complex.\(^10\) Organized as “Free Corps Fleitmann,” the Bürgermoor SS fired on the police, who retreated, which led Diels to secure Hitler’s permission to deploy Reichswehr artillery. Figuring in Hitler’s and Göring’s decision for removal was the rumor that the SS were arming their prisoners. On November 6, the Prussian police under Polizeioberrst Hans Steiler von Heydekamp deposed the SS without firing a shot. For several years, Brinkmann was persona non grata in the SS. He died in 1941. None of the Papenburg SS commandants ran another camp.\(^11\)

Papenburg’s new commandant and office manager, Polizeioberrst von Kmenebeck and Polizeimajor Günbel, stipulated that future staff consist of 80 percent SA and 20 percent SS and that previous guards never be rehired.\(^12\) Thus when SS-Mann Fritz Kaiser applied for his old post, his request was rejected.\(^13\) The November 12, 1933, Reich Plebiscite embarrassed the regime because Bürgermoor and Esterwegen III detainees overwhelmingly voted against Nazi rule.\(^14\)

On December 20, 1933, the SA relieved the police of their responsibilities. Polizeimajor Gotthilf Hoffmann and his adjutant, SA-Obersturmbannführer Engel, commanded 420 SA and 80 SS. On December 22, 1933, 1,500 detainees were released in a “Christmas amnesty.” Diels attended the Bürgermoor and Esterwegen ceremonies.\(^15\) Except for Bürgermoor, the SA were violent overseers: Ludwig Pappenheim’s murder at Neusustrum in January 1934 was one of five committed under their administration.\(^16\) On March 11, 1934, Göring...
banned the creation of new camps and, in a bid to assert control, demanded that camp guards become state employees.17

Except for Esterwegen, the Prussian (later Reich) Justice Ministry converted Papenburg into penal camps on April 1, 1934. The penal prisoners included many political convicts and members of outcast groups. Merging party and state functions, it staffed the camps with SA-Pioneer Regiment “Emsland” (Pionier- Standarte- Emsland) under Oranienburg’s controversial commandant, SA-Obersturmbannführer Werner Schäfer. At Christmas 1935, SA guard Walter Talbot produced a photographic album for Hitler that represented prisoner labor in the moors. These images roughly accorded with early camp testimonies: prisoners cut peat, removed it by railed handcarts, dispersed sand and granite, and unloaded barges along the Küstenkanal.18 Under wartime pressure, the Justice Ministry suspended moor cultivation in 1942.

Because Göring appointed Himmler Gestapo inspector on April 20, 1934, the SS reestablished control over Esterwegen. The consolidation of political detainees at Esterwegen took part in two stages, with Neusustrum’s population transferred to Bürgermoor on April 1 and Bürgermoor’s moved to Esterwegen II on April 25. On the latter date, the total “protective custody” population was 1,162.19 On June 20, 1934, Esterwegen II closed, and its population moved to Esterwegen II. Esterwegen continued as an Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL) camp from August 1, 1934, to September 23, 1936. After its closure, the Reich Labor Service (RAD) and Reich Justice Ministry competed for the property. In January 1937, the SS sold it to the Justice Ministry for 1.05 million Reichsmark (RM), using some proceeds to finance Sachsenhausen.20

Papenburg exemplified what Johannes Tuchel calls the failed “Prussian model” of state-run concentration camps. For the Emsland project, it registered modest gains, creating 66 settlements and opening 722 hectares (1,784 acres) to cultivation in 1933 but a negligible proportion of the 1934 output.

By 1939, Papenburg consisted of 15 camps, of which some became Wehrmacht or Neuengamme subcamps in wartime.

SOURCES


**NOTES**


8. NStA-Os, Rep. 430 Schmieder, Aktenvermerk, October 17, 1933; and SS-Gericht III, München, report in Wil-helm Fleitmann BDCPF, cited in Klausch, *Tätergeschichten*, pp. 51, 98.


**PAPPENHEIM BEI OSCHATZ**

On April 8, 1933, the SA converted a school vacation hostal at Pappenheim bei Oschatz, Saxony, into an early concentration camp. Under the command of SA-Sturmführer Schiemann, approximately 20 SA men guarded between 120 and 150 pris-oners at Pappenheim. Conditions were brutal. For example, the guards forced the prisoners to hang from a stake or on beams for hours on end. In another form of torture, the pris-oners' hair was shorn by bayonet. A Communist cell was ac-cepted at Pappenheim. Conditions  were brutal. For example, the guards forced the prisoners to hang from a stake or on beams for hours on end. In another form of torture, the pris-oners' hair was shorn by bayonet. A Communist cell was ac-cepted at Pappenheim but was subsequently suppressed. As in other early camps, church attendance was mandatory, but this requirement afforded the prisoners the opportunity to make fertile contact with the outside world. On May 27, 1933, the camp was disbanded and the prisoners transferred to the much larger Saxon camps at Colditz Castle and Sachsenburg.

**SOURCES** This entry follows the standard work on the early concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akade-mie Verlag, 1993).
PERLEBERG

At Perleberg in Potsdam, the SA and SS established an early concentration camp in an artillery depot. Prisoners from the then dissolving early camp at Havelberg refitted the structure and became the first inmates. Under the commander, SA-Standartenführer Felix Marnette, Perleberg lasted from May 24 to June 28, 1933, after which the prisoners were dispatched to the much larger concentration camp at Oranienburg. Because of transfers and releases, Perleberg's population fluctuated a great deal, with 95 detainees on May 31, 31 on June 8, and 40 on June 23.

SOURCES This entry is based upon the standard work on the early Nazi camps, Klaus Drobsch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

As cited in Drobsch and Wieland, primary documentation for Perleberg can be found in the Regierungsbezirk Potsdam Polizeipräsidium, in the BLHA.

PLAUE BEI FLOHA

The SA opened an early concentration camp at Plaue bei Floha on March 8, 1933. The first concentration camp in Saxony and, after Nohra in Thuringia, the second concentration camp in Nazi Germany, Plaue was situated in a workers' gymnasium. Categorized as a "labor service camp," it held 174 "protective custody" detainees by April 12. The SA humiliated prisoners by cutting swastikas into their hair. Most prisoners worked in agriculture, but 40 were reassigned to build the huge early concentration camp at Sachsenburg on April 19. The Plaue camp was dissolved on June 10 and its remaining prisoners transferred to Sachsenburg.


As cited in Drobsch and Wieland and in Schmeitzner, primary documentation about Plaue can be found in the files of the SHStA-(D), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten.

Joseph Robert White

PORZ [AKA HOCHKREUZ]

At the instigation of the mayor of the community of Porz (Rheinisch-Bergischer Kreis), an SA “protective custody” camp was established in a former explosives factory at the "Hochkreuz" near the village of Eil in July 1933.1 The camp was under the command of a "special commissar" (Sonderkommissar), SA-Sturmbannführer Schreiber (Sturmbann III/65) from the district town of Bergisch Gladbach. The guard squad came from Porz, Cologne, and the surrounding district.2 On July 14 and 15, 1933, more than 45 members of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) were interned in the camp. They were interrogated in an extremely brutal manner in order to find out information about the publishers and distributors of the underground newspaper *Roter Sender.*3 At the end of June, the men were released; proceedings were initiated against 4 of them for high treason. Three of the men were convicted.

One week later, seven more men were interned. The Bergisch Gladbach police had arrested them on suspicion of criminal activities, but as the police had not made progress in their questioning, they decided to have the SA thugs in the camp at Hochkreuz continue the interrogation.

Their torture methods led to numerous other arrests without a court order. Proceedings were initiated against 24 prisoners for high treason and other criminal activities, while the others were released at the beginning of August. At the beginning of August 1933, the camp was shut down by order of the Cologne district president.

Several of the prisoners retracted their confessions and through their lawyers brought charges for bodily harm and extortion. The Cologne State Attorney’s Office began proceedings against several SA members. A few were taken into pretrial confinement, but the proceedings were closed in August on higher orders. The records survived World War II and served as the basis for criminal proceedings that led to convictions of several former SA men in 1946–1947.

SOURCES The author’s chapter on the Porz camp formed the basis for this article: “Das Schutzhaftlager der SA am Hochkreuz in Porz-Gremberghoven,” *Rechtsrheinisches Köln: Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Landeskunde* (ed. Geschichtsverein Rechtsrheinisches Köln e.V.) 8 (1982).

This chapter was based to some extent on several interviews with eyewitnesses but above all on the 1933–1934 Cologne State Attorney’s Office records, which are located in the NWHStA-(D), Best. Rep. 9 Nr. 288–291. The prosecution of the perpetrators after the war was carried out on the basis of these records. During the author’s initial research in 1981, however, the corresponding trial records were not available. Photocopies from these files and from the personnel file

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of Hermann Odekon, Nazi mayor of Porz, as well as the eyewitness interviews are located in the HAStK-P, Best. E Nr. 117 and M Nr. 14.

Gebhard Aders
trans. Eric Schroeder

NOTES
1. The community of Porz—about 13 kilometers (8 miles) southeast of Cologne—was elevated to city in 1951 and in 1975 was incorporated into Cologne.
2. This information is based on the investigation records of the Cologne State Attorney's Office at the NWHStA-(D), Rep. 9 Nr. 288–291.
3. According to witness statements, there was a list with 45 to 65 names, 32 of which could be identified by the author. See HAStK-P, Best. E Nr. 117; and Best. M Nr. 14.

QUEDNAU

The Quednau Fortress was built between 1872 and 1884 as 1 of 12 large forts of the new belt of fortifications to the north of Königsberg. Supposedly a camp was erected there in January 1933 by the Königsberg police and other agencies in order to house the leaders of the East Prussian Nazi Party (NSDAP) who were to be arrested in the event of an anti-Nazi coup that Kurt von Schleicher was allegedly planning. Between March and June 1933, the camp was used for male opponents of the NSDAP and then was closed in August of the same year.

During the course of the persecution of political opponents, 400 officials of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the German Communist Party (KPD) were arrested in March alone in the district of Königsberg. Entire Königsberg apartment complexes were surrounded, combed through systematically, and thousands of apartments were searched. The prisoners were taken to the police prison, where they were treated relatively well, or to the temporary detention camp at Fort Quednau (Übergangslager Fort Quednau), which was generally considered a “forerunner of a concentration camp” and was guarded by the SA and Stahlhelm. Hardly anything is known about the conditions of the detention. The prisoners were held in the casemates of the fortress, in each of which 8 to 12 men had to sleep on straw. The costs for running the camp of 3,000 Reichsmark (RM) until June 1933 were extremely low, which could indicate a short period of existence or very poor living conditions for the prisoners. Some reports written in exile about the terror in the early camps only mention the name Quednau; others speak in detail about religious services but also about draconian punishment and torture.

Quednau was, however, not a “wild concentration camp” but one of the six state camps officially recognized and financed by the Prussian Ministry of Interior. In June 1933 the district president of Allenstein reported the transfer of 55 prisoners to Quednau; according to a report by the district’s Stapo, 47 political opponents were imprisoned here in September 1933. It appears that the East Prussian prisoners were assembled here and then transported farther into the Reich. At first the transports went, among other places, to Hammerstein near Schlochau and later mostly to the Emsland moor camps.

SOURCES

Stefanie Schüler-Springorum
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

REICHENBACH [AKA LANGENBIELAU]

On March 8, 1933, the Nazi SS established a “transit camp” in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) community center at Reichenbach, Saxony. Despite the nomenclature, Reichenbach was a concentration camp in everything but name. The commandant was Albert Greiner, and the guards came from SS- Standarte 7. The detainees consisted mainly of Social Democrats but also included Communists and at least two Stahlhelm members. The size of the camp population is not known.

Under the pretext of interrogation, the SS tortured the prisoners. These sessions normally took place at night, after the guards’ drinking binges. Those who did not cooperate faced an escalating series of punishments: 5 blows for “stuttering,” 10 for lying, 15 for “silence,” and 20 for “pausing to think.” These regulations were posted in the former restaurant where portraits of Marxists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg continued to hang on the walls. Prisoners who fainted under torture were revived with cold water, and the thrashings began anew. To muffle the screams, the guards held a cushion over the prisoners’ faces.1

Among the Reichenbach perpetrators were Toni Grunwald and Dr. Kassebaum. Grunwald, a former Communist, forced prisoners to inject castor oil, after announcing his intention of relieving their “thirst.” The camp physician, Kassebaum, berated detainees for “faking” injuries sustained during interrogation.2

On March 22, one day after Reich President Paul von Hindenburg officially received Hitler’s government at Potsdam, the SS celebrated by parading battered SPD members through
the neighboring marketplace. At least two torture victims, Social Democrat Hermann Schencker and Communist leader Albert Janka, died as a result of their injuries. Among the Reichenbach prisoners was SPD Reichstag deputy Erwin Hartsch.1

On May 11, the camp was moved to the nearby foundry at Greizerstrasse. Reichenbach was disbanded in late May or early June 1933, and its detainees were transferred to the early concentration camps at Zwickau, Colditz, and Sachsenburg.

SOURCES This entry follows in part the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). The camp is also mentioned in Stefanie Endlich, Nora Goldenbogen, Beatrix Herlemann, Monika Kahl, and Regina Scheer, Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999).

The one primary source available for this camp is a contemporary report by Colditz and Sachsenburg prisoner Otto Meinel, who gathered secondhand information from transferred Reichenbach prisoners: Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt: Ein Buch der Greuel: Die Opfer klagen an (Karlsbad: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934), pp. 164–169. Joseph Robert White

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 168.

REMSCHEID-LÜTRTINGHAUSEN

In March 1933, the Gestapo ordered the Lüttringhausen penitentiary at Remscheid in Prussian Düsseldorf to make a wing available for “protective custody” detainees. The prisoners numbered in excess of 100 and consisted mainly of Communists and some Social Democrats. Justice Ministry guards administered the wing, but the supervisor’s name is not known.

In 1983, former Communist Reichstag member and Lüttringhausen detainee Willy Spicher described the conditions at this camp. Prisoners subsisted on inadequate rations. Communists faced the additional burden of enforced isolation, as the authorities would not permit them to mail letters or receive visitors. Torture was commonplace. A prison guard conducted Spicher to a police interrogation. After the guard left the room, two policemen tortured him on the pretext of his “hiding a box of dynamite,” a common charge that the Nazis leveled against Communists in 1933.1

At Lüttringhausen, Spicher participated in two protests. The first, a hunger strike, took place because of the communications ban against Communist prisoners. During exercise times, he organized this strike with other prisoners, but the result is not known. The second strike occurred after one detainee suffered ill treatment at the hands of a guard. As Spicher recalled, “A storm of protest broke out. All the political prisoners thunders against the cell doors. At the time it was labeled a mutiny by the political police.”2

As the alleged ringleader of the spontaneous protest, Spicher was placed in a so-called dark cell for an unknown period. Stripped naked, he was unable to stand up or lie down in the pitch-dark cell but rested on his knees. Another prisoner, Social Democrat Emil Hirsch, had just entrusted him with a letter intended for Hirsch’s wife. Rather than risk its discovery, Spicher quickly disposed of the letter while proceeding to the dark cell.1

In August 1933, an unknown number of Lüttringhausen detainees were dispatched to the early concentration camp at Wuppertal-Barmen (Kemna). This transport included Hirsch and Spicher.


Primary documentation for this camp begins with its listing in the ITS, Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem, ed. Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schnitt (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitauzendeins, 1990), I:140. Hinz reproduces an abbreviated form of Spicher’s 1983 interview in the Ronsdorfer Zeitung (RonzZ).

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NOTES

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

ROSSLAU

On August 30, 1933, the SA converted a Rosslau community center owned by a local trade union into a transitional concentration camp for “protective custody” detainees. The camp was established in order to relieve Anhalt’s remand
prisons of overcrowding. The first 25 prisoners entered the camp in October. Forty more detainees were subsequently transferred to Rossau from the early Oranienburg concentration camp, because they hailed from neighboring Dessau. The prisoners consisted of leftist opponents and at least two hostages. Under the commandant, Wachtmeister Otto Marx, 12 to 14 SA guards oversaw the camp. Custody of Rossau passed to the SS and Gestapo in January 1934.

Rossau was a site of murder and torture. Communist Party member Franz Wilkus, who was suspected of murdering an SA man, was himself murdered at Rossau. After the SS takeover, two unidentified Communists were hanged in the presence of the camp population. The prisoners were compelled to sing during the execution. The SS may have appropriated this technique from the torture sessions taking place in this camp, in which the prisoners were made to sing in order to drown out the victims’ screams.

As was the case in other early camps, Rossau prisoners participated in the November 12, 1933, national plebiscite. As the detainees voted, the authorities bent a corner of their ballots so their votes could be singled out for propaganda or retaliation. A sympathetic citizen from Dessau seized this opportunity to display solidarity with the persecutes, by earmarking her ballot in like manner.

Rossau became the focus of an international cause célèbre. On December 4, 1933, Social Democratic Party (SPD) Reichstag deputy Gerhart Seger escaped from Oranienburg. In exile, he published one of the first concentration camp testimonies. In retaliation, the Nazis arrested his wife and two-year-old daughter in the same month. They remained in custody at Rossau until late May 1934. On April 23, 1934, the London Daily Herald reported: “A 20 months old baby has been labeled by the Nazis ‘Political Prisoner No. 58.’ With her mother, ‘Political Prisoner No. 57,’ she is booked for an indefinite stay at a concentration camp in Rossau. . . . The baby is Renate Seger, daughter of the exiled Reichstag member, Gerhard [sic] Seger . . . [stated:] ‘When people showed sympathy with my wife during her unguarded walks outside the camp with Renate, the governor had them stopped. Now they can only go out accompanied by two warders and a dog.’ Seger’s tireless publicity on his family’s behalf attracted the attention of Lady Nancy Astor, a Member of Parliament. Astor appealed to the German ambassador in London and secured the Seger family’s release.5

After the appointment of SS-Brigadeführer Theodor Eicke as inspector of the concentration camps, Rossau was closed on July 31, 1934, as part of the effort to consolidate the SS concentration camps. At the time of dissolution, the camp held approximately 18 detainees. It is not clear whether these prisoners were transferred or released.


The camp is also listed in Stefanie Endlich, Nora Goldenbogen, Beatrix Herlemann, Monika Kahl, and Regina Scheer, *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation*, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn: Bundesszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999).

As cited in Drobisch and Wieland, primary documentation for this camp consists of File St 3/226 (on the Seger affair) and various papers from the KZ und Haftanstalten collection. Both of these references can be found in the BA- BL, SAPMO-DDR. The Rosslau camp was also mentioned in the German and British press, including the Anh-A, August 30, 1933; FZ, September 1, 1933; DH (London), April 23, 1934; and T-LO, May 24, 1934. The Anh-A and FZ articles are cited in Drobisch and Wieland.

Joe Joseph Robert White

**NOTES**


**SACHSENBURG (AND SUBCAMPS)**

On May 2, 1933, the SA formed a “protective custody” camp inside the abandoned Tautenhahn mill in Sachsenburg near the city of Frankenberg. Situated on the Zschopau River, the four-story building required renovation before it could be occupied. This task fell to the SA’s first 100 prisoners. By May 30, Sachsenburg had 376 inmates. Its history is divided into two phases, with administration by the SA (1933–1934) and then the SS (1934–1937). Sachsenburg was the largest Saxon camp. Its prisoners were Communists, Social Democrats, Jews, Protestant and Catholic clergy, Jehovah’s Witnesses, some nationalists, criminals, and “asocials.” The camp’s population fluctuated significantly. Between May 1933 and February 1934, it grew with transfers from the dissolved camps at Pappenheim, Zschorlau, Hainewalde, and Zwickau. In August 1933, the population stood at over 1,200 detainees but fell to 750 by November and 456 in December. A year later, in August 1934,
there were 316 detainees. The population rose to 576 on April 8, 1935, then peaked at 1,305 on October 31, 1935. On March 18, 1936, there were 877 prisoners.²

Sachsenburg’s first commandant was SA-Standartenführer Hähnel, commander of SA-Standarte 182 (Flöha). The second commandant was SA-Obersturmbannführer Kleditsch, who relieved Hähnel after the November 1933 plebiscite (see below). By November 1933, 300 SA guarded the camp.³

The SA converted the windowless wool mixing room into an arrest bunker and torture chamber. The interrogation room, under SA-Scharführer Vinne, was used to break “stubborn deniers,” in prisoner Otto Meinel’s words. Among the tortured victims was Bruno Kiessling, whose death on October 31, 1933, was officially attributed to a lung embolism.⁴

In August 1933, the prisoners composed an unauthorized camp song, “Das Lied von Sachsenburg.” Credited variously to prisoners R. Seidel or Rudi Reinwarth, it circulated among the prisoners in an illegal pamphlet. The opening of the song commented on the irony of so many workers trapped in an abandoned mill: “Its machines don’t rattle, the wheels stand still,/ But you find many working people there.” From a Marxist viewpoint, the second stanza resolved the contradiction by claiming ownership of the camp, who “is now the world of the [Marxist] fighting group, who has been imprisoned in battle.” A prohibition against singing it on outside detachments came too late to prevent some Frankenberg civilians from learning the lyrics.⁵

On November 12, 1933, the camp participated in the Reich plebiscite. Unlike most camps, the prisoners resisted considerable pressure and rejected the Nazis. Of the 650 eligible prisoners, 516 cast “no” votes in answer to the question of whether they supported the Hitler regime. Detainee treatment worsened considerably thereafter.⁶

From 1933 to 1934, Sachsenburg established five subcamps: Augustusburg (May 1–December 31, 1933), Chemnitz (May 22, 1933–September 4, 1934), Colditz (May 31–August 15, 1934), Dresden Trachenberge (September 4–October 31, 1934), and Lützelsöhö (officially listed from April 19 to August 16, 1934, but eyewitness testimony indicated activity already in mid-1933). The Augustusburg labor camp had 120 prisoners in the summer of 1933. According to Meinel, Lützelsöhö was an SA housing project subcontracted to the Kell construction firm. Colditz had 31 prisoners in July 1934. The SS closed Chemnitz, Colditz, and Lützelsöhö but opened Trachenberge.⁷

The SS phase began in August 1934, when Inspector of Concentration Camps SS-Gruppenführer Theodor Eicke dispatched special commander “Sachsen” to the camp. By 1936, this guard unit was renamed the 3rd SS-Death’s Head Battalion “Sachsen.” Eicke’s protégé, SS-Sturmbannführer Max Simon, became the first commandant and later headed the guard unit. Between October 1934 and April 1935, Sachsenburg had several commandants: SS-Obfuehrer Alexander Reiner, SS-Obersturmbannführer Karl Otto Koch (future Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Majdanek commandant), SS-Obersturmbannführer Walter Gerlach, and SS- Standartenführer Bernhard Schmidt. Schmidt held the post until July 1937. Schmidt’s first protective detention camp leader was SS-Scharführer Gerhard Weigel, whom the prisoners ironically called “the uncle.” Promoted to Untersturmführer by 1936, Weigel became Schmidt’s adjutant, and SS-Obersturmbannführer Arthur Rödl was appointed protective detention camp leader. A Nazi Old Fighter, Rödl was Higher SS and Police Leader in Ukraine and South Russia during World War II. Three commanders of prisoner companies were SS-Scharführers König, Pfal, and Kampe.⁸

Schmidt implemented the “Eicke system,” which meant rigorous procedure and institutionalized brutality. The service diary recorded the prisoners’ routine: wake-up at 5:30 A.M., breakfast at 6:00, roll call by 6:30, labor from 6:35 to 11:30, lunch at noon, labor from 12:30 to 5:00 P.M., evening roll call at 6:00, and lights out at 9:00 P.M. On Sundays, prisoners arose an hour later, attended a mandatory church service, showered, and played sports in the afternoon. Another characteristic of the Eicke system was careful recordkeeping, which included Labor Service reports. A record from January 19, 1936, showed that 18 inmates were allocated to the “football” detachment, presumably building an SS sports field, but 1 was removed after reporting for medical treatment.⁹

The SS instituted flogging in May 1935 under their new system. According to prisoner Hugo Gräf, the first victim was held over a desk, but the furniture broke under the blows. Schmidt then had inmate carpenters build a wooden stand for use during beatings. At evening roll call, the victim would be fastened against the stand in a leaning position, his arms strapped below and legs trapped in a pillory. Before the first blow commenced, the victim sang, “I am going to climb the mountain over there, that gives me great joy.” Two SS took turns lashing the victim with bullwhip or rubber truncheon. With the first blow, the prisoner started singing the “Deutschlandlied.” The last was timed to coincide with the anthem’s final note, but often the victims passed out beforehand. Many prisoners, such as Helmuth Kademann, received lashes far...
exceeding the normal 25. The SS twice imposed a 25-lash punishment on Jewish prisoner Dr. Curt Boas, a World War I army physician. Boas responded, “A German officer can stand anything.” Because Sachsenburg lacked an infirmary, the SS regularly dispatched flogging victims to the Chemnitz hospital for treatment. The hospital became an important conduit for information about the camp.¹⁰

Scharführer König commanded the Jewish and Penal Company, for which labor was torture. Originally consisting of criminals and recalcitrant prisoners, this company added at least 40 Jews in the summer of 1935. Deployed to the Zachopau’s banks, the prisoners quarried stone, performed demoralizing tasks, and endured penal exercises or “sport.” Transferred from Bautzen penitentiary in early 1935, Communist prisoner Walter Janka got into trouble on his first day and was immediately dispatched to the Penal Company. For six weeks, he broke rock with a sledgehammer, at a pace of three swings per minute. Communist prisoner Hugo Gräf, who headed the camp library and bookbindery, secured Janka’s transfer to his detachment under false pretenses. Jewish “returnee” Paul Wolff, at Sachsenburg between May and October 1935, recalled that the Jews, mainly returning immigrants and “race deflectors,” experienced unceasing harassment at the quarry. Intellectuals among the Jews were singled out for “ladling” liquefied manure. At least 2 members of the Jewish company were murdered: Wertheimer, who was arrested due to “race deflection,” and Dr. Max Sachs, business editor of the Dresdner Volkszeitung.¹¹

Although Eicke ordered commandants on May 24, 1935, to report unusual death cases to the Reich Interior Ministry and to other authorities, the Sachs case demonstrated how easily the camp’s commandant could circumvent this directive. According to Wolff, Schmidt warned prisoners not to talk about Sachs’s death immediately before a Saxon prosecutor came to the camp to investigate. Wolff dismissed the prosecutor’s interviews with the prisoners as a farce. Meanwhile, one of Sachs’s former employees, Röbricht, was placed in the Bunker for 42 days in order to prevent his talking about the murder.¹²

Two important events occurred at Sachsenburg in the spring of 1935. First, 10 trombonists from Pastor Georg Walther’s Thomaskirche in Leipzig performed Easter hymns near camp, in protest of his imprisonment. As a scare tactic, the Nazis confined them to Sachsenburg until evening. Walther was among 21 Protestant clergymen in Sachsenburg custody until early June 1935. The SS made them quarry stone and subjected them to racist indoctrination. Second, a British Quaker inspected Sachsenburg in late April or early May. After interviewing inmates, he complained to the SS on behalf of one detainee who had been in camp for two years. The SS feebly tried to dismiss this case as an isolated incident.¹³

Sachsenburg’s commandants devised elaborate insignia to designate reasons for arrest and prisoner rank. Under the SA, the prisoners wore green jackets and gray pants, but the SS supplied them with blue-and-gray-striped uniforms. All prisoners wore a red triangle, but criminals also bore a green stripe. Jews wore a yellow star, and homosexuals, a violet triangle. Jewish “returnees” bore red arm- and leg bands. The prisoner hierarchy simulated the military: a company Gefangenenfeldwebel (prisoner sergeant) displayed three triangles, foremen two, and valets (“swings”) one.¹⁴

In July 1937, Eicke ordered Sachsenburg’s dissolution. The remaining 700 prisoners were dispatched to Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald by October 1937. The first Buchenwald transport consisted of 75 skilled workers. The camp staff, including Rödl, was transferred to Buchenwald, while Schmidt became protective detention camp leader at Sachsenhausen and later Dachau. It is not certain whether any guards were tried in connection with their activities at Sachsenburg.¹⁵

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Simon, and Gerhard Weigel. Sachsenburg is listed in ITS, *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem*, ed. Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main: Zweiautsendeins, 1990), 2:638. This volume also documents the Augustusburg and Lützelhöhe subcamps, but the dates for Augustusburg are inaccurate. For Chemnitz, Colditz, and Dresden-Trachenberge, Drobisch and Wieland cite the ITS, Arolsen, Abteilung Sachsenburg, Files 1 and 12. “Dass Lind von Sachsenburg” is reproduced in Fackler, p. 276. Detailed reports on Sachsenburg can be found in *Deutschen Berichten der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands* (Sopade), 1934–1940, 7 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Petra Nettelbeck, Zweitausendeins, 1980). Published and unpublished testimonies support many *Sopade* reports. As cited by Drobisch and Wieland and Tuchel, a valuable collection of detainee testimony is Karl Otto, ed., *Das Lied von Sachsenburg: Tausend Kameraden Mann an Mann; Beiträge zur Geschichte des antifaschistischen Widerstands- kampfes im Konzentrationslager Sachsenburg*, 2nd ed. (Hainichen: Kreisleitung der SED, 1978). The most important eyewitness testimonies are by Otto Meinel and Otto Urban, available in Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt: Ein Buch der Greuel: Die Opfer klagen an: Die Opfer klagen an (Karlbad: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934). Detained in Colditz and Sachsenburg, Meinel was released on November 9, 1933, three days before the plebiscite. Before his transfer to Hohnstein, Urban worked in the camp clerical office, a privileged position, between August 1 and November 29, 1933. The testimony of Helmut Kademann (in camp from February to November 1935) is found in *Das deutsche Volk klagt an: Hitlers Krieg gegen die Friedenskämpfer in Deutschland: Ein Tatsachenbuch (Paris: Éditions du Carrefour, 1936);* and Heinz Pol, “Konzentrationslager,” *DNW*, December 19, 1935, pp. 1614–1617. Another important witness is Hugo Gräf, a former Communist Reichstag member, who was confined at Sachsenburg from circa May 1934 to around September 1915. Gräf published several articles in the mid-1930s, including “Prügelstrafe,” *DNW*, March 19, 1936, pp. 335–358. Gräf’s comrade Walter Janka, who subsequently headed the East German film corporation DEFA, devoted a chapter to his autobiography to Sachsenburg (he was in the camp from circa January to August 1935): *Sparen eines Lebens* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991). His testimony must be used with caution because the chronological convoluted; perhaps under the influence of post-war accounts, Janka significantly overestimated the camp’s population. The testimony of Paul Wolff (in Sachsenburg from late May to the end of October 1935) may be found in File P III h. No. 689 (Sachsenburg), “Bericht eines Rückwanderers über Sachsenburg, 1936,” *Testaments to the Holocaust*, Series 1, WLA, Section 2, Eyewitness Accounts, Reel 58. The typewritten copy of Wolff’s letter, titled “Summer 1936,” came into the Wiener Library’s possession in 1957. Composed while the author was in the Netherlands awaiting emigration to Paraguay, it appears to be addressed to the Vorstand of the Hilfswerk der deutschen Juden, Berlin. Wolff’s testimony helps to document the Wertheim and Sachs murders. The Wertheim case was published in “Ein Rassenschänder,” *DNW*, February 27, 1936, pp. 263–264. A report about the Sachs murder is also found in File P III h. No. 572 (Sachsenburg), “Geheimnisse einer Todesanzeige. Der Fall Sachs,” Sept. 25–Oct. 11, 1935, in *Testaments, 1/2/58*. On the Quaker visit and the trombonists’ protest, see file P III h. No. 570 (Sachsenburg), “Der verhaftete Posaunenchör. Geistliche im Konzentrationslager,” 1936, in *Testaments, 1/2/58*. Other Nazi and non-Nazi newspaper reports on Sachsenburg can be found in NV; August 27, November 26, 1933; *SbK*, June 12, 1935, September 3, 1936; and *BanZ*, January 12, 1938. 

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NOTES


In March 1933, the police and SA established a “protective custody” camp at the police prison in Senftenberg (Oberspreewald-Lausitz County [Landkreis]), Prussia. The director’s name is not known. The first detainees included leading leftists and deputies from the Brandenburg Landtag (parliament). On the night of June 25–26, 1933, the police and SA deputies rounded up 265 Communists and Social Democrats. On June 26, the Potsdamer Tageszeitung newspaper averred that they were “taken into protective custody for their own security. The operation proceeded without incident.” The authorities temporarily dispatched the prisoners to the gymnasion (Turnhalle) at Senftenberg’s Elementary School I (Volksschule I), where the SA had established a torture site. The police moved most or all female detainees to the prison on June 27 and dispatched at least some male prisoners to the same location before month’s end. It is not known how long the gymnasion at Elementary School I remained a torture site.

The official announcement about the June 25–26 raid sharply contrasted with eyewitness testimony. According to Martha Wölk, the police tore apart families and ransacked homes. She recalled that when her husband, Arthur, inquired about the reason for this—he, his second—arrest, the police replied, “That you know best and if a question is going to be asked, then we’ll do it! You Communists are finally done for.” In fact, the June raid did not eliminate anti-Nazi activity in Oberspreewald County, because in August 1933 more Communists were arrested after distributing leaflets among SA and SS members. In addition to Wölk, Senftenberg held Elsa Barufka, Max Birke, Hans Blaczewski, Andreas Dembinski, Christian Fabricus, Anna and Karl Freter, Paul Handke, Robert Harnau, Max Homa, Willi Karich, Reinhold Kaspar, Ernst Kosul, Max and Josef Kowall, town councilor Marianne Seidel, Felix Spiro, Hans Stecklina, Gerhard Tsichteri, and August Ulbrich. Seidel, who was pregnant at the time of arrest, was the camp’s only murder victim.

Inside the police prison, detainee treatment ranged from tolerable to brutal. A June 1933 photograph of prisoners Fabricus, Harnau, Blaczewski, and Wölk created an impression of domestic tranquility. Seated on benches in the sunshine, the four prisoners peeled potatoes. Harnau was shirtless, and Blaczewski sat with his sleeves rolled up in the front. Over Blaczewski’s shoulder, Wölk smiled at the camera. A kitchen knife appeared conspicuously in the foreground. By contrast, a second photograph taken that summer showed Anna Freter behind bars. While she and her husband remained in custody, a “Nazi family” cared for her children. In the image, her face betrayed a desperate look. It is not certain whether the guards took these photographs.

Seidel’s murder demonstrated that the torture of inmates begun at the gymnasion continued in the police prison. When Elfriede Dembinski visited the prison, she found her neighbor, Marianne Seidel, in terrible shape. Seidel had a “high fever” and “red spots” on her body. She also suffered great mental anguish. Dembinski recalled: “At night she was not able to listen to the cries of beaten prisoners any more and for that purpose wrapped a blanket around her head.” So serious was Seidel’s condition that the physician, Dr. Beiche, arranged her release and transfer to a local hospital. Injuries sustained under torture jeopardized Seidel’s pregnancy, and she died on July 10, 1933, her second day...
in the hospital. The authorities unsuccessfully attempted to forestall public knowledge of her murder. Armed with truncheons, SA deployed along the streets to obscure the view of the hearse transporting Seidel's body to the town crematory.7

**NOTES**


**SOURCES**

This essay builds upon the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin, 1993). The camp is listed in Stefanie Endlich, Nora Goldenbogen, Beatrix Herlemann, Monika Kahl, and Regina Scheer, Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn, 1999). Although Endlich categorizes the gymnasium as a protective custody camp, Drobisch and Wieland list it as a torture site.

Primary documentation for Senftenberg may be found in Bezirksleitung Potsdam der SED—Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der örtlichen Arbeiterbewegung, ed., Ausgewählte Dokumente und Materialien zum antifaschistischen Widerstandskampf unter Führung der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands in der Provinz Brandenburg, 1933–1939 (Potsdam, 1978), vol. 1, which reproduces testimonies by Elfriede Dembinski, Anna Freter, Richard Koal, and Martha Wölk; photographs in the Senftenberg police prison of Hans Blaczewski, Christian Fabricus, Anna Freter, Robert Harnau, and Arthur Wölk (1933); and the article from the PoT, June 26, 1933. The volume also contains the Volksgerichtshof judgment against Kurt Uhlich et al., August 23, 1934 (14 J 327/33) and Anklageschrift des Generalstaats-Anwalt, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn, 1999).

The Sonnenburg concentration camp near Kustrin in Neumark existed from April 3, 1933, until April 23, 1934. It was located in the Sonnenburg penitentiary, which originally had been established in 1832–1833 as a Royal Prussian penitentiary. (After the war, Sonnenburg became the Polish town of Słon’sk in the county of Gorzow.) The penitentiary was located 600 meters (656 yards) outside of the town on the arterial road leading to Posen (Poznan). In 1931, this relatively large prison, which accommodated 637 inmates and was economically significant for the town, was closed due to catastrophic sanitary conditions. Wilhelm Kube, the local Nazi Party (NSDAP) leader and later Gauleiter of the Gau Kurmark, promised during the 1931 election campaign to reopen the prison as soon as possible. The wave of arrests that followed the Reichstag fire after February 28, 1933, quickly exhausted the capacity of the Berlin prisons and SA cells. As a result, the former Sonnenburg penitentiary was repositioned and placed under the control of the Berlin Police Headquarters as a state concentration camp (Staatliches Konzentrationslager).

An inspection of the Sonnenburg penitentiary complex by Berlin Correctional Bureau officials on March 23, 1933, revealed that in three wings there was room for 941 prisoners, in both single cells or in dormitory cells, which held 20, 30, and 60 prisoners. Heating and plumbing in part did not function, and water would have to be obtained from the well in the courtyard. The Correctional Bureau provided 900 bed frames and 300 stools free of charge.

The first prisoners, from Berlin, were overwhelmingly functionaries of the German Communist Party (KPD). They arrived on April 4, 1933. Two days later, a group of prominent Nazi opponents was transferred to Sonnenburg, including Carl von Ossietzky, Erich Mähsam, Ernst Scheller, and Hans Litten. The Sonnenburger Anzeiger newspaper reported about this event on April 7, 1933: “The prisoners had to march from the railway station to the former penitentiary singing the national anthem and were driven by the rubber truncheons of the Berlin auxiliary police [Hilfspolizei].”

The large majority of the prisoners in Sonnenburg were left-wing parliamentarians and intellectuals. A few National Socialists, however, were incarcerated for various reasons; most of these were supporters of Gregor Strasser.

There were only a few Jewish prisoners in Sonnenburg. The only Jewish prisoner to leave a memoir behind, Hans Ullmann, who was imprisoned in Sonnenburg in mid-September 1933
with his father and brother on account of “economic espionage,” recalls four other Jewish prisoners. “Only Christian prisoners were sent to Sonnenburg. The Jews went to Papenburg.” Many eyewitness accounts unanimously report that the guards particularly targeted Jewish prisoners, especially the three Ullmanns, and mistreated them brutally.

From October 1933 on, several freemasons were supposedly interned in Sonnenburg, including Dr. Leo Müffelmann, the grandmaster of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany (S.G.L.v.D.), who died on August 29, 1934, from the consequences of his internment.

Hans Ullmann also refers to a “head foreman in a brown coal mine who got drunk at a rally instead of listening to the Nazi orator” and an “owner of a basalt quarry in west Germany. Someone had offered him illegal newspapers, he declined the offer as he was not interested but said to the offeror that perhaps this person or that person would be interested. He was denounced to the authorities and arrested. He was a civilized man and said that he would probably go bankrupt.”

All in all, far more than 1,000 men were interned and tortured in Sonnenburg. According to Willi Harder, who several times received orders from the Kommandantur to determine the exact number of prisoners, reports that the prison population reached its peak at 1,226 “protective custody” prisoners. A criminal police examination report dated November 30, 1933, speaks to “approximately one thousand prisoners.” Due to a significant fluctuation in prisoners during the camp’s year of existence and a lack of archival sources, it remains difficult to determine the exact number of prisoners.

The prisoners, who wore discarded police uniforms, were employed in various ways. In addition to a locksmith’s shop, a blacksmith’s shop, plumber’s shop, and a carpentry, there was a tailor’s workshop with 81 sewing machines, a willow cultivation, and a cane chair manufacture. Other prisoners had to construct a shooting range, which was used to train SS men. In addition, the prisoners undertook other tasks. For example, there were barbers who cut the prisoners’ hair on a regular basis and shaved them twice a week, kitchen hands, and laundry workers. There was also a “toilet paper cutter, who cut old newspapers—discarded by the political police, who had marked selected articles in different colours—into small pieces and distributed them to the various toilets.”

From September 1933 to the closing of the camp in April 1934, a nationwide “regulated camp counseling” (geregelte Lagersorge) was conducted in Sonnenburg, which had been initiated by the Committee of the German Protestant Church (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenausschuss) in June 1933. The counseling was basically limited to regular church services with mandatory attendance for all prisoners.
All contemporaneous reports published outside Germany in the years 1933 and 1934 unanimously testify that even in comparison with other concentration camps the guards in Sonnenburg were exceptionally brutal and high-handed. The camp quickly became known as “torture hell” (Folterhölle) outside Germany. Rudolf Diels, the head of the Gestapo at the time, later on remembered a visit to Sonnenburg:

The appearance of the prisoners was simply indescribable. They were reminiscent of spooks or guises of some demonic dream. Their swollen heads stuck out of their rags like pumpkins; yellow, green and bluish faces that no longer bore any resemblance to human faces. Their bare skin was covered with weals and congealed blood. A shiver ran through my body as if I had seen a ghost. . . . When I asked for Kasper [Wilhelm Kasper, the former treasurer of the KPD parliamentary group in the Prussian Landtag, Kasper Nürnberg (KN)], a creature reported to me; only his smouldering eyes were reminiscent of a once lively and vital man. Notwithstanding I would see worse things, seeing this agonized man was the most shocking experience of that year.

The “dark cell” (Dunkelzelle) and the “eastern cellar” (Ostkeller) were notorious places, especially for sexual abuse. Harder reports: “Any imaginable form of sadist cruelty was practiced in the Ostkeller. The prisoners were forced to place their genitals on the edge of a table and whereupon those beasts slapped them!”

The guard units were initially composed of SA men from Berlin SA Stürme (companies) I (“Horst Wessel”) and 33 (“Mordsturm Maikowski”). From the middle of April they were joined by members of the Police Detachment Wecke (Polizeiabteilung Wecke), named after Polizeimajor Walther Wecke, who in 1933 commanded three large police detachments (which reached regimental strength in May 1933) and operated a large torture chamber in the police garrison Friesenstrasse in Berlin-Kreuzberg. By the end of April, SA members from Frankfurt an der Oder replaced the Berlin SA. According to the testimony of SS-Scharführer Heinz Adrian, 130 SS men from SS-Regiment 27 (Standarte 27), after having received basic training and instructions, replaced first the SA and then the police by the end of August 1933. From then on, they were in charge of security at Sonnenburg. Adrian was sentenced to death by the grand criminal court of the Schwerin regional court on September 29, 1948, and was executed in November 1948 at the Dreiberger penitentiary.

The camp’s commanders also reflect the changes in responsibility between the SA, police, and SS: Polizeioberleutnant Gerhard Paessler and his colleagues Leutnant Bark and Oberleutnant Siegmund succeeded SA-Sturmführer Bahr. SS-Truppführer Paul Brüning was appointed camp commander in late summer. In December he was given responsibility for administrative matters, which was withdrawn from Polizeioberinspektors Pelz and Reschke.

Following its dissolution in the spring of 1934, Sonnenburg was converted once again to a penitentiary under the supervision of the Reich Ministry of Justice. Mainly criminals were interned here but still also political prisoners. Later on the inmates included deserters, recalcitrant forced laborers, and following arrests after the so-called Night-and-Fog-Decree of August 8, 1942 (“Nacht- und Nebel”-Erlass), Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, Belgians, French, and Luxemburgers. Among them were Jean Baptiste Lebas, the postal minister in Leon Blum’s government, who died in Sonnenburg on May 10, 1944. Herschel Grynszpan had supposedly been brought to Sonnenburg in the spring of 1944 and remained there until his transfer to the Brandenburg penitentiary in early 1945. Sonnenburg gained notoriety again on the night of January 30–31, 1945, when SS men, before fleeing to the west, shot almost all the remaining prisoners, leaving a huge heap of corpses for the approaching Soviet soldiers. The soldiers buried the dead and erected a memorial with the following inscription: “Here are buried 819 citizens, bestially shot and burned by the Germans when they gave up Sonnenburg. Soldier! Remember and retaliate.”

SOURCES The history of the Sonnenburg concentration camp has not been researched in great detail. The only monograph is a history of the camp in Polish: Przemysław Mnikowski, Obóz koncentracyjny i więzienie w Sonnenburgu (Słonsk) (The Sonnenburg Concentration Camp and Prison) (Warsaw, 1982).


Also worthy of mention are Irmgard Litten, A Mother Fights Hitler (London: Allen and Unwin, 1940); and Kreszentia
The construction of a concentration camp in the Bredow district of Stettin (today Szczecin-Drezetowo) went back to an initiative of SS-Abschnittsführer Fritz-Karl Engel, who, since September 1933, was also acting police president in Stettin. Officially it served as an additional police detention center for “protective custody” prisoners. The camp, located on the grounds of the Vulkanwerft, which had been closed and torn down in 1928, became a special interrogation and internment site for the Stettin Gestapo and SS. The camp was under the jurisdiction of SS-Sturmführer Dr. Joachim Hoffmann, a Criminal Police employee with the Stettin State Police Office since the fall of 1933.1

By the end of October 1933, between 25 and 40 male prisoners were permanently interned in the Vulkanwerft camp. Only a few of them were active political opponents of National Socialism, as most political opponents in Stettin had already been arrested in the first months after Hitler took power. Often members of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) or its organizations were imprisoned at Stettin-Bredow.2 Various trivial “offenses” could result in being taken into protective custody and being sent to Stettin-Bredow. Some were arrested due to denunciations by company superiors or party offices, while others had complained to various authorities about administrative measures. Drunks were arrested in pubs and carried off to the camp. Landlords were punished in Stettin-Bredow for supposedly demanding too much rent.3 Several prisoners who found themselves in pretrial confinement for criminal offenses were blackmailed into confessions at Stettin-Bredow—they had been taken there sometimes without consent, sometimes at the instigation of the criminal police.4 Several well-off Stettin citizens were brought to the camp with the intention of extorting money and payment in kind in order to finance the camp. At this time the Prussian Ministry of Interior only financed the central state concentration camps (staatliche Konzentrationslager), to which Stettin-Bredow did not belong. Thus, independent money sources had to be developed; large sums of money or payment in kind like food items, clothes, or items of furniture were extorted from prisoners; property of prisoners was confiscated, or houses from imprisoned home owners were held, and the rent was taken. In addition, a special fund of 50,000 Reichsmark (RM) was available from the SS district (SS-Abschnitt).5

At Stettin-Bredow, prisoners were systematically beaten with whips in a cellar room called the “bunker.” The beatings were ordered most often by Hoffmann but also in some cases by Fritz-Karl Engel. The number of blows administered was based on the Berlin Columbia House example of “wind strength” (Windstarken): “wind strength 1” indicated 25 and “wind strength 2” 50 double-blows on the naked buttocks. The guard units also carried out numerous individual and collective abuses on their own initiative. The camp had at its disposal its own SS physician, Dr. Wilhelm Seegers; however, he pretended not to notice the prisoners’ injuries.6

The work the prisoners were forced to do also bordered on torture. While at a jog and under whip lashes, the prisoners had to carry gravel, stones, and other building materials. This work was intended for the expansion of the camp.7 Whether there were fatalities in Stettin-Bredow cannot be clarified. The judicial investigations in 1934 and 1950 did not confirm any deaths. Nevertheless, several eye-witnesses and newspapers reported that bodies, with hands and feet tied and weighted down by a stone, were found in the Oder.8

An on-site camp leader managed the camp. The first camp leader was SS-Scharführer Bruno Vater, who was relieved at the beginning of November by SS-Obertruppführer Otto Meier. From February 1 through February 28, 1934, SS-Truppführer Karl Salis was camp head, followed by SS-Truppführer Fritz Pleines, who ran the camp until it closed on March 9, 1934. None of them had had careers in police service and had been hired as criminal police employees at the Stettin State Police Office in 1933. About 10 to 12 SS men from Stettin, in most cases unemployed, guarded the camp and were paid out of the camp budget.9

Very little is known about everyday life at Stettin-Bredow camp, since the primary sources of information about the camp were trials, which focused on the mistreatment of prisoners rather than on their living conditions.

NOTES
1. SonA, April 7, 1933.
3. Ibid., 83–84.
Apart from isolated cases of refusals to work and verbal protests against their treatment, nothing is known about active prisoner resistance. Several prisoners attempted to inform the police president about abuses whenever he visited the camp. It was not clear to them that he actually knew about the abuses and tolerated or supported them. One prisoner successfully managed to escape from the camp. Nothing is known about the circumstances of the escape or the reaction it caused.

The cruel treatment of the protective custody prisoners at Stettin-Bredow soon became the talk of the town. Requests for legal counsel from relatives of the prisoners piled up at lawyers’ offices in Stettin. The senior state attorney in Stettin, Dr. Reinhard Luther, began investigations into the matter that were, however, hampered by SS authorities.

Stettin District President Konrad Göppert learned about the camp at the end of November 1933 when the Swedish consulate inquired about the whereabouts of a Swedish citizen who was imprisoned at the camp. He demanded an account from Engel about the operation of the camp and submittal of a document of the camp’s authorization issued by the Prussian Ministry of Interior. Police President Engel endeavored in Berlin to obtain such permission for running the camp several times but without success.

During a visit to the Stettin-Bredow camp in mid-February, the head of the Secret State Police Office Rudolf Diels did not detect any peculiarities; the camp functioned “like everywhere else.” However, the visit had previously been announced. Police President Engel and the guard units considered this visit a confirmation of the legitimacy of their conduct.

A few weeks later, high-ranking Stettin police officials took advantage of the absence of the police president, who was on vacation in Austria, to complain to Göppert about the conditions at the Stettin State Police Office and the abuses of prisoners at the Vulkanwerft camp. Göppert sent an investigation committee to the camp and turned to Hermann Göring with the request to take action against the camp. Göring also had a complaint from influential Feldmarschall August von Mackensen, who learned about the conditions at the Stettin State Police Office and the abuse of prisoners at the Vulkanwerft camp. Göring also had a complaint from influential Feldmarschall August von Mackensen, who learned about the mistreatment of prisoners from a former inmate.

After a directive from Hermann Göring, Vulkanwerft was closed on March 9, 1934, and a large number of guards as well as Hoffmann were arrested. The Berlin Central State Attorney’s Office, headed by Werner von Haacke, brought a case before the Stettin Regional Court against Joachim Hoffmann, Karl Salis, Fritz Pleines and four SS guards for misuse of authority and grievous bodily harm. On April 6, 1934, they were sentenced to several years in prison or penitentiary.

The trial caused an international sensation, as even the New York Times reported on it. 

The central state attorney’s office initiated further proceedings against Engel in June 1934; however, the evidence did not at first suffice for an indictment. Only after their conviction did the former camp leaders and guard units incriminate him. This case was dismissed at Heinrich Himmler’s instigation.

After the war, the Flensburg State Attorney’s Office became aware of Engel. In 1949 proceedings against him were initiated for crimes against humanity. Over 50 witnesses to the events were found. On May 23, 1950, Engel was sentenced to a total of five years and one month in prison for crimes against humanity, causing grievous bodily harm while on duty, and grave deprivation of liberty. This sentence was reduced on appeal to two years and six months on April 22, 1952, and on June 16, 1952, a plea for clemency for a remittance of the remaining sentence was granted.

**NOTES**

1. GStAPK, I. HA Rep. 84 a Justizministerium Nr. 54826, pp. 50, 155–156.
2. Ibid., p. 13.
In March 1933, the SA established a “protective custody” camp in the Hoheneck penitentiary.


No primary sources have been found for this camp.

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**STUTTGART**

On March 1, 1933, the barracks at the Stuttgart women’s prison became a “protective custody” camp. The present location of this facility is not known. Under the direction of Polizeiwartmeister Nauer, the female detainees received decent treatment. The number of detainees is not known. The most memorable event at Stuttgart took place when an SS officer addressed the detainees. The officer, named Jagow, proclaimed: “The Third Reich has begun, all misery and moaning ends now.” The women later invoked these words humorously in order to bolster morale. The camp was dissolved on March 31, 1933, and the detainees were dispatched to the first women’s concentration camp, Gotteszell in Schwäbisch Gmünd.


Primary documentation for Stuttgart consists of a file in the BA-BL, SAPMO-DDR, as cited by Drobisch and Wieland. The file number is Zentrales Parteiarchiv St 10/158/22 a. As also cited by Drobisch and Wieland, another file about this camp is found in the BA-P. It is Reichsministerium des Innern, No. 26,058.

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**STRUPPEN**

In March 1933, the SA converted their leaders’ school at the former manor at Struppen, Saxony, into an early concentration camp. Among the detainees was leftist political opponent Artur Tiermann. The camp was dissolved in May 1933, and the prisoners were transferred to the early concentration camp at Hohnstein Castle.


No primary sources have been found for this camp.

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**ULM–OBERER KUHBERG**

The Württemberg concentration camp, “Württembergisches Schutzhaftlager, Ulm a.D. (an der Donau),” existed between
November 16, 1933, and July 11, 1935, in Ulm an der Donau, which is located on the border of Württemberg and Bavaria.

The Ulm-Oberer Kuhberg camp was the direct successor to the Heuberg [aka Stetten am kalten Markt], concentration camp, which was closed at the end of 1933 and transferred to Ulm. The camp was located in a purpose-built military building, Fort Oberer Kuhberg.

There were around 600 Württemberg prisoners who were held in the Ulm camp, the “hard core” of political resistance and other opponents of the regime who were deemed incapable of “improvement.”

Both Heuburg and Kuhberg were state concentration camps under the administration, from the end of April 1933, of the Württemberg Ministry of Interior’s Political Police Office. The Ulm camp was an instrument of the political police whose task was defined in the Stuttgart NS-Karier on January 30, 1934, “to research the enemies of the Third Reich, to observe them and if necessary to take immediate ruthless action against them.”

In practice that meant that, until its closure, the Ulm concentration camp was under the authority of the state and not under Theodor Eicke’s authority via the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL). From 1934 on, the Reich assumed about a quarter of the costs of the Ulm concentration camp. The majority of the costs were paid for by the state. The prisoners had to bear a small percentage of the “accommodation costs” (Unterkunftskosten).

The first president of the Württemberg Political Police and Chief of the State Concentration Camps was the Württemberg judge and SA-Standartenführer Dr. Hermann Matheiss (1893–1934), who was shot on July 1, 1934, during the so-called Röhm Putsch. His successor until 1937 was SS-Mann Walther Stahlecker (1900–1942).

From April 1933 on, the former Württemberg professional officer and later engineer Karl Buck (1894–1977) was the commandant of Heuberg and, later, commandant of Ulm-Oberer Kuhberg. He joined the National Socialist Party and the SA in 1931. As a member of the Württemberg Political Police, he was appointed concentration camp commander in 1933 and retained that post until the end of the war. Three months after the closure of Ulm, on October 1, 1935, a new Württemberg state concentration camp was opened in the Police Prison Welzheim. Buck was also the commandant of that camp. From 1941, with the rank of SS-Hauptsturmführer, he was the commandant of the Elsass “security camp” (Sicherungslager), which held mostly French political prisoners who were incarcerated by the German occupation authorities.

The prisoners at Heuberg and Ulm have stated that Buck was brutal, but he exercised brutality with a degree of cynicism. He had a basic education, was intelligent, and exercised self-control. His deputy at Ulm is described as primitive and brutal. The deputy, Hermann Eberle (1908–1949) from Württemberg, was an unemployed tradesman who joined the party and the SA in 1931. He was appointed an auxiliary guard in the Heuberg concentration camp. He was Buck’s deputy at Ulm and continued in that role at the Welzheim concentration camp until Buck’s departure to Schirmeck-Vorbruck at the beginning of 1941. From then until 1945, he was the commandant at Welzheim.

In November 1933, there were 120 guards and 5 administrative personnel in Ulm. With the subsequent reduction in prisoner numbers, the guards’ numbers also declined so that when the camp closed, there were only 29 guards and 3 administrative personnel. Initially the guards were members of the Schutzpolizei (municipal police) and a few SS members. This situation changed following the Röhm Putsch, and in the following months, the guards were absorbed into the SS.

The names and other data of 430 of the approximately 600 prisoners in the Ulm-Oberer Kuhberg concentration camp are known. They were aged between 19 and 71 and were mostly from Württemberg. More than half were from Stuttgart and the other large cities, that is, from areas where industrialization was most advanced and the Socialist workers’ movements’ organizations were most developed.

All the prisoners were classified as “enemies of the National Socialist State,” opposed politically, ideologically, and socially to the regime. This was sufficient reason for arrest. About half the prisoners had connections to the German Communist Party (KPD), and a fifth to the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). Two virulent opponents of the National Socialists from before 1933 were KPD Member of the Landtag Alfred Haag (Schwäbisch Gmünd, 1904–1982) and SPD Member of the Reichstag (MdR) Kurt Schumacher (Stuttgart, 1895–1952). For the National Socialist persecutors, they were the “enticers and manipulators” (Verführer und Drabtszieber) of the people and were the target of mistreatment and other special measures in the punishment bunkers in Ulm (particularly Schumacher after 1933).

Of particular political significance, extending beyond Württemberg, was the news that appeared in the press (which was still free) in January 1934 that three Catholic priests who had publicly criticized the National Socialist authorities as part of their pastoral duties had been classified as “Saboteurs of State Order” (Saboteure der staatlichen Ordnung) and sent to Ulm.

The prisoners who did not fit into the above-mentioned groups have not been the subject of biographical research. They were not defined as party political. However, they represented a political/ideological and social protest potential within the population. The use of racial labels such as “asocial” (asozial) or “work shy” (arbeitsscheu) appears instead.

What can be stated with certainty is that until 1938 the Jews and “Gypsies” (Zigeuner) were not separately classified as “enemies of the national community” (Feinde der Volksgemeinschaft). If such people were imprisoned, they were held as members of the SPD or KPD.

Half of the prisoners were held for around three months and the others for between three and nine months. In exceptional cases, such as with Schumacher, prisoners were held from the first to the last day of the Ulm-Oberer Kuhberg concentration camp.

According to surviving prisoners, the prison conditions and everyday life inside Ulm were worse than in Heuberg.
The April 1933 confinement regulations (Haftordnung) for Heuberg, which were very similar to those for the Justice Department’s prisons consisting of stages of imprisonment (Entry Stage, Stages I to III), were cast aside by the “al-mighty” Commandant Buck. He determined the day-to-day rules, he interrogated, blackmailed, verbally humiliated, punished, beat, or had others beat the prisoners.

The hallmarks of everyday life were the withdrawal of mea-ger rations, alarms at night, punishment roll calls, military-type abuse, senseless heavy labor, withdrawal of postal privileges and any other beneficial activity, holding fake executions, and torture. The aim of such actions was to have prisoners betray other prisoners or to reveal underground activities so as to arrest those members of the resistance who had not yet been arrested.

But according to the postwar reports of surviving prisoners, what was worst was the site itself, the nightmarish fort with its damp, cold, dark, stinking casemates, in which the prisoners lived and in which were missing nearly all means for personal hygiene.

The psychological survival of the prisoners was made possible by some strong personalities within the prisoner population and because most of the prisoners identified themselves as political opponents to the regime. It was also facilitated through political discussions, conducted in whispers; the singing of Swabian songs or songs from the workers’ movement; and games of chess (the figures were the prisoners and were rather primitive). The prisoners’ solidarity was relatively intact because the prisoners had relatively similar social and intellectual backgrounds, and there was not yet a strong Kapo system.

Those responsible at Ulm were brought to justice after 1945, albeit in a limited way: Buck was arrested in Elsas in 1945 and sentenced to death by a French and a British Military Court for homicides committed in Schirmeck-Vorbruck. In 1953–1954, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and he was extradited from France to the German Federal Republic in April 1955 as a war criminal. He was released and lived until his death close to Welzheim. An attempt by former Heuberg, Kuhberg, and Welzheim prisoners to bring him before a court after 1955 was unsuccessful. He could not be charged because of the statute of limitations (it could not be proven that he had committed murder in these camps) and because of the defense that he was “acting in accordance with orders” (Befehlsnotstand). Eberle was arrested in 1945 and sentenced by a British Military Court to 13 years’ imprisonment. He committed suicide while in prison in 1949. Only 1 guard was tried, and that was in 1947. He was sentenced to jail. The other 41 guards were investigated around 1950.


There are no complete administration files for the Ulm-Oberer Kuhberg camp. In particular, a list of admissions and releases is missing. The LA-B-W in Stuttgart, Ludwigsburg, and Sigmaringen have some files regarding administration matters during the period of the concentration camp. Files of the “compensation” (Wiedergutmachung) after 1945 are also held here but particularly in the archive of the state branch of VVN in Stuttgart. Files on the criminal trial of Karl Buck and other members of the camp staff are mostly held in BA-L (formerly ZdL). Probably the most complete file on the concentration camp history is the Ulm DZOK, but most of the material consists of copies from private collections and provided by prisoners.

Silvester Lechner trans. Stephen Pallavicini

VECHTA

Vechea, a district town in Lower Saxony, lies between Bremen and Osnabrück. Until 1946, it was part of the state of Oldenburg. The Free State Oldenburg (since 1934, Land Oldenburg) had an overwhelmingly Evangelical population and a strong agricultural economy. Next to the Oldenburg area, the state included the distant areas of Lübeck (Eutin) and Birkenfeld until 1937. The National Socialists very early gained greater support here than anywhere else. From 1928, they were represented in the state parliament, and from June 1932, they were able to form a state government on their own.

From as early as March 1933, there was talk of establishing a concentration camp in the Oldenburg district. It was to be based on the Dachau model. It was established in July of that year in a former women’s prison in Vechea, which from 1931 had stood empty. It was administered by the Oldenburg Ministry of Interior. At the beginning of August, the camp contained about 60 police prisoners, that is, prisoners in “protective custody.” It was envisaged that their numbers could be increased to 100. From August on, those held in protective custody for longer periods of time were taken from the local police cells and jails to Vechea, mostly in group transports via Oldenburg.1

In the beginning, the protective custody arrest orders were issued by the city magistrates (in Oldenburg, it was mostly the city Police Department, which became subordinate to the Secret State Police Office [Gestapa] once its office had been established) or by the senior administrative officials (comparable to the Prussian rural district administrators). More and more, however, these orders came from the interior minister. From 1935, such orders, first occasionally and from 1936 more frequently, came from the Gestapa, which by 1937 seemed to have become exclusively responsible for them.
Most of the concentration camp inmates were Communists. They came primarily from Oldenburg, Wilhelmshaven-Rüstringen, Delmenhorst, and Nordenham. In addition, there were some Social Democrats, members of the Center Party and the Stahlhelm, and people with no party affiliations. There were also Jews who had fallen into political disfavor. The prisoners were held in one- or two-man cells. According to witnesses, the food was the usual prison food. Occasionally there were special rations. An early innate recalls, however, that the food was served in small portions (in the morning, two slices of black bread with a tablespoon of watered-down jam; at lunch, a bowl of stew). Forced labor and protective custody went together. The prisoners had to work usually between 10 to 10.5 hours a day. Some of the prisoners had to go to work for the judiciary as auxiliary guards. On April 1, for prisoners on remand and for convicts. From the spring of 1934, the operation of the Vechta concentration camp gradually wound down. Between July 1933 and July 1934, more than 100 prisoners alone were transferred from the Oldenburg jail to the Vechta concentration camp. From July on, the transfers ceased.3

The number of prisoners increased from 50 in July to 75 in August, to 90 in September, to 100 in October, and to 113 at the beginning of November. Thereafter, the numbers averaged 80 a month. Following the 1933 Christmas amnesty, the numbers were 20 at the end of December, and in January 1934, 25. As the numbers of protective custody prisoners receded in the spring of 1934, the building was used also, from April 1, for prisoners on remand and for convicts. From the spring of 1934, the operation of the Vechta concentration camp gradually wound down. Between July 1933 and July 1934, more than 100 prisoners alone were transferred from the Oldenburg jail to the Vechta concentration camp. From July on, the transfers ceased.3

The 113 prisoners in the concentration camp on November 12, 1933, were able to vote (as a separate polling district) in the Reichstag elections and on the referendum on whether Germany should remain in the League of Nations. Of the 88 returned votes for the Reichstag elections, 22 percent were held to be invalid. For the referendum, 7 percent voted “no,” while 4.5 percent of the votes were listed as invalid. The election results were even published in the newspapers. Note also that in the referendum on the unification of the offices of Reichs president and Reichs chancellor of August 19, 1934, the “State concentration camp” with its 11 prisoners formed one of the city’s seven electoral districts.6

The head of the camp was an official from the judiciary, Senior Prison Superintendent Friedrich (Fritz) Fischer (1888–1965). Prisoners, after the war, described him as correct and spoke about him in positive terms. On March 1, 1935, he was transferred as court secretary to the remand prison at Oldenburg. In Vechta, he ensured that the SS guards from Oldenburg and the surrounding area were not permitted to exceed their authority, although there were isolated cases of harassment. The SS was mostly deployed externally. Its only internal function was to lock the prisoners in their cells. When there were visitors, it was the judicial officials who supervised. At the suggestion of the SS-Standarte 24 in Oldenburg and with the approval of the minister of interior, the SS became responsible for guard duty and were appointed as auxiliary guards. From the summer of 1934—from June, to be precise—they wore disused uniforms of the Oldenburg order police with shoulder pads denoting their function as prison auxiliary guards.6

The Gestapo officials, who regularly came to Vechta from Oldenburg for interrogations, were considerably more ruthless and brutal and, at the very least, employed methods of psychological terror. Nonetheless, their interrogation methods were less feared than those of their Bremer colleagues.

So far as is known, only one person died in the concentration camp, namely, a protective custody prisoner who committed suicide after being held in remand.7

As judicial official, Fischer remained subordinate to the director of penal institutions in Vechta and thus also to the Oldenburg chief state prosecutor. The concentration camp itself, headed by Fischer as “prison chairman,” fell under the Oldenburg minister of interior, however. The responsible police official in the ministry was also head of the Oldenburg Gestapo office, which was formed in November 1933. The Gestapo itself had, however, nothing to do with the concentration camp administration. Its activity was restricted to the interrogation of protective custody and political remand prisoners.

The dissolution of the concentration camp was decided upon no later than February 1935. The six guards (SS men) were given their notice on February 28, and three of them went to work for the judiciary as auxiliary guards. On April 1, 1935, the concentration camp formally ceased to exist, and the building was again used as a normal male prison until 1937, after which it once again became a prison for women.8

Notwithstanding that the Vechta concentration camp was situated in a former female prison, it was a camp for men only. According to statements of witnesses, the concentration camp, which existed from July 1933 to the end of March 1935, was not of the worst type, in part due to the moderating influence of its head, Fischer. It is not clear, however, where within the Justice Department Fischer and his assistants received the authority to act.

**SOURCES**


**VECHTA**

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There is only fragmentary material in the archives on the Vechta concentration camp. The prison books for the Oldenburg jail and the Vechta jail, housed in the StaA-Ol, provide the most detail about the prisoners (Best. 145-1 Akz. 9/84 Nr. 23, Best. 145-2 Akz. 19/1985 Nr. 2). However, a prisoners’ log and lists of the inmates of the Vechta camp are missing. Otherwise, there are only scattered files in the collections of the Ministry of Interior (Best. 136), Ministry of Justice (Best. 133), and others. For the initial period at least, the regional and local newspapers such as the OSZ and the NSLO or the OVV contain important information. The surviving Gestapo reports on the camp for the years 1933–1936 and the reports of the Minister of Interior in Oldenburg to Berlin contain little information (see the publication by Eckhardt and Hoffmann listed above).

Albrecht Eckhardt
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES
5. StaA-Ol, Best. 262-11 Nr. 772; Best. 136 Nr. 795; Best. 231-4 Nr. 18; also OVV, November 14, 1933 2. Blatt, August 20, 1934.
6. StaA-Ol, Best. 133 Nr. 331, Bl. 617.; Best. 136 Nr. 2884; Best. 205 Nr. 590.
7. StaA-Ol, Best. 133 Nr. 387, Bl. 306ff.
8. StaA-Ol, Best. 133 Nr. 331, Bl. 692–693, and Nr. 363, Bl. 292–803; Best. 136 Nr. 30190 (Nr. 4677).

WALDHEIM

Between March 18 and May 12, 1933, a section of Waldheim, the largest penitentiary in Saxony, served as a “protective custody” camp. The camp maintained strict discipline. The administration censored the detainees' letters and refused to permit the discussion of political topics during visits by relatives. A document from 1935 noted that the penitentiary guards included 31 SA. Whether these personnel guarded the early camp in 1933 is not certain but possible. Neither the number of prisoners nor their destination following the closure of this camp is known. Throughout the Nazi dictatorship, Waldheim held male and female political prisoners who were sentenced to lengthy terms of confinement.

SOURCES
This entry builds upon the standard study of the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobsch and Günther Wieland, System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). The camp is recorded in Stefanie Endlich, Nora Goldenbogen, Beatrix Herlemann, Nikolaus Wachsmann, Hitler’s Prisoners: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), situates the abysmal treatment of Waldheim prisoners in the overall context of Nazi terror.

Primary documentation for this camp begins with SHStA-(D), Zuchthaus Waldheim, File No. 804, as cited in Habicht. The penitentiary is also listed in Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, Ursula Krause-Schmitt, and ITS, Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), p. 123. As cited by Wachsmann, the volume by Union for Recht und Freiheit, eds., Strafvollzug im III. Reich: Denkschrift und Materialsammlung (Prague, 1936), includes a contemporary account of conditions in Waldheim.

Joseph Robert White

NOTE

WEISSENFELS

The baroque castle Neu-Augustenburg was constructed between 1660 and 1694 as the residence for the dukes of Sachsen-Weissenfels. Between 1869 and 1920, it was used as a noncommissioned officers’ school. From 1928 to 1945, municipal police squads (Schutzpolizei) were based at the castle. The Weissenfels police president and the criminal investigation unit of the police (Kriminalabteilung) were based in the castle from 1931.

A concentration camp was established in the castle in early March 1933. After a large number of people, mostly functionaries of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the Social
Democratic Party (SPD), had been arrested in the region and local prisons as well as police detention centers were overcrowded, it became necessary to establish a concentration camp. The prisoners were initially interned in a large police classroom on the second floor of the castle. As the numbers of “protective custody” prisoners continued to grow, the camp expanded into the gymnasium. Fritz Kleine, a former prisoner, recalls his internment in the classroom: “We had to squat the whole day on the straw sacks, crammed together like herrings in a can. It was impossible to move. We were taken downstairs into the courtyard only for one hour a day to get a breath of fresh air. That really felt good after having ‘eaten the stench’ (Getankfressen) for twenty-four hours.”

Nearly all of the prisoners in Weissenfels had been active in the workers’ movement. The camp on average held 180 prisoners, the majority of whom were male and under 40.

Kleine describes everyday life in the camp: “Everyone was given a sack of straw, a towel and cookware. Linen and clothes had to be obtained by the prisoners. . . . There were only two toilets in the camp for two hundred prisoners. They could only be used between 6 A.M. and 7 A.M., 1 P.M. to 2 P.M. and in the evening from 7 P.M. to 8 P.M. The SS ensured that everyone left the toilet as quickly as possible by scattering chlorinated lime on the floor, into the toilet pit and on the toilet seat so that you could not breathe in. It was impossible to stay in there for longer than one minute, even if the next one in line had not urged you to hurry.”

Although it was planned to use the prisoners to reconstruct the gymnasium, they were never forced to do physical work during the camp’s existence. After breakfast, however, the prisoners had an opportunity to volunteer for work. “Working had several advantages: one was exempt from cleaning the rooms and the toilets as well as getting water. One could spend the whole day in the fresh air and if there was some food left over at lunch you could be first to get an extra serving. Imprisoned Communists and Social Democrats built a shooting stand for the SS to be able to enjoy these personal freedoms!” Those working were also subject to victimization. Above all, “the intellectuals were forced to do the dirtiest work. The SS and SA had a lot of fun watching the school’s inspector Benda, the Jewish engineer Lomitzsch, the teacher Gleitsmann, and others, who were not at all accustomed to physical labor, struggle with the toilet barrels (old herring vats), whose contents squirted onto their clothes and faces.”

Political indoctrination of the camp inmates was emphasized. Each week there were two hours of lectures on National Socialism, and there were regular radio broadcasts of selected speeches and rallies.

There were several cases of physical mistreatment in the Weissenfels camp. The news spread very quickly among the prisoners. Fritz, fearful of what could happen on the Sunday that the memorial was to be unveiled, escaped from his work detachment outside the camp. All the remaining prisoners were punished—for a fortnight they were neither allowed to receive visitors nor permitted to smoke. Fritz was caught only a few days later and taken to the Lichtenburg concentration camp.

The guards in Weissenfels were mainly recruited from the SA, SS, and Stahlhelm. The men were mostly between 21 and 35 years old, often unemployed, and predominantly from Weissenfels and the surrounding area. They wore armbands identifying them as auxiliary policemen. They were armed with rifles, pistols, side arms, and rubber batons. Initially, the camp commander was probably Oberleutnant Hennecke. He was later on supported by Polizeiobermeister Schmale as his deputy. The prisoners were guarded round the clock by the auxiliary police, escorted to meals and the toilets, and supervised while working. Two of the police officials were permanently stationed in the prisoners’ dormitory. Nevertheless, according to Kleine, it was possible for the prisoners to have political discussions, and it is even said that some of the auxiliary police participated in those discussions.

Many of the prisoners were interned in Weissenfels for only a few days. Others were held for weeks or months. From June 1933, there were prisoner transports to the Lichtenburg concentration camp, which opened in the same month. That camp was located near Prettin in what became Sachsen-Anhalt after the war. The Weissenfels camp had served as the regional model for the Lichtenburg camp. A last transport of 60 inmates to the Lichtenburg camp took place on August 12, 1933, while 48 prisoners were released from Weissenfels. The auxiliary police was dissolved, and Police President Neubauer bid them farewell. In the context of these events, the camp was eventually dissolved as well. In isolated cases, the gymnasium of the castle was still used after the camp’s closure to intern protective custody prisoners.
The early National Socialist concentration camps

**SOURCES**


Fritz Kleine reported in detail about his experience in Schloss Neu-Augustusburg in *Konzentrationslager: Ein Appell an das Gewissen der Welt; Ein Buch der Greuel; Die Opfer klagen an* (Karlsbad: Verlagsanstalt “Graphia,” 1934), pp. 182–188.

During the period of the establishment of the early camps, the Nazis wanted the public to know about protective custody and reeducation measures in order to frighten the population and to prevent the formation of new opposition. For these reasons the local press reported at regular intervals on the Weissenfels camp. Articles were published in the *WeißTh, MNZ*, and the *HaNa* between March and August 1933.

Relevant source material is to be found in the ASt-WsF, HZ 37 Hochbauamt Zeitz/Schloss, Bauliche Unterhaltung 1933–1934, 1936; and in the LHSA-Ma, Regbez. Merseburg Rep. C 48 Ie Polizeiregistratur Nr. 1189a.

**NOTES**

2. Ibid., p. 182.
3. Ibid., p. 183.
4. Ibid., p. 184.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 185.
8. Ibid., p. 183.

**WEISSWASSER**

In March 1933, the SA established the Weisswasser early concentration camp in an SA hostel in Liegnitz, Prussia.

**SOURCES**

This entry follows the standard work on the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

Primary sources are not available for this camp.

Joseph Robert White

**WERDEN**

In the spring of 1933, the detention center in Werden, Prussian Düsseldorf, became a “protective custody” camp under unknown authority. The camp was dissolved in June 1933.

**SOURCES**

This entry follows the standard work on the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobisch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

Primary documentation for Werden can be found in the BA-BL, Abteilung Potsdam, Film 14929.

Joseph Robert White

**WITTMOOR**

After Hitler took power, the Nazis began to put the police and justice system in Hamburg under their control. At the same time, the number of imprisoned political opponents rapidly increased to 1,750 people between March and May 1933 alone.

The prisoners held in “protective custody” were initially interned in the Hamburg remand center at Holstenlacias. In view of the constantly growing number of prisoners and the increasing length of imprisonment, the correctional service made an empty building complex on the grounds of the Fuhlsbüttel penal complex available in March 1933. The dreaded Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp later emerged out of this provisional camp.

At the same time, the police president tried to find accommodations for protective custody prisoners that would make it possible for them to be employed in productive agricultural work. The choice fell on the site at Wittmoor. (From a legal point of view, Wittmoor was considered a “protective custody camp.” In original documents, however, it is again and again referred to as a “concentration camp for Communists.”) A visit to the site revealed that the rooms in the Wittmoor peat factory were adequate for the immediate accommodation of those prisoners currently on hand. For the further accommodation of around 200 people, the interned Communists were supposed to make the necessary preparations.

The construction of the Wittmoor camp was therefore ordered on March 31, 1933.

Wittmoor was initially occupied by 20 prisoners who were watched by a guard unit of 14 police officers. The camp was under the supervision of the police authority. The first inmates were to repair the buildings on the construction site. Occupancy of around 150 prisoners was planned.

In the following months the number of prisoners at Wittmoor steadily increased; already in May, 100 prisoners were accommodated at Wittmoor. The highest occupancy was reached in October 1933 with 140 prisoners, then went down to 110 in October.

The prisoners were deployed—in addition to the extension and maintenance work on the buildings—in peat extraction and processing: cutting peat, laying it out to dry and piling (curling) it, and processing it into bales or fuel. A witness reports: “During the day we had to meet our quota in the bog or on the bank. In our free time we could go walking outside. I still have a picture from when I had a visitor. In any case I had already had a girlfriend. We still went into the bogs; we could do that, we could receive visitors and the women passed themselves off as fiancées. We could only receive visitors on Sundays. Our camp leader was a police officer and he was really humane. We were
after all prisoners, our freedom had been taken; but he recognized us as political prisoners, as was right."

In the early days of the camp, there were protests from the prisoners:

The food was delivered from the Glasmoor penal institution. This institution, however, was not provided with extra provisions for us, so the kitchen at Glasmoor diluted the soup. They were watery soups with hardly any potatoes and no meat at all. When I then one day also found a dirty washcloth in my food, I went to the commandant with my cup and explained to him that my comrades refused to go back to work. “We’ll stay seated in front of the mess kit (cup) and won’t pick up anything until we get something decent to eat!” At that time that was still possible. Later in any one of the other camps no one would have had the courage to go to the camp commandant at all. The commandant was rather shocked and immediately called the Gestapo. Then a number of officers showed up and there was a meeting in which a representative of camp leadership and the boss of the peat factory participated. In the following days the food became better. For the time being though, we stayed on hunger strike.£

In the meantime, the public also learned about life in the Wittmoor camp. The Hamburg newspapers published several reports (some with pictures), and Reich Governor Karl Kaufmann visited the camp several times.® The author and Communist Willi Bredel, who was later incarcerated at Fuhlbüttel and who described that time in his novel Die Prüfung, published a short story about one of these visits.

The business of selling the extracted peat was going well. Simultaneously the need for further accommodations increased. In this context and because there was evidently a large demand for the peat that the prisoners had cut, the police authority considered expanding Wittmoor to a size of 400 to 500 men in August 1933. For reasons of time and money, the plan to construct a solid building was discarded, and an extension of the camp with three barracks of approximately 6 meters by 30 meters (19.7 feet by 98.4 feet) for 80 prisoners each was suggested instead. In order to bring off this extension the police authorities requested 25,000 Reichsmark (RM) from the treasury, explicitly remarking “that the governing mayor has declared that approval is necessary as state security renders the expense essential.” Neither the monies nor the planned extension came about.

After a visit to Wittmoor in August 1933, Reich Governor Karl Kaufmann ordered the camp to be handed over to the penal authorities since “there was too little beating up there.” Justice Senator Rothenberger rejected that order for reasons of security and ordered the prisoners to be transferred to Fuhlbüttel; after that the Wittmoor camp would once again be made available to the police.
On October 18, 1933, Wittmoor was shut down. Due to peat deliveries and cleaning still to be conducted, 30 prisoners remained temporarily on the grounds.

The prisoners of Wittmoor were transferred to Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp. The sudden and, for those responsible, probably surprising closure of Wittmoor and the transfer of the prisoners to the female wing of the Fuhlsbüttel penitentiary presented police authorities with the problem of keeping prior commitments to the tenant of the peat processing factory, as well as fulfilling outstanding delivery agreements, in addition to completely exploiting the remaining materials. For these reasons, the police chief suggested in a letter to the provincial administration dated October 17, 1933, that even after the closing of the camp 30 prisoners should be driven from Fuhlsbüttel to Wittmoor every day in order to process the remaining peat there.9

Wittmoor differed from other concentration camps in various ways. With a maximum of 140 inmates, it was a small camp; it was subordinate to the Hamburg police authority and was run by a police officer; and finally, it only existed for a short time. These circumstances prevented Wittmoor from becoming a “typical” concentration camp—that is, it lacked several characteristics of later concentration camps. Thus, the institutionalization of a distinct, sophisticated camp hierarchy was not necessary and in the short time also not possible.

Even if there were only a few victims at Wittmoor itself, this camp was a link in the chain of Nazi instruments of power and played its role here. Even the short time of its existence reflected fundamental aspects of the camp system established later: deterrence—reeducation—exploitation of labor. “Extermination through work” and purely exterminatory measures were reserved for the later camps.

SOURCES The history of Wittmoor concentration camp was reconstructed for the first time in 1983–1984 by a project of the Department of Youth Didactics at the Norderstedt Adult Education Center. Within the framework of this project, “Searching for traces: National Socialist everyday life in Hamburg and its vicinity” (“Spurensuche: Nationalsozialistischer Alltag in Hamburg und Umgebung”), a research group, including the author, by chance discovered a document about Wittmoor in the Hamburg newspapers and materials that the above-mentioned research group found and used in the framework of its project, as well as a small exhibit, are located in the ASt-No, the archive of the community in whose area the grounds of the former Wittmoor camp are located today.

Willy Klawe trans. Eric Schroeder

NOTES
2. AG-NG, Schreiben der Domänenverwaltung vom 01.04.1933.

In 2001, Klawe published another article on Wittmoor, which basically referred to the data in the first publication and at the same time served as the basis for this essay: “Wittmoor—das erste Konzentrationslager Hamburgs,” in Terror ohne System: Die ersten Konzentrationslager im Nationalsozialismus 1933–1935, ed. Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2001), pp. 251–259. A few of the former prisoners at Wittmoor have written about their internment in the camp—for instance, Helmuth Warnke in his memoir Der verratene Traum: Langenborn; das kurze Leben einer Hamburger Arbeitergesinde, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 1995). Hamburg author Heinz Liepmann, who portrayed the Nazi seizure of power in his novel Das Vaterland: Ein Tatsachenroman aus Deutschland (Hamburg: Konkret-Literatur-Verlag, 1979), also published an article on Wittmoor: “Ein Alltag im Konzentrationslager [Wittmoor bei Hamburg. Erlebnisbericht. Mit einer Vorbemerkung der Redaktion],” Weltbühne 38 (1933): 1179–1182. Author Willi Bredel, who was imprisoned in Fuhlsbüttel as a Communist (his experiences there are depicted in detail in his novel Die Prüfung, 4th ed. [1946; repr., Berlin: Aufbauverlag, 1985]), published a short story on Wittmoor under the title “Das missglückte Experiment” (no bibliographical information available). Presumably he himself was never kept there but used one of the scattered articles that appeared on Wittmoor in the Hamburg newspapers as inspiration.

The number of sources on Wittmoor in archives is sparse, which is due not only to its short period of existence but also to the fact that as a small, temporary protective custody camp Wittmoor was not considered especially important. Finally, it was also subordinate to different authorities. Accordingly, the StA-HH primarily holds documents relating to costs and the profitability of the camp operation. The same can be said about the AG-NG. All of the documents and materials that the above-mentioned research group found and used in the framework of its project, as well as a small exhibit, are located in the ASt-No, the archive of the community in whose area the grounds of the former Wittmoor camp are located today.

Willy Klawe

trans. Eric Schroeder
The Wuppertal-Barmen concentration camp was established in Wuppertal at the beginning of July 1933. Wuppertal was an industrial metropolis at the southern border of Germany's principal industrial region, the Ruhr Valley. To most locals the camp was known as “Kemna” because it was located in the Wuppertal neighborhood of Kemna. The date of the camp’s opening is not precisely known. On July 6, 1933, a representative of the district presidium in Düsseldorf first mentioned the camp in a report addressed to the Prussian minister of interior. The representative requested permission to establish and use the factory building as a concentration camp as 15 prisoners had already been detained there temporarily.

Although the Prussian Ministry of Interior denied the authorization, the district president of Düsseldorf and the provisional police president in Wuppertal considered the Kemna concentration camp a necessary institution. As the records show, Kemna was not a “wild” camp, since it was not created spontaneously or irrespective of the existing administrative structure. Rather, the establishment of the camp was discussed by the responsible authorities, and they supported it at least for a short period of time. The camp was thus an integral part of the evolving Nazi state and fulfilled what was deemed a necessary task, namely, detaining and maltreating political opponents.

The initiative to establish the Kemna concentration camp apparently arose from the SA-Oberführer and Nazi Party (NSDAP) local branch leader in Wuppertal, Willi Veller, who had been the provisional police president in his hometown since the beginning of July 1933.

The camp was established in an abandoned cotton waste factory in Wuppertal. On the first floor of the main building, a guard room, a registry for new prisoners, and a kitchen were installed. The second floor was used as a sleeping and common room for the guards. The two other floors and the other factory buildings at ground level were used as living quarters for the prisoners. A former coal cellar, called “the bunker,” was used as a cell. About 200 to 300 prisoners were supposed to be accommodated in these factory buildings. In the fall of 1933, however, there were around 1,000 inmates imprisoned in Kemna. About 4,500 prisoners were interned in the camp at one time or another.

The first commandant of Kemna was SA-Sturmbannführer Hugo Neuhoff. SA-Obersturmbannführer Alfred Hilgers soon replaced him. Hilgers was the decisive personality in the camp and formed its character. He was commandant until December 1933. His successor, SA-Sturmbannführer Wolters, only led the concentration camp for a few weeks until it was closed in January 1934.

Like the commandants, the camp guards were also SA members. About 35 SA men were permanently assigned to the camp. They were on duty in the areas of the barracks, the administration, and the kitchen and were responsible for camp security. For guard duty, the SA men were divided into three groups of 10 men. Nearly all the SA men came from Wuppertal and were “Old Fighters” of the Nazi movement. The majority of the guard personnel were between 22 and 28 years old and were recruited overwhelmingly from the ranks of workers, skilled laborers, and craftsmen.

The prisoners came from a similar social background as their guards. This can be explained by the fact that in the early days of Nazi rule it was primarily the members of the workers’ parties who were persecuted. Many prisoners also came from Wuppertal and were likewise involved in street fights in preceding years with the SA men who were now guarding them. However, some prisoners were brought to Kemna from other cities and regions of the Lower Rhineland.

The most prominent prisoners included the former deputy of the Prussian prime minister and welfare minister, Heinrich Hirtsiefer, member of the German Center Party (Deutsche Zentrumspartei); later Rhineland-Palatinate Minister of Labor Wilhelm Bökenkrüger; the editors Oskar Hoffmann and Emil Quitzau, both members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD); German Communist Party (KPD) member and Member of the Reichstag (MdR), Willy Spicher; and several Wuppertal police officers who had monitored the Nazi movement before the “seizure of power.”

From the beginning, living conditions in the camp were very poor. Food consisted of thin soup and a few slices of bread. SA men often stole the meat or fish that was actually provided for the prisoners. The hygienic conditions were miserable: most of the prisoners had to sleep on the bare cement floor in the living quarters. Only a little straw was distributed for some insulation. Just shortly before the camp was closed, beds were installed and paillouses were distributed. Buckets in the dormitories were used as latrines. The buckets were small, and they overflowed regularly.

The camp commander and the guards believed that sufficient medical care for the prisoners was not necessary. Practicing physicians, two of whom were SA members, performed rounds of the wards, but the daily medical “care” was under the supervision of an incompetent and brutal SA man. Therefore, as was common in later SS concentration camps, some prisoners took care of other inmates who had fallen ill.

Work in the Kemna concentration camp was torturous. Only a few prisoners were employed “usefully,” working in the camp office, in the kitchen, or as skilled laborers, when things had to be repaired. The majority of the prisoners had to exercise in the factory yard, in any kind of weather, or they had to collect stones from the nearby Wupper River and dump them at another place in the river.

As many prisoners reported after the war, they were tortured at every opportunity. Upon their arrival at the camp, they were beaten with cudgels and straps. The torture continued in the receiving room during registration. Eventually, all new prisoners were kicked and struck as they were driven into the dormitories or the bunker. At night, the prisoners were taken away for “interrogation.” There, the SA men and sometimes even camp Commandant Hilgers beat the defenseless prisoners. The prisoners then had to undress and lie down on
a table in the SA common room. They were then thrashed until they lost consciousness. After being revived with cold water, they were forced to count the lashes or to sing songs. It is understandable, then, why the guards called their torture chambers “singing cells” (*Singstube*).

Torture was not carried out by the guard detail alone. Every once in a while, the police came to the camp to question the inmates regarding hidden weapons or in an effort to extract the names of KPD members. If the interrogated persons did not provide the information, both the policemen and the SA would beat the prisoners.

During a weapons search action at a sewage plant on August 26, 1933, prisoners were forced to search for weapons in the sludge. A group of onlookers gathered around the prisoners and the guards to watch them working. To drive away the onlookers, the SA fired into the crowd and killed a child. The crime remained unpunished, legal proceedings were discontinued, and the father of the child was paid compensation. No prisoners were killed in Kemna. At least two prisoners, however, died after their release from maltreatment and injuries they had suffered in the camp.

As the killing of the child illustrates, the Kemna concentration camp was relatively well known in Wuppertal. Newspapers also reported about the camp. After a visit of Prussian Crown Prince August Wilhelm to the concentration camp, an article describing the “idyllic camp” appeared in the local coordinated press on September 18, 1933.

When the camp was closed on January 19, 1934, most of the prisoners had already been released. Around 200 prisoners who had been classified as particularly dangerous, however, were taken to the Börgermoor concentration camp, one of the so-called Emsland moor camps.

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The Kemna concentration camp was representative of the early camps; in these camps, the characteristics of the later concentration camp system could already be recognized. Admittedly, no one was systematically murdered in Kemna. Nevertheless, the camp was rightly referred to as—as the prisoners had named it—the “Hell of Kemna.”

**SOURCES**

Hardly anything has been published on the Kemna camp. Besides some local historical studies, there is a memoir by Karl Ibach, *Kemna: Wuppertaler Lager der SA; 1933 (Wuppertal: VVN, 1948).* In 1984, the AS-W published a small volume of source material: *KZ Kemna 1933–1934. Eine Quellendokumentation* (Wuppertal: Stadtarchiv, 1984). Most of the source material is located in the NWHStA-(D) and mostly consists of investigation and trial records.

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**ZSCHORLAU**

On April 21, 1933, the SS, SA, and Aue police established an early concentration camp in Zschorlau, Saxony. The authorities occupied the grounds of an abandoned factory, Firma August Wellner & Söhne, without paying rent. Although Zschorlau had a capacity for holding approximately 500 detainees, the total population did not exceed 207. Eighty percent of the prisoners were Communists. One prisoner was Jewish. The commandant, SS-Scharführer Robert Philipp Weissmann, was a fanatical National Socialist. The camp administration used Communist Party funds for the procurement of prisoners’ eating utensils, clothing, and other supplies. Confined to an industrial waste pit, the prisoners were chained by the legs to prevent escape. Zschorlau’s harsh conditions and rough interrogations caused the deaths of Otto Hempel, Paul Höhl, Albert Höhnel, Erich Pilz, and Alfred Schädlich. The camp was disbanded on July 12, 1933, and its prisoners removed to larger early concentration camps at Sachsenburg and Zwickau.

The trial of Weissmann reveals the career pattern of an early camp commandant. Joining the Nazi Party (membership number 147328) and SA on August 1, 1929, and the SS on December 22, 1930, Weissmann expressed early hostility toward Jews and Communists. In the late 1920s he quit a job as store assistant at Firma Nickel und Co., on grounds of its
allegedly “Jewish” character.1 Weissmann participated in anti-Communist street brawls in the early 1930s. After Zschorlau’s dissolution, he joined the Security Police in 1935. For the mass murder of Jews in the Nowy Targ district in Zakopane, Poland, in 1942 and 1943, the Freiburg state court sentenced him in 1965 to seven years’ imprisonment. He was not held accountable, however, for crimes perpetrated at Zschorlau.

**SOURCES** This entry follows the standard work on the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobsch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999); the memorial for the Zschorlau early camp is recorded in Stefanie Endlich, Nora Goldenbogen, Beatrix Herlemann, Monika Kahl, and Regina Scheer, *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Eine Dokumentation*, vol. 2, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen-Anhalt, Sachsen, Thüringen (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999).


**NOTE**  

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**ZWICKAU**

On approximately March 10, 1933, the SA and SS in Zwickau established a “protective custody” camp inside Osterstein Castle, located at Katherinenhof 12. Used as a penitentiary from 1775 to 1962, Osterstein was the second early concentration camp in Saxony, following the establishment of Plaue bei Flöha. On April 12, 1933, the camp held 108 detainees. By August 1, 1933, the population had increased to 275. Overall, some 750 prisoners were held at Zwickau, primarily leftists, Christians, and Jews. Among them was a Social Democratic deputy to the Saxon Diet, Eugen Fritsch.

Zwickau imposed a severe regimen. The diet consisted of thin soups with little nutritional value. For at least one month, the detainees slept in dank cells without light or warmth. Their beds were retractable cots suspended from the walls. As a form of degradation, they had to march in an enclosure in view of the local population.

The SA designated a room in the castle expressly for interrogation and torture. Passersby reported hearing the victims’ agonies from adjacent streets, but the details are not available. Among the victims was Communist official Martin Hoop, who had been held at Zwickau for less than one week. Hoop was shot to death on the night of May 12, 1933. As per convention, the SA blamed his death on an escape attempt.1 Still other prisoners committed suicide following maltreatment.

The Osterstein protective custody camp was dissolved on February 1, 1934, and its detainees were removed to the early concentration camp at Sachsenburg.

On April 17, 1948, during the Soviet occupation, the Zwickau State Court convicted four Osterstein guards for their activities in 1933. The published record does not specify the charges, their unit, or following German practice, their last names. Convicted were Kurt B., who received life imprisonment; Wilhelm Sp., confined to penitentiary for 15 years; Willi R., sentenced to 6 years in penitentiary; and Kurt K., who was also sentenced to 6 years in penitentiary.


Primary documentation for Zwickau-Osterstein, as cited by Drobsch and Wieland and Schmeitzner, begins with File No. 4842 in SHStA-(D), Ministerium für Auswärtigen Angelegenheiten. Also available in the same archive is file KH Zwickau, No. 3045/1, concerning the death of Martin Hoop. As cited by Drobsch and Wieland, there

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**ZWEIBRÜCKEN**

The penal institution at Zweibrücken, in Bavaria, served from March to June 1933 as a “protective custody” camp under unknown authority. The detainee population fluctuated considerably during these months: there were over 400 prisoners in April, 91 in late May, and approximately 300 by June 30.

**SOURCES** This entry follows the standard work on the early Nazi concentration camps, Klaus Drobsch and Günther Wieland, *System der NS-Konzentrationslager 1933–1939* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993). An ITS listing for Zweibrücken can be found in *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem*, ed. Martin Weinmann, Anne Kaiser, and Ursula Krause-Schmitt (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1990), 1:174.

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