The Hinzert concentration camp in winter, nd.
USHMM, WS #70097, COURTESY OF CNR
**HINZERT MAIN CAMP**

The Hinzert camp was established in 1938 by the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front, DAF) as a camp for Organisation Todt (OT) workers constructing the Westwall: the guards were supplied by the DAF. In the summer of 1939, the camp burned down, except for two barracks. Rebuilt, it was opened in October 1939 as a work education camp (Arbeitserziehungslager) and police detention camp (Polizeiaufnahmelager) as well as an SS special camp (Sonderlager). Hinzert was one of at least 8 (some sources say 20) Western camps (Westlager) structured the same way and was also the seat of the central command for all Polizeiaufnahmelager on the Westwall. Hinzert and its attached Westlager reported to the Inspector of the Security Police and SD, who also was the leader of the Security Staff (Sicherungsstab) at the OT.

The Sicherungsstäbe were allocated by the Chef der Sicherheitspolizei (Sipo) to each OT building directorate. The purpose of this was to prosecute workers building the West Wall and the Reich autobahn for breaching discipline, such as failing to turn up for work, stealing from “comrades,” fighting, acts of violence against superiors (Tatlichkeiten gegen Vorgesezten), speaking out against National Socialism, and breaches against the “principles of a sound conduct of war” (Grundlagen einer gesunden Kriegsführung). Workers were usually sentenced to about eight weeks of arrest at the police detention camp, but in certain cases (severe crimes or repeat offenders), they were transferred to the SS special camp for a much longer period of time. This way, Hinzert was two camps in one, and its inmates remained police prisoners who could be dragged into a camp by simple administrative decisions.

Hinzert continued its existence as a police prison even though Heinrich Himmler in December 1939–January 1940 had ordered that all camps established after the beginning of the war either be dissolved or be taken over as concentration camps. The only change was that with the movement of the Sipo and its attached Westlager to the Inspector of the Security Police and SD, who also was the leader of the Security Staff (Sicherungsstab) at the OT.

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In the camp's initial phase, the guards were ordinary members of the Allgemeine-SS and OT, and former soldiers of the Reich Veterans League (Reichskriegerbund). From 1940, the headquarters of the camp was moved to Hinzert, but the camp began to resemble more and more a concentration camp.

On February 7, 1942, Himmler withdrew from the Stapostelle Trier the commercial administration of the camp and placed the camp under the control of the newly founded SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA). The Hinzert property continued to remain in the ownership of the farmers who leased it. Fiscally, it was under the control of the Stapostelle Trier. Administratively, Hinzert remained a unique case. The command structure, file systems, organization, command staff, and guards at Hinzert corresponded to all the SS-WVHA concentration camps; but instead of the Political Department II, which in the other concentration camps was responsible for prisoner interrogation, Hinzert had an autonomous Gestapo interrogation squad installed in the camp.

The Hinzert camp was located in the Hunsrück Mountains, about 30 kilometers (19 miles) to the southeast of Trier, 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) to the west of the village of Hinzert, in the Moselgau. It was located outside the village, but two public roads ran along the camp boundary. The camp was divided into two sections: The prisoners' camp(s) had an area of about 29,000 square meters (35,000 square yards). Grouped around the roll-call square were five wooden accommodation barracks, as well as an administration barracks (clothing store, dry storeroom, mortuary, baths, and quarantine room), a kitchen barrack (kitchen, stores, and mess room), the laundry, the bunker, and several storage and supply barracks. The prisoners' barracks were divided into two rooms, each of which could hold 50 inmates. The prisoners slept in double bunk beds equipped with straw sacks: between the two dormitories there were flush toilets and washbasins. There was an infirmary in the camp with about 20 beds, where three French inmate physicians worked: Dr. Chauvenet, Dr. Chabaud, and Dr. Jagello, all of them Night- and- Fog (Nachtdaum- Nebel, NN) prisoners. The prisoners' camp was surrounded by high mesh and barbed wire. In the corners were four guards’ towers equipped with strong searchlights.

The SS part of the camp consisted of two or three accommodation barracks for the more than 200 SS-Führer und guards, an administration barracks (offices, interrogation rooms), a barracks for the kitchen and canteen, and a garage with a multipurpose workshop. In addition, there were kennels and arrest cells for guards who infringed on regulations. Depending on its function and organizational structure, the Hinzert camp recruited the guards from a variety of sources. In the camp's initial phase, the guards were ordinary members of the Allgemeine-SS and OT, and former soldiers of the Reich Veterans League (Reichskriegerbund). From 1940, the guards were recruited from surrounding district defense commands (Wehrkreiskommandos). An indication of Hinzert's special position is gleaned from the fact that even
though the camp was officially designated as an Arbeitserziehungs­lager, the responsible camp leaders, administrative personnel, and guards in Hinzert were not provided by the police, as was usual for AELs. No later than the summer of 1940, when the camp came under the control of the IKL, began a regular exchange of Hinzert’s guards with the Waffen-SS Death’s Heads Formations (Totenkopfverbänden) from other concentration camps and Waffen-SS units that had been at the front. As some of the SS members who had been called up to active service were often transferred to the SS special camps as guards, there was a high turnover rate in the guards.

For many prisoners, Hinzert was the worst camp that they experienced. Details of the living and work conditions can be obtained from the indictment against the camp commandant, Paul Sporrenberg, in 1960–1961. About 10 percent of the inmates worked in the internal prisoner detachments inside the camp itself. The others worked in many outside detachments that were deployed in the immediate vicinity of the camp, mostly doing fortification and repair work but also working in forests as well as in firms at Hinzert, Hermeskeil, and other nearby areas. Hinzert had more than 20 subcamps. In 1942–1943, larger groups of Hinzert inmates were transferred to other camps. Beginning in the summer of 1944, the prisoners were deployed in various outside detachments in the vicinity of Hinzert, especially at airfields along the Rhine.

Hinzert was originally built for 560 prisoners; at least in the initial months of the war the camp operated at below full capacity. In 1943–1944, there were up to 1,500 prisoners in the camp; usually the numbers were between 800 and 1,200. Estimates vary strongly on the total number of prisoners who passed through the camp, varying between 9,500 and 20,000 in Hinzert and its subcamps. There were not only German inmates but inmates from just about every European country—Soviets, Poles, Belgians, Dutch, Croats, Italians, Spaniards, Czechs, French, Yugoslavs, Hungarians, and Jews of various nationalities.

According to official camp records and records of the Hermeskeil Bureau of Vital Statistics, in whose area the camp was situated, nearly 300 prisoners died in Hinzert: 18 Belgians, 53 French, 2 Dutch, 1 Croat, 64 Luxembourgers (some sources speak of 79 or 82), 41 Poles, 1 Italian, 78 Soviet Russians, 10 Germans, and 29 prisoners of other nationalities. This obviously low death count may have been caused by the fact that
Hinzert was not only a small camp—it was also a transit camp where many inmates did not remain for very long. Official and internal dissimulation occurred, and so it is likely that a higher death toll is more realistic. A letter from the French occupation authority dated February 4, 1946, refers to around 1,000 corpses exhumed in the area around the Hinzert main camp. Not included in the number of dead in the Hinzert camp are those prisoners that were only brought to Hinzert to be executed in the camp or its immediate vicinity. Three mass executions took place: 70 Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) were killed in September 1941, 20 Luxembourgers in September 1942, and 23 Luxembourgers in February 1944. There are no records of any successful escape attempts from Hinzert. Recaptured prisoners were taken back to the camp and, as a rule, executed.

In Hinzert, there were a number of prisoner categories: The so-called work shy or Arbeitserziehungshäftlinge (AE) and assials (Assiallo) were initially Germans admitted as police prisoners and protective custody prisoners while constructing the Westwall or the autobahn. Later, this category also included foreigners such as Luxembourgers and others but also political prisoners, who were admitted as AE prisoners. No one knows how many prisoners of this category Hinzert held. Another category were Luxembourg prisoners, above all political prisoners arrested for political/security reasons by the Sicherheitspolitische Einsatzkommando Luxembourg. At least 1,599 (some sources say at least 1,800) Luxembourgers were sent to Hinzert from the middle of 1941. In 1941 and 1945, Luxembourg prisoners represented between 10 and 15 percent of the camp inmates. Initially, they were not put to work but were held at the disposal of the State Police Interrogation Commission (Vernehmungskommission). From July 1942, they were used as labor. Then there were NN prisoners who were sent to the camp from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands from May 29, 1942 on. At least 40 NN transports arrived from France, and probably more than 2,000 French NN inmates were held at Hinzert. There were very few Jews at the Hinzert camp, including a small group from Luxembourg but also some Jews of other nationalities. Several were murdered in the camp, and others were transferred to other camps. A special category consisted of so-called E-Polen (“Eindeutschungs-Polen,” Poles to be Germanized): they were Polish civilian laborers and POWs who had had illegal sexual relations with German women. Usually they were meant to undergo so-called special treatment (Sonderbehandlung, execution) for committing this “crime,” but some of them, following a decree by Himmler in 1941, were selected to be examined to determine whether they could be Germanized. In that case, they would have to “have Nordic characteristics . . . a good appearance and . . . a very favorable character.”

In 1943, Himmler ordered that the prisoners in question be transferred for six months to Hinzert, “to a department in the special camp especially established for those who were capable of being Germanized.” They remained for a period of six months there while undergoing a “racial/psychological investigation.” During this period, their relatives (Herdstellenaengehörrigen) also were checked by the SS-Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA) in Poland. In case of a positive result, they were placed on the German national list (Völkleiste) III and would have to marry the German woman with whom they had had a relationship. E-Polen had their own rooms and mostly worked in Polish-only labor detachments, but in 1944 the so-called re-Germanization program (Wiedereindeutschungs-Programm, WED) was wound down due to the war. There is no information available regarding the number of E-Polen that Hinzert actually held. Another category of inmate specific to the Hinzert camp only were Foreign Legionnaires: Up to 1,000 former Foreign Legionnaires of German origin were deported from France via the camps in Fréjus and Chalon-sur-Saône to Hinzert in the first half of 1941 and 1942 to receive a “strict” reeducation including punishment by severe labor or—in case they were qualified for military service—to be recruited for the Afrika Korps. Since the Foreign Legionnaires fell into different categories, it is almost impossible to come to clear conclusions regarding their working and living conditions. For what was presumably only a limited time, there were youths in the “youth detachment” (Jugendabteilung), which was set up in April 1941 at the instigation of the Stapostelle Saarbrücken. However, it was replaced that year by the Etzenhofen-Köllerbach Arbeitserziehungslager (work education camp, AEL), which existed until 1944. From 1942 on, Hinzert also held foreign laborers from Poland, the Soviet Union, and other East European countries who had been accused of loaﬁng or refusing to work. At the end of 1943, Hinzert became a transit camp for French foreign workers who had illegally returned to France and were now being sent back into the German Reich as well as for hostages (Repressaliengeseln). It is also thought that there were political prisoners from Poland in Hinzert, including POWs and students, but little is known about them.

Hinzert was under the command of a number of commandants: The ﬁrst one was SS-Sturmbannführer Hermann Pister, from October 9, 1939, to December 21, 1941. During his era, 70 Soviet POWs were murdered by the SS camp doctor (Lagerarzt) Dr. Wolter using Zyanakali (prussic acid) in September 1941. Pister was transferred to the Buchenwald concentration camp at the end of 1941. When Hinzert came under the control of Buchenwald in January 1945, he once again became commandant of Hinzert. He was sentenced to death after the war for crimes committed in Buchenwald and died in Landsberg on September 28, 1948. The second commandant was SS-Sturmbannführer Egon Zill, from December 21, 1941, to May 1, 1942. After serving in Hinzert, Zill became commandant of the Natzweiler-Struthof camp. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1955, but later his sentence was reduced to 15 years. He died, a free man, in 1974. The third commandant was Paul Sporrenberg, from May 1, 1942, to January 1945. Sporrenberg initially had been the leader of the Vicht police and protective custody camp near Aachen, which was a subcamp of Hinzert. In the middle of 1941, he returned to Hinzert and became one of the three
protective custody leaders (Schutzhäftlagerführer), later becoming commandant of the most important Hinzert subcamp, Wittlich. At the beginning of 1942, he was once again a Schutzhäftlagerführer in Hinzert, and from April 1942, Hinzert deputy commandant. From July 25, 1942, he had full command in Hinzert. He was promoted in November 1943 to SS-Hauptsturmführer. During his command, 43 Luxembourg resistance fighters were murdered in September 1943 and February 1944. Sporrenberg was in command of up to 300 SS men. He was responsible for introducing a regime of merciless arbitrary acts and was known to set upon the prisoners with a German shepherd. He was transferred to Buchenwald in January 1945 and took over the command of the Dorndorf subcamp near Eisenach. He was only charged as an “accessory to murder” in March 1960 but died in December 1961 before his trial commenced. The last Hinzert commandant, from January 1945 to March 3, 1945, was an SS-Obersturmführer and criminal investigator from Trier whose name is unknown.

On November 21, 1944, Hinzert formally came under the jurisdiction of the Buchenwald concentration camp. There were still small groups of prisoners sent to Hinzert and its subcamps in the middle of February 1945. The Hinzert camp was dissolved on March 2 and 3, 1945, when U.S. troops reached Trier. Accompanied by a few SS men, the inmates, probably between 120 and 130, were driven on an evacuation march toward Buchenwald. Divided into small groups, they were liberated by the U.S. Army over the course of the following days. Only a few inmates had remained in the camp. As soon as the SS guards escaped from the approaching Allied troops, the prisoners went into hiding in the forests surrounding the camp and only came out of hiding after the arrival of the U.S. troops.

Between 1948 and 1960–1961, the following trials dealt with crimes committed at Hinzert:

- US Military Court, Dachau, 1946: Dr. Waldemar Wolter is sentenced to death for his crimes committed as a physician at the Hinzert and Mauthausen camps; he is hanged in 1947 in Landsberg/Lech.
- U.S. Military Court, Dachau, August 14, 1947: In the so-called Buchenwald Trial, Hermann Pister was sentenced to death by hanging. He died before he could be executed.
- The Swiss Schwurgericht Zürich, June 20 to July 6, 1948: Camp Kapo Eugen Wipf was sentenced to life in prison for “repeated murder, accessory to murder, grievous bodily harm.” He died in prison on August 31, 1948.
- Military Court of the French Occupying Authority in Germany, Rastatt/Baden, June 18 to July 12 (15 members of the guard), September 1 to October 28, 1948 (including appeals to February 1949) against a former camp doctor and 21 members of the former camp SS: Sentenced to death were SS-Oberscharführer Anton Pammer (responsible for the vegetable gardens, block leader) and SS-Oberscharführer Julius Reiss; lifelong hard labor for the SS-Schutzhäftlagerführer Untersturmführer Alfred Heinrich; lifelong forced labor for SS-Hauptscharführer Johann Schattner (stores administrator) and SS-Oberscharführer Theodor Fritz (in charge of the prisoners’ card index and responsible for labor detachments); 20 years’ hard labor for SS-Oberscharführer Ludwig Windisch; 3 years’ hard labor for auxiliary policeman Julius Günther.
- Landgericht Mannheim, April 14, 1950, against two SS-Unterführer: SS-Oberscharführer Georg Schaaf (bricklayer and block leader, called Ivan the Terrible [Iwan der Schreckliche] and SS-Oberscharführer Josef Brendel (Sanitätsdienstgrad [medical orderly, SDG]) for aggravated prisoner mistreatment: Brendel received 2 years 6 months’ prison, and Schaaf, 10 years’ prison. Schaaf later committed suicide in prison.
- Schwurgericht München, February 27, 1951: Egon Zill was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. On appeal, the sentence was reduced to 15 years’ hard labor. He died in 1974.
- Schwurgericht Trier, 1961, three trials against four former members of the camp SS in Hinzert: SS-Oberscharführer Hans Krischer, head of the infirmary, sentenced to four years and nine months’ imprisonment; SS-Oberscharführer Willy Kleinhehn sentenced to two years’ hard labor; SS-Sanitäter Josef Brendel and dentist Werner Fenchel (accessories to the homicide of 70 POWs), acquitted.
- Staatsanwaltschaft Trier, 1960–1961: Investigation and charges laid against Paul Sporrenberg for 10 counts of murder, 23 counts of being an accessory to murder, and in at least 6 cases, grievous bodily harm causing death. A trial did not take place as Sporrenberg died in 1961.

Unpublished sources on the Hinzert camp are to be found in the following archives:

- BA-K (NS 4, Konzentrationslager; NS 4 Hi, SS-Sonderlager Hinzert; NS 19, Persönlicher Stab RFSS; R 58, RSHA; NWHStA-(D) (Akten der Stapostellen Köln, Aachen, Düsseldorf); BA-Bl (former BDC); ACNR, Luxembourg Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation, Besançon AOC (collection Rhenan-Palatinat, cercle de Trèves, mise sous séquestre, Hinzert, caisse 1096 and others); LHRP-Ko (Verfahrensakten gegen Hinzerter Täter vor dem Landgericht Trier; Dokumentegruppen im Zusammenhang mit den Verfahren des IMT, Nürnberg); BA-L. Files from the trials against the commandants and the Hinzert camp guards are to be found in the archives of the authorities having jurisdiction in the Swiss Department of Justice, AOC, GLA-K, and ANL, as well as in the LHRP-Ko. For a comprehensive overview on the archival sources on the Hinzert camp, see Engel and Höhengarten, Hinzert: Das SS-Sonderlager im Hunsrück, 1939–1945, following p. 613. Roland Ostyn has published the prisoners' statements made to the Staatanwaltschaft Trier on Hinzert in Hinzert: 4 Hefte (Brussels, 1977). Former Luxembourg prisoner Metty Barbel published his experiences in Hinzert in its subcamps and police camps in her work Die nationalsozialistischen Lager und Einsatzlager der Gestapo: Arbeitsziehungslager im Dritten Reich (Stuttgart, 2000). The appendix provides a comprehensive list of unpublished sources in German, Dutch, and British archives. In Lotti's SS-Sonderlager im NS-Terrorforum: Die Entstehung von Hinzert, Stutthof und Soldau, in Ausbeutung, Vernichtung, Öffentlichkeit: Neue Studien zur nationalsozialistischen Lagerpolitik, ed. Norbert Frei, Sibylle Steinbacher, and Bernd C. Wagner (Münich, 2000), pp. 209–229; she provides comprehensive information on the early Hinzert camp. Eugen Kogon mentions the Hinzert camp in passing in his work Der SS-Staat, 23rd ed. (Gütersloh, 1974). Gudrun Schwarz mentions the SS-Sonderlager Hinzert and its subcamps and police camps in her work Die nationalsozialistischen Lager (1990; Frankfurt am Main, 1996); unfortunately, many of the details are either incomplete or inaccurate. Another important source is Peter Buchers, "Das SS-Sonderlager Hinzert bei Trier," JWDLG (1978). Eberhard Klopp analyzes the Hinzert camp with a focus on the posterior history of the camp in Hinzert—kein richtiges KZ? Ein Beispiel unter 20.000 (Trier, 1983). Linus Reichlin deals with the fate of Lagerkapo Eugen Wipf in his book Kriegsverbrecher Wipf, Eugen: Schweizer in der Waffen-SS, in deutschen Fabriken und an Schreibtischen des Dritten Reiches (Zürich, 1994). Hinzert and its subcamps are mentioned in the "Verzeichnis der Konzentrationslager und ihrer Aussenkommandos gemäss § 42 Abs. 2 BEG," BGBl. (1977), Teil 1, pp. 1768–1852. Further details on Hinzert can be found in the following: Dieter Burgard, "Förderverein: Dokumentations-und Begegnungsstätte Hinzert e.V.," Sachar 7 (1994); Hans-Günther Homfeldt and Helmut Pfeifer, "Gedenkstättenarbeit zum früheren SS-Sonderlager/KZ Hinzert," Sachar 7 (1994); Hiltrud Kometz, Das ehemalige KZ Hinzert (Luxembourg, n.d.); Matthias Alexander Gerstlauer, "Das ehemalige SS-Sonderlager Hinzert im Organisations- und Machtgefüge der SS" (Master's thesis, FB III Universität Trier, 1996); Edgar Christoffel, "Ein KZ-Lager im Trierer Land: Das SS-Sonderlager Hinzert (Hunsrück)," in Christoffel, Verfolgung und Widerstand im Trierer Land während des Nationalsozialismus (Trier, 1983), pp. 219–249; and Volker Schneider and Helmut Peifer, The Former SS-Special Camp/Concentration Camp at Hinzert, 1939–1945, trans. Susan Hubert (Mainz, 1997).
**BAD NAUHEIM (OT-POLIZEIHAFTLAGER)**

Bad Nauheim was one of at least eight Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camps (Polizeihaftlager) that were administered by the Hinzert main camp. The camp was probably set up at the end of 1939 or the beginning of 1940. The number of prisoners in the camp, as with other West Camps (Westlager) probably ranged between 300 and 400. These OT-Polizeihaftlager held prisoners from the Westwall and the Reichsautobahn (RAB). The security offices, which were allocated to each OT building administrative unit by the Chief of the Security Police, had sentenced the workers to police custody for breaches of discipline due to failures to work, theft from comrades, fighting, assaults on foremen, disparaging statements about National Socialism, and breaches of the “basic principles of a healthy war attitude.”

The prisoners were not convicted by a court but simply put in police custody. Upon their release, they were considered as having no record of a conviction, and therefore were not regarded as “protective custody” prisoners, as the police arrest camps were not recognized as state concentration camps. The inmates remained as prisoners of the police who had been deployed to an SS special camp by a simple administrative measure.

According to historian Gabriele Lotfi, “Unlike the concentration camps where terror reigned, the police custody camps, at least initially, felt bound to follow the traditional authoritarian-military approaches used in ‘improvement institutions,’ insofar as they wanted to educate the inmates by means of discipline and training in order to release them later back into society as useful elements.” As a rule, the prisoners were held in camps such as Bad Nauheim for only a few days or weeks but not more than three months; those held for more than three months served their time at the Hinzert main camp.

Regional authorities, district governments, building administrations, and local communities all asked for prisoners from camps such as Bad Nauheim. They wanted to use the prisoners for a variety of projects, and the prisoners were highly valued because working under police guard they arrived punctually at work and worked extremely diligently. The camp was dissolved in 1940 following the occupation of France, which meant that the tasks set for OT were no longer necessary.


Evelyn Zegenhagen

**NOTES**


2. Ibid., p. 213.

**COCHEM [AKA BRUTTIG UND TREIS]**

Cochem is located at the Mosel river in the former Prussian Rhine Province. It was the closest railway station to Bruttig and Treis, two villages where concentration camp inmates were kept. Bruttig and Treis were located at the opposite ends of a railway tunnel that had been built before the war but had never been put to use. In March 1944, in the context of the Jägerstab (Fighter Staff) program that dealt with securing and increasing the production of fighter planes, for instance, by relocating the production underground, plans were developed to also use the railway tunnel between Bruttig and Treis for that purpose. Therefore, a Natzweiler subcamp was erected that bore the official name of Cochem and whose inmates were accommodated in Bruttig and Treis. The camp held about 600 to 800 inmates from all over Europe who began to prepare the tunnel for the commencement of production. But already in August or September 1944, after the camps in Bruttig and Treis had been bombed by Allied planes, the camp was dissolved. Afterward, inmates of the Hinzert concentration camp were taken to Bruttig and Treis, probably to continue the construction work. But continued Allied bombing made the work impossible, and this Hinzert subcamp was finally dissolved, too.

**SOURCES** Due to its short existence, there is only little information on this Hinzert subcamp. Ernst Heimes has provided a comprehensive description in his research into the camps at Bruttig and Treis in his book *Ich habe immer nur den Zaun gesehen: Suche nach dem KZ-Aussenlager Cochem* (Frankfurt, 1998) as a Hinzert and Natzweiler subcamp.

Archival documents relating to the Cochem subcamps
(Bruttig and Treis) are to be found mostly in the collections at ACCS. In addition, there are two newspaper articles that are devoted to the proceedings against senior officers of the Natzweiler subcamp before the Tribunal Général 1947 in Rastatt: “Die Verbrechen von Treis und Bruttig,” Tr-Vö, August 5, 1947; and “KZ-Lager Treis und Bruttig vor Gericht,” Tr-Vö, July 22, 1947.

Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Pallavicini

FRANKENTHAL-MÖRSCH
(OT-POLIZEIHAFTLAGER)

Frankenthal-Mörsch in Bavaria was one of at least eight Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camps (Polizeihaftlager), which were under the supervision of the Hinzert main camp. It was first mentioned in the Hinzert camp files on July 25, 1940.

Workers from the Westwall and Reichsautobahn (RAB) were put into the OT-Polizeihaftlager once found guilty for having breached discipline requirements—lack of work compliance, theft from “comrades,” involvement in fights, assault on foremen, remarks against National Socialism, breach of “principles of a healthy war leadership.” “The common aim in establishing such camps was to re-educate the mostly young conscripted OT workers into a National Socialist way of life. This was to be done through supervised hard labor supplemented by a strict military drill and ideological training all in accordance with the same educational program as used by the Reich Labor Service [Reichsarbeitsdienst] and Hitler Youth.”

As “police prisoners” the inmates were to be “re-educated” and molded into “full” members of the National Socialist community by means of hard work, physical mistreatment, brutal punishment, beatings, and arrest. As the inmates had not been convicted by a court and were only in police custody upon release, they had no criminal record.

Prisoners with prison sentences of less than three months (often only for two weeks) were sent to the Polizeihaftlager Frankenthal-Mörsch—those with longer prison sentences were sent straight to the Hinzert main camp. The prisoners performed heavy labor on the Reichsautobahn. Frankenthal-Mörsch was mentioned for the last time in the Hinzert files on November 11, 1940. Presumably the camp was dissolved around this time or shortly thereafter in connection with the occupation of France and the subsequent new work assignments for the OT.


Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES
2. Ibid., p. 214.

GELNHAUSEN [aka ROTHENBERGEN BEI GELNHAUSEN]

It is not clear whether Gelnhausen was a Hinzert subcamp or a work detachment. In any case, Gelnhausen was one of a group of subcamps or work detachments that was established from the summer of 1944 onward along the Rhine Line or at nearby airfields. Gelnhausen is located in the Prussian province of Hessen-Nassau, at the foot of the Spessart. The camp was located in the vicinity of Rothenbergen near Gelnhausen.

According to the International Tracing Service (ITS), the camp’s or the detachment’s existence as of September 1944 was mentioned for the first time in a statement made by a former prisoner.

From June to August 1945, prisoners were taken to Gelnhausen for the first time. Their number was about 20. In September, apparently a new, second camp was erected to replace the first one. This camp is referred to in ITS, based on a statement made by a former prisoner. The approximately 80 male prisoners constructed mine shafts for a bomb-secure subcommand post located at an airfield that was used for training purposes by glider pilots and Luftwaffe school squadrons of the Gau of Wiesbaden.

The prisoners were kept in corrugated iron barracks surrounded by barbed wire. The camp leader was a “grumpy 80-year-old SS man” who had a Doberman. According to prisoners’ statements, the ITS stated that the camp existed until the end of March 1945. More recent research indicates that the prisoners in the Gelnhausen subcamp were sent to Mannheim-Sandhofen (a Natzweiler subcamp) as early as the autumn of 1944.

SOURCES The Gelnhausen subcamp is mentioned in the ITS, Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945), 2 vols. (Arolsen, 1979), 2:710. Marcel Engel and

**HOMBURG-NORD**

The Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camp (Polizeihaftlager) in Homburg-Nord in the Saarland was first mentioned in the files of the Hinzert main camp on December 13, 1939. It was one of at least 8 (some sources say 20) so-called West Camps (Westlager) in which workers on the Siegfried Line and the Reichsautobahn were held for breaches of discipline, such as work absenteeism, thefts from “comrades,” fights, assaults on superiors, or statements made against National Socialism. The security staff officers who were assigned by the Chief of the Security Police to each OT construction administration carried out the prisoners’ arrest. They were held in prison for only a few days to about two weeks to a maximum of three months. Prisoners held for longer periods were held in the Hinzert main camp.

The prisoners in Homburg-Nord worked for the OT senior construction administration at Homburg and Pirmasens and for the Saarbrücken district of the OT senior construction administration at St. Wendel-Saarbrücken. Working conditions were aggravated as the “common aim in establishing such camps was to re-educate the mostly young, conscripted OT workers into a National Socialist way of life. This was to be done through supervised hard labor, supplemented by a strict military drill and ideological training. The same education program was used by the Reich Labor Service [Reichsarbeitsdienst] and Hitler Youth.” Local and regional private businesses, communities, and authorities also profited from the reliable and punctual labor service provided by the prisoners, who were under constant guard. As a rule, the Westlager held between 40 and 300 prisoners.

The camp is mentioned for the last time in the camp files for September 18, 1940. At this time, the OT police custody camps were dissolved, as the invasion of France resulted in new assignments for the OT.

**NOTE**


**HERMESKEIL**

Hermeskeil was only a few kilometers away from the Hinzert main camp. It can therefore be assumed that the Hinzert prisoners were used primarily for external work detachments.

According to the Hinzert files, which are cited by the International Tracing Service (ITS), prisoners were used for the first time in Hermeskeil on March 23, 1940. They were deployed in a number of detachments from no later than March 23, 1940, until at least April 15, 1944, to the firm Paul Dietrich, Laubach; to the Bahnmeisterei Hermeskeil—a work detachment Flachsrosterei (flax roasting facility); to the firm Müller & Frottzeheim, when constructing the Reichsautobahn; to the timber firm J.C. Dittgen KG from Schmelz/Saar, loading timber; and to the firm Peter Blumeyer, St. Wendel, laying water pipe. In addition, a 90-man-strong Polish contingent worked at the ball-bearing factory of Ehrenreich & Co. The attempt by two prisoners to escape from this detachment during Pentecost 1940 was unsuccessful.

The last time the Hermeskeil camp is mentioned in the Hinzert files is on April 22, 1944.

**SOURCES**


Evelyn Zegenhagen

**NOTE**


**HOPPSTÄTDEN**

Emergency accommodations for the prisoners of the Neu- brücke subcamp were located in Hoppstädten. After the Neu- brücke subcamp was destroyed during a heavy bombing raid on January 22, 1945, the camp was relocated to Hoppstädten. The prisoners, however, were still working in Neu- brücke, repairing bomb damage and salvaging machines from their work location, the tank undercarriage plant of the Deutsche Eisenwerke.


**KIRRBERG (OT-POLIZEIHAFTLAGER)**

The Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camp (Polizeihaftlager) in the Bavarian town of Kirrberg near Zweibrücken was administered by the Hinzert main camp. It was first mentioned in a letter written by the commandant of the SS special and police custody camps on October 11, 1940.

Prisoners were committed to the OT police custody camps by the security staff officers, who were assigned by the Chief of the Security Police to each OT construction administration. They were committed for breaches of discipline, such as work absenteeism, thefts from “comrades,” fights, assaults on superiors, or statements made against the National Socialist regime. The prisoners in Kirrberg were held for a period of between a few days and a maximum of three months. The average time was two weeks. There were probably between 40 and 300 prisoners held at Kirrberg. “The common aim in establishing such camps was to re-educate the mostly young, conscripted OT workers into a National Socialist way of life. This was to be done through supervised hard labor, supplemented by a strict military drill and ideological training. The same education program was used by the Reich Labor Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst) and Hitler Youth.”

The dissolution of the camp probably occurred after the transfer of the OT to occupied France.


**NOTE**


**LANGENDEICH**

The Hinzert subcamp Langendiebach was located in the Prussian province of Hessen-Nassau. Based upon a witness statement, the International Tracing Service (ITS) states that the camp was first opened in 1942 and that the male prisoners worked on an airfield.
Other statements put the camp's opening on June 13, 1944. By then, the camp would have been one of the Hinzert subcamps founded in 1944 on or close to airfields along the river Rhine. This camp, which is also referred to as Langendiebach I, was under the command of camp leader (Lagerführer) SS-Oberscharführer Nikolaus Spurk until approximately July 1944. The prisoners of the Langendiebach I subcamp worked at the Hanau military airfield, which was opened in July 1939, and were accommodated in a large wooden barrack next to the maneuvering area. The barracks was once part of a Hitler Youth camp. The camp was probably dissolved on August 18, 1944, and the prisoners taken back to Hinzert.

Langendiebach II was founded in the fall of 1944 (probably on September 10 or 13, 1944). Its camp leader was SS-Scharführer Max Zimmermann, followed at an unknown date by SS-Unterscharführer Martin. This time, two separate barracks, one for French prisoners of war (POWs) of African origin and one for Greek prisoners, had also been added next to the maneuvering area. Each of the consecutive camps held approximately 100 to 120 prisoners. More than a third of them were Luxembourgers; the others mostly Dutch, Belgian, and French inmates. For some of them, as Volker Schneider suggests, Langendiebach might have been a transit camp on their way to a deployment in other Hinzert subcamps. The inmates were guarded by Luftwaffe soldiers and Organisation Todt (OT) men who apparently were less brutal than the usual SS guards.

Mainly interceptors and night fighters were stationed at the Langendiebach airfield, but due to lack of fuel and spare parts as well as to devastating Allied air raids, which occurred almost daily, the planes remained mostly on the ground. The inmates were used to maintain the airfield and the runways and to defuse unexploded bombs. There are no reports detailing if and how many inmates died as a result of their tasks or the frequent air raids.

The subcamp was evacuated on March 25, 1945. At that time, 117 prisoners were still in the camp. They were taken by three train cars toward Bad Orb, where they were liberated by the U.S. Army on March 31, 1945. According to survivor statements, several prisoners managed to escape from the evacuation march by pretending that they were a labor detachment on their way to work.

Sources The Langendiebach subcamps I and II are mentioned in ITS, Verzeichnis der Haftstätten und ihrer Außenkommandos gemäß § 42 Abs. 2 BEG, BGBl. (1977), Teil 1, pp. 1768–1852; and the reference in the ITS.


Mainz-Finthen was a Hinzert subcamp located at Mainzer Höhe, a hill between the villages of Wackernheim, Drais, and Finthen, just outside the city of Mainz, Hessen Province. In the summer of 1939, a military airfield had been opened in Finthen, and this was to become the site of a Hinzert subcamp created in the summer of 1944. Mainz-Finthen therefore belonged to a group of subcamps established at that time that were located at airfields along the Rhine Line.

After an advance detachment of Poles and Luxembourgers had arrived at Mainzer Höhe from the Amersfoort camp in the Netherlands to begin preparatory work, the main group of inmates was sent on to Mainz-Finthen on September 14, 1944. It consisted of 100 inmates, mostly Dutch and Luxembourg prisoners. They had arrived by train at the Mainz-Mombach station and had walked from there the 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) to the Hinzert airfield, accompanied by SS guards. The International Tracing Service (ITS), however, sets the date the camp was erected as November 16, 1944—this is probably the date when an additional prisoner transport from Hinzert arrived in Mainz-Finthen. After the arrival of this transport, the camp had reached its maximum capacity with about 220 inmates—among them 96 Luxembourgers, 108 Dutch, 18 Italians, 3 Belgians, and 1 Frenchman, whose names are known.

The prisoners were accommodated in a few (fewer than five) barracks at the southeastern corner of the airfield. The prisoners slept on the bare ground; they had no beds but used straw mattresses to cover themselves. There was a camp library, which they were allowed to use. The hygienic conditions were poor; there was only one water faucet for the inmates, and the prisoners were plagued by lice. The medical officer of the Luftwaffe airfield was in charge of the concentration camp inmates, too, and among other things he vaccinated them against contagious diseases.

The camp leader (Lagerführer) was Nikolaus Spurk, who had gained notoriety for being an alcoholic and beating the inmates. Until October 1944, Spurk was supported by SS-Unterscharführer Weirich. From the beginning, the Luftwaffe commander of the airfield made Spurk understand that under his authority the prisoners were not to be mistreated. In March 1945, when Spurk was ordered to accompany the evacuation march of the Hinzert inmates, he was replaced by an SS-Schütze called Müller and a few weeks later by a young
SS man named Gert Gutknecht. Both of these last two were later described in prisoner statements as harmless and friendly. The remainder of the guards were elderly Austrians and young Luftwaffe pilots still in training who could no longer fly due to the lack of aircraft. Inmates report that in general they were treated nicely by their guards and that from time to time they even received supplemental food from them. Nevertheless, food was always scarce in the camp, especially due to the situation at the end of the war. The cold winter and the harsh labor conditions would have required much larger rations of food than were available to the inmates. During the last weeks of the existence of the camp, inmates therefore repeatedly left the camp and tried to steal food from the local population. There is only one reported case of death in camp: Luxembourg inmate Jean-Pierre Jungels died on November 29, 1944, from exhaustion.

The work of the male prisoners at the airport consisted mainly of filling in bomb craters, building roads and paths, cutting timber in order to camouflage the airplanes, and building underground tunnels for the construction of a bunker. During air raids, there was no shelter for the inmates of the camp, and they had to hide themselves in a nearby forest. However, according to historian Bärbel Maul, no inmates were killed during these attacks.

The camp existed until its liberation in the spring of 1945. On March 17, the Luftwaffe units left the airfield, and the inmates were to follow on March 20. Afraid that they would be killed during the evacuation march, more than 30 inmates escaped and hid in the forest, with local farmers, and in a tunnel they had dug not far from the camp. They were liberated on March 21, 1945, when U.S. troops reached the camp. About 160 inmates, however, were taken on an evacuation march toward the south, and they were only liberated on March 29, 1945, by the U.S. Army in Berstadt near Hungen.

**Sources**


Evelyn Zegenhagen

**MAINZ-GUSTAVSBURG**

The Mainz-Gustavsburg subcamp was established quite late in the history of the Hinzert camp system, most likely on December 6, 1944. Its erection was a direct result of repeated air raids on Mainz that had already destroyed inmates’ quarters. The labor detachments therefore had to be relocated permanently, and a new camp was erected at the Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg AG (MAN), on the Mainspitze in Gustavsburg, a Mainz suburb on the eastern shore of the river Rhine. The prisoners worked for MAN until their camp was dissolved or evacuated on March 19, 1945.

**Sources**


Evelyn Zegenhagen

**MAINZ-INGELHEIMERAU [aka MAINZ-INGELHEIMER AUE]**

The Hinzert subcamp at Mainz-Ingelheimerau was erected in the early summer of 1944 at a former island in the river Rhine that had been connected with the river’s western bank by landfill in the early twentieth century. From then on, it was used as an industrial area, and a number of companies were located there. In the early 1940s, the Gestapo had established a Lager Rhein (Camp Rhine), adjacent to the company of Dr.-Ing. Eugen Pflieger, who had developed a procedure for the manufacture of prefabricated buildings from light
of the Hinzert subcamp in Mainz-Weisenau, which was to be dissolved at that time. In June 1944, the inmates from Weisenau arrived at the new subcamp. Over the next months, more inmates arrived, partly from the Mainz police prison but also from Giessen and Darmstadt. Most of the inmates were Polish and Russian forced laborers, but there were also French and Dutch citizens. The average strength of the camp was about 100 inmates; the maximum was reached late in 1944 with 292 inmates, but already in December the number began to decline.

There were not enough barracks to accommodate the inmates. In the beginning, all inmates slept in one building, on the bare floor, on wood shavings. In the course of the following months, more buildings were erected, but the camp remained mainly incomplete: There were no washrooms for the inmates, and the hygienic conditions were terrible. Brüchert reports that one inmate died as a consequence of bites to his skin from rats, lice, and bedbugs.

The inmates worked for the Pfl eiderer company, producing concrete parts. They also were employed at other locations within the city of Mainz: They helped to clean up after air raids and worked at the city’s slaughterhouse, at the gasworks, and in repairing the railway bridge at Ingelheimer Aue. Beside these tasks, inmates were also used in further constructing the camp. Their work conditions were exhausting, and there were permanent disagreements between Pfl eiderer and the camp leaders as to where to employ the prisoners. The terrible work conditions, malnutrition, insufficient accommodation and hygienic conditions as well as mistreatment by guards led to a number of deaths in the camp.

The first camp leader (Lagerführer), Klein, personally killed two inmates: one was shot during an attempt to escape, the other because he was to be taken to a hospital. SS-Oberscharführer Friedrich Köhler, who became the camp leader in July 1944, also killed a number of prisoners. There was no infirmary in the camp. An inmate without medical expertise was in charge of treating the sick, but according to Brüchert, German physician Dr. Regner, who took care of the workers in the forced laborers’ camp, repeatedly volunteered to take care of the inmates of the Hinzert subcamp and AEL, too.

In December 1944, the camp suffered severe damage during an air raid. Apparently, the prisoners were still kept at Ingelheimer Aue afterward, and the camp was only evacuated in mid-March 1945, the inmates probably taken to the AEL at Frankfurt-Heddernheim. Most likely, 31 Soviet inmates who were too weak to be taken on the evacuation march were shot near the camp on that occasion.

In 1947, SS guard Karl Lippelt and Paul Vollrath were tried by a French military tribunal for crimes committed at the Mainz-Ingelheimerau camp. Lippelt was sentenced to three and Vollrath to five years of prison. Pfl eiderer and his wife had to face denazification and were sentenced in 1948 to four years of labor camp and the loss of a part of their property. In 1950, the sentence was commuted: Pfl eiderer’s services as a supplier of concrete parts were badly needed in reconstructing Germany.

Sources

Hedwig Brüchert gives a detailed description of the Mainz-Ingelheimer Aue subcamp in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., Der Ort des Terrors, vol. 5, Hinzert, Auschütz, Neuengamme (Munich: Beck-Verlag, 2007), pp. 54–57. A further reference to the subcamp Mainz-Ingelheimerau is in Volker Schneider’s online article “Auflösung des Konzentrationslagers ‘SS-Sonderlager Hinzert’ 1944/45” (PDF, n.d.)

Archival sources on the subcamp can be found especially at Spruchkammerakte Pfl eiderer, in HHHStA-(W), Bestand 520 BW, Nr. 2838–39. For trials against guards and other people in charge in the camp, see Urteilsbegründung des Schwurgerichts bei dem Landgericht in Darmstadt, 22.8.19498, in HStA-D, Bestand H 13 Darmstadt Nr. 915 (evacuation march of the inmates); and AOC, Colmar, Dossier de jugement de Karl Lippelt, call number AJ 1640, and Dossier de jugement de Paul Vollrath, call number AJ 1654. For a trial against camp leader Köhler, see Heinrich Pingel-Rollmann, Widerstand und Verfolgung in Darmstadt und der Provinz Starkenburg 1933–1945 (Darmstadt, 1985), p. 411 n. 62. For his crimes committed at the Mainz-Ingelheimerau subcamp, Köhler was never put on trial.

Evelyn Zagenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

Mainz-Weisenau

The history of the Hinzert subcamp at Mainz-Weisenau is very complex, mainly due to the fact that there were a number of camps existing at Mainz-Weisenau whose histories were closely intertwined.

The subcamp was located on the grounds of the Portland-Zementwerke (Portland Cement Factory), where the Darmstadt Gestapo had already erected a work education camp (Arbeitserziehungslager, AEL) in 1941 or 1942. In June 1944, the inmates of this camp were relocated to the Mainz-Ingelheimerau camp. Historian Hedwig Brüchert provides two explanations as to why the Weisenau camp was dissolved: According to a statement by the head of the Darmstadt Gestapo, Fritz Gierke, the poor food supply was one reason. More relevant, however, according to Brüchert, were plans to relocate the armament production of the Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg (MAN) factory in Mainz-Gustavsberg underground. The factory was threatened by frequent air raids, and therefore plans were developed to relocate parts of
the production process to tunnels that were to be dug in the quarry of the Portland-Zementwerke at Mainz-Weisenau. Since this project was considered top secret, the AEL had to be relocated, and the prisoners were replaced by inmates from Hinzert.

It is not exactly clear when the Mainz-Weisenau camp was erected. The camp is mentioned in the Hinzert files for the first time on November 14, 1944, but apparently inmates were already in the camp before that date. Their task was to dig tunnels, working closely with German miners and engineers (Pioniere). This task was extremely dangerous, and there were a number of accidents in which inmates died. According to Brüchert, two Belgians and one French inmate were killed on September 15, 1944, and also a number of Russian inmates. The camp leader at that time, until Christmas 1944, was SS-Unterscharführer Brandenburg. He was then transferred to the Flossenburg concentration camp. It is unclear if the Mainz-Weisenau camp was completely dissolved at that time.

At the end of December 1944, however, new inmates were sent from Hinzert to Mainz-Weisenau. Mainly they were Luxembourgers, Poles, and Russians, and some of them had been in the Gehnhausen, Seligenstadt, and Mainz-Gustavsburg camps before. They were accommodated in a barrack at the Weisenau quarry, equipped with beds and mattresses, but they had no shelter in the case of air raids. According to Brüchert, none of these inmates worked at digging the tunnels, but they were taken daily to Mainz-Ingelheimerau, where they had to shovel coal at the local gasworks, which had been significantly damaged during an air raid. In mid-January, the prisoners' barrack was destroyed during another air raid. Thanks to an SS guard who had promised the inmates that, in case of an air raid, he would open the gates so that they could escape to the banks of the river Rhine, the inmates escaped death. Some of them were then sent to Mainz-Gustavsburg, while the others were taken permanently to Mainz-Ingelheimerau.

At Mainz-Weisenau only the camp that was erected in the underground tunnels remained. It was considered an AEL and held German and foreign prisoners who were sent to the camp from the Mainz police prison. Some of the prisoners were employed in preparing the tunnels for the underground production, while others helped to dig a tunnel at Karl-Weiser-Strasse in Mainz where a bunker for the city commandant of Mainz was to be erected.

It is unclear when the last Hinzert inmates left the Mainz-Weisenau subcamp. According to a survivor statement, the AEL was to be dissolved and evacuated to the AEL at Frankfurt-Heddernheim. Rumors stated that the last 30 to 40 inmates were to be blown up in a railway car stationed at a railway bridge, but this never took place. On March 22, 1945, the last remaining inmates of the Mainz-Weisenau subcamp were liberated by the Americans.


The Mainz-Weisenau subcamp is mentioned in the ITS, Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945), 2 vols. (Arolsen, 1979), 2:711. Albert Pütz names Mainz-Weisenau as a Hinzert subcamp in Das SS-Sonderlager/KZ Hinzert 1940–1945: Das Anlageverfahren gegen Paul Sporrenberg (Frankfurt am Main, 1998), p. 277. Volker Schneider’s online article “Auflöschung des Konzentrationslagers ‘SS- Sonderlager Hinzert’ 1944/45” (PDF, n.d.) states that Mainz-Weisenau was one of the last Hinzert subcamps. Gudrun Schwarz in Die nationalsozialistischen Lager (Frankfurt am Main, 1990) states that Mainz-Weisenau was a Hinzert labor detail. The “Verzeichnis der Konzentrationslager und ihrer Aussenkommandos gemäss § 42 Abs. 2 BEG,” BGBl. (1977), Teil 1, pp. 1768–1852, also states that Mainz-Weisenau was a Hinzert labor detail.

Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**MERZHAUSEN**

There has been little research on the Hinzert subcamp at Merzhausen near Usingen in the Prussian province of Hessen-Nassau. The Merzhausen prisoners worked at an airfield in the Taunus Mountains between the villages of Merzhausen, Hausen-Arnsbach, and Wilhelmsdorf. The airfield had been erected in 1937 as a reserve airfield of the Luftwaffe and had been in operation since November 1939. The Führer’s headquarters “Adlerhorst” was located in nearby Ziegelberg/Wiesetal, and beginning in the fall of 1940, the Führer’s courier echelon was situated at the Merzhausen airfield. In the spring of 1944, Merzhausen became an active airport for defense purposes, and the runways had to be extended to accommodate the more modern, more technologically advanced fighter planes. Therefore, Merzhausen was one of the numerous Hinzert subcamps that arose from the summer of 1944 on, when prisoners who were capable of work were no longer sent to the larger concentration camps but to the newly formed subcamps and work detachments that were located, above all, along the Rhine, on or near airfields.

The first inmates to be relocated to Merzhausen left Hinzert on June 14, 1944. The transport consisted of 30 inmates from Luxembourg who were accommodated in Merzhausen in a wooden barric at the northeast corner of the airfield. They were guarded by older Luftwaffe soldiers and promised that they would be treated decently but severely punished for every attempt to escape. But only a few weeks later, when SS-Unterscharführer Windisch arrived from
Hinzert to become the camp commander, a regime of terror was established. The working conditions of the inmates were very hard; many of them were already too emaciated to be able to fulfill the physically demanding labor of extending the runways. Inmates considered to be incapable of work were transferred to Mauthausen; out of nine inmates of the Merzhausen subcamp sent to Mauthausen, seven died.

The remaining 21 Luxembourg inmates were evacuated on August 18, 1944, via Neubrücke-Hoppstädten to Hinzert; 17 of them were later taken to the airfield at Mainz-Finthen to work there. By the end of the war, they were evacuated to Buchenwald. On the way there, they were liberated by the U.S. Army.


Archival sources on the Merzhausen subcamp can be found at BA-B, NS 4 Hi/8.

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**NEUBRÜCKE**

**AKA NEUBRÜCKE-HOPPSTÄDTEN, NEUBRÜCKE/NAHE**

Neubrücke was a Hinzert subcamp established in April 1944. It was formed at a time when Hinzert concentration camp prisoners were no longer being shunted into the larger concentration camps but were assigned to “outside details” or “subcamps.”

Neubrücke is located on the Nahe River in the Prussian Rhine province, at the railway line between Saarbrücken and Bingerbrück. According to the International Tracing Service (ITS), the first mention of the camp is to be found in the Hinzert files on July 17, 1944. Marcel Engel and André Hohengarten also state that the Neubrücke subcamp was first mentioned on July 17, 1944. But already by April 27, 1944, prisoners from Hinzert had been stationed in Neubrücke-Hoppstädten to help erect a branch factory of the Deutsche Eisenwerke AG (German Iron Work, DEW). DEW at that time was to produce the SdKfz 251—a lightly armored half-tracked vehicle that had the advantage of being lighter and much more efficient than fully tracked vehicles. In the Neubrücke factory, components were to be preassembled before being delivered to the Duisburg main factory to be finished. The machines for this future plant had been requisitioned and dismantled in France. Also involved in this project were Italian military internees (IMIs) who were most likely accommodated elsewhere. As soon as the Neubrücke factory was erected, beginning in July–August 1944, the prisoners were given two new job assignments: some began to work in the factory, producing the vehicles, while the others were taken to erect another armament plant in the neighboring Steinena valley. Due to the harsh work conditions—the prisoners had to redirect the Steinau creek here and do construction work in a swamp—this work detachment was considered the worst in the subcamp.

The camp was located on the street from Neubrücke to Birkenfeld, and the barracks were set up along the railway tracks. The roughly 200 prisoners—Luxembourgers, Poles, Dutch, Italians, and most likely also French, Belgians, Ukrainians, Russians, and Serbs—were housed in four large barracks. The camp was fenced, but since there were no searchlights and guard towers, the prisoners were locked up at night in their barracks. Originally, the guards came from the Hinzert main camp; among them were also Flemish and Czech SS men. The camp commander was SS-Oberscharführer Rüsch. Subsequently, the SS guards returned to Hinzert and were replaced by police forces, first a police unit from Trier and later on local policemen. From early January 1945 on, there were no more Hinzert SS men in the Neubrücke subcamp.

**MICHELBACH (SCHMELZ)**

The Hinzert subcamp in the Saarland town of Michelbach (Schmelz) is mentioned for the first time on August 12, 1940, in a letter from the company Betting Hartsteinwerke GmbH, Saarbrücken.

The Michelbach prisoners worked for the company Lenhard in Saarbrücken in a quarry in Michelbach belonging to the Betting Hartsteinwerke. Their camp was located near today’s Schattentriesiedlung.

**SOURCES** A very short mention of the Michelbach camp by Beate Welter can be found in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel, eds., *Der Ort des Terrors*, vol. 5, *Hinzert, Auschwitz, Neuengamme* (Munich: Beck-Verlag, 2007), p. 63. The camp is also mentioned in Heimatgeschichtlicher Wegweiser zu Stätten des Widerstandes und der Verfolgung 1933–1945, ed. Studienkreis deutscher Widerstand (Frankfurt am Main, 1995). The Michelbach (Schmelz) subcamp is further mentioned in ITS, *Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS* (1933–1945), 2 vols. (Arolsen, 1979), 2/712. Albert Pütz erroneously lists the Hinzert subcamp as Michelstadt in a geographic overview included in *Das SS-Sonderlager/KZ Hinzert 1940–1945: Das Anklageverfahren gegen Paul Sporrenberg* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998). Gudrun Schwarz states in *Die nationalsozialistischen Lager* (Frankfurt, 1990) that Michelbach was part of Hinzert.

Evelyn Zegenhagen

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

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By the end of 1944, the subcamp and the armament plant were bombed. On January 22, 1945, the camp was severely damaged during an air raid, and the prisoners were taken to a temporary camp in the neighboring village of Hoppsstädten. In March 1945 the camp was dissolved. On March 16, the prisoners were taken in the direction of Kusel but then returned to Hoppsstädten. Here they were liberated by U.S. troops on March 18, 1945.


**RHEINZABERN (OT-POLIZEIHAFTLÄGER)**

The Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camp (Polizeihaftlager) Rheinzabern was located close to the city of Gernersheim in Bavaria. According to the International Tracing Service (ITS), it is first mentioned in the camp files on April 26, 1940. The last reference to the camp, according to a member of the camp’s staff, was in 1941. The prisoners in the Rheinzabern Polizeihaftlager were OT workers laboring for the OT Senior Construction Administrations (OBL) Landau-Speyer and Freudensstadt.

OT-Polizeihaftlager were established to punish OT workers on the Siegfried Line and the Reichsautobahn (RAB) for breaches of discipline. These breaches included work absenteeism, theft from “comrades,” fights, assaults on superiors, statements made against National Socialism, and generally all violations against the "principles of a healthy war conduct." The security staff officers, which were allocated by the Chief of the Security Police (Sipo) to each OT construction administration, sentenced the OT workers to police custody. They were transferred to the camp by the State Police (Stapo). The usual period of imprisonment was from between two weeks to a maximum of three months: longer periods of imprisonment were served in the concentration and Hinzert main camp, which provided prisoners for all OT police custody camps in the area.

During their time in custody, the prisoners were to be reformed to become “useful members” of the “National Socialist people’s community” through supervised hard physical labor complemented by a stringent military drill and ideological training in the sense of a National Socialist way of life."

As with other OT police custody camps that stood along the Siegfried Line, one can assume that there was heavy demand for the prisoners’ labor. Regional and local firms, authorities, communities, building administrations, and district authorities profited from the use of the prisoners, who worked under heavy police guard until they were exhausted. The dissolution of the camp was probably connected with the transfer of the OT into occupied France, where it was allocated new tasks.


**NOTE**


**SELIGENSTADT**

The Hinzert subcamp at Seligenstadt was probably opened on September 22, 1944. Prisoners from Hinzert were taken to the Mainflingen-Zellhausen airfield (other sources: the Langendiebach airfield), where they refueled and maintained an installation that provided wood gas for the generators.
installed on the trucks of a Luftwaffe unit. The prisoners were accommodated in a gymnasium (other sources: barracks); there were Poles and Belgians in addition to Luxembourgers. The inmates were guarded by Luftwaffe soldiers. The camp was probably dissolved by December 2, 1944.


**Trier (Sicherungsstab)**
The subcamp Trier, Sicherungsstab (Security Staff), at Martinstrasse 61 is one of the early Hinzert subcamps. Security staff officers were assigned by the Chief of the Security Police to each Organisation Todt (OT) Senior Construction Administration (OBL) in order to punish breaches of discipline by workers—absenteeism, thefts from “comrades,” fights, assaults on superiors, statements against National Socialism, and generally all violations of the “principles of a healthy war conduct.”

According to the International Tracing Service (ITS), the subcamp Trier, Sicherungsstab, was mentioned for the first time in the Hinzert files on June 2, 1940. The most recent research seems to point to a later date, but before June 1941.


**Sources** The only reference to this subcamp is to be found in Marcel Engel and André Hohengarten’s book, *Hinzert: Das SS-Sonderlager im Hunsrück* (Luxembourg: Sankt-Paulus, 1983), p. 456.

**Networking**

**Usingen**
The Usingen subcamp of the Hinzert concentration camp system, located at the base of the Taunus Mountains, was established on June 14, 1944. It was one of a series of Hinzert subcamps and labor details that were formed mostly along the Rhine from the summer of 1944.

The Usingen subcamp was based on a former airport for glider training. Some 30 prisoners were to upgrade the field for larger airplanes.

The prisoners were accommodated in a barracks running parallel to the road to Usingen. Each barracks was divided into two rooms. The prisoners slept on the upper level in beds with clean linen. The guards were reservists (probably from the Luftwaffe). SS guards were seldom present.

There were several political prisoners in the Usingen subcamp. They were taken back by SS members to Hinzert. These prisoners died there or in other camps to which they were sent from Hinzert.

The Usingen subcamp was dissolved after only two months on August 18, 1944.

**Sources** The only reference to this subcamp is to be found in Marcel Engel and André Hohengarten’s book, *Hinzert: Das SS-Sonderlager im Hunsrück* (Luxembourg: Sankt-Paulus, 1983), p. 456.

**Uthlede (OT-Polizeihäftlager)**

**[Aka Utlede]**
An Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camp (Polizeihäftlager) subcamp of the Hinzert main concentration camp was located in Uthlede near Wesermünde in the Prussian province of Hanover. The camp files refer to the camp for the first time on April 26, 1940. The police prisoners held here were workers of the OT Senior Construction Administration (Oberbauleitung, OBL) in Bremen. They were interned for a variety of disciplinary offenses—mainly work absenteeism, thefts from “comrades,” fights, assaults on superiors, statements against National Socialism, and the like. They were interned for a maximum of three months. Prisoners with longer sentences were held at Hinzert.

Police custody camps came into being at the end of 1939 in order to deal with the growing disciplinary problems during the construction of the West Wall and the Reichsautobahn (RAB). “The common aim in establishing such camps was to re-educate the mostly young, conscripted OT workers into a National Socialist way of life. This was to be done through supervised hard labor, supplemented by a strict military drill and ideological training. The same education program was used by the Reich Labor Service [Reichsarbeitsdienst] and Hitler Youth.” The prisoners were regarded as “pupils” (Zöglinge). Since their internment was not the result of any judgment sentence, they had no criminal record after their release.
As with other so-called West Camps (Westlager), one can assume that in Uthlede the number of prisoners was between 40 and 300 and that the prisoners possibly worked for local and regional construction projects in addition to their work for OT. Private enterprises, public authorities, and communities often had a great interest in the reliable, cheap labor of the prisoners who could be exploited until complete exhaustion. Presumably, Uthlede was dissolved during the course of 1940 or at the latest in 1941 when the OT was transferred to occupied France, where it undertook new assignments.

**SOURCES**


**NOTE**


**Vicht (OT-Polizeihaftlager)**

The Organisation Todt (OT) police custody camp (Polizeihaftlager) Vicht was located in the Prussian town of Gresenich (Rhine Province) close to Aachen. It is mentioned for the first time by the head of the OT Security Office Wiesbaden in a letter dated December 5, 1939. It was closed in the middle of 1941. According to a statement by the commandant of the Hinzert main camp, all remaining Vicht prisoners were transferred to Hinzert. The prisoners in Vicht had worked for the OT Senior Construction Administration (Oberbauleitung, OBL) in Aachen, Düren, Bonn, and Geldern.

Vicht was solely an OT camp. Prisoners were interned there for three to four weeks for minor infractions—work absenteeism, insubordination, or theft from “companions.” Those sentenced for longer periods were held in the Hinzert camp.

The Vicht camp was about 50 × 50 meters (55 × 55 yards). It had a capacity for 320 prisoners. There were three small accommodation barracks in which an average of 50 to 60 (up to a maximum of 80) prisoners were held; there was a guards’ barrack. The guards consisted of between 10 and 22 SS members (SS noncommissioned officers and other ranks). The camp commandant was Paul Sporrenberg who later became infamous as the Hinzert commandant. In 1960–1961, the Trier public prosecutor’s office initiated investigations against Sporrenberg; however, he died in 1961 before proceedings commenced.

**SOURCES**


**NOTE**


**Wächtersbach**

The subcamp Wächtersbach in the Prussian province of Hessen-Nassau is referred to for the first time on September 12, 1944, in International Tracing Service (ITS) documentation, based on a witness statement. According to at least one other source, it was a subcamp of the Hinzert subcamp Langenich. The prisoners worked for the company Karl Budde, Dampfsäge und Hobelwerk (Steam Saw and Planing Mill), in Wächtersbach. The last reference to the subcamp is on March 23, 1945.

Beate Welter states in *Ort des Terrors* that the prisoners kept in Wächtersbach were “E-Polen” (Eindeutschungs-Polen, Poles to be “Germanized”) who had had forbidden sexual contacts with German women and were now tested and tried for a potential “Germanization.” E-Polen were a special
category of concentration camp inmates who were only found in the Hinzert camp. According to Welter, the inmates worked in a private enterprise, building barracks and sheds (Hallen). It is unclear if she refers to the Karl Budde enterprise.


**NOTE**


**WIESBADEN-ERBENHEIM**

[AKA WIESBADEN-FLIEGERHORST, ERBENHEIM]

Starting in the summer of 1944, Hinzert prisoners who were capable of work were no longer sent on transports to the larger concentration camps. Instead, they were deployed in outside details, especially at airfields along the Rhine Line.1

One example is the use of Hinzert prisoners at the subcamp at Wiesbaden Air Base (Fliegerhorst) Erbenheim, whose existence is confirmed in an official report held in International Tracing Service (ITS) files. The prisoners held in this camp were mainly Luxembourgers.


**NOTE**


**WIESBADEN-UNTER DEN EICHER [AKA WIESBADEN]**

On March 20, 1944, a work detachment of 57 skilled Luxembourgeois craftsman was sent from Hinzert to Wiesbaden. Their task was to erect Ausweichquartiere (temporary quarters) for Police and SS offices that were either threatened or destroyed by Allied bombing raids in Wiesbaden. Already a few weeks earlier, inmates of the Wiesbaden police prison had prepared accommodations for these inmates on the grounds of the former Festplatzgelände (fair grounds) of the city Unter den Eichen.

The contingent was increased in numbers in September 1944 by an additional 19 Luxembourg prisoners who had previously been dismantling airplanes in Gelnhausen. Altogether, there were almost 100 prisoners in the Wiesbaden-Unter den Eichen subcamp, including 76 Luxembourgers, a few Dutch and French, 1 Belgian, and 1 German prisoner. The camp elder was Nicolas Braun. Other sources state that in November 1944 a second group of about 100 prisoners, mostly Dutchmen, arrived in the camp.

The prisoners worked for the Bauleitung der Waffen-SS und Polizei (Waffen-SS and Police Building Inspectorate) and renovated a former tournament barrack; they built air-raid shelters and large barracks for SS offices as well as accommodations for female auxiliary communication officers of the Luftwaffe, the so-called Blitzmädel. The prisoners worked 12 hours daily, not only on the camp grounds but also in a few Wiesbaden tradesmen’s stores, in the neighboring Café Ritter, and at the Erbenheim airfield. They were deployed in cleanup operations after air raids and, after February 1945, in loading trucks with incriminating files. They had to help in the burning of those files outside the city. A few prisoners from the subcamp worked in the house and garden of Jürgen Stroop in Wiesbaden, Nerotal 46; the original Jewish owner of the house had been expelled from Wiesbaden. Stroop at that time was Höherer-SS und Polizeiführer Rhein/Westmark, SS Brigadeführer, and had become notorious as the SS commander who suppressed the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April and May 1943.
Although the work was hard, living conditions were in general more bearable than at Hinzert. The camp leader, SS-Unterscharführer (other sources: Hauptscharführer) Theodor Fritz, is described by the prisoners as distant and initially strict. However, his demeanor softened after the prisoners demonstrated their discipline and willingness to work and as the end of the war got closer. After the war, a few prisoners described the police guards as “distinctly humane.”

The camp consisted of five simple wooden barracks without any insulation. They were separated from the nearby SS and police offices as well as Café Ritter by a simple barbed-wire fence. The camp guards were from the Order Police (Orpo); during work the prisoners were guarded by the SS.

The camp food came from the kitchen of the Wiesbaden police. Sometimes the head cook of the camp, the butcher Jean Pirotte, was able to supplement the food with meat from horses or sheep killed during bombings. Additional food deliveries and medicines were supplied by the owner of the Café Ritter, Elisabeth Ritter, and her future husband Josef Speck. The couple also arranged mail deliveries for prisoners (which was prohibited) and also arranged for the prisoners to be visited by family members (which was also strictly prohibited).

Six Luxembourger prisoners died during an air raid on Wiesbaden on December 18, 1944. They were buried in the city’s southern cemetery, and their remains were repatriated after the war.

The SS withdrew from Unter den Eichen on March 24, 1945. A few prisoners were able to escape from the planned evacuation march to Frankfurt-Heddernheim and were hidden by Wiesbaden citizens. The evacuated prisoners were to be shot by the SS in Heddernheim, but the detachment leader, Polizeileutnant Hertert, was able to prevent the killings. While the evacuation march continued northeast, more prisoners were able to flee. The remaining prisoners were liberated by U.S. soldiers.


Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**NOTE**


**WITTILCH [AKA WITTILCH AN DER MOSEL]**

Wittlich was the first and the most important subcamp administered by the Hinzert main camp. It was located about 50 kilometers (31 miles) to the north of Hinzert in the Prussian Rhine Province.

The Hinzert subcamp was erected in April 1940 and existed until the end of February 1942. It is not clear if there was any connection with a camp at Wittlich that held French prisoners of war (POWs) and was formed on April 29, 1940. This camp was located in Wittlich below Kohlenzer Strasse on Hahnenvweg, behind the former Wittlich Dampfziegelei (Steam Brick Works), and its more than 200 prisoners in Wittlich worked on a reopened large construction site in the Rhine Province.
Flussbach municipality. In Flussbach, there was also a large penal and forced labor camp for women.1

The Wittlich subcamp was located near the Wittlich-Daun railway tracks at the northern edge of the town. There were two inmates' barracks with two- and three-tiered bunks and four administrative barracks: kitchen barracks, mess (Soo- siebahle), toilets, and a wash barracks, as well as clothes storage, and a “punishment bunker” (Strafbunker). The SS guards were accommodated in a house outside the camp. The commando leader was Paul Sporrenberg, who later became the commander of the Hinzert concentration camp. Sporrenberg was responsible for the most stringent camp drill. He was supported by others including Unterscharführer Georg Schaaf, whom the prisoners called “Ivan the Terrible” on account of his sadism. Schaaf served in the Wittlich camp over Christmas 1941.2 Eugen Wipf, barrack elder for the Poles, later became known as the infamous Kapo of the Hinzert camp.

The Wittlich prisoners came mostly from Poland, Italy, and Luxembourg, including some Jews from Luxembourg. One of the most prominent inmates at Wittlich was John Engel and André Hohengarten, a Swiss court of assizes in Zurich to life imprisonment, but he committed suicide in prison. Eugen Wipf, barrack elder for the Poles, later became known as the infamous Kapo of the Hinzert camp.

When the construction work on the RAB ceased at the end of February 1942, the Wittlich subcamp was also dissolved (historian Gudrun Schwarz sets the date as February 28, 1943), and the inmates were taken back to Hinzert.

In 1960–1961, the Trier public prosecutor’s office initiated investigations against Paul Sporrenberg. Sporrenberg died in 1961 before proceedings commenced. Georg Schaaf was convicted by the Mannheim Regional Court in 1950 of charges of severely mistreating prisoners and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. He committed suicide in prison. Eugen Wipf was sentenced in 1948—largely for his crimes in Hinzert—by a Swiss court of assizes in Zurich to life imprisonment, but he died two months into his prison term.


Notes
its occupants were returned to Hinzert between January and the middle of February 1945.


Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini