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The Natzweiler concentration camp's subcamps stretched across all of southwestern Germany and occupied Alsace (France) but were primarily located in the areas of northern Baden and Württemberg. Several camps were located in the southern areas of Hessen.

The first Natzweiler subcamps were established at the beginning of 1942. The majority were to follow much later, mostly in 1944, with a few at the beginning of 1945 after the Natzweiler main camp had been abandoned in September 1944 due to the approaching front. The command was not dissolved after the camp was abandoned but relocated to Gottenbach in northern Baden. The subcamp administration was based here as well as the administration responsible for the labor demands of regional firms and the preparation of statistics, which served as the basis for the SS-Business Administration Main Office's (WHVA) accounting of labor use. The administration and storage offices of the former main camp were relocated to Schloss Binau, the vehicle pool and its maintenance to Neunkirchen, and the mail service to Rorhau. The establishments in these locations should not be seen as actual subcamps but rather as installations where the leadership and administration of the Natzweiler main camp and its satellite system of subcamps were located.

The use of prisoners in the Natzweiler subcamp system was mostly for armaments purposes. There were two basic uses for prisoner labor: on the one hand, subcamps were attached to existing or newly established armaments firms; on the other hand, the prisoners were used to relocate production underground as a result of the increasing Allied bombing raids. The prisoners in the subcamps in the caverns, tunnels, and mines were often not used in armaments production per se but in the creation of the means necessary to commence production. Here they had, as a rule, the heaviest physical labor to perform under extreme conditions—for instance, by being detained for long periods underground in an atmosphere of high humidity and insufficient ventilation—which necessarily resulted in a high death rate.

Although the existing and newly created subcamps continued to be under the control of the Natzweiler camp administration after the main camp was dissolved, they were, because of their specific roles, often connected to the projects and their command structures, such as the Geilenberg Staff, the Fighter Staff (Jägerstab), and the Kammler Staff. For example, the Natzweiler subcamps of the Gruppe Wüste in present-day Zollernalb district were subordinated to the Geilenberg Staff, which drove forward the extremely important war project of excavating shale oil rock. The camps of Gruppe Wüste were infamous for the extreme work and living conditions that prevailed and the resultant mortality rates. (A more extensive discussion of the Gruppe Wüste camps follows separately.)

Many Natzweiler subcamps were subordinated to the Jägerstab, founded in March 1943, which with a rigorous exploitation of labor set the foundations for a manifold increase in the production of fighter aircraft. The Jägerstab worked closely with the Kammler Staff, which, under the command of Hans Kammler, chief of Amtsgruppe C (Construction) of the WVHA, was entrusted with the task of protecting armaments production from Allied bombardment and relocating the armaments firms underground. By January 1945, the Kammler Staff was using tens of thousands of prisoners in the most inhumane conditions, preparing around 425,000 square meters (508,296 square yards) of subterranean production areas.1 Natzweiler subcamps were also integrated into the Kammler Staff. Within the Jägerstab, many enterprises, such as Daimler-Benz, Heinkel, Junkers, Messerschmitt, and Siemens-Schuckert, profited from the use of prisoner labor. The camps of the Jägerstab represented the largest camp complex within the system of Natzweiler subcamps. They included the “Unternehmen Goldfisch” camps (also called Neckarelz camps), the site of the underground relocation of armaments production to the gypsum mine “Friede” near Obrigheim. The Reich Aviation Ministry chose this pit with an area of about 50,000 square meters (59,800 square yards) to relocate the Presswerk Sindelfingen and the airplane motor production of the Daimler-Benz AG in Genshagen near Berlin in the spring of 1944. From March 1944 on, Natzweiler inmates worked on this project, code-named “A8” by the SS and “Goldfisch” by the Reich authorities. In June 1944, the Goldfisch camps around Neckarelz already held more than 2,500 inmates.

The subordination of subcamps to the various project commands has meant that the Natzweiler subcamp system is largely difficult to analyze and is inadequately researched due to the lack of source material. The later a subcamp was established—and this applies to the majority of the Natzweiler camps—the worse it is documented; many camps, such as Thionville, for example, appear never to have left the planning stage due to the rapidly advancing front.

The prisoners in the subcamps also worked in constructing roads and airfields; by the war’s end, the prisoners were often involved in removing rubble or were lent to local manufacturers. Two Natzweiler subcamps, the death camp (Sterbe-lager) at Vaiblingen and the auxiliary hospital (Hilfskrankenhaus) Unterschwarzach lacked any productive function. They were used solely, or at least most likely in the case of Unterschwarzach, to hold prisoners who were no longer capable of working.

The subcamps’ leadership and guards were as a rule, even after the main camp was dissolved, selected from the pool of men at the main camp. As a result, the subcamps most often did not have their own command offices, which due to the reduction in personnel costs led to an increase of profit from...
The use of prisoner labor. The subcamps were commanded by camp leaders (Lagerführern) and work detachments (Arbeitskommandos) by detachment leaders (Kommandoführern). The guards were members of the SS, the Organisation Todt (OT), and the Wehrmacht or the Luftwaffe. Male guards secured the female camps, while the supervisory personnel within the camp and during working hours were often a company’s female employees assigned to guard the prisoners. These women were usually trained as overseers in Ravensbrück before they took on their new roles.

The number of Natzweiler subcamps cannot be exactly stated. Some of the camps never went beyond the planning stage; the existence of others can only be surmised; and with others one cannot be certain that they formed part of the Natzweiler system. Altogether, Natzweiler, the smallest and most westerly of the German concentration camps, had around 50 subcamps. A few sources mention up to 80 subcamps, but this number is probably too high, even if one includes all the indirect connections of subcamps and all the work details, that is, work sites without accommodations for the prisoners. More than 40 of the Natzweiler subcamps held male inmates. There were no females in the Natzweiler main camp. However, there were a few subcamps, including Calw, Geisenheim, Geislingen an der Steige, Hayingen, and Walldorf, that did hold women. There are a few camps where the sex of the occupants is either unknown or uncertain. In a few other camps, for example, the Hilfskrankenhaus Unter- schwarchach and the Sterbeler Vaihingen, prisoners of both genders may have been held.

On average, there were in the subcamps around 20,000 prisoners, including 1,000 to 2,000 women. By the end of 1944, the prisoner numbers reached their high point of 22,587. Thereafter, the numbers declined despite new admissions. Documented numbers for January 15, 1945, for the Natzweiler subcamps are 20,961 male and 1,209 female prisoners. West European Night-and-Fog (Nacht-und-Nebel) prisoners, who represented a dominant category of prisoners within the main camp, due to security reasons were hardly represented in the subcamps. Around 70 percent of the prisoners in the Natzweiler subcamps were from Eastern Europe: they were forcibly evacuated Soviet civilian workers, deported Poles who had been arrested after the extensive roundups in Poland, or Jewish prisoners from Eastern Europe, so-called Arbeitsjuden, who were mostly from the work camps at Radom and Płaszów, but some also came from Auschwitz. In addition, especially in the last phase of the war, there were contingents of prisoners from other concentration camps: the women were mostly transported from Ravensbrück and Auschwitz, the men from Dachau, Flossenbürg, Lublin, and other concentration camps. In addition, there was a constant exchange of prisoners between the Natzweiler subcamps caused by the need to evacuate the camps as the front approached but above all by the specific labor demands of individual subcamps, both quantitative and qualitative.

French prisoners, who constituted 10 percent of the prisoners, were the largest group of Western European prisoners. The Reich Germans (Reichsdeutsche) represented 5 percent of the prisoners. Many of the prisoners in the subcamps did not go through the main camp, which was dissolved in September 1944; when the prisoner numbers were handed out in the subcamp, however, the number system of the main camp continued to be used. As in the main camp, there was also in the subcamps a limited prisoner administration.

The dissolution of the Natzweiler subcamps took place in stages in the last two months of the war as a result of the front moving from east to west. Many of the prisoners were sent on death marches, whose destination, as a rule, was Dachau and its subcamps. The last of these evacuation marches took place at the end of April or beginning of May 1945. The concentration camp command relocated from Guttenbach via Stuttgart to Dürmendingen in Saulgau, where it dissolved itself. Members of the Natzweiler camp administration as well as the guards were tried toward the end of the 1940s in the Rastatt Trials.

**Sources**

The history of the Natzweiler subcamp system remains largely unresearched. This is primarily because many files were destroyed when the camp was evacuated. A second difficulty is the dual nature of the languages of the sources: too few works have attempted to deal with both German and French sources so as to provide a comprehensive review of the Natzweiler camp complex including the subcamps. Above all, one must note Christine Glanning, Konrad Pfleg, and Georg Fischer, Arbeit und Vernichtung. Das Aussenlagersystem des KZ Natzweiler-Struthof (Stuttgart: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2004). Important German works that investigate individual subcamps or subcamp complexes within regional and time-specific contexts are Tobias Markowitsch and Katrin Rautnig, Goldfisch und Zebra. Das Konzentrationslageraussenkommmando Neckarelz. Konzentrationslager des Verlagerungsjahres 1992; Bernhard Brunner, Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte des KZ Natzweiler (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992); Bernhard Brunner, Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte des KZ Natzweiler (Baden-Württemberg: Bad Boll: Evang. Akademie Protokolldienst, 1997). In addition, there are a few German works that attempt to deal with the history of the Natzweiler concentration camp and all of its subcamps or at least parts of it. The most important works include Wolfgang Kirstein, Das Konzentrationslager als Instrument totalen Terrors: Das Beispiel des KL Natzweiler-Struthof (Stuttgart: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992); Bernhard Brunner, Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Natzweiler; Forschungsstand, Quellen, Methode (Stuttgart, 2000), available at www.rlp.bwue.de/publikat/natzweiler/natzweiler.html; and Antoine Greffier, Materialien zum Stand der Forschung über die Außen- und Nebenlager des KL Natzweiler-Struthof, ed. LPB-BW (Stuttgart, 2002). For further information, see also Michael Schmidt and Hellmuth Bauer, “‘Wir waren ja niemand’ Ein ehemaliger Zwangsarbeiter berichtet über die Jahre 1942 bis 1945 in Genshagen-

The first comprehensive French work on the Natzweiler concentration camp appeared in 1988, Arnod Kientzler, ed., *Le camp de concentration du Struthof. Konzentrationslager Natzweiler: Témoignages* (Collection Documents—Tome III) (Schirmeck, 1988). The most comprehensive monograph on the Natzweiler concentration camp system is Robert Steegmann, *Struthof: Le KL-Natzweiler et ses kommandos. Une nébuleuse concentrationnaire des deux côtés du Rhin, 1941–1945* (Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 2005). However, the subcamp system is not comprehensively dealt with in the book but is dealt with as part of the camp’s history, with a focus on the formation of the camps in each relevant chapter. Steegmann lists the camps not under their German names at the time (the most relevant names for researchers) but under today’s French names, which adds a layer of difficulty to the work. However, his monograph provides a good overview of the state of research on individual subcamps.

Archival sources on the Natzweiler subcamps are listed with the individual subcamps. For the Neckarelz (Goldfisch) camps, the Imperial War Museum London holds a collection of records at FD 2228/45. This includes Daimler-Benz correspondence regarding the relocation of production from Genshagen to Obrigheim. Also, BA-BL holds material on the Neckarelz camps under 419 AR-1831/67 Obrigheim.

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NOTES


2. BA, Sammlung Schumacher 1329.