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**GRUPPE “WÜSTE” COMPLEX**

The code name “Wüste” was used for the extraction of oil from Württemberg shale oil, which was part of the Geilenberg project from July 1944 onward. However, the use of shale oil has a longer history. As part of the rearmament and autarky program from 1936 onward, engineer Freiherr Hans Joachim von Kruecener (employed by the Benzin-Benzol-Verband and Reichsfelde für Mineralöl Berlin) promoted the economic exploitation of shale oil. The “Amt für den Viereinjahresplan” rejected this idea, as it thought that fuel production would be met by the construction of hydrogenation plants.

During the war, shale oil was the cause of many disputes between different agencies, initially between Carl Krauch (chairman of IG Farben, Generalbevollmächtigter für Chemie [GeBeChem], and head of the Reichsamt für Wirtschaftsausbau), who was in charge of fuel production, and SS-Brigadeführer Walther Schieber (head of the Rüstungslieferungsamt in the Rüstungsministerium). Schieber, who was always getting involved in the affairs of GeBeChem, pushed Krauch in 1942 to use shale oil more intensively. This resulted in the formation of the first of three shale oil companies in Württemberg, which experimented with different ways to extract shale oil and which conducted practical tests based on those experiments: the Lias-Olschieferforschungsgesellschaft Frommern in September 1942.

At the beginning of 1943, Erhard Milch (Generalinspekteur der Luftwaffe) ordered the recall of engineer Kruecener to Berlin from the front and instructed him to continue working on the shale oil question and appointed him as the shale oil expert in the Reichsluftfahrtministerium. The reason for this decision was the inadequate supply of fuel, coupled with the almost hopeless order by Hermann Göring in January 1943 to supply by air the Sixth Army trapped in Stalingrad. The ambitious Kruecener, who in the meantime had become an SS-Führer in the SD-Hauptamt, together with Schieber, whom he had appointed as his consultant on questions of oil extraction, drove the issue forward. A second shale oil exploration company was established in July 1943: the Kohle-Öl-Union based in Berlin, which at the end of October 1943 began construction of a subterranean carbonization facility. The most important company was the Deutsche Ölschieferforschungsgesellschaft (DÖLF) based in Schömberg, which was established on October 20, 1943: it was to scientifically research and test all issues regarding shale oil, and it developed the primitive “Meilerschwelverfahren,” the process that later would be the technical foundation for the Wüste Project. Kruecener, Schieber, and Krauch were among those who occupied key positions in the management and board of the company.

In August 1943, Kruecener, at the request of Schieber, made contact with the Reichsführer-SS Himmler to bring the SS into the project. Up to this point of time, attempts by the SS to take control of armaments industries had failed due to resistance by Albert Speer and private industry. Driven by Himmler, who was still searching for suitable armaments projects for the SS, the south Württemberg shale oil project quickly developed into a prestigious SS project, but where profitability was not the key focus. Himmler, who had the absurd idea to secure “the oil supply for the Waffen SS and the Heimarmee from shale oil,” instructed the head of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) Oswald Pohl at the end of October 1943 to secure shale oil for the SS. Kruecener was to be the SS-WVHA’s consultant on shale oil questions, and he was the only person who was able to strengthen his position within the chaos of competing interests.

Pohl, who traveled several times to the Württemberg shale oil area, agreed to supply the shale oil companies with labor. This resulted in the establishment of three concentration camp subcamps: in Schömberg (October 1943), in Frommern (January 1944), and in Schörzingen (February 1944). There were several attempts by the SS to take over test factories that were in the course of being established. The SS then decided to establish its own shale oil plant near Erzingen. Pohl, in order to more effectively represent the interests of the SS, established on May 2, 1944, the Deutsche Schieferöl (German Shale Oil) GmbH Erzingen—which was the only SS company established and operating in 1944 within the “Alt-Reich.”

The economic aims of the SS had long collided with the goals of the Armaments Ministry (Rüstungsministerium). Rüstungsminister Speer really only began to take an interest in the production of shale oil for fuel after a dramatic reduction in fuel production following the Allied air raids on German hydrogenation plants in the spring of 1944. Speer conferred with Hitler on July 5, 1944, “to get a decision on questions regarding shale oil,” as an unsettled Pohl noted on the same day. A week later during a meeting in the Rüstungsministerium Planning Office (Planungsamt), it was decided that the Wüste Project would be part of the Geilenberg-Program. A new crisis office (Krisenstab), based on the Jägerstab, equipped with almost unlimited power, was to be established. It was to rebuild the damaged hydrogenation plants and to construct new fuel plants.

Edmund Geilenberg, who was appointed at the end of May 1944 as Generalkommissar für Sofortmassnahmen, immediately ordered the construction of 10 plants to extract shale oil in Württemberg. Some 5,000 prisoners were to be used in the construction. He appointed the Deutsche Bergwerks- und Hüttenbau Gesellschaft (DBHG), a subsidiary of the Hermann-Göring conglomerate, as head contractor, which
The Wüste Project was a special case because even though this armaments project was under the auspices of the Armaments Ministry, the SS had an option to take over the 10 shale oil plants once construction was complete. This did not come to fruition because of the eventual course of the war. The production of shale oil was doomed from the start because of the poor technology and the high death rate among the concentration camp prisoners. Only 4 of the 10 plants were ready by the end of the war. The Wüste-Werk 2 in Bisingen was the first shale oil plant to commence production on February 23, 1945—but only in a makeshift way.15

Despite doubts by some individuals that the plans could be realized, and despite the numerous difficulties (e.g., transport of machines and materials), those involved remained wedded to their decision until the end. Competing interests added to the chaos that reigned in the last stage of the war. Those involved followed their own interests: construction firms focused on securing machines, materials, and labor for the postwar period; technical personnel in the shale companies, chemists, and engineers attempted to promote and secure their future careers.

It was with this background that the employees in the many firms and research organizations closed their eyes to the public suffering of the prisoners and did nothing to change the situation in the camps, which from a production perspective should have been done. It is true that there are some reports, which were sent to Berlin and resulted in Pohl’s perspective should have been done. It is true that there are many firms and research organizations closed their eyes to their future careers. Netto informed the SS-Hauptamt that initially the corpses of the victims were cremated in the crematoria in Reutlingen, Schwenningen, and Tuttlingen and that there were many transports of seriously ill prisoners to other camps. The death marches from the Wüste camps resulted in an unknown number of victims. Those prisoners who could not march were relocated to Dachau/München-Allach, and after the evacuation of that camp between April 16 and 18, 1945, the prisoners were moved in a southerly direction. The survivors were liberated in Oberschwaben, Bavaria, or in Austria. There are numerous graves of the victims of the death marches in Upper Swabian villages.


The BA-B holds extensive file collections on the topic of shale oil: the files of the SS-WVHA, the RFSS, the RWA, and the RMFRK. The BA-DH holds the files of the DBHG. The AKr-Bal holds an even larger collection regarding the

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**SOURCES**


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Wüste Project. The AOC also holds numerous documents on shale oil. The large collection of investigation and trial files in the StA-L also holds much information on the Wüste Project.

Christine Glauning
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES

1. BA-BL, NS 19/1386.
2. The planned experimental facility was financed by the RWA but for "formal reasons" was operated by Lias. BA-BL, NS 19/1186, Schreiben Himmler an Kehrl, Oktober 1943.
4. BA-BL, NS 19/1386, Schreiben Schieber an Himmler, September 16, 1943.
6. BA-BL, NS 3/823: Schreiben Pohl an Grimm, May 26, 1944. Work by the DÖLF was financed by the RWA. For technical matters, the DÖLF was subordinate to the Planungsamt.
8. BA-BL, NS 13/1386, Schreiben Himmler an Pohl, November 24, 1943.
9. BA-BL, NS 13/1386, Schreiben Himmler an Milch, ende November 1943.
10. The factory was to be constructed by DÖLF, operated by it, and then transferred to DESt. BA-BL, NS 19/1386, Schreiben Pohl an Himmler, December 21, 1943. Die “Wüste”-Olschieferwerke in Württemberg, o.D. [nach 1945], in AOC, AP/PD, c. 1304, p. 15/4, S. 16.
12. BA-BL, NS 19/1386, Telegramm Pohl an Himmlers Referenten Brandt, 5.7.1944.
AUDUN-LE-TICHE ("ROWA")
[AKA DEUTSCH-OTH]

The Natzweiler subcamp at Audun-le-Tiche lay in the former Gau Westmark, the present-day district of Moselle, France. The camp's opening is dated as somewhere between August 24 and 30, 1944. There were a maximum of 100 male prisoners in the camp who worked for Minett GmbH and in abandoned ore mines near Longwy. Parts for the V-1, produced at the Volkswagen factory in Wolfsburg, were stored in the mine. Robert Steegmann states in Struthof that the Bosch facilities from Stuttgart were to be relocated in Audun-le-Tiche at an underground facility of 60,000 square meters (71,759 square yards). The plan was to have 1,300 laborers at work there.

Transfer records from the Audun-le-Tiche subcamp to other camps have survived; for example, there was a transfer of prisoners to the Kochendorf subcamp on January 9, 1944. Audun-le-Tiche was probably closed in September 1944 as the front was getting ever closer. (Antoine Greffier offers a date of February 1945, but this is highly unlikely.)

**SOURCES**


**BENSHEIM-AUERBACH**

The Natzweiler subcamp in the Hessian town of Bensheim-Auerbach is mentioned, according to the International Tracing Service (ITS), for the first time on September 11–12, 1944. According to a witness report, the prisoners had been held in the Darmstadt subcamp and following the bombardment of that camp were brought to Bensheim-Auerbach.

Horst Riegert, in his detailed report, states that the Bensheim-Auerbach camp is mentioned for the first time in the Natzweiler files on October 10, 1944.

There were 45 male prisoners in the camp—Germans, Czechs, and French. They worked in the underground factory of Dr.-Ing. Frank H. Heymann, Darmstadt, located in a former marble mine in Hochstätten, 125 Mühltal Strasse. The caverns in this mine were excavated and outfitted for armaments production. Stabilizers for the V-2 manufactured in Peenemünde were produced here. The prisoners worked mostly as technical draftsmen; 4 prisoners worked in Darmstadt.

The prisoners in the Bensheim-Auerbach subcamp were accommodated in wooden barracks near the mine. They worked each day of the week. In October 1944, there was an average of 25 prisoners attached to the subcamp. The Natzweiler camp office charged 6 Reichsmark (RM) per prisoner per day for each prisoner, of which 0.80 RM was deducted as costs for rations. Prisoners who died were buried in the Bauerbach cemetery. Their number is not known.

According to a witness report, the camp was dissolved by the guards on March 25 and 26, and the prisoners were driven away from the camp in a southeasterly direction, reaching Dachau on April 3, 1945.

**SOURCES**
The Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945), published by the ITS (Arolsen: Suchdienst, 1979), mentions the subcamp at Bensheim-Auerbach in vol. 1, p. 199.

Horst Riegert mentions the Bensheim-Auerbach subcamp in his article in Lothar Bembenek, ed., Hessen hinter Stacheldraht. Verdrängt und vergessen. KZs, Lager, Aussenkommandos (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn-Verlag, 1984), p. 57, but describes it as a work detachment.

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**BISINGEN**

Bisingen was the second largest of the "Wüste"-Lager. Between August 24, 1944, and March 1945, at least 4,163 prisoners, including no less than 1,250 Jews, were sent to the camp in five large transports and several individual transfers from other camps. There were approximately 1,000 Poles from Auschwitz; 1,500 East European prisoners from Stutthof; 250 Polish Jews from Vaihingen/Enz; 400 prisoners most probably from Dachau, including Sinti and Roma (Gypsies); and 1,000 Jews from Buchenwald.

The camp was not ready when the first transport arrived. The prisoners were accommodated in tents that were later replaced by horse stables. Contrary to all SS security requirements, the camp site had neither guard towers nor barbed-wire fences. The prisoners' first work was to construct and secure the camp under the direction of the Organisation Todt (OT).

The camp inmates worked primarily in the shale oil plant Wüste 2 in Bisingen but also in Wüste-Werk 3 in Engstlatt and Wüste-Werk 1 in Dusslingen/Nehren. These temporary production facilities also had to be constructed by the prisoners. Bisingen was a typical construction camp where the prisoners had to do physically exhausting work on construction sites and in quarries. The replaceable auxiliary labor had far worse survival chances than the generally better qualified skilled workers in the factory camps (Fabriklagern).

In Bisingen, around 1,200 prisoners (about 38 percent) died; 1,158 were hastily buried in a mass grave outside the town; 10 prisoners were cremated in the Reutlingen crematorium, and around 30 victims were buried on the
construction sites in Bisingen. The actual number is higher, as prisoners who were no longer capable of working were transported to the so-called camps for the dying (Krankenlager). At the insistence of companies using the labor and the Deutsche Ölschieferforschungsgesellschaft (German Oil Shale Research Association, DÖLF), the SS, between the end of October 1944 and the beginning of April 1945, transferred several hundred seriously ill prisoners to the concentration camps at Vaihingen/Enz, Dachau/München-Allach, and Bergen-Belsen, where an unknown number of prisoners died.\(^3\)

The head of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), Oswald Pohl, who pushed the SS to quickly establish shale oil plants, inspected the Bisingen concentration camp at the end of 1944 because of its high death rate. Pohl publicly and sharply criticized the senior camp commander Franz Johann Hofmann because of the catastrophic conditions in the camp and transferred him to the Natzweiler main camp. Pohl’s appearance is interpreted as an act of “publicity.” No one could imagine that he disapproved of the conditions in the subcamp “which he must have known from other areas.”\(^4\) The average death rate increased from December 1944, to the middle of April 1945, being almost double that of the preceding months.\(^5\)

The high death rate had little to do with the chaotic conditions toward the end of the war. What was critical was the behavior of the SS camp command, which had little interest in the economic necessity of maintaining the prisoner labor. The SS camp command was more fixed on ideological matters. The senior camp commander of Bisingen and Dautmergen, SS-Hauptsturmführer Hofmann, was a long-serving SS man and, according to statements by his superior, a “fanatical National Socialist.” His SS career had begun as early as 1913 in Dachau and had led him to the position of Schutzhaftlagerführer in the “Gypsy Camp” in Auschwitz II-Birkenau and finally to Schutzhaftlagerführer at the Auschwitz I main camp.\(^6\) These experiences greatly influenced his brutal behavior in the Bisingen subcamp, behavior described by survivors and other witnesses.

One of the most decisive changes in the final phase of the concentration camp system was the mass transfer of Wehrmacht soldiers into the camps from the spring of 1944. Countless former Wehrmacht soldiers now served as camp personnel with long-serving SS men. The Wehrmacht soldiers were transferred either from the Luftwaffe or Landesschützenbataillons to the SS. This was not a temporary phenomenon but the result of a lack of personnel and was widespread in the many new concentration camps that were
established from the summer of 1944. The guards company in Bisingen, which escorted the prisoners to the shale oil plant and guarded them while they worked, consisted almost exclusively of members of the Wehrmacht. These men did not play by any means a subordinate role in the concentration camp system but took over central positions in the camp administration as block leader (Blockführer), work detachment leader (Arbeitskommandoführer), or camp doctor (Lagerarzt).

The camp commander and SS-Oberscharführer Johannes Pauli came from the Wehrmacht. This was not an isolated case. Pauli's behavior toward the prisoners was no different from that of the long-serving concentration camp functionary elite. His career shows that the use of violence in a society over a long period of time, together with a long period of portraying the same groups as enemies, determined his behavior. Serving at the front during World War I, Pauli was a member of a Freikorps whose fighting in the east was motivated by antisemitic and anti-Bolshevik motives. In 1941–1942, Pauli was a member of the Feldgendarmerie in Ukraine, taking part in the murder of the civilian population, murder disguised as "partisan warfare." As Bisingen camp commander, he was not a follower but a driving force in the excess of violence. Pauli shot a prisoner who was accused of stealing food after an air raid and gave the order to kill two other prisoners. He mistreated the camp inmates not only within the camp but also on the construction site.

At least 10 prisoners managed to escape. A few were shot by the police not far from Hechingen. An accounts clerk, for ester, and two policemen shot, on the orders of the Sigmaringen Police Commander, 4 prisoners in the area around Gammertingen/Neufra. Two of the perpetrators were later praised by the head of government in Sigmaringen. Some of the dead prisoners were hastily buried in Neufra; others were brought back to the Bisingen concentration camp and left to lie at the camp entrance as a deterrent. Several prisoners were hung on the roll-call square after their escape attempts failed.

The concentration camp was located on the edge of the town and was not cut off from its surroundings; on the contrary, the civilian world was closely intertwined with the camp world. The daily presence of the prisoners meant that the camp's existence was not hidden from the local population. The prisoners marched daily through Bisingen to the nearby town of Engstätt, laid water pipes through Steinhefen and Bisingen to the shale oil plant, and removed rubble after air raids, repaired the church roof, and were leased out as labor to the shale oil plant and guarded them while they worked, consisted almost exclusively of members of the Wehrmacht. These men did not play by any means a subordinate role in the concentration camp system but took over central positions in the camp administration as block leader (Blockführer), work detachment leader (Arbeitskommandoführer), or camp doctor (Lagerarzt).

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Behavior toward the camp ranged from indifference, individual acts of help, and profit making to participating in tracking down escaped prisoners. However, in the collective consciousness, acts of assistance stand out most. The Bisingen myth arose as a result of an article that appeared in the French newspaper, Le Figaro in 1946. The author of the report stated that the Bisingen population had systematically supported the prisoners and protested against their treatment—"an undoubtedly unique act in Germany." However, the acts were those of individuals motivated by humanitarian or religious grounds. There was no systematic support, and there is no evidence of a strong protest.

The evacuation of the Bisingen concentration camp occurred in the middle of April 1945. Prisoners who could not walk, the majority, were taken by rail to Dachau/München-Allach or by truck to the Natzweiler subcamp at Spaichingen. The remainder of the camp inmates marched to Schörzingen or Dautmergen, where they joined a death march to the south. A few prisoners were shot along the way; several mass shootings were planned, but none took place. The survivors were liberated in Oberschwaben, Oberbayern, or Austria.

In 1947, a French military tribunal sentenced three SS men and an OT member to death; three were hung on August 26, 1947. The sentence of the fourth was commuted to 20 years' imprisonment. He was released in 1962. Another SS man was sentenced to life in prison, two to 20 years, one to 8 years, and one to 18 months. Another OT member was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment. Camp commander Pauli fled to Switzerland, where in a unique trial he was sentenced on February 11, 1953, by the Basel Criminal Court to 12 years' hard labor. The Schwurgericht Hechingen acquitted Hofmann in 1966. Many other investigations of SS men or the camp elders were stopped largely as a result of the passage of time. None of the perpetrators were found guilty by a German court.

The concentration camp cemetery was consecrated in 1947. A memorial with an exhibition and history recalls the Bisingen concentration camp.

**Sources**

Möglichkeiten des Erinnerns. Orte jüdischen Lebens und nationalsozialistischen Unrechts im Zollernalbkreis und im Kreis Rottweil (Hechingen: Alte Synagoge Hechingen, 1997), pp. 43–59. The earliest study on the Bisingen subcamp is by Wolfgang Sörös, “Nationalsozialistische Konzentrationslager und Kriegswirtschaft im regionalgeschichtlichen Unterricht, dar- gestellt am Beispiel des Konzentrationslagers Bisingen” (unpub., Ludwigsburg, 1977). The Juso-AG Bisingen published the first work on the camp that was taken seriously in Bisingen and that was the subject of discussion: Das KZ Bisingen (Bisingen: Selbstverlag, 1996).


There are numerous but scattered archival materials on the Bisingen concentration camp. The largest collection is the numerous investigation files and trial files in the Sta-L. A few files relating to the preliminary investigations are held in the ZdL (Aubenstelle des Bundesarchivs), now at BA-L. Prisoner lists are held in the archives of the memorials Auschwitz and Danzig-Stutthof. The Natzweiler concentration camp Nummernbuch 6, which has the names of the prisoners in the transports including to Bisingen, lies in the AN in Paris. The BA-B holds SS files and Reich authority files with numerous details on the camp and the shale oil project, documents on the SS economic interests in armaments firms, and the particular role of Bisingen (Pohl’s visit). In YVA, there are records of interviews and written statements by survivors. The same are also to be found in the archive of the Bisingen Concentration Camp Memorial. The AOC in Colmar has an extensive collection of files on the camp, mass grave, shale oil, the institutions involved, and the behavior of the civilian population (questionnaires after 1945). The files of the Kreiserhärungsamt in the Sta-S deal with the prisoners’ food supplies and provide details on the troops in the camp. The investigation files as well as the trial files of the Bisingen camp commander are held in the BAR as well as the Sta-KBS and can be easily accessed.

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NOTES
1. Lagerstärke des KZ Bisingen, zusammengestellt nach Dokumenten der historischen Abteilung des Internationalen Suchdienstes in Arolsen, in StaALB, EL 317 III, Bü 379, Bl. 68.
4. Vernehmung Haenlein (Betriebsführer DÖLF) vor dem Schwurgericht Hechingen, August 2, 1965, S. 8, in StaALB, EL 317 III, Bü 1328.
6. SSO Hofmann, in BA-BL, chem. BDC.
7. Vernehmung Giese (Wachmann), November 30, 1953, in StaALB, EL 317 III, Bü 1362, Bl. 36f.
11. Vernehmung Müller, July 30, 1956, in StaALB, EL 317 III, Bü 1238, Bl. 7.

17. Fig, November 30, 1946, veröffentlicht im Heimatbuch Bisingen.
18. Zahlreiche Aussagen von Überlebenden und anderen Zeugen, in StaALB, EL 317 III.

CALW
The International Tracing Service (ITS) puts the opening date for the Natzweiler subcamp in Calw, Württemberg, as
January 14, 1945. This date is confirmed by the files of the former concentration camp and an eyewitness report.

The camp probably held between 135 and 200 women. They worked on the night shift at the Luftfahrtgerätesellschaft (Luftg), manufacturing parts for airplanes. They were accommodated on the second floor of a building directly under the roof. Wash and shower facilities were located in the basement of the building. It is possible that the camp also held French and Italian prisoners of war (POWs) later.

On April 1 and 2, 1945, the healthier women and those capable of walking were evacuated in the direction toward Bavaria. The sick were taken to the Dachau subcamp at München-Allach, arriving on April 11, 1945. They were liberated by U.S. troops at the end of April—beginning of May 1945.

**SOURCES** The Calw subcamp is mentioned in the ITS’s *Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945)* (Arolsen: Suchdienst, 1979), 1: 200.

A short description of the camp, from which details for this essay are taken, is to be found in Herwart Vorländer, ed., *Nationalsozialistische Konzentrationslager im Dienst der totalen Kriegführung; Sieben württembergische Aussenkommandos des Konzentrationslagers Natzweiler/Elsass.* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer-Verlag, 1978), p. 11.

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**COCHEM-BRUTTIG (“ZEISIG”)**

[Aka KOCHEM-BRUTTIG]

Cochem-Bruttig, in the former Prussian Rhine Province, was the site of a Natzweiler subcamp, which administratively was connected to the Cochem-Treis subcamp. Some sources, among them the International Tracing Service (ITS), state that the Cochem-Treis subcamp was a subdetail of the Cochem-Bruttig subcamp. Sometimes both camps are generically described as Cochem (also known as Kochem).

Bruttig and Treis were connected by a disused railway tunnel that had been constructed at the end of World War I. In 1944, it was integrated into the Jägerstab (Fighter Staff) project. The Baubestrebek Reich-West (Building Inspectorate Reich-West), part of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), Amtsgruppe C, was in charge of the tunnel and operated it as “Project A7” (code name “Zeisig”).

According to files from the Natzweiler concentration camp, the camp in Cochem-Bruttig was established on March 10, 1944. The ballroom of the Zum guten Onkel hotel, which was on the outskirts of the town, was requisitioned by the SS to accommodate the first prisoners. The prisoners remained there until they had constructed the new subcamp located at “Auf der Kipp” (i.e., on the railway embankment constructed from fill obtained when the tunnel was excavated).

The first prisoner transport left Natzweiler on March 5, 1944. There were 300 French prisoners, 232 of whom were Nacht-und-Nebel prisoners, who for security reasons actually should not have been permitted to work outside the main camp. After four weeks it was realized that these prisoners should not have been there, and the Frenchmen were removed from the camp and replaced by more than 700 new prisoners—417 Poles, 286 Russians, 5 Croats, 2 Frenchmen, 1 Italian, 5 Germans, and 2 stateless persons. An additional 850 Polish and Russian prisoners from Auschwitz arrived on May 3, 1944. Prisoners were also sent from Buchenwald and in July 1944 from Hintzert to the camps at Bruttig and Treis. The Zeisig construction project involved Frenchmen, Poles, Russians, Dutch, Belgians, Luxembourgers, Yugoslavs, Italians, Croats, Greeks, Norwegians, and a few Germans. Most probably there were no Jewish prisoners. The prisoners were from just about all prisoner categories—convicts transferred from the judicial system to a concentration camp (Security Custody, SV), temporary and preventive remand, asocials, foreign civilian workers, prisoners of war (POWs), prisoners for political reasons, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Special Section Wehrmacht (SAW)—and all types of trades and professions: trademen, laborers, farmers, technicians, officers, teachers, traders, white-collar workers, a few apprentices, pupils, students, and doctors. The youngest prisoner in Cochem turned 16 on April 2, 1944. A Frenchman, aged 61, was the oldest. On July 24, 1944, there were 1,527 prisoners in the subcamps at Bruttig and Treis. There was a regular exchange of prisoners between the Natzweiler main camp and the subcamps. It is not known how the prisoners were distributed between the two camps at Bruttig and Treis.

The railway tunnel Bruttig-Treis, with an area of 21,000 square meters (25,116 square yards), was to be expanded by the prisoners for use by Bosch, Stuttgart, so that spark plugs could be produced in the tunnel. To expand the tunnel, the SS-Führungsstab (Command Staff) A7 listed the following materials: 550 metric tons (606 tons, short U.S.) building iron, 275 metric tons (303 tons, short U.S.) machine iron, 145 cubic meters (190 cubic yards) raw timber, 610 cubic meters (798 cubic yards) cut timber, 1,500 metric tons (1,653 tons, short U.S.) cement, and 200 metric tons (220 tons, short U.S.) bricks. The total cost of construction was 3.5 million Reichsmark (RM). The lead construction company was Fix from Dernau.

The names of some members of the Führungsstab (management) of Project A7 are known: it was first led by SS-Obersturmführer Meyer from March 1944. In May 1944, he was replaced by SS-Sturmbannführer Gerrit Oldeboershuis, also known as “Oldenbuhr,” who also was head of the Special Inspectorate (Sonderinspektion) III in Bad Wimpfen on the Neckar River. By the end of the war, Oldeboershuis was the camp commandant at Ohrdruf. The deputy commander was SS-Untersturmführer Karl-Heinz Burkhardt (who was given the special task of supervising the construction site in the Bruttig-Treis tunnel). Other names of men who served there are Wachtmeister Funke and SS-Mann Felder. The local representative of the Amtsgruppe D with the A7 project was SS-Obersturmführer Rudolf Beer (also spelled “Bär”), SS-Sturmscharführer and Kreissekretär (District Secretary)
Friedrich Schulze was given security responsibility by the Koblenz Gestapo.

The commander in the Bruttig and Treis subcamp was initially SS-Obersturmführer Beer. He was followed by SS-Obersturmführer Scheffe and later SS-Untersturmführer Wicker. The prisoners were guarded by a Luftwaffe detachment commanded by Hauptmann Rückert. However, some sources state that SS members or Wehrmacht members constituted the guard.

Working conditions in the tunnel were catastrophic. Ernst Heimes wrote:

Everyone goes into the tunnel. That is the worst of the work columns. It is really mean. The dead are no longer counted. . . . The old water drainage system is to be removed and a larger ditch is to be constructed. At the entrance civilians supervise the work; insults are in German, the baton at the ready. . . . And the hunger. . . . The prisoners never get even the smallest portion of sausage or margarine. Packages arrive, but the SS takes them. Even most of the bread is stolen from them. The prisoners eat only weels and white snails. . . . There are four water cans for 400 prisoners. It is impossible to get to them.1

There were constantly attempts to escape, which generally failed because of the local geography—close settlements, hills, and the Mosel River loop. There are more than 20 documented escape attempts from the camps at Bruttig and Treis. In general, the recaptured prisoners were executed in the tunnel. At the Bruttig cemetery are the grave stones of 12 prisoners from the year 1944. Not all the prisoners were buried in the victims in both camps during the Natzweiler period are to be found in Archival records on Cochem and the subcamps Treis and Bruttig and includes numerous photographs. Two Bruttig and Treis prisoners have written their memoirs: Bert Treis and Bruttig and includes numerous photographs. Two Bruttig and Treis prisoners have written their memoirs: Bert Aerts, Advokaat en Nacht en Nevel (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1972); and Henry Allainmat, Auschwitz en France (Paris: Presses de la Cité, 1987). Albert Pütz describes Cochem in Das SS-Sonderlager/KZ Hinzert 1940–1945. Das Anklageverfahren gegen Paul Sporrenberg (The SS Special Camp/Concentration Camp Hinzert 1940–1945. Proceedings against Paul Sporrenberg) (Frankfurt: Ministerium der Justiz Rheinland-Pfalz, 1998) as a subcamp of Hinzert and a Natzweiler work detachment (map at p. 277). In Schattenmenschen (Shadow men) (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes and Apel, 1996), Ernst Heimes relates the events in the Cochem camp and in the subcamps at Bruttig and Treis.

Archival records on Cochem and the subcamps Treis and Bruttig are to be mostly found in the archival collections of the Natzweiler concentration camp. Incomplete details on the victims in both camps during the Natzweiler period are to be found in Nachweise über Grabstätten von Angehörigen der Vereinigten Nationen im bayerischen Amtsbezirk VG Cochem-Land, Kreis Cochem, and Nachweise über Todesfälle von KZ-Häftlingen in der Gemeinde Bruttig, Kreis Cochem, Amtsbezirk Cochem—Cochem Land. There are also two newspaper articles about the proceedings against commanding officers of the Natzweiler subcamps before the Tribunal Général in Rastatt: “Die Verbrechen von Treis und Bruttig,” Tr-Vo 31, August 5, 1947; and “KZ-Lager Treis und Bruttig vor Gericht,”
Cochem-Treis ("Zeisig") [aka Cochem-Treis]

Cochem-Treis on the Mosel River in the former Prussian Rhine Province was the site of a Natzweiler subcamp that organizationally was connected to the Cochem-Bruttig subcamp. Some sources, among them the International Tracing Service (ITS), state that the Cochem-Treis subcamp was a subdetail of the Cochem-Bruttig subcamp, whereas other sources describe both camps as Natzweiler outside details usually known under the common term “Cochem” (also known as Kochem).

Bruttig and Treis were connected by a disused railway tunnel that shortened the Mosel loop between both locations. The tunnel had been built at the end of World War I. In 1944, it was integrated into the Jägerstab (Fighter Staff) project and was known as “Project A7” (code name “Zeisig”) and administered by the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), Amtsgruppe C, Building Inspectorate (Baubesichtigung) Reich-West.

The Cochem-Treis camp is mentioned for the first time in an official report dated March 27, 1944. Confirmation of that report is to be found in the files of the Natzweiler concentration camp. Thus, Cochem-Treis is about two weeks younger than the Bruttig camp. According to a prisoner statement, the Treis camp existed in 1942, but this cannot be confirmed by official documents or from other witnesses.

As temporary accommodation for the prisoners, the SS had requisitioned some rooms in the Treis Wildburg hotel on the Mosel River. The hotel’s hall was separated from the rest of the hotel by barbed wire, and the first 150 prisoners were held there. Presumably, business continued as normal in the rest of the hotel. The prisoners stationed at the hotel constructed the subcamp that was located in Treis “Auf der Kipp” (i.e., on the railway embankment constructed from material excavated from the tunnel). It was to this camp that the prisoners were transferred at the end of March—beginning of April 1944.

Initially, the Treis camp consisted of a two-level prisoner barrack and three other barracks (one for the kitchen and two barracks for the guards) as well as a kennel. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire, and at each of the four corners, there was a watchtower with a height of approximately 4 meters (13 feet). The guards in the towers were armed with machine guns, and searchlights were mounted on the towers. Another six or seven prisoner barracks were very quickly added, the foundations in part being on the railway embankment. It is probable that, as a result, a number of the barracks even had cellars. Outside the camp there were other barracks for the guards, and further up the Mosel, there were three stone buildings, whose purpose remains unclear (most probably they were administration buildings and garages).

The first transport of prisoners from Natzweiler to Bruttig and Treis left on March 5, 1944, and consisted of 300 French prisoners, 232 of whom were Nacht-und-Nebel prisoners. For security reasons, these prisoners usually were not permitted to work outside the main camp. Once this error was realized, four weeks later, the French prisoners were withdrawn and replaced by more than 700 new prisoners—417 Poles, 286 Russians, 5 Croats, 2 French, 1 Italian, 5 Germans, and 2 stateless persons. Another 850 Polish and Russian prisoners arrived from Auschwitz on May 3, 1944. Prisoners were also sent from Buchenwald and, in July 1944, from Hinzert. French, Poles, Russians, Dutch, Belgians, Luxembourgers, Yugoslavs, Italians, Croats, Greeks, Norwegians, and a few Germans (but most likely no Jews) were the prisoners who made up the construction project Zeisig. They were from just about all prisoner categories—convicts transferred from the judicial system to a concentration camp (Security Custody, SV), temporary and preventive remand, asocial, foreign civilian workers, prisoners of war (POWs), prisoners for political reasons, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, SAW (Sicherheits-Abteilung/Security Section Wehrmacht), and all types of trades and professions: tradesmen, laborers, farmers, technicians, officers, teachers, traders, white-collar workers, a few apprentices, pupils, students, and doctors. The youngest prisoner in Cochem turned 16 on April 2, 1944; a French prisoner aged 61 was the eldest. On July 24, 1944, the Natzweiler documents recorded 1,527 prisoners in the subcamps at Bruttig and Treis. There was a constant exchange of prisoners between the main camp and these subcamps. It is not possible to determine for every individual whether they were sent to Bruttig or Treis.

The prisoners’ task was to expand the Bruttig-Treis railway tunnel with its 21,000 square meter (25,116 square yards) area. Once complete, the tunnel was to be used by Bosch, Stuttgart, to manufacture spark plugs. The SS-Führungsstab A7 listed the following material for construction: 550 metric tons (606 tons, short U.S.) building iron, 275 metric tons (303 tons, short U.S.) machine iron, 145 cubic meters (190 cubic yards) raw timber, 610 cubic meters (798 cubic yards) cut timber, 1,500 metric tons (1,653 tons, short U.S.) cement, and 200 metric tons (220 tons, short U.S.) bricks. The total cost of the construction work was 3.5 million Reichsmark (RM), and the construction firm Fix from Dernau had primary responsibility for the work.
From March 1944, Project A7 was commanded by SS-Obersturmführer Meyer and, from May 1944, by SS-Sturmbannführer Gerrit Oldeboershuis, who was known as “Oldenhuir” and who simultaneously was head of the Special Inspectorate (Sonderinspektion) III at Bad Wimpfen on the Neckar River. At the end of the war, Oldeboershuis was in command of the camp at Ohdruf. The second in command was SS-Untersturmführer Karl-Heinz Burkhardt (he had the special task of securing the Bruttig-Treis tunnel construction work). Noncommissioned officers included Wachtmeister Funke and SS-Mann Felder. The regional representative of Amtsgruppe D was SS-Obersturmführer Rudolf Beer (also spelled “Bär”). SS-Sturmscharführer and Kreissekretär (District Secretary) Friedrich Schulze was given responsibility for security by the Koblenz Gestapo.

The commanders of the Bruttig and Treis details were SS-Obersturmführer Beer, followed by SS-Obersturmführer Scheffe and finally by SS-Untersturmführer Wicker. The guards were supplied by a Luftwaffe detachment under the command of Hauptmann Rückert, although some sources refer to SS or Wehrmacht members.

The working conditions in the tunnel were disastrous. Belgian prisoner Albert Aerts, a former lawyer, describes his time in Treis as follows: “The Germans felt that it had become a race against time, and although we only had picks, they drove us with kicks and blows to a hellish working tempo. The road had to be constructed within one week, and that’s the way it happened. Practically, we received no food at all. The guards sold off their rations to the local population, who themselves suffered from hunger. For the first time, we were starving day and night.” There were constant escape attempts that, due to the geography, close settlements, hills, and the Mosel loop, as a rule failed. More than 20 escape attempts were documented for the Bruttig and Treis subcamps. The official documents reveal that the local Treis gendarmerie actively participated in the hunt for the escapees. Recaptured prisoners were regularly executed—in the subcamp at Cochem-Treis, the prisoners were hanged from the acacia or linden trees. Aerts reports that on Good Friday 1944 two Bruttig inmates were crucified for their attempt to escape. The camp inmates had to watch their death struggles for hours. Only at the very end, after many hours, one guard shot them to death.

The punishment was just as severe for those who tried to assist the prisoners. Two civilian forced laborers from Luxembourg working in the tunnel for Bosch, Johann-Peter Wilwert and Wilhelm Braun, gave information, money, and food to some Italian prisoners in the Treis subcamp. They were detected and held as concentration camp prisoners in Treis. Wilwert was later sent to the so-called Education Camp at Neuwied. He died in Buchenwald at the end of 1944–beginning of 1945.

A few prisoners were used outside the tunnel by local tradesmen or in homes, at a smith in Cochem, or for unloading goods at the railway station. Supplies for the subcamps probably came via the Karden railway station (present-day Treis-Karden). The Bosch machines probably came via the Cochem railway station.

Bombing of the camps began at the end of August 1944, and this probably resulted in the decision to close the subcamps. The Cochem-Treis camp is mentioned in official documents for the last time on October 7, 1944. The Treis and Bruttig prisoners were transferred to Buchenwald. A trial began in July 1947 before the Tribunal Général in Rastatt of those in charge of the subcamps at Cochem-Bruttig and Cochem-Treis. SS-Sturmbannführer Oldeboershuis was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor for aggravating crimes committed by him personally. SS-Obersturmführer Scheffe, occasional camp commander, who ordered 13 prisoners to be hung for trying to escape, was sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted on November 8, 1947, to 15 years’ imprisonment with hard labor. Scheffe was released early from prison on July 9, 1956.

SS-Untersturmführer Burkhardt, who, pursuant to Oldeboershuis’s direct order, was responsible for supervision of the construction in the tunnel, was sentenced to 10 years in jail. Oswald Allhäuser, a foreman of some of the prisoners, also received a sentence of 5 years in jail. Mathias Schneider, a mason and office worker at the Treis construction site, and foremen Anton Zimmer and Oskar Krober received sentences of less than 5 years.

**SOURCES**


Reinhold Schommers has published two articles on Cochem: “Die Last drückt immer noch,” *RZC*, ca. 1985; and “Ein Mahnmal deutscher Vergangenheit,” *St. Ald*, ca. 1985. The ITS’s *Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-

The archives at the Natzweiler concentration camp hold documents on the Cochem subcamp and the Treis and Bruttig camps.

Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES


DARMSTADT

The Natzweiler subcamp at Darmstadt was opened on August 31, 1944, according to the files of the main camp. The prisoners were accommodated in Darmstadt and taken daily to Bensheim-Auerbach, where they worked supposedly as draftsmen in a commissioned tunnel of a marble quarry used by the company Dr. Hans Heymann of Darmstadt. They worked on the gyro stabilizers for the V-2 rocket produced in Peenemünde.

Following the heavy bombardment of Darmstadt on September 11–12, 1944, the Darmstadt subcamp was closed, and the prisoners were permanently transferred to Bensheim-Auerbach.

SOURCES


Information regarding the Darmstadt subcamp and the work of the inmates at Bensheim-Auerbach can also be obtained from NWHStA-(D), RG H 13 Darmstadt (Staatsanwaltschaft beim Landgericht Darmstadt), 1124—here especially AZ: 2 Js 263/72, the records of the investigations undertaken in 1970 to 1972.

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DAUTMERGEN

Dautmergen was the largest of the seven Wüste camps, with an average of around 3,000 prisoners. On February 1, 1945, the camp reached its peak number with 3,181 prisoners.1 In addition to the Lithuanian Jews, survivors of the Warsaw Uprising, and resistance members from France, Holland, and Norway, Sinti and Roma (Gypsies) were also held there.

There are records that confirm the following transports: August 23, 1944, 1,000 Poles from Auschwitz; August 31, 1944, 1,000 Poles from Bisingen; September 19, 1944, 15 prisoners from Sachsenhausen; September 27, 1944, 400 prisoners from Dachau; at the beginning of October 1944, 1,000 Jews from Wilna (Vilnius), who had previously been working in Estonian shale oil plants; November 8, 1944, 250 prisoners from the Vaihingen Krankenlager.2 The Natzweiler concentration camp Nummernbuch 6 lists three additional transports: 32 prisoners of unknown origin; 599 prisoners who, no later than the beginning of December 1944, arrived at Dautmergen; and 138 prisoners who left Buchenwald on December 21, 1944.3 The last Buchenwald transport with 280 prisoners reached Dautmergen on March 30, 1945.5 To these 4,714 prisoners must be added an unknown number of Jewish prisoners who were transferred to Dautmergen in the middle of February 1945.

There were initially 50 to 60 guards; 24 were from a former Russian prisoner-of-war (POW) factory security unit that had been formed in Estonia.4 At the end of 1944, 188 men guarded around 3,000 prisoners.6 The camp inmates were mostly deployed at the Wüste 9 construction site in Schönberg. This factory commenced initial operation on March 11, 1945.7

According to a list composed after the end of the war but that starts on November 1944, 1,468 men died in the Dautmergen concentration camp.8 Among the victims (so far as is known) were 356 Jews.9 The total number of victims is not known, as sick prisoners were shunted off to death camps where most did not survive. On November 9, 1944, 500 prisoners were transferred to the Vaihingen/Enz concentration camp. The first of these died two days later.10

SS-Hauptsscharführer Lisken was the camp commander from the beginning of October 1944, having been transferred a few months previous from the Territorial Guardsmen (Landesschütze) to the SS. His successor, Braunwarth, also came from a Landesschütze unit.11

The last camp commander, SS-Unterscharführer Erwin Dold, took over the leadership of the camp at the beginning of March 1945.12 The 24-year-old Luftwaffe noncommissioned officer had previously been camp commander at the Haslach concentration camp and is probably the only camp commander who tried to improve the conditions in the camp. He obtained building material, improved barracks and sanitary conditions, and obtained additional food from the black market. Survivors have described Dold as the “Angel of Dautmergen”13 and as a “great moral support.”14

SS-Unterscharführer Stefan Kruth, who arrived at the end of August 1944 at Dautmergen via the concentration camps Neuengamme, Lublin-Majdanek, Radom, and Vaihingen/Enz, was at first in charge of the camp office and later became the Rapportführer. Kruth, who had the nickname “hare” or “Hase,” because he was constantly hunting the prisoners, engaged in systematic mistreatment of the Jewish prisoners. Survivors have described him as the “prisoners’ nightmare” and as a “prototype sadist.”15
Kruth and Hofmann (commandant of the Natzweiler/Bisingen subcamp) implemented a delousing action in January 1945 that resulted in many victims. The prisoners, including many seriously ill, were forced to bathe in cold water and run back to the camp through the snow either naked or with a minimum of clothing.\(^9\) Kruth, Hofmann, and Wurth ordered the hanging of an unknown prisoner and the shooting of 22 prisoners on April 7, 1945, who had been brought to Dautmergen for their execution. Dold refused to assemble the execution squad. Finally, Wurth led the execution. Among the victims were 20 Russian officers and 2 German clergymen.\(^7\)

Prisoner-functionaries also mistreated prisoners: the feared Polish camp elder and Kapo and his successor, a German prisoner, as well as another Polish Kapo and a young Jewish block elder were all abusive to prisoners.\(^8\)

Dold, the only SS member to face trial, was acquitted by a French military court in Rastatt in 1947 on the evidence provided by survivors. The camp elder and a Kapo were sentenced to death; the Jewish block elder was sentenced to life imprisonment. Six other SS members received the death sentence; there were two life sentences; and two received prison terms of 20 years. An SS member was sentenced to 10 years, two to 5 years, and one to 1 year in prison.\(^9\)

At the trial at the Hechingen Schwurgericht (Court of Assizes) in 1966, the court sentenced Rapportführer Kruth to 12 years in prison in a penitentiary for 2 counts of attempted murder. He had originally been charged on 129 counts of murder and 23 counts of accessory to murder.\(^10\) The court took into account that Kruth “since then had not offended” and that “as a Volksdeutsche he was proud to be serving in the SS.”\(^11\) Hofmann was acquitted of all charges for crimes committed in the Dautmergen concentration camp.\(^22\) On appeal, the Schwurgericht Ulm reduced Kruth’s sentence to 6 years.\(^23\)

Sources


The largest source on the Dautmergen concentration camp is to be found in the Sta-L (Akten der Ermittlungsverfahren und Prozessakten). A few survivors’ reports as well as prisoner lists are held in YVA (including a list of Jewish victims), in the NARA, as well as in the ANFP. In the AOC, there are files on the mass grave, the exhumation after 1945, and the shale oil project. In the Sta-S, there are the files of the Kreisernährungsamt, which provide detail on the camp troops.

NOTES


5. Urteil Hechinger Prozess, S. 58.


8. Schaubild der Opfer der KZ Dautmergen und Schönberg, nach 1945, in StALB, EL 317 III, Bü 1250, Bl. 2859.


DERNAU AN DER AHR [AKA REBSTOCK]

There were several railway tunnels and caverns in the Ahrtal Valley that were of interest to the Reich for the construction of underground munitions plants, especially toward the end of the war. Among other things, the Luftwaffe leadership planned to assemble the V-1 rockets there in underground facilities. One of the participating companies was Volkswagen (VW).

The so-called Restock subcamp in Dernau an der Ahr consisted of a number of different camp types and categories. The camp held military internees, forced laborers, German and foreign laborers, and also concentration camp prisoners. Wolfgang Gückelhorn estimates the percentage of concentration camp prisoners in the Restock camp was around 20 percent; the camps had been in existence long before the first prisoners arrived. The Natzweiler subcamp arrived (that probably took place in 1944) and held prisoners of a number of nationalities: Germans, Poles, Russians, French, Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, Spanish, Dutch, Yugoslavs, and one Canadian flyer.

It is difficult to follow the trail of the Natzweiler subcamp in the Dernau camp complex. Most research works focus on the Dernau camp, but they inadequately differentiate its parts according to main camp. In Dernau, there was also a significant Buchenwald subcamp and a concentration camp for prisoners from the Amersfoort concentration camp.

The Natzweiler/Dernau subcamp originally probably consisted of prisoners from the Natzweiler/Thil subcamp, who in August 1944 were brought to Dernau for construction work. They were followed at the beginning of September by a group of 300 Jewish specialists to work in an underground iron ore mine in Tiercelet that would be used to assemble the V-1. However, the machines and tools remained in the Lothringen town of Tiercelet, and the training of these prisoners could not be used in Dernau. It is likely that in the first two to three weeks of their stay in Dernau they were used in general construction work in the tunnels before they were transported to Mittelbau/Nordhausen in September 1944, when plans for armaments production in Ahrtal were abandoned in the face of the incessant bombardments.

Details on work and living conditions in the Natzweiler subcamp cannot be filtered out from the general information on the Dernau camp complex. The same applies for the prisoners’ death rate. The Natzweiler subcamp in Dernau is not referred to in the published International Tracing Service (ITS) works, nor was it the subject of investigations by the Central Office of State Justice Administrations (ZdL).


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DORMETTINGEN

The Dormettingen concentration camp was the last “Wüste”-Lager to be opened. It was ready at Christmas 1944, but it was only at the end of February—beginning of March 1945 that the first prisoners arrived. According to the mayor of Dormettingen, the number of prisoners in the camp was 3,000; but this number cannot be confirmed. On September 20, 1944, the commander of the Stutthof concentration camp, Hoppe, suspected that the planned transport of 3,000 prisoners to Dormettingen was a mistake. According to investigations by the Central Office of State Justice Administrations (ZdL), around 500 prisoners were ultimately interned in...
Dormettingen. According to statements by two SS men, the camp functioned as a camp for sick prisoners from Bisingen and Dautmergen.

Three slate oil plants were planned for Dormettingen (Wüste 6–8). Only the Wüste-Werk began operation before the war, but it was not fully commissioned. Work on Wüste 6 and 7 ceased at the beginning of March 1945. The camp commander was at first SS-Unterscharführer Fritz Bauer, until he was replaced, probably at the beginning of April 1945, by the Rapportführer and deputy commander of the Bisingen concentration camp, Franz Ehrmanntraut.

The Dormettingen register of deaths records the death of 16 prisoners. The victims were probably buried in Dautmergen. Among the dead were 6 prisoners who attempted to escape after the first air raid on the slate oil plant at the end of March or beginning of April 1945; 2 of them, Hungarian Jews, hid in the house of a leading Dormettingen National Socialist. The camp commander, Ehrmanntraut, was in the house at the time. When he discovered the prisoners in the cellar, he shot them. The other prisoners were held in rooms in the local castle and were probably also shot. The Schömberg gendarmerie daily logbook (Geschäftstagebuch) notes the escape of Nikolai Kierew from Dormettingen, his capture, and his “departure” on April 5, 1945, to the Oberndorf Gestapo.

Nothing is known of his fate.

The Catholic priest in Dormettingen reported after 1945 that the security at the camp shortly before the end of the war was not tight and that the prisoners entered the village. He visited several times a clergyman from Lothringen who was held in the camp. Directions by the camp commander that during religious services the local population should be told not to give food to the prisoners were ignored by him.

The Dormettingen concentration camp was evacuated in April 1945. Between April 6 and 13, 428 prisoners were evacuated to Dachau. The remainder most probably set forth on a death march. The number of victims is not known.

The Dormettingen concentration camp is anchored less in the collective consciousness of the population than a private, “wild” concentration camp established after the end of the war. This camp was established by former concentration camp prisoners and forced laborers who worked at the Deutsche Ölschieferforschungsgesellschaft (German Oil Shale Research Association, DOLF) in Schömberg. The camp was to intern perpetrators from the local Dormettingen concentration camp and local National Socialist bigwigs. They were to be punished here. However, most of the SS at the Dormettingen concentration camp had long gone. Around 40 Germans from Dormettingen and its surrounding area were arbitrarily imprisoned. Among them were a few women who were raped by the guards. At least 16 people were mistreated and died. Among them was an Organisation Todt (OT) construction leader, the former Ortsgruppenleiter in Dotternhausen, the mayor of Dotternhausen, an SS man, and a builder from Metzingen who had mistreated prisoners at the Schömberg concentration camp. Among these perpetrators was the local Dotternhausen commander installed by the French military government, Alfonso Scheerer (also known as Deletre or de Laitre). A Frenchman, he had apparently worked during the National Socialist period for the SD. Also responsible for mistreating the prisoners was a Czech who during the war had worked for a Czech OT labor detachment as well as an engineer and master mechanic Helmer-Sandmann, who had worked for DOLF in Schömberg.

The French military tribunal in Rastatt sentenced Ehrmanntraut on May 29, 1947, to death for the murder of the two Jewish prisoners who escaped from the Dormettingen concentration camp (as well as for other crimes committed in the Bisingen concentration camp). His sentence was finally commuted to 20 years’ imprisonment, and he was released from prison in 1962. Investigations by the Stuttgart state prosecutor into Ehrmanntraut were temporarily halted as the result of a German-French treaty on the exchange of prisoners and were permanently halted after his death in 1974. In 1951, the Rottweil Schwurgericht (Court of Assizes), after extensive investigations, sentenced the person most responsible for the wild camp in Dormettening, Helmer-Sandmann, to 15 years’ imprisonment in a penitentiary.

Sources

There has been little research on the Dormettingen concentration camp. Michael Grandt has devoted part of his book Unternehmen Wüste: Hitlers letzte Hoffnung: Das NS-Olschieferprogramm auf der Schwäbischen Alb (Tübingen: Silberburg-Verlag, 2002) to the camp.

Most information on this subcamp is to be found in the investigation and trial files held in the Sta-L (on the camp commander). A few files, mostly on the topic of shale oil, are held in the AOC, Colmar, as well as the Sta-S. In Sigmaringen there are the investigation files (Verfahren der Staatsanwaltschaft Rottweil) regarding the time of the wild camp.

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Notes

2. Charnier de Schömberg, 1947, S. 24, in AOC, AP/PD, c. 1304, p 15 bis, d. 5.
The Echterdingen camp was founded in November 1944 as a subcamp of Natzweiler, under the supervision of the Organisation Todt (OT)-Bauleitung Esslingen am Neckar. On September 23, 1944, the OT required 600 workers from Oranienburg to work on the military airport; at the beginning of October, a member of the Kommandanturstand Natzweiler visited Echterdingen (a town of 3,054 inhabitants in 1939) in order to prepare for the establishment of the camp. The whole administration of the camp was in the hands of the SS; an SS-Untersturmführer who had been active in Natzweiler since January 1942 and later became block leader (Blockführer) was appointed to oversee the guards; he finished the war as head of the women's camp Geislingen an der Steige. All the other guards belonged to the German air force.

As early as November 22, an inmate died in Echterdingen. His death was registered at the Bernhäuser city hall, the neighboring town, which indicates that inmates arrived very shortly after the OT had requisitioned them. Six days later, the first eight inmates were incarcerated in the Esslinger crematorium, eight Jews. The inmates arrived from Oranienburg but also from the Konzentrationslager (KZ) Stutthof near Danzig, in one single transport. Some were transported in ordinary passenger trains that split at the Stuttgart train station between Echterdingen and Spaichingen, another Natzweiler subcamp.

Before the arrival of the Jewish inmates from Oranienburg, foreign workers, mostly East European prisoners of war (POWs), had already worked on the airport compound and also on the surrounding farms. They lived in the empty hangar, as the planes were no longer kept in it because of the Allied air attacks. They were provided with minimum furniture, beds, coal heating, and even cupboards and with makeshift quarters for doctors and the camp elder (Lagerältester). Four watchtowers were built to guard the prisoners and were surrounded by a nonelectrified fence. A kitchen barrack and an OT office were built outside the camp. Some 600 inmates, all male Jews, were registered under Natzweiler numbers 42904 to 43503. The main camp kept the records of the death registry.

The camp was widely self-administrated, and four inmates worked in the kitchen. There were three doctors among the inmates. All of the prisoners had been registered for labor on the transport list, most as officially unskilled manual workers. The transport list kept in the Arolsen archives shows that the inmates were of different nationalities, including Dutch, Italian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, Estonian, Belgian, and Russian. The largest number came from Poland; some inmates were registered as Spaniards, others as political Jews (politishe Juden) who were in fact German. Many of the inmates arrived in Echterdingen in poor health, sick and undernourished. They received no food during the transport to Stuttgart. While the conditions of living in the new camp were much better than in Stutthof or Oranienburg, the food supplies remained insufficient. No evidence of ill treatment in Echterdingen is documented due to the composition of the guards and of the prisoner administration; the Lagerältester, a Polish Jew named Jakob, behaved quite decently toward his fellow prisoners. The death rate in Echterdingen was high, though still below many other concentration camps. A maximum of 111 inmates perished of the 600 who arrived in Echterdingen: 8 in November 1944, 49 in December, and 54 in January 1945. The first 19 bodies were burned in the Esslingen crematorium, and the ashes were transported to the Jewish section of the Ebershalden cemetery. The cremations had to be stopped for lack of adequate facilities, and the bodies were then buried in two mass graves in the communal forest, about 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) from the camp. In January 1945, a typhus epidemic raged through the camp. The deaths were also registered in a special volume at the city hall, following the instruction of the mayor, but a secretary of the municipality burned it in April 1945 when French troops entered the village.

Doctors treated the ill in the camp. One to three doctors worked at any given time, among them a Doctor Goldberg from Kraków. The German air force, the OT and the Esslinger hospital provided a small amount of medicine.

The inmates had four work assignments: the construction of a road between the airport and the neighboring motorway, so that the planes could be moved to them for takeoff; the camouflaging of planes to protect them from air raids; the cleaning of the airport runways after air attacks; and the mining of rock from a quarry. The quarry was located 6 kilometers away (3.7 miles) from the Echterdingen camp, between Bernhausen and Sielmingen. It belonged to the Bernhausen municipality as well as to several private individuals and had been idle before the war. German civilians worked alongside the inmates, probably as skilled workers. The SS received 6 Reichsmark (RM) a day per skilled worker and 4 RM per unskilled worker.
All contacts between the inmates and the civilian population were strictly forbidden. Nonetheless, the senior inmate met frequently with the mayor of the village, as the municipality was in charge of providing the ration cards for the inmates. Some inhabitants gave food to Jews on their way to work, even though this was forbidden by the head of the camp.

The SS administration dismantled the Echterdingen subcamp at the end of January 1945, following the typhus epidemic. At that time, air raids on the airport were frequent, and the village was almost entirely destroyed. Two transports of 50 men each left the camp on January 9 and 10 and eventually reached the Natzweiler/Vaihingen subcamp. On January 21, a transport of 12 train cars left the Echterdingen train station, taking the remaining inmates to Ohrdruf, a subcamp of Buchenwald. These cars were heated; the transport bore the number 6782554 and took two days to reach its final destination. A fourth transport left Echterdingen, also on January 21; 59 men were sent to Celle/Hannover. They might possibly have arrived in Bergen-Belsen, but their fate remains unknown.

After the war, American forces ordered the bodies of the deceased inmates to be reburied in the Jewish section of the Esslingen cemetery. A ceremony was held there in October 1945. The American air force occupied the airport and took over the still-standing hangar that had housed the inmates.


Documents on the camp can be found at ITS, Hänge- mappe Akdo Echterdingen, and at BA-L (AZ. IV 419 AR 1775/67).

Jean-Marc Dreyfus

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**ELLWANGEN**

A Natzweiler concentration camp for male prisoners was located in the Württemberg town of Ellwangen on Stettin Strasse. The camp is mentioned for the first time in the Natzweiler files on June 28, 1943. Other sources refer to the date that it is first recorded as June 18, 1943. Herwart Vorländer’s work states that the camp was probably completed in August 1943 and that it commenced operation then. The number of prisoners exploited in Ellwangen is unclear: in September 1943, it was probably 50, and another 50 arrived at the end of 1944. In March 1945, there were 102 prisoners in the camp, mostly foreigners. There were very few German prisoners. All the prisoners were accommodated in barracks.

The men worked for the SS-Grenadier-Ersatz-Ausbildungs Bataillon 5 (Grenadier Replacement Training Battalion 5) in the Neunheim quarry, the charcoal-fueled power station (Holzkiobelmeilern) in Schwäbisch Hall, where they produced charcoal for carburetors. They constructed bunkers, roads, and dwellings; repaired military barracks; and did other work in the barracks. Julius Schätzle states that five prisoners died in the Ellwangen camp.

According to an official report, the camp was evacuated on April 6, 1945 (following Gudrun Schwarz) via Hessental to Dachau (other sources conclude that the prisoners were sent to Dachau/München-Allach). The first night of the prisoners’ evacuation march was spent in their former work site, the Neunheim quarry. Around 30 of the prisoners lost their lives during the night. The survivors finally joined prisoners from the Schwäbisch Hall-Hessental subcamp on the Hessental death march, reaching Dachau/München-Allach sometime between April 19 and 21.


Evelyn Zegenhagen

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**ERZINGEN**

The SS-Deutsche Schieferöl (German Shale Oil) GmbH, founded on May 2, 1944, part of the Amtsgruppe (Office Group) W des SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt (SS-Business Administration Main Office) and a subsidiary of the SS economic enterprise Deutsche Wirtschaftsbetriebe (German Business Enterprises) GmbH, was responsible for the construction of a factory to process shale oil in Erzingen. The SS wanted to keep open all possible options for the production of oil so that it would be in control of the ever-decreasing supplies. Russian prisoners of war (POWs) were to
provide the labor, and the SS established a camp called Hungerberg for them in Erzingen. The local population called it the Russian camp (Russenlager). The factory was to be operational by May 1945.

The SS-Schieferöl and its primitive attempts to extract oil from shale using a charcoal-fired power station became part of Unternehmen Wüste. On May 30, 1944, the Arbeitsstab Geilenberg began construction of Wüste 4 and Wüste 5 in Erzingen. The Erzingen concentration camp was completed on May 22, 1944. It was situated opposite the railway station. The first prisoners arrived a month later.

Although the SS-Schieferöl was officially established in May (meaning that it was then entered into the Handelsregister), equipment was being transported by rail to Erzingen from March 1944. A list prepared by the company Ernst König, Magdeburg, which was involved in the construction, makes this clear.

The subcamp was constructed by the 20 prisoners from the Schömberg concentration camp, including Julien Hagenbourger, who later was prisoner recorder (Häftlingsschreiber) in the concentration camps at Erzingen and Schörzingen. They were brought each day by rail to Erzingen from Schömberg: construction took two months, from March to the end of April, taking place during the period that materials were supplied by the König company.1 The barracks were prefabricated, and the Organisation Todt (OT) was the project manager. Initially, the newly constructed barracks held the work detachments, and later Erzingen became a camp for political prisoners. It existed from May 22, 1944, to April 17, 1945 (331 days). It was the fourth of the seven Wüste camps and was, like the main camp, a Nacht-und-Nebel Lager; its prisoners were mainly resistance fighters from the German-occupied states of Western and Northern Europe. The first 200 prisoners arrived in Erzingen on June 22, 1944. In the Natzweiler Nummernbuch, the Erzingen concentration camp was abbreviated with the letter E, which conforms to the Dutch camp system of Western and Northern Europe. The first 200 prisoners were a list prepared by the company Ernst König, Magdeburg, which was involved in the construction, makes this clear.

The accused tried in the postwar trial in Rastatt also included SS-Hauptscharführer Karl Rießlin; SS-Aufseher Anton Geisel, nicknamed by the prisoners as “White Glove” (weisse Handschuhe); and Simon Kellinger, the “Machine Pistol” (Maschinenspistole). Paul Marek, König’s head foreman, also played a special role at the camp. He was convicted with the other accused in Rastatt: he had the nickname “Croqui-gnome” (or Nasenstüber).

The SS lived in the village of Erzingen, as did Marek and the other mine inspectors (Schachtmeister). The Erzingen concentration camp is an example of how the SS hierarchical structures meshed with those of the OT and civilian firms who did the construction work: here were the “anarchical gray zones” where the Erzingen prisoners could profit.

The prisoner hierarchy (Häftlingshierarchie) included the prisoner-functionaries (Funktionshäftlinge) of the camp, including Dr. Léon Bouthbien, who looked after the prisoners as well as the guards. “Thanks to the French prisoner doctor . . . the sick were able to get indispensable care,” in reference to the small infirmary in the Erzingen concentration camp.2 The block elder (Blockältester) was Bernhardus Hemmer, a Dutchman, as was camp elder (Lagerältester) Jan A. Cleaton. All three received birthday wishes in the form of cards from their fellow prisoners in 1944–1945. This reveals the unusual character of the Erzingen camp, as the birthday cards were a sign of resistance against the National Socialist regime, which wanted to destroy the Nacht-und-Nebel prisoners. The birthday cards for Cleaton’s thirty-first birthday on December 15, 1944, were from prisoners of each nationality in the camp—Norwegians, French, Belgians, and Dutch. This was the composition of the Erzingen camp and is confirmed by the Häftlingsbestandsbuch.3

There was also a close connection between the prisoners and the civilian employees, as shown in the case of Dr. Bouthbien and Frau Ziebarth. For Christmas 1944, she organized “cakes” that Bouthbien thanked her for with the following note: “I am very much touched that Saint Nicholas did not forget us—and I rejoice at the fine presents! Once again I thank you—Leon.”4 Ziebarth also gave the prisoners a work by Goethe, and in return, Isaak Wirschup, the only Jew in the camp, drew a portrait of her and Cleaton; the connection was very strong.5 All of them, including the SS (it is said that
Olesch was “bearable when he was drunk”), prevented the transfer of Wirschup to Berlin, as he was “urgently needed” in Erzingen.6

There were a few prisoners who died. One event makes it clear that this had something to do with the work the prisoners were forced to do. Cleton records the deadly accident (Unfall) of the Belgian Gastwirt Marcel Groevoet, born on August 8, 1909, prisoner number 17392, on “30–11–44.” Paul Marek had to answer for this “accident” after the war in the Rastatt Trials, as he was accused of deliberately loosening the last screw while pipes were being unloaded at the Erzingen railway station. This could not be proven. Marek, as a civilian mine inspector, supervised small groups of prisoners who worked on the supplies for Erzingen including unloading railway wagons, heavy labor for which there were additional rations. Erzingen concentration camp prisoners worked on the construction sites of the Wüste-Werke 4 and 5, at other Wüste construction sites that they reached by traveling by rail, and on building a light field railway that would connect the “Abbaufeld” and “Kondensations.”

The prisoners mined shale at the Wüste 4 and 5 construction sites of the Deutsche Bergwerks- und Hüttenbau Gesellschaft (DBHG); worked the oil ovens run by the Bossert company; and dug caverns, as the prisoners had to help the Erzingen villagers construct air-raid shelters, which are today remembered by the villagers as “Jakobibau,” in memory of the leader (Gefolgschaftsführer) of the operation, Jakobi.

**sources**

There are numerous archival sources on the Erzingen concentration camp in the ASt-Bal. The estate of Frau Ingeborg Ziebarth, who worked in the geological office and who had good contact with the prisoners, also provides a wealth of information.

The author possesses original documents relating to Erzingen, including the birthday cards prepared by the Nacht- und Nebel prisoners for Cleton’s thirty-first birthday.

The StA-S also contains numerous unpublished archival sources including postwar documents from the Zentralverwaltung der Württembergischen Olschieferwerke and documents from the National Socialist period on the Wüste Project.

Immo Opfermann trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**notes**


3. This card is displayed in the Natzweiler main camp.


5. Verbally by I. Ziebarth.

6. Ibid.

**frankfurt am main [aka Katzbach]**

A Natzweiler subcamp was located in Frankfurt am Main in the Prussian province of Hessen-Nassau. According to concentration camp files, the subcamp was opened on August 22, 1944. The subcamp, which lasted for seven months, held 1,600 prisoners, many of whom were Poles. The prisoners mostly came from the Natzweiler, Dachau, and Buchenwald concentration camps. Many of them were in poor condition and suffered from tuberculosis. It is likely that very few survived the camp.

The prisoners worked at the Vereinigte Dente OTA (VDO, previously known as Heinrich Kleyer), Kleyer Strasse 45, Frankfurt am Main. They manufactured replacement parts for tanks and trucks, but they were also used within Frankfurt in cleanup operations after bombing raids. They were accompanied by SS guards as they were taken to and from work. The camp was cut off from the outside world. There are reports of frequent executions in the Adler factories where skilled tradesmen from Western Europe, laborers from Eastern Europe, prisoners of war (POWs), and Italian military internees (IMIs) all worked. All of them were forced workers.

There were still 474 prisoners in the camp in March 1945, many of whom were suffering from tuberculosis. On March 24–25, 1945, the prisoners were evacuated on foot to Gelhausen, via Dörnigheim, and on to Hünefeld. More than 80 prisoners died on this death march. From Hünefeld the prisoners were sent on March 30 to the Buchenwald concentration camp, where many of them, because of their weakened condition, were murdered in the infirmary by lethal injection.

There are few witness statements on the subcamp and the prisoners’ treatment. Two of those statements were made in 1946 by a former employees’ spokesman and by the deputy director of the factory. There are said to have been investigations against the last managing director of the Adlerwerke, but they were stopped in 1949. It is claimed that after the liberation of the subcamp by U.S. forces, 516 urns, marked with wooden crosses and nameplates, were buried in the vicinity of the camp; however, the locations of these graves are no longer known.

**references**


3. This card is displayed in the Natzweiler main camp.


5. Verbally by I. Ziebarth.

6. Ibid.
FROMMMERN

At the war’s unexpected reversal of fortunes in 1942, certain circles in the Wehrmacht remembered the Swabian shale oil rocks and commissioned geological investigations on the edge of the Albtrauf with the aim of securing a limited degree of self-sufficiency in oil production and so as not to be outdone by the SS, which planned a shale oil plant in Erzingen. Test wells were drilled in Frommern, Endingen, and Rosswangen. Frommern was chosen as the site for a factory that would extract oil from shale using the Lurgi-Schweizer method.

Before the war, there had been planned a shale oil test plant at the Dotternhausen cement factory. In 1936, there were plans for eight shale oil-processing plants on the “Ölschieferplateau Schönberg-Dotternhausen,” geologically part of the Frommern location.

The Frommern concentration camp was located close to the Lias factory (one of the 11 facilities that processed oil shale and so loosely connected with Gruppe “Wüste”) because it was here that the concentration camp prisoners would work, just as they worked in the Wüste camps. The camp is unusual because it did not have a large number of prisoners: only 120. A “Forderungsnachweis Nr. 34/44 über den Häftlingseinsatz” dated June 1, 1944, and sent by SS-Obersturmführer Ehrmanntraut to the Lias-Ölschiefer-Ausschuss: “Ölschieferplateau Schönberg-Dotternhausen,” geologically part of the Frommern location.

The prisoners were accommodated in barracks. A British aerial photograph from March 15, 1945, shows the number of barracks and their location. The Allies could not but see the quickly expanding construction site between the dividing line of the “Ohnra” and “Kohl” fields.

The Frommern concentration camp functioned as a subcamp from March 1, 1944, to April 17, 1945. Its commander was Hartjenstein, the superior to the Forderungsnachweis signatory. On July 14, 1944, he arranged for 20 prisoners from the Frommern concentration camp to be transferred to Ebingen to remove unexploded enemy ordinance. This provides further proof that Frommern was administered by the Waffen-SS and the “KL Natzweiler Elsass” office. In the concentration camp’s Nummernbuch, which lists all the prisoners that were sent from the main camp to this camp, the Frommern concentration camp is abbreviated with a simple “F”.

SS-Hauptscharführer Wilhelm Seith, born March 25, 1896, was the camp commander in Frommern. He headed the camp from March to December 1944. He arranged for the paint that gave the barracks a more friendly appearance, as one has “to be able to see from the outside that the barracks hold humans and not animals.” His successor was either SS-Obersturmführer Wurth or Hauptscharführer Driziwicki: this is an indication of the personnel connections with the other concentration camps because Wurth administered Dautmergen and Bisingen as was revealed in the Hechinger trial.

Poles, Russians, French, Italians, Alsatians, Croats, and Germans were used as laborers (Hilfsarbeiter). There were skilled workers, for example, three carpenters and two painters: the relationship between the two was about 2:1, as there were around 80 laborers and 40 skilled workers. The skilled workers, as with those higher up the hierarchy, lived in private homes in Frommern.

The Frommern camp infrastructure resembled that of a large concentration camp: an SS squad of 20 to 28 men formed the guards, in part recruited from men from the nearby villages such as Weilstetten; there was an SS cook; and Fritz Böttiger managed the canteen, suggesting a separation between meals for the guards and the prisoners. There was medical care from two local Frommern doctors and later a camp doctor, a Polish prisoner. One of the three barracks was the infirmary, and there was a shower-bath that was adequate, according to eyewitnesses. There is nothing to suggest that there were executions in Frommern or that prisoners died there. It is possible that this had something to do with the camp’s prisoner hierarchy. As a German prisoner, Wilhelm Kratt, a salesman in civilian life, born on March 21, 1905, in Trossingen, was for a long period of time the camp elder, Kapo, and camp scribe. His successor, the French prisoner Edmond Heiter from Forbach in Lothringen, was also probably able to prevent the worst in Frommern because of its small size.

Death certificates of the deceased in Frommern were signed by SS-Stabsarzt Dr. Steinicke or the SS-Standortarzt Dr. Rohde, well known in Bisingen and Dautmergen.

There are eight foreign “protective custody” prisoners (Schutzhaftlinge) listed in the Frommern register of deaths. Of these, three died between January and March 1945. Their deaths were listed as the typical causes of death and noted by the doctors on the death certificates, real or otherwise, namely, as “acute heart weakness” or “tuberculosis.” The prisoner numbers of these prisoners suggest that they came from the Natzweiler main camp or another large camp.

The Frommern concentration camp was fenced in with a 2-meter-high (6.6-feet-high) electrified barbed-wire fence.

VOLUME I: PART B
The Royal Air Force photo shows four rather large barracks. A comparison with other photos from the early days of construction of the Lias factory suggests that it was only the concentration camp area that was fenced in with barbed wire. Three large prisoners' barracks are separated from the SS guards' area and a barracks for mine inspectors (Schachtmeisterbaracke) by a double barbed-wire fence.

The prisoners worked daily for 11 hours. The sick were not permitted to remain in the barracks and, on orders issued by the camp command, were forced to stay in the area of the construction site until those who could work returned.

Some 55 concentration camp inmates were taken by rail to Dachau and given Dachau numbers: 17 on April 12, 1945, and 38 on April 13. The remainder of the prisoners embarked on a death march on April 17 with prisoners from the other camps, marching in the direction of Bodensee and the National Socialist period.

The prisoners worked daily for 11 hours. The sick were admitted to the camp on December 12, 1944. The subcamp comprised three barracks located on the factory grounds. They were to hold 200 female prisoners by the Natzweiler commandant's headquarters on September 26, 1944. The subcamp comprised three barracks located on the factory grounds. They were to hold 200 female prisoners who were admitted to the camp on December 12, 1944. The prisoners were mostly Polish Jewish women from the Łódź ghetto who had been selected in Auschwitz as “capable of working.” There were also a few Hungarian Jewish women. They were all sent to Geisenheim via Bergen-Belsen. It is likely that the prisoners had also been processed through the camp at Ravensbrück.

Lothar Bembenek’s research has revealed that the Geisheim subcamp was established following a special order given by the Natzweiler commandant’s headquarters on September 26, 1944. The subcamp comprised three barracks located on the factory grounds. They were to hold 200 female prisoners who were admitted to the camp on December 12, 1944. The prisoners were mostly Polish Jewish women from the Łódź ghetto who had been selected in Auschwitz as “capable of working.” There were also a few Hungarian Jewish women. They were all sent to Geisenheim via Bergen-Belsen. It is likely that the prisoners had also been processed through the camp at Ravensbrück.

Lothar Bembenek has shown that as early as August 1944 seven female workers from the machine factory, each of whom had just turned 20, were sent to Ravensbrück for training so that they would be ready to assume the roles of female wardens in the subcamp. Of the 200 prisoners, 80 worked for the machine factory Johannisberg GmbH. The remainder, about 120 in number, worked for Krupp. They finished off the seals for flak guns. The female wardens accompanied the prisoners to work and back and guarded them while they were working. The type and the duration of work were determined, however, by the foremen and skilled tradesmen at Krupp. Prisoner statements vary significantly about the type and degree of difficulty of the work.

In the camp there were 10 SS male guards under the command of SS-Lagerführer Schack. In addition, there were seven female wardens in the factory. Prisoners have described the camp as clean, the food as tolerable, and the treatment by the guards as humane. Schack was soon replaced by SS-Oberscharführer Lenzian. He mistreated the women severely.
The prisoners have also stated that, except for Lenzian, no SS male ever entered the camp. The real security was provided by five SS uniformed women in the barracks who, as a rule, properly treated the prisoners and never beat them. Medical care was provided by an SS noncommissioned medical orderly and a Polish Jewish woman. According to the prisoners, when one of the prisoners was suffering from inflammation of the lungs, a senior SS doctor was called. After the war, the Wiesbaden state prosecutor investigated an incident in which a female prisoner and her newly born baby were said to have died because the SS was intentionally negligent in providing the appropriate care. The proceedings were stopped 25 years after the event, as it was not possible to prove the allegation. Overall, there were few deaths in the subcamp.

Following the evacuation of the subcamp on March 18, 1945, the women were forced to march seven weeks via Geisingen and Neckargerach to the Dachau/München-Allach camp. A couple of women were shot along the march (which took place only during the night), and others were mistreated when they arrived in München-Allach.

**SOURCES**

Lothar Bembenek describes the Geisenheim subcamp in detail in his article “AK Geisenheim,” in *Hessen hinter Stacheldraht: Verdrängt und vergessen. KZs, Lager, Ausenkommandos*, ed. Lothar Bembenek (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Publishing House, 1984), p. 50. On p. 51, there is an aerial photograph of the Krupp factory, and the Johannisberg machine factory, both taken by the USAAF on March 13, 1945. The four barracks are clearly visible.

The HAK contains an essay defending the use and treatment of the Geisenheim workforce. It is to be found in the file WA 40/681. It was prepared in June 1948 by lawyer Dr. W. Siemens and presented to the U.S. military tribunal as part of Krupp’s defense.

The investigation files of the ZdL (held at BA-L) hold statements by two female wardens and four former prisoners. Investigations by the Wiesbaden state prosecutor into the negligent death of a female prisoner and her baby are to be found in that court’s file 8 Js 232/71.

Evelyn Zegenhagen
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**GEISLINGEN AN DER STEIGE**
The Natzweiler Geisingen an der Steige subcamp for women was located in what is Kreis Göppingen in present-day Baden-Württemberg. The women were accommodated in a section of a barracks camp for East European forced laborers on the Heidenheim Strasse/Robert-Bosch-Strasse. The site was leased by the city to Württembergische Metallwarenfabrik (WMF). The company, in return for the lease, agreed to accommodate all of Geisingen city’s foreign labor force.

In February 1944, the WMF entered an agreement with the Organisation Todt (OT) where an area of 100 × 100 meters (109 × 109 yards) on the site was fenced off with a 1.5-meter-high (5-feet-high) barbed-wire fence. On the inside of the fence a ditch was dug. Wooden screens hid the view of the camp from the road. In the camp, there were five (some sources say six) one-level accommodation barracks with a surface area of 8 × 26 meters (26 × 85 feet), an infirmary barracks, and an office barracks that held the camp’s administration and the guards. In the summer of 1944, the WMF negotiated with regional Höherer-SS und Polizeiführer Oberguppenführer Hoffmann for the dispatch of concentration camp prisoners to the new camp. On July 28, 1944, 600 Hungarian Jewish women arrived at the camp, with the arrival of the transport the camp was open. The women were aged between 15 and 45. Their heads had been shaved. They were put in quarantine for a fortnight; this respite may also have been because the WMF had initially not been able to find a sufficient number of its employees (there had to be at least 15) who would volunteer to be wardresses.

The WMF supplied the prisoners’ accommodations and food. The women working the night shift received per person an extra liter (4.2 cups) of soup; there was a camp vegetable garden, and the company made tools and seed available. The prisoners stated that the food in the factory was markedly better than that in the camp. This was not because of any philanthropic motive but because of the necessity of preserving the prisoners’ strength. Within a few weeks of the camp opening, additional security measures were put in place including rolls of barbed wire, searchlights, guard towers, and probably an electrified fence.

The first camp commander was SS-Oberscharführer Christian Ahrens. He was soon transferred to Natzweiler and replaced by a person named Schopp. In January 1945, Rene Roman took over command of the camp.

With the arrival of transports from Ravensbrück, the prisoner administration came into operation: in October 1944, 6 political and 10 asocial women arrived in the subcamp who were appointed the block elders. On November 29, 1944, 130 women arrived from Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. The total number of women in the camp was at least 800 and possibly as high as 1,050. The women worked in the Württemberg metal factory, producing munitions, engines for jet fighters, machine guns, and empennage (tail assemblies) for aircraft. Mostly, they produced coops for the jet engines and worked on the presses, working in two shifts, each of 12 hours, with shift changes at 6:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. The women were separated from the other workers both at work and on their route to work by wooden partitions. The SS guards accompanied the women to work, where the wardresses took over. The behavior of the wardresses and the German foremen is described as correct in prisoner statements, and in a few cases, they supported the women with food and medicine.

Nevertheless, living conditions in the camp were hard. There was a lack of food, which, coupled with the long working hours, resulted in many accidents at work. The prisoners...
were mistreated, with survivors reporting whippings. In the camp, there was an infirmary that was under the control of a Hungarian female doctor. On average, around 10 percent of the prisoners were ill—and this despite the fact that the women knew that being in the sick bay was accompanied by the risk of being selected. As a rule, women who could no longer work were transported to Auschwitz (which usually meant to the gas chambers). Details of at least two transports to Auschwitz have survived. Pregnant women were also transported—at least one child who was born in the camp died in the camp. At least 8 (some sources say 12) women died in the camp and were buried in the local cemetery or cremated.

On March 28, 1945, an evacuation transport of 230 women arrived in Geislingen. It had originated in Auschwitz, traveling via Bergen-Belsen, Neckargerach, and Calw to Geislingen. For a short time, the number of women in the camp climbed to over 1,000, but no more work was being done. The WMF refused to feed the newly arrived women and asked the SS to evacuate the camp. A few days later, on April 4, 1945, the women were taken by train in the direction of Dachau/München-Allach. However, before they arrived at that camp, they were liberated by Allied troops on April 17, 1945.

Arthur Burkhardt, of the WMF, who was in charge of the use of the concentration camp prisoners, was interned by the Allies between 1946 and circa 1948. After that, he was released and was in charge of the WMF for the next 21 years.

SOURCES This essay closely follows a report of the Geislingen city administration at www.geislingen.de/formulare/Ausenlager.pdf. The camp history is told in several essays including one by Annette Schäfer: “Das Aussenlager des Konzentrationslagers Natzweiler in Geislingen/Steige,” 1999 3 (1990). Ullrich Haller describes the camp in his essay on the complex web of forced labor in the city (foreign forced laborers, military internees, POWs, and concentration camp prisoners) in “Zwangarbeit und Rüstungsproduktion in Geislingen an der Steige, 1939–1945,” ZfStLg 57 (1998): 305–368. The essay contains numerous statistical details including the WMF turnover between 1939 and 1945 and the total number of people employed by the company including POWs and concentration camp prisoners.


Richard Steegmann describes the Geislingen an der Steige subcamp in several sections of his comprehensive history of the Natzweiler concentration camp: Struthof. Le KL-

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**GUTTENBACH [ALSO BINAU AND NEUNKIRCHEN (FAHRBEREITSCHAFT)]**

Guttenbach is located in Nordbaden, 14 kilometers (8.7 miles) to the northwest of Mosbach in the Neckar River Valley between the cities of Heidelberg and Heilbronn. After World War II, it was incorporated into the town of Neckargerach, which lies to the south of the Neckar River.

It is uncertain whether there was in fact a Natzweiler subcamp in the Baden-Württemberg town of Guttenbach. The village provided accommodation for the guards of the Neckargerach subcamp, which was only 500 meters (547 yards) from the town; the assumption that there was a subcamp in Guttenbach might be the result of this arrangement.

From November 23, 1944, on, the Natzweiler concentration camp administration was transferred, in the face of the advance by Allied troops, to Guttenbach, just opposite Neckargerach, on the opposite side of the Neckar River. The approximately 15 to 20 SS men who worked in the Guttenbach command remained responsible for organizing the guard units for the various subcamps, for assessing labor requests by regional companies, and for preparing information that served as the basis for the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) when determining labor allocations. At the end of February or the beginning of March 1945, the members of the camp command retreated to Stuttgart and from there farther south.

Between November 23, 1944, and March 2, 1945, 30 to 35 (other sources: 10 to 15) prisoners worked in the command office and on farms around Guttenbach.

Like the prisoners put to work in Guttenbach, the inmates who were employed at Binau were also transferred on a daily basis from the Neckargerach subcamp. At the Binau Castle, in the village of Binau between Neckargerach and Neckarelz, about 10 (other sources: 8 to 17) inmates were employed in the administration and clothing storage depot in auxiliary functions. A last detachment to leave the Natzweiler main camp was the carpool (Fahrbereitschaft), which was transferred to Neunkirchen, about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) from Neckarelz. Some 15 SS men were in charge of approximately six
trucks, supported by 3 inmates who were taken to Neunkirchen on a daily basis from the Neckargerach subcamp.

Like the other inmates of the Neckargerach subcamp, also the inmates employed at Guttenbach and Binau were evacuated at the end of March 1945. In Neunkirchen, the SS had already left the premises, and the inmates only had to wait for the arrival of the U.S. troops. Several SS men and inmates who were involved in the administration at Guttenbach, Binau, and Neunkirchen stood trial after the war. Adolf Rieg, who was in charge of food supply, was acquitted in the second case during the Rastatt Military Tribunal. Some prisoner-functionaries were tried and sentenced in the same court trial.


At BA-BL, some witness statements and documents have been gathered with events and inmates of Guttenbach. For further information, see BA-BL, 419 AR-1835/67. For information on Binau, see 419 AR-1771/67.

Evelyn Zegenhagen

**HAILFINGEN**

Very little is known on the prehistory of the Hailfingen subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp. In 1937, the building of a military airport started near Hailfingen (district Rottenburg, near Tübingen) on a place known as Hailfingen/ Tailfingen where land had been expropriated. The Reich Labor Service (Reichsarbeitsdienst) started the construction project on a small airport where Messerschmitt planes and about 100 people from the German air force were stationed. It is not known which workforce built the camp itself, whether the Reichsarbeitsdienst or the inmates that were soon to arrive after the war broke out. In the second half of 1941, around 100 Russians were transported to the camp. It is not known if they were prisoners of war (POWs) or civilians submitted to forced labor. As postwar testimonies describe a 12-year-old prisoner and as some inmates were sent to work on surrounding farms, the Russians may have been used as slave laborers. They worked at extending the airport facilities, as did the 350 Greeks who arrived in the camp on September 20, 1944. These Greeks were all men, aged between 14 and 60, and had been arrested in a roundup in Athens on August 9 before they were transported to the Reich as hostages. At least 2 Greek inmates died in Hailfingen. Most of them were sent to other labor camps in December 1944. Only 4 remained and worked as locksmiths.

The Hailfingen subcamp was founded in early December 1944, when 600 inmates were sent there by the Office II in the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA). The transport had been requested two months earlier. All the prisoners were male and Jewish, with numerous different nationalities (Baltic States, Belgium, Hungary, the Netherlands, Greece, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Turkey, and Germany), all registered as “political inmates” and most coming from different concentration camps. Inmates of the newly founded subcamp were registered under Natzweiler numbers 40448 to 41047. They were a Star of David on their clothes, made of a red triangle (political) and a yellow one (Jew).

The camp facilities were simple. Jewish inmates lived in a hangar surrounded by a wired fence. A watchtower allowed an easy view of the prisoners. Outside this area, several buildings were used for air defense, a coal store, the inmates' kitchen, and five barracks for the guards. A street divided the compound into two parts. On the other side of it, the building for the Russians was near the Organisation Todt (OT) building and the Matte’s firm office. The head of the camp was an SS-Unterscharführer. He commanded about 60 guards, most of them older air force soldiers who, according to postwar accounts, behaved decently toward the Jews. Testimonies were gathered after the war of ill treatment and killings of inmates by the head of the camp, as well as by the work supervisor (a member of the OT) who received the nickname “Chess Master” (Schachmeister). Some Lithuanian and Ukrainian guards may also have been active in the camp.

Conditions of living were terrible; inmates were undernourished, ill-treated, and beaten. No medical treatment was available. It was almost impossible to wash. On their way to work, prisoners kept trying to steal potatoes or fruits in the surrounding fields. If caught, they could be shot. The death rate was especially high if compared to that of other Natzweiler...
subcamps of this region in southwest Germany. Corpses were first transported to the Reutlingen cemetery, where they were burned in the crematorium. After January 31, 1945, the corpses were buried on the airport compound in a mass grave. When the Allies opened it, they exhumed between 72 and 96 bodies (testimonies differ from one another). Between 300 and 390 inmates died, most of them of hunger, which means a death rate between 50 and 65 percent.

Working conditions were extremely hard. Some local firms employed the inmates: Gärtner & Sohn, Härer, Mattes, Meyer, Kirchhoff, and the OT. The Jews continued the building of the airport runway and built streets on the compound, one leading to the neighboring train station at Nebringen. Most of the inmates worked in two quarries, in Hailfingen and Reusten.

On February 14, 1945, the Hailfingen subcamp was dismantled, and all the surviving Jews were evacuated in two transports. One, of about 110 people, arrived in the subcamp Vaihingen; the second, with about 100 Jews, went to the subcamp of Dautmergen and other subcamps of Natzweiler. After the evacuation of Hailfingen, only 4 Greeks and 1 Pole from the camp of Dautmergen and other subcamps of Natzweiler. After the evacuation of Hailfingen, only 4 Greeks and 1 Pole from the previous transports remained at the airport. French troops entered the village and searched the compound. A survivor, a former inmate, is said to have shown them the location of the mass grave. On June 2, 1945, inhabitants of the surroundings villages were forced by the French to gather around the grave. Former Nazi Party (NSDAP) members had to exhume the corpses as the other Germans were watching. Workers were beaten, some were wounded, and two died on this day. The corpses of the prisoners were transported to the Tailfingen cemetery and reburied in a common grave, under a wooden cross.

The head of the camp died in December 1945 as a POW and thus was never put on trial. A historical project conducted in the 1970s in the region of Tübingen revealed that the women of Hailfingen used to sing a song, to the tune of the famous melody “Ich liebte einst ein Mädchen.” The words of the song follow:

Es war am 2. Juli,  
Ein heisser Sommertag,  
Wir standen auf dem Flugplatz,  
Bei einem Judenrab.  
Und als wir so standen,  
Erwachten Reu und Leid,  
bekamen wir noch Schläge,  
Mit einer langen Peitsch.  
Ach Gott, wo sind die Juden,  
Die Juden sind ja tot,  
Man hat sie ja erschossen.  
Ihr Blut floss rosenrot.  
(It was on July 2,  
A hot summer day,  
We stood at the airport,  
Near a Jewish grave.  
And as we so stood,  
Waiting for remorse and grief  
We got beaten

With a long whip  
O God, where are the Jews,  
The Jews are dead,  
They have been shot  
Their blood streamed rose-red.)

Before leaving the airport, the Wehrmacht blew up some buildings, as did the French occupation troops a few months later.

**SOURCES**


Documents on the camp can be found at ITS (Hänge-mappe Akdo Hailfingen), in the BA-L (AZ. IV 419 AR-Z 171/69), at the Prosecutor’s Office (Staatsanwaltschaft) Stuttgart (16 Js 326/52), and in files pertaining to the Natzweiler-Struthof Trial at the Landgericht Hechingen (Ordner 23 Bl. 5030).

Jean-Marc Dreyfus

**HANAU**

The Natzweiler subcamp in Hanau is not listed in the International Tracing Service (ITS) list and was never the subject of an investigation or court proceedings.

Lothar Bembenek states that this subcamp was to be established at the Dunlop factory. The only mention of its existence is to be found in a special order of the Natzweiler concentration camp, dated September 26, 1944, dealing with the assignments of the companies of guards. The order stated that the future camp should be guarded by the 2nd Company.

It is possible that a heavy bombing raid on the Dunlop factory toward the end of the war wiped out any trace of the camp.

**SOURCES**

The only mention of the camp is to be found in N.N., “Spurensuche Aussenlager Hanau,” in Hessen hinter Stacheldraht: Verdrängt und vergessen; KZs, Lager, Aussenkommandos, ed. Lothar Bembenek (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn-Verlag, 1984), p. 61.

Evelyn Zegenhagen  
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**HASLACH ("BARBE") [ALSO VULKAN, KINZIGDAMM]**

In Haslach, located in the Baden district of Wolfach near Offenburg in Baden-Württemberg, three camps were erected in
summer and fall 1944 in connection with the relocation of armaments production underground, using the tunnel system of the Hartsteinwerke Vulkan. The company had been erected in 1902, and until the outbreak of World War II, it had produced large quantities of gravel for streets and railways, paving stones, undressed stone, and other related building materials. With the start of World War II, Vulkan received enormous government contracts, especially in connection with the erection of strategic highways to the east and the construction of the Siegfried Line (Westwall). When these orders ceased in 1943, Organisation Todt (OT) recruited personnel and machinery from the company for employment in the Ukraine. The grounds of the property were confiscated with the erection of strategic highways to the east and the enormous government contracts, especially in connection with armaments production underground, using the tunnel system of the company for employment in the Ukraine. The grounds of the property were confiscated with the erection of strategic highways to the east and the enormous government contracts, especially in connection with armaments production underground, using the tunnel system.

In the name of the project was “Barbe,” and it was to cover 18,488 square meters (21,111 square yards) of underground area. In June 1944, OT began planning the erection of 14 larger prisoner barracks along the road between Haslach and Mühlbach.

The first inmates, males only, arrived in Haslach on September 16, 1944. The transport consisted of 450 inmates who had been evacuated from Struthof via Dachau and Allach. Two-thirds of the prisoners were French; the others came from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, and some from Poland and the USSR. They were kept in a wooden shed near the Haslach sports fields that formerly had belonged to the Wehrmacht. From there they had to walk for about one hour to their work sites, the underground area of the former Hartsteinwerke, where they had to prepare the access road to the area. The prisoners were employed by two local firms, Wayss & Freytag and Dohrmann in Mühlheim, which cooperated with OT. Plans to prepare the production of V-weapons and crankshafts for airplanes were quickly changed after the severe bombardment of the Daimler-Benz facilities at Gaggenau on October 3, 1944. Now the Armament Office in Berlin decided to have Daimler-Benz use the underground facilities, and the partial transfer of production began in November 1944.

The living and working conditions of the inmates at the Sportplatz camp were hard. According to survivor statements, they had to be up at 4:00 A.M. Roll call was accompanied by yelling and beatings. Afterward, they marched in long columns through the town. Their work was physically challenging: They had to build roads, lay pipe, break stones, and pour concrete on the tunnel floors. The guards were brutal, and SS-Rottenführer Lindau was considered the most brutal of them all. Survivors report that he killed several inmates.

Due to their poor condition, inmates began to die quickly. There was no medical treatment available, and the food was bad. Inmates also died from mistreatment, were executed after failed attempts to escape, or died as a result of the exploitation at the job site. When, early in December 1944, a transport of 248 inmates from Flossenbürg arrived, the conditions in the Sportplatz subcamp became even worse. Dysentery, typhoid, and tuberculosis began to spread; by the end of the year, more than 100 inmates had died. Many inhabitants of Haslach who witnessed the brutal treatment of the inmates and observed their poor physical condition tried to provide food, especially apples and potatoes. The local minister, Vetter, got in touch with ministers among the inmates and used these contacts to help severely sick prisoners by providing food and medication.

Numerous transports of prisoners incapable of work left the subcamp for other camps. In February 25, 1945, the remaining 265 prisoners—all of them in very weak condition—were sent to the sick camp in Vaihingen/Enz. But since the Sportplatz camp was not the only camp in Haslach, the work on the project “Barbe” was continued by the inmates of two other camps that had also been erected in the fall of 1944. The Sportplatz camp was put to use one final time from March 28 until mid-April 1945, when the remaining inmates of the Vulkan camp were accommodated there.

On December 10, 1944, when 300 more prisoners arrived from the Work Education Camp (AEL) Niederbühl, there was no room left for them at the Sportplatz camp. For one night, the newly arrived prisoners were kept at the Haslach city hall, and immediately afterward they were taken to the premises of the Kaufmann Co. From there, they were taken in groups to the Kinzigdamm camp, which probably consisted of two barracks near the Arche Inn, between the houses along Fischerbacher Strasse and the Kinzigdamm, not far from the bridge across Kinzig creek. The camp had been erected by Dutch forced laborers in the fall of 1944, and it existed from fall 1944 until March 1945 and is sometimes also referred to as Protective Custody Camp (Sicherungslager) Kinzigdamm. The Kinzigdamm camp was the smallest of the three Haslach camps, but it was notorious for its horrible hygienic conditions, the poor food supply, and the mistreatment of inmates that resulted in several deaths. The inmates of this camp were employed with numerous local companies and craftsmen. On March 1, 1945, most of them were taken to the Sülz camp, where they were put to work again.

The last Haslach camp was the Vulkan camp, which was erected on December 4, 1944, with the arrival of about 700 male inmates, mainly from the Schirmbeck-Vorbrück (Elsass) protective custody camp. Many of them were members of the French resistance, about 100 were hostages from Alsace, and about 350 were Soviet prisoners. The Vulkan prisoners lived under inhuman conditions in the former Hartstein tunnels. They slept on the plain floor, which was covered with straw. The straw was never renewed and became saturated with water and waste from the prisoners, who had no toilets to relieve themselves. The prisoners of the Vulkan camp were employed to prepare the Hartstein tunnel for armaments production; their tasks consisted of laying wastewater pipes, digging tunnels, pouring concrete floors, and breaking and cutting stone.
The camp leader was SS-Scharführer Kraus. Survivors report that on a regular basis he had prisoners’ excrement from the infirmary poured out over the kitchen waste to prevent the inmates from eating the garbage, but the inmates were so starved that they ate it nevertheless. Kraus also owned a dog trained to attack human beings—at least one inmate was killed this way, and another one was severely injured. In general, the conditions at the Vulkan camp were worse than in the main camp. Lice were everywhere, and many inmates suffered from typhoid. Inmates who tried to escape where shot, among them several Russian prisoners. A plot among Ukrainian inmates was betrayed, and they were all killed; 10 officers, members of the French resistance, disappeared without a trace; it is very likely that they were shot. Despite the arrival of additional inmates, the production in the tunnel never commenced. The poor condition of the prisoners, the lack of materials and supplies (especially of trucks to transport machinery to the tunnel), and Allied air raids made it impossible to reach any of the planned goals.

In September 1944, there were 1,700 inmates in the three Haslach camps, of which the names of 750 are known. Among them were Nacht-und-Nebel prisoners, hostages, prisoners of war (POWs) and hundreds of forced laborers. All three Haslach camps were under the command of SS-Hauptsturmführer Karl Buck, who had a long career as an SS officer: in 1933, he had been the commandant of the Heuberg concentration camp; afterwards, of the Ulm-Oberer Kuhberg and Welzheim camps. From July 1940 until November 1944, Buck had been the commandant of the Schirmeck-Vorbrück camp, until he took over command of the Haslach camps. Detlef Ernst and Klaus Rieixinger state that the guards at the Haslach subcamp were from the Sixth Waffen-SS Guard Company.

There is no clear indication how many prisoners died in the three Haslach camps. Originally there had been plans to transport the dead back to the main camp and burn them there. Very soon, this became impossible: The main camp was dissolved, and no trucks or gas were available to transport the dead to crematoria in other camps. On September 21, 1944, the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) therefore issued a decree (Anweisung) to bury the dead at local cemeteries: They were to be dressed in a way that they could not be recognized as concentration camp inmates, and they should be buried in a remote area, where usually suicides and forced laborers were buried. No local, outside personnel had to be involved in the burial. Inmates who died at the Haslach camps were buried at the western edge of the local cemetery; their graves were not marked. Inmates who died at the Vulkan camp were buried next to the camp, on the mountain. After the war, 135 corpses were exhumed, identified, and taken back to their home countries. It is estimated that at least 400 inmates died in the three Haslach camps, among them 192 who succumbed to an epidemic of dysentery in the fall of 1944.

In March 1945, the prisoners were evacuated in a number of transports, either by truck, train, or on foot.

In 1946, Karl Buch was sentenced to death by a British court for his killing of four American and two British pilots who had parachuted from their planes. In 1953, he stood trial again, this time for crimes committed at the Schirmeck-Vorbrück camp, and he was sentenced to death again. Later this sentence was reduced to penitentiary for life in Great Britain, but in 1955 he was transferred to the German authorities who released him shortly after. Further attempts by the Office of the District Attorney to put him on trial were not successful.


Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**Hayingen [aka Ebingen]**

The prisoners in the Natzweiler Hayingen subcamp (French: Hayange) in the former Gau of Westmark were deployed to Ebingen (French: Ebange). The camp is sometimes referred to in the literature as Ebingen.

The camp was opened on August 24, 1944. There were around 500 women who entered the camp on August 28. They were employed by the Hüttenwerkverwaltung Westmark GmbH, in a Hermann Göring Reichs factory in Ebingen, in a Hermann Göring Reichs factory in Ebingen. The number of prisoners who died in the camp is uncertain: Antoine Greffier estimates the number as five. According to concentration camp files and prisoner statements, the prisoners were transferred by foot on September 11, 1944, via Saarlautern to the Ravensbrück concentration camp; it is most likely that the camp was then dissolved. Of the 500 women who marched out of Hayingen, only 363 arrived in Ravensbrück on September 29, 1944; 135 women were able to escape along the way, and only a few of them were recaptured.


The subcamp is listed in the ITS’s *Verzeichnis der Haftstaten unter dem Reichsführer-SS* (1933–1945) (Arolsen: Suchdienst, 1979), 1:203.

**HEIDENHEIM**

In mid-December 1944, evacuees from the concentration camp Natzweiler were housed in a barrack at the Police School Heidenheim, which in 1941–1942 had already held prisoners from Dachau.

Immediately before that, the Police School had been evacuated from Heidenheim. From the end of November, part of the SS-Signal Intelligence Female Assistants’ School Oberehnheim/Elsass had occupied the empty rooms. This school was forced to leave Oberehnheim on November 22–23, 1944, because of the approaching front. The labor detail, which from September 24, 1944, consisted of 20 prisoners, had been assigned to the SS-Signal Intelligence Female Assistants’ School Oberehnheim. It was transferred together with the assistants via Geislingen an der Steige to Heidenheim. The labor detail does not appear on the International Tracing Service (ITS) lists, perhaps because it has always been known as the evacuated subcamp “Oberehnheim.” From January 13, 1945, the school was officially known as the SS-Female Assistants’ School Heidenheim.

The labor detail was kept busy with all the work required by the school: hauling boxes of supplies, felling trees in the forests and cutting them into firewood (there was an acute shortage of coal), cleaning, clearing snow, and so on. Under guard, the prisoners acquired supplies in the city and did work there, partly of an official nature and partly as private work for the SS from the school; skilled craftsmen (cobbler, tailors, painters, carpenters) applied their skills in the camp and in the town.

The identity of the 20 prisoners is known; 7 of the 8 Germans were “criminals”; the eighth, a long-standing Communist, was the camp elder. The foreigners (7 from Luxembourg, 3 Poles, 1 Frenchman, and 1 Russian) were all “protective detention” prisoners; the prisoners from Luxembourg had been arrested because of illegal political activity. There were no Jews. There was no nurse, but there was a (German) clerk.

The strength and composition of the labor detail changed—one of the Luxembourgers was transferred to the subcamp Leoben on December 31, 1944, and on February 23, 1945, two of the German “criminals” escaped. They were able to cut through the fence of the Police School at night. The SS guard intentionally paid no attention to their escape. The prisoners should have been punished for an infringement, according to a relative’s statement, possibly with the death penalty. They were not caught, and there were no reprisals against the remaining prisoners. There were no deaths in Heidenheim.

The commander of the SS squad was Oberscharführer, later Hauptscharführer, Hermann Stiefel, born in 1890 in Erfurt. He joined the Nazi Party in 1933 and the SS only in November 1941. From then until May 1942, he was stationed in Auschwitz; thereafter, until March 1943, he was in the Natzweiler main camp and then in Oberehnheim. Stiefel was relatively old, small, and fat. His behavior was not what one would expect from a member of the SS. The prisoners did not have any difficulties either with him or the other four guards. This could have been because the end of the war was near, plus the personal interest of the SS that the labor detail remained as a unit to avoid being sent to the front.

The prisoners’ barrack most probably was the same as the one used by the Dachau prisoners. However, because of their fewer numbers, they were quartered in one room. The SS occupied the other room. Barbed wire covered the windows. Other barracks existed on the remaining vacant land of the school area. Again, the school kitchen provided food for the prisoners. Even cigarettes were distributed to them from time to time. With the help of the guards, it was also possible to obtain additional food supplies in the town.

The Female Assistants’ School and the prisoners were evacuated with trucks on April 5, 1945, further to the south. To the south of Ulm, in Altenstadt-Illereichen, another eight prisoners were able to escape with the passive assistance of the guards. Finally, Stiefel simply dismissed the remaining prisoners. The Americans arrested Stiefel on May 1, 1945, as he tried to return home.

**SOURCES**


The subcamp has scarcely been acknowledged until more recent times. It has definitely not been acknowledged in Heidenheim. Hints of its existence were found by chance in a number of denazification court files and through statements made for the ZdL (files held at BA-L). File IV 410 AR 1209/69 is on Heidenheim, and file IV 419 AR-Z 170/69 is on the subcamp Oberehnheim. Other incomplete records are scattered in the BA-B, NS 32 II (SS-Female Signal Intelligence Assistants’ School Oberehnheim). NS 4 Na Büschel 81 (Subcamp Oberehnheim) contains a compiled list of the prisoners. Further worthwhile and precise information was obtained in 1995–1996 from former Luxembourg prisoner Marius Pauly and through contacts with another Luxembourger, Ernest Gillen, who had extensively studied the Natzweiler subcamps and conducted interviews with survivors who have subsequently died.

Alfred Hoffmann
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**HEPPENHEIM**

Documents from the Dachau concentration camp show that between May 28, 1942, and December 18, 1942, a Dachau subcamp existed in the town of Heppenheim in Hessen.
On June 15, 1943, the camp was reopened and placed under the administration of the Natzweiler concentration camp. Horst Riegert has shown that the camp held 66 male prisoners, some of whom were from Yugoslavia. The prisoners constructed the “Trokofa” dried vegetable factory (Trockenkonservenfabrik) and worked there and on the farm of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) Amt W V/1 at the German Experimental Institute for Nutrition and Provisions (Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung GmbH, DVA). During the cold winter, they had to sort, wash, and trim vegetables in unheated rooms. They were accommodated in wooden barracks on the “Trokofa” site. Occasionally, they were assigned to work in the Schriesheim quarries.

The Heppenheim subcamp was evacuated on March 22–23, 1945. Witnesses stated that most of the prisoners were taken to Dachau. The remaining prisoners were liberated on March 27, 1945.


The BA collection, NS 4, KL Na (Natzweiler) refer to the camp in the following subcollections: 49–102: Haftungsangelegenheiten; within that range, number 85—Errichtung und Besichtigung einzelner AK—and also number 102—Kommando Heppenheim: “Haftungsküche Heppenheim”; Kon trollbuch über Zu- und Abgänge bei Lebensmitteln, 1943. Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**IFFEZHEIM**

A Natzweiler subcamp with male prisoners was located at Iffezheim in Baden. The first reference to the subcamp in the Natzweiler files is on October 14, 1943. The Waffen-SS, Baden/Oos, Sandweier Office, Hauptwirtschaftslager (HWL) II employed the prisoners, who put up barracks for the Waffen-SS in Sandweier and Iffezheim and also worked for the Müller Wine Cellars in Rastatt in loading operations.

The camp is mentioned for the last time in the Natzweiler files on April 22, 1945.


The BA collection, NS 4, KL Na (Natzweiler) refers to the camp in the following files: 72—AK Iffezheim; 83—Namensliste AK Iffezheim; 85—Errichtung und Besichtigung einzelner AK. Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**KOCHENDORF (“EISBÄR”)**

A Natzweiler subcamp for male prisoners was located in the Württemberg town of Kochendorf (incorporated into the city of Bad Friedrichshall in 1933) near Heilbronn. According to the Natzweiler files, the Kochendorf camp was opened on September 3, 1944. At first it held 635 prisoners, but by the time it was dissolved in March 1945, between 1,700 and 1,900 prisoners occupied the camp. Detlef Ernst and Klaus Rie xinger have written that just under half of these prisoners were Jewish, many of them from Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen. Other prisoners were from Poland, France, the Soviet Union, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, and Romania. There were also Czechs, Bulgarians, a Spaniard, a Swiss, and probably crew members of American and British aircraft that had been shot down. The youngest prisoners in Kochendorf were most likely the Polish brothers Abram and Lolek Frydmann from Łódź, 16 and 14 years old.

The subcamp, which was constructed just beneath the present-day district hospital in Bad Friedrichshall, was to be a collection point for prisoners evacuated from Natzweiler subcamps in Lothringen, Audun-le-Tiche, and Thil-Longwy. The former commander of Thil-Longwy, SS-Oberscharführer Eugen Walter Büttner, became camp commander in Kochendorf. The guards were from the Waffen-SS Guard Company 6 commanded by SS-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Lautenschlager, who had been commander in Vaihingen an der Enz. The German SS guards were complemented by members of the Africa Corps and the Luftwaffe, as well as by Ukrainian SS members. In October 1944, there were 77 guards. Additional armed guards were later supplied by the Organisation Todt (OT).

The first prisoner barracks were erected by the OT, but prisoners who arrived from September 3 onward at the latest continued construction. At the beginning of October 1944, there were just under 1,400 prisoners in the camp, which was surrounded by an electric barbed-wire fence. Inside the camp there were, as described by Ernst and Rie xinger, 11 barracks (8 of them for prisoners, including a special barrack for Jewish prisoners), as well as a jail, a kitchen, and an infirmary. At the rear of the camp there were 3 or 4 transit barracks for prisoners who were only temporarily in Kochendorf. Outside the camp were the administration building, guards’ quarters, the food warehouse, the commander’s blockhouse, the guards’ washhouse, and the laundry room.

The camp was set up in the immediate vicinity of a sloping tunnel that led to underground armaments manufacturing sites, the SS construction venture called “Eisbär,” which was part of a still-active salt mine. Ernst and Rie xinger provide evidence that the construction companies Hochtief AG and Versuchacht, which had constructed these underground facilities, were among the first and the largest recipients of prisoner labor. Another major taskmaster was Ernst Heinikel AG, Werk Hirthmotorenbau (Hirth Engine Construction
Kochendorf prisoners also worked under OT construction management in Weinsberg and Kochendorf and for the Kriebitz OT site management in Heilbronn. They were furthermore deployed to work in agriculture, to fill bomb craters at the nearby military airfield in Oedheim, and to work at the Neckarsulm Motorenwerke AG (NSU) factory in Neckarsulm. The prisoners also performed forced labor for the Bad Friedrichshall community, where, among other things, they cut grass, removed rubble from bombed houses, dug graves for bombing victims, cleared snow, and fortified the banks of the Neckar canal.

Sanitary conditions in the Kochendorf subcamp were catastrophic. The camp only existed during the coldest part of the year (September to March), but neither the buildings nor the prisoners were suitably outfitted: cold, constant dampness, infestations of lice, systematic malnutrition, and ruthless exploitation resulted in a high rate of illness and death among the prisoners. According to Ernst and Riexinger, the death rate in the infirmary, where a Czech and a French doctor worked under the supervision of an OT doctor, was 90 percent.

Reports of prisoner abuse, escape attempts, and executions have emerged from the subcamp. Thus, in October 1944, Hungarian prisoner Miklos Klein was executed for alleged sabotage. In November 1944, a Russian prisoner, who had tried to escape with two others, was executed. His companions were apparently successful in their escape attempt, as was a Russian who had already fled in October.

After a U.S. bombing raid in March 1945 destroyed a shaft-head frame and as the front moved steadily closer, armaments production gradually shut down during that month. On March 28, 1945, at least 398 no longer ambulant prisoners were evacuated by freight car to Dachau. On March 30, between 1,200 and 1,500 prisoners started the Kochendorf death march headed by Commandant Büttner. Conservative estimates are that at least 220 people died on this march. The prisoners arrived at Dachau in several batches: the transport of nonambulant prisoners arrived on April 2 (354 prisoners and 44 dead); on April 8, another 753 prisoners; a further 5 prisoners on April 12. Kochendorf prisoners were also joined with the Schwäbisch Hall-Hessental death march to Dachau, while others were sent to Dachau/München-Allach and from there to München-Riem.

The number of surviving Kochendorf prisoners ranges between 1,000 and 1,300, a closer estimate is impossible. Within the camp itself, 234 deaths have been verified, along with a further 213 on the evacuation marches. Nevertheless, the numbers are unreliable because many of the dead could not be identified. In addition, the numbers do not include those prisoners who were selected in Kochendorf and sent to the death camps.

During the Rastatt Trials from October 6 to November 21, 1947, 42 members of the guard and camp command of the Natzweiler subcamps at Hessental, Kochendorf, Vaihingen/Enz, and Unterriexingen were tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Tribunal Général of the French Military Government in Rastatt sentenced 7 of the accused to death. Of the 4 executions that were carried out, 2 involved defendants from Kochendorf: SS-Unterscharführer Richard Maurer, a dog handler who had trained his dog to attack prisoners and tear off their flesh, had also allegedly buried a prisoner alive; the second person to be executed was Obergefreite Joseph Kaiser (nicknamed the “African”), an Africa Corps soldier, alleged to have killed at least three prisoners. Furthermore, the Rastatt Trials imposed one life sentence, and 11 received either maximum or normal-security prison terms.

Subcamp commander Büttner had commanded the Natzweiler Quarry subcamp from the spring of 1941. In the summer of 1944, he became the commander of the subcamp at Thil-Longwy and served from September 3, 1944, as Waffen-SS Oberscharführer commander of Kochendorf. At the end of 1945, a denazification court in Berlin exculpated him as a fellow. The Stuttgart state prosecutor began investigations in 1962, during which he was interrogated twice, once in 1962 and then in 1969. The proceedings ceased in November 1970 because of insufficient evidence. Büttner died in 1975.

Sources
Kochendorf is listed as a Natzweiler subcamp in ITS’s Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945) (Arolsen: Suchdienst, 1979), 1:204.

Detlef Ernst and Klaus Riexinger have described the history of the subcamp and its connections with the German armaments industry in Vernichtung durch Arbeit. Die Geschichte des KZ Kochendorf/Aussenkommando des KZ Natzweiler-Struthof (Bad Reichenhall: Welker, 1996). The book contains many reproductions of documents on the camp history, witness reports, and pictures, as well as a comprehensive bibliography.

Collection RG-50.042*0007, Acc. 1994.A.447 of the USHMM in Washington, DC, contains the witness statements of Shony Braun about his odyssey through German
concentration camps. Among other things, he reports on the death of his father in the Kochendorf subcamp after severe mistreatment by guards and the SS. These archives also contain a report by George Freshman about his experiences as a prisoner at Kochendorf, Vaihingen, and Vaihingen/Unterriexingen in Collection Acc. 1997.A.0829. Furthermore, at USHMM, Collection Acc. 1998 A.0045, Reel 44, has the names of 700 prisoners transferred from Sachsenhausen to Kochendorf in October 1944. The BA-MA in Freiburg holds documents on Kochendorf in Collection RW 19/1788, RL. 3/1172 and R 3/1757.

Files on Ernst Heinkel AG are held in the ASt-Ros. The files of the ZdL (held at BA-L) on Kochendorf are cataloged as IV 419 AR-Z 180/1969. Other documents are to be found in the ASt-B-Fl, which also holds documents on the camp's cemetery.

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LEONBERG

The city of Leonberg is located in Württemberg, about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) from Stuttgart. It was chosen as the site for a large subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp because an airplane parts manufacturing plant (Presswerke) for the firm Augsburg Messerschmitt AG was located there. The workshops were built in the Eiblingen area. Next to Leonberg ran a section of the Munich-Heilbronn highway, and a double tunnel had been dug before the war. At the end of 1943, the ends of the tunnel were blocked and the factory was relocated there. Production began at the end of spring 1944. All that was needed was a labor supply. A Natzweiler subcamp (Aussenlager) was created for that purpose, just a few hundred meters from the tunnel's entrance. The exact date of the camp's creation is unknown, but it appears that the first transport of prisoners arrived on April 10, 1944, bringing 398 inmates from the Dachau subcamps of Haunstetten and Gablingen. They were put in barracks built on a plot on Seestrasse in Leonberg.

New transports of inmates arrived regularly. On June 1, 1944, there were 650 men in the camp; on July 1, 852; July 9, 798; July 12, 1,032; September 30, 1,162; October 31, 1,555. The number of inmates rapidly increased until reaching around 3,000. The largest number of convoys came from Dachau or its subcamps. At least 13 convoys arrived from the Dachau main camp; 5 from Dachau/Augsburg-Pfaffenhofen, with a total of 748 men; 2 from Dachau/Kaufering, with 268 inmates; and a single convoy of 129 people from Dachau/Gablingen. At least 1 convoy arrived from Sachsenhausen (216 men) and 1 from Auschwitz (200). It is thus possible to calculate that at least 3,329 inmates were registered at Leonberg. Some were sent back to other camps; for example, 31 of them were sent to Dachau on November 1, 1944; two groups of 60 each to Natzweiler/Vaihingen/Enz, and 258 to Bergen-Belsen on March 11, 1945. The inmates arrived at the train station in Leonberg, and then they had to walk 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) to the camp. They came from all over Europe, from at least 21 countries (including Switzerland and Spain). The most widely represented nationalities were Polish, Hungarian, French, Russian, and Yugoslav. The categories of inmates present in the camp were also diverse. While the majority were registered as "protective custody" (Schutzhaft) prisoners, there were Jews, political prisoners, Gypsies, "asocials," and prisoners of war (POWs). The first Jewish prisoners did not arrive until November 1944. There were in total 659 Jews registered in Leonberg.

The camp was made up of five wooden barracks on concrete foundations; one served as an infirmary (Revier). The other buildings each included four sections into which prisoners were crowded. The camp, surrounded by electrified barbed-wire fences, was guarded from about four or six towers. The roll-call yard was small. The surveillance of the camp was in the hands of the SS. On July 29, 1944, there were 12 SS noncommissioned officers (Unterführer) and 21 guards assigned to Leonberg. With the number of inmates increasing rapidly, the number of guards was increased to 15 Unterführer and 45 guards. During at least the first few months of the camp's existence, certain wardens were not with the SS but were soldiers in the Luftwaffe. It is even possible during the early period that the head of the subcamp himself might have been an officer in the Luftwaffe. Before the evacuation, the head of the subcamp was an SS-Obersturmführer.

The inmates' sanitary situation was relatively adequate in the camp's first few months but rapidly deteriorated after November 1944 with the arrival of a large number of prisoners. The number of deaths increased beginning in November, and the situation was catastrophic up until the evacuation. A typhus epidemic broke out. Numerous inmates were evacuated to the SS hospital camps (Krankenlager). Whereas there had only been 1 or 2 deaths a month until October, there were 6 in November, 21 in December, and 51 in January. In February, 162 inmates died. At least 291 deaths were recorded at the city hall prior to the evacuation (including 99 Polish, 49 Hungarians, 41 French, and 39 Italians), but the actual number of dead was higher. The bodies were buried in a mass grave dug near the camp, in a place called Blosenberg. After the war, the grave was opened, and 374 bodies were found.

Some inmates escaped; 13 succeeded in leaving the camp between May 22 and August 16, 1944, of whom 9 were recaptured. Their fate is not known. Three Russian prisoners were sentenced to 15 baton blows for "preparation to escape" (Vorbereitungen zur Flucht). On August 6, Russian prisoner Wladimir Golowin succeeded in fleeing. Recap"
The vast majority of camp prisoners worked in the tunnel, manufacturing airplane parts, in particular, wings for Messerschmitt (Me) 262 series aircraft. The majority of the factory’s workers were inmates, but there were also German foremen and foreign forced laborers. For this last group, barracks were built at one of the entrances of the tunnel. Messerschmitt AG sent at least one engineer and several technicians to Leonberg. The inmates worked 12-hour periods, with shift changes at 6:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. In December, a single 18-hour workday was imposed, with stoppages of 48 consecutive hours. Some inmates were also employed outside the tunnel. We know, for example, of the existence of a mine clearance team. Other groups worked on small construction sites in Leonberg; another in a nearby quarry. After the aerial bombardments on the city, some inmates were put to work clearing the ruins.

In mid-April 1945, facing the advance of Allied troops, the inmates were evacuated on foot to Stuttgart. The inmates received 200 grams (7 ounces) of bread for the journey. Many among them were beaten during the death march, for example, at Mitterskirchen. At the train station in Stuttgart, they were loaded into freight cars, as many as 100 per car. Some inmates died in the cars. Fights broke out. There was no food distribution. After three days of travel, the train arrived at the Kaufbeuren station, close to Landsberg, about 60 kilometers (37.3 miles) from Munich, where there was a Dachau subcamp. According to the testimony of one of the inmates, Ernst Bornstein, one-fourth of the men died on the train. The majority of the inmates, 1,989, remained in this subcamp; a smaller contingent of 724 men was transported to the Mühldorf subcamp, which was also under the control of Dachau.

Before the arrival of the Allied armies, the barracks of the Leonberg camp were burned down. The remains were razed after the war, and apartment buildings were constructed on the site.

In 1953, the mass grave was opened, and the bodies were buried in the municipal cemetery. In addition to the 291 recorded deaths, 82 bodies were found.

On December 28, 1979, an inhabitant of Leonberg, Margarete Stingele, received a Merit Cross (Verdienstkreuz) from the president of the Federal Republic of Germany for the help she had given to the camp’s inmates.

Sources

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MANNHEIM-SANDHOFEN [aka MANNHEIM-WALDHOF]

On September 27, 1944, a subcamp of the concentration camp Natzweiler was opened at Sandhofen, a suburb of the city of Mannheim, in Baden. This subcamp was also known by the name Mannheim-Waldhof. A convoy of 1,060 men arrived from Dachau on that September day. Some inmates had only briefly passed through Dachau, like the Pole Zdzisław Siwak, who came from the transit camp of Pruszcz and who left a testimony of his internment at Mannheim-Sandhofen. The journey lasted three days, despite the short distance between the two camps. The inmates were allocated prisoner numbers from 29241 to 30300. Once they arrived at the train station in Mannheim, they went through town on foot, in rows of five, to reach their new camp. On October 7, the camp management asked the administration of the Natzweiler main camp for seven German Kapos and a doctor for the inmates (Häftlingarzt). A doctor arrived at the camp. His name was Andreas Barhard, and he was an Iraqi, born on November 13, 1914. He had internment number 14903. The camp elder (Lagerältester) was Karlus Walter. There were some Jewish inmates in the camp, including survivors of the Warsaw ghetto. A group of Polish prisoners had taken part in the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944.

The camp was established in three schools. The main school was the Friedrich School (Friedrich Schule), located at Kriegerstrasse 28 in Sandhofen. The two other schools were on the same street, at numbers 15 and 18. Five supplementary Kapos who spoke Polish were sent to the camp. Surveillance was provided by 40 soldiers from the Luftwaffe and by a few SS men. The main building, the former Friedrich School, consisted of eight classrooms on each of the two floors, each room measuring about 60 square meters (646 square feet). There were 13 toilets on the first floor and two small administrative offices. The inmates were crowded into the classrooms, with more than 60 per room. Behind the building there was a courtyard and a gymnasium (Schulturnhalle) where a kitchen was installed for the inmates. Siwak reports in his testimony that a small orchestra was formed around that time, to entertain the guards.

The inmates’ sanitary situation was quite poor. They would arrive at the camp already weakened and in poor health. They were frequently beaten. Their uniforms were only washed one time during the camp’s entire existence. The prisoners were able to take advantage, however, of a weekly shower or bath, in the school’s facilities. The guards carried out death sentences by hanging prisoners from a tree in the camp’s courtyard. A box would be placed under the inmate’s
attended the hangings. For example, inmate Marian Kraiński, born in 1914, was hanged, accused of having sabotaged production at the Daimler-Benz factory where he worked. He was executed on January 4, 1945. The camp's dead were buried in the Mannheim cemetery. Frequently the prisoners faced sadistic treatment from the guards who “amused” themselves with the inmates. Abuse of prisoners declined following intervention from the management of the Daimler-Benz factory where the inmates worked, due to dissatisfaction with low productivity. There were escapes from the camp: a group of three prisoners in November 1944 and an isolated escape, that of one of the Kapos dressed in the uniform of an SS guard.

The majority of inmates worked in the Daimler-Benz factory in Luzenberg, about 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) away from the camp. They went there on foot and returned each night to the camp. The workweek was six and a half days, at a rate of 11 hours a day. One Sunday night in three was idle, but the day was taken up with interminable roll calls in the courtyard, accompanied by forced marches and poor treatment. Daimler-Benz AG paid the SS 6 Reichsmark (RM) for a day of work by a skilled laborer and just 4 RM for an unskilled laborer. In October 1944, the company paid 106,181.20 RM to the management of the Natzweiler concentration camp. The inmates of Mannheim-Sandhofen worked in manufacturing crankshafts and trucks. They were employed as lathe operators or on an assembly line. The factory supplied the camp with supplementary food rations, which were frequently stolen by the guards.

A few days before Christmas 1944, Mannheim and Ludwigshurg were bombed. A bomb fell on the camp's kitchen, killing the inmates who worked there and injuring several others. The school was damaged, and some inmates were temporarily housed in a bunker that had originally been intended to serve as a civilian shelter.

Starting in December 1944, on Christmas, several hundred inmates were removed from the camp and sent to Buchenwald. The rest of the prisoners were housed in the building of the preschool next door, which until then had housed Italian forced laborers. Space was lacking. Inmates lived under the roof, where the temperature was terribly low. In mid-March, a selection took place, and inmates deemed unfit for labor were sent to the Vaihingen/Enz camp. About 400 men remained at Sandhofen. They were evacuated on March 20, 1945, to the camp at Kochendorf, another Natzweiler subcamp, located near Stuttgart. They were put to work in an airplane factory built inside a salt mine. The camp was evacuated on March 30, with the 1,500 surviving inmates. The death march lasted eight days, until arriving at Dachau. Only 175 men made it there alive. There were a small number of survivors, just a few hundred, from the Mannheim-Sandhofen camp. When American troops entered Mannheim on March 26, 1945, the camp had been entirely evacuated.

Sources

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Markirch
The Markirch (French: Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines) subcamp is first mentioned in the Natzweiler concentration camp files on March 13, 1944. According to Robert Steegmann, the subcamp was opened with 25 prisoners on this date. Immediately thereafter a transport of 500 prisoners arrived from Dachau, of whom 36.6 percent were Italians, 23.4 percent were Soviets, and 22.6 percent were Yugoslavs. Some 96 percent of the prisoners were political prisoners; 12 were “associates”; 7 were security prisoners; 1 was a prisoner who refused to serve with the Wehrmacht; 2 were foreign civilian forced laborers; and 2 were prisoners of war (POWs). By the autumn of 1944, 59 of these prisoners are thought to have died in the Markirch subcamp. Initially the camp consisted solely of the Markirch site; later Bayerische Motoren Werke (BMW) established a second camp in Otto-Hütten, with the camps being known as Camp I and II. From the end of April 1944 to the end of December 1944, the Markirch camp commander was Eugen Wur.; Andreas Gób. was senior Kapo (the abbreviated names have been taken from the court proceedings).

According to Steegmann, a second transport of 500 prisoners arrived at the end of March 1944; 48.7 percent of the prisoners were Italians, 26.4 percent were Yugoslavs, 24.6 percent were Soviets, and 10.1 percent were Germans; but there were also 25 French and 28 Greeks. The overwhelming majority of prisoners, 96.7 percent, were political prisoners. The men from both transports were set to work in Markirch, constructing the camp and preparing a disused railway tunnel as the production site for aircraft engines by BMW. Supplies and production material mostly came from the Dachau/München-Allach (BMW) subcamp, which had been largely destroyed during Allied bombing raids.

Other transports arrived in the following months: 56 prisoners on May 25, 1944; 16 on June 1; 60 on June 17; and 537 on June 18. All the transports originated from München-Allach and consisted mostly of Soviet political prisoners, who had been chosen for their professional skills—construction workers and metalworkers. Two other transports from München-Allach arrived in Markirch between July and August 1944: on July 19, 223 prisoners; and on July 23, 139 prisoners (61.3 percent Italian, 6.3 percent Yugoslav, 18.5 percent Soviet, 8.2 percent Dutch). Documents from the Natzweiler concentration camp reveal that these prisoners were not chosen because of their professional skills. A final, large transport from München-Allach arrived in the camp in August 1944—57.3 percent of the prisoners in this trans-
port were Soviet citizens. The 226 prisoners did not remain in Markirch but were distributed between other Natzweiler subcamps in Neckarstal, including camps of the Gruppe “Wüste” and the subcamp in Spaichingen. Steegmann states the source material on the transports to Markirch is generally chaotic and that not all were put together in the Natzweiler main camp.

It is likely that two prisoners were executed in the camp for trying to escape: the execution of Italian prisoner Agsdino Campo (escaped on July 30, 1944; hanged on September 14, 1944) is documented.

On August 14, 1944, there were 1,857 prisoners registered in Markirch as capable of working: 816 for the construction detachment Markirch A9 [Ste Marie A9] and 1,041 for BMW (Elsässische Spezial Grosskellerei). The Markirch A9 work site was a tunnel that was constructed close to Saint-Die. The tunnel was 6,875 meters (about 7,519 yards) long, 6.15 meters (6.7 yards) high, and 7.8 meters (8.5 yards) wide. Under the command of SS-Hauptsturmführer Fritsch and SS-Obersturmführer Losacker, a Mannheim architect, railway track laying, electrical, and concreting work was to be done on the surface of 50,000 square meters (538,195 square yards). Ventilation and heating equipment was also to be installed. After the tunnel was constructed, it was to be prepared so that BMW could commence production of aircraft engines. Work in the tunnel was extraordinarily difficult, and the high humidity resulted in many illnesses. At least 100 prisoners died while working in the tunnel. These numbers do not include those prisoners who could no longer work and who were returned to the main camp, where they were exchanged for new prisoners.

At the end of August 1944, there were between 1,600 and 1,700 prisoners in the camp. However, production in the A9 tunnel never commenced due to the advance of the front line. During September, most of the prisoners were evacuated in different transports to Dachau (mostly to the München-Allach subcamp). At least 62 prisoners died while being transported. Other prisoners were taken to the Neckarelz and Neckargartach subcamps.

**SOURCES**

Robert Steegmann describes Markirch in his history of the Natzweiler concentration camp in *Struthof: Le KL-Natzweiler et ses commandos. Une nébuleuse concentrationnaire des deux côtés du Rhin, 1941–1945* (Strasbourg: Nuée Bleue, 2005), pp. 67–69, 276–277. SS-Untersturmführer Eugen Wur. was tried in 1965–1966 before the court (Landgericht) in Hechingen for the execution of a foreign prisoner but was acquitted for lack of evidence. The judgment is to be found in *JnNS-V*; vol. 23, lfd. Nr. 625, pp. 369–462.

Archival material on the Markirch camp can be found in the ACCS as well as in the AAC-C (Collection NAT 55: Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines, 1 box). Records from investigations by the state prosecutor on crimes committed in the Markirch subcamp are held at the BA-L (419 AR 2191/67; 419 AR-Z 33/61).

**METZ**

During the German occupation, from 1940 to 1944, there was a Natzweiler subcamp for male prisoners in the city of Metz, which belonged in that period to the German administrative unit Gau Westmark. The first mention of the camp is on August 6, 1943, and the last, a year later, on August 16, 1944.

The prisoners were used by the Waffen-SS Building Administration as well as by the police and SS-Intelligence School in Metz. They were accommodated in the Fort Göben Casemate I.

**SOURCES**

The Metz subcamp is mentioned in the ITS’s *Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945)* (Arolsen: Suchdienst, 1979), 1:206.

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**MÜHLHAUSEN**

The Mühlhausen subcamp (French: Mulhouse) was located in the former Reichsgau Bade-Elsass. It came into existence during the liquidation of the Natzweiler main camp, lasting for only a few weeks.

The camp is first mentioned in the Natzweiler files in the period after August 24, 1944. Around 200 male prisoners were taken from Dachau to Mühlhausen on August 30, 1944, to construct a factory for Elsässische Maschinenbau GmbH (Elmag), which was to be used to produce armaments.

Robert Steegmann determined the composition of the prisoners: around 18 percent were Italians, 12.5 percent were Poles, and 48.5 percent were Soviets. The large majority of the prisoners were political prisoners.

The prisoners never commenced work because of the approach of Allied troops. The camp is mentioned for the final time in the files of the main camp on September 29, 1944, when 198 inmates were sent back to Dachau.

**SOURCES**


Antoine Greffier states that the Mühlhausen subcamp was a secure Natzweiler subcamp in *Materialien zum Stand der Forschung über die Aussen- und Nebenlager des KL Natzweiler-Struthof*, published by the Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg in 2002, at p. 157.


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**NECKARELZ I AND II**

At the end of the war, as Allied bombardments on the Reich intensified, the production of war equipment went underground.

VOLUME I: PART B
The gypsum mine in Obrigheim/Neckar was used as the site for Daimler-Benz workshops to manufacture engines for Messerschmitt planes. Previously, the mine had been operated by the Heidelberg company Portland-Zementwerke. Two subcamps of the Natzweiler concentration camp in Alsace were created to supply labor to the subterranean factories. They were built in the town of Natzweiler, located on the other side of the Neckar River. The first subcamp was set up in the Natzweiler school on March 21, 1944, with the arrival of a convoy of 500 inmates from Dachau, where they had been selected for the work. The lack of security installations permitted 3 inmates to escape shortly after their arrival; quickly, however, the grounds of the school were surrounded by barbed-wire fences. The Natzweiler subcamps were built in the following months, as the Daimler-Benz labor demand increased. In April, three other convoys with prisoners arrived from Auschwitz, Natzweiler, and Gross-Rosen. In May, 600 men were sent from Oranienburg. Between July 22 and 24, 1944, 1,100 inmates, all French, arrived from Dachau, where they had been transported from the camp at Compiègne on July 1. A convoy sent from Markirch brought another 600 men in September 1944.

In the Neckarelz I camp and the three subsubcamps there were 2,129 inmates in June 1944 (1,100 in Neckarelz alone) and 2,944 in September. In Neckarelz II, there were an average of 1,400 inmates. The group of five camps included 3,000 inmates at the time of its evacuation. There were some women among them, mostly French prostitutes imprisoned in France and sent to concentration camps by the Germans.

The Neckarelz camp had a rectangular shape. The school yard served as the roll-call area. The barracks were built around it, 12 in all, with several infirmaries (Revis), a warehouse for food, two disinfectant rooms, and another for the block leader (Blockführer). The inmates were housed in the school building’s eight classrooms where trivel bunk beds were put up. The inmates’ office (Schreibstube) was in the cellar, along with the office of the “protective custody” camp chief (Schutzhaftlagerführer).

In December 1944, a second camp was built, near the entrance of the Obrigheim mine, designated as Neckarelz II. It was located next to the old Natzweiler train station, beside the tracks. It consisted of one or two housing barracks but depended on Neckarelz I for the rest of its facilities (kitchen, infirmary). Inmates deemed unfit for work were sent to Neckarelz I and replaced by prisoners from there. The camp guard was made up of a few SS men and 300 to 400 Luftwaffe soldiers from the Gotha and Vienna units.

The first commandant, transferred from the Auschwitz camp administration, was SS-Obersturmführer Hößler. He was replaced after two months by SS-Hauptsturmführer Franz Hofmann, who also came from Auschwitz. In October 1945, he was put in charge of the Gruppe “Wüste” camps. The protective custody camp chief replaced him.

The commander of Neckarelz II was an SS man with the rank of Rottenführer. The director of labor named Lutz murdered many inmates and was sentenced to death after libera-

The commander of Neckarelz I was Max Schwaiger. A former lieutenant in the Wehrmacht, he had been denounced for seditious intentions and sent to a concentration camp. The Lagerälteste of camp II was a homosexual, Walter Haufe; according to survivor accounts, he displayed sadistic behavior.

At Neckarelz, there existed the position of Oberkapo to supervise the group of Kapos. The position was held by someone named Hermann, a procurer from Berlin. Some Kapos behaved particularly brutally and killed dozens of inmates. Positions within the camp's administration were held by political prisoners. There was a political department (Politischer Abteilung) at Neckarelz, directed by a criminal policeman (Kriminalsekretär) of the Karlsruhe Gestapo. There were at least six executions, five for attempted escape and one for sabotage.

The prisoners' food was prepared by a group of 11 prisoners in the Neckarelz camp and brought to Obrigheim by truck. The meals at 9:00 A.M. and at noon were taken on the work site. The food was insufficient for the inmates, despite the 2,000 Reichsmark (RM) paid monthly by Daimler-Benz to purchase supplementary rations. Clothing was even scarcer, as the delousing hut at Neckarelz I burned down at the end of August 1944, along with many clothes. The inmates tried to protect themselves from the cold by putting sheets of paper or empty cement sacks under their shirts, even though that was forbidden.

The majority of inmates worked in the old gypsum mine, where they had to enlarge the subterranean chambers to set up workshops. This immense project carried the code name of “A8.” The existing subterranean chambers were enlarged, others were dug, the corridors were reinforced with concrete, and electricity was provided. An enormous heating installation, the Kesselhaus, was built and fortified to resist bombardments. It was a matter of building workshops for Daimler-Benz to manufacture airplane engines for the Messerschmitt and Heinkel aviation factories. At the end of the war, a floor space of 71,000 square meters (84,915 square yards), together with 34 kilometers (21 miles) of subterranean corridors, had been created underground.

The hardest excavation work was reserved for camp inmates. Forced laborers were employed at the manufacturing plant. They were housed in hospitals and in a requisitioned home for the disabled. In all, 5,000 men and women worked in the mine. Other inmates from Neckarelz were employed in construction work by the SS-Construction Special Inspectorate (Bausonderinspektion) III Obrigheim and by different local public works companies, like Dyckerhoff und Widmann (D & W). One group of inmates worked in the galleries of the mines at Obrigheim and Neckarkzimmern; another group was employed in a cement factory, and a third in a pickle plant (Garlenkonserverfabrik). Small labor details, often temporary, existed too. There was one at the train station in Neckarelz where the inmates were unloaded from the train cars. The one at Asbach built barracks. The Mosbach detail worked for an Alsatian company where there were free Alsatian workers who when on leave would run small shopping errands for the French inmates.
The official list of deceased French inmates at Neckarelz I and II and at Neckargerach includes 232 names. The bodies of the dead inmates were first sent to the crematory in Heidelberg. Beginning in mid-October 1944, in order to save the costs of cremation and transportation, they were buried in a mass grave in the Jewish cemetery of Binut, situated between Neckarelz and Neckargerach.

At the end of March 1945, the order to evacuate the camps arrived. The inmates of the sub-subcamps of Asbach, Bad Rappenau, and Neckarbischofsheim were sent to Neckarelz I. From there, all of the prisoners left on foot on March 25 or 26. On March 29, they arrived at Kupferzell, where they stayed two days. The death march continued in the direction of Schwäbisch-Hall, where approximately 2,000 prisoners boarded a freight train that took them to Dachau, 1,655 arrived alive. On April 28, 441 additional Neckarelz inmates arrived at Dachau, having covered the distance on foot. A freight train transported another 287 inmates incapable of walking. Because bombardments had destroyed the tracks, the train stopped at Osterburken. After four days of waiting, the prisoners were liberated by American troops.

The machines that were found in the mine were dismantled and sent to the Soviet Union. In 1952, the bodies in the Binut cemetery were exhumed, and those of the French prisoners, after being identified, were sent to the military cemetery in Strasbourg. The other corpses were buried again, near the entrance of the Jewish cemetery.

SOURCES A complete description of the history of the camp can be found in Jürgen Ziegler, Mitten unter uns. Natzweiler-Struthof: Spuren eines Konzentrationslagers (Hamburg: VSA Verlag, 1986), pp. 183–237. Philippe Bent, a French doctor, wrote a book of memoirs: L’attente de la mort dans les camps du Neckar (Montclar-de-Quercy: Dr Philippe Bent, 1957). A member of the Resistance arrested in Toulouse, Bent was first deported to the camp of Compiègne, then to Dachau on July 1, 1944, before July 22, when he was sent to Neckarelz. Another member of the Resistance from Toulouse, Jacques Barrau, was deported on the same convoy. In Neckarelz, with the help of other inmates, he started to make some drawings of daily life in the camp. These drawings were saved and completed after liberation. They are published, with commentaries in both French and German: Jacques Barrau, Dessins d’un camp. Le camp de Neckarelz, Zeichnungen aus einem Lager. Das Konzentrationslageraussenkommmando Neckarelz (Karlsruhe: Verlag Michael Schmid, 1992). For another survivor testimony, see Alice Landau, Neuf mois de chirurgie au camp de déportation de Neckarelz (Toulouse, 1947).

NECKARELZ I AND II/ASBACH

In the Baden village of Asbach, male Natzweiler concentration camp inmates were stationed to erect barracks for employees of the Daimler-Benz company. The camp was part of the Neckar complex, and the work done here was closely connected with the project “Goldfisch,” the relocation of the Daimler-Benz production site from Genshagen to Obirgheim, not far from Asbach, and the “Kormoran” project. After the work was completed, the prisoners were to return to the camps they had originally come from, Neckarelz and Neckargerach. In recent literature—for instance, by Tobias Markowitsch and Kattrin Rautnig—the Asbach camp is therefore referred to as Barackenbaukommando (barracks construction detachment).

The original SS plans consisted of erecting 32 barracks for approximately 1,200 Ostarbeiter (Eastern forced laborers), with the construction work to be concluded on August 20, 1944. Due to short supplies of material and slave labor, however, construction work only began on September 14, 1944, when 60 male prisoners from Neckargerach, under the command of SS-Oberscharführer Heinrich Meyer and guarded by 10 SS men, were taken to Asbach, to the camp site in the village forest at Daudenzell. For the first two weeks, the prisoners were taken back to Neckargerach every night. From September 25 on, they were accommodated in the first barracks that was finished in the camp. In the course of fall 1944, the number of inmates increased to 150, now also including inmates from Neckarelz I.

At the same time, other projects within the Neckar camp complex gained a higher priority, and increasing Allied air raids made the construction work harder and harder. In December 1944, the project was mostly complete: The pipeline that brought drinking water into the camp was laid, the kitchen barracks were all but finished, and a wash barracks was under construction, as were 8 to 10 barracks that were to be used as living quarters. Also, the road leading to the camp and the pathways within the camp were completed. By the end of 1944, the plans were reduced: now only 9 barracks were to be erected, and the number of concentration camp inmates in the camp was reduced to 45. Asbach remained a provisional camp. In January 1945, Dr. Jean Andréis, who at that time was the prison physician at Neckarzimmern, was called to Asbach to take care of the SS command leader who had taken a bad fall. As Markowitsch and Rautnig report, Andréis received permission to visit the local pharmacy, and while buying the necessary medication for the SS man, he also bought some medication for the inmates, mainly vitamin pills, and surgical gauze. Besides this doctor’s visit, there was no medical care in the camp, which apparently had no infirmary.

On March 23, 1945, the work at the camp officially ceased, and the inmates were transferred back to Neckarelz. Afterward, the camp was dissolved.

NECKARELZ I AND II/BAD RAPPAUEN

A work detachment of the Natzweiler subcamps Neckarelz I and II for male prisoners was located in the Baden town of Bad Rappenau. It was part of the Neckar camp complex and specifically dedicated to the machinery that was to be used by the Daimler-Benz company after its relocation from Genshagen near Berlin to Obrigheim.

According to an official report, the Bad Rappenau camp was opened between September and October 1944 with the arrival of about 15 inmates from the Neckarelz camp in the town of Bad Rappenau, about 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) from Bad Wimpfen. Inmates were to prepare a giant machinery park in the old salt pit of Bad Rappenau; therefore, the inmates had to clean the salt pit first to prepare it for storing the machines there. This equipment came from the local SS-Bauhof, which was in charge of paints, engines, machines, air filtration systems, clothing supply, modular barracks, and other items—all of them booty from the occupied areas and evacuated goods from areas that had fallen into the hands of the Allies. Inmates had to unload the arriving equipment and place it in the fabric halls. The prisoners were located in the two former drilling houses of the salt pit: in one of them, they installed two-tier bunk beds; the second building was used as the inmates’ kitchen. Most likely, the camp administration and the guards’ quarters were also in this second building. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire.

Like the guards, the majority of inmates had come from the Natzweiler subcamp at Wesseling, which had been evacuated in late fall of 1944 to Neckarelz. This transfer is confirmed by the memoirs of Zacheus Pawlak, a Polish inmate first of Auschwitz, then of Wesseling and Bad Rappenau. The criminal inmate Toni, who had been camp elder in Wesseling, also became the camp elder in Bad Rappenau. Pawlak reports that the living and working conditions at the Bad Rappenau subcamp apparently were bearable, depending on the inmates’ work assignments. In general, the guards (SS and Luftwaffe) did not mistreat the prisoners, and the local population (including the nuns of the Bad Rappenau orphanage) frequently supplied the inmates with food. Beside the salt pit and the SS-Bauhof, inmates worked at the railway station, where they loaded and unloaded trains; at the Neckar River, where they loaded and unloaded ships and boats; and for local farmers. For the farm work, inmates were sometimes able to receive some extra food rations. On December 5, 1944, one day after the devastating air raid on Necksarsulm (about 15 kilometers or 9.3 miles away), inmates of the Bad Rappenau subcamp were taken to the town to clean up. The Bad Rappenau salt pit itself had been attacked repeatedly from the air, but no inmates had been killed. Only in March 1945 were four inmates killed, when they were sent to clean up after an Allied air raid, and a bomb exploded. There are no reports on the number of inmates who may have died during the camp’s existence; most likely, inmates considered too weak to work were sent to other camps such as Vaihingen/Unterriexingen and died there.

At the end of March 1945, the prisoners were evacuated to the Neckarelz subcamp. From there, they were taken only a few days later by foot and train to Dachau and its subcamps. During this evacuation, on Easter Sunday 1945, their train was attacked by Allied planes, and numerous inmates died.


At BA-BL, see call number 419 AR-1772/67 for more information on the Bad Rappenau subcamp.

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NECKARELZ I AND II/NECKARBISCHOFSHEIM

The town of Neckarbischofsheim in Baden was the seat of a labor detail of the Natzweiler subcamp Neckarelz I and II and belonged to the complex of the Neckarlager (camps along the Neckar River). According to a decision by the SS-Führungstab Ost (Leadership Staff East), inmates from Neckarelz and Neckargerach were to erect a barracks camp that was to house a Daimler-Benz workforce that was to be evacuated from their locations in central Germany due to the increasing number of air raids.

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The grounds for this barracks camp at Neckarbischofsheim were located on the edge of the city, next to a field and the Schwarzbach Creek. The close proximity to the railway track between Neckargmünd and Obrigheim was another important factor for choosing the site.

Between September 14 and 25, 1944, every day about 80 prisoners were taken from Neckargerach to Neckarbischofsheim, where they started to work on erecting the camp. On September 25, they moved into the first barracks that was completed. In the plans of the SS-Leadership Staff, the amount of workforce needed to erect the camp was estimated at 90 specialists (construction workers) and about 225 unskilled workers. The plans called for the erection of 12 barracks within 70 days; additionally, barracks for special purposes (administration, kitchen, washing, infirmary, de-lousing, toilets) were also to be built. The building of roads and pathways, of canals, and of fences was also planned. When finished, the camp was to hold about 1,000 Daimler-Benz laborers.

Since the SS-Führungsstab was not able to provide a sufficient number of inmates, all planning became unrealistic. Neckarbischofsheim always remained a small camp, with approximately 200 male inmates. During the construction phase, the conditions in the camp became unbearable quickly. Prisoners had no chance to shower for months; their bathroom consisted of a tree trunk that was laid across Schwarzbach Creek. Very soon, the inmates started to suffer from typhus and typhoid, and only then were some measures taken to slightly improve the sanitary conditions.

In November 1944, it became obvious that other projects within the Neckarlager complex had a higher priority. Additionally, air raids at a number of the camps delayed the construction work significantly. By the end of the war, only six barracks were completed in Neckarbischofsheim; also constructed was the road leading to the entrance of the camp, a provisional bridge crossing the creek, and some pathways. To accomplish this, SS men mercilessly exploited the emaciated and starving inmates. On March 15, 1945, 30 inmates not able to work were exchanged for new prisoners from Neckarelz II. The small size of the detachment even increased the exploitation of the inmates. Only temporarily, between October 1944 and mid-February 1945, a prisoners’ physician was present in the camp: Dr. Joseph Leccia, a French resistance fighter, who afterward was transferred to Neckarelz II.

Presumably, the Neckarbischofsheim inmates came from a number of different nationalities, like all inmates in the Neckarlager complex. Among them were French, Poles, Russians, Italians, Germans, Norwegians, Belgians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Czechs, Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), Latvians, Hungarians, Luxembourgiants, Dutch, Romanians, Slovaks, Yugoslavs, Spaniards, and Greeks. Robert Stein, one of the few German inmates in Neckarbischofsheim, was the camp Kapo.

By the end of March 1945, Neckarbischofsheim was evacuated, and the inmates were sent back to Neckarelz. From there, they joined the evacuation marches of the Natzweiler inmates. On March 29, all prisoners still able to walk were taken via Öhringen to Kupferzell. From there, 2,000 inmates were taken by train to Dachau, where they arrived on April 2. Another group of inmates walked from Neckarelz to Dachau, where they arrived almost a month later, on April 27. Sick inmates who were no longer able to walk were to be taken by train to Dachau, but these plans were never realized, and the inmates were set free on April 2, 1945, after their guards had escaped.

There is no clear information as to how many inmates died in the Necklager. According to records, the death rate was about 10 percent. But this death rate is unrealistically low since many inmates who were no longer able to work were sent to Vaihingen/Enz, a camp that within the compound of the Neckar camps served the purpose of a camp solely for the dying. The victims of that camp do not show up in any statistical records.


There are some archival sources on the Necklager in general and on Neckarbischofsheim specifically. The results of investigations by the ZdL on the Neckarbischofsheim camp can be found in BA-L today (419 AR-1778/67). Also, the ACCS holds some further information.

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NECKARELZ I AND II/NECKARGERACH

A detachment of the Natzweiler subcamps Neckarelz I and II was established in Neckargerach in Baden on April 7, 1944, on the site of a former Reich Labor Service (RAD) camp. In fact, Neckargerach was the first subcamp erected after the establishment of the Neckarelz I and II subcamp. After more and more inmates had arrived at Neckarelz I and II and were to be employed in the construction of accommodations for Daimler-Benz employees, the Neckarelz I and II camp was not able to take in any more prisoners. By the end of April the former RAD camp was confiscated for the purpose of erecting the new subcamp. The camp was located in Neckargerach at Seebach Creek, about 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) down the river from Neckarelz. The RAD camp provided barracks and sanitary installations, as well as access to the Neckarelz-Obrigheim train tracks connecting Neckargerach with its superior camp and the project Goldfisch at Obrigheim, the work site of the inmates as well.

Since early April, inmates of Neckarelz I and II had worked on preparing for the opening of the camp. Most likely, the camp was opened on April 27, 1944, already very crowded. Some 400 of the inmates who arrived that day were sent to work in the underground tunnels of the Goldfisch project, while 450 remained in the camp and continued working on its construction; 4 inmates worked in the kitchen, and 19 were prisoner-functionaries. In May 1944, 600 more inmates arrived in the Neckarelz region from Sachsenhausen. Among the prisoners were 370 Soviets, 163 Poles, 36 Germans, 7 Dutch, 7 Czechs, 6 French, 5 Belgians, 2 Lithuanians, 2 Yugoslavs, and 2 stateless persons. Again, most of the prisoners were political prisoners. On the transport, 31 had died. Of the surviving inmates, about 340 remained in Neckargerach, while the others were taken to Neckarelz I and II. With about 1,240 inmates (the peak was reached on June 18, 1944, when 1,321 prisoners were in the camp), Neckargerach between May and December 1944 was the largest camp in the Neckar area. At that time, there were more inmates in the camp than the barracks could hold, and an additional tent was erected to hold 300 inmates.

Originally, the camp consisted of five barracks, each of them divided into nine rooms (Stuben); one barracks was used as the kitchen. The rooms were each equipped with two-tier bunk beds, two tables, benches, and a stove—but no fuel was provided. Outside the camp, there were two more barracks, one for the guards and one used as an office building. Open latrines were placed at the outskirts of the camp. For more than 1,200 inmates, there were only five faucets. Franz Hössler, the commander of all the Neckar camps, was initially also in charge of the Neckargerach subcamp. But within a few days he was replaced by a local camp commander: between April 30 and July 12, 1944, this was SS-Oberscharführer Josef Brandauer, followed by Luftwaffe-Feldwebel Zimmermann until early September 1944. Until September 23, 1944, the staff of the guard unit Spangenberg was in charge, and from October 15, 1944, on, SS-Oberscharführer Steinbach.

Detlef Ernst and Klaus Rießinger state that the guards were part of the 6th Waffen-SS Guard Company, commanded by SS-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Lautenschläger. The 6th Company was responsible for guarding the subcamps and detachments in Vaihingen, Kochendorf, Neckargerach, Hessel, and Unterriexingen. On the other hand, Tobias Markowitsch and Katrin Rautnig state that, according to a special order of the commander of the Neckar camps, the 5th Guard Company under Wilhelm Streit was in charge of guarding Neckargerach and some other camps in the area.

Two-thirds of the inmates of the Neckargerach camp worked the day shift at the Obrigheim tunnel, to prepare the underground relocation of the Daimler-Benz production site from Genshagen to Obrigheim. One-third of the inmates worked the night shift, and about 45 inmates worked within the camp. The inmates’ day started at 4:45 in the morning; roll call was at 5:15 A.M. At 5:30 the inmates were marched to the Neckargerach railway station and from there taken by train to Neckarelz and Obrigheim, where they started to work at 7:00 A.M. Proof of the severe living and working conditions in the camp can be seen in the fact that already by May 1944, less than one month after the camp in Neckargerach had opened, 70 prisoners were transferred back to the Natzweiler infirmary.

Until October 1944, according to survivor statements, prisoners who tried to escape or were accused of sabotage were executed in the camp. Such executions took place especially during the reign of the second commander of the Neckar camps group, Franz Johann Hofmann. For instance, according to Robert Steegmann, 23 prisoners stated to be Polish partisans were executed in June, and 27 were shot in July—either in Neckarelz or Neckargerach (sources differ). One prisoner, Boleslaw Schesyk, was hanged in June 1944 following an unsuccessful escape attempt. Prisoners Ilja Prokuda (Soviet Union), Rene Brunet (France), and Eugen Florczak (Poland) were shot in August and September 1944, probably while trying to escape.

In December 1944, Neckargerach underwent a transformation: it completely ceased to be a work camp and became a so-called hospital camp (Krankenlager) for all camps of the Neckar region instead, while all inmates still capable of work were taken to Neckarelz I and II. In mid-July, a camp physician began to work in Neckargerach; on July 25, 1944, a second physician was sent to the camp; and on August 13, a third one. From November 1944 on, four to five physicians were working at Neckargerach. Thanks to the research of Markowitsch and Rautnig, the names of the inmates-physicians at the Neckar camps are known: they were French inmates Prof. Dr. Francois Rohmer, Dr. Joseph Helluy, Dr. Jacques Garnal, Dr. Stephane Fuchs, and Dr. Jean Bernex, German Dr. Werner Vohl, and Norwegian Dr. Leif Paulson. Originally the Reiter (infirmary) only held about 25 patients a day—probably because there was no more space or because a larger number of patients were not allowed by the camp commander. In the second half of the year, the number of inmates at the infirmary began to rise to 70 and later 80 to 90 per day.
This number did not significantly increase since sick prisoners were regularly selected and sent to the "dying camp" (Sterbelager) Vaihingen/Enz, as happened with 120 inmates on December 20 and a further 2 in March 1945. A local German physician, Dr. Hans Wey, who had been central in saving the lives of inmates in some of the Neckar camps, also helped the prisoners of the Neckargerach camp: by warning them early about upcoming selections, he saved the lives of many prisoners. Markowitsch and Rautnig provide statistical information regarding the number of deaths in the Neckargerach camp: in April 1944, no inmates died; in May, 10; in June, 25; in July, 5; in August, 6; in September, 8; in October, 3; in November, 18; in December, 13; in January 1945, 13; in February, 15; and in March, 21. In total, these are 137 cases of death, not including those Neckargerach inmates who were transported to other camps (like the main camp or Vaihingen) to die or to be killed there.

At the end of March 1945, the evacuation of the prisoners began. By then, the number of inmates in the Neckargerach camp was over 2,000 and included numerous prisoners who had been evacuated from other subcamps to Neckargerach. Those who could walk were taken to Dachau; the last transport with 1,920 prisoners, according to eyewitness statements and files, arrived there on April 10, 1945. Those who could not walk, roughly 900, were taken at the end of March 1945 to Osterburken, where between 250 and 300 of them died. The Allied freed 887 survivors from Neckarelz/Neckargerach on April 2, 1945.

Hofmann was sentenced in the first Auschwitz trial in 1961 by the Landgericht (Regional Court) München II to life imprisonment with hard labor for 1,938 homicides. The Landgericht Hechingen also sentenced him to imprisonment with hard labor in 1965 for his activities at Neckargertach. The sentence was revoked and the proceedings stayed, as Hofmann had already been sentenced to life imprisonment for killings committed in 1938.


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NECKARGARTACH-HEILBRONN

Neckargartach, a subcamp of the Alsatian concentration camp of Natzweiler, opened in August 1944. Neckargartach is a suburb of Heilbronn in Württemberg. The camp was established next to an athletic field, not far from the Neckar River. The chosen site, outlined by Bollinger and Wimpfener, was surrounded by vegetable gardens. It occupied an area of 100 meters×150 meters (328 feet×492 feet). About 200 inmates were transferred to Neckargartach on September 4, arriving from Kochendorf, another Natzweiler subcamp. The inmates built the first three barracks in just three days. The work was managed by the Higher-SS Construction Directorate (Oberbauleitung) Kiebitz-Stuttgart. The project carried the code name “Steinbock in Heilbronn.” It appears that the Organisation Todt (OT) was not involved in the camp’s construction; instead, the work was managed by the SS with the help of civilian foremen.

A second transport arrived around the same time, bringing inmates from the Longwy and Adun-le-Tiche subcamps in Lorraine. As the camp was not yet finished, the convoy was directed to another subcamp. On September 15, a transport of 600 inmates from the Markkirch subcamp in Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines in Alsace arrived in Neckargartach. The prisoners had worked in the construction of Bayerische Motoren Werke (BMW) airplane engines in a factory installed in a railroad tunnel. The convoy was composed of 150 skilled and 450 unskilled laborers. Another convoy arrived from the camp of Wesserling, also in Alsace. Neckargartach thus served as the evacuation link for several of Natzweiler’s subcamps under the threat of advancing Allied troops. The exact number of camp inmates is not precisely known; it was probably around 1,200.

The camp’s organization included a political department (Politische Abteilung), controlled by the Gestapo. According to oral accounts, included among the inmates were labeled...
Night-and-Fog (Nacht- und Nebel) prisoners, common criminals, political prisoners, Gypsies, and at least one homosexual. One inmate was a former deputy in the German parliament (Reichstag). Jews were probably not very numerous among the inmates; 2 deceased were buried in the Jewish cemetery of Heilbronn-Sonthofen. Polish inmates were the most numerous. There were also Italians, Russians, Yugoslavs, Germans, and French, as well as others from Luxembourg and Alsace-Moselle. The number of dead is also not known in detail, but there were at least 295 dead, of which 31 were cremated in the Heilbronn crematorium; others were buried in a mass grave. The highest number of deaths occurred in January 1945. At least two escapes are recorded. The final fate of the escapees is not known, but they were not returned to the camp.

A doctor worked in the camp, a Polish inmate. A German doctor from Neckargartach treated the guards and wrote the death certificates. Sick inmates were sent to the hospital camp (Krankenlager) in Vaihingen, another subcamp of Natzweiler, most often to die there. The camp elder (Lagerältester) was a German, a bookseller from Heidelberg. He was later replaced by Vally Greska, a Jehovah’s Witness.

The camp’s commander was Johannes Gillbert, an SS-Oberscharführer and a native of the Duisburg area. Accounts indicate that he did not beat inmates. He even tried at times to improve the condition of the prisoners’ lives, in particular by providing them with shoes. This was a necessity to enable them to report to their work site. The camp was protected by about 80 guards from the SS and soldiers from the Luftwaffe. Many guards were ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) who had previously been stationed in the concentration camps of Ra-don (a subcamp of Lublin-Majdanek) and Lublin. About 20 brutal Kapos inflicted cruel treatment on the inmates. There were no regular executions of inmates; instead, they died of weakness and exhaustion. Some residents of Heilbronn attempted to come to their aid by giving them food. For example, apples were left along the path the prisoners had to take to get to work. Their poor physical condition was visible to the residents. It was even possible to see inside the camp from the neighboring streets. The camp had been built in Neckargartach because of its proximity to a salt mine, which was used as a shelter for the workshops necessary to the war industry. The inmates worked at digging a second entry tunnel, then a third, for the mine chamber, where a workshop was built.

Accounts differ on the work carried out in this underground chamber. In any case, it was a matter of war production, perhaps spare parts for airplanes or even for V-2 rockets. Inmates worked there in three shifts of eight hours each. The work took place six and a half days per week. Other inmates were employed in the fields, in groups of 8 or 10. The main employers for manual labor in the camp were the OT and the local excavation company Julius Berger. On December 4, 1944, the city of Heilbronn suffered extensive aerial bombing. The work in the mine was stopped, and the inmates were employed to clear the rubble, to bury the corpses, and to disable unexploded bombs. When the neighboring town of Neckars-
soner physician, was also in Neckarzimmern for a short time to take care of sick inmates unable to work. Despite being the camp physician, he had to work like all the other inmates and had no medical instruments or medication for treatment available.


The camp is not mentioned in the ITS list kept in Arolsen, nor was it the subject of an investigation by the ZdL in Ludwigsburg or any other German prosecutor’s office after the war. The German Bundesarchiv in Berlin holds a few documents that verify the existence of the camp: BA-B collection NS 4, KL Na (Natzweiler) refers to the camp in the subgroup 49-102: Häftlingsangelegenheiten. In List 85 there are documents on the creation and inspection of some labor details. The labor detail Neckarzimmern is listed, along with Neckargartach and Asbach, in 93a. At BA-BL, call number 419 AR-1833/67 provides some further information on Neckarzimmern.

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**NEUENBÜRG**

The Baden-Württemberg town of Neuenbürg an der Enz was traditionally the site of iron ore, quartz, and fluorite mined in the Neuenbürgischer Revier and processed in a nearby IG Farben factory. Toward the end of World War II, these raw materials became vital for the German war effort.

In the spring of 1945, around 170 foreign forced laborers were held in Neuenbürg, but the exact site where they worked is uncertain. Eventually they were put to work in the Neuenbürgischer Revier mining raw materials; beginning in the autumn of 1944, they were also exploited for the project “Dachsbau” to relocate the Daimler-Benz factory at Gaggenau. For this purpose, a provisional camp was established in a forest near Neuenbürg. It held around 90 prisoners from Natzweiler who were to prepare a permanent camp built by the Organisation Todt (OT). The so-called Waldwerk was not finished by the end of the war. It is not known when this provisional camp was established and dissolved.

Antoine Greffier mentions Neuenbürg as a probable Natzweiler subcamp, as the prisoners could have originated from the Natzweiler Vaihingen I subcamp, while Robert Steegmann does not refer to the camp in his monograph on the Natzweiler concentration camp.

**SOURCES** A brief description of the camp in Neuenbürg and its significance for the war effort can be found in Heimatschichtlicher Wegzeizer zu Stäten des Widerstandes und der Verfolgung 1933–1945, vol. 5, Baden-Württemberg, Regierungsbezirke Karlsruhe und Stuttgart (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag für akademische Schriften, 1991), p. 22. The question as to whether Neuenbürg was a Natzweiler subcamp remains unanswered. Antoine Greffier deals with the uncertain state of research on Natzweiler in his _Materialien zum Stand der Forschung über die Aussen- und Nebenlager des KL Natzweiler–Struthof_ (Stuttgart: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg, 2002), p. 315.


_Evelyn Zegenhagen_  
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**NIEDERBRONN**

Niederbronn’s (French: Niederbronn-les-Bains) status as a Natzweiler subcamp remains uncertain. Niederbronn is located in the French Vogesen in present-day Departement Bas-Rhin. Although Antoine Greffier mentions Niederbronn as a possible Natzweiler subcamp, there is no supporting evidence for this classification.


_Evelyn Zegenhagen_  
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**OBEREHNHEIM**

The Oberehnheim subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp was created in December 1942 in Obernai, a small town of 7,000 inhabitants located in Alsace, west of Strasbourg, in the foothills of the lower Vosges Mountains. Designated as Aussenkommando Oberehnheim, the camp was set up at a small manor, the Oberkirch manor, surrounded by a large park located on the outskirts of town. The plot of land was 30 hectares (74 acres); the proprietors, the Hell family of Oberkirch, had left Alsace, and the manor had been requisitioned. In February 1942, Heinrich Himmler ordered the setup of a school to train female communications assistants for the SS (SS-Nachrichtenhelferinenschule) on the property. Young German women—3,000 in all—were trained.
there, starting in June of 1942. In conjunction with the school, it was seen necessary to renovate the chateau and to build additional structures. The school had a total of 13 requisitioned properties at its disposal in Obernai or in the surrounding villages, including the Leonardsau manor and the city's elementary teacher training college. The labor supply necessary to carry out the construction work explains the creation of the subcamp, which was set up on the construction site itself. Himmler visited the school on June 5, 1943.

The camp itself was established in the manor house, which was surrounded by barbed wire. There was a guard station at the entrance, and the guards had police dogs.

A convoy of 200 inmates arrived at the camp. They were housed in the stables of the manor, where they slept on straw. The living conditions were harsh, due to malnutrition and maltreatment. Over the course of a year, 80 of the prisoners died. New inmates were sent to Obernai at the end of 1943 as part of frequent prisoner transports between the Obernai subcamp and the main camp. The total number of dead is estimated to be around 100. Bodies were sent back to the main camp. There was no doctor or infirmary in the subcamp—only a nurse. The wounded and the ill were sent to the infirmary (Revier) in Natzweiler. At least 2 prisoners were shot by guards as they were trying to flee. A third was killed at the Obernai train station because, according to testimonies, he had either stolen or received a bottle of alcohol from a local resident.

The inmates were, for the most part, registered as political prisoners. They were from Poland, Russia, Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. They were all skilled laborers who worked to move furniture from manors and properties that had been requisitioned for the school. In the courtyard of the manor, they built barracks to house students of the SS school as well as an air-raid shelter. The inmates also worked to repave roads, to clean a river, and to paint and maintain the school buildings. According to one account, they also refurbished individual houses in Obernai. Some inmates who worked outside the camp could establish contacts with the local population.

The Natzweiler construction management (Bauleitung) organized the work. The camp architect was August Schlachter, who was sent to Kiev. His successor was named Heider. According to one account, the camp elder (Räumälter) was named Böhler, a German from Mannheim, where he had been a Communist member of the city council.

The camp surveillance was provided by about a dozen SS guards as they were trying to flee. A third was killed at the Obernai train station because, according to testimonies, he had either stolen or received a bottle of alcohol from a local resident.

The subcamp was dismantled in two steps: on September 29, 1944, facing the advance of Allied troops, 91 inmates were sent to the Dachau concentration camp. The remaining inmates, about 20, left the camp on foot on November 22, 1944, just before the liberation of the town. They arrived at the camp of Geislingen, where they stayed several days, then were evacuated to the Heidenheim subcamp, near Ulm. The school of communications was evacuated at the same time and reestablished near Berchtesgaden, where it functioned until the end of the war. Wolfgang Seuss was tried by an American tribunal at Landsberg, sentenced to death, and executed.

**SOURCES**


Jean-Marc Dreyfus trans. Gina Cooke

**PELTERS**

In Pelters, south of Metz (1940–1944: Gau Westmark; present-day Pelter, Moselle department, France), there existed a subcamp of Natzweiler. It was opened at the end of March 1942 and is last mentioned in a letter of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) dated August 17, 1944. The camp leader (Lagerführer) was SS-Oberscharführer René Roman. The average number of prisoners in Pelters was 50 (reaching at one point a maximum of 60), and they were initially housed in an ancillary building of a local company and later in another nearby building in the center of the settlement. The main function of the camp and its prisoners was to take care of the horses of the SS-Cavalry Remount School (Remonte-Schule) in Pelters. According to the testimony of one of the prisoners, however, the inmates were also used for digging a large hole in the ground some 12 meters×20 meters (39 feet×66 feet) at an excavation site about 15 minutes away from the camp. It is suspected that this excavation was inten-
It is very likely that prisoners from various Natzweiler subcamps were also temporarily housed here, since at this time individual Natzweiler subcamps were being cleared before the advancing Allied troops. Rastatt was one of the evacuation points for prisoners coming from the Natzweiler subcamps located in Alsace. For the prisoners from the security camp in Schirmeck-Vorbrück, it is known that they were transferred on to Haslach (Vulkan factory), where they had to work for Daimler-Benz. Haslach was a Natzweiler subcamp, which again demonstrates the close connection between the camps of Schirmeck-Vorbrück and Natzweiler, with respect to the camp in Rastatt.

**SOURCES**

Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Martin Dean
The prisoners from Luxembourg occupied the central positions of the Baltic Oil Limited Company, who had been deployed among the civilian workers in the camp and ghetto camp for Jews in Döblin. Among them, however, were buried in a mass grave, which was exhumed after the end of the war. Alongside the concentration camp prisoners, DÖLF also exploited Eastern forced laborers (Ostarbeiter), as well as forced laborers from Italy and France. Since the test facility in Schömberg was intended to provide the technical basis for the running of all 10 planned factories of Operation Desert, its completion was accelerated, and the prisoners from the Schömberg camp were primarily deployed there. On the instructions of Edmund Geilenberg, a senior figure in the Armaments Ministry, the Organisation Todt (OT) took over responsibility for construction of the test facility. Among the civilian workers were also members of the Baltic Oil Limited Company, who had been deployed in Estonia producing shale oil and were transferred to DÖLF after the evacuation of Estonia by the Germans in the summer of 1944. From the end of July until the end of December 1944, the DÖLF test facility produced 228 metric tons (251 short tons) of shale oil. The Wüste 9 plant only came provisionally online on March 11, 1945.

Starting on October 20, 1944, the camp leader was SS-Oberscharführer Helmut Schnabel. He joined the SA in 1933 as an unemployed workman, entering the SS in 1936. He served initially in the Buchenwald and Fallersleben concentration camps, before being appointed in 1942 as head of the administration (Verwaltungsführer) in the concentration camp and ghetto camp for Jews in Döblin in the General Government. From the summer of 1943 and into 1944, he was a camp commandant (Lagerführer) at the concentration camp at Vaivara, Estonia, and in various of its subcamps (Vivikon, Ereda, Lagedi), as well as deputy commandant in Narva. In Estonia, Schnabel took part in “selections” of Jewish prisoners and personally murdered countless Jews. In addition, he directed a shooting Aktion (operation), in which Jewish children were among the victims.

At the end of 1944, camp commandant Schnabel together with Eugen Wurth ordered and carried out the shooting of at least 2 prisoners who had been captured while attempting to escape. Two additional Russian prisoners who also tried to flee were hanged in the presence of two Gestapo men on the orders of Schnabel and Wurth. This execution is also mentioned by the camp elder (Lagerältester), Roger Hoffmann, who kept a journal of events at the Schömberg concentration camp from March 3, 1944, until April 17, 1945. On January 21, 1945, he recorded: “Two Russians were hanged in front of all the prisoners of the camp.”

Hoffmann listed other special events in the camp, for example, on March 28, 1944: “Alexandrow Wasili put into the dog pound by SS-man Reichenbach, biting wounds”; on May 31, 1944: “Matwejo shot while trying to escape.” Just between September 9 and October 11, 1944, a total of 10 prisoners escaped, of which 2 were brought back to the camp and one “drowned during the escape attempt.” A prisoner died following the amputation of his leg; another hanged himself in a shed. On the other hand, 9 Norwegians were released from the camp following the intervention of the Red Cross, on March 22, 1945. According to the records kept by the senior Kapo, 63 prisoners were occupied working within the camp itself; of these, 16 belonged to the “prisoner self-administration,” 26 camp inmates worked as craftsmen, 6 as cooks, and 15 as potato peelers. One of the two prisoner doctors was Léon Boubien, later highly decorated as a French Resistance fighter and doctor, who was interned at Natzweiler, Schömberg, Erzingen, and Dachau.

The prisoners were subjected to chicanery from their supervisors not only in the camp but also on the construction site. The German in charge of construction, Kirchhardt from Metzingen, who arrived in Schömberg in 1943 and worked on behalf of DÖLF, was notorious for the fact that he physically abused the roughly 30 prisoners assigned to him as workers.

At the Rastatt Trial in 1947, a French military tribunal sentenced a block leader (Blockältester), the report leader (Rapportführer), the head of the kitchen, and a craft supervisor (Werksmeister) to death and also gave three SS guards 5 years in prison. In 1966, a German court in Hechingen sentenced Schnabel to 10 years in prison for crimes committed at the concentration camps in Vaivara and Vivikoni; he was not punished for the crimes at the Schömberg concentration camp. Wurth was also acquitted of the killings at the Schömberg camp, as the court assumed in his favor that these were possibly the “implementation of legal verdicts.”

**SOURCES**

A considerable amount of documentation regarding the Schömberg concentration camp can be found in Sta-L (both investigative and trial files). At the BA-B, BDC records, there are additional details concerning the SS in the camp, while in the BA-DH the documents of the Deutsche Bergwerks- und Hüttenbau Gesellschaft (DBHG) reveal certain aspects of everyday life and forced labor in the camp. Finally, the Schömberg concentration camp is also mentioned in the files of the District Food Supply Office (Kreisernährungsamt), located in Sta-S.
NOTES

1. Letter of Pohl to Himmler, December 21, 1943, in BA-B, NS 19/1386 (first mention of the concentration camp).

2. Letter of Fortmann to Krüdener, February 24, 1944, in AOC, AP/PPD, c. 1304, p. 15 bis, d. 4, p. 52.

3. List of supplies provided by the community in Kreis Balingen, 60th distribution period [March 1944], in Sta-S, Wü 65/4 Bd. 2, Nr. 1412.


7. Table on the development of the number of deaths in the Schömberg camp, undated [after 1945], in ibid., EL 317 III, Bü 1250, Bl. 28598 (in total 385 deaths).


10. Note of DBHG regarding the transfer of the responsibility for the construction of the test facility in Schömberg to the OT, August 5, 1944, in BA-DH, R 121/1523.


SCHÖRZINGEN

At the end of 1943, the company management of the Kohle-Öl-Union (KÖU), that is, the manager Hübner and his secretary Hagedorn, as well as mining engineer Bockhorst, requested from Office D II of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) that concentration camp prisoners be made available for work underground. Around the same time, a KÖU report from the town hall in Schörzingen confirms the work deployment of prisoners there. In his letter to Heinrich Himmler on December 21, 1943, Oswald Pohl stated under point three: “From the middle of January 1944, three hundred prisoners will be directed to the underground facility of the Kohle-Öl-Union von Busse KG (a subsidiary of the Göring Works) in Schörzingen near Rottweil, as the housing facilities will not be completed before this time.” Pohl wanted to ensure “that from the start it was clear, how much oil would be available to the SS from the plant’s production.” In return for providing the concentration camp prisoners, however, the SS demanded for itself the entire future production of shale oil from the plant, so that up to the beginning of February 1944 it still remained unclear how many prisoners would be made available to the KÖU. After a lengthy period of negotiation, in which the KÖU director, von Busse, also intervened, the 300 prisoners that were already in Schörzingen were permitted to remain. The deployment of prisoners was no longer “to be dependent on the benefit accruing to the SS.”

From January 1944, between 20 and 50 prisoners were in Schörzingen, so that the “official date” for the establishment of the concentration camp may have been February 1, 1944. The establishment of the Schörzingen subcamp accordingly took place only in connection with the underground carbonization operations of the KÖU, whose management requested prisoners from the SS, although in this factory, which operated like a coal mine, only civilian workers, “including some requisitioned from the mine in Peignitz,” were supposed to be deployed. The Numbers Book (Nummernbuch) of the Natzweiler concentration camp, however, indicates for Schörzingen, abbreviated as “Schz,” other categories of workers. These were designated on the list as “AZA [foreign civilian worker] Poles,” “AZA Russians,” and “Kgf Russians (POWs [prisoners of war])” who were sent to Schörzingen from the Natzweiler main camp. It has not been possible to clarify whether the prisoners were treated any differently on account of these separate designations. The reality of work in the underground carbonization plant or on the construction of the camp erases any differentiations indicated by the Numbers Book.
The prisoners constructed the camp on the road to Wilflingen at the end of the village of Schörzingen, first working on the building for the SS, then on the barracks for the prisoners, which were “made from wooden planks” with “floor-boards simply laid loosely on the ground.” The site of the buildings was adapted to the terrain, as demonstrated by British aerial photographs. The camp was surrounded by a double “security fence;” the inner fence was electrified with high-voltage current, as shown on a sketch of the entire campsite. Outside the fence there was one barrack containing the administration and quarters for the SS; inside, four barracks (Blocks I to IV), each intended for “one hundred prisoners,” were planned; of these, Block I housed the camp office and the room of the camp elder (Lagerältester). Directly at the camp gate there was a dog cage, opposite the kitchen and the entrance to the mine.

In the triangle formed between the kitchen and two of the barrack buildings was the parade ground, which was enclosed to the south by the “clothes store.” The sketch dated October 29, 1944, indicates four guard towers, one directly by the exit onto the Wilflinger Strasse, on both sides of which today small bunkers still make it possible to discern the former entrance to the mine. The prisoners constructed the camp on the road to Wilflingen, which was enclosed to the south by the “clothes store.” This space was adapted to the terrain, as demonstrated by British aerial photographs. The camp was surrounded by a double “security fence;” the inner fence was electrified with high-voltage current, as shown on a sketch of the entire campsite. Outside the fence there was one barrack containing the administration and quarters for the SS; inside, four barracks (Blocks I to IV), each intended for “one hundred prisoners,” were planned; of these, Block I housed the camp office and the room of the camp elder (Lagerältester). Directly at the camp gate there was a dog cage, opposite the kitchen and the entrance to the mine.

In the triangle formed between the kitchen and two of the barrack buildings was the parade ground, which was enclosed to the south by the “clothes store.” The sketch dated October 29, 1944, indicates four guard towers, one directly by the exit onto the Wilflinger Strasse, on both sides of which today small bunkers still make it possible to discern the former entrance to the concentration camp, as well as the entrance to the mine and air-raid tunnels. The site of the KOU’s underground facilities was also protected by a 3-meter-high (9.8-feet-high) fence constructed of wood and barbed wire. Located outside, directly on the road in the direction of Schörzingen village, were also an additional “residential camp” and “kitchen,” which perhaps confirms that, outwardly and qualitatively, certain distinctions were made between the prisoners and the civilian workers. Perhaps the kitchen located close to the KOU building also supplied the civilian workers of the factory.

The aforementioned sketch also makes clear one very important change at the Schörzingen camp: it designates an “expansion for Zepfenhan,” as the KOU camp was expanded by a new section for “Wüste 10” (Desert 10), the “external work detail Zepfenhan.” Wüste 10 was the most southerly of the Wüste production facilities, which was constructed by Schörzingen concentration camp prisoners from September 1944. Two large barracks in the style of “horse stables” served as housing for the Zepfenhan prisoners: they extended the wedge-shaped concentration camp complex to the southwest. At least 500 of the Wüste prisoners were housed in one of the barracks; the other was subdivided into an infirmary (Revier), a quarantine section (Schonungsblock), and a section for sick prisoners given up for death (Totenblock).

The expansion for the Wüste 10 construction site created two classes of prisoners at the Schörzingen concentration camp: one group comprised those who worked underground in the KOU shale mine, a task that entailed the breaking up and piling up of the shale by hand. These prisoners worked from 10 to 16 hours in two shifts, going down into the tunnels via steel steps. The prisoners assigned to the Zepfenhan work detail had to cover the 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) to the building site at Eckerwald twice a day: the very heavy labor in the mud and cold between these marches cost many prisoners their lives. From the continually rising death rate, it can be seen that the SS implemented its program of “destruction through work.” The categories of prisoners also changed over time: out of a transport of 1,000 Polish political prisoners—noted in the Numbers Book as “pol.Pole(n),”—that arrived from Auschwitz on August 24, 1944, 164 were sent to Schörzingen. On September 16, 1944, a transport comprising 500 men of various nationalities arrived in the Schörzingen camp from Dachau. An alphabetical list with the names of 50 men, partly from the French region of La Petite-Raon, demonstrates how real and alleged political opponents were treated, especially in the later period of the Third Reich.

As a Wüste camp, Schörzingen was subordinated to the Natweiler main camp. The hierarchy within this camp complex can be seen from the signature of the Natweiler camp commandant, SS-Sturmbannführer Hartjenstein. Subordinated to him was SS-Untersturmführer Eugen Wurth, who was the commander of the 9th SS-Guard Company in Natweiler and also the leader of the Operation Desert detachment. Subordinated to Wurth in turn was SS-Rottenführer Herbert Oehler, who became the subcamp commandant in Schörzingen. Oehler and Lagerältester Walter Günther Telischow were the first to be mentioned at the Rastatt Trial, since they both “behaved like real tyrants, tormenting and torturing the inmates.” The “Journal Officiel” additionally names the Kapo Lorentz Stach (the head cook in the camp); SS-Sturmmänner Johann Dornauer and Winterbauer (as block leaders); SS-Hauptscharführer Jakob Hermann (head of the guard company); SS guards Rolf Pfefferkorn, Jakob Link, and Wolfgang Danek; and the head of the Zepfenhan work detachment, Josef Patollo, who worked for the Organisation Todt (OT). All of them were accused of having beaten and tortured prisoners.

The Schörzingen camp existed until April 17, 1945; on Wednesday, April 18, the “evacuation transport” of 650 prisoners set off on foot in a southeasterly direction, guarded by about 40 SS men. The death march took them toward Lake Constance in columns varying in size from 50 to 300 men; the SS had carts to transport their own families and the weakest prisoners, which the other prisoners had to drag along. As the front line approached, the SS guards deserted, and the death march was redirected toward Ostrach and Königseggwald, where the prisoners from Schörzingen were liberated.
SCHWÄBISCH HALL-HESSENTAL

In 1936, a military airport was built in the town of Schwäbisch Hall, in an area called Hessian. Schwäbisch Hall is located north of Württemberg, near Heilbronn. A Reich Labor Service (RAD) camp provided the labor for the excavation and maintenance work. On September 13, 1944, the airport was almost entirely destroyed by an aerial bombardment. Its reconstruction was immediately undertaken, and to help the effort, a subcamp of Natzweiler was set up there. The decision to establish the Schwäbisch Hall-Hessental subcamp was made at the same time as the main camp was evacuated to the interior of the Reich. The first major inmate transport arrived on October 14, 1944; it included 600 men who had come from the Radom subcamp, after passing through another camp in Vaihingen an der Enz (other inmates may have arrived earlier, to prepare the barracks, but this has not been confirmed). In November and December, further transports, also coming from Vaihingen, brought an additional 200 men. The inmates were almost all Polish Jews, with a few German and Hungarian Jews. When they arrived, their physical condition was already quite poor. Many had no shoes. On December 8, 1944, 53 inmates who were unfit for work were sent to the so-called hospital camp (Krankenlager) at Vaihingen.

The Hessental camp was built on a piece of land belonging to the Deutsche Reichsbahn (German Railways), and the prisoners were housed in barracks that had previously been used by the RAD. A new barrack was added at the end of 1944. The camp was in the shape of a rectangle, monitored by four towers. Outside of the perimeter, which was marked by barbed-wire fences, stood several small buildings: the offices of the SS guards, their kitchen, a small warehouse, and an office for three employees of the Organisation Todt (OT), including a Frontführer.

The camp was under the control of the OT initially, but on October 17, 1944, SS-Hauptscharführer August Walling, formerly a Luftwaffe officer, took over as commandant; he would remain in control until the camp’s evacuation. The guards for the camp itself consisted of five SS men. According to testimonies, Walling’s attitude was rather ambivalent: he made some effort to improve daily life for the prisoners, even authorizing some of them to go into town to bring back medicine, lenses for glasses, and cobbler’s tools. Days off were organized, and a disinfection room was installed. On the other hand, he imposed cruel punishments on the inmates, such as standing up for hours between two rows of barbed wire. One of the inmates, Alexander Donat, left a long account in which he tells how Walling shot his revolver at a young inmate to punish him for staying away from his work site to beg for food. The inmate was only wounded, and Walling then spent long hours at his bedside, watching him in his struggle against death. When the prisoner’s condition had improved, Walling brought him an apple.

The guards for the external work details were soldiers in the Luftwaffe. Their number varied, reaching as high as 70. During the last months of the camp’s existence, Ukrainian

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SOURCES


The StA-S also contains numerous unpublished sources concerning the “Central Administration for the Württemberg Shale Oil Factories” from the postwar period, as well as original documentation on Operation Desert from the Nazi period.

NOTES

3. Ibid., p. 231.
6. Ibid., p. 37.
guards worked at Schwäbisch Hall-Hessental. Inmates were subjected to maltreatment and were constantly beaten.

There were two Polish prisoner physicians (Haftlingärzte) for the inmates that arrived with the first convoy. Walling approved the installation of an infirmary (Revier) and a shower room. The two physicians were allowed to establish contact with the airfield hospital, whose doctor provided them with bandages and medical instruments. The infirmary occupied four rooms in Block I, of which two were recovery rooms and one a treatment room. The sanitary situation stabilized somewhat, until the arrival of a second convoy of inmates who were quite weak. Between 100 and 150 inmates a day were declared to be unfit for work. A special barrack was built to accommodate them; the inmates called it “U” (for unfähig, “incapable”). Donat was put in charge of inmate health at the airfield, where he reported each day. There, on premises used as an ammunition depot, he received inmates who needed first aid. This place rapidly became a restful haven, and the prisoners could benefit from a few minutes’ break.

Inmates worked 9 hours a day, instead of the usual 11 or 12 hours in the concentration camps, but they walked to work. Weekly reports preserved in the Ludwigsburg archives describe the work carried out in the early weeks of the camp’s existence. The large majority of the inmates, 364, worked at the airfield, 80 others in construction work, 50 in a nearby quarry, and 20 in the construction of a railroad track. On the airfield, inmates repaired runways and removed snow. Some worked assembling airplane parts in a workshop in Hasenbühl, a wooded area near the airport. The others remained in the camp, where they were kept busy with the upkeep of the barracks, cooking, or clerical work (Schreibstube), or were declared sick. Inmates were also given the responsibility of clearing the rubble after aerial bombardments on the airport and on the town of Schwäbisch Hall. They buried the dead bodies. Some were also employed by businesses in Schwäbisch Hall and Hessental and on neighboring farms.

The mortality rate in the camp climbed with time. A total of 182 corpses were buried in 18 mass graves in the town cemetery. Hunger was the leading cause of death; 32 inmates died of 182 corpses were buried in 18 mass graves in the town cemetery. Between 27 and 30 inmates died and were buried on the spot. There were 42 deaths at the stop in Zöbingen. The survivors reached Augsburg. From there they were sent in livestock cars to Dachau, where they were liberated by American troops on April 19, 1945. The death march had cost at least 170 men their lives.

In November 1947, Walling was sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment by the French Tribunal Général in Rastatt for crimes against humanity. He served 10 years.

**Sources**


Archival sources can be found at ITS (Hängemappe Akdo Hesserlent) and the BA-L (AZ. IV AR-Z 171/69).

Jean-Marc Dreyfus trans. Gina Cooke

**Schwindratzheim**

Schwindratzheim in the former Gau Baden-Elsass, present-day Bas-Rhin (France), was a Natzweiler subcamp. It was...
most likely a construction camp, and its approximately 600 male prisoners did road work as part of the so-called A-Massnahme 11. They were accommodated in the ZEH gypsum factory outside the town of Schwindratzheim.

The Schwindratzheim subcamp existed for only a short period of time; it is mentioned for the first time in the Natzweiler concentration camp files on August 29, 1944. According to an official report, the camp was evacuated in October, possibly on October 21, 1944.

**SOURCES**


Evelyn Zegenhagen

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**SENNHEIM**

The Sennheim (French: Cernay) subcamp was located in the then Gau Baden-Elsass, which is in the present-day District Haute-Rhin (France), 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) to the east of Mulhouse. It was established as part of an SS training camp (Ausbildungslager) that had been in the same location since at least 1942 to train low-ranking non-German SS members. It is known that SS members from France, Norway, the Netherlands, Croatia, and Ireland were drilled there and received infantry and ideological training.

The Sennheim subcamp opened in 1943 (probably on October 1, 1943, according to Robert Steegmann) or March 1944 and consisted initially of 80 male inmates, later increasing to 250 (other sources refer to 300), most of whom came from the Soviet Union and Poland. According to Antoine Greffi er, the inmates were accommodated in the attic of a Luftwaffengesellschaft (Lufag) building. However, Henri Mounine states that Italian military prisoners were brought from Natzweiler to Sennheim and were first used to construct the barracks.

According to Mounine, who cites the report by Luxembourg resistance fighter and Natzweiler prisoner Roger Hildgen, the subcamp’s prisoners built accommodations for the local police and the Waffen-SS and Police Construction Directorate (Bauleitung) and administration barracks for the SS. Several Alsatian firms were also involved in the construction project. Hildgen also describes the difficult working conditions as well as the physical mistreatment of the prisoners. The camp commander in Sennheim was SS-Unterscharführer Witzig; the camp elder (Lagerältester) was the criminal prisoner (green triangle) Telschow; and the construction administration lay in the hands of an engineer named Nicolas Wilgé. According to Hildgen, the camp had a small infirmary (Revier) and a “bunker” that functioned as a prison. According to prisoner statements, Sennheim was a particularly brutal camp with up to 25 deaths among the prisoners.

Hildgen states that the camp was evacuated on September 10, 1944, and that the prisoners were taken to Dachau. Greffi er dates the evacuation as September 20, 1944. The SS-Ausbildungslager Sennheim was dissolved in November 1944.

Greffier states that there were in Sennheim from January 23, 1944, Norwegian students, following an order by the Reichsführer-SS that they should be given lectures at the SS-Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft “Das Ahnenerbe.” Additionally, Norwegian students were transferred from the Buchenwald concentration camp to Sennheim from July 1944; in December 1944, they were sent back to Buchenwald. Whether these Buchenwald prisoners were inmates that were sent to work in the Sennheim subcamp or, as is more likely, were foreigners who had been recruited by the Waffen-SS cannot be ascertained from the files.

After the war, Kapo Telschow was sentenced to death and executed.

**SOURCES**


Evelyn Zegenhagen

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**SPAICHINGEN**

Schaichingen in Württemberg was the site of a subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp. The Spaichingen subcamp for male prisoners was located in the Gewann Lehmgrube (a clay pit formerly part of a strip field), which is presently the Spaichingen city center.

The Spaichingen camp was part of the German effort toward the end of the war to relocate German armaments manufacturing. In the summer of 1944, the Metallwerke Spaichingen put a plan before the city of Spaichingen to construct three barracks (one with two levels) to hold concentration camp prisoners who were to work in its metal factories.
According to files from the Natzweiler concentration camp, the Spaichingen subcamp is referred to for the first time on September 26 or 29, 1944. Historians Herwart Vorländer and Gudrun Schwarz put October 1944 as the time when the camp opened. The camp remained operational until April 18, 1945. It held 300 to 400 political prisoners who were used to construct housing. The prisoners originated from a variety of European countries including Hungary, Italy, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, France, Switzerland, Austria, and the Soviet Union.

The exact number of prisoners who died in the Spaichingen subcamp is unknown. Numbers vary between 80 and 110.

When the camp was closed, there were two completed barracks and one still under construction. Metallwerke Spaichingen probably never commenced production. The prisoners did preparatory work, metal processing, and transport and construction work on the campsite in the clay pit.

According to a prisoner’s statement, the camp was evacuated between April 15 and 18, 1945, in the direction of Wurzach. Schwarz puts the date the camp was closed as April 18, 1945.

After the war, SS members, guards, and detachment leaders from the Spaichingen subcamp were charged with murder, accessory to murder, theft, and war crimes and tried in the spring of 1946 in the Rastatt Trial, the first Allied war crimes trial that occurred in the French Occupation Zone. Of the seven accused, three were sentenced to death, one to life imprisonment with hard labor, and one to 5 years in jail. The director of the Metallwerke, Hartmann, received a prison sentence, as he was responsible for the miserable food provided to the prisoners. The camp leader Schnabler was not tried, as he had not been captured at this time.


Original documents on the Spaichingen subcamp are located in the AKr-TUT, Kreisarchiv Tuttlingen, Schriften- sammlungen F 389 and D 1645. Documents on the Rastatt Trial are held in AOC, in the collection Tribunal Général du Gouvernement Militaire de la Zone Française d’Occupation en Allemagne, Série AJ, no. 4028, cartons 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, dossier no. 3/46, but are subject to a 100-year access bar, and only selected documents may be seen with special permission.

Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**THIL ("ERZ") [AKA ARBEITSKOMMANDO LONGWY-DEUTSCHOTH, LONGWY-THIL, LONGWY-THIL-AUDUN-LE-TICHE]**

The Thil subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp was located outside the small town of Thil in a narrow valley close to the Luxembourg border in the Département Meurthe-et-Moselle in the northeastern part of France that Germany annexed in 1940 under the name of Lothringen. The camp was established on June 15, 1944, on the initiative of Volkswagen chief executive officer (CEO) Ferdinand Porsche after agreements with Heinrich Himmler and the Fighter Staff (Jägerstab). It was a subcamp of the Natzweiler main camp under the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA). The Thil concentration camp is mentioned in contemporary sources under various names: Arbeitskommando Longwy-Deutschoth, Longwy-Thil, Longwy-Thil-Audun-le-Tiche, and Erz (after the project code name). The camp was evacuated in early September 1944, when Allied forces approached, and the prisoners were transported to other concentration camps.

Thil was a slave labor camp with the main purpose of providing manpower for the construction of underground production facilities for the Minette GmbH, a Volkswagen daughter company, and for its manufacturing of Fi 103 cruise missiles (V-1) and fighter aircraft. The Thil facility consisted of a system of mines that belonged to the Syndicat de Tiercelin and were part of the Minette iron ore district. The underground production facilities were to cover an area of 230,000 square meters (275,078 square yards). Volkswagen was in charge of V-1 series production and used its special status to expand into other lucrative high-priority armaments programs like the manufacturing of fighter aircraft. There were plans to occupy 10,000 workers at the facility, and Porsche’s vision was that all laborers except for German foremen and guards would be concentration camp inmates.

On March 4, 1944, Himmler promised him 3,500 concentration camp prisoners for the project. Production lines from the air-raid-vulnerable Volkswagen main factory in Fallersleben as well as machinery looted in France were...
transferred to Thil and to other Minette facilities in Dernau and Eschershausen. Several trains with equipment arrived in Thil, as did thousands of forced laborers from various occupied countries meant to serve as labor for the construction project under the coordination of the Organisation Todt (OT).

The first concentration camp prisoners in Thil erected huts for the SS’s and prisoners’ accommodation as well as barbed-wire fences surrounding the prisoners’ barracks and a crematorium intended for the burning of corpses. In the beginning, some of the prisoners were brought to work in the Deutsche Erzbergwerke AG iron ore mines in Longwy. Soon, most prisoners had tough refurbishing assignments such as concrete work and the laying of railway tracks, piping, and cables in the underground spaces under the supervision of Volkswagen and OT specialists. They worked alongside Germans, voluntary and forced laborers from other occupied countries, and local French labor. By early August, a growing number of prisoners worked in manufacturing V-1 parts, while others—as construction was interrupted due to lack of building materials—were commanded to work in a quarry under the guards’ excessive brutality and at road construction and cable work in the nearby town of Deustocho (present-day Audun-le-Tiche).

The commandant of the Thil concentration camp was SS-Oberscharführer Eugen Büttn. The first 12 prisoners arrived on June 15, 1944, from the Natzweiler main camp and were assigned to prisoner-functionary (Funktionshäftlinge) posts. On June 20, a transport of 500 Hungarian Jews that had been selected by a Volkswagen engineer in Auschwitz followed. An additional 51 non-Jewish prisoners arrived on June 29 and July 3, and on July 6, the total number of prisoners rose to 861, at the arrival of a transport of 300 Jews who had been selected and deployed to V-1 manufacturing at the Volkswagenwerk main factory until this facility was damaged by Allied bombing. No provisions had been made to receive this group, so the prisoners were accommodated in primitive tents, so even if the prisoners were in good shape when they arrived having spent only a few days in Hungarian ghettos and in Auschwitz, some reached the “Muslim” (Muselmann) stage in the course of their short stay in Thil. By early August, some 30 prisoners were constantly stationed at the camp infirmary, and some 40 convalescent prisoners (Schonungshäftlinge) were allowed to stay in the camp and perform easy maintenance tasks. Many survivors and local witnesses report that guards practiced random beatings and elaborate, sadistic ways of torture, but due to the priority given to construction progress and manufacturing, there was no systematic killing of prisoners.

Prisoners from the later transport were considered “bearers of secrets” (Geheimnisträger), and they were banned by threat of death from communication with other prisoners and other laborers. Their camp elder, Gyula Gross, had gathered well-educated, older Hungarian Jews around himself as Funktionshäftlinge. Some survivors remember their regime as brutal and authoritarian; others appreciate what they consider their attempt to protect the prisoners against the SS. Non-Jewish Funktionshäftlinge were in charge of the early arrivals.

In the traditionally Socialist mining community, miners and their families provided help by placing food and fruit, tobacco, newspaper clippings, and encouraging notes along the prisoners’ marching route and at the work site. Survivors recount a feeling of the camp being watched by protective locals, and prisoners managed to establish contact with the anti-Nazis outside. An escape attempt by a group of young Jews was partly successful since they got away and—helped by French resistance—crossed the front line in order to provide the Allies with secret V-1 information. As collective punishment, the rest of the camp had to stand at alert an entire night without food or drink, and the escapees’ closest friend was beaten unconscious and left for days on the roll-call square; the conspiracy, however, remained undisclosed.

Allied advances on the Western Front thwarted plans of a collective breakout supported by local resistance, as prisoners were ordered to dismantle manufacturing equipment quickly, load it onto railway cars, and evacuate—the 300 “specialists” to another Volkswagen facility in Dernau, the rest to the Kochondorf concentration camp.

**SOURCES**

Archival material on the Thil concentration camp is rich but scattered. The VWA and the ASt-WOB hold company records and copies of documents from APMO, NARA (CIOS reports), BA-B, BA-MA, and ZdL (now BA-L). The Thil Memorial (AMRCC-T-L, www.outoftime.de/thil) holds copies of documents from French archives, as does the ACCS. Witness and survivors’ accounts can be found in Dezsö Schön, *As
Unterschwarzach

It is questionable whether there was a Natzweiler subcamp in Unterschwarzach. It is likely that the connection to the Natzweiler concentration camp has more to do with an auxiliary hospital (Hilfskrankenhaus) that was established there in 1944.

Since 1936, the “Schwarzacher Hof” in Unterschwarzach, Neckar-Odenwald-Kreis, had been part of the Institute for the Education and Care of the Mentally Ill (Erziehungs- und Pflegeanstalt für Geisteskrank) in Mosbach, an institution operated by the Innere Mission. In the early summer of 1944, Daimler-Benz insisted that part of the Schwarzacher Hof be evacuated and made available as a Hilfskrankenhaus for Project “Goldfisch”—Goldfisch was a code name for the underground relocation of Daimler-Benz AG production of aircraft engines in Wiesbaden to the “Friede” mine at Oberbriegheim. Those responsible at Daimler-Benz AG for the project had inspected Schwarzacher Hof, which at the beginning of 1944 accommodated more than 200 children, youths, and adults, to check its suitability as a Hilfskrankenhaus for Project Goldfisch.

The Institute’s management protested against the planned takeover and urged relatives of patients who were in the Institute to take their relatives home; 71 patients were rescued, but despite the protests, another 49 were “transferred,” which meant they were sent to institutes where they were killed. The remainder of the patients remained in the Schwarzacher Hof in a much more confined area so as to create space for the Hilfskrankenhaus.

The research on prisoners housed at the Schwarzacher Hof—their number and categories, and indeed their very presence—remains inconclusive. If German and foreign forced laborers were brought to the Hilfskrankenhaus, then according to regulations they would have been accommodated in separate areas. The Materialien zum Stand der Forschung über die Aussen- und Nebenlager des Konzentrationslagers Natzweiler refers to Unterschwarzach as a company hospital for Project Goldfisch; if this is so, then it is questionable whether there would have been concentration camp prisoners in the building. Even if the hospital in theory was planned for the medical care of the prisoners, it could have functioned as a type of death camp (Sterbelager), holding prisoners who could no longer work without care and food.

Also unknown is the number of dead: there are no reports for 1944; in 1945 the deaths of 12 forced laborers were registered in Unterschwarzach—8 in the Hilfskrankenhaus; 7 from typhus and 1 from a lung inflammation. The dead were buried in the local cemetery.


Archival documents on Unterschwarzach are held in the Unterschwarzach Register of Deaths (AgZ-USZ), which lists the dead who died in 1945 in the Hilfskrankenhaus.

Evelyn Zegenhagen

Vaihingen/Enz

The reason behind the choice of the town of Vaihingen/Enz—located between Ludwigsburg and Pforzheim—to establish a Natzweiler subcamp is not precisely known. The existence of an unused quarry belonging to Baresel AG had drawn the attention of the armaments sector, which was directed by Albert Speer, who was responsible for the displacement of factories to places protected from aerial bombardment. The quarry was already being used as a test site for V-1 rocket engines. For the most part, inmates worked in underground rooms on several levels in the quarry, where workshops had been installed and the construction of which had begun even before their arrival in the camp. At the beginning of the summer of 1944, work on the construction of the camp began. A wheat field, located on the outskirts of Vaihingen on the road to Ensingen, was chosen. Attaining the level of a proper SS camp, the road was blocked by trees and framed by police posts. The camp was just one small part of a larger project. This subcamp occupied a 150×80-meter (492×263-feet) plot. The camp was surrounded by a double row of barbed-wire fences, and its four corners were flanked by watchtowers. At night, it was lit up by floodlights. Inmates came from the Radar camp, which had been evacuated in the face of the advance of Soviet troops; 3,000 inmates had left the camp on foot: men, women, and children. The women, the children, and the sick were separated from the convoy at Tomaszow. The men were transported in livestock cars to Auschwitz, where a selection was made. Around August 15, 1944, 2,188 men arrived in Vaihingen. The majority of the inmates were Polish Jews who had passed through several different concentration and work camps.
The inmates were housed in four wooden barracks, with 500 prisoners per barrack. After the war, the detention conditions were described as more favorable than those known by inmates in Poland. Alexander Donat, a Polish Jewish journalist from Warsaw, spent two months in the Vaihingen camp and left his published memoirs as a testament. The camp was composed of one building for the inmates' kitchen, an infirmary (Revier), and open-air latrines. On the outside of the barbed wire stood the buildings for the SS guards, the secretary's bureau (Schreibstube), and—according to one account—workshops for the camp, including a sewing workshop. The camp commandant had the use of a small house built for him by the Organisation Todt (OT). He belonged to the 215th Panzergrenadierersatzbataillon of Reutlingen, which was put at his disposal in June 1944 by the SS construction management, the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), centered at Oranienburg. He was part of a group of 200 officers, all intended to support the framework of the ever-expanding concentration camp system. He was sent to Natzweiler. At the end of July, he received orders to report to Vaihingen, where the construction of the camp had not yet been completed. The surveillance of Vaihingen was provided by 80 men, soldiers in the army, in the Luftwaffe, and the SS. An assistant physician (Assistenz-Arz) of the Luftwaffe was responsible for the health of the guards. The internal administration of the camp was in the hands of Polish Jews who had arrived with the first convoy. The camp elder (Lagerältester), Friedman, had already fulfilled the same function at the Radom camp. On October 15, 1944, 600 inmates from Vaihingen were sent to the new subcamp at Schwäbisch Hall-Hessental. Between November 8 and 16, 1944, 1,200 more inmates were transferred to other Natzweiler subcamps at Dautmergen, Bisingen, and Unterrüexingen. At the end of November, only about 380 men remained in Vaihingen, half of whom were unfit for work. In the meantime, the camp had been transformed into a camp for the dying (Krankenlager); however, no changes in the camp's facilities were put into effect until December 1944, when a fifth barrack was built, with running water, bath, and toilet facilities. The plan to build a permanent structure, with an operating room and real medical facilities, was never carried out.
Two prisoner physicians, Dr. Boogaerts, who was Belgian, and Dr. Paulson, a Norwegian, arrived at the camp in the month of January. They had previously been interned at Neckarelz. Dr. Paulson was actually a dentist. Starting in November 1944, sick inmates arrived from different Natzweiler subcamps, from Dautmergen, Schörzingen, Bisingen, Schönberg, Frankfurt, and so on. In December 1944, a total of 1,500 sick inmates had arrived in Vaihingen. The last patient transport, which had come from Mannheim-Sandhofen, took place on March 11, 1945. In all, 2,442 inmates were transferred there from 17 different subcamps. The physical condition of the new arrivals was terrible. Many died en route. A detachment was established to handle the corpses (Leichenkommando). The camp population, until then relatively homogeneous, became far more diverse with the arrival of the convoys of sick inmates—25 nationalities were represented. The living conditions for the weakest inmates were extremely harsh, the food as insufficient as the medicine. In Block 5, an isolation ward was set up for contagious patients. Block 2 received inmates who had been excused from work and were officially in convalescence. Even they were subjected to two roll calls per day. In mid-February 1945, a typhus epidemic broke out in the camp. The disease spread rapidly. The entire health-care staff was contaminated. Block 4 in Vaihingen was used to isolate infected prisoners. Beginning on March 11, 1945, no more transports of sick inmates were directed to Vaihingen, perhaps because of the epidemic. A convoy from the Leonberg subcamp was sent to Bergen-Belsen. The general mortality was quite high, even if the archives do not permit a precise breakdown of all the deaths. There were at least 1,578 deaths. The camp at Vaihingen was a hospital in name only. It primarily served to empty out the other subcamps of their sick inmates who were unable to work. Despite Vaihingen's status as a hospital camp, inmates who were capable of work were put to work. Despite Vaihingen's status as a hospital camp, inmates who were capable of work were put to work.

Camp inmates mixed with forced laborers of different nationalities, Poles, Soviets, and French. Germans who were forced to work as foremen. Exchanges took place, measured in number of apples or loaves of bread. The inmates at Vaihingen found themselves responsible for the hardest chores, such as continuing to dig out halls in the mine and to reinforce their infrastructures. Thus, they performed excavation work. A group of inmates worked outside to remove stones. Some groups of prisoners were also employed in a soap plant, a shoe factory, a foundry, and in agricultural work in Kleinglatbach. After the bombing of Stuttgart, some inmates were sent there to clear the ruins.

The Vaihingen camp was evacuated toward the beginning of April 1944. Inmates unable to walk were left behind. Some inmates were registered at Dachau. Two groups were registered at the München-Allach subcamp. On April 7, the First Free French Division entered Vaihingen, liberating the inmates left behind, whose exact number could not be determined. Many died in the days between the evacuation and the liberation. On the order of French officers, the civilians of Vaihingen were required to care for the surviving patients and to take them to the Vaihingen hospital. The barracks were most immediately burned to limit the risk of epidemic. At least 31 inmates died after the liberation, as well as 7 residents of Vaihingen, who had contracted typhus in caring for the sick.

The work supervisor, SS-Oberscharführer M., who had terrorized the inmates and boasted of having participated in the Operation Harvest Festival (Aktion Erntefest) massacres in Lublin-Majdanek, was imprisoned and handed over to Poland. He was sentenced to death and executed in Lublin on October 6, 1948.

**SOURCES**


**VAIHINGEN/UNTERRIEXINGEN**

(with Gross-Sachsenheim)

Unterriexingen was a subcamp of Vaihingen (a subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp in Württemberg), located some 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) outside Vaihingen and 30 kilo-
meters (18.6 miles) northwest of Stuttgart. It was established on the road between Unter- and Oberriexingen and enclosed by a double barbed-wire fence 3 meters (almost 10 feet) in height. On an area of approximately 7,000 square meters (8,372 square yards), between 400 and, at maximum, 550 prisoners were to be accommodated here. Of the two barracks, one was never completed; in addition, there was a barrack for the guards on duty and a lodging barrack for the guard unit. The camp had no running water; a small wooden shed outside the camp grounds served as a kitchen (the food was delivered by the Organisation Todt [OT]).

For 500 inmates, many of them afflicted with dysentery, there was only one four-seated latrine. Jules Schelvis, a prisoner in Unterriexingen, provides a description of the resulting drastic conditions:

Already before you reached the pit, the ground was covered with excrement. Many of the prisoners had not managed to reach the seat in time and relieved themselves beforehand. I hadn’t even reached the latrine when my wooden clogs got stuck in the shit. But these shoes were indispensable, so I took them with me anyway. I had to wait for one of the seats to be vacant. There was a slapping and a spraying in the pit on account of the dysentery, a disease to which everyone had gotten accustomed and with which you lived until you could not go on any longer. After all, what other choice was there. There was no paper to wipe oneself. Like everyone else, I used the middle finger of my left hand for this purpose. . . . My bare feet covered with excrement, my wooden clogs in hand, I returned to the barrack. . . .

Who can imagine such a situation? From this instant on, I knew that Unterriexingen was a death camp.1

The Unterriexingen camp was opened on or after November 16, 1944. The camp was guarded by the 6th Waffen-SS Guard Company under SS-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Lautenschlager, the lead of the Vaihingen/Enz concentration camp. According to historian Herwart Vorländer, there were also other organizational links between the two camps: for example, Unterriexingen had been constructed by Vaihingen/Erz prisoners, and in November 1944, 500 Jewish prisoners were transferred from Vaihingen to Unterriexingen. In early 1945, 150 to 200 Polish prisoners, survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, were transferred to Unterriexingen from the Mannheim-Sondhofen camp, as well as a group of approximately 50 to 100 Italian military internees (IMIs). Thus, the overall number of prisoners will presumably have far exceeds the prisoner number of 300 cited by author Julius Schätzle.

Schelvis, p. 66, states that the camp leader’s name was SS-Hauptsturmführer Bruno Fedrowitz. Like a proportion of the prisoners themselves, Fedrowitz would have come to Unterriexingen from Radom with the Romanian SS guard unit. Schelvis also said that 40 of the SS men in Unterriexingen had been supplied by the Vaihingen camp and 10 by the Natzweiler main camp.

The prisoners, all males, had their lodgings in barracks. They worked for the “Gallinit” construction project and the Eple Company. Gallinit was the code name for an underground construction project in the context of which parts of the Mannheim Daimler-Benz production operations were to be moved to a tunnel in Gross-Sachsenheim. The prisoners moreover built barracks and worked in the Unterriexingen/Gross-Sachsenheim quarry (between Enz Bridge and Gross-Sachsenheim airfield), where at least 80 prisoners were on duty. They had to break stones for repair work at the airfield and on nearby roads. Other inmates worked at the Gross-Sachsenheim air base; occasionally, they were sent to Stuttgart and vicinity, for example, Pforzheim and Kornwestheim, to carry out clearing work following air raids.

The last mention of the Unterriexingen camp is found in an official report of April 1945. At this time, the inmates were evacuated to Vaihingen and, later, from there in the direction of Dachau. After the war, 250 corpses were found on the camp grounds—testimony to the horrendous living conditions in the camp. Due to the fact that, until a few months before the dissolution of the camp, the bodies of the prisoners who perished in the Unterriexingen camp had been transported to the Vaihingen subcamp, it can be assumed that many more than 250 prisoners died in the Unterriexingen camp.

From October 6 to November 21, 1947, within the context of the Rastatt Trial, 42 members of the camp administration and guard units from the Natzweiler subcamps Hessental, Kochendorf, Vaihingen/Enz, and Unterriexingen were charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Rastatt Trial before the Tribunal Général (supreme military court) of the French military administration was the first Allied war crimes trial to be carried out in the French-occupied zone. Altogether 7 death sentences were imposed (of which 4 were enforced); 1 defendant was sentenced to life imprisonment and 11 to prison and penal servitude.

**Sources**

In USHMMA, a four-page typewritten report by George Freshman on his experiences as a prisoner in Kochendorf,
Vaihingen, and Vaihingen/Unterriexingen is to be found under File No. Acc. 1997.A.0289. Documents pertaining to the Rastatt Trials are located in the AOC, in the file Tribunal Général du Gouvernement Militaire de la Zone Francaise d’Occupation en Allemagne, Série AJ, no. 4028, cartons no. 2A, 2B, 3, 4, 5, dossier no. 3/46. A 100-year prohibition was imposed on access to these files, and they can only be inspected with special permission and only in parts. A striking description of the living and working conditions at the Unterriexingen subcamp is found in Jules Schelvis, “Eine Reise durch die Finsternis: Die Lager Vaihingen und Unterriexingen,” in Das KZ vor der Haustüre. Augenzeugen berichten über das Lager “Wiesengrund” bei Vaihingen an der Enz, ed. Manfred Scheck (Vaihingen an der Enz, 1995), pp. 57–80.

**NOTE**


**WALLDORF**

The Walldorf subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp was officially in operation from August 27, 1944 (the date August 22, 1944, occasionally cited in the literature refers to the arrival of the first prisoner transport), to October 31, 1944. It was part of the complex of camps set up around the Rhine-Main Airport. Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) had been put to work at this airport as early as 1942. Disguised as lumberjacks, they worked on the expansion of the airport and the creation of shelters for the fighter formations stationed there. Beginning in the autumn of 1944, interceptors of the type Messerschmitt (Me) 163B were stationed at this site, making it necessary to build an additional runway, a project requiring the employment of additional workers.

For this reason, the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) commissioned Construction Administration V (Heidelberg) of the Organisation Todt (OT), in cooperation with the construction company Ed. Züblin & Cie., with the construction of the Walldorf subcamp, which was placed under the administration of the Natzweiler concentration camp. The subcamp was located between Nordenstrasse on the northern periphery of the town of Walldorf and the Rhine-Main Airport, on the grounds of a former chicken farm that had been seized from its Jewish owners and used in the 1930s as a Reich Labor Service (RAD) camp. The prisoners were guarded by male and female guard units from Natzweiler as well as by members of the OT. According to testimony by former prisoner Susanne Farkas, the camp consisted of five barracks blocks in which the women slept on bunk beds without blankets, as well as a kitchen building, an infirmary, and administration rooms.

On August 22, 1944, 1,700 female prisoners arrived in Walldorf from the Auschwitz concentration camp. The majority of them were Hungarian Jews; many of the others came from Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. According to accounts by witnesses, the women were between 14 and 65 years of age. As early as the first day, one of the women died—officially of heart failure, but according to witness accounts, she had been shot to death. The women began working on August 24: approximately 80 of them worked in the camp; at the request of the Züblin AG company, about 40 of them were put to work breaking stone in Frankfurt am Main. All of the others worked at the Rhine-Main Airport, where they cut down and transported trees, unloaded railroad cars, dug ditches for cables and tank facilities, carried out foundation work, and leveled runways.

According to an expert report by journalist Anette Raab-Neff, the prisoners in the Walldorf subcamp were subjected to harsh treatment. The rations provided the women working for the Züblin company were completely inadequate. During air raids, the women were left to lie on the earth on the airport grounds entirely unprotected, while the guard units sought shelter. Former prisoner Helena Halperin recalls:

We carried out various types of work at the airport. We unloaded large stones from railway cars; they were wet from snow and rain in October. When one of them fell beneath the car, we had to retrieve it. Then we uncovered cables in the forest. We dug up the earth, uncovered the brick, lifted them, and inside there were cables. Then we, many girls and women, took the cables and assembled them in one place. At the airport we were often shot at and bombed. One time there were six women under a tree; one of them was killed, one of them was hit by a bullet, one of them was grazed by a bullet; I had a head shock and couldn’t hear anything for three days. During attacks we had to stay seated, were not permitted to move from the spot, and the SS guards ran under the trees and watched where the bombs were falling, while the bullets were falling, and they protected themselves and we were not allowed to move from the spot. Sometimes there were deaths; sometimes there were no deaths.1

When there was nothing else for the prisoners of the subcamp to do, the guard units gave them senseless tasks such as raking the forest soil. Officially only 6 women met their deaths during the camp’s existence. Due to the working and living conditions prevailing there, however, only 500 of the 1,700 prisoners were still fit for work by the end of October 1944. The subcamp was dissolved on November 23, 1944, and the work taken over by Soviet POWs. Already in
October 1944, 34 pregnant women had been transported to an unknown destination; they were presumably murdered.

The remaining women, numbering approximately 1,650, were taken to the Ravensbrück concentration camp between mid-November and mid-December. When Ravensbrück was dissolved, many of them died on death transports and marches to Zillertal, Grosswarten, Reichenberg, Theresienstadt, Mauthausen, and Gunskirchen-Wels.

In the second half of the 1970s, the Darmstadt Public Attorney’s Office instituted proceedings against the former camp leader Reinhold Loehs (born 1909) and others on charges of murder and aiding and abetting murder. The proceedings were suspended in June 1980 due to the fact that, according to the Public Attorney’s Office, “no proof of participation in criminally relevant, still prosecutable acts can be ascertained for any of the defendants.”

**SOURCES**

The brochure *Nichts und niemand wird vergessen: Zur Geschichte des KZ-Aussenlagers Natzweiler-Struthof in Walldorf* (Mörfelden-Walldorf, n.d.) provides a wealth of information on the Walldorf subcamp, including excerpts from the expert report by Anette Raab-Neff (pp. 10–13) and witness accounts by former prisoners (Helena Halperin, pp. 14–16; Jolan Freifeld, pp. 17–18; Susanne Farkas, pp. 19–22).


Evidence of the existence of the Walldorf subcamp is found in BA-BL, File No. NS 4, KL Na [Natzweiler], 49–102 Häftlingsangelegenheiten, above all in 80—Walldorf. Information on the legal proceedings against camp leader Reinhold Loehs and others is available in the files of the Sta. Darmstadt at the LG Darmstadt, File No. 2 Js 590/76.

Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Judith Rosenthal

**NOTES**


2. Sta. Darmstadt, 2 Js 590/76.

**WASSERALFINGEN**

A subcamp of the Natzweiler concentration camp was located in Wasseralfingen near Aalen in Württemberg. A camp for male inmates, it was first mentioned in the Natzweiler concentration camp files on September 27, 1944, when 400 inmates from the Dachau concentration camp arrived in Wasseralfingen. In November 1944, another transport to Wasseralfingen took place, consisting of 200 to 300 Polish prisoners arrested in the wake of the defeat of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The prisoners were lodged in a barrack camp along the street then called Moltkestrasse.

The prisoners worked for various companies and institutions, among them the Organisation Todt (OT) Higher Construction Administration Kiebitz in Heilbronn, the companies Heilmann & Littmann, Staud and Suka, and the Alfing Kessler KG machine works. One of the prisoners’ chief tasks was the expansion of underground tunnels to accommodate a Hamburg crankshaft factory. When the plant went into operation in the winter of 1944–1945, the men were also put to work directly at the machines. The harsh working conditions cost at least 33 prisoners their lives. Moreover, on each of two transports in January and mid-February 1945, 30 prisoners “unfit for work” were transferred to the Vaihingen subcamp.

The guards for the subcamp were supplied by the 6th Waffen-SS Guard Company, which was under the command of SS-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Lautenschlager, the commander of the Vaihingen subcamp. In May 1944, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler had issued an instruction to the effect that a large number of soldiers unfit for field duty were to be integrated into the Waffen-SS. Accordingly, this unit consisted not only of members of the Waffen-SS but also of Luftwaffe soldiers, members of the Afrika Korps, and several Ukrainian SS men. According to historians Detlef Ernst and Klaus Rieckinger, altogether 8 SS-Unterführer and 26 members of the 6th Guard Company performed guard duty at the Wasseralfingen camp.

The last mention of the subcamp in Wasseralfingen is to be found in the records of the Natzweiler concentration camp pertaining to February 2, 1945. An official report confirms the evacuation of the subcamp to the Neckarelz subcamp.

**SOURCES**


In the holdings of USHMMA under Acc. No. 2004.35.1, Manfred Macuse Papers, there is an archive pertaining to the Wasseralfingen subcamp.

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VOLUME I: PART B
WESSERTLING ("KRANIICH," "A10")
[AKA URBES, HÜSSEREN-WESSERLING, COLMAR]
The Natzweiler subcamp in Alsatian Wesserling (French: Urbés) is also referred to in the literature as Hüsseren-Wesserling, Colmar, and Urbés. Wesserling is one of the sub-camps to have emerged in the phase of the dissolution of the Natzweiler main camp. The prisoners of the camp, which was located near Thann in Alsace, were to prepare a tunnel located between the towns of Urbés and Bussany in order to accommodate Daimler-Benz armaments production operations. In this tunnel, the company intended to undertake the production of propeller parts under the code name “A10 Kranich.”

The camp was first mentioned on March 25, 1944. On that day, 300 male prisoners from Dachau arrived. Nearly 90 percent of the prisoners on this transport were political prisoners; as for nationality, one-third of them (36.3 percent) were Italians, followed by Soviet citizens (26.3 percent), Poles (13 percent), Yugoslavs (5.3 percent), Frenchmen (8.5 percent), Germans (5.6 percent), Greeks (3 percent), and Luxembourgers (3 percent). A second transport of 200 prisoners followed on March 29.

In the weeks that followed, further prisoner transports arrived in Wesserling, among them 302 prisoners from Lublin-Majdanek on April 4; 1,350 prisoners on May 5; and 1,350 on May 31, 1944. Most of the prisoners were Polish forced laborers and Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) or forced laborers. On June 6, 550 prisoners came from Auschwitz, including 302 Poles and 248 Soviet citizens. Nearly all of the inmates on this transport were classified as political prisoners. One of the inmates arriving was Zacheus Pawlak, who described that the camp was located about 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from the railway station and that the inmates had to walk to the camp from the station. The camp consisted of a number of barracks—three of them were accommodation for the inmates—and was fenced with barbed wire. Guards and administration were housed in a building outside the inmates’ camp. The camp was guarded by SS men and Luftwaffe soldiers, and in the beginning, it had no infirmary and no camp physician. The camp elder was Toni, a criminal prisoner.

According to Pawlak, the barracks of the camp had been erected on top of a former camp that had been burned down, and right behind the barbed wire that surrounded the sub-camp there was another camp for civilian workers from Poland, Russia, and Italy. The tunnel where the inmates were put to work was located about 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) from the camp. Already since 1935, the French had worked on building the tunnel through the Vosges Mountains and had made about 7 kilometers (4.4 miles) of progress.

In the summer of 1944, according to Pawlak, about 20 inmates tried to escape. They had arranged contact with the civilian population, organized maps, and bribed the guards. But their attempt to escape failed; 5 inmates were hanged in the subcamp, the other ones sent back to the Natzweiler main camp. At about the same time, in August 1944, 50 Soviet women arrived in the camp, presumably having been sent there with the intention of having them carry out kitchen, laundry, and cleaning tasks. On August 31, 1944, the final transport to arrive in Wesserling brought 465 Jews from Flossenbürg, including 444 of Polish nationality, 9 Soviet, and 11 German Jews. These prisoners had worked for Daimler-Benz as “labor Jews” in the Reichshof (Rzeszów) ghetto and subsequently in Dbica and had come to Wesserling by way of Krakau-Plaszów, Wieliczka, Auschwitz, and Flossenbürg. In Wesserling, they were lodged in the so-called Block 3.

The management of the construction project was assigned to the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), Section C (Construction), SS-Command Staff A10, Wesserling. SS-Hauptsturmführer Josef Janisch was responsible for overseeing the prisoners’ work; the camp commandant was SS-Untersturmführer Arno Brendler. According to Luxembourg, the company intended to undertake the production of propeller parts under the code name “A10 Kranich.”

The administration of Wesserling subcamp as being relatively humane. The food supply came from the Messerschmitt company and was better than in the Majdanek camp where Gillen had come from. In the morning
the prisoners received bread and margarine; at lunch, soup and bacon; in the evening, another substantial soup—and twice a week, even a salad. Pawlak reports that there were regular delousings and disinfections for the inmates, which took place in a public bath in nearby Rothau, and that the inmates’ clothes and bedlinen were changed weekly. Survivors confirm that there were a good number of Alsatian civilian workers at the construction site who behaved decently toward the prisoners and even provided them with food.

Due to the advancing front, the relocation project was discontinued in October 1944; October 10, 1944, is the date of the subcamp’s last mention in the concentration camp files. It is not known how many prisoners were in the camp at the time of its evacuation. At least 300 prisoners had already been transferred to the Neckar camp complex (Project “A8”) in late August–early September 1944, as confirmed by Pawlak. Another 300 prisoners were sent to the Schwindratzheim subcamp (Project “A11”), and 465 prisoners—probably the last remaining inmates of the camp—were taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. As historian Robert Steegmann reports, from there they were taken to Elster GmbH in Kamenz, Saxony, to work.


At BA-L (formerly ZdL), there is an investigation file on Wesserling subcamp. Ernst Gillen’s testimony is in ACCS.

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