There are only a few consolidated studies on the history of the Ravensbrück concentration camp system. As historian Bernhard Strebel shows, there are considerable differences in research, for instance, in the number and extent of the complex of subcamps. This is due largely to the comprehensive reconstruction of the Ravensbrück subcamp system that occurred in the summer of 1944.

The Ravensbrück subcamp system exhibits several peculiarities that distinguish it from the subcamp systems of other Nazi concentration camps. The first is that the Ravensbrück subcamp system, which began with the first subcamp at the end of 1942–beginning of 1943, was not, as was usually the case, restricted to a particular area but encompassed just about all the subcamps with female prisoners—with locations in the Prussian provinces of Brandenburg, Pommern, and Sachsen; in the states of Mecklenburg, Bayern, Thüringen, and Sachsen (that is, within the area of the later German Democratic Republic); and also in the Reichsgau Sudetenland and in all areas of the so-called Ostmark (Austria). It was only with a reorganization in the summer of 1944 that this principle was abandoned in favor of a system based more on location, during which many Ravensbrück subcamps were handed over to main camps that were geographically closer. The result was that the Ravensbrück complex, unlike those associated with other concentration camps, had already reached its maximum extent in the summer of 1944, with approximately 40 subcamps. Of these, one-quarter (about 10) were large subcamps, with more than 1,000 prisoners, and one-half (around 20 camps) were medium-sized, with between 250 and 1,000 prisoners. At the end of 1944, however, when there were around 334 subcamps for women existing within the concentration camp system in total, only 20 were under the control of Ravensbrück—considerably fewer, for example, than the number of women's subcamps under the control of Neuengamme or Gross-Rosen. Despite this, and this is the second peculiarity, Ravensbrück remained administratively responsible for several of these camps not under its jurisdiction, in that it trained and/or paid the camp personnel. Third,
many Ravensbrück subcamps were directly connected with leading personalities, institutions, or interests of the SS, be it that they were established on estates operated by leading SS men or that they supported the operation of SS overflow institutions.

Within the Ravensbrück concentration camp, experience had been gained since August 1942 with the first use of concentration camp prisoners in industry, when the so-called Fertigungsstelle (Production Point) Siemens was erected. At that time, the shortage of labor was becoming more and more serious, and the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) therefore had intensified its cooperation with industry, especially with Albert Speer’s ministry. The SS insisted, however, that the use of prisoners could only take place inside the concentration camps. The result was that the Siemens & Halske camp, the Fertigungsstelle, was established on the camp’s grounds in Ravensbrück. It was only in September 1942, on Speer’s insistence, that the use of prisoners outside the concentration camps in industrial subcamps was considered. At this time, the first Ravensbrück subcamps were established. Comthurey and Born were two of these camps, but they were rather small and held only very few inmates. The first noteworthy subcamps were established only at the end of 1942—Grüneberg to the north of Berlin, where the prisoners produced munitions, and Neurohlaub in the Sudetenland, where the prisoners manufactured porcelain. While Neurohlaub, due to its distance from the main camp, had to be run as a real subcamp, one can only assume that Grüneberg was a true subcamp where the prisoners were kept permanently and not returned to the main camp at day’s end.

There were, in essence, three groups of subcamps if one considers who operated and profited from them: in the first group, the prisoners, both male and female, were used from 1942 on by Higher SS leaders and their entourage (Heinrich Himmler, Oswald Pohl, and Felix Kersten, for example), to work mostly in gardens and houses of private estates as well as in construction and repairs. This group of camps also included the deployment of prisoners working in SS institutions such as the Reichsführer-SS Personal Staff, the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA), WVHA branches or relocated offices, the German Research Institute for Nutrition and Provisions, Ltd. (DVA), “Lebensborn” homes, and SS research institutes. A second group of camps was operated by the Wehrmacht, which mostly cooperated with private armaments manufacturers. At least four subcamps—Karlshagen I and II, Retzow, and Königsberg—were directly operated by the Wehrmacht. Finally, there was a third group of subcamps operated by private firms. These included large companies in the armaments industry: the Luftfahrtgerätewerk Hakenfelde GmbH (LGW), a subsidiary of Siemens, which had assembly plants in Graslitz and Zwolda; the Ernst-Heinkel-AG; and the Hugo-Schneider AG (HASAG); as well as a number of smaller companies.

As in other subcamp systems, it often happened in Ravensbrück that concentration camp prisoners were substitutes for forced laborers and were accommodated in former forced labor camps. The establishment of subcamps often also arose due to the relocation of institutions and production sites as the result of the intensifying Allied bombing campaign. However, the Ravensbrück prisoners were rarely used in underground facilities (such as in the former Ravensbrück women’s subcamp Beendorf, which was taken over by the Neuengamme concentration camp). That so few Ravensbrück prisoners were used underground had more to do with the geographical conditions around the Ravensbrück concentration camp and its subcamps than with any regard for the overwhelming majority of prisoners in its subcamps, women. Although the working and living conditions varied in individual subcamps, it is clear that no consideration was given to the gender of the prisoners when it came to their deployment. Historian Linde Apel shows that Jewish women in the late phase of the subcamps’ existence were not necessarily used in the most dangerous and unhealthful deployments but were mostly used in mixed subcamps, which held prisoners of various categories. Surviving women, predominantly from the armaments industry, report that they worked with no protective clothing and were exposed to working with dangerous chemicals. The Malchow subcamp, for instance, where there were repeated accidents due to the handling of explosives, must be regarded as one of the most dangerous camps with regard to work and living conditions. For male prisoners, the Ravensbrück subcamps at Karlshagen I and Barth were the worst—the number of deaths among inmates in these two camps accounted for 60 percent of the deaths among all male Ravensbrück inmates. That other subcamps, especially those with female inmates, had a lower death rate does not prove that the work and living conditions in these camps were less fatal: prisoners who could no longer work were usually selected in these camps and taken back to Ravensbrück or, depending on the circumstances, to Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen, where they were killed. Strebel also states that, at least in 69 cases, pregnancy was the reason for the return of prisoners from the subcamps.

From 1944 on, the use of female labor in the Ravensbrück camp complex intensified. At this time, at least every second prisoner who was taken to the Ravensbrück camp was taken to one of its subcamps. Ravensbrück became a gigantic transit point for the deployment of labor in the subcamps. As historians Erika Schwarz and Simone Steppan show, prisoners from Ravensbrück were assigned to more than 200 locations. In the summer of 1944, the prisoners comprised three large groups: female Poles, who were victims of the crushing of the August 1944 Warsaw Uprising; women who were being evacuated from Auschwitz; and Hungarian Jewish women who escaped the gas chambers because they were useful for the armaments industry.

One special problem arising from the constantly increasing number of prisoners in the subcamps was the lack of guards. This was initially compensated for by an increased recruitment of ethnic Germans (Volkdeutsche), often as part of the SS, and the deployment of members of the Wehrmacht. From July 1944, female employees of industries that planned...
to use the concentration camp prisoners were trained as supervisors. What had happened earlier on an individual basis now had become a systematic policy.

At the same time, in the summer of 1944, the Ravensbrück subcamp system was reorganized. Until this time, all subcamps that held women were the responsibility of Ravensbrück, regardless of their location. The only exceptions were the women’s subcamps established in Silesia, which were under the control of Gross-Rosen. With a decree of the WVHA Office Group D, the scattered Ravensbrück subcamps were now reorganized along geographical lines. From the surviving sources, it is known that on September 1, 1944, Buchenwald and Flossenbürg took over Ravensbrück subcamps in their areas and that Mauthausen did the same on September 15. For other camps, the change occurred no later than October 1944. According to Strebel, Ravensbrück surrendered approximately one-half of its women’s subcamps and at least a quarter of its female prisoners to other main camps that were geographically closer to those subcamps. The women in the camp brothels in Buchenwald, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, and Sachsenhausen, previously under the administration of Ravensbrück, now also came under the control of the camps in which the brothels were located. It can be assumed that the reasons for this reorganization were rooted in organizational and administrative purposes: since other concentration camp subcamps increasingly held women, and the strict separation between men’s and women’s sections in individual subcamps was being relaxed, there was no longer any reason for the main camps’ responsibility to be based strictly on the sex of the prisoners. With the redistribution of territorial responsibilities, the extent of Ravensbrück subcamps was mainly limited to the area north of Berlin.

Research does not completely reveal the extent to which Ravensbrück remained connected with guarding the female prisoners. Strebel states that Ravensbrück remained largely responsible for paying the female guards deployed at Gross-Rosen, Neuengamme, Flossenbürg, Auschwitz, Dachau, Stutthof, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbrück itself. While Ravensbrück remained responsible for training the female guards based in Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, Flossenbürg, Gross-Rosen, Neuengamme, and Stutthof trained their own female guards. However, male guards in the subcamps were often recruited from the command office personnel and the guards in the respective main camp.

Due to the lack of source material, it is difficult to reconstruct the final phase of the Ravensbrück subcamp system. What is clear is that from the summer of 1944, there were more and more prisoners in the camps. In August and September 1944, there were 27,600 women sent to Ravensbrück from camps located farther to the east that had been dissolved. Historian Simone Erpel estimates that between January and April 1945 there were 38,000 prisoners in the main camp and as many again in the subcamps of Ravensbrück. At the beginning of 1945, with the evacuation of Auschwitz, the number of prisoners would dramatically escalate again. After a short stay in the main camp, the prisoners were often sent on to the subcamps, which also were hopelessly overcrowded. For example, in the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp, established for 900 inmates, there were 4,200 prisoners on April 10, 1945. In Malchow, which held an average of 1,200 prisoners, there were at the beginning of April 1945 more than 4,200 women. The same can also be proven for the Barth men’s camp, which in the last months of the war was the destination for evacuations from the Ravensbrück subcamps and other subcamps. The overcrowding not only led to a dramatic decline in living conditions, but the number of deaths increased correspondingly. To deal with this, the SS at the end of the war conducted selections in the subcamps, for example, in Retzow, Malchow, Neustadt-Glewe, and Neubrandenburg. Sick prisoners and those no longer capable of working were returned to Ravensbrück and murdered, mostly in its death zone, the Uckermark. Around 7,500 women, mostly of Scandinavian nationality, were liberated as part of “Operation Bernadotte,” just days or weeks before the end of the war.

Countless women from the subcamps died on death marches in the last days of the war. From the end of the war into the 1990s, there were investigations into SS personnel from at least four Ravensbrück subcamps—Barth, Retzow, Malchow, and Neubrandenburg—for the deaths of female prisoners on evacuation marches.


Detailed information, both source material and legal investigations, on individual subcamps is detailed in the individual subcamp essays.

Evelyn Zegenhagen
trans. Stephen Pallavicini
ANSBACH

The International Tracing Service (ITS) refers to a Ravensbrück subcamp in the Bavarian city of Ansbach. According to a prisoner, the camp came into existence no later than December 11, 1944. The prisoners had to work at the SS-Lebensbornheim. The SS-Lebensbornheim was established in 1935 with the racial and population policy goals of reducing the number of abortions and increasing the birthrate in order to strengthen the armed forces. There were only female prisoners at Ansbach. Although the women originated from Dachau, Ansbach was under the control of the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Just before the end of the war, the Lebensbornheim seemingly required additional labor. On April 4, 1945, a female prisoner was transferred from the Dachau concentration camp to the Ravensbrück Ansbach subcamp. Six days later, on April 10, 1945, the camp was evacuated, and the prisoners were taken over by the Ravensbrück outside detail at Steinhöring. The employer for this subcamp, about 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) to the east of Munich, was also a Lebensbornheim.

Sources


Sources on the Ravensbrück subcamp in the Bavarian city of Ansbach can possibly be found in AG-D and AG-R.

BARTH

Located on the Baltic Sea between Rostock and Stralsund, the Barth subcamp was part of the Ravensbrück concentration camp and consisted of one section for men and one for women. It was a project of Ernst Heinkel AG, Rostock, which transferred a part of its aircraft production from its main Rostock factory to Barth in order to protect it from Allied air raids. At the end of April 1942, Rostock had become the target of massive air raids by the Royal Air Force. A quarter of the air raids had been aimed at the Heinkel factory, located on the edge of the city. In addition, Heinkel was one of the first private companies to enter into arrangements with the SS, and as early as the end of 1941 to relieve on male prisoners from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in a nearby factory at Oranienburg.

The history of the Barth subcamp begins with the arrival of the first 200 male prisoners from Buchenwald. Their first task was to fence in the camp and to convert the buildings on the Barth air base into factory buildings. About a month later, the first 200 female prisoners arrived from Ravensbrück. In February 1944, there were already 1,721 male and female prisoners in Barth. In the period that followed, the numbers increased to 4,000 prisoners. Altogether 6,000 male and female prisoners were deported to Barth, making it one of the largest Ravensbrück subcamps.

Internal security was provided by a handful of SS men and a number of SS female overseers. External security was provided in large part by SS members of German origin from Croatia, Hungary, and Romania.

A little less than one-half of the female prisoners were Russian and Ukrainian. Approximately one-third were Poles. There were smaller numbers of Yugoslavs, French, Hungarian Jews, and a few Germans, as well as a number of very young “Gypsies” (Roma) in Barth. The Roma—some 15 and 16 years old—from the Burgenland, were deported to Ravensbrück in June 1939.

In February 1944, a group of 56 female Russian prisoners, led by 12 Soviet prisoners of war (POWs), refused to act as forced laborers for the German war effort. The SS unsuccessfully sought to break the resistance, on the one hand, by brutally mistreating the prisoners, and on the other, by promising additional rations. It was only when a few of them could no longer stand the torture, and the SS threatened to randomly kill selected prisoners, that the female Russian prisoners relented and attempted to continue their resistance by sabotage.

The Russians, followed by the Poles, were the largest group among the 2,900 male prisoners. Italians, Yugoslavs, French, Croats, Germans, and other nationalities were nowhere near as strongly represented. It was common in the male camp for weak and exhausted male prisoners to be placed in the outside detail of the infamous SS-Kommandoführer Zay. Survivors report that this detachment regularly returned to the camp with dead prisoners, who had been mistreated by Zay, beaten to death, or shot. Noteworthy is that the female camp at Barth was also marked by numerous examples of maltreatment of prisoners, resulting, though, in noticeably fewer deaths, which leads to the assumption that a more violent atmosphere prevailed in the male camp than in the female one.

In addition, from the middle of February 1945 on, the male camp at Barth was the goal of evacuation transports from Karlshagen I and the Stutthof subcamp of Pölitz. Many of these prisoners were at the end of their strength, emaciated and ill, further weakened by the privations of the evacuation transports. Many died in Barth just a few weeks and days before liberation. On April 30, 1945, the SS forced those prisoners capable to march in several columns in a westerly direction. There remained behind around 300 seriously ill and completely exhausted male prisoners who were liberated by the Red Army on May 1.

Altogether 438 prisoners died in the male camp at Barth. Thus, the male camp at Barth, together with the Karlshagen I subcamp, counted as one of the worst Ravensbrück subcamps for male prisoners. On the other hand, it is scarcely possible to estimate the number of dead in the women’s camp, as sick and exhausted prisoners were returned to the main camp at Ravensbrück. It is certain there were more than the 12 female prisoners known to have been cremated in the Barth crematorium.

The most extensive collection of documents (camp documents and prisoner reports) is located in the ASt-Ba.

Bernhard Strebel

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES


2. List by the WVHA chief Pohl, February 21, 1944 (Annex to a letter from Himmler to Göring, March 9, 1944), Nuremberg Document PS-1584.


BORN

The village of Born, located in the southern part of the Baltic peninsula of Darss (during World War II, part of the province of Pommern, Landkreis Franzburg-Barth), is part of the present-day Federal German State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In a list of the Ravensbrück concentration camp detailing private companies, the subcamp is listed under the number "14KII 16/14c- SS-Standartenführer Müller, Born b. Wieck auf Darss.”

Before the Ravensbrück camps were established, there was a temporary Neuengamme subcamp on Darss. A group of 50 male prisoners (Jehovah’s Witnesses) were used to cut reeds in the winter of 1940–1941 and 1941–1942. The reeds were required as raw material for weaving mats in Ravensbrück. The reeds were to be used to produce camouflage mats. The prisoners were held in Wieck and later in Zingst.

Unlike the Neuengamme subcamp, which only existed during the winter months for the purpose of cutting the reeds, an independent subcamp was established in Born, probably in 1943, for male and female prisoners from the Ravensbrück concentration camp.

Reeds were not of much value to the Ravensbrück camp. The attempt to use reeds as an extraordinary material, to cultivate in large quantities and to process the reeds into a fiber, cellulosic or starch, failed in 1942 due to Oswald Pohl, head of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA). Reeds were to be used in the Ravensbrück concentration camp for women solely for the production of mats. For large-scale production, there was a shortage of civilian labor, with the result that prisoners had to be used. For the industrial processing, there was a lack of specialists, and in any case there were plans to use the prisoners for more important work. It was probably for this reason that the cutting of reeds at Darss was stopped. The weaving mill for the raw material in the main camp at Ravensbrück ceased production at the end of September 1943 due to a lack of raw material. The Ravensbrück prisoners in the Born subcamp were given other tasks.

Four Jehovah’s Witnesses were held in the Born Forestry Office between May 1943 and April 1945. They were accommodated in the Master Forester Franz Müller’s laundry on the forestry grounds. In this building the women had to produce, among other things, feed for pigs. At night they slept in double bunk beds. The women were rarely given a proper meal. They ate potatoes while preparing the feed for the pigs. The women, dressed in prisoner clothing and wearing wooden clogs, were easily recognized by the villagers in Born. They were mistreated by private individuals while doing farmwork. On the whole, they worked without supervision, as escape from the peninsula was impossible and had no purpose. Shortly before the end of the war, the women were released.

In the summer of 1943, the windows of the Born Hof, an inn, were equipped with iron bars. In the autumn of 1943, approximately 120 prisoners accompanied by approximately 20 SS guards arrived at the subcamp. This contingent of prisoners would be the first. The guards occupied the first floor of the inn. The office of the detachment leader, Willi P., was located here. The prisoners were held in the large room below. They slept on three-tiered bunk beds. At this time there were also Polish forced laborers in the Born Hof. There was no contact between the prisoner groups.

The prisoners worked at the SS-Meilerei, or charcoal works, about 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) away from the Born Hof, to the north of the Postweg. The SS-Meilerei is intended to convert wood to a fuel by coking it. In 1943, the SS bought part of a private farm from the state Forestry Office. Equipment to process hard wood was established in the buildings on the farm. During the winter, reeds were cut on the Saaler Bodden but only for the purpose of renovating Born dwellings. Müller was in charge of all the work.

It is likely that a group of five fleeing prisoners were shot in the Darss Forest and buried on the edge of the cemetery. The Schwerin Criminal Police recorded on October 20, 1944, that during the night of October 12, 1944, three Eastern European men escaped from a labor detachment of the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Born on the Darss. The search...
order emphasized that the escapees, once recaptured, were to be transferred back to the Ravensbrück concentration camp.\textsuperscript{10}

The SS began to dissolve the camp in April 1945. Astonishingly, a group of 35 prisoners were deported to the Barth subcamp, which was located further east. This was unusual, given that the Red Army was advancing. The remaining prisoners were driven in the direction of Ribnitz. They were liberated by the Red Army near Wustrow. Camp commander Wilhelm P. and Master Forester Müller most likely fled in the direction of Hamburg.

There are no known trials against the SS members in the camp.


Archival materials are held in both the AG-R and AG-NG, as well as in the BA-B, BA-L, and VLA-G.


\textbf{Comthurey [aka Dabelow]} The Comthurey subcamp was located at the Comthurey Manor in Mecklenburg, about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) to the northeast of the Ravensbrück concentration camp (on the road from Dabelow to Wokuhl). The manor house was used by SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl, the head of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), and his family as a country residence. The manor comprised about 338 hectares (835 acres) and had been bought in December 1940 or January 1941 by the German Research Institute for Nutrition and Provisions, Ltd. (DVA) (Amtsgruppe W, Amt W V/1 of the WVHA [Stand 1942]), an SS firm. Farming the manor was organized by the DVA.

The SS-Experimental Farm (Versuchsgut) Comthurey is connected to the first experimental Ravensbrück farm that began operation shortly after the opening of the Ravensbrück main camp in 1939. Female prisoners were to be used for the expansion of the farm for economic reasons. The DVA aimed to make the SS-Versuchsgut Comthurey an “exemplary example of a farm in bio farming\textsuperscript{8}” and invested heavily in the expansion of the farm. By 1943 the Comthurey Manor was farming 570 hectares (1,408 acres).\textsuperscript{2} The expansion of the Comthurey Manor occurred largely in accordance with the personal wishes of Pohl. In part, Pohl personally took over its administration even though he did not have the slightest understanding of agricultural matters. So-called enthusiasts’ buildings (\textit{Liebhaberbauten}) were put in place to strengthen the representative character of the manor. The DVA goal was “to achieve outstanding agricultural production, as much as possible.” The farming interests included the nearby manors of Brückenthin and Dabelow. Pohl’s decision to establish a home within the DVA area and his personal influence on the economic expansion underline the significance of the Comthurey subcamp in the Ravensbrück subcamp system.

The \textit{Verzeichnis der Haftstellen unter dem Reichsführer-SS}, published by the International Tracing Service (1979), lists the Comthurey subcamp as the Dabelow Labor Detachment. The subcamp’s buildings were not located in Dabelow but on Comthurey Manor grounds. The camp was in fact two camps—one for male and a second for female prisoners. The exact location of the camp is unknown.

At the beginning of 1942, male prisoners from Ravensbrück were sent to the manor to build and expand its facilities.\textsuperscript{1} The camp was located close to the Pohl’s family house, on a field close to the Grosse Gadow See.

SS-Scharführer Wilhelm R. was initially in charge of the prisoners.\textsuperscript{4} They were guarded by eight SS men.

Unlike other subcamps, the prisoners’ barracks were not the normal barracks but 8 to 10 “caravans” or circus vans. As security, the wagons were fenced in with barbed wire. The wagons were equipped with three-tiered bunk beds. There were sanitary facilities, and washing and drinking water had to be brought from the nearby lake by the prisoners.\textsuperscript{1} The small windows were locked during the night. Due to the lack
of space, there was nowhere for the prisoners to sit. They could hardly move in the caravans.

The first group of prisoners were political prisoners, the “limited preventive custody” prisoners (befristete Verwahrfiichtlinge BVers).\(^6\) Initially between 80 and 100 prisoners (Czechs, Germans, Poles, French, and Russians)\(^7\) were busy pulling down part of the old manor and rebuilding the Pohl home. They also worked up until the middle of 1943 on the nearby garden, expanded the stables, and built a lodge in the forest.\(^8\) The pressure that was put on the prisoners to build Oswald and Eleonore Pohl a luxurious residence has been described by eyewitnesses as unbelievably inhuman. At times the prisoners worked day and night; skilled prisoner artisans worked up to 36 hours. Work was done on the run, and the SS personnel drove the prisoners on without a break. According to eyewitnesses, the prisoners, who were mostly stigmatized as criminals, received little food; their labor was exploited to the maximum, and they were not allowed basic hygiene. Sick prisoners were returned to the Ravensbrück main camp.

After the initial expansion construction, the SS largely exchanged the prisoners in the summer of 1943. A second group of prisoners were deployed, the majority of whom were Jehovah’s Witnesses. Their task, according to Alois M., was to build in 1943–1944 Germany’s most modern piggy.

In the middle of 1944, the camp’s commander Wilhelm R. was transferred to the Natzweiler concentration camp. The name of his successor at the Comthurey subcamp is not known.\(^9\) The guards were replaced by Croatian SS men.

The prisoners built barracks in addition to the caravans. They were allowed to place tables in the barracks, and there was room to move—unlike the previous conditions. According to survivors, the Jehovah’s Witnesses were subject to special rules by the camp leadership. They were allowed to pick berries in the nearby forest. This guaranteed the prisoners’ survival. As with the previous group of prisoners, they had to care for all the agricultural requirements of the manor, focusing on the construction of farm buildings.\(^10\)

Survivors recall three deaths in the subcamp. The prisoner Reinhold S. was witness in 1943 to the murder of two prisoners. Their escape over the lake did not succeed, and they were hung by the SS at the manor.\(^11\)

As the Comthurey subcamp was geographically close to the main camp, the SS had quick access to its prisoners and chose men with skilled qualifications so that they could exploit their skills in other subcamps.\(^12\)

Little is known about the prison conditions and the history of the women’s persecution due to the lack of documentation.\(^13\) The camp probably existed from the spring of 1942 to April 1945. It consisted at first of one barracks and later of two wooden barracks. It was close to the Comthurey farm laborers’ settlement (Comthurey Oberstadt). The barracks were divided into a commercial barrack, which held the kitchen and sanitary facilities. The second functioned as a dormitory and canteen. In the spring of 1942, 80 Polish women were deported to the subcamp to expand the drainage ditches at Comthurey. This group of women worked on the manor until they were transported back to Ravensbrück in the autumn of 1942. Many of the women suffered from kidney inflammations due to the heavy labor and the cold. Sick women were sent back to the main camp and were replaced by other prisoners.\(^14\) The female prisoners were mostly used in agriculture.

This camp is not to be confused with the female labor detachment “Gut Dabelow.” This manor lay only a few kilometers from the Comthurey camp. They worked each day on the Boldt Manor (a grain mill) in Dabelow, returning in the evening, under the supervision of a wardress, to the Ravensbrück main camp.\(^15\)

On March 23, 1943, on the order of camp commander Fritz Suhren, 10 women were transferred to the Auschwitz concentration camp as punishment. They were accused of sending uncensored letters with the help of a wardress to the outside world while they were working in the labor detachment at the Comthurey Experimental Farm. It remains unclear whether this was a day labor detachment or prisoners who were permanently based in the subcamp.

Later there were approximately 100 women in the Comthurey subcamp. They were of different nationalities.\(^16\) According to the wardress Frieda L., the women mostly did agricultural work and worked as servants in the Pohls’ residence. The women also worked in private homes and the bakery and did forestry work.\(^17\) The prisoner Alois M., from the male camp, was responsible for giving the women tools from the storeroom for work on the farm and the forest.\(^18\)

According to the former wardress Frieda L., shortly before the end of the war, in February 1945, Jewish prisoners were brought to the camp. The health of these women was very poor. Their fate is not known. At the end of March 1945 the subcamp is thought to have been dissolved, with the prisoners being taken to the main camp, from where they were sent on a death march.

As the demand for prisoners depended on the decisions of the DVA, the number of prisoners varied considerably, particularly as the subcamp was close to the main Ravensbrück camp.

According to the provisional final report on the DVA from June 30, 1944, there were at this point 93 prisoners held in Comthurey (without distinction as to gender), nine SS members, two civilian employees, and 17 farm laborers. The use of prisoners was relatively high compared to other manors.\(^19\)

According to a Comthurey local, just before the end of the war the main building in Comthurey was detonated by the SS. The stables remained, as did the terrace, which had been built by the prisoners, a sauna, a wooden pavilion, and an ornamental fountain close to Pohl’s house. The farm laborers’ settlement on the road to Wokuhl also survived. After the war, Comthurey was to hold approximately 30 German refugees.\(^20\)

Only parts of the foundations remain of what is thought to be the female prisoners’ accommodation. There is nothing to recall the history of the camp, and neither the perpetrators’ structures or the SS power structure in the area is docu-
mented. There were references to the killed prisoners. Both German states disregarded camp survivors until the 1990s.

Notwithstanding that, in 1969 the Central Office of State Justice Administrations (ZdL) and the Federal Republic of Germany investigated former wardens and wardresses, although there were no court proceedings against them.

The German Democratic Republic’s (GDR) criminal proceedings against the wardress Frieda L. have not been researched.

**SOURCES**


Archival records are available in the BA-B and the AG-R. Angelika Meyer trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**NOTES**

1. BA-B, NS 3/722, p. 22, Jahresabschlussbericht Chef W im SS-VVHA from April 12, 1944, für die DVA GmbH.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
4. BA-B, Film 1757, n.p.
7. Sammlungen MGR/SBG, RA Bd. 43 Ber. 940/18.
8. Cf. Various reports: Sammlugen MGR/SBG, RA Bd. 36, Ber. 716 (Karl G), RA Bd. 43 Ber. 940/19, RA Bd. 43 Ber. 940/6 (Emil S), RA Bd. 43 Ber. 940/15, RA Bd. 43 Ber. 940/18 (Fritz S), RA Bd. 43 Ber. 940/33 (Horst S.).
12. BA-L, AR-1439/66, Bl.68ff, Vernehmungsprotokoll Joseph S., Kommando Hohenlychen, Gut Harzwalde. Other prisoners were deported to Damshöhe or Prenzlau.
19. BA-B, NS 3, Nr. 722, unpub.
20. AST-NZ, Org. 155, unpub.
They had to fell trees, level roads, construct barracks and garages, lay out a riding ring, and do other manual work. They were housed in a wooden barrack that was encircled by a barbed-wire fence. There was at least one watchtower (possibly several). A cordon of SS guards, transferred from Ravensbrück, was responsible for external security. One of the prisoners functioned as Kapo and another as cook. There are reports of two attempts by prisoners to escape in July 1943. Mischko Houbin, a Soviet prisoner, was unsuccessful and was murdered in Dahmsöhö on July 14, 1943. This crime resulted in the above-mentioned proceedings against Beer, who was acquitted on July 17, 1950, by a jury for lack of evidence.  

As the Eastern Front approached at the beginning of April 1945, the SS-Noncommissioned Officers Training Squadron was transferred to Bohemia to the military training ground at Beneschau (Benešov), about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) south of Prague. Investigations by the State Prosecutor at Stade, Niedersachsen, between 1975 and 1979 could not substantiate claims that members of the squadron shot, on April 7 and 8, 1945, 36 inhabitants at the Czech village Velké Povořic.

SOURCE
There is no written history of the Dahmsöhöhe camp. Details on the Dahmsöhöhe subcamp are the result of a research project conducted by the AG-R and SBG between January 2000 and January 2002 by A. Meyer, E. Schwarz, and S. Steppan. To date, the only and most important sources on the Dahmsöhöhe subcamp are the investigations by ZdL (held at BA-L), as well as documents from the court proceedings at the Stuttgart District Court against the former camp commandant of the male camp at Ravensbrück. The investigation is also found in Justiz und NS-Verbrechen: Sammlungen Deutscher Straftatverbreite wegen Nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbreiten 1945–1966, ed. A.L. Rüter Ehlermann, H.H. Fuchs, and C.F. Rüter (Amsterdam, 1971), 6: 726. The NLStA-S has a collection of documents relating to the SS-Kavallerieschwadron.

NOTES
1. See Landkreis Havel, Landkreis Oberhavel, der Landrat, Kataster- und Verwaltungsamt Oranienburg, Alt-Thymen, Steuermutterrolle, Bd. IV, Nr. 74; as well as Alt-Thymen, Gebäudebuch; Reinkarte Regierungbezirk Potsdam, Gemarkung, Alt-Thymen.
3. BA, Film 1567, “Verzeichnis der zuständigen Ersatztruppenteile der Waffen-SS vom 1.8.1944.” In this document, as in others, Dahmsöhöhe is written as Damshöhe.

EBERSWALDE
The town of Eberswalde is a county seat located some 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) to the northeast of Berlin. Two barracks have remained standing near the former Eisenspaltarei railway station and serve as reminders of a subcamp operated by the Ravensbrück concentration camp on these and the adjoining grounds in 1944–1945. The two buildings—authentic testimonies to the National Socialist tyranny—were placed under monument protection in 1998.

Under National Socialism, Eberswalde and what was then still the independent town of Finow came to play a central role in armaments production. This first “industrial” center of the Mark Brandenburg region had already begun to emerge on the Finow Canal in the early seventeenth century. In the early days of its history, metalworking plants such as iron, copper, and brass works shaped its economy.

One of the largest enterprises in the Finow Valley was the Ardelt Works, founded in 1902 by Robert Ardelt and moved to Heegermühler Strasse in 1912. In the period before 1933, the company distinguished itself worldwide with the construction of cranes; during the Third Reich it developed into a leading armaments manufacturer. The Ardelt family enjoyed the best of connections to the heads of the Reich departments and ministries and realized enormous profits in the execution of public orders. Antitank guns became among its most well known products. The expansion of the plant culminated in 1940 with the completion of a huge steelworking hall; construction of the “Nordwerk” facility on the Hohenzollern Canal (the present-day Oder-Havel Canal) had gotten under way in 1935. There, the Märkisches Stahlformwerk GmbH, a subsidiary of the Ardelt Works, manufactured hand grenades and bombs.

During World War II, the company’s workforce was reduced by conscriptions to military service; at the same time, however, the demands on production were growing. The Ardelt Works came to terms with these circumstances by employing an increasing number of “foreign workers” and concentration camp prisoners, who accounted for 3,000 of the 11,000 members of the company’s manpower (including the workforces of the Eberswalde Steel-Molding Works and the Breslau Works) after 1939.

Several barrack camps were established in the vicinity of the plant. In 1943, on an area of land owned by the Ardelt Works, the Rüstungskommission III des Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition (Armaments Commission III of the RMfBM) ordered the construction of the camp known as the Camp Cooperative West (Gemeinschaftslager West). The Berlin architects Eckart Muthesius and Hellmut Remmelmann were responsible for the plans. On September 13, 1943, the ministry officially responsible for construction projects informed the president of the administrative district of Potsdam of plans for a camp to be built according to “the stationary solid construction system for the accommodation of one thousand workers . . . of which the first subsection for 650 foreign workers and 200 German workers will be executed immediately.”

The Berlin architects Eckart Muthesius and Hellmut Remmelmann were responsible for the plans. The district president—in his capacity as senior building inspector—approved the project on September 23, 1941, “for the duration of the war” and granted his approval for two additional barracks on November 15.  

The camp ultimately consisted of eight ac-
commodation barracks, two washroom and toilet barracks, one service barrack (including a kitchen, dining hall, shower room, etc.), a first-aid station, and a guard and camp command barrack. The Eberswalde-Finowfurt railway separated the factory grounds from the camp, whose entrance was located only a few meters from the Eisenspalterei railway station.

The first “residents” of the Gemeinschaftslager West were some 100 to 150 Belgian workers. When they arrived in early March 1944, the barracks had not yet been completed. As early as the beginning of May, all inmates were moved to the nearby Drehsnitzlager. The Gemeinschaftslager West, now completely evacuated, was assigned a new function: it was to serve the Ravensbrück concentration camp as a subcamp. On September 5, 1944, the first Ravensbrück inmates arrived in Eberswalde from the main camp. Two weeks later (on September 21) the subcamp’s population already numbered approximately 730 prisoners.\(^1\)

The utilization of the existing barracks was now adapted to the new requirements. The prisoner area was enclosed by two fences, of which the inner one was electrically charged. This arrangement, along with the guards posted in watchtowers, made escape attempts practically impossible. Like the original first-aid station, the four lodging barracks in the northeastern section of the grounds were located outside the enclosure. The infirmary (Revier) was housed in the service barrack. A former guard testified that 18 women were employed as guards, along with 8 to 12 men for the “external control of the camp.”\(^6\)

SS-Unterscharführer Friedrich (Fritz) Giese served as camp commander. A trained roofer, he had joined the SS in 1933 and served on the front in 1939, at the beginning of the war. No longer “conditionally fit for combat duty” due to a severe injury, Giese had been on the staff of Ravensbrück concentration camp since March 1942. He took command of the Eberswalde and Finow subcamps in September 1944.

The majority of the prisoners in Eberswalde were young women under the age of 21. Most of them came from Italy, Poland, and the Soviet Union. Other known countries of origin were Denmark, France, Greece, Yugoslavia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, and Hungary. Only a small number of German women were committed to the Eberswalde subcamp. All of the prisoners wore the red triangle identifying them as political prisoners.

The day began with wake-up at 4:00 A.M. The prisoners had to form up for roll call an hour later. Armed SS women with dogs accompanied the work gangs to the Ardelt Works. The working hours were Monday to Saturday from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. The workers usually had Sundays off and stayed in the camp. Some of the women were employed in the production of machine guns in an arms factory located in the former Eberswalde municipal theater about 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) from the camp. In addition to forced labor in the factories, prisoners were employed in the construction of temporary housing as well as in the excavation of trenches and antitank ditches.

Violations of the camp regulations were disciplined with draconian punishments. A prisoner recalls: “The Russian and Polish women were often caught looking for potatoes and turnips in the cellar or informed on. . . . They had to stand at the camp fence in the severe cold with little on in the way of clothing, received 15–20 blows and nothing to eat until the following day. We Germans were often ordered by the SS to pick fights with the foreign women. We refused and were called ‘sissies’ from then on.”\(^7\) The prisoners also dreaded detention in the “Bunker,” a cellar partially filled with water.

Malnutrition led to a brief dysentery epidemic and tuberculosis. Due to the poor hygiene conditions, many of the women suffered from infections of the skin. The number of dead is not known, for the bodies were usually sent to the Ravensbrück main camp for cremation.

The history of the Eberswalde subcamp ended in April 1945. One record testifies to a population of 821 prisoners as late as April 10.\(^6\) In view of the advancing Red Army, the camp was evacuated a short time later. The prisoners were transported back to Ravensbrück on trucks, approximately 25 ill prisoners already having been taken back by rail.

After the war, the legal authorities called several members of the SS staff to account. The French military tribunal in Rastatt, for example, condemned the guard Lena Barth to a two-year prison term for her activities in the Eberswalde and Neubrandenburg subcamps. Three further Eberswalde subcamp guards had to answer for their actions before the Halle (Saale) District Court on October 13, 1949. Frieda Krüger, Hildegard Mannig, and Hilda Trocha, however, were cleared of all charges of crimes against humanity. The fourth defendant, Helene Rösch, evaded trial by fleeing to Western Germany. In the 1960s, the Public Attorney’s Office in Cologne instituted proceedings against the former camp commander Giese. By the time of Giese’s death in 1969, however, it had not proved possible to shed light on the homicides with which he was charged.


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The buildings of the Eberswalde subcamp and the history of their construction are outstandingly well documented, particularly by the construction files (town of Eberswalde), which have survived in their entirety, as well as by aerial photographs of the years 1944 and 1945 (LAVM-Br). Eyewitness reports are to be found in the AG-R. Files of the BDAH, BA-L, and the BStU provide information on the legal proceedings against former SS guards and camp commander Friedrich Giese after 1945.


NOTES


where they were used, for example, as electricians, on SS construction projects. Whether some of those held in Feldberg remained there until war’s end is not documented.

Little is known about the restructuring of the SS buildings in Feldberg. Former areas of the Amt W V, two SS barracks on the Kuhdamm, were handed over in 1946 as part of the sequestration of the Feldberg property. They were in turn leased to the Landwirtschaftliche Hauptgenossenschaft-Reifeissen GmbH for grain storage.7

Proceedings against the alleged murderer and former SS guard Anton M., who was said to have murdered the prisoner Albert Franz on September 15, 1943, ceased in 1974.8 The Koblenz State Prosecutor determined that the SS member should not be charged on the basis that he shot for base motives but on the basis that he shot a prisoner trying to escape. As a result, the killing was not considered murder. The accused acted according to SS regulations in shooting escaping prisoners. The accused could not be charged on the basis that he shot for base motives but on the basis that he shot a prisoner trying to escape. As a result, the killing was not considered murder.

There were no proceedings in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) for crimes committed in the Feldberg subcamp. The State Security, in the summer of 1981, researched whether the Feldberg subcamp was connected with the prosecution of secret weapons at the time.9

SOURCES There are no published sources specifically on this camp.

Archival records are held in the BA-BL, the BA-L, and other archives as indicated in the notes.

Angelika Meyer
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES
1. BA-BL, NS 3, Nr. 751, Bericht des Chefs des Amts W, Baier bei der DVA in Feldberg/Meckl, vom December 4–5, 1943 (Baier Chef des Stabes W und stellvertretender Chef der Amtsgruppe W).
7. MLHSH, Ministerium des Innern (1946–1952), Nr. 2935, unp.

FINOW
A subcamp of Ravensbrück existed in 1944–1945 only about 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the Eberswalde subcamp, in the town of Finow (the present-day district of Eberswalde). Following the National Socialist assumption of power, the brass works located there had developed—like the Ardelt Works—into a major munitions supplier.

The plant, in operation since 1700, is one of the oldest industrial sites in the Finow Valley. The Prussian state privatized what had long been the Königliche Messingwerk (Royal Brass Works) in 1863. The new owner, the Halberstadt trading firm Aron Hirsch & Sohn, ran the firm as a public limited company (Hirsch, Kupfer-und Messingwerke AG) beginning in 1906. The Neawerk (new plant) constructed in 1917–1920 produced for a worldwide clientele. In 1935, the enterprise had some 3,300 employees. The memory of the Jewish business family Hirsch, which because of economic difficulties had retired from the firm in 1932, was erased from the company name for good in 1941. Called the Finow Kupfer- und Messingwerke AG (FKM), the undertaking was incorporated into the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG) the following year.

A subsidiary founded especially for wartime production, the Finower Industrie GmbH was already established on the Hohenzollern Canal (the present-day Oder-Havel Canal)—approximately 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) from the parent company—as early as 1934–1935. The plant manufactured rifle cartridges and antiaircraft munitions. In addition to the production halls, there were a magazine and a shooting gallery. Because of its concealed location in the forest, the local population referred to the site speciously as Waldeslust (forest delight).

In view of the large number of employees enlisted for military service, the FKM and its subsidiary made increasing use of foreign workers to satisfy the rising demand for munitions. At the end of May 1944, of the company’s 6,260 workers, 1,000 were on war duty. A full 2,482—that is, 47 percent of the 5,260 workers remaining in Finow—were foreigners (including 306 Italian prisoners of war [POWs]).

A lodging camp for the Finower Industrie GmbH had already been set up in 1942–1943 between the factory grounds and the works railway to the south. In addition to an already existing air-raid shelter, initially four workers’ barracks and one service barracks were built. A few months later, they were supplemented by an additional five lodging barracks, two toilet facilities, and a washroom with bath facilities.

It was at this site that the Ravensbrück concentration camp established the Finow subcamp in 1944. The FKM had applied for the assignment of 200 prisoners to meet its workforce demands in munitions production. The first transport from Ravensbrück to Finow took place in the summer of 1944. Initially, approximately 100 to 200 women shared two barracks. The first barracks (the Russian block) was divided into two sections, one accommodating Ukrainian women, the other primarily Polish. In the second barracks (the Polish block), all four sections were occupied by Polish women. The campgrounds were enclosed by two fences, with the inner one being electrically charged.

In the winter of 1944, in view of an expected—and later executed—transport of prisoners from the Auschwitz concentration camp, the Finow subcamp was expanded by the addition
of three barracks located nearby, which had previously provided living quarters for “free” Russian women. From this time on, one section of the Polish block served as an infirmary, which, however, had only very few medications and primitive medical supplies (for example, toilet paper for bandaging wounds and a kitchen knife for opening abscesses) at its disposal. The factory first-aid station had previously been responsible for the prisoners’ medical care. Frequently, though, the SS staff had refused sick prisoners access to that facility.

The prisoners performed forced labor for Finower Industrie GmbH 12 hours a day, from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. “The work considered heaviest was that at the shell and bullet sorting machines, since the workers had to stand the entire time, and the prisoners charged with operating those machines also had to put in night shifts,” a former prisoner recalls. “Two shifts were also worked in the so-called ‘paint shop,’ where . . . as a result of the vapors brought about by the heating of the lacquered shells, the work was particularly unpleasant and hazardous to the health. The night work was uncommonly arduous because of the fact that, even though you could theoretically sleep during the day, the noise in the barracks and the prisoners charged with operating those machines also had to put in night shifts,” a former prisoner recalls. “Two shifts were also worked in the so-called ‘paint shop,’ where . . . as a result of the vapors brought about by the heating of the lacquered shells, the work was particularly unpleasant and hazardous to the health. The night work was uncommonly arduous because of the fact that, even though you could theoretically sleep during the day, the noise in the barracks and the frequent roll calls, from which the night-shift workers were not exempt, prevented you from sleeping.” The quality control of the bullets was among the easier tasks.

On November 20, 1944, 416 of the 2,012 workers at Finower Industrie GmbH were concentration camp prisoners. The number of camp prisoners rose to 564 by December 11, 1944, and to 674 by January 8, 1945, as compared to the overall workforce of 1,999 and 2,245, respectively. In addition to citizens of Poland and the Soviet Union, the prisoners included Belgian, German, French, Yugoslavian, Dutch, and Hungarian women. German civilian workers were also employed in the factory.

Like the Eberswalde subcamp, the Finow subcamp was under the command of SS-Unterscharführer Friedrich (Fritz) Giese. The SS staff reacted to disobedience and escape attempts with blows, detention in darkness, deprivation of food, and other brutal punishments. Some of the prisoners were taken back to the Ravensbrück main camp. Nothing is known of their later fate. “Quite suddenly the conduct of the SS changed,” a prisoner who worked in the infirmary recalled. “We were no longer beaten indiscriminately in the courtyard but were taken into the so-called roll call hall individually and beaten there. The reason for the change soon became clear to us. Free workers from the East, Poles and German civilians gathered around the fence and complained audibly when the SS went about celebrating their sadistic orgies on us.” Prisoners no longer able to work to full capacity were transported to Ravensbrück and exchanged there for “fresh” workers. “It is therefore easily conceivable that no one dared to say she was sick, since the return to Ravensbrück meant: crematorium. So among the women in the infirmary there were always a few who were as good as dead.”

In view of the daily cruelties, every sign of solidarity aided survival in the camp. Evidence exists, for example, of contact between a prisoner and a Czech factory worker (both women); the latter supplied current news from the front and mailed and received correspondence to and from the prisoner’s children under her own name. Furthermore, two members of the camp personnel enlisted for service with the SS, Johannes Gebhardt and Elfriede Reimer, are known to have helped the prisoners and thus endangered their own safety. They never doled out blows; they shared their rations, provided information on the course of the war, and occasionally conveyed news to family members.

A characteristic example of the misanthropic mentality of the SS is the order, issued shortly before the end of the war, “that in the case of an enemy tank breakthrough or airborne landing, all prisoners, regardless of their nationalities, are to be taken into the magazine . . . and the magazine is to be blown up.” This horrendous deed was never committed, however. In early March 1945, Finower Industrie GmbH discontinued production due to a shortage of raw materials, and approximately 300 prisoners were returned to Ravensbrück in trucks. There were still 306 prisoners in the camp on April 10, 1945, according to a camp population report drawn up on that day.7 That same month, the Finow subcamp—like the Eberswalde subcamp—was completely evacuated. The remaining inmates were likewise transported back to Ravensbrück by truck.


Several construction files (Barnim District, Town of Eberswalde) as well as aerial photographs of 1944 and 1945 (LAVM-Br) provide information on the construction history of the munitions factory Finower Industrie GmbH and the Finow subcamp. Firsthand reports of former prisoners (AG-R) provide insight into everyday life in the camp. Files of the BA-L and the BStU-H(S) supply information on the legal investigations into actions of the camp personnel.

The particular archival collections are as follows: BA-B, R 8119 F/P-1172 - P-1188 and RS/Giese, Friedrich/19.05.10; BA-L, AR 1492/66 and AR 2485/66; BStU-H(S), Zentralarchiv (Berlin) AP 3783/79; LAVM-Br, Landesluftbildsammlung (Potsdam) Aerial photographs dated May 30, 1944 (Film-Nr. K 006–44, Bild-Nr. 4036), and April 15, 1945 (Film-Nr. K 178–45, Bild-Nr. 4106); AKr-EW, Bauakten Finower Industrie GmbH; NARA, RG 339-000-50-II, Ravensbrück, vol. 2, Folder 3, Statement Danuta Tulmacka, May 13, 1945; Stadt Eberswalde, Untere Bauaufsichtsbehörde, Verwaltungsarchiv Bauakten Finower Industrie GmbH; and SBB, MGR (Fürstenberg/Havel) RA Bd. 22, Bericht-Nr. 211; RA Bd. 31, Bericht-Nr. 576; and RA Bd. 40, Bericht-Nr. 932.

Carsten Seifert

trans. Judith Rosenthal
The management of the Grüneberger Metallgesellschaft mbH counted 217 employees and 4,121 laborers who worked at the factory in the summer of 1944. Most of them were Germans (1,868), but there were also 124 workers from Italy, 205 workers from France, 894 workers from Eastern Europe, and 1,030 women and girls from the Ravensbrück concentration camp.1

Grüneberg was the third of approximately 39 subcamps of the Ravensbrück concentration camp, following Comthurey in Brandenburg and Born at the Baltic Sea. The first 350 female prisoners—who were deported from the Soviet Union to Ravensbrück—reached Grüneberg on March 6, 1943. The number of prisoners increased continuously and reached a maximum figure with 1,703 in April 1945. Most of them were women and girls from the Soviet Union (Russians, Ukrainians). About 300 prisoners were deported from Poland; others were from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (most of them were Slovenes); there were also Latvians, Estonians, and a few prisoners of Dutch, French, German, and Greek origin.

The Grüneberg subcamp was located about 150 meters (492 feet) from the station. It was separated from the nearby factory building by the railway line. The subcamp—150 meters (492 feet) long and 118 meters (387 feet) wide—was surrounded by a fence under voltage and had two guarded gates used as an entrance.

The prisoners lived in eight huts of the make 501/34. These huts were 50 meters (164 feet) long and 10 meters (33 feet) wide. Every hut had space for 214 prisoners, who had to sleep in bunk beds without mattresses and pillows but with sheets and thin blankets. Every hut had a toilet room and a separate space with six washbowls. In three cases the toilet rooms were outside the hut, and during winter, all huts were bitterly cold.

In addition, there was a hut used as an infirmary, a kitchen, and a pantry and another hut used as a dining hall. The so-called “Bunker” was a special place where prisoners were tortured. The Bunker was simply a deep, unlined hole.

The prisoners who worked in the factory building—only a few prisoners were forced to do housework in the subcamp instead of working in the factory—worked in 12-hour shifts with a break of about 15 minutes.

The labor time changed every week between a day shift (as a general rule from 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M.) and a night shift (from 7:00 P.M. to 7:00 A.M.).

Although there was no Allied air strike, air-raid warnings were frequent, and prisoners were sent to the factory’s basement or to an underground area next to the subcamp during the alarm. The female SS guards controlled the prisoners in the subcamp, on their 15-minute walk to and from the factory building, and inside the factory. The leading female SS guard was Betty Herzinger. Her substitute, a woman called Hesse, was moved to the Auer Oranienburg subcamp in 1945.

The unhygienic living conditions and the hard work led to numerous diseases. In July 1944, hundreds of prisoners came down with food poisoning. A Russian and a Czech doctor were on duty in the subcamp’s infirmary, but they were overtaxed because of an absence of medications. A huge number of prisoners died in the subcamp as well as after their deportation back to Ravensbrück, but it is not possible to give exact numbers.

The authorities evacuated Grüneberg between April 22, 1945, and April 26, 1945. At first, all prisoners from Poland were deported by trucks to Ravensbrück. The Swedish Red Cross liberated most of them in the so-called Aktion Bernadotte on April 24, 1945, when the SS allowed their release.

Most Grüneberg prisoners were deported by train or forced to walk to Ravensbrück, which was about 40 kilometers (25 miles) away. The authorities in Ravensbrück evacuated the concentration camp and forced the Grüneberg prisoners to be part of a second march. A huge number of weakened women and girls died; other prisoners reached the Mecklenburg town of Luebz—east of Parchim—where they were liberated by Soviet soldiers on May 1, 1945.

**SOURCES**

Primary documentation on the Grüneberg subcamp is located at the AG-R, as well as at the AG-S, especially “Sammlung Thomas Irmer Recherche Aussenlager des KZ Sachsenhausen Ordner No. 8. Inhalt: Diverse Aussenlager 1/2 A-K.”


NOTE

1. AG-S, Gewerbeaufsichtsamt Neuruppin (April 11, 1944), in “Sammlung Thomas Irmer: Recherche Aussenlager des KZ Sachsenhausen Ordner Nr. 8, Inhalt: Diverse Aussenlager 1/2 A-K.”

HAGENOW

Hagenow lies about 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) to the west of Neustadt-Glewe and was part of the former state of Mecklenburg. In 1945, the People’s School and Wehrmacht Senior Hospital Training School (Volksschule und Oberschule Wehrmachtslazarette) was established there.¹

In February 1945, 150 female prisoners from the Ravensbrück concentration camp were deported to Schwerin. There, the prisoners worked at a number of different places.² A group worked in a market garden and on farms; the others, in a clothing factory; 5 of the women from the transport arrived at Hagenow. There they had to work in a laundry, which formed part of the Wehrmacht hospital. The women were accommodated in the garden house of a private dwelling, which was surrounded with a 2-meter-high (6.6-feet-high) barbed-wire fence. Each morning the women were collected by Wehrmacht soldiers and taken to the laundry. The soldiers guarded and supervised the women. In May 1945, the women were liberated by American soldiers when they were on their way to the laundry. The women continued to help in the laundry until they returned home.

SOURCES

There are no secondary sources specifically on this camp.

Archival records may be found in the BA-L.

Angelika Meyer
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES

2. BA-L, AR-1585/69, p. 21

HOHENLYCHEN

Hohenlychen, part of the spa town of Lychen, lies 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) to the northeast of the Ravensbrück concentration camp. During the National Socialist era, Hohenlychen was the location for a well-known clinic for sport and work injuries headed by Professor Dr. Karl Gebhardt, a specialist in reconstructive surgery and a confidant of Heinrich Himmler. From 1936 onward, Gebhardt was a member of the SS-Medical Corps and then the Waffen-SS, where, by the end of World War II, he had reached the rank of SS-Gruppenführer and Generalleutnant. Even before the war, he established a special clinic for SS members in his sanatorium. During the war, members of the Wehrmacht were treated in a separate department, and a smaller section remained available for civilian use. From 1936, Gebhardt maintained another ward where he had a private practice. Among his patients were members of various European royal families, diplomats, politicians, sports people, industrialists from various countries, as well as high-ranking members of the National Socialist political and military leadership.

The sanatorium was officially known as the Red Cross Sanatorium Hohenlychen. Its history is closely connected with the Ravensbrück concentration camp in two ways: first, through the human medical experiments conducted in 1942 and 1943 on Polish female resistance fighters by Gebhardt and at least two of his assistants. Second, prisoners from the Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück concentration camps were used as forced laborers in Hohenlychen. There is also a statement by a witness according to which Gebhardt conducted medical experiments at Hohenlychen in 1943 and 1944 on four male prisoners from Ravensbrück and a Jewish woman from the Uckermark youth camp. The victims were killed by means of an injection, once the experiments were complete.¹

As with the medical experiments, hardly any documents on the use of prisoners in the sanatorium have survived from the National Socialist era. The little information that is available on prisoners’ labor is based mostly on witness statements or personal experiences of former prisoners and by a former female employee of the sanatorium. Whether the prisoners were used throughout the sanatorium or worked only in certain areas and the extent to which they were used as forced laborers remain unclear. Details about how the clinic organized the work details and the guards can only be gleaned from the prisoners’ reports. It is not even possible to clarify whether Hohenlychen should be seen as a subcamp of Ravensbrück, because many work details were covered by the Ravensbrück main camp. Finally, the period during which prisoners worked at Hohenlychen is uncertain. All that can be ascertained with certainty, from statements by former prisoners and a few documents, is that the period is from 1941 to 1945.

The fragmentary clues, which point to prisoners’ labor in the sanatorium, at least give an indication of the type of forced labor in Hohenlychen: there is evidence that a work detail comprising 29 prisoners from Sachsenhausen was put to work in the Hohenlychen Sanatorium on August 1, 1941.² Neither the type of work nor the prisoners’ nationalities or group to which they belonged is known. All the remaining information relates to prisoners from the Ravensbrück camp. According to a statement by former prisoner Alois Moser, the sanatorium employed, from time to time, 30 to 50 Jehovah’s Witnesses, that is, “serious Bible researchers.”³ Moser, as a Jehovah’s Witness, himself imprisoned in Ravensbrück, stated that between December 1944 and April 1945 he worked in the canteen and the SS clothing store. He described Hohenlychen as a subcamp of the Ravensbrück camp.⁴ A former sanatorium employee tells of a Jehovah’s Witnesses’ work detail that was put to work cleaning the streets in Hohenlychen.⁵ Worthy of note is the statement by Moser that the Jehovah’s Witnesses working in Hohenlychen were treated in an
unusual way—they were dressed in civilian clothing, and their hair was not shorn.6

In addition to this group of prisoners, mostly the names of Polish prisoners, who worked as forced laborers in Hohenlychen, have been verified. Zofia Rys, a Polish woman, stated in an interview that she worked in the sanatorium’s garden.7 She was held in Ravensbrück from September 1941. She does not state in her interview when she became a member of the Hohenlychen work detail. In the summer, the garden detail comprised 10 people and, in the winter, 15. The prisoners traveled each day by train from Ravensbrück to Hohenlychen. They wore prisoners’ garb. According to Rys, working in Hohenlychen was a privilege. She describes the peace in the walled-for sanatorium garden as a blessing, compared to the conditions in the Ravensbrück camp. The female wardens in the sanatorium were less strict and not as brutal. She and her coprisoners were able to smuggle fresh fruit from there into the Ravensbrück camp. According to her report, mostly civilian sanatorium employees supervised the prisoners’ work. The employees, particularly the “director” and the gardener, chose the prisoners strictly according to their job performance. Rys, in her report, states that because of her musical abilities she had a special function within the work detail: she had to sing for the head of the Hohenlychen kitchen and for this reason was chosen in the winter for the reduced work detail.8

The woman in charge of the Ravensbrück gardening work detail in the sanatorium was probably the Pole Teresa Taczkowa. Another eyewitness account states that during the years 1943 and 1944 she was successful in making contact in Hohenlychen with French prisoners of war (POWs), who were also working there. As a result of this contact, it was possible to forward to the resistance current details of the conditions and events in Ravensbrück. Rys states in her report that the French POWs had hidden a radio in a pigsty. By this means, information flowed back to Ravensbrück. The work detail in Hohenlychen, with the help of Polish agricultural laborers, was able, for more than a year, to send and receive letters to and from families of the prisoners in Poland. According to the eyewitness report, victims of the medical experiments were able to work, despite a ban, outside the camp in the Hohenlychen loading work detail and in the garden work detail.9

As a result of these channels of information, the sanatorium played a special role also for the resistance of the “guinea pigs” in Ravensbrück.

In addition to the outside details, individual prisoners from Ravensbrück appear to have been assigned to the sanatorium for special technical work. The engineer Walter Jahn from Ravensbrück was technical supervisor of the x-ray equipment in Hohenlychen at various times between October 1941 and April 1943. He reported on the human experiments in Hohenlychen. He also claims that there was a prisoners’ barracks in Hohenlychen.10 His report does not indicate whether he himself lived there. According to the prisoners’ card index, another prisoner, Jaroslav Chmelar, also worked in Hohenlychen from April 1941. The nature of the work he did is not known.11 Another example proves that prisoners must have lived in Hohenlychen. In connection with the medical experiments in Ravensbrück, Gebhardt obtained a Polish doctor, Halena Chelmicka, a technical assistant in Ravensbrück, to work in Hohenlychen in 1942–1943. A letter by Gebhardt reveals that she worked in the sanatorium’s photographic section.12 According to statements of colleagues, Chelmicka lived at Hohenlychen isolated from patients and other employees. When Gebhardt fled in April 1945 from Hohenlychen to Flensburg, he took her with him.13 Her fate is unknown. The First American Military Tribunal in the “Nuremberg Doctors’ Trial” in 1947 convicted Gebhardt of carrying out inhuman medical experiments. He was sentenced to death and executed a year later. The forced labor at Hohenlychen did not play any part in this and later trials.

SOURCES No sources or eyewitness statements that could give further information about the prisoners’ work or the Hohenlychen subcamp are known, other than those referred to in the text. The names of the prisoners, death lists, and poems from the Hohenlychen external details, which were smuggled out of Ravensbrück and buried, have survived. Constanze Jaiser discusses these documents in her dissertation “Poetische Zeugnisse: Gedichte aus dem Frauen-Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück 1939–1945,” in Ergebnisse der Frauenforschung, vol. 55, (Stuttgart: Weimar, 2000). The significance of Hohenlychen as part of the Ravensbrück resistance is referred to in several short passages in publications by former Ravensbrück prisoners: Germaine Tillon, Frauenkonzentrationslager Ravensbrück (Lüneberg, 1998); Dunja Brear, Ich lebe, weil du dich erinnerst: Frauen und Kinder in Ravensbrück (Berlin, 1997); Wanda Symonowicz, Über menschliches Mass: Opfer der Hölle Ravensbrück sprechen (Warsaw, 1970).

A work on Zofia Rys is being put together by Gabriele Knapp, Musik und Gesänge aus Ravensbrück (to be published). Excerpts from Alois Moser’s report are to be found in publications about the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Third Reich: Detlef Garbe, Zwischen Widerstand und Martyrium (Munich, 1993); Alfred Ludwig Hillinger, Kraft, die über das Normal hinausgeht: Zeugnisse unerschütterlichen Glaubens (Oberwang, 1999). Otherwise, Hohenlychen is usually only mentioned in connection with economic matters and Karl Gebhardt’s medical experiments on the women from the Ravensbrück concentration camp; Vernichten und Heilen: Der Nürnberger Arzteprozess und seine Folgen, ed. Angelika Ebbringhaus and Klaus Dörner (Berlin, 2001). An essay with further information about the Hohenlychen Sanatorium during the National Socialist era is to appear shortly: “Karl Gebhardt und die Heilanstalt Hohenlychen,” by Judith Hahn, in SudA.

Judith Hahn
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTES
2. See MGR, Häftlings-Kartei.
cluding the number of inmates, camp guards, commandant, and armaments manufacturing workforce stemmed from an agreement forged between the SS-Business and Administrative Main Office (WVHA) and the administration of the armaments firms. Inmates were provided to the firms at a low, per-day “price” paid by the firms to the WVHA.

No further information about the subcamp at Kallies, including the number of inmates, camp guards, commandant, living and working conditions, or postwar trials, could be found. The inmates were evacuated from Kallies to the main Ravensbrück camp in early 1945.

SOURCES
There are few primary or secondary sources on the Kallies subcamp of Ravensbrück. For a brief outline of the camp, including opening and closing dates, kind of prisoner work, and so on, see the entry for Kallies in the IT’S’s Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945): Konzentrationslager und deren Außenkommandos sowie andere Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS in Deutschland und deutsch besetzten Gebieten, vol. 1 (Arolsen, 1979).

The ZdL (now BA-L) in Ludwigsburg contains various files related to or that make note of the Kallies camp: see IV 409 AR-Z 99/70 VI/VIII; IV 409 AR 1485/66; and IV 409 AR 1591/66. Additional materials are most likely stored at the AG-R.

Christine Schmidt van der Zanden

KARLSHAGEN I AND II

The concentration camp Karlshagen I, near Peenemünde on the island of Usedom on the Baltic coast, was one of the largest Ravensbrück subcamps for male prisoners. Some 1,800 prisoners passed through it during its almost two years of existence, from May 1943 to the end of April 1945.

The testing unit of the Reich Air Ministry (RLM) operated the camp (for the testing of the aerial bomb Fi 103 better known as the V-1 rocket), which fell back on earlier experience in using large numbers of different categories of forced labor, such as prisoners of war (POWs) and foreign civilian workers.

The initiative to use concentration camp prisoners stemmed from the testing unit, which had applied for these services at the end of April 1943. Four weeks later, the first 253 prisoners were transferred from Buchenwald to the Karlshagen I subcamp. There followed transports up to January 1945, above all from Buchenwald but also from Sachsenhausen and Natzweiler, totaling 1,540 prisoners. The majority of the prisoners came from the Soviet Union. The next largest groups were from Poland and France. There were other nationalities represented, but their numbers were by no means as great.

Karlshagen I and Barth were the worst of the Ravensbrück subcamps for male prisoners. In the period from June 1943 to March 1945, 228 prisoners died in Karlshagen I. In addition, quite a few were evacuated in the four “sick transports” that took 600 prisoners in June and September 1944 and January 1945 to Bergen-Belsen. Another “invalid transport” from Karlshagen I headed in the middle of February 1945 for the Barth subcamp.

SS-Obersturmführer Hans Baumgart was commander of the Karlshagen I subcamp until July 1944. Later, he was replaced by a lieutenant of the Wehrmacht. The SS guards were largely replaced in the summer by members of the Luftwaffe.

KALLIES

About 70 kilometers (44 miles) southwest of Gdańsk, a subcamp attached to Ravensbrück was created in Kallies (Pommern Provinz; later Kalisz Pomorski, Poland). An unknown number of male inmates were deported to Kallies, most likely from the men’s camp at Ravensbrück. The Kallies subcamp was created to supply cheap labor to the Gerätewerk Pommern in mid-1944. The introduction of concentration camp inmates from Ravensbrück and other camps into the armaments manufacturing workforce stemmed from an agreement forged between the SS-Business and Administration Main Office (WVHA) and the administration of the armaments firms. Inmates were provided to the firms at a low, per-day “price” paid by the firms to the WVHA.

No further information about the subcamp at Kallies, including the number of inmates, camp guards, commandant,
The average of approximately 1,000 prisoners were used for heavy labor such as transport, earth and grading works, as well as working for the Schlemp construction unit and the Luftwaffe. The debilitating work was often made worse by abuse and mistreatment by the guards and a few Kapos.⁵

Not to be forgotten is the spectacular escape of 10 Soviet prisoners under the leadership of air force officer Michail Dewjatajew from the Karlshagen I subcamp in February 1945. They stole a Heinkel (He) 111 bomber and successfully reached Soviet lines.

At the end of March 1945, about 950 prisoners were taken to Ellrich, a subcamp of the Mittelbau concentration camp. A few days later the majority of these prisoners were taken to Bergen-Belsen. At the end of April, the remaining prisoners were taken by ship to Barth, and a few days after their arrival, they were forced to march in a westerly direction. They were liberated by the Red Army a short distance from Rostock.⁶

The Karlshagen II subcamp near Peenemünde on the island of Usedom was attached to the serial test works of the Army’s Weapons Office (Heereswaffenamt) for the development and production of the A4 (agregat 4), or V-2 rockets. It was established in the middle of June 1943 and administered by the concentration camp at Ravensbrück. The camp was dissolved in the middle of October 1943 after the massive air attack on Peenemünde on the night of August 17–18. The total number of male prisoners held in the camp on that date was 600.

From the beginning of the war, foreign and forced laborers (POWs and foreign civilian laborers) were used in Peenemünde in large numbers. As the production of the V-2 rockets came closer to reality in 1943, the already chronic shortage of labor worsened additionally because of the efforts to maintain secrecy. After initial thoughts to replace the civilian forced laborers with concentration camp prisoners, an A4 Committee delegation inspected the Heinkel factory in Oranienburg in the middle of April 1943. Here 4,000 prisoners from the nearby Sachsenhausen concentration camp were used by Heinkel.⁷

Two months later, the first transport of 200 prisoners from Buchenwald arrived; a second transport with another 400 prisoners from Buchenwald followed on July 9, 1943. Two-thirds of the prisoners were from France and the Soviet Union. There were also a large number of German “protective custody” prisoners. The prisoners were housed in the cellar of the large assembly building. This “advance detachment” was engaged primarily in heavy manual labor in construction and assembly. During the four-month existence of the Karlshagen II subcamp, 15 prisoners died, excluding those who died during air raids.

SS-Untersturmführer Arnold Strippel was commander of the Karlshagen II subcamp. A large number of the guards were ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) and elderly Wehrmacht members.⁸

A heavy raid by the Royal Air Force during the night of August 17–18, 1943, hit the assembly factory, killing 18 prisoners. After this air attack, all plans for the mass production of V-2 rockets in Peenemünde were dropped. The prisoners were kept for a few weeks in Peenemünde, where they cleaned up and dismantled the facilities. In the middle of October 1943, they were taken via Buchenwald to the recently established Mittelbau subcamp. Here they were housed in underground tunnels and again put to work in debilitating construction and assembly work in setting up this new underground production facility.


For the escape of the Soviet POWs, see M.P. Dewjatajew, *Flucht von der Insel* (1964; Berlin/Ost, 1972). There are other unpublished survivors’ reports, as well as contemporary documents scattered throughout numerous archives.

A scholarly work on the Karlshagen II subcamp remains to be written. For research literature, see Michael J. Neufeld, *Die Rakete und das Reich: Werner von Braun, Peenemünde und der Beginn des Raketenzeitalters* (Berlin, 1999); also published in English: *The Rocket and the Reich: Peenemünde and the Com- ing of the Ballistic Missile Era* (New York, 1995).

The most detailed report, published shortly after the liberation, is a report by a survivor, the then-19-year-old Frenchman Michel Fliecx: *Pour défait d’espérance: Deux ans a Buchenwald, Peenemünde, Dora, Belsen* (Evreux, 1946). Other unpublished memoirs and statements by former prisoners, as well as contemporary documents, are kept in different archives, including BA-MA.

Bernhard Strebel

translated by Stephen Pallavicini

**NOTES**


The Klützow subcamp (in the present-day town of Kluczewo) was probably constructed in the late summer of 1942 and used from the spring of 1943 to the beginning of 1945 as a camp for male prisoners from the camp for men in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. It was located close to the Klützow airfield about 7 kilometers (4.4 miles) to the south of Stargard. As part of the process whereby production sites of industries vital for the war effort were relocated, the production facilities of the Gerätewerke Pommern GmbH Stargard were relocated to the site. The company’s principal place of business had been located in Stargard since 1943. The company was owned by the Askania Werke AG Berlin-Friedenau. The company manufactured aircraft armaments. The camp is described differently in a number of documents and reports, for example, Aussenkommando Fliegerhorst Klützow, Aussenkommando Stargard, or Gerätewerk Pommern GmbH in Stargard im Pommern.

The camp’s history can be divided into two phases: construction and operation. It was probably at the end of 1942 that the first 80 to 100 prisoners, most of them from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, were deported via the Ravensbrück concentration camp to Klützow. Three to five barracks were separated from the Wehrmacht accommodation on the military airfield and transformed into a concentration camp. At times the camp was shielded from the outside world with a paling fence. To maintain security within the camp, it was planned to have four guard towers. Its size was approximately 80×100 meters (262×328 feet). The camp was divided into a section for the prisoners’ barracks, an infirmary, and administrative and kitchen buildings. One of the three (or four) prisoners’ barracks had sanitary facilities, the so-called bathhouse (Badehaus). One of the rooms in the support barracks, the so-called Bunker, was part of the SS punishment system. At the entrance to the camp there was the guards’ office and the rollcall leader (Rapportführer) building. The factory was about 300 meters (984 feet) from the camp and was located in the former hangars on the airfield. During the first phase, the buildings were cleaned and facilities installed for the manufacture of aerial torpedoes. The prisoners constructed shrapnel trenches on the site. Little is known about the prisoners’ work conditions (or their treatment by company employees and SS men). The company not only produced torpedoes but probably tested them at the site. There were labor detachments that brought the raw material from the railway station, about 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) away.

The first prisoners were probably under the command of SS-Oberscharführer Ahrens. He was transferred from the Natzweiler concentration camp to supervise the construction of the Klützow camp and in mid-1943 was transferred again. There were approximately 25 SS men as guards. Some of the prisoners were deported from the camp under construction to other subcamps. A number of different concentration camp transfer lists (Ueberstellungsliste) document the largest deployment of prisoners from the spring of 1943. Several transports of between 50 and 100 people were deported from the Buchenwald concentration camp to the Klützow subcamp. The majority of the prisoners originated from the Soviet Union and Poland. To improve the efficiency of the prisoners, so-called skilled prison laborers (Häftlingsfacharbeiter) were transferred in October 9, 1943, from the Flossenbürg concentration camp to the Arbeitslager Gerätewerk Pommern GmbH in Stargard. According to an SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) Amt D letter dated September 23, 1943, seven plumbers, mechanics, and machinists were to be sent. SS-Oberscharführer Franz Pribil was in charge of the Klützow camp from 1943 to October–November 1944 after Ahrens was transferred back to Natzweiler. Pribil worked for the Ravensbrück camp commander, Kögel, as his personal secretary in the command office in 1942. In February 1945, he was the last commander of the Ravensbrück subcamp at Neustadt-Glewe.

From the autumn of 1943 to the summer of 1944, SS-Rottenführer H. Wolter was the responsible labor allocation officer (Arbeitseinsatzführer) and guard duty officer. Wolter had previously been a member of the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, later serving in the command office of the Buchenwald concentration camp and in 1942 in the command office of the Ravensbrück concentration camp as accommodation administrator (Unterkunftsvorwalter). On December 16, 1942, he married the wardress Georgine F. in Fürstenberg/Havel, who also served in the command office at Ravensbrück.

Wolter is described as a sadist regardless of when witnesses made postwar statements and regardless of which country they were made in. His brutal behavior remains in their memories. The SS murder of prisoners and the excess of violence in the Klützow camp are constantly described by survivors.

Wolter himself came under pressure in the summer of 1944 following an escape attempt. In a letter dated July 2, 1944, from the Gendarme group station Dölitz, Kreis Pyritz, to Landrat in Pyritz, it was stated that on June 26, 1944, three Russian concentration camp prisoners had escaped from the Gerätewerk Pommern. On July 2, the three escaped prisoners were found in the Sallentin Forest, 15 kilometers (9.3
Wolter was questioned on July 4, 1944. 

Death resulted in an investigation by the State Prosecutor. Wolter was shot and injured by one of the searchers and later died from his wounds. The shepherd who was helping in the search, was shot and injured when the shooting began, Ernst Pawilkowski, an assistant selected by an SS squad.

The main reason that this report was written was that when the shooting began, Ernst Pawilkowski, an assistant shepherd who was helping in the search, was shot and injured by one of the searchers and later died from his wounds. The death resulted in an investigation by the State Prosecutor. Wolter was questioned on July 4, 1944. The question to be determined was whether the shot came from Wolter’s machine gun. The results of the investigation are not known. It is also not known if and where the dead were buried.

The dissolution of the camp is described by the former commander Suhren in the Rastatt Trial. He gave details on the number of prisoners in the camp as 600. In February 1945, on the order of SS-Obergruppenführer Heissmeyer, the subcamp was to be relocated to Ravensbrück. As no train was available, the prisoners were ordered to march by foot. The survivors were then sent on a death march from the Ravensbrück main camp.

The record from interviews largely confirms that this was the camp’s dissolution date and also confirms the march to the Ravensbrück main camp.

The Königsberg (Neumark) subcamp was located on the grounds of an airport, 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) south of Königsberg (present-day Chojna, part of the Polish administrative district of Szczecin). The town, in the northeast of the Prussian province of Brandenburg, formed a part of the Frankurt/Oder government district and was also its administrative center. It was about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the Ravensbrück main camp and the city of Fürstenberg/Havel in Mecklenburg.

The main airport in Königsberg (Neumark) was apparently constructed in 1938–1939. The so-called work centers at Märkisch-Friedland and Gabbert in Pomerania, 75 and 44 kilometers (47 and 27 miles) east of Stargard, as well as Mohrin, 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) south of Königsberg, were part of the airport. The airport was given the code name Buggerhaus. The Königsberg (Neumark) airport was used to engage in hostilities from the first days of the war in action against Poland. The main airport and its work centers then served as training grounds for pilots. The developments on the Eastern Front from 1943, as well as the Allied air raids on the Reich, revealed the inferiority of the Luftwaffe and changed the nature of the air war. The airport at Königsberg (Neumark) was given new and additional tasks and functions. German fighters left Königsberg (Neumark) to attack the Anglo-American four-engine bomber units. Fighter pilots received crash training courses. Obviously, the airport conditions up to then were not equipped for the additional demands. In 1944, it was expanded, above all to extend its takeoff and landing runway. The Wehrmacht, specifically the Luftwaffe, was responsible for the construction. A number of sources state that the Organisation Todt (OT), using Italian military internees (IMIs), French prisoners of war (POWs), Polish forced laborers, and concentration camp prisoners, was also involved with the project.

The Königsberg (Neumark) subcamp was opened around October 20, 1944, with the arrival of female prisoners from the Ravensbrück concentration camp. The camp existed until its closure at the end of January 1945 and was administered by the main camp administration. French prisoners called the...
camp “Petit-Koignigsberg” so as to distinguish the town in Neumark from the city of Königsberg in East Prussia.

The exact location of the camp is unknown. The area in which the camp was thought to be is covered with grass. According to descriptions by former prisoners, a barbed-wire electric fence surrounded the camp, which consisted of a number of barracks. Within the fence were several wooden barracks, which housed the prisoners. There was a barrack outside the camp, which was a warehouse and sewing room. The SS guards and the female wardens were housed here, and a sentry box gave shelter to the sentries.

Written records do not provide any information on the exact number of women who were held in the Königsberg camp. According to statements by survivors, it is probable that there were between 800 and 900 female prisoners in the subcamp. The largest group of prisoners came from occupied Poland. The majority came from Warsaw and were captured after the uprising in 1944. They were sent by Special Transport (Sondertransport) Number 105 on October 8, 1944, first to Ravensbrück, from where they were transported to Königsberg. The French women held in Königsberg came with an earlier transport, which left France on August 15 for Ravensbrück.4 At a later stage, the largest group of these prisoners were transported to Torgau in Saxony, where they were forced to work in the army’s munitions factory. Refusal to work and acts of sabotage resulted in their being removed from Torgau on October 6, 1944, and 250 were sent to the airport at Königsberg. According to other sources, prisoners from the Soviet Union, Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia were also in Königsberg. The transport from Torgau also included three English women. They were members of the secret service “Special Operation Executive” whose members, in the struggle against fascism, were sent on special missions into different occupied countries. They were brought back to the Ravensbrück main camp in January 1945 and summarily shot.

Details of the strength of the SS-Kommando and the names of its members who guarded the camp have not survived. One can assume, however, that the members of the Luftwaffe, who were assigned to SS guard details, were responsible for security. As a result of judicial investigations and prosecutions, five female wardens are known by name.5 The behavior of the head warden, Wilhelmine Pielen, was regarded by the prisoners as particularly sadistic. Her efforts to care for the sick were inadequate. Food was withdrawn at the slightest infringement. Those who attempted to escape were imprisoned in a special unheated cell. She had women stand outside her office window for days (but not nights) in strict parade formation.

All the activities of the women were designed to keep the airport at Königsberg (Neumark) operational and to ensure that planes could take off and land. The women were assigned to heavy work details, which free women would not be expected to do. The majority of the women were used to widen the takeoff and landing runways. Others worked in the forest or on excavation required for the construction of roads, hangars, barracks, or other buildings. The prisoners’ watery soup was prepared in the camp and brought in wooden vats to the work sites. The women were housed mostly in unheated barracks with several-layered wooden bunks, which were covered with paper-filled sacks. The diet, low in calories, and the heavy work in extreme weather, first in autumn and later in winter, permanently weakened the women’s condition. They suffered above all from colds and flu, abscesses, stomach illnesses, general weakness, and tuberculosis.6 The sick and those who could no longer work were taken to the infirmary or were put to work inside the camp. Basic care was given to the patients by a female French and Polish doctor and nurses from the Soviet Union, Poland, and France. The efforts of these doctors and nurses were highly praised by several survivors. A month after the camp was opened, a transport with 30 sick prisoners returned to the Ravensbrück main camp.

The approaching front had a direct effect on the Königsberg (Neumark) camp. The SS guards and staff of the airport fled on February 1, 1945, in front of the rapidly advancing Soviet troops. However, the prisoners’ freedom lasted only for two days, as units of the Wehrmacht and the SS appeared, who again imprisoned most of the women. The fate of these women differed. A group of the women, capable of being moved, were brought back to Ravensbrück. Those weakened women who could not stand up to the exertions of the journey were shot. A group of those who reached Ravensbrück was immediately sent to other subcamps, including the Lärz airport, and the testing ground of the Luftwaffe at Rechlin in Mecklenburg. Only a few survived this torture. Those too sick to work were put in the infirmary. Not all had the luck of those who were evacuated by the International Red Cross in a transport to Sweden. Others were murdered in the gas chamber. Another group consisted of prisoners from the infirmary and those who were able to hide in the sick barracks before the transport back to Ravensbrück. They were liberated on February 5, 1945, by troops of the Soviet Army. About 10 days later, these women, numbering more than 100, were taken by truck into the hinterland. After several months of medical care in Polish hospitals, they could return to their homes and countries.

The airport was used by the Soviet military from 1945 until the beginning of the 1990s. After their withdrawal, a residential and industrial park was constructed there.

SOURCES Simone Steppan and Erika Schwarz were the first to provide a detailed analysis of the history of the Königsberg (Neumark) camp in the BWF 20 (2003): 3–43. Details about the camp can be found in the publication by Christian Bernadac, Kommandos de femmes: III. Ravensbrück (Editions France-Empire, 1973), pp. 177–201; as well as in newspaper articles about the living conditions in the camp, above all the conditions for the French prisoners.

The most important sources on the Königsberg (Neumark) subcamp are the preliminary investigations by the ZdL (now BA-L) into a female warden, SS men, and the camp commander of Ravensbrück. Essential are the reports of the former prisoners.

Erika Schwarz
trans. Stephen Pallavicini
The majority of the women who were brought to the camp at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 were Jewish. By the time the Jewish girls and women arrived in Malchow, they had years of persecution behind them. For many of them, Malchow was the last phase on their Holocaust route.

The camp consisted of living barracks, a wash barrack, a kitchen, and an infirmary barrack. The prisoners were guarded by SS men in the outer circle and by female guards (Aufseherinnen) in the inner circle. Wehrmacht soldiers who had been disqualified for the front guarded the women prisoners on their way to and from work.

Several of the female guards had come from Ravensbrück; some had been recruited from the ammunition industry according to the requirement of the SS to supply workers as guards for the hired-out prisoners. Another group of the SS staff had been transferred from the evacuated eastern camps. Among these was Luise Danz, head of the female guards (Oberaufseherin) of Malchow during the last months of the war. The male camp leader of Malchow was SS-Oberscharführer Lothar Kleinstich. The directors of the plant were Dr. Reuter and Dr. Vervoorst. Special guard units of the plant, headed by Herr Minderop, guarded its inner areas. Another unit guarded the plant from the outside, under the command of Freiherr von Hausen. The ammunition plant was divided into four separate areas. The different departments of the plant were scattered in separate bunkers to avoid having to shut down the entire plant in case of an explosion.

The plant’s workers consisted of German workers, foreign laborers, prisoners of war (POWs), and women prisoners from the concentration camp. The testimonies of the Jewish survivors refer to eight months between October 1944 and May 1945. That period can be divided into two according to the conditions in the camp and the change in its purpose: from October 1944 to the beginning of February 1945, and from February to May 1945.

The women who reached Malchow during the first period were surprised to find bearable living conditions. They worked in the plant in 12-hour shifts, day and night. The work included weighing the explosive material, filling different molds with it, then compressing it, and packing the final product. At noon the women had a lunch break. The prisoners considered the plant a good working place, as it was indoors, in a warm, clean area. Life in Malchow from October 1944 to February 1945 was an improvement compared with the prisoners’ experience in other camps.

Conditions in the camp deteriorated radically during the second period. The women who reached Malchow in February 1945 had arrived in Ravensbrück from Auschwitz. Within two days, 3,000 women arrived in Malchow. The shortage in raw materials had reduced production in the plant so that most of the new prisoners were not assigned to work there. About 1,000 women were put in what some of them refer to as the “stable,” where they lay on straw on the floor. The rest were squeezed into the blocks of the veteran prisoners, bringing filth and disease with them; boils and typhus spread rapidly.
If they were lucky, the late arrivals were able to get work in the forest or inside the camp. The policy during this second period was to keep the working women alive and to starve the rest to death. Danz boasted that she could kill an unlimited number of Jewish women. The women realized that they were about to be starved to death. They testified that the agony of starvation made Malchow the most atrocious camp they had been in. During the roll calls, Danz would pick out women, sometimes beating them to death. The camp leader would arrive on horseback at the end of the roll call and hit women with his whip.

By the end of March 1945, the concentration camp was on the verge of collapse. On April 2, about 2,000 women were put on a transport to Leipzig. Women testified that the train, which traveled along a heavily bombarded route, was expected to be bombed. They overheard Danz saying: “We have to send a death transport on its way.” Contrary to Danz’s expectations, the train arrived in Leipzig, where the prisoners were divided into two groups, one being sent to Taucha, the other to Hugo-Schneider AG (HASAG) Leipzig-Schönefeld. During the last days of April, Red Cross packages were brought into the camp of Malchow, but most of them were stolen by the SS. As part of the agreement among Folke Bernadotte, the representative of the Swedish Red Cross, Norbert Masur, representative of the World Jewish Congress in Sweden, and Heinrich Himmler, Red Cross trucks set out for Sweden on April 26, with 300 to 500 prisoners from Malchow. At that stage, the remaining prisoners in the camp were given food only every 36 hours.

On May 1, the remaining women who were still strong enough to walk were led out of the camp; they marched for about four days, during which several of them who were too weak to continue were shot. The sick and wounded remained in the camp’s infirmary. On May 2, Soviet soldiers entered the camp.

The Polish court in Kraków sentenced Oberaufseherin Luise Danz to life imprisonment in 1947, but she was released in 1957 and returned to her hometown in Germany. In 1996, the prosecutor of Meiningen decided, after years of investigations, to press charges against Danz for the murder of a young Jewish prosecutor of Meiningen. The juridical inquiry of 1990 against camp leader Lothar Kleinschmidt was discontinued since he had died in 1988.

It is not known how many prisoners died in Malchow. However, it is clear that the role of the camp, which was originally erected as a “labor camp,” changed with the evacuation of the eastern concentration camps and the decline in industrial production. From February 1945, the main purpose of the overcrowded Malchow camp was to get rid of as many prisoners as possible. Under the circumstances, and given the location of the camp in the midst of German civilians, starvation seemed to be the most “appropriate” extermination method.

SOURCES The main secondary source on the ammunition plant of Malchow is the booklet Stadt Malchow (Meckl.), ed., Das Munitions- und Sprengstoffwerk in Malchow (Meckl.), 1938–1945: Heft 2 zur Geschichte der Stadt Malchow (Meckl.) (Malchow, 1995), which contains information on the construction of the plant, the state and private or semiprivate enterprises involved, the ammunition it produced, and the manufacturing process. It also mentions the workers of the plant. Primary source material can be found in the ASt-MCW, in particular, background documents pertaining to the financial arrangements between the town and the companies that built the plant. The AG-R contains various testimonies and documents. The BA-L and YVA contain the results of the legal investigations into the crimes perpetrated in the camp. The collection of testimonies at YVA also contains testimonies of women who were imprisoned in Malchow. Valuable interviews with survivors are located in the LUS (Lakocinski, Zygmont, Deposition 1974, PIZ); HAFHDCB; and WL. Information on some of the camp perpetrators is located in the TStA-M (Bestand Suhl). Several memoirs published by survivors who were imprisoned in the Malchow subcamp provide valuable information and insight into the experience of the prisoners. For example: Inka Wajsbort, Im Angesicht des Todes (Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 2000); Miriam Biderman, Ne’urim betzel hamavet (Tel Aviv: Davar Press, 1960); Raya Kagan, Nakhim belishkat bagebenom (Merhavia, Israel: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1947); and Halina Nelken, Freiheit will ich noch erleben (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 1996).

Iris Dublon-Knebel

NOTES
2. The number of barracks varies in the testimonies between 10 and 20; LUS, Zygmont Lakocinski, Deposition 1974, PIZ, no. 240; BA-L, AR-Z-55/71(NY RH SE 50627/18/70); YVA, 03/3388.
3. TStA-M, Bestand Suhl 1112.
4. PIZ, nos. 102, 240, 174, 277.
5. PIZ, nos. 102, 240, 174; YVA, 03/5802
6. PIZ, no. 174.
7. YV, 03/9416.
8. Ibid.
9. PIZ, no. 487.
11. HAFHDCB, A-81019; BA-L, AR-Z-55/71 (Stadtgericht Bratislava SP 1893/70); WL, PIII h 441; YVA, 03-9416.
13. PIZ, no. 102.
15. BA-L, IV 409 AR 1483/66.
16. TStA-M, Bestand Suhl 1121.
17. Ibid., 1113.

MILDENBERG

The Mildenberg subcamp was located on the grounds of a brickyard in the Mildenberg district, Templin region, in the...
former Prussian province of Brandenburg. It was about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) to the southeast of the city of Fürstenberg/Havel, Mecklenburg, and the Ravensbrück concentration camp. H.C. Kröger & Co. bought the brickworks, situated in north Mildenberg, from the beneficiaries of Julian Prerauer, the Jewish owner, after his death in 1939. The facilities were buildings typical for a brickworks including, among others, two furnaces, a circular kiln, and numerous drying sheds. According to witness statements, production ceased in 1943. In the dormant brickworks, an overflow facility was located for the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) Amt II C 3, which comprised a unit of 32 men, responsible for a vehicle supply unit. The facility was given the code name “Werkstoff.” Due to the bombing on the German capital city, hundreds of vehicles were to be relocated in the course of 1943 from Berlin to the brickworks, which was about 72 kilometers (45 miles) from Berlin. The 100-meter-long (328-feet-long) drying sheds and the ring kilns were particularly suited for garaging the vehicles.

Male prisoners from Ravensbrück were engaged to construct additional buildings, such as housing barracks and buildings for the maintenance of the vehicles and for storage of building materials. Initially, these men were transported early each day to work at Mildenberg and in the evening returned to the main camp. Only after the prisoners had built quarters for themselves could they remain on the grounds of the brickworks. The prisoners’ barracks, according to one prisoner, were located close to a small river, the Welsengraben. A 1945 aerial photo shows other barracks in the immediate vicinity of the prisoners’ quarters, which apparently were used by the vehicle supply unit personnel and the security guards.

It is believed that in Mildenberg there were at first about 30 and later about 80 prisoners from Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Germany. Among the prisoners were Kapos, as well as a cook who also prepared meals for the SS. The prisoners were guarded by SS guards, including the commander of a dog squad, who had been ordered away from Ravensbrück. The prisoners, once they had completed their work in the autumn of 1944, were sent back to Ravensbrück. During this period, the Mildenberg subcamp was administered by the main camp.

**SOURCES**

Simone Steppan and Erika Schwarz were the first to describe the history of the Mildenberg camp in *BWF* 20 (2003): 44–52.

A former Czech prisoner of the Mildenberg subcamp only alludes to the existence of the camp in the AG-R. An entry in the BA collection on the RSHA also refers to the existence of the additional facility.

**NEUBRANDENBURG**

The Neubrandenburg subcamp was one of the first of the Ravensbrück subcamps for female prisoners. It was also the largest. In the course of its two-year existence from March 1943 to the end of April 1945, at least 7,000 female prisoners passed through its gates. At the end of 1944 a camp for about 500 male prisoners was added there.

The Mechanischen Werkstätten Neubrandenburg (MWN) appears as the motivating force behind the establishment of the subcamp. This company was established in 1934 by the Reich Air Ministry (RLM). The know-how was supplied by the Carl Heber Mechanische Werkstätten from Berlin-Britz, a company that specialized in the construction and development of bomb-launching devices. The RLM provided the financing. The MWN had already used other types of forced laborers (foreign civilian laborers), which made up approximately 44 percent of the workforce by the end of 1943.¹

A camp leader and a few SS men were responsible for the camp, as well as SS female guards trained in Ravensbrück, who were responsible for internal security, one for every 100 prisoners. Survivors have described the behavior of the female guards as extraordinarily brutal. External security was provided by elderly men from the MWN security guards.

The use of concentration camp prisoners was initiated by the MWN. The number of female prisoners increased continually, beginning with 200 in March 1943 to almost 2,000 at the end of February 1944. At the end of August 1944, when production had been exclusively switched over to concentration camp prisoners, there were 5,200 female prisoners in Neubrandenburg.² They were primarily female Poles, Russians (including a few prisoners of war [POWs]), Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, French, and Czechs.

The female prisoners were mostly used in the production, in particular, of bomb-dropping devices. Sometimes they had to engage in heavy manual labor, including the construction of a semisubterranean overflow camp, Waldau, about 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) away. German civilian workers were in control, and their behavior is variously described. Another form of control was the sophisticated use of informers. As a result, in May 1944 the Pole Klara Jeziorska was denounced for sabotage and executed in November 1944, following a brutal interrogation in Ravensbrück.

There was an infirmary for 150 patients, which in the last few months was completely overcrowded with 400 to 500 female prisoners. The more seriously ill and those who were no longer capable of working were returned to the main camp at Ravensbrück, where at the end of 1944–beginning of 1945 they were in danger of being selected for extermination.

The SS evacuated the camp on April 27, 1945, and drove the female prisoners on foot marches toward the northwest. Two days later, the 100 sick prisoners left behind in Neubrandenburg were liberated by Soviet troops.

An unusual form of resistance was the “Neubrandenburg Manifest,” which in the spring of 1944 was put together by a group of female political prisoners of different nationalities as a form of ideal testament. A copy reached the main Ravensbrück camp.
Sources

The most comprehensive overview of the Neu-
brandenburg subcamp is by Heinz Barche, Mahnung
und Verpflichtung: Leben, Ausbeutung und antifaschistischer Wider-
standskampf weiblicher Häftlinge in den Konzentrationslagern
Neubrandenburgs 1943–1945; Kommentare, Dokumente, Berichte
(Neubrandenburg, 1980). Details on the national composi-
tion of the subcamp and on the execution of Klara Jeziorska
may be found in Wanda Kiedrzyn’s Kein Ort für Träumen: Bericht aus
einem Frauenlager (Hamburg, 1960); published in French as: Un camp très ordi-

Further reports, including unpublished ones by former
prisoners and some fragmentary documents, are to be found
in the AG-R and in BA-B.

Notes

1. “Bericht der Deutschen Revisions- und Treuhand AG
über die MWN,” Jahresabschluss 1943, BA-B, R 8135/2217.

2. Details from Statement by WVHA chief Pohl on Febru-
ary 21, 1944 (enclosure to a letter by Himmler to Göring,
March 9, 1944), Nuremberg Doc. PS 1584; Dr. v. Lepel, “Er-
fahrungen mit weibliche Häftlinge bei den MWN,” August
21, 1944, AG-R, 422.

Neustadt-Glewe

The Ravensbrück concentration camp subcamp in Neu-
stadt-Glewe went into operation on September 1, 1944. It was set
up as a result of negotiations between the manager in charge
of the Dornier Works in Wismar, Schulte-Frohlinde, and the
head of labor deployment at the Ravensbrück women’s con-
centration camp, SS-Oberscharführer Flaum.1 The Dornier
Works had been evacuated in 1943 and moved to Neustadt-
Glewe. The Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp was to
guarantee the workforce required to keep production going
in the aircraft works in Neustadt-Glewe by supplying able
workers.

The subcamp was established at the military airfield 2 ki-
lometers (1.2 miles) south of Neustadt-Glewe, district of Lud-
wigslust (Mecklenburg).

The barracks of the ground personnel in the eastern sec-
tion of the air base were evacuated, and the grounds were en-
closed with electric and barbed-wire fences and equipped
with watchtowers. The two barracks of the SS camp com-
mand as well as the guards’ and overseers’ lodgings were loc-
cated outside the enclosure.

The camp is thought to have been under the command of
an SS officer by the name of Heinrich Weiss until February
1945.2 In handwritten documents from the Ravensbrück main
camp, the names Anna St., Helene Sch., and Ruth W. are
mentioned as overseers at the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp.

The camp was under the control of SS guard units; in
the spring of 1945, these SS guards were replaced and/or supple-
mented to a certain extent by older Wehrmacht soldiers.

In the fall of 1944, an initial 300 women were committed
to the subcamp; by the end of that year, the number had risen
to approximately 900. The majority of these women, who ar-
ived on transports from Ravensbrück, were Poles who had
been arrested in connection with the Warsaw Ghetto Upris-
ing, as well as women from the countries of the Soviet Union
and those of other nationalities from the German-occupied
territories, including Sinti and Roma (Gypsies).

The prisoners were assigned to forced labor in the work-
shops of the Dornier Works as well as on the air base. The
work, generally carried out in two shifts of 12 hours each,
consisted primarily of the production and repair of airfoils for
aircraft assembled in other factories. Moreover, the prisoners
were employed in the assembly of aircraft engines and under-
carriages and, on the airfield, as camouflage and roll squads
responsible for rolling the aircraft out of their protective pits
and onto the runway and, after landing, returning them to
the pits and camouflaging them. The work was supervised by
master workmen and foremen and carried out under the sur-
veillance of the camp overseers.

A portion of the inmates were forced to carry out shaft and
excavation work for the construction of air-raid shelters and
trenches on the airfield and at the nearby Reich Labor Service
(RAD) camp. One labor detachment was employed in the
Kurz cement works in Neustadt-Glewe.

Beginning in mid-February 1945, transports of primarily
Jewish women and girls from Hungary, Poland, Slovakia,
Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Romania, Hol-
land, Germany, France, Belgium, Greece, and other countries
arrived—prisoners who had survived the death march from
Auschwitz. Among them were 12 women who had been vic-
tims of medical experiments at Ravensbrück and had been
saved by fellow prisoners at the last minute before their in-
tended murders by being smuggled onto the transports under
false names.4 Members of the Auschwitz underground
resistance—Antonina Piatkowska, the doctor Slava Klein, and
Vera Foltynowa—also were sent to Neustadt-Glewe.

The population of the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp, which
had been set up to accommodate a maximum of 900 prisoners
and was already severely overcrowded, now grew to approxi-
mately 5,000. (Due to the lack of records, the exact number
cannot be reconstructed.)

The Neustadt-Glewe camp prisoners, who were already
dangerously enfeebled by their previous sufferings and the
death march, lived in disastrous conditions. The women were
crowded into unheated storage rooms, factory halls, and bar-
racks. There was hardly enough room to sleep, and the hy-
genie facilities were completely inadequate. The majority of
the women suffered from undernourishment and disease.
Some of the most severely ill were taken “back” to Ravens-
brück on trucks.
Nearly 1,000 women and girls did not survive the inhuman conditions and died at the Neustadt-Glewe camp (88 of them in the hospital on the days following liberation). The high death rate is to be attributed above all to the prisoners' undernourishment, which provided favorable conditions for the spread of epidemics such as typhoid, tuberculosis, and dysentery. The women who died in the camp were buried at the cemetery and in mass graves in the nearby woods by fellow prisoners who had been assigned to the so-called corpse unit. (In 1946, a mass grave with the bodies of 46 women was discovered in the forest. These bodies were moved to the cemetery.)

There is no specific information on the overall number of dead, since neither documents nor name lists pertaining to the subcamp exist. The above-mentioned figure is derived from the reconstruction of the memories of former subcamp prisoners (eight), among them members of the corpse unit, in correspondence with other eyewitness accounts and surviving notes.

Prisoner transports continued to arrive in Neustadt-Glewe until the end of April 1945.

On the morning of May 2, 1945, the members of the guard units left the camp in plainclothes and left the inmates locked in the barracks. The women broke down the doors and window bars. On the afternoon of May 2, the Red Army occupied the airfield, the camp, and the town of Neustadt-Glewe. Some 300 severely ill women received medical care in the infirmary, which was placed under the command of the Soviets on May 4, and in the town school, which had been in use by the Wehrmacht as a field hospital. Alone or with the aid of the Red Army, a number of the women still capable of traveling left the camp immediately. Others remained to regain strength before leaving the camp and the town.

**SOURCES** Information on the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp may be found in the following sources: Der Totenkopfgeneral (Schwerin: Schweriner Volkszeitung, 1999); Der antifaschistische Widerstandskampf unter Führung der KPD in Mecklenburg von 1933 bis 1945 (Rostock: Ostseedruck, 1970); and Karl Heinz Schütt, Ein vergessenes Lager? 4 vols. (Schkeuditz: GNN-Verlag Sachsen/Berlin, 1997–2002).

Primary sources for this subcamp are available at MPW, Signatur A-882 (Krankenbuch KZ-Revier Neustadt-Glewe). Files, testimonies, and minutes of the public attorney’s investigation into the war crimes committed at the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp are archived in BA-L, AR-Z 23/70. Eyewitness reports and manuscripts are to be found in the AG-R, AMBN-G, APMO, and ALR-LWL. Additional material is in MLHSN, Bezirksleitung der SED Schwerin, V1/137 (n.d.). At the time of the dissolution of Ravensbrück concentration camp by the SS, the majority of documents and files were destroyed, among them all documents that could have shed light on the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp. The information now available on the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp is based primarily on firsthand reports by women who experienced the Neustadt-Glewe subcamp as prisoners (compiled by the author); research carried out by the author and reports by other eyewitnesses are included in the two publications in Ein vergessenes Lager?

Karl Heinz Schütt
trans. Judith Rosenthal

**NOTES**

1. Sammlungen Ravensbrück, AG-R, Bd. 25/372 (Bericht 228-SS-Suhren).

**NEUSTRELITZ-FÜRSTENSEE**

About 100 kilometers (62 miles) north of Berlin, a subcamp attached to Ravensbrück was created in Neustrelitz-Fürstensee (Mecklenburg province). An unknown number of male inmates were deported to Neustrelitz-Fürstensee most likely from the men’s camp at Ravensbrück sometime in 1943. During the trial of several Ravensbrück staff members in 1946, former Ravensbrück block elder (Blockältester) and witness Hermine Salvini confirmed in cross-examination that Neustrelitz was attached to Ravensbrück and tentatively totaled the number of prisoners in Neustrelitz, Konterei, and Kellehelt between 70 and 100. No further breakdown of the number of inmates in Neustrelitz is available.1

There is no further information about the subcamp in Neustrelitz, including the number of inmates, kind of prisoner work, camp guards, commandant, living and working conditions, or postwar trials. The camp was occupied on April 30, 1945, by Allied troops.

**SOURCES** There are few primary or secondary sources on the Neustrelitz-Fürstensee subcamp of Ravensbrück. For a brief outline of the camp, including the dates of occupation, and so on, see the entry for Neustrelitz in the ITS’s Verzeichnis der Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS (1933–1945): Konzentrationslager und deren Aussenkommando sowie andere Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS in Deutschland und deutsch besetzten Gebieten, vol. 1 (Arolsen, 1979).

The ZdL in Ludwigsburg contains some files related to the Neustrelitz camp: see BA-L, IV 409 AR-Z 39/59 and IV 409 AR 1992/69. The camp is briefly mentioned in the postwar trial documentation of several Ravensbrück staff members, copies of which are located in USHMM: Judge Advocate General’s Office: War Crimes Case Files, Second World War, RG-59.016M, Reel 10 (originals stored in the PRO, London, WO 235/305). Additional materials are most likely found at the AG-R.

Christine Schmidt van der Zanden
NOTE


PRENZLAU-KLEINE HEIDE
[ALSO HINDENBURG, BIRKENHAIN]

A specific date for the establishment of the Prenzlau-Kleine Heide subcamp of the Ravensbrück concentration camp is unknown. The existing statements by former prisoners are very contradictory and range from May 1943 to the autumn of 1943.

In all likelihood, a labor detachment of about 30 prisoners was brought to the vicinity of Prenzlau to construct the camp in the late summer of 1943. The camp itself changed locations from Prenzlau-Kleine Heide to Hindenburg (present-day Lindenhagen). At the latter site, an existing windmill, circus wagons, and barracks constructed at a later date served as a camp. The transfer of the prisoners to the vicinity of the Birkenhain construction site was intended as a means of economizing on fuel. The distance to the place of work was now 2 kilometers (1.2 miles), which had to be traveled on foot. A proportion of the prisoners also had their living quarters directly in Birkenhain.

According to an official report, the camp’s dissolution took place on April 27, 1945. This date is presumably incorrect, however, in view of the fact that the personal staff of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler had already left Birkenhain—code name “Birkenwald”—at the end of March 1945, and the existing buildings were occupied by military operations offices until the war came to an end in the Uckermark.

The prisoners were initially assigned the task of constructing alternative headquarters for the personal staff of the Reichsführer-SS. To this end, large buildings were confiscated, and a considerable number of prefabricated wooden barracks were erected. The completion of the various facilities dragged on into the spring of 1945. In isolated cases, prisoners were employed at the Birkenhain site as custodians, gardeners, and cleaning staff.

The entire facility was under the command of the personal staff of the Reichsführer-SS. The guard units assigned to oversee the prisoners at their living quarters and at work were deployed from Ravensbrück.

On the basis of eyewitness interrogations and the evaluation of the existing archives, it was possible to ascertain the following prisoner insignia: red triangles for political prisoners, purple triangles for Jehovah’s Witnesses, green triangles for criminals. In a few cases, foreign (Eastern European and French) prisoners were also assigned to labor in Birkenhain.

The precise size of the workforce employed in Birkenhain at any given time cannot always be reconstructed since the SS records did not survive. On May 14, 1944, 59 prisoners were on labor duty in Birkenhain; on August 25, 1944, 172.

According to the few existing documents and eyewitness reports, the prisoners were not tortured at their place of work, and there were no murders.

Witnesses to the events stated that, at their living quarters, prisoners were beaten for the slightest violations of the camp regulations.

The identities of this subcamp’s leaders are not ascertainable. The names of the guards are known. They were deployed from the guard units of the main camp. According to eyewitness interrogations, it came about on occasion that prisoners were hired out to the people of Hindenburg as skilled workers. Jobs for electricians were mentioned in this context.

For one resident of the town of Hindenburg (the owner of the windmill), the prisoners painted two oil paintings in return for his help in the form of additional food. These paintings are still in the family’s possession.

At least one attempt must have been made to escape from the camp, since there is a document regulating the collaboration between the SS and the local police/gendarmerie in the event of a further escape attempt.

One witness to the events spoke of two prisoners who were allegedly caught, shot to death, and then buried in the forest; however, it has not been corroborated.

The dissolution of the camp along with its workforce presumably took place in late March 1945. Individual laborers—women and Jehovah’s Witnesses who worked as cleaning personnel—are reported to have been present in the officers’ lodgings until April 1945. Proceedings against individual members of the SS who belonged to the guard units from Ravensbrück were carried out in the Federal Republic of Germany between the 1940s and the 1960s.

SOURCES


Numerous documents on the history of the subcamp are to be found in the BA-K, Bestandsnummer NS 19, Persönlicher Stab RFSS. File No. AR Z 94/1971, Prenzlau, in the BA-L is likewise significant. It contains statements by former prisoners on the working and living conditions in Birkenhain. In the holdings of the BA-B is a film of documents (Film No. 3612) on the Birkenhain camp containing reports on the labor deployment of the prisoners from the perspective of the SS. The author’s archive contains records of numerous eyewitness interrogations.

Reinhard Timm
trans. Judith Rosenthal
RETZOW [AKA RECHLIN]

Retzow is a district of the town of Rechlin and is located southeast of Müritz (district of Waren, state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania).

The barracks camp in Retzow was built between 1939 and 1942. It was to provide lodgings for workers employed in the construction of the Lärz airport. The airfield was part of the Luftwaffe testing site in Rechlin. The camp was located 500 meters (1,640 feet) from the northern entrance to Lärz airfield. Until 1943, the camp provided lodging primarily for members of the Reich Labor Service (RAD) and Italian workers. In 1943, 4 of the 12 barracks in the camp as well as a large proportion of the social barrack were fenced in. On the basis of the type of enclosure that was built, it was soon clear that a special type of camp was being set up—a concentration camp. In the early summer of 1943, 1,000 to 1,200 male prisoners were committed to this camp.

It is very difficult to determine what camp the men came from. In any case, they were not from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. It is assumed with some certainty that they came from the men's camp in Ravensbrück.

For the most part, the prisoners were put to work primarily on excavations for the construction of the Lärz airfield and of a pilot's shelter. Some witnesses to the events have claimed, however, that there were specialists among the prisoners who were assigned to help with assembly tasks at the airfield or at the testing site. During the performance of their labor assignments, the prisoners were subjected to rigorous treatment by the guard units. The rations were relatively satisfactory. In the early summer of 1944, a large majority of the men were transferred. To replace them, women were sent from Ravensbrück on July 9, 1944. By the late autumn of 1944, the camp population had risen to 3,000 at times. The number fluctuated strongly during this period.

Whether women or men, the prisoners were put to work primarily in the construction of the Lärz maneuvering area. As a rule, they carried out excavation work. This labor was often much too strenuous for women.

Beginning in the autumn of 1944, the majority of the women were employed building so-called camouflage pits. These pits were depressions dug into the ground, over which—a wooden framework—a camouflage net was spread to hide the aircraft from enemy pilots flying overhead. Here again, excavation constituted the major proportion of the work. At times, smaller groups of men were also assigned to help with the harvest. The women, for their part, were assigned to work in the halls in smaller groups. The work in the halls was considered easier. The greatest burdens placed on the women were the trench work and the clearing work following air raids. The work was organized by the management of the testing site or by the command of the air base. Among the male as well as the female prisoners, various nationalities were represented in the camp. According to the memories of former prisoners, a conspicuous number of French people were imprisoned in Retzow. From the autumn of 1944 onward, due to lack of space in the barracks, the cinema of the social barracks was also used as living quarters. The prisoners lodged in the cinema were primarily Jewish women who had previously been imprisoned in Auschwitz. This was also the period in which the camp population rose to as many as 3,000. The death rate fluctuated sharply. Relatively few men died. Several of them were shot to death during alleged escape attempts. A great deal more of the women died. In the period from the end of 1944 to April 1945, the rations were severely reduced. Moreover, the prisoners suffered increasingly from vermin of all kinds, ranging from rats to head lice. As a result, the incidence of many kinds of disease increased to the point where they could be classified as epidemics.

The dissolution of the Eastern European extermination camps and the resulting deportations of Jewish prisoners to concentration camps in the West caused the situation in the Retzow subcamp to change. The Jewish women had separate lodgings, being literally crammed into the cinema of the social barracks. There, selections were carried out regularly, and the selected women were taken back to the Ravensbrück main camp, presumably for extermination. Every Friday, a transport of women classified as “unfit for life” was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. In her monograph on Ravensbrück, Germaine Tillion, a prisoner in the main camp, describes a scene she witnessed on March 27, 1945. That evening, there was a transport from Rechlin on the camp street. She passed close by it on her way back from work. The women were lying in front of the washroom wing on the ground, and five or six of the women had died during this time. The others were horribly emaciated, very tan from the sun, but pale at the same time. Their gazes were full of fear and agitation. In February 1945, even more prisoners were detained in the cinema, among them a large number of French women. Even prisoners who had been in various concentration camps in the course of the years and were sent to the cinema barrack described the conditions there as especially atrocious. There is no evidence as to whether any of the women held in the cinema survived. Anise Postel Vinay recounts that, on April 26, 1945, women who had previously been in the Retzow subcamp were transported in trucks from the Uckermark camp to the main camp and then murdered.

The memoirs of Tillion, Postel Vinay, and Renault indicate that, at least in certain phases, the camp was divided in its functions: Some of the prisoners were forced to perform the heaviest conceivable labor—but were out in the fresh air. Other women were doomed to vegetate in locked rooms day and night with minimal rations. Hunger, thirst, overcrowding, and disastrous hygienic conditions led to the deaths of the women.

Many of the prisoners who died in Retzow were taken to Ravensbrück for cremation. A large number of women were killed during air raids. They were not evacuated but merely subjected to the bombing without any form of protection. Another considerable portion were killed in work-related accidents. The extension of the runway was carried out while the planes were in operation, and the women were frequently
blown to the ground by landing aircraft with such force that they subsequently died.

Altogether 251 dead prisoners—men, women, and children—were buried at three sites in Retzow.10 In 1948, 30 of the corpses were exhumed, identified as French women, and transported to France. The remaining 221 were dug up in 1950, cremated in Schwerin, and buried at a memorial in Waren (Müritz). Three other bodies were buried in a neighboring village. The overall death toll of the Retzow subcamp, however, has never been determined.

It is difficult not only to find the names of the dead today but also to describe the routes taken by the prisoner transports. It is known for certain that major relocations of prisoners took place in February 1945. At that time, the men who had remained in the camp in the summer of 1944 and many women prisoners were deported by train to the Ellrich concentration camp in the Harz (a subcamp of the Mittelbau concentration camp). These prisoners had been selected because they were still in relatively good physical condition. At Ellrich they were put to work in the construction of underground industrial facilities. In Ellrich, as well, there was little chance of survival.

No information concerning acts of resistance in Retzow has been found. In February 1944, one man succeeded in escaping from the camp. He was found by a forest worker 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the camp in a wooded area, suffering from a severe chill. He allowed himself to be taken back to the camp without resistance.11

On April 30 and May 1, 1945, the majority of the prisoners were driven on foot in the direction of Röbel-Malchow under the close surveillance of guards.12 They were ultimately liberated by U.S. troops. The number of prisoners who died on the road is not known. The guards not needed for the evacuation were ultimately ordered to report to Neustadt-Glewe. Altogether, 71 women remained behind in the camp. At this point in time, 56 women were dead. The remaining prisoners were liberated by soldiers of the Red Army on the morning of May 2. At the instruction of the first in command of the Red Army in the town, Karl Wulf, a citizen of Retzow, assumed the medical care of the living prisoners and the burial of the dead. An additional 10 women died in May, the last in July. The women of the town were assigned to help Wulf. He succeeded quite well in caring for these severely enfeebled people, particularly in view of the fact that he initially had no medical personnel at his disposal.

Beginning in 1969, the Central Office of State Justice Administrations (ZdL) in Ludwigsburg instituted legal proceedings against alleged criminals of the Retzow subcamp. In 1974, criminal proceedings were initiated against the guard Paul P. on charges of murder. Paul P. claimed that he had been a guard at the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp, that he guarded male prisoners during the construction of stables at the Damshöhe subcamp, and that he was assigned to guard duty as a concentration camp guard at the Rechlin runway and transferred to Barth, a subcamp of Ravensbrück, in the winter of 1944.13 In 1975 he was sentenced to youth custody for three years by the District Court of Kleve. The verdict was amended by the 3rd Criminal Division of the Federal Supreme Court after the defendant lodged an appeal (on account of a procedural error). The charge was changed from consummated murder to attempted murder. The 1976 sentence was for two years and six months.14

No other trials were carried out. No original documents on the SS guard personnel have been uncovered.

SOURCES Material relevant to this subcamp may be found in Heinrich Baetke and Heinrich Ross, Aus der Geschichte der Erprobungsstelle Rechlin (Waren, 1999); Christian Bernadoc, Les Mannequins Nu (Paris, 1973); Heinrich Beauvais et al., Flugprobianstgen bis 1945: Johannis, Lipez, Rechlin, Travemünde, Tarnewitz, Peenemünde West (Bonn, 1998); Magistrat der Stadt Mörfelden-Walldorf, ed., „Das Geheimnis der Erlaung beis Erinnerung.“ Ein Begleitbuch zum Historischen Lehrpfad am ehemaligen KZ-Aussenlager Walldorf (Mörfelden-Walldorf, 2000). Useful information may also be found in Grit Philipp, Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück 1939–1945 (Berlin, 1999).

As is the case of many of the Ravensbrück subcamps, there are hardly any primary sources on Retzow. The only existing detailed memoirs pertaining to the history of the Rechlin-Retzow camp were provided by French women formerly imprisoned at the camp; they are available in the form of written testimonies. Various set pieces of the memories of individual inmates are in the “Erika Buchmann” file in the AG-R. In this source, however, often neither the point in time nor the specific context of the events described is known. The documents of the ZdL were transferred to the holdings of the BA-L in the year 2000. The public attorney investigations comprise records of hearings of men and women formerly imprisoned in the Retzow subcamp, carried out between 1968 and 1971. Because of the author’s personal interest in the history of this subcamp, he conducted interviews with eyewitnesses for many years. Many of these people were already very old at the time of the interviews and insisted on remaining anonymous. Their memories have been incorporated into this text. Two published testimonies on this subcamp are Maisie Renault, La grande Misère (Vannes, 1948); and Germaine Tillion, Frauenkonzentrationslager Ravensbrück (Lüneburg, 1998).

NOTES


2. Interviews with witnesses to the events conducted by Heinrich Ross.

3. In 1998, an international student group developed a memorial at the authentic site. In a personal interview conducted there with Johanna Krause, who was 90 years old at the time, she stated with regard to her period of imprisonment in Retzow that having been a political and Jewish concentration camp prisoner for many years, she had become accustomed to a great deal. The accommodation in this so-called cinema was an especially devastating and unforgettable experience.
4. On the subject of transports, cf. Ilse Hunger, Briefe an die VVN Berlin, Sammlung MGR/SBG, RA-Nr. 18, Bericht 74; interviews with former residents of Retzow conducted by Heinrich Ross.


6. In Tillion’s memoirs there is an account of a transport of 2,000 French women to Rechlin on February 14, 1945. As in the Uckermark camp, the treatment of the women was aimed at their murder. Selections were carried out in March and April in this subcamp as well. The selected prisoners were picked up by trucks and probably murdered in the Ravensbrück gas chamber. See Grit Philipp, Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück 1939–1945 (Berlin, 1999), pp. 194, 201.


8. Sammlung AG-R/SBG, RA-Nr. 20, Bericht 188/1.

9. Heinrich Ross, interview with witnesses to the events.


11. Memories of a forestry worker in interview with Heinrich Ross.

12. Before the liberation of the subcamp, a so-called death march of some 3,000 women left the Ravensbrück main camp on March 22, 1945, and headed toward Rechlin by way of the town of Wesenberg. In the process of the so-called evacuation, the subcamps thus served as “catch basins” for the main camp. Philipp, Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück 1939–1945, p. 201.


ROSTOCK-SCHWARZENPFOST/STEINHEIDE

In 1943, one year after the especially heavy bombardment of the Hanse city of Rostock, the idea was formulated to relocate essential armament production facilities to well-camouflaged sites. One such top-secret project lay concealed behind the code name “Robert” in the extensive forests of the Rostock Heath. Illusionary plans for constructing a large new aircraft factory were under consideration. Following the bombing of the Heinkel Works in Rostock-Marienehe, the plant had been divided into 40 small- and medium-size operations spread all over Mecklenburg, a solution that, however, did not guarantee acceptable production figures. Now a large facility was to be constructed on an area measuring 97 hectares (240 acres). The plant was built from the ground up almost exclusively by concentration camp prisoners and foreign workers. In addition, there was also a lodging camp for female prisoners in Oberhagen, a district of Rövershagen. It was enclosed by an electrically charged barbed-wire fence and kept under surveillance from three watchtowers manned by heavily armed guards belonging to the Ravensbrück unit of the SS-Totenkopfstandarte (Death’s Head Regiment). In addition to an administration building, five barracks had been built to serve as lodgings for approximately 300 prisoners. Every day the emaciated inmates were driven on foot a distance of more than 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) to a forest near Schwarzenpfost to carry out 12 hours of the heaviest conceivable construction work.

A large number of eyewitness documents were discovered in the estate of Alfred Weber in the Western Pomeranian Landesarchiv in Greifswald (VLA-G). Among them is a letter written from Bulgaria by Mara Zanewa Beltchewa Göbelmann, excerpts of which are reproduced here:

One day—the picture that I still see in my mind’s eye even today—two hundred women and young girls came from the Barth camp and were taken to join the other prisoners. They also had to work in the same factory [Schwarzenpfost]. They were so dirty, so infested with lice, that I could not possibly take them to the other prisoners. I left them standing in the courtyard and ran to the overseer to ask for fresh underwear and clothing for them. They hadn’t changed for months and the shirts on their backs were like hard boards. The shirt . . . [?] them more than it warmed them. Their backs, their bodies were covered with sores. . . . These women were primarily journalists, doctors, teachers. They had deliberately been insulted, humiliated in this way, simply not given any change of clothing for eight months. . . . Then I took two hundred dresses and two hundred shirts for all of them.

Magdalena Szabolcsi Imrene of Hungary recounted her memories of the Schwarzenpfost camp in 1964:
In April 1945 we were taken to Schwarzenpost to work in an aircraft factory, but because of our weakness, we were no longer in a position to do so. There was no kitchen whatsoever; we survived on what we found on the ground. The camp was not far from the road, and we could see that the people were fleeing from the advancing front. . . . In Schwarzenpost camp there were approximately three hundred women. There were also men there, but they were separated from us by a wire fence; how many of them there were I do not know, because contact of any kind with them was entirely impossible. As far as the nationality of the inmates was concerned, there were Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, Dutch, and above all Russians. The overseers were SS women. Our lodgings were in Schwarzenpost, as I remember. I can remember with absolute certainty that there were several barracks there, though I can no longer say exactly how many. During the death march which ended in Warnemünde and led from Schwarzenpost through the forest, many women were killed. . . . On the night of April 29, 1945, the advancing front forced the SS to evacuate the camp. The prisoners—in April, male inmates had arrived from the east, some on foot, some in trucks—were driven through the forest to Hinrichshagen. From there the march went on to the Hohe Dune by way of Markgrafenheide. When the SS guard troops learned that the Red Army was already close to Warnemünde, they put on civilian clothing. One SS officer who had always treated us with such fine expressions as “scumbags,” “sows,” and “bitches” suddenly called out to us: “You’re free, ladies!” Now suddenly we were “ladies.” . . . On the way, we heard fine expressions as “scumbags,” “sows,” and “bitches” suddenly called out to us: “You’re free, ladies!” Now suddenly we were “ladies.” . . . On the way, we heard shots again and again; prisoners who were too weak to go on were “finished off,” murdered by the SS.1

What Weber concealed and negated as he was gathering the witnesses’ reports on behalf of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) was the circumstance that among the prisoners there were hundreds of Jewish men and women of various nationalities, Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, so-called asocials, criminals, and others. Even in the internal, unpublished documents, antifascism was equated exclusively with the concept of communism. As a consequence, many of the documentation were decreed because of their obvious bias in the recounting of historical events.

References to the Schwarzenpost/Steinheide camp are also found in the rationality of indexes and statistics, often concealed behind code names such as “Robert” and “Sturm.” The organizational plan of the Heinkel aircraft works includes a depiction of the company hierarchy showing not only the chief branches in Rostock, Oranienburg, Vienna, and Stuttgart but also a number of subsidiaries under the administration of the Rostock branch. The sites Patriotischer Weg, Werftstrasse, Bleicherstrasse, Putnitz bei Ribnitz-Damgarten Krakow, Libzi, Gustrow, Rövershagen, Oelsnitz, and Adorf in Voigtland as well as the underground facility Kabel und Leitungswerke AG (Cable and Conductor Works, Inc., KALAG) in Stassfurt were listed in conjunction with the Rostock main factory.

In the International Tracing Service (ITS) catalog, the following memo is found on Schwarzenpost: “Schwarzenpost, District of Rostock, Russian Zone, CC-Kommando of Ravensbrück (Concentration Camp Kommando) May 1944—one thousand women at Heinkel Company.”2 In another list published by the ITS, the following can be read in connection with the Schwarzenpost camp: “Opened in mid-1943 according to a statement by a chief department head of the SS-WVHA (Business Administration Main Office).”3

The Central Archive of the Federal Commissioner for the Documentation of the State Security Service (BSTU) also holds documents that shed light on the history of Schwarzenpost camp. Particularly in the 1960s, the Ministry for State Security (Staatssicherheit, Stasi) of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) carried out a considerable number of investigation procedures on the concentration camps in Mecklenburg and Western Pomerania. In this context, it is conspicuous that quite a few persons decisively involved in the camp hierarchy carried out their offices and functions in the GDR until their deaths, although they had been proven guilty.

In April 1964, Prof. Dr. Köhler, who as head of operations in the Heinkel company was responsible for the establishment of the concentration camps in Barth and Schwarzenpost, among others, was interrogated on this subject. In the course of the hearing, he stated the following about a conversation with higher-ranking SS men in Ravensbrück: “The only thing I remember about the negotiations was that the conditions of the already existing Oranienburg concentration camp [by this he meant the Sachsenhausen concentration camp] were included in the basis for the agreements.”

Köhler also claimed: “Shortly before the divestiture a proportion of the prisoners from Barth concentration camp were employed in the construction of a forest plant for the Heinkel company near Rövershagen. The prisoners’ wages were paid by the Heinkel company as a flat rate, two to three Reichsmark per day. The payments were settled with Office D (SS-Economic Office). This form of payment brought the Heinkel company a financial advantage which was passed on to the Ministry of Aviation only in part. Through this form of payment, the services actually performed by the prisoners were by no means compensated.”

Finally, two drawings were found in which the camp grounds, the course of the electric fence, and, to some extent, the locations of individual buildings are depicted. These drawings are of particular value for the endeavor to carry out targeted research work on the former camp grounds themselves.

**SOURCES** There is to date no completed publication on the Schwarzenpost/Steinheide concentration camp near Rövershagen. More specifically, a brochure was issued by Prof. Dr. Karl Bittel titled *Wir klagen an—Die Wahrheit über die faschistischen Konzentrationslager im Ostseegebiet* (Stralsund, 1966),
but its documentary value is extremely doubtful since—in keeping with the state doctrine of East Germany at that time—facts were concealed or purposely changed. This assessment also applies to the work carried out by Alfred Weber during the same period. The first objectively correct publication on this camp is in volume 5 of the *Schriften der Geschichtswerkstatt Toitenzirkel* (Rostock, 1998) in an article titled “Kriegsgefangene und Zwangsarbeiter zwischen Warnow und Barthe.” Since 2002, a research group has undertaken a thorough investigation of the camp.

As far as is known, there is little in the way of archival material on the concentration camp. In the AS-Ros, among the forestry records, the files 1.10.337 “Mitbenutzung der Holzverladestelle u.a. Heinkel AG” and 1.10.477 “Einsetzung von Kriegsgefangenen in der Rostocker Heide” are to be found. A number of isolated documents were found in the AG-R. In BStU the following material pertaining to this concentration camp was found: “Untersuchungsvorgang Zöllner, Arnold,” the “Bildbericht zur Exhumierung von zehn ermordeten KZ-Häftlingen aus zwei Gräbern in der Gemeinde Rövershagen Krs. Rostock.”

Wilfried Steinmüller
trans. Judith Rosenthal

NOTES
1. Excerpt from the file Rep. BI V / 5 Nr. 326, VLA-G.
2. Excerpt from the file Rep. Bi Nr. 3069, VLA-G.
5. Excerpt from the file HA IX/11 Archiv ZUV 4 Akte 3, BStU.

**SIEMENSLAGER RAVENSBRÜCK**

The Siemens subcamp (Siemenslager) was located on a swampy rise above Lake Schwet, in the immediate vicinity of the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp and the Ravensbrück “production center” of the Siemens concern. On December 3, 1944, 1 detainees of the so-called Siemens detail were transferred to the Siemens subcamp. The history of the Siemens detail is the history of the Siemens subcamp as well as the Siemens & Halske (S&H) firm’s involvement with the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp.

At the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, following the failure of the Blitzkrieg, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler and Generalflugzeugmeister Erhard Milch arranged for the utilization of concentration camp prisoners to produce Luftwaffe armaments. Siemens quickly assumed a key role in the arrangement: out of the companies already using concentration camp detainees as labor at this time, Siemens had the largest share—at that time, over 1,500 of the 6,400 female detainees at Ravensbrück. In addition, Siemens at this initial phase had the responsibility for coordinating the use of female detainees as labor at other firms. The reason for this was that Siemens had full order books, but its Berlin factories were desperately short of labor. The Reich Air Ministry’s (RLM) interest in the expansion of production by its important supplier was such that Siemens could shift a large proportion of its investment costs to the Reich. The factory erected next door to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, built at the cost of the RLM, was ready for use. The factory buildings were then leased to Siemens, which in turn fitted out the buildings with the relevant machinery.

The project became a reality on June 8, 1942, when male and female prisoners from Ravensbrück constructed, from precast materials, the factory buildings next to the concentration camp. Production began in the factory on August 21, 1942, in one of the first buildings constructed. Adroit female detainees with finger dexterity and good eyesight were chosen for the production line. The women manufactured relays, microphones, toggle switches, and other electronic parts. The items were manufactured from precast parts in Berlin. All the products were destined for use by the Luftwaffe. A total of 20 buildings were erected over a period of time. With its “own Ravensbrück operation,” Siemens increased its production capacity of telephone terminals (WWFg), radios, building components (WWR), telegraphic equipment (WWT), and meters (WWM).

Records of the numbers of people in the Siemens detail are fragmentary and incomplete. In January 1945, Siemens used 2,307 prisoners, the largest number. In February 1945, 2,298 female concentration camp detainees, the biggest production detail of female prisoners, were still being used for labor by the Siemens complex.

The workplaces were fitted out with ergonomic facilities. They were adequately heated and lit because of the work required on the delicate material. Nevertheless, the work was very demanding and burdensome. The prisoners worked initially in 8-hour shifts and later in 12-hour shifts, day and night. The work required a high degree of concentration. In addition, there was the constant supervision and demands by Siemens employees and female SS guards. In cooperation with the SS, the factory management established a system, based on an assumed piecework rate of production, to measure an individual’s “learning” and production rates. For adequate or good performance, there were additional rations; for inadequate performance, as punishment, there was additional work or rations were withheld, or the detainees were subjected to a hierarchy of beatings, or they were reported to the SS. Notwithstanding the burdensome work, the prisoners feared being dismissed from the detail; it was considered a “disconnection” because those affected went back into the pool of “disposable” people who were allocated the most strenuous work, largely unprotected in the open air. By manipulating the account settlement statements, the prisoner-functionaries employed in the workshops and offices of the firm tried to support and protect their
fellow detainees. The extent and effectiveness of this sabotage, which is given a prominent account in survivors’ reports, are difficult to gauge. All that is known for certain is that Siemens was so satisfied with the detainees’ work that it used the Ravensbrück “production center” model, for example, at the Flossenbürg Graslitz and Zwodau subcamps.\footnote{10}

The main camp, in which the Siemens detail prisoners were originally quartered, had filled beyond capacity. The cumulative catastrophic overcrowding, together with typhoid and dysentery epidemics and general camp disorganization, resulted in the creation of the Siemens subcamp in the second half of 1944. Probably the firm expected a reduction in downtime from this camp, by shortening the period in which the more than 2,000 detainees marched to and from the camp. Also hoped for was an increase in control over the food supply.

Some 13 barracks, enclosed by an electric fence, were constructed between the factory and Lake Schwedt. The barracks functioned as lodgings, kitchen, dispensary, and washing facilities. Unlike the main camp, the lodgings consisted of a single, large room. There were no toilets. The latrine consisted of simple ditches with long boards across them. The women detainees found it particularly degrading when they had to relieve themselves under the gaze of the SS guards.\footnote{11} The lodgings are described as unheated, overcrowded, and stifling. Until the beginning of 1945, most of the detainees had to share their bunks. Bedding on the bunks was sacks of straw. There were approximately 250 to 300 prisoners per barracks. This was a marked contrast to the overcrowded main camp where, in many barracks, between 700 and 800 detainees were crowded together.\footnote{12}

The Siemens camp was under the command of SS-Hauptscharführer Grabow and SS-Oberaufseherin Holthöver. The head of the Kapos of the Siemens subcamp, Anna or Anni Vavak, acted as the unofficial camp elder (Lagerältester).\footnote{13} Some prisoners claim that Grabow beat them, while others report that they were “justly treated.” Many survivors hold him responsible for the fact that during their work-free periods they were required to transport peat to the camp for flowerbeds. It is said of Holthöver that she personally often beat detainees and represented the “old camp methods,” that is, the common practice of humiliating and mistreating the prisoners. The behavioral patterns created in the main camp were transferred to the Siemens subcamp with the results that the block elders (Blockältester) also often beat the detainees, and prisoner-functionaries of the so-called prominent block enjoyed privileges such as daily showers.\footnote{14} The detainees successfully maintained their cultural activities (thereby asserting themselves against the SS) in the Siemens camp. Reports mention theater performances, group singing, and New Year’s festivities.\footnote{15}

Overall, the transfer from the main camp represented only a small improvement in living conditions. The most significant was the food. Less was misappropriated from the kitchen in the Siemens subcamp than in the main camp. In the infirmary with some 20 beds, presumably with double occupancy, and in the face of a shortage of medicine and bandages, the detainees’ chief doctor, Dr. Court, and chief nurse, Countess zu D., could not provide adequate care for the sick. Seriously ill detainees were transferred back to the main camp. Yvonne Useldinger strikingly described those conditions in her diary—on a visit to the dentist in the main camp, she had to step over corpses. The Siemens subcamp itself supposedly had no deaths among the prisoners.\footnote{16}

Production decreased in the last few months of the war because of air-raid alarms and difficulties in the supply of energy and components for production. This resulted in production decreases and reductions in the size of the Siemens detail, which were dangerous for the prisoners because selections then took place. Elderly and “less productive” women were the main targets. The firm management was directly and decisively involved in determining who would be “disconnected” and transferred either to the main camp or to the youth camp Uckermark.\footnote{17} An additional life-threatening danger arose in the spring of 1945 for those “unproductive” detainees when a gas chamber at Ravensbrück commenced operation.\footnote{18}

The Siemens subcamp was probably evacuated on April 13 and 14, 1945. With the evacuation of the subcamp, the Siemens model project, its “own Ravensbrück production center,” came to an end. Male detainees of an “evacuation transport” from Mittelbau or Buchenwald then occupied the empty barracks.

Between 1946 and 1948 in Hamburg, the British occupying authorities conducted 7 “Ravensbrück Trials” against members of the SS camp and security personnel as well as against prisoner-functionaries of the women’s concentration camp. Only in 2 of the trials did the accused have a connection with Siemens’ use of detainees or the Siemens subcamp. In the first trial, lasting from December 5, 1946, to February 3, 1947 (Judge Advocate General [JAG] 225), Eugenia Skene, the block elder in the Siemens subcamp, was sentenced to more than 10 years’ imprisonment. On the other hand, the military tribunal in the 6th trial that took place between July 2, 1948, and July 21, 1948 (JAG 334), acquitted Christine Holthöver, the senior female guard at the Siemens subcamp, because of a lack of evidence. The French occupying authorities also prosecuted Ravensbrück SS personnel and prisoner-functionaries. Between 1946 and 1950, 11 trials were conducted in Reutlingen and Rastatt. Only the proceedings against Emmy Kowa and Ruth Schumann had a connection with Siemens. Kowa, a temporary guard in the Siemens factory, was sentenced on February 20, 1948, in Rastatt to 20 years’ imprisonment with hard labor. Schumann, a former Siemens employee, was acquitted on appeal. Under the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) and in the German Democratic Republic (DDR), a number of trials against Ravensbrück SS personnel were conducted. However, the trials did not meet the requirements of the rule of law. The accused were tried before a military tribunal. Most of the accused had neither legal representation nor translators, so the accused were not in a position to defend themselves. Later trials in the DDR in the 1960s were conducted in accordance with the requirements and under the supervision of the Ministry for State Security (MfS). They were mainly characterized by political opportunism and doubtful verdicts relating...
to the social behavior of the accused in the social milieu of the DDR. They should thus be seen as being politically motivated and as a means for securing power. The trials played neither a role in appraising nor explaining the National Socialist crimes committed in the Ravensbrück concentration camp.


The location of the SMAD files is unclear. They are most likely located in CAFSSRF and are probably inaccessible. The BStU holds the files of the DDR trials. Included in these files are numerous statements made by former SS female guards. These statements were made before 1950, so they are, like numerous other National Socialist documents, not codified the way such documents in later decades were. In 1959, the ZdL, now BA-L, conducted an exhaustive preliminary investigation into the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp (AR-Z 39/59), including the Siemens subcamp (AR-Z 39/59 SH). As there were no killings in the Siemens subcamp, the results of the investigations were not handed over to the state prosecutors. The holdings of the AS-M are apparently quite extensive. Regrettably, to a large extent the “unregistered files of the temporary archive” are not accessible for independent researchers. This includes the Ravensbrück production center’s monthly “production center reports,” including information about the genesis of the use of detainees and cooperation between management and the SS and the Siemens subcamp. Researchers are therefore forced to rely on state archives. In addition to the already mentioned trial documents, the BA-B has microfilmed records of the Deutsche Bank. Deutsche Bank was Siemens’s banker, and representatives of the bank sat on the board of directors of S&H. The detailed information kept by the bank and now in the BA contains valuable information on the origins and development of the use of Ravensbrück detainees by Siemens. Also kept in the BA are microfilms of documents seized by the OMGUS. These documents deal with the production of armaments by Siemens. The original documents are held by NARA. Additional extensive collections dealing with armaments and economic administration are held in the BA-MA. Reports by former, mostly Communist, detainees of the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp, which are unrelated to judicial proceedings, are kept at a number of locations. The reports deal mostly with issues of solidarity and resistance. They are found at the AG-R, DÖW, as well as in the former BPASED-B(O), which is now part of LA-B. This latter archive keeps in particular the records of Bruno Baums, a former concentration camp prisoner. The Compensation Treuhand GmbH has collected other important records. Dating from the beginning of the 1960s, the records concern compensation claims by Jewish survivors against large German companies. As a result of the claims, the German companies made available their management files. Excerpts from these files can be found in the preliminary investigations conducted by the ZdL. Probably the most valuable collection of documents is the record group M32 in YVA. However, the author was not granted access to those records on the basis that they contained personal confidential information. Other sources have been quoted in the text. In many of the publications of survivors of Ravensbrück, the Siemens subcamp plays a role as an important provider of work in the main Ravensbrück camp. A drawing of the Siemenslager by prisoner Astrid Petersen Blumensaad is reproduced in Sigrid Jacobit, “Arbeitsalltag Ravensbrück: Aus der Lebensbeschreibung von Rita Sprengel, Häftling Nr. 12867,” in *Verfolgung, Alltag, Widerstand, Brandenburg in der NS-Zeit, Studien und Dokumente*, ed. Dietrich Eichholtz (Berlin, 1993), pp. 303–321. Prisoner-functionaries have published reports about their activities with Siemens, such as Margaret Buber-Neumann, *Als Gefangene bei Stalin und Hitler: Ein Welt im Dunkel* (1958; repr., Frankfurt am Main, 1993); or Rita Sprengel, *Im Schatten der eisernen Pforte* (Berlin [East], 1949); and *Der rote Faden: Lebenserinnerungen; Ostpreussen, Weimarer Republik, Ravensbrück, DDR, Die Wende, ed. Sigrid Jacobit* (Berlin, 1994); as well as Maria Montuoro, “Schicht ‘B’,” *Doh 3* (187): 221–230, a worker on the production line.

Records of the trials are kept at AG-R and PRO.

Rolf Schmolling

trans. Stephen Pallavicini

**VOLUME I: PART B**
NOTES:


5. On the timing of the start of construction, see Schreiben SS-OGruF Pohl and RFSS Himmels, October 20, 1942 Betr.: Herstellung von Nachrichtengeräten in den KL, BA-B, NS19/968; on the construction of the factory, see Vernehmungsniederschriften Rudolf Karl August Kn., September NS19/968; on the start of production, see ZdL, Frauenkonzentrationslager Ravensbrück: Eine Gesamtdarstellung, SH5, S. 38ff; as well as AG-R, RA V/1, Nr. 28, RA Bd. 14, Arbeitsvereinbarungen FKL Ravenbrück.


8. See map “Geplante Verlegungsstellen von S&H und zugeh. Ges. (ohne TB 1 Stand Anfang April 44)” aus Referat Dir. Leifer, Aktenvermerk S&H AG Dr. Lohse, April 15, 1940.

9. All numbers from NARA, RG260, Box 173. For the time before, see statements of Oberkapo Anna Vavak of the Siemens commando. See Anna Vavak, “Siemens & Halske AG im Frauenkonzentrationslager Ravensbrück,” ZdL, the “Monatsberichte der Fertigungsstelle Ravensbrück,” in AS-M are not available for research. See Feldenkirchen, Siemens, p. 552.


13. On Grabow and Hohlhöver see ZdL, Gesamtdarstellung FKL Ravensbrück, p. 133.


STARGARD IN POMMERN

About 40 kilometers (25 miles) southeast of Stettin (Szceze- cin), a subcamp attached to Ravensbrück was created in Star- gard in Pommern (later Stargard Szczecinski, Poland). Created in mid-1943, a contingent of both male and female inmates was deported to the Stargard camp from both the Flossenbürg and Ravensbrück main camps. The Stargard subcamp was created to supply cheap labor to the Gerätewerk Pommern GmbH in Stargard. The introduction of concentration camp inmates from Ravensbrück and other camps into the armaments manufacturing workforce stemmed from an agreement forged between the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) and the administration of the armaments firms. Inmates were provided to the firms at a low, per- day “price” paid by the firms to the WVHA.

No further information about the subcamp at Stargard, including the number of inmates, camp guards, commandant, living and working conditions, or postwar trials, is available. The inmates were evacuated from Stargard to the main Ravensbrück camp in early 1945. The further fate of the Stargard inmates is unknown.

SOURCES There are few primary or secondary sources on the Stargard in Pommern subcamp of Ravensbrück. For a brief outline of the camp, including opening and closing dates, kind of
The village of Steinhöring is situated east of Munich. In the summer of 1944, it became a headquarters of the SS organization Lebensborn e.V., which was established by Heinrich Himmler on December 12, 1935. “Lebensborn” was part of National Socialist ideology: The SS authorities supported German women to deliver babies. They established so-called Lebensborn homes (Lebensbornheime) where—in most cases, unmarried—women and girls could deliver their babies. The first Lebensborn home was “Haus Hochland” in Steinhöring, which was built in September 1936. About two-thirds of the approximately 1,400 children at Steinhöring had mothers who were unmarried.

The first Lebensborn headquarters was located in Berlin, but it was transferred to Munich in 1938. On July 11, July 12, and July 13, 1944, Allied air strikes destroyed the buildings of the Lebensborn in Munich. The SS started the evacuation to Steinhöring in July 1944 and completed the evacuation on September 20, 1944.

Steinhöring was a subcamp in the broadest sense, because the SS authorities allowed the female prisoners to walk around. In addition, the prisoners wore civilian clothes. There was a maximum of 24 female prisoners from the Ravensbrück concentration camp and about 27 male prisoners from the Dachau concentration camp. SS authorities counted 27 male prisoners in Steinhöring on April 3, 1945, and 24 female prisoners were counted by Allied authorities after the liberation on May 3, 1945. Most of the female prisoners were Jehovah’s Witnesses and worked between 1943 and 1945 at the Lebensborn e.V. The male prisoners were insuffi cient labor for harvesting the 608 hectares (1,502 acres) that were under cultivation—220.75 hectares (545.5 acres) of grain, 315.25 hectares (779 acres) of root crops, and 60 kilometers (37.3 miles) from the city of Fürstenberg-Havel in Mecklenburg. Servants and day laborers worked on his manor, and a welder from France arrived as prisoners in Steinhöring.

A small SS unit controlled the whole area, while Dr. Gregor Ehner led the maternity clinic, together with one hospital matron and fi ve or six nurses. The SS deported the male prisoners from Steinhöring to Dachau on April 28, 1945, and left Steinhöring one day later. In contrast, the female prisoners were asked by the hospital matron to stay and help with the babies even after the liberation; as a result, most of the female prisoners left Steinhöring two months after the end of the war.

SOURCES

Primary sources for the Steinhöring subcamp of Ravensbrück may be found at AG-R.

Christine Schmidt van der Zanden

NOTE
1. See BA-L, ZdL, fi les IV 410 (F) AR 2629/7 and IV 409 AR-Z 99/70.
43 hectares (106.3 acres) of oil and fiber plants capable of being woven, and 29 hectares (71.7 acres) of forage crops. Von Armin must have had good connections directly to the SS or via the offices and people of the Wehrmacht. This is the only way that he could have ensured that detainees from the Zichow subcamp could be made available for work at his manors in a time of severe labor shortage where the priority lists for the use of detainees, POWs, and forced laborers rapidly changed.

The exact date when the Ravensbrück concentration camp prisoners arrived at Zichow cannot be determined. All that is certain is that at the beginning of 1944, at the commencement of the harvest, 70 female prisoners were assigned to von Armin’s manor. They were housed in a brick building with iron bars over the windows, a former storehouse, not far from the manor house. Inside, there was a lounge and bedroom, both 147 square meters (176 square yards). Both rooms were drafty and unheated. The detainees’ kitchen is said to have been located in the cellar of the farm building opposite the storehouse. The Zichow subcamp closed, and the detainees were transported back to Ravensbrück on February 3, 1945.3

The population of the detachment fluctuated during the seven months of its existence, as the prisoners were rotated several times. This was necessary because not all of the women were able to do the heavy farmwork, especially since they had been weakened by a long period of detention. Those who could not meet the demands were promptly returned to the main camp. On December 16, 1944, for reasons that are not fully clear but possibly because there was less work, a transport of 28 women left the subcamp in the direction of Ravensbrück. It is possible to identify approximately 100 prisoners who for either a shorter or longer period were brought to Zichow as forced laborers. The Ravensbrück concentration camp administered Zichow from the moment it opened to its closure.

All the women came from Germany, except for one Polish woman. The youngest was 18 and the oldest 43; 35 of the women were between the ages of 22 and 24. They all wore a red triangle, so Gestapo officials had classified them as political detainees. The reasons for their arrest have not been clearly determined, but it is certain that some had been sent to the concentration camp for “adulterous relations” with foreign forced laborers.

The leader of an SS detachment was in control of the Zichow subcamp. He maintained a line of communication to the main camp and organized matters relating to the detainees, including exchanging detainees, basic medical care, clothes, mail, and recommendations for awards. SS men guarded the camp. At least three female guards, sent from Ravensbrück, were present and ensured that the detachment’s work was done without any trouble.

The women primarily worked in the field from Monday to Saturday, regardless of the weather. By November they had harvested hay, grain, rapeseed, flax, root crops, as well as vegetables. After that they loaded sugar beets, cabbage, straw, and potatoes. Sick detainees and those incapable of doing this work worked inside, mostly in the kitchen. Two prisoners had special functions, one in the kitchen and the other doing things outside the camp. The detainees were encouraged to exceed work norms by means of an award system. The detainees were given award cards valued at either 1 or 2 Reichsmark (RM), which, among other things, they could exchange for stamps. Conversely, the prisoners were punished if, in the opinion of a supervisor, they had not worked hard enough or had not carried out an instruction. In September 1944, two women were not given lunch for four days.

The heavy work in the heavy clay Uckermark soil, for which the detainees had inadequate clothing and footwear, produced many colds and flu, rheumatic pains, stomach and intestinal problems, boils and abscesses, and abdominal complaints. The Zichow subcamp did not have an infirmary. A dentist in Gramzow, 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) away, dealt with minor dental problems—but only after the detachment leader had spoken with the head of the dental unit in the Ravensbrück main camp and after a transfer pass was presented. The detainees’ mail was sent by the detachment leader to be checked in Ravensbrück, from where the mail was sent out.

On October 7, 1944, three women attempted to escape after they had succeeded in taking a key from one of the female guards. Their absence was discovered the following day during morning roll call. They were discovered that morning hiding in an adjacent barn where Russian POWs were held. The following day the three women were returned to Ravensbrück. On October 21, 1944, the manor received replacement laborers.

SOURCES The history and purpose of the Zichow subcamp were first mentioned by Simone Steppan and Erika Schwarz in BWPF 20 (2003): 30–42. A research project of the MGR/SBG, from January 2000 to January 2001, by A. Meyer, E. Schwarz, and S. Steppan, began to collect further information about the Zichow subcamp.

The most important source on the Zichow subcamp is a file on the camp’s internal organization, which is located in the collection of AG-R. The BLHA holds other documents on the manor.

Erkka Schwarz
trans. Stephen Pallavicine

NOTES
1. Details about the internal operations of the subcamp are found in surviving documents in the Sammlungen AG-R/SBG, Bd. 45, Bericht 1030.
2. Further information, in particular about the manor, can be found in BLHA, Rept. 37, Zichow.
3. See BLHA, Ber. 37 (Rept. 37), Zichow, Nr. 69, n.p.
6. See BLHA, Bericht 37, Zichow, Nr. 378, pp. 72–95.