INTRODUCTION TO THE YOUTH CAMPS

The idea of establishing a separate prevention institution (Be-wahranstalt) or assembly camp (Sammellager) for the “difficult or impossible to educate” youth, who had become noticed because of their stubborn and deviant behavior, was not new. From the mid-1920s, youth welfare workers, lawyers, medical practitioners, psychiatrists, and adherents of the “racial hygiene” movement had been demanding such institutions to deal with the high level of care (and thus expense) for such youths. Without any further education, they would be held for an indefinite period of time in such institutions with their labor being exploited. Those advocating such a policy were not successful during the Weimar Republic, but this changed from 1933 with the assumption of power by the National Socialists and the establishment of the concentration camp system.

A series of decrees and orders from 1937 set the legal and institutional basis for the struggle against youth degeneration. A decree dated October 14, 1937, on “preventive criminal measures” established what was regarded as “asocial behavior,” which was “someone who acts against the community, even if such actions were not criminal, but showed that he or she did not want to be part of the community.” This decree formed the basis for the persecution of anyone who deviated from National Socialist norms and ideals. In 1938, there followed a further series of decrees and regulations that dealt with the treatment of asocials and called for the “protective custody” of whole families as well as suggesting the registration and police surveillance of asocials.

Following a circular decree by the Reich Ministry of the Interior (RMdI) on May 24, 1939, the Reich Center for Combating Youth Criminality (Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung der Jugendkriminalität) was established as a department of the Reich Criminal Police Office (Reichskriminalpolizeiamt, RKPA). This authority was tasked with the police surveillance of youths and the power to use force, including sending youths to closed reform institutes. Later, it would be in charge of the “police youth protection camps” (polizeiliche Jugendschutzlager). In actuality, they were concentration camps for youths. On December 22, 1939, at a conference on “degenerate youth,” Reinhard Heydrich demanded the establishment of reform camps for youths (Jugenderziehungs-lagern). This demand was supported in the following months by Hermann Göring and Heinrich Himmler. On June 26, 1940, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA) issued a circular announcing that the confinement of youths to police youth protective custody camps could begin within a short period of time. In the end, three such camps opened: Moringen (for boys) in August 1940, Uckermark (for girls) in June 1942, and Litzmannstadt (for Polish juveniles) in December 1942. All remained in operation almost until the end of the war.

Youths were admitted to the Jugendschutzlager on racial, religious, or political grounds. They included the so-called Hamburg Swing Youth (Swing-Jugend), who were accused of establishing a dangerous clique even though they only wanted to listen to jazz, then regarded as un-German, and had formed their own subcultures to do so. The authorities also confined homosexuals, Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), Jews, and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Youths in the camps were subjected to military drill, euphemistically termed “community training” (Gemeinschaftserziehung). The stated aim was character education, focusing on cleanliness, order, punctuality, discipline, and above all, work. The inmates worked on agricultural estates, at armaments
firms, and at workshops of various sorts. Living arrangements were primitive, the food and clothing inadequate, and the punishments severe. Death rates were not as high as in some of the adult concentration camps, but prisoners did die in significant numbers.

**SOURCES** Sources on the youth protection camps can be found in the individual camp entries.

Jürgen Harder

**NOTE**

Between December 1, 1942, and January 18, 1945, the Reich Criminal Police Office (RKPA; also designated the Reich Security Main Office [RSHA], Office V) operated a camp for Polish juveniles inside the Łódź ghetto. Called the Polish Youth Custody Camp of the Security Police in Litzmannstadt (Polen-Jugendverwahrlager der Sicherheitspolizei in Litzmannstadt), it was administratively related to the German “youth protection camps” (Jugendschutzlager) at Moringen and Uckermark. Directed by the Criminal Police (Kripo), it deployed forced labor for the SS-Business Administration Main Office's (WVHA) Office Group D (Inspectorate of Concentration Camps, IKL). In 1969, the International Tracing Service (ITS) classified the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager as a concentration camp.

Two months after the German invasion of Poland, the RSHA inaugurated an arrest campaign against juvenile delinquents. To this end, RKPA head Arthur Nebe called for the establishment of Jugendschutzlager in the Old Reich and the newly incorporated territories of Poland. Although he ordered the Kriminalpolizeistelle Lodsch (effective April 11, 1940, the Germans renamed the city Litzmannstadt) to establish a Polish youth camp on April 1, 1940, his order took more than two years to implement. The delay was partly attributable to the imposition of German administration in the annexed territories, particularly in the welfare authorities, but space accommodation for the juveniles also played a role. Litzmannstadt's Kripo and mayor’s offices repeatedly complained about rising youth crime in 1940 and 1941 but only obliquely connected the Polish children's begging, stealing, and smuggling (especially into the Łódź ghetto) to the underlying Nazi policies. Among these policies were the forced labor drafts and mass arrests of Polish adults and the instability caused by the “racial” selection and deportation to the General Government of Poles, respectively, by the SS-Race and Settlement Main Office (RSHA) Aussenstelle Litzmannstadt and the RSHA Umwandererzentralstelle Posen. In situating the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager in the ghetto, the Kripo followed the precedent set by the “Gypsy” camp’s (Zigennerlager) formation inside the Łódź ghetto between October 1941 and January 1942.

Although the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager was established on the disingenuous pretext of combating juvenile crime, the children's case files reflected the Kripo's persecution of “asocials” and outcasts elsewhere and its solution of social problems through policing. Grounds for confinement included membership in the Jehovah’s Witnesses and listening to illegal radio transmissions. Many children were orphans or lacked parental supervision because one parent was held in another camp or performed forced labor, while the other parent was deceased. Some young Auschwitz prisoners were transferred to Litzmannstadt.

Erected in the Marysin district inside the northeast quadrant of the Łódź ghetto at Ulica Przemysłowa 72, the compound consisted of two city blocks surrounded by a high barbed-wire fence and encompassed a section of the New Jewish Cemetery. Construction commenced on September 30, 1942. The Marysin district featured residences for privileged Jews, including ghetto eldest (Ältester) Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, and small agricultural plots essential for the ghetto's subsistence. As was the case with the Gypsy camp, Jewish laborers seem to have erected the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager. On November 24, 1942, the ghetto chronicler, Dr. Oscar Singer, observed, “The construction of a Polish camp for youth in Marysin continues at a swift tempo.” A few Jewish skilled workers served as the camp's trade school instructors. The ghetto's inhabitants called the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager the “Polish” (Polen-) or “Kripo camp” (Kripolager).

Kripo officials, SS, and ethnic Germans (Volksdeutschen) from the Reichsgau Wartheland guarded Litzmannstadt. On January 1, 1943, the commandant, Kripo official, and SS-Sturmbannführer Karl Ehrlich, issued the Litzmannstadt camp order (Lagerordnung). The IKL's regulations, it prescribed punishments including beatings with wooden canes or rubber truncheons for offenses such as speaking Polish. The inmates were subjected to paramilitary discipline similar to that found in IKL camps, like roll calls. The females' camp leader was Eugenie Pohl, a 19-year-old Łódź native who changed her Polish name (Genowefa Pol) after signing the German National List (Volksliste). Another Łódź native, Isolda (Sydomia) Bayer, administered the female section.

Called dependents or pupils (Zöglinge), the prisoners originally comprised gentiles aged 12 to 16 from the newly incorporated territories. When the Youth Welfare Offices (Jugendämter) in Wartheland, Ostoberschlesien, Danzig-West Preussen, and elsewhere dispatched fewer youth than
anticipated, the Kripo reduced the confinement age to 8 in order to enlarge Litzmannstadt’s camp population. Some inmates were as young as 4 years old. The first group arrived at the camp on December 11, 1942. Litzmannstadt held approximately 1,000 inmates per month. For each inmate, the administration produced an index card with mug shot and periodic conduct (Führung) reviews. The Kripo divided the Zöglinge into three levels (Stufen): (1) newcomers, (2) reformables, and (3) incorrigibles. Some males wore military uniforms, while females had gray dresses. The inmates’ labor consisted mostly of manufacturing straw shoes as well as cartridge belts for the German army.

Because the RSHA deemed undesirable the mixture of Polish and German youth, the SS-RuSHA Litzmannstadt Aussenstelle received the order to screen the camp “racially,” starting with the youngest Zöglinge. The RuSHA chief, SS-Gruppenführer Otto Hofmann, inspected the Litzmannstadt camp in the spring of 1943. The inmates found “racially valuable” were dispatched to Litzmannstadt’s Germanization camp at Ulica Sporna 73.

Between May 1943 and January 1945, Litzmannstadt recorded 77 deaths, including one shooting. During the period from September 1943 to November 1944 (except October 1944), inmates were hospitalized for scabies (497 cases), tuberculosis (216), trachoma (116), and mumps (106). They also suffered numerous work-related injuries and had poor dental care. In December 1943 and January 1944, a louse-borne typhus epidemic (Fleckfieber or Flecktyphus) resulted in the hospitalization of over one-third of the camp’s population (378 cases) during these months. Although the camp had an infirmary, the authorities quarantined over 200 typhus-infected children at the ghetto’s infectious disease hospital at Ulica Dworska. On December 21, 1943, Rumkowski was ordered to evacuate 100 Jewish patients from the hospital. This order imposed a burden, Singer wrote, because typhus had only recently been contained in the ghetto and the evacuated patients’ health remained in jeopardy. Under the care of Czech Jewish pediatrician Dr. Emil Vogl, most of the Polish patients recovered, and the ward was closed on March 1, 1944.

According to ITS, Dzierżaźnia and Tuchingen (Tuszyn) were Litzmannstadt subcamps. An agricultural estate approximately 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) from Łódź, Dzierżaźnia opened on January 12, 1943, and closed on July 31, 1944. Under Lagerleiter and police official Hans Heinrich Fuge, the 200 female prisoners raised food to support the main camp. Between August 16, 1943, and March 28, 1944, the Umwan derzentralstelle Posen put Tuchingen, a three-story building, “at the [youth camp’s] disposal” (zur Verfügung).

Four and a half months after the deportation of the Łódź ghetto’s inhabitants to Auschwitz, where the majority were murdered, the Germans abandoned the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager during the Red Army’s advance on January 17–18, 1945. The inmates were not evacuated. Distantly witnessing the destruction of the Radogoszcz prison, Łódź inmate Apolonia Beda “feared that they [the Germans] would come back and burn us, but they had actually gone.” Soon afterward Łódź resident Janina Rutakoperkiewicz saw the children scavenging for food outside the camp.
In 1948, the United States sentenced Otto Hofmann to 25 years in the “RuSHA” case at Nuremberg. After 1945, Eugenie Pohl reverted to her Polish name and became a kindergarten teacher in Łódź. In 1974, a Polish court sentenced her to 25 years’ imprisonment.


On RuSHA Aussenstellen Litzmannstadt, see Isabelle Heinemann, “Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut”: Das Rasse- und Siedlungsunternehmen der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003).

Primary sources for this camp begin with USHMM, RG-05.008M, Stadtverwaltung Litzmannstadt Records, Reel 7, File 36, Stadtverwaltung Litzmannstadt, Jugendamt, “Massnahmen gegen die Verwahrlosung der polnischen Jugend,” 1940–1944, reproduced from APL. Additional relevant holdings at USHMM include RG-55.003*55, Aleksander Tytus Kulisiewicz Litzmannstadt camp music collection, and RG-55.005*15, Piotr Hyszko Litzmannstadt camp poetry collection; and the Łódź Ghetto Tageschronik in RG 15.083 M, APL, Przełożony Starzenstwa Żydów w Getcie Łódzim, Reel 253, sygn. 1081–1086; Reel 254, sygn. 1087–1088. The published and translated version of the chronicle Lucjan Dobroszycki, ed., *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto, 1941–1944*, trans. Richard Lurie et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), selectively reproduces references to the Polen-Jugendverwahrler. Some 45 photographs of the youth camp, including the Dzierżążnia and Tuchingen subcamps, are found in USHMMPA, 200.7035, Litzmannstadt (Jugend- schutzlager). Witkowski and Hrabar reproduce and cite German documents and Polish testimonies, the originals of which may be found in AK-IPN, APL, and WAP-By. On Hofmann and on the SS-WVHA’s relationship to the Polen- Jugendverwahrler, see *TWC*, vols. 4–5. The Lernen aus der Geschichte Web site reproduces Polish testimony, including the statements of Apolonia Beda and Janina Ruta- Koperkiewicz. A prisoner memoir is Tadeusz Rzniński, *Obć 327 (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łodzi, 1971).*

**NOTES**


11. USHMM, 200.7035 WS # 00849; also Tadeusz Raźniewski, Cień dzieci (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódź, 1971), p. 120.


15. USHMM, 200.7035 WS # 00844, 00845, 00848, 00849, 15002, 15006, 17362.


18. USHMM, 200.7035 WS # 02378.


24. TWC, 5:160, 166.

YOUTH PROTECTION CAMP MORINGEN

In the autumn of 1940, at the initiative of Chief of the Security Police and the SD Reinhard Heydrich, a concentration camp for male youths between the ages of 16 and 21 was opened in the buildings of the state workhouse (Lan-derwerk) in Moringen near Göttingen. The first youths were interned in August after having been classified by state institutions for youth, the Reichskriminalpolizei, and welfare practitioners for closed corrective training as “burdensome hereditary criminals” (erblich kriminell belastet) or “ethically and morally degenerate” (sittlich und moralisch verzweifelt).

The Jugendkonzentrationslager in Moringen was the first of the so-called youth protection camps (Jugendschutzlager), which were generally welcomed by the social welfare authorities. Formerly the site of an early Nazi men’s camp in 1933 and an early women’s camp from 1933 to 1938, the Moringen Jugendschutzlager was administratively and conceptually related to similar camps established in 1942 for females at Uckermark and for Poles at Litzmannstadt (Łódź). The Reich Criminal Police Office (Reichskriminalpolizeizentamt, RKPA) confined male youths to Moringen after studying their files. Applications to send such youths to the camp were initially made by the State Youth Offices and later by the Criminal Police (Kripo), by the Hitler Youth leadership, and by the protective courts and other judicial authorities. The applications constantly referred to asocial behavior or criminal tendencies. The overwhelming majority were said to be incapable of “readmission to the national community” (Wiedereingliederung in die Volksgemeinschaft). The terms used to justify admission to the camps were deliberately vague and allowed the punishment of any type of behavior that deviated from the norm, as well as allowing the expanded persecution of youths who hitherto had not been seized.

Under the command of SS-Sturmbannführer und Kriminallrat Karl Dieter, the guards from the SS-Totenkopf (Death’s Head), and “trainers” (Erzieher) from the Waffen-SS, the Moringen youths were subjected to military drill, euphemistically termed “community training” (Gemeinschaftserzie-bung). The stated aim was character education, focusing on cleanliness, order, punctuality, discipline, and above all, work.

The camp organization corresponded to that established for concentration camps for adults. The inmates were divided into various blocks, each of which was supervised by an SS
Blockführer, as well as block elders and camp elders, who were chosen from among those interned. These prisoner-functionaries had a similar function to Kapos in the large concentration camps. Operating at the behest of the SS, they reported infringements against camp regulations and ensured that the orders of the camp personnel were carried out.

Everyday life in the camp was planned to the minute. During the summer, the day began at 5:15 A.M. and in winter at 5:45 A.M. The hard physical labor lasted for more than 10 hours; the SS Erzieher permanently controlled, supervised, and committed arbitrary acts of violence against the prisoners. The slightest infringement of the rules, such as a mistake while making beds (Bettenbauen), alleged loafing during work, and many other infringements led to draconian punishments. Authorized and unauthorized punishments included the withdrawal of mail privileges; the order to stand while eating; the withholding of meals; sleeping on a “hard bed” (Harte Lager—removal of the mattress so that the prisoner slept on the wooden boards); standing at attention; performing penal exercises (often to the point of total physical collapse); placement under arrest (with only bread and water, with a full meal every third day); and being beaten with a cudgel.

At the end of 1941, the Criminal-Biological Institute of the Security Police (Kriminalbiologische Institut der Sicherheitspolizei, KBI), whose tasks included the observation of “community alien youths” (jugendliche Gemeinschaftsfremde), was incorporated into the RKPA. It was headed by Dr. Robert Ritter, who promptly established a department of KBI inside the Moringen youth concentration camp. He used the camp to continue his studies, begun in the 1930s, to develop a preventive “racial hygienic campaign against criminals,” which amounted to experiments and selections conducted on the youths based on pseudoscientific criminal and hereditary theories. A letter from the RKPA dated June 24, 1942, to the Moringen and Uckermark youth concentration camps as well as to the Ravensbrück women’s concentration camp defined the purpose of the youth concentration camp as follows: “[to] examine the inmates for criminal-biological traits, to support those who can still be members of the community so that they can take their place in the national community while holding those who are uneducable until their final accommodation elsewhere, while using their labor.” This “final accommodation elsewhere” (endgültigen anderweitigen Unterbringung) could mean deportation and murder in one of the death camps, the fate of 21 Sinti (Gypsies) on March 24, 1943.

Ritter developed a classification system to examine and sort the youths into different “human types” (Menschenarten): the youths were divided among various blocks based upon their genealogical, moral, and medical characteristics. At Moringen, the newly admitted inmates were allocated to the so-called observation block (Beobachtungshilf, or B-block). Held for six months until a final “determination” by Ritter or his assistant of many years, Eva Justin, they were allocated to a block depending upon KBI’s expectation of success in their training and the resultant social prognosis. The prisoners were dispatched to the blocks for incompetents (Untauglichen, U-block), troublemakers (Störer, S-block), total failures (Dauerzweiger, D-block), occasional failures (Gelegenheitszweiger, G-block), questionably educable (fraglich Erziehungsfähigen, F-block), educable (Erziehungsfähigen, E-block), and the political opponents, Stapo-block (Staatspolizei, or ST-block).

The Stapo-block was strictly separated from the others. It held youths who had been classified by the police authorities as political opponents, including foreign youths from countries such as Norway and Luxembourg, parisiens from Slovenia, and members of Hamburg’s Swing Youth. The prisoners were mostly admitted to this block on the basis of “protective custody” orders issued by the Gestapo. They were regarded by the police authorities as extremely dangerous to the community. Consequently, they were subjected to an especially strict training and security regime.

The fate of the youths depended on the blocks to which they were allocated. The blocks determined the inmates’ everyday life and formed the basis for their later transfer to the Reichsarbeitsdienst (Reich Labor Service, RAD) and Wehrmacht units or, if there was a negative assessment, to the asylums or to death camps.

Ritter’s criminal and hereditary biological assessment had severe consequences for those who survived the physical and psychological terror of the camp. Many of the youths interned in Moringen were forcibly sterilized at the request of the criminal biologists.

The center point of everyday life in the camp was the ceaseless exploitation of the inmates’ labor with completely inadequate sustenance or medical care. For breakfast there was a little bread with jam and a cup of ersatz coffee. At midday and in the evening, the meal was mostly a thin watery soup with cabbage, potatoes, or beets. Meat was a rarity.

Initially, the inmates’ sustenance was restricted to the minimum necessary to maintain their work strength. Later it did not even suffice for this. As a consequence of malnutrition, at least four youths died, with the result being that the SS-Lagerarzt was forced to demand an improvement in April 1942; otherwise, there would be more deaths. However, the food situation changed so little that illnesses, hunger, and malnutrition remained the inmates’ constant companions.

The daily 10 hours’ forced labor regimen was regarded by the detaining authorities as a particularly valuable education method for the growing boys, even though it imposed the most difficult physical trials, monotony, and permanent threat of punishment. The youths were deployed in labor detachments both inside and outside the Moringen camp. In the camp itself, there were a number of workshops such as a saddlery, a weaving mill, a knitting mill, and machines to glue paper bags, as well as tailor, bookbinding, and paint shops. Some of the prisoners worked under SS supervision and for piece wages offered by the companies Götting Leineweber GmbH, Papiersackfabrik Alfred Rockenfeller, and Jute-Spinnerei und Binärfarbenfabrik August Greve KG. They manufactured overalls, sheets, and hand towels; glued to-
geather cement bags; sorted string; and produced cartridge holders and other armaments products for the Wehrmacht. Other inmates worked on farms in the area and at harvest time were sent to work in the sugar mill at Nörtchen-Hardenberg.

The majority of the youths worked in labor detachments that were especially notorious for their physical work. They dug trenches to lay cables for the Reichspost, worked on the nearby Leine River to regulate its flow, and on the run carried dug trenches to lay cables for the Reichspost, worked on the that were especially notorious for their physical work. They

Hardenberg.

land Cementfabrik Hardegsen AG. The SS used other prisoners in quarries or on construction sites for the Reichsbahn and the Reichsbahn.

The SS extracted the most profit from the youths when they worked in armaments industries, which paid bonus and wages to the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA). The prisoners never received their wages or bonuses. Inmates from the Moringen camp worked as slaves in the Heeresmunitionsanstalt (Muna), a former salt mine situated about 15 kilometers (9.3 miles) from the camp in Volpriehausen and in the workshops of the Piller company, which opened a branch factory in Moringen on October 1, 1942, with the express purpose of using the camp's labor. According to historian Hans Hesse, the Moringen workhouse director, Hugo Krack, while performing a wartime assignment, informed Piller of the youth camp's labor sources.2

Before its dissolution on April 9, 1945, when the U.S. Army marched into Moringen, around 1,500 male youths passed through the camp. At least 56 youths died in the camp as a result of the inhuma living conditions or were shot while working in the labor detachments or while trying to escape. To this number should be added those who contracted tuberculosis and were transferred to the tuberculosis institute at Benninghausen, where many of them died. Others were transferred to the death camps or the asylums, where they fell victim to systematic mass murder and euthanasia measures. Even when the remaining prisoners were sent on the death marches, they were murdered by the SS guards when they could go no further due to exhaustion and illness. One can assume that at least 10 percent of the inmates in the youth concentration camp died while in camp or as a result of the period spent in the camp.


YOUTH PROTECTION CAMP UCKERMARK

Intended to hold young women ages 16 to 19, and later women up to age 21, the Uckermark youth protection camp (Jugendschutzlager) opened as the first concentration camp for young females in June 1942. Since the Moringen Jugendenschutzlager

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opened in August 1940, the SS had urged leading officials in the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt (RKPA) to establish a comparable site for females. Like Moringen and the Polen-Jugendverwahrlager Litzmannstadt, the Kriminalpolizei (Criminal Police) directed Uckermark, but its forced labor fell under the jurisdiction of the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL) in the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WHVA). Like Moringen, Uckermark’s inmates, called “pupils” (Zöglinge), were classified as criminals due to sexual promiscuity, membership in the “Swing Youth” (Swing-Jugend), relationships with prisoners of war (POWs) or “non-Aryans,” refusal to work in arms production, or political opposition. There were also inmates whom the Nazis deemed “racially inferior,” such as Jews and Gypsies (Sinti and Roma). Many Zöglinge were dispatched to Uckermark from “asylums” and juvenile institutions. Some prisoners were Slovenian.

In mid-May 1942, the SS-Kriminalrätin Lotte Toberentz became Uckermark’s commandant, with staff drawn from Ravensbrück. Initially, Uckermark had only 2 accommodation barracks, one for Zöglinge and the other for female “educators.” Male prisoners from Ravensbrück completed a new barracks before the arrival of each additional transport. The first group of prisoners consisted of about 10 females. By August 1942 there were four blocks for approximately 200 Zöglinge. By early 1945, there were around 17 barracks holding 1,200 prisoners.

The new arrivals were sent first to Ravensbrück, not Uckermark, where they underwent a demeaning admission procedure. Stripped naked, they surrendered personal belongings, and their hair was shorn. Following a cold shower, they were examined by SS doctors, fingerprinted, photographed, issued prisoner clothing, and introduced to camp procedures. A few days after this “introduction,” the young girls were transferred to Uckermark.

As in Moringen, the admission criteria were based upon the obscure criminal-biological theories of Dr. Robert Ritter and his assistant, Dr. Eva Justin, of the Kriminalbiologische Institute (KBI). KBI ascertained the young prisoners’ alleged “criminal propensities” and “inherited inferiority” and correspondingly assigned them to different blocks after six months’ observation. Although Uckermark’s block system was not as elaborate as Moringen’s, each block had its own corresponding “educational” methods. Comparatively few were admitted to the higher, “educable” blocks, while most were dispatched to the lower and middle blocks for the “questionably educable” or “hopeless” Zöglinge. A special block for Gestapo prisoners and partisans’ children was isolated from the others.

According to Commandant Toberentz, an essential reason for the differentiated treatment of female juveniles concerned their alleged proclivity for sexual promiscuity. This assessment about the female asocials’ special “nature” reflected welfare administrators’ attitudes dating back to Imperial Germany, when Zöglinge were consigned to workhouses for “unseemly” behavior. Euphemistically, the authorities, such as Paul Werner from RKPA, described youth forced labor as fundamentally educational.

Constant torment and hard labor marked daily life. The day began at 5:00 A.M. After a cold shower and clad in under- wear, the prisoners went barefoot to “early sport,” regardless of season. After dressing, they made their beds, which consisted of straw sacks and simple blankets. The female block leaders and Toberentz inspected the blocks, punishing the disorderly. A simple breakfast and roll call preceded the work assignments.

Under constant SS supervision, the girls generally worked between 10 and 12 hours. If they collapsed or did not reach the daily work quotas, they were punished for sabotaging work. One labor detachment in Uckermark was used for moor cultivation, terrible work that resulted in psychological and physical exhaustion. Many prisoners brought in the harvest at neighboring manors and farms. Others worked in armament firms, such as Siemens, which had opened branches in Ravensbrück and at Uckermark. The Jugend- schutzlager had a tailor shop and a workshop, the latter made dolls and toys for the children of fallen SS men. Especially difficult was Hölzermachen, where 16-year-olds dragged felled trees to the camp, which were then cut into smaller segments.

Conducted back to camp, all Zöglinge assembled for evening roll call. Supper consisted of a piece of bread with spreadable cheese. Twice a week there was sausage or soup. The soup was a thick brew with cabbage or beets but rarely contained meat. The meals were totally inadequate for growing youngsters, with the result that the prisoners soon wasted away. After eating there was an hour of sport, cleaning, or roll call. Completely exhausted, the Zöglinge were permitted to shower and sleep. But even during the night there was no peace, as Toberentz made nightly inspections and collectively punished the blocks at the slightest opportunity.

The prescribed punishments were warnings, food deprivation, arrest, postal bans, and the withholding of privileges. The Zöglinge were also forced to do hours-long military drill. Pursuant to Heinrich Himmler’s order, the camp rules forbade the beating of females, but the Zöglinge nevertheless suffered blows from male and female SS. A daily torment was the absolute talking ban. Under threat of severe punishment, the inmates were not allowed to talk when eating, working, or at night. Recaptured escapees were harshly punished. Former prisoners reported that vicious dogs were set upon escapees. One Zöglingle was mauled on the calf, and another’s nose was torn to pieces.

The poor food, heavy labor, and inadequate clothing caused severe illnesses. In winter, the inmates were given only a scarf for protection, not pullovers or gloves. Working in primitive wooden shoes wounded their feet. The sick and injured were sent to the Ravensbrück infirmary, which had a police doctor and two prisoner nurses. This facility’s minimal aim was to return the Zöglinge for labor. Toward the end of 1943, Uckermark obtained an infirmary, but its medical standards were also poor. Although cases of forc-
ible sterilization have not yet come to light, it can be assumed that because Uckermark was run similarly to Moringen that the authorities’ negative assessment resulted in sterilization.

Based upon Ritter's and Justin's decisions, some Zöglinge were murdered at concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Dachau, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, or Ravensbrück. Others were sent to “asylums,” where they were murdered as part of the “euthanasia” program.

In June 1944, Uckermark’s dissolution began with the opening of the Dallgow-Döberitz transit camp, which was led by Uckermark staff. Of its first transferees, 49 girls were deployed in an armaments firm. Another 58 worked in homes in Uckermark's immediate vicinity; 22 Zöglinge described as "pathologically degenerate" were sent to an asylum, and another 71 youths to Ravensbrück.

In January 1945, the RKPA urged Uckermark’s accelerated dissolution because the SS needed the barracks for evacuated concentration camp prisoners. Four Uckermark barracks were separated from the rest for 20 underage political Zöglinge. In the emptied portion of Uckermark, under the command of Ruth Clausius from Ravensbrück, approximately 4,000 weakened female evacuees were murdered or died. The killing methods included strychnine poisoning, starvation, and gasning.

In April 20, 1945, Commandant Toberentz fled before advancing Allied troops with the remainder of the Zöglinge. On April 30, the Red Army liberated Ravensbrück and Uckermark.

Postwar trials scarcely touched the Uckermark camp personnel. In the Ravensbrück III Trial at the Hamburg Curio-Haus, April 14–26, 1948, the British acquitted Toberentz of involvement in the murder of “Allied nationals” but condemned Clausius to death. During the 1950s and 1960s, the West German judicial authorities did not categorize Jugendschutzlager detention to be a National Socialist crime.

Sources


Primary sources for the Jugendschutzlager Uckermark begin with documentation in BA-DH (KL/Hafta/Sammlung Nr. 25/Uckermark). On the relationship between Uckermark and WVHA camps, see Nuremberg document R-129, reproduced in TWCl. 5. Portions of the Ravensbrück Trial III (also called the Uckermark Trial) testimony are reproduced in Ebbinghaus, pp. 191–216, and are based upon PRO, WO 235/516. Fragmentary records of this proceeding are also available in USHMMA, RG 59.016 M Acc. 2001.114, PRO, WO 235/516, JAG Office War Crimes Case Files, 1945–1953, Reel 19. Extensive interviews with former Slovenian Zöglinge of Uckermark are reproduced in Limbächer, Merten, and Pfefferle, eds., Das Mädchendokumentationslager Uckermark. Jürgen Harder and Joseph Robert White trans. Stephen Pallavicini

Notes

4. Quotation in Request for Concurrence in Confirmation of Death Sentence, Ruth Clausius (9); and handwritten defendants list, in Ravensbrück III Trial (n.p.)—both copied in USHMMA, RG 59.016 M Acc. 2001.114, Reel 19.