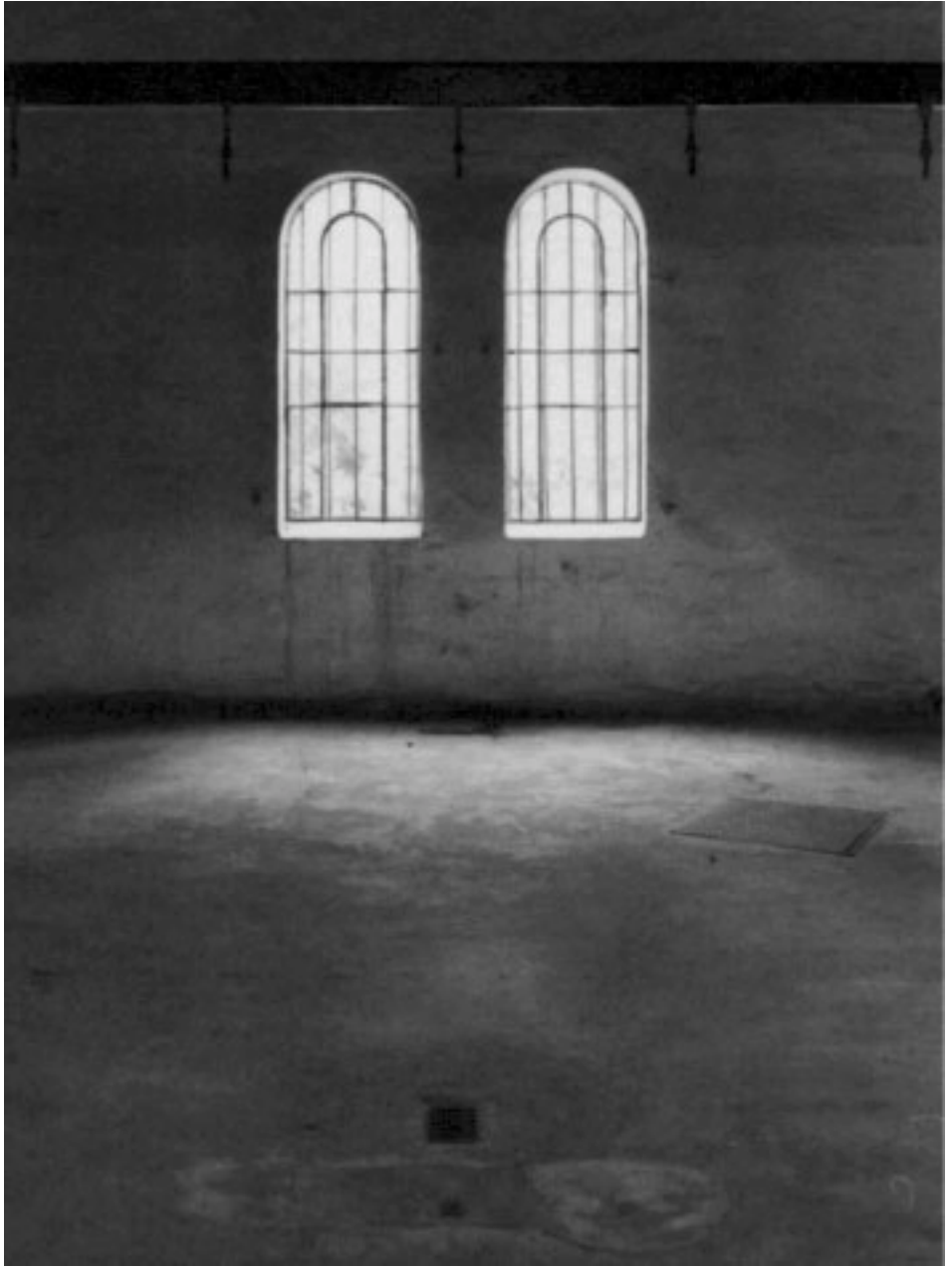


**Plötzensee
Memorial Center**



Brigitte Oleschinski

**Plötzensee
Memorial Center**

**Published by
the German Resistance
Memorial Center
Berlin**





Aerial view, before 1945.

**Plötzensee:
Site of the Victims - Site of the Culprits**

"At this site, hundreds of people died as victims of judicial murder during the years of Hitler's dictatorship from 1933 to 1945 because they fought against the dictatorship for human rights and political freedom. Among them were members of all social classes and almost every nation. With this memorial center, Berlin honors the millions of victims of the Third Reich who were defamed, maltreated, deprived of their freedom, or murdered because of their political convictions, religious beliefs, or racial ancestry."



Execution building,
1965.

Upper right:
Memorial wall and urn with
soil from former
concentration camps.



"Normally the executioner came twice a week. His name was Roettger. He didn't so much walk as creep. He always wore a three-quarter length jacket. What did he think about? He had executed thousands. Innocent people. He had pocketed a bonus of 80 Marks for every head. And extra cigarette rations. He always had a cigarette in his mouth. His helpers were big strong men. They had to bring the hog-tied victims to the gal-lows!

Any Commemoration Must Pose Questions

"Two wardens led the condemned from the cell to the execution shed. Each of them got eight cigarettes for doing this. [...] A man named Appelt acted as overseer in the death building. The prisoners called him 'the fox.' He loved to pop up suddenly and check the bonds. He was always lurking around."

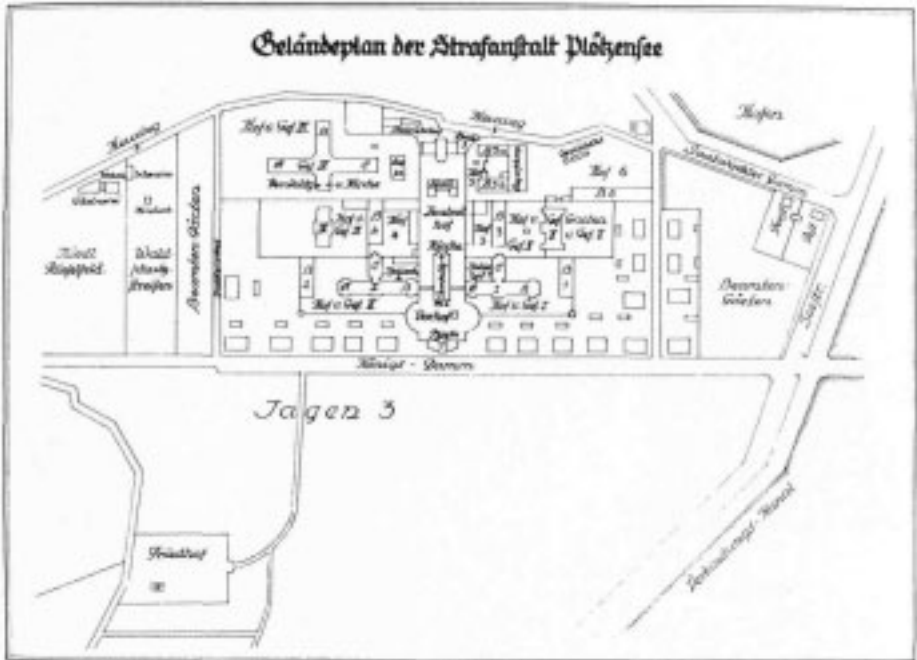
What is there left to see? Not much. A long, wide corridor opens into a courtyard. Rising in the middle of the courtyard is a gray stone wall dedicated as a monument to "the victims of Hitler's dictatorship during the years 1933-1945." Hidden behind this is a red brick shed with two rooms; in one of them an iron bar with five hooks on it extends from one bare wall to the other.

This is all that remains of the former execution site of Berlin-Plötzensee Prison. Only those who hear the story of what happened here will be able to appreciate the horror that has left its mark on this place. Between 1933 and 1945, over 2,500 people were murdered in this humble shed. Many of those beheaded or hanged were political opponents of the National Socialist dictatorship. They were sentenced to death by the People's Court or other courts for having opposed the regime. Many belonged to Communist resistance groups; others were members of the opposition networks of the Harnack/Schulze-Boysen organization, the Kreisau Circle, or the conspiracy of July 20, 1944. But there were also other victims executed by the German judicial system for minor misdemeanors, and many foreign prisoners from the occupied countries in Europe also met their death here.

The Berlin prison on Plötzensee lake was built between 1869 and 1879. The plain brick buildings were part of a complex covering over 60 acres that was surrounded by a 20-foot wall. The prison staff's living quarters were outside the walled area. Within this area, there were five three-story cell block buildings, which could accommodate a total of approximately 1400 prisoners. The buildings were designed according to what was known as a panoptic system; the cell blocks formed a cross-shaped structure with wings extending outward from a central core from which each floor was visible. The cell block buildings, work buildings, prison chapel, and walled inner courtyards formed a self-contained environment, which from the beginning was subject to rigid scrutiny and discipline in the Prussian military tradition. Only a handful of people on the outside were aware of what went on behind the high walls at Plötzensee.



Main entrance
of the Plötzensee prison,
1950.



Under the National Socialist regime, the conventional penal system developed into a political instrument for the oppression and segregation of "enemies of the people." It supplemented the newly created concentration camp system, which was not answerable to the judiciary. Chronic overcrowding, military drill, and poor nourishment were commonplace in penitentiaries and prisons during the Third Reich. However, the party-controlled public opinion paid no heed to the prisoners' suffering. In part, this was due to direct propaganda; the National Socialists condemned prison inmates wholesale as "foreign bodies in the community" and "professional criminals." Yet many people also harbored deep-seated prejudices against prison inmates and instinctively felt they deserved harsh treatment. Even judges, who under the Weimar constitution were not subject to government authority, were not willing or able to protect political opponents from persecution at the hands of the state. Draconian sentences and a deliberate policy of placing criminal and political offenses on equal footing became common practice. German courts passed death sentences increasingly frequently and unscrupulously. At least 16,560 people were sentenced to death from 1933 to the end of the war, of which 11,881 were executed by the end of 1944. Almost one quarter of these executions took place at Plötzensee.

Plan of the Plötzensee prison grounds about 1935. The »storage shed« (Lagerschuppen) to the right of »Prison III« (Gefängnis III) is the execution building.

Urn with soil from concentration camps as a memorial to the victims, 1956.



The victims of these murders included people of all social classes and political leanings whose intentions, deeds, and desires had no place in the National Socialist system. In many cases, all that remains of these people is a name in the execution card file. A production-line death by beheading or hanging was the ghastly culmination of an inexorably merciless procedure. Administrative ordinances regulated every last detail, the process becoming increasingly streamlined as the number of executions rose. Following an air raid in September 1943, 186 prisoners were hanged in a single night to prevent them from escaping the heavily damaged prison (Documents, p. 56 through 63). Not quite one year later, the conspirators and supporters of the failed assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, were among those to die here. Hitler ordered camera teams to film the agony of their deaths.

The present Plötzensee Memorial Center is located in and around the former execution shed. It lies in the middle of modernized penal institutions under the administration of the Berlin judiciary. The prison buildings damaged during the war have been torn down (including House III in which the condemned prisoners spent their last hours before being executed) or restored. Modern buildings were added later.

Initial plans for a memorial center and monument in Plötzensee were conceived in the summer of 1946, when the Berlin Magistrate's Main Committee "Victims of Fascism" sponsored a competition for this purpose. Although the designs were exhibited in the White Hall of the Berlin city palace in February 1947, none of them ever became reality. It was only in 1951 that the execution shed and surrounding grounds were separated from the rest of the prison to become a place of silent remembrance. Visitors enter through a wrought iron entrance gate on Hüttigpfad flanked by two high stone buttresses and walk down a long access path. The path opens into the slightly elevated courtyard with the memorial wall of hewn stone block bearing the inscription "To the victims of Hitler's dictatorship during the years 1933-1945." The execution site is in the building behind the memorial wall. A great stone urn with the inscription "In honor and remembrance of the victims of the concentration camps" stands in the northwestern corner of the courtyard. The building itself is a two-room, single-story brick structure with a low gable roof. The executions took place in the northern room; today it is a memorial room. The room next to it documents the practice of the National Socialist judiciary. The memorial was dedicated on September 14, 1952.

The historic site of Plötzensee prison, the central facility for capital punishment, is the logical location for commemorating all those murdered by the National Socialist judiciary. However, we may not overlook the profound differences among the victims' intentions and deeds. Neither their varied and often conflicting political goals nor the differences in the timing and direction of the persecution they suffered at the hands of the Na-

tional Socialist regime permit us to draw simple parallels. The fates of individuals who were involved in opposition circles and secret resistance networks continue to raise distressing questions about the scope of political involvement and personal responsibility. The torturous paths that German society took into and through the National Socialist dictatorship are reflected in myriad facets. It was a dictatorship under whose heel conformity and resistance, approval and refusal, and negligence and helplessness often lay close together.

Roughly fifty years after the end of the war, monuments and memorial in many places in Germany commemorate the victims of National Socialism. The more remote this historical period becomes, the more abstract the catastrophe of the Third Reich becomes for most people. Increasing numbers of people question the necessity of reminding people of the millions of German crimes throughout Europe decades after the fact. They no longer want to be identified with a past they see as having been eclipsed by and compensated for by the postwar development in the two German states.



Execution building
with the remains of House III
in the background,
about 1950.

Yet the horrors of the National Socialist reign of terror continue to leave their mark both within the Federal Republic of Germany and outside of it up to the present day. Germany's European neighbors still bear the scars of the Second World War. We can still feel the web of guilt and failure in our own family, our own city, and our own country. Throughout Germany, we continue to find traces of secret approval and unquestioning cultivation of tradition alongside the mandatory rejection of the National Socialist crimes. These include the eerie regression into militant hatred of foreigners and anti-Semitism.

Undoubtedly, the majority of Germans today denounce persecution of political opponents and ethnic minorities by the state as was practiced by the National Socialist regime at the time. Yet most fail to realize that the National Socialist regime was able to arise within the Weimar Republic. It did not suddenly appear, but developed gradually from political mistakes and national illusions in a period of stifling social turmoil. The culprits and those who benefited from the system, those who went along with it and those who stood and watched, came from the same streets and cities as their victims. Right from the beginning, the National Socialists used more than mere brute force against those who held different opinions. They also placed the judicial and bureaucratic instruments of administrative government by law in the service of their own authoritarian and dogmatic state. In this respect, the Plötzensee Memorial Center is more than just a site commemorating the victims. The fates of those murdered here shed light on the procedures employed by the culprits in government offices and courts of law. Those who stripped justice and law of every bond with human dignity, freedom, and democracy and placed them in the service of the National Socialist rulers were judges, prosecuting attorneys, and ministerial and judiciary officials. This, too, bears mention when we commemorate the victims.

When Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor of a coalition government in January 1933, the democratic system of the Weimar Republic was still in existence. Parliamentary procedure had been largely curtailed by emergency ordinances and secret arrangements among the nationalist conservative parties. However, the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) did not have a parliamentary majority and thus had minimal influence on public administration. It was only the fateful interaction of the sanctioned terror of the party's "brown battalions" and the voluntary submission to party control on the part of many institutions that brought the National Socialists to power once and for all. In addition to politicians and military officers, members of the judiciary and public administrators were deeply involved. It was they who created, tolerated, and executed the "National Socialist law" that transformed Germany into a fatal trap for anyone whose race or political convictions were deemed undesirable.

From the beginning, this "National Socialist law" had nothing in common with traditional notions of government by law. The new laws no longer derived their authority from the German constitution nor were they sanctioned by acts of parliament; instead, they cited sources of law such as "the will of the Führer" or "National Socialist ideology." The so-called protectors of German law used their decrees and ordinances as weapons against those with dissenting opinions, "foreign races," and political opponents. They demanded a complete renunciation of the "liberalist" constitutional state of Weimar. "The entire conceptual world of basic rights, the dichotomy of the individual and the state, the idea of an original and inviolate realm of individual freedom [...] fundamentally contradicts National Socialist thought." Consequently, the sole purpose of National Socialist law was to "protect the specific national ethnic community order, annihilate parasites, punish behavior harmful to the community, and resolve disputes among members of the community."

In 1933, a "legal revolution" transformed the ailing Weimar democracy into a dictatorship. Legality and terror entered into an ominous alliance. Although these developments violated the letter and spirit of the German constitution, the political parties still represented in the Reichstag (with the exception of the Social Democrats) passed the "Act to Relieve the Distress of the People and the Reich" into law March 24, 1933. By this time, the parliamentary seats held by the Communist Party had already been declared invalid, and many Communist members of parliament had been placed under arrest. This "Enabling Act" granted the government the power to enact legislation without parliamentary approval. This created a "bridge from the old state to the new," which noted philosopher of law Carl Schmitt openly welcomed in 1933: "The fact that this transition was effected legally was of great practical significance. For [...] legality [is] a functional mode of the state system of civil servants and public authorities and as such is of political and legal significance."

The Enabling Act repealed the republican doctrine of basic rights, which the Ordinance of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and the State of February 28, 1933, had already suspended. Personal liberty, the right of free speech, and other basic rights were no longer ensured. An unprecedented wave of arrest and persecution was unleashed against Communists, Socialists, Jews, Social Democrats, labor union members, and other undesired persons, among them elected politicians and members of parliament. In many places, groups of SA thugs were officially declared police auxiliaries. They abducted, abused, and murdered their victims without encountering any significant resistance from the police or judiciary. The judiciary reacted only in cases in which their own interests were affected. Thus, a handful of presiding judges protested when the SA attacked Jewish judges and attorneys in court buildings in 1933. Yet no further protest was voiced when the Act for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 7, 1933, called for the dismissal of Jewish civil servants.

Like a large part of the German people, the civil servants in the judiciary and public administration felt carried away by the "national uprising." Blind trust in governmental authority was widespread and prevented many people from taking a critical view of the regime. Although National Socialist legal doctrine differed from traditional thinking in the legal professions, most civil servants readily adapted to the new legal system. Only a handful had the courage to stand up for their beliefs. The more apparent it became that getting ahead in the future would depend on unconditional allegiance to the Führer, the more they adopted a posture of submission, even anticipating the wishes of their masters. These efforts on their part were supported by the Act to Secure the Unity of Party and State of December 1, 1933, which placed the traditional loyalty of civil servants to the state in the service of the National Socialist German Workers Party: "Following the victory of the National Socialist revolution," stated Section 1 of the act, "the National Socialist German Workers Party has become the bearer of the German concept of the state and has entered an inseparable union with the state."

The criminal justice system played a special role in establishing and strengthening the National Socialist dictatorship. Long-term developments in criminal justice and the penal system merged with the new instruments of National Socialist police law. The protective custody ordinances of the states' interior ministries are prime examples of this tendency. These ordinances allowed the Gestapo to imprison any person for an indefinite period of time in concentration camps or penal institutions without a court warrant or due process of law. Once arrested, these victims were denied the benefit of constitutional restrictions on the authority of the judicial system. Neither the courts nor the judicial authorities were able to curb the power of the political police or the SA or SS. On the contrary, senior officials of the Reich Ministry of Justice went so far as to devise a new

ideological criminal code to entrap political opponents and dissidents and thus to increase their own influence on the process of eradicating "enemies of the people." Often a sentence was no longer based on the actual consequence of an act (i.e., the resulting injury), but on the defendant's "criminal will," which could manifest itself in the attempt or mere intention of committing the act. Political motives for one and the same offense were grounds for increasing the severity of the sentence.

Special Courts (*Sondergerichte*) that competed with the Gestapo and concentration camps were established within the jurisdictions of the high courts (*Oberlandesgerichte*) of each individual German state beginning in 1933. One year later, the People's Court (*Volksgerichtshof*) was established. Like the Special Courts, it prosecuted political offenses. This court was the first to institutionalize a procedure that greatly curtailed the rights of the defendant and the defense counsel, a procedure later adopted by other courts. The Special Courts dispensed with pretrial procedure and were not required to serve the defendant with an indictment. Judges were authorized to refuse to admit exonerating evidence. From 1935 on, appealing a verdict could result in a more severe sentence for the defendant. Beginning in 1939, the political executive had the option of contesting a sentence that was "too lenient" by filing an "appeal for exceptional reasons" and ordering a retrial to pronounce a more severe sentence.

Yet the ideologically motivated wanton punishment of political convictions was not the only change the new regime made. Other prisoners also felt the changes in conditions in the penal system's penitentiaries and prisons after 1933. Whereas the Weimar Republic had seen a lively discussion about a proposed reform of the penal system with emphasis on rehabilitating and improving prisoners, the National Socialists relied entirely on a highly visible policy of severe deterrence, atonement, and revenge. However, the belief that severe punishment significantly reduced the crime rate in the Third Reich is not borne out by statistics; they show that the reduction applied only to a few offenses. Far more significant is the fact that media coverage of crime was restricted and manipulated according to ideological criteria. Thus, idealistic impressions tend to color the memories of period contemporaries.

Draconian severity was the hallmark of everyday life in the penal institutions of the Third Reich. Hitler's rise to power ushered in a period of agony for prison inmates. Although the prisons and penitentiaries were not characterized by rampant abuse and murders as were the concentration camps, disciplinary detention, unpalatable food, military drill during non-working hours, poor sanitary conditions, and frequent harassment made conditions in the overcrowded prisons intolerable. Some of the previous penal regulations from the Weimar period remained in force. Most of the prison officials were also kept on from the Weimar Republic. Many of them were particularly cruel to the

political prisoners. The National Socialists regarded only a few of the prisoners as "suitable for rehabilitation." These prisoners were to be returned to the "community of the people" after serving their sentences. However, most prisoners, particularly those serving time for political offenses, "habitual criminals," and "antisocial elements" risked further reprisals after their release. The great majority of these ex-prisoners were thrown into concentration camps and later killed while being held in "preventive detention" when patients in clinics and care facilities were murdered.

With the onset of the Second World War, conditions in the penal institutions became even more severe. Twelve-hour workdays, additional military drill, and even poorer rations soon became routine. The systematic escalation of killing at the front also dulled the senses of prison personnel in Germany. The pressure of the wartime economy caused the penal institutions to develop an even more brutal selection among prisoners. Only a few had a chance of surviving. Many others were allowed to die of hunger, disease, and exhaustion. While extermination camps were being established in the eastern European occupied territories and mass murders were being committed in many places in Europe, the scope of National Socialist terror was expanded within Germany as well. Administrative circles increasingly ignored the fact that ever expanding "measures" at home and abroad were costing hundreds of thousands of people their lives. In the eyes of government officials, the lives of the victims were worthless. They were "Jews," "Marxists," "foreigners," "parasites," "enemies of the state," or "social pests." Increasingly unscrupulous regulations accelerated their physical segregation and extermination. The entire judicial system was involved in this development. During the war years alone, civilian criminal courts passed at least fifteen thousand death sentences. Yet it was not the SS and Gestapo that committed these crimes. The culprits were legal practitioners and officials in the judicial system whose actions continued to be regarded as lawful in the Federal Republic of Germany after the war. The more than thirty thousand death sentences passed against members of the armed forces by military courts were almost completely forgotten. In addition to this, innumerable murders were committed by the SS and Gestapo in concentration camps and police custody; even today, there can be no reliable count of these crimes.

Corridor with prison cells in Plötzensee.



"One must see - and this must be done with a lesson and by action on the part of the supreme judicial authorities - that the nation is made aware that the state is determined to eradicate any attempt at interference with the most barbaric means, whereby one must bear in mind that the unavoidable lack of respect for human life at the front and the overvaluation of the lives of bad elements is a reality that represents an overriding danger. The judge is the bearer of racial and national self-preservation [...] If on the other hand, I do not mercilessly annihilate the filth, then one day there will be a crisis. [...] There are certain ideological crimes that remove a person from the community of the people. [...] One must eradicate the notion that the judge is there to administer law even at the risk of letting the world go to pieces."

Plötzensee is the place where these threats that Hitler uttered during a conversation with his minister of justice on August 20, 1942, became reality.

The death penalty became one of the deadliest weapons of the judicial system under National Socialism. Although the death penalty had existed before the National Socialists came to power in 1933, it had been used sparingly since the mid-nineteenth century, and was generally reserved for murder. In the fourteen years of the Weimar Republic, 1141 death sentences were passed, of which only 184 were actually executed. In those days, influential experts doubted whether the death penalty was ethically permissible and effective in terms of criminal policy. They demanded it be eliminated. In contrast, National Socialists like Alfred Rosenberg or Roland Freisler dramatically demanded that the state have the unrestricted right to conduct a political "purge" with own "rope and gallows" and thus bring about the "removal of alien characters and foreign nature." The National Socialist German Workers Party found widespread sympathy for this thinking among voters. When Hitler came to power in January of 1933, the death penalty was a preferred means of demonstrating government brutality and for settling scores with political opponents.

In the Ordinance of the Reich President for the Protection of the People and the State of February 28, 1933, which for the first time gave the National Socialists a free hand in turning public life into a dictatorship, new offenses were immediately punishable by death. These included high treason, arson, and sabotage. One month later, a law followed that permitted the execution of death sentences not only by beheading but by hanging as well. It also allowed retroactive application of this provision, thus violating one of the central principles of every constitutional state. At the same time, the first of the Special Courts were established. These courts were initially responsible for prosecuting political offenses under the Treachery Act of December 20, 1934. This law made attacks against the National Socialist German Workers Party ranging from political jokes to misuse of the party uniform subject to severe punishment. The Special



Left: prison chapel and execution building.
Foreground: remains of House III, the »house of the dead,« after 1945.

Courts and the People's Court, established in May 1934, were empowered to pronounce the death sentence. Yet the death sentence was increasingly threatened or required for other offenses as well under the new ordinances and laws.

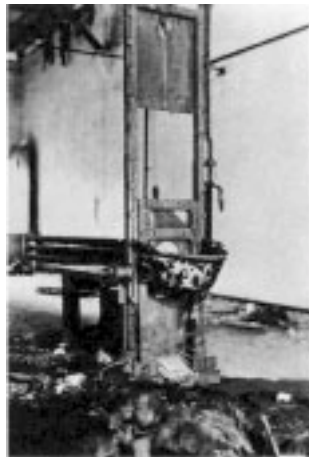
However, it was a long way from the National Socialist German Workers Party's initial efforts at gaining control of the judicial administration and the courts to the state's mass executions of 1943 and 1944. Initially, the attempt to increase the number of executions by increasing the number of death sentences presented practical problems. Permanent execution sites were lacking throughout Germany. Judicial administrators spent many months studying the execution procedures in other countries to gain insight into current and previous methods of execution. Two and one half years passed before the Reich Ministry of Justice arrived at a uniform execution procedure, a high priority for the ministry. Finally, in October 1935, a circular order by Reich Minister of Justice Franz Gürtner provided for a single uniform procedure for executing the death penalty in all of Germany. Yet Berlin's Plötzensee prison had been one of the Third Reich's execution sites even before this. The executioner beheaded four persons convicted of robbery and murder with an ax in the courtyard for the first time in 1933. That year, a total of 64 death penalties were carried out in Germany, of which four were in Plötzensee. In 1934, the number increased to 79, of which twelve were in Plötzensee, and in 1935, 94 executions were carried out, 20 of them in Plötzensee.

In Plötzensee, as at other sites, executions were usually carried out in the early morning. The condemned person had to be informed of the impending execution the evening before by a public prosecutor in the presence of other officials. An official report of this meeting was recorded. After this, the condemned persons were transferred to a special wing in House III, the "house of the dead," where they were closely guarded (and later bound) and could only be visited by their attorney and the prison chaplain. At dawn, prison guards led the condemned persons, their hands tied behind their backs, one by one to the execution shed next to House III. There the verdict was pronounced in front of the assembled persons, and the prison chaplain was given the opportunity to say a short prayer. Next, the executioner's helpers grabbed the victim, and the executioner did his work. The actual act of beheading the prisoner took only a few seconds. Then an official report of the proceedings was recorded and the body released to the Institute of Anatomy and Biology of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin.

In the years that followed, this procedure was greatly shortened and simplified. The presence of the Plötzensee prison chaplain, who provided important testimony, was prohibited by a circular order from the Reich Minister of Justice on October 15, 1942. The more executions took place, the more quickly and efficiently they had to be performed (Document, p. 46-47).

On December 28, 1936, Reich Minister of Justice Gürtner ordered the guillotine to be used for all future executions. Not even the responsible department in the Ministry of Justice had been informed; it only learned of the order after the fact. This new regulation was apparently put into effect at Hitler's personal order. Among the eleven prisons that initially performed executions, Plötzensee was officially responsible for executions in the appellate court district of Berlin, the state supreme court district of Stettin, and for various adjacent regional court districts (Document, p. 43). At the same time, an Executioner Ordinance was enacted. This ordinance regulated every aspect of the rights and duties of the professional executioners in Germany (initially there were three of them). Under the provisions of this ordinance, executioners received an annual salary of 3000 Marks and a special bonus of 60 to 65 Marks for each execution. This bonus was also paid to the helpers.

On February 17, 1937, the guillotine arrived in Plötzensee prison from Bruchsal prison, where executions had previously been performed, and was erected in the execution shed. From this day on, the number of executions in Plötzensee and elsewhere increased rapidly. By March 1940, Plötzensee had already seen 277 executions since 1933. Three years later, the executioner in Berlin no longer submitted invoices for these "services" annually but every month: 114 executions in March of 1943 and 124 in May. In late 1942, facilities were provided for hanging up to eight people simultaneously in the execution shed. The first victims murdered in this manner were members of the Harnack/Schulze-Boysen resistance group.



The guillotine after liberation of the prison by Soviet troops, May 1945.

When the guillotine in Plötzensee was damaged in an air raid during the night of September 3-4, 1943, over three hundred people were awaiting their execution in House III, which itself was severely damaged. During the raid, three of them succeeded in escaping but were apprehended shortly thereafter. This seemed to affirm the circular order issued by new Reich Minister of Justice Otto Thierack on August 27, 1943, which provided for accelerated execution of death sentences due to the risk of air raids. Thus on September 7, 1943, the Reich Ministry of Justice, acting at Hitler's personal request, resolved to shorten clemency proceedings in the manner proposed by Thierack, and to execute all condemned prisoners in Plötzensee in rapid succession. To save time in forwarding the death warrants, the names of the condemned were relayed by telephone from the Reich Ministry of Justice to Plötzensee, where the responsible public prosecutor compared them with prepared lists. This procedure resulted in misunderstandings with grave consequences. During the first night, the 186 persons murdered included four whose clemency proceedings had not yet been completed. However, the officials involved in this error were able to rely on the leniency of their superiors during the ensuing inquiry. They were spared punishment, "considering the fact that the death sentences against the four condemned persons would have been executed within a short time anyway" (Documents, p. 60 through 63).

Remains of House III,
the »house of the dead,«
about 1950.



Since the guillotine could only be repaired a few weeks later, the prisoners were hanged. Eyewitnesses later described the executions during the night of September 7-8, among them the two prison chaplains, Protestant cleric Harald Poelchau and his Catholic colleague Peter Buchholz. Harald Poelchau vividly described these dreadful nights:

"As darkness fell on September 7 the mass murders began. The night was cold. Every now and then the darkness was lit up by exploding bombs. The beams of the searchlights danced across the sky. The men were assembled in several columns one behind the other. They stood there, at first uncertain about what was going to happen to them. Then they realized. Eight men at a time were called by name and led away. Those remaining hardly moved at all. Only an occasional whisper with my Catholic colleague and myself [...] Once the executioners interrupted their work because bombs thundered down nearby. The five rows of eight men already lined up had to be confined to their cells again for a while. Then the murdering continued. All these men were hanged. [...] The executions had to be carried out by candlelight because the electric light had failed. It was only in the early morning at about eight o'clock that the exhausted executioners paused in their work, only to continue with renewed strength in the evening."

In the following months, most of the executions from Plötzen-see were moved to the Brandenburg-Görden penitentiary (Document p. 58). The number of executions in Plötzensee only increased significantly again when the People's Court began sentencing conspirators in the failed assassination attempt of July 20, 1944. These executions continued until the final days of the war. As late as April 18, 1945, probably the last day on which executions took place, 28 people were put to death. A few days later, on April 25, Soviet troops occupied the prison and liberated the inmates.

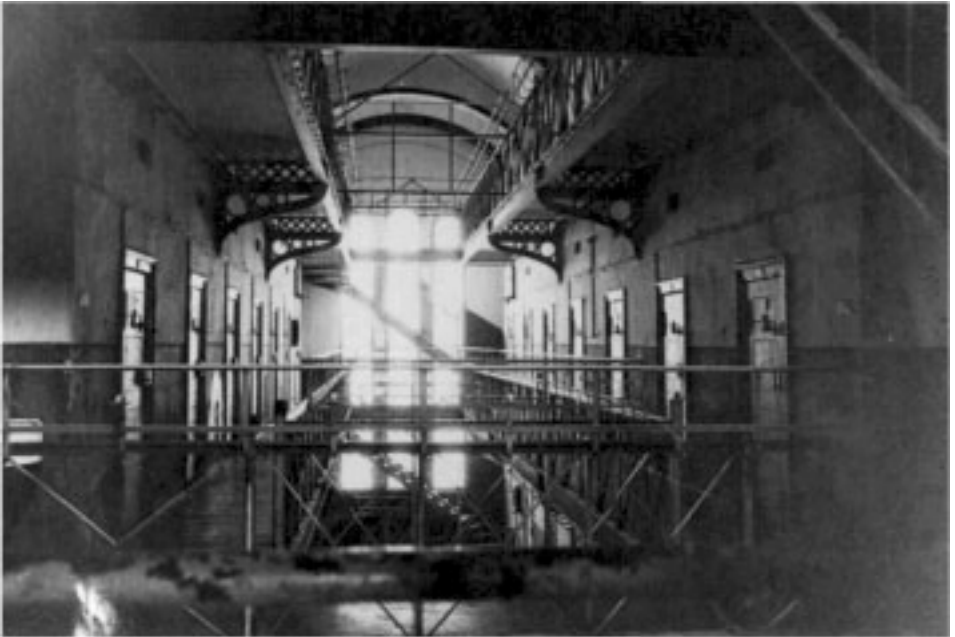


Peter Buchholz.

Harald Poelchau.



**People in Resistance
against
National Socialism**



Cell corridors in House III,
before 1940.

The more than 2800 people murdered in Plötzensee between 1933 and 1945 came from a variety of social classes, political groups, and ideological orientations. Not all of them were opponents of the National Socialist dictatorship, although the judges sentenced them to death as alleged enemies of the state. Often emotional bonds or personal fate were more important than political opinions in determining their resistance to National Socialism. For many of them, their political or religious convictions gave them the strength they needed (Document p. 65).

Communists and Social Democrats were among the first victims of the National Socialist regime. Tens of thousands of Communists were arrested by the SA and police following the burning of the Reichstag on February 27-28, 1933, and were abducted to makeshift concentration camps set up especially for this purpose, where they were cruelly abused. Even during the Weimar Republic, the National Socialists had proclaimed their boundless hatred of people with dissenting opinions. Deliberate use of violence against weaker and defenseless opponents was part of the everyday political activities of the "movement." As of January 30, 1933, the law no longer afforded any protection to Communists, socialists, Social Democrats, Jews, and others whom the National Socialists had arbitrarily declared as enemies.

The judicial system also participated in the persecution of political opponents of the National Socialists immediately after the party came into power. With draconian sentences against the members of Communist and Social Democratic organizations, the judges continued in a long tradition of political bias, carry-

zensee were Communists. On June 14, 1934, Richard Hüttig was beheaded with an ax in the prison courtyard. At this time, Hüttig was 26 years old. He belonged to the Communist group Rotfrontkämpferbund ("Alliance of Red Front Fighters") and was tried before the Special Court in Berlin for having allegedly shot and killed an SS leader during a "penal expedition" by the SA and SS in his residential district. The Special Court admitted in the grounds for its decision that it could not be proven that Hüttig, who had been unarmed, had committed the deed. In spite of this, Richard Hüttig was sentenced to death on February 16, 1934, for "severe breach of the public peace" and "attempted murder."

Many Communists, socialists, and Social Democrats elected to go underground after 1933. Despite unrelenting persecution, regional party contacts or groups of like-minded persons were maintained, leaflets were secretly distributed, and brochures were smuggled into Germany from abroad. The Gestapo enlisted the aid of the police and the SA in large-scale raids to track down illegal party groups. Those persons arrested who were not interned in concentration camps were turned over to the judiciary to be put on trial. They were often sentenced to disproportionately long prison and penitentiary terms. To deter

Communists, Socialists and Social Democrats



Richard Hüttig.

others, important functionaries were sentenced to death even when the charges of "treason" or "high treason" would not have been defensible in a legal system ensuring due process of law.



Liselotte Herrmann.

On November 4, 1937, Adolf Rembte and Robert Stamm were executed in Plötzensee. They were members of the national leadership of the German Communist Party in Berlin and had good contacts with the Communist exile groups in Moscow and elsewhere. They were charged with "conspiracy to commit high treason." This accusation provided sufficient justification for the death penalty. When the sentence was executed, Stamm was 37 years old and Rembte was 35. Both came from traditional working-class families and were well known for their personal integrity and the courage of their convictions. Pastor Harald Poelchau later related how the execution of people like Stamm and Rembte who had merely continued their political efforts made even the most hardened prison wardens stop and think.

Another case that greatly alarmed people both in Germany and abroad was the execution of Liselotte Herrmann. She was 28 years old and the mother of a four-year-old son. As a teenager, she had joined the Communist youth group. She began to study biology in Berlin in 1931, but was expelled from the Friedrich Wilhelm University in 1933 because of her affiliation with the German Communist Party. After the birth of her son, she worked in Stuttgart in her father's engineering office and was actively involved in underground Communist activities. In December of 1935, she was arrested by the Gestapo. She was found with the floor plan of a munitions factory in her possession that was to be smuggled abroad. After spending a year and a half in police custody and pretrial confinement, Liselotte Herrmann was sentenced to death by the People's Court on June 12, 1937.

Her co-defendants Stefan Lovasz, Josef Steidle, and Arthur Göritz were also sentenced to death. They, too, were members of the German Communist Party. In the wake of the verdicts, Communist exile groups launched an international solidarity campaign. Hundreds of people from many countries wrote letters to the German government demanding clemency for Liselotte Herrmann. Yet all efforts were in vain. Even after she had been sentenced to death, the Gestapo continued to interrogate Liselotte Herrmann in another case. When this investigation was completed, she was beheaded with the guillotine on June 20, 1938. Lovasz, Steidle, and Göritz were also executed on that day.

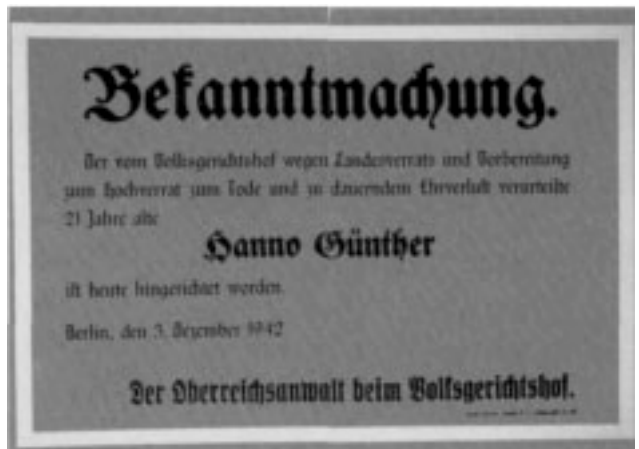
Youth Groups

Even during the Weimar Republic, the National Socialists made a concerted effort to compete with the large youth organizations of the socialist parties, the *bündisch* movements, and the churches. After 1933, most youth organizations were prohibited or forced to conform to the party line and integrated into the Hitler Youth. Yet Communist and socialist young people offered resistance to the National Socialist regime during the first few days and weeks following Hitler's rise to power. The Gestapo and the courts responded ruthlessly and sentenced young functionaries to long prison terms. In spite of this, a few groups, some of whom had split off from the illegal party leadership, succeeded in continuing their forbidden work for several years. Many young people fell victim to the terror of the judicial system after the war began and judges increasingly made use of the death penalty.

The Rütli Group

On December 3, 1942, 21-year-old Hanno Günther and his friends Wolfgang Pander and Bernhard Sikorski were executed in Plötzensee (Document p. 68). After the victory of the German armed forces over France, Günther, Pungs (a Communist), and Pander (a young Communist of Jewish descent) produced and distributed leaflets, which they titled "The Free Word" and signed "German Peace Front." These leaflets contained news about the development of the war, demanded peace and freedom of opinion, and called upon workers in munitions factories to commit acts of sabotage. Günther, together with Sikorski, Emmerich Schaper, and other former students of the Rütli School, a progressive school in Berlin's Neukölln district, later established a small resistance circle. In July and August 1942, everyone who had been in contact with Günther was arrested. The Gestapo labeled the young people among them "Rütli Group" after the school they had all attended.

Poster announcing the execution of Hanno Günther.



In his indictment of May 26, 1942, the senior prosecutor at the People's Court accused the members of the group of high treason and of listening to foreign radio broadcasts. The defendants had committed two particularly serious crimes in his eyes: They had held regular meetings at which the young people read Marxist literature, and, with the aid of Elisabeth Pungs, they had established contact with Herbert Bochow, a German Communist Party functionary active in resistance. Bochow, who had been severely abused during his interrogations, had put the Gestapo onto the trail of the young people. On October 9, 1942, six of the seven defendants were sentenced to death. Dagmar Petersen, only marginally active in the group, was sentenced to seven years in prison, while Emmerich Schaper, who was severely ill, died before he could be executed.

The Baum Group

At the same time, members of a group of Jewish Communists centered around Herbert and Marianne Baum, a married couple, were being held by the Gestapo. Since the mid-1930s, Herbert Baum had sought the acquaintance of sympathizers who, like himself, were of Jewish descent. Since the secret networks of the illegal German Communist Party regarded them as particularly endangered, they remained largely isolated from the Party's normal contact channels. In spite of this, the group attempted to produce leaflets protesting against the National Socialist regime. In May 1942, they attempted to set the anti-Communist propaganda exhibition "The Soviet Paradise" in Berlin's Pleasure Garden on fire. Shortly thereafter, Herbert and Marianne Baum, Werner Steinbrink, Hildegard Jadamowitz, and many other members of the group were arrested. Herbert Baum and two other people committed suicide in custody after suffering abuse. Over twenty persons involved were sentenced to death in six large trials. The fate of others remains uncertain; they probably died in concentration camps. The convicted members of the Baum Group were executed at Plötzensee in several groups on August 18, 1942; March 4, 1943; May 11, 1943; June 18, 1943; and September 7, 1943.



Demonstration accompanying the opening of the exhibition "The Soviet Paradise" in Berlin's Pleasure Garden on May 8, 1942.

The Harnack/Schulze-Boysen Resistance Circle

Between December 22, 1942, and August 5, 1943, most of the members of an extensive resistance circle, the Harnack/Schulze-Boysen organization, were executed. Later known as the "Red Orchestra," the name originally given to them by the Gestapo, the groups included over one hundred members. They formed during the mid-1930s, centering around Arvid Harnack, a Berlin scholar and civil servant in the Reich Ministry of Economics, and Harro Schulze-Boysen, a first lieutenant attached to the Reich Aviation Ministry. Their shared interest in alternatives to the National Socialist system first brought Harnack and Schulze-Boysen together in 1940. These informal discussions soon developed into a variety of contacts and political projects.

Arvid Harnack and his American wife Mildred Harnack-Fish, who had followed him to Germany in 1929, formed the focal point of a study group that prior to 1933 had discussed aspects of the Soviet planned economy. Both lived in Berlin since 1930. In 1935, Harnack entered the Reich Ministry of Economics, where he specialized in American economic policy. Mildred Harnack instructed literature and translated for the Friedrich Wilhelm University's foreign studies department, which was established in 1940. Both regarded themselves as resolute opponents of the National Socialists. Among the members of their private discussion group were Adolf Grimme (former Prussian minister of education and cultural affairs and a religious socialist), author Adam Kuckhoff, his wife Greta, and worker Karl Behrens. They sought to expand the group by establishing contacts to other opponents of the regime.



Harro and his wife Libertas
Schulze-Boysen (née Haas-Heye).

A similar circle formed around Harro Schulze-Boysen and his wife Libertas (née Haas-Heye) following their marriage in 1936. Prior to 1933, Schulze-Boysen had sympathized with nationalist revolution groups. He was the editor of the magazine *gegner*, which was prohibited immediately after Hitler assumed power. Schulze-Boysen and his friend and coworker Henry Erlanger were abducted into a concentration camp by the SA and so severely abused that Erlanger subsequently died. After his release, Schulze-Boysen began training at the civil aviation school in Warnemünde and in April 1934 was given a position at the Reich Aviation Ministry. Libertas Schulze-Boysen initially worked as a press assistant for an American film company and was later self-employed. In 1941, she became a literary manager in the central office for cultural cinema of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda. Like her husband, she used her professional contacts to locate opponents of the regime and to expand the common circle.

In early 1942, the organization around Arvid Harnack and Harro Schulze-Boysen began producing leaflets. Aside from Harnack and Schulze-Boysen, the primary authors included Wilhelm Guddorf, Adam Kuckhoff, and John Sieg. These leaflets described the horrors perpetrated by the *Einsatzgruppen* (Deployment Groups) and individual Army units on prisoners of war and

Clara, Mildred, and Arvid Harnack
in Neubabelsberg, 1931.



civilians behind the front in the occupied territories. Calling for criticism and the courage to stand up for one's beliefs, the leaflets predicted a dreadful outcome for the war, which they maintained the regime could not win. The group succeeded in distributing the regularly published leaflets in many areas of Germany, even sending them to the front.

The means of illegal work pursued by some members of the group included cooperation with the Soviet Union. Harnack maintained a confidential exchange with members of the Soviet and American embassies. He and Schulze-Boysen warned the Soviet leadership prior to the attack invasion for June 1941. In an effort to accelerate the end of the war and pave the way for a dialog with the Soviet Union in matters of foreign policy, they made preparations for establishing radio contact with Moscow. Hans Coppi assumed responsibility for this contact, but the project never progressed beyond the experimental stage. In autumn of 1941, the Soviet military intelligence service sent its Brussels agent to Berlin. He radioed information from a conversation with Schulze-Boysen from Brussels to Moscow. The fate of the organization with its various circles of friends was sealed in late summer of 1942 when German counterintelligence agents deciphered a radio message from Moscow with Berlin addresses.

Not all of the companions of the Schulze-Boysens and Harnacks knew of the contacts with the Soviet Union or were involved in the leaflet efforts. These included such leaflets as those of May 1942, which spoke out in favor of the arson attack on the anti-Soviet propaganda exhibition "The Soviet Paradise." Many group members merely sought to participate in discussions about political and social topics and were willing to help their friends without asking questions by doing such things as sending letters, hiding radio transmitters, or taking in people they did not know. Among these were Frida and Stanislaus Wesolek, Klara Schabbel, Else Imme, and Annie Krauss. Others, like author Adam Kuckhoff or journalists Walter Husemann, Günther Weisenborn, and John Graudenz, were deeply involved in drafting leaflets, which were then copied and duplicated in the apartments and studios of Kurt and Elisabeth Schumacher, Oda Schottmüller, Cato Bontjes van Beek, and other companions.

The individual actions or discussion circles involved people of the most varied political and religious convictions. Journalist and railroad worker John Sieg played an important role. Sieg was a member of the German Communist Party and had lived in the United States for a long time. He worked closely with Harnack and Schulze-Boysen, utilizing his contacts with cells of the illegal German Communist Party in particular. A further circle had formed around physician and psychotherapist John Rittmeister. This circle included young people such as Ursula Goetze, Liane Berkowitz, and Friedrich Rehmer. They helped French slave laborers and were involved with distributing leaflets. Religious and philosophical motives were decisive for people like Maria Terwiel, Helmut Himpel, and Eva-Maria Buch. Maria Terwiel, for example, sent off hundreds of copies of sermons by the Catholic bishop of Münster, Clemens August Graf von Galen, who in the summer of 1941 had openly spoken out against the National Socialists' murders of sick and helpless persons, known as "acts of euthanasia."



Hans and Hilde Coppi camping.

In August 1942, the Gestapo discovered the groups centering around Harnack and Schulze-Boysen. Over one hundred people were arrested within a few weeks. A special commission of the anti-sabotage division of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Main Office of Reich Security) conducted the investigations. Some of the accused were subjected to cruel torture in intensified interrogations. Several victims broke under the pressure of the abuse and made statements. Other prisoners became entangled in contradictions and unintentionally revealed decisive details. In December 1942, senior military prosecutor Manfred Roeder brought charges against the most important members of the organization in an initial trial before the Reich Military Court, which had jurisdiction in espionage cases. Among the defendants were the Harnacks, Schulze-Boysens, Coppis, and Schumachers. Except for Mildred Harnack and Erika Gräfin von Brockdorff, they were all sentenced to death on December 19, 1942, and executed on December 22 in Plötzensee.

Hitler refused to accept the comparatively lenient verdict against Mildred Harnack and Erika von Brockdorff. At his order, the Reich Military Court reopened proceedings against the two women and this time sentenced them to death. Mildred Harnack was beheaded in Plötzensee on February 16 and Erika von Brockdorff on May 13, 1943. Following further trials held in January and February of 1943, about forty people died in several groups under the guillotine, most of them in Plötzensee. Among those executed on May 13 and August 5, 1943, were also many women from the group. Women were always brought from the women's prison on Barnimstrasse in Berlin's Friedrichshain district to Plötzensee shortly before their execution (Documents, p. 52 and 66-67). Hilde Coppi and Liane Berkowitz gave birth to children in prison, who were taken from them shortly after birth. The bodies of the executed women were given to the Institute of Anatomy and Biology of the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. Anatomist Hermann Stieve then prepared gynecologic sections from the cadavers.

Contempt of other peoples and nations was a fundamental aspect of National Socialist ideology. As the war progressed, the officials of the Reich judicial administration formulated a number of regulations such as the "Ordinance regarding Criminal Law for Poles" that granted only severely restricted rights to the inhabitants of the German-occupied territories of Europe and was intended to remain in force after "final victory" as "permanent criminal law for foreign races."

Foreign slave laborers and members of resistance organizations in the occupied European countries were particularly endangered. Some of these brought into the so-called "Old Reich" (the territory of prewar Germany) after their arrest, where they were sentenced to death. This was done on the basis of the secret "cover of darkness decree" of December 1941 ordered by Hitler and signed by the chief of the Armed Forces Supreme Command. All persons suspected of resistance who were not likely to be sentenced where they were, were to be deported to Germany "under cover of darkness." Special provisions applied to resistance fighters in the eastern European territories. Resistance fighters could be shot or hanged upon being apprehended without any trial. Prisoners from western Europe, however, were abducted to German penal institutions. Their sentencing by the Special Courts or the People's Court were kept secret, as were their executions. In some cases, these prisoners were only recorded in temporary lists and were often arbitrarily murdered by the Gestapo and SS while being secretly transported.

Among the foreigners executed in Plötzensee from the beginning of the war until the "bloody nights" of September 1943 were Polish and Czech resistance fighters. The convicted Poles in Plötzensee included members and helpers of the secret *Armia Krajowa* (Polish Home Army) accused of possession of arms and explosives, sabotage, and high treason. Others were escaped prisoners of war or slave laborers who had been apprehended by the Gestapo and initially turned over to the Special Courts, Poles who had attempted to assist their persecuted compatriots were also sentenced to death and executed at Plötzensee prison. The large group of Czech convicts included many members of a military resistance organization called "People's Defense" (*Obrana Národa*) recruited from former officers of the disbanded Czechoslovakian army. Between April 1942 and September 1943 alone, about eighty Czech officers died in Plötzensee. During the same period, over 220 further Czechs were executed. Of these, about eighty were active in Communist resistance groups, while around 140 were affiliated with other civilian resistance groups. They used different means in their struggle for an independent Czechoslovakia, a goal that the German courts regarded as particularly reprehensible following the annexation of the Czech lands and the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. Among the convicts murdered in the night of September 7-8, 1943, was Czech Communist Julius Fucik, who left behind extensive writings titled "Reports Written under the Noose."



Julius Fučík

A third group of foreign convicts in Plötzensee included about a dozen young Belgians and Frenchmen sentenced to death for burglary. They belonged to the large contingents of slave laborers from the many occupied eastern and western European countries, some of whom were abducted to Germany and some of whom had been lured there with false promises. Most of them were about 20 years old and had been in Berlin for varying periods of time before being accused by the Gestapo of committing a series of burglaries and thefts. Two of them, the Frenchman Gaston Deflin and the Belgian Richard Havron, had not even reached the age of eighteen. Deflin had worked in Germany since the age of fifteen and, like most of the others, had no police record. He visibly suffered from malnutrition and, answering a questionnaire through his interpreter, stated that he had only stolen because of hunger. Despite this, the Special Court's prosecutor at the Regional Court, Berlin, petitioned the court to sentence Deflin and Havron to death because, "considering their precocious Latin hereditary traits," they were "obviously to be regarded as equivalent" to persons over the age of eighteen. On July 23, 1943, eleven convicted prisoners were executed in Plötzensee, among them Deflin and Havron.

Deflin's mother had since heard of her son's arrest through unknown channels. She appealed to the director of the Plötzensee prison in an urgent letter, requesting information and assistance. The callous indifference of the response sent to her in August 1943 by the prison director via the German embassy in Paris requires no further comment: "The particular deterrent to the general public that the state of war dictates in the interest of preserving public security has required this sacrifice from you."

Not everyone executed in Plötzensee or in the other German prisons that performed executions during the Third Reich was a political opponent of the National Socialist dictatorship. During the war years, thousands of people were sentenced to death for minor offenses such as petty theft, pilfering food, or illegal slaughtering. Others were denounced as "defeatists" and forfeited their lives for expressing doubts about Hitler's conduct of the war or for telling political jokes in private company. Again and again, people who acted on the basis of highly personal motives fell into the hands of the Gestapo. They hid persecuted Jews or deserters in their homes, gave food to foreign slave laborers and prisoners of war, or deliberately undermined National Socialist "hold out" phrases (Documents p. 65, 70, and 72).



Helmuth Hübener (center), Rudolf Wobbe (left), and Karl-Heinz Schnibbe in Hamburg, about 1941.

The convicted prisoners included young people who were not affiliated with any larger resistance group. In August 1942, the People's Court held proceedings against a group of 17 and 18-year-old friends in Hamburg, Helmuth Hübener, Karl-Heinz Schnibbe, Rudolf Wobbe, and Gerhard Düwer, who had attempted to attract the public's attention with leaflets and papers since 1941. In their texts, they described the state of the war according to foreign radio broadcasts and commented on the propaganda lies spread by the German leadership. Helmuth Hübener belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and knew Rudolf Wobbe and Karl-Heinz Schnibbe from this circle. In February 1942, the four young people were arrested by the Gestapo and severely abused during their interrogations. Helmuth Hübener was sentenced to death as the alleged ringleader, while his friends received long prison sentences. On October 27, 1942, Hübener died under the guillotine in Plötzensee.

The more than three hundred executions of the "bloody nights" in September 1943 included the appalling case of the young pianist Karlobert Kreiten. Born in Bonn in 1916 as the son of a Dutch musician and his French wife, Kreiten was regarded as a virtuoso pianist at a very young age and won several international music prizes. Like many other people, he was betrayed by an informer among his friends. In a conversation with an acquaintance in March 1943, he expressed doubts about Hitler's conduct of the war and was subsequently betrayed to the Gestapo. The People's Court sentenced him to death on September 3, 1943. His family attempted to enlist the aid of high government offices, and the Reich Chancellery assured his parents that he would be granted clemency. By this time, however, the sentence had already been executed. Kreiten was one of those persons killed during the night of September 7-8, 1943, for whom a death warrant had not even been issued. His execution was an "error," yet one for which none of the responsible officials were ever made accountable.

Karlobert Kreiten.



The civilian and military judicial systems proceeded with equal ruthlessness against draft evaders and deserters, routinely sen-

tencing them to death. People who aided them risked the same fate. On the morning of June 9, 1944, 44-year-old Emmy Zehden was brought from the women's prison on Barnimstrasse to Plötzensee for execution. The sentence was carried out at 1:00 p.m. Emmy Zehden was a Jehovah's Witness, and her faith was the focus of her life. This religious community was prohibited in the Third Reich, and its members were persecuted. Emmy Zehden had hidden her foster son Horst Günter Schmidt and two friends and fellow believers in quarters in Gatow because the young men were evading military service for religious reasons. Her husband Richard Zehden, who was of Jewish descent, was compelled to perform heavy slave labor at this time. In December 1942, Emmy Zehden and other Jehovah's Witnesses were betrayed by informers. The People's Court sentenced her to death on November 19, 1943, for "subversion of national defense." Richard Zehden was murdered in Auschwitz. Of the three draft evaders sentenced to death, only Schmidt survived until the end of the war (Document p. 69).

Many people were betrayed by friends or neighbors during the Third Reich. The Gestapo also planted spies in groups of friends or church groups to track down remarks hostile to the regime. In the fall of 1943, an informer betrayed the circle around Hanna Solf, the widow of diplomat Wilhelm Solf. Hanna Solf regularly held tea parties for members of the foreign ministry and other acquaintances or friends with whom she attempted to organize help for persecuted people. Her circle included Protestant educator and social worker Elisabeth von Thadden. In early 1944, Hanna Solf, former emissary Otto Carl Kiep, Elisabeth von Thadden, and other members of this circle were arrested. The People's Court sentenced two of them, Elisabeth von Thadden and Otto Carl Kiep, to death on the basis of informers' testimony. It was only after Kiep was convicted that the Gestapo learned of his involvement in the conspiracy of July 20, 1944. He was then subjected to severe abuse during renewed interrogations and was finally executed in Plötzensee on August 15, 1944. Elisabeth von Thadden was executed there on September 8, 1944.



Elisabeth von Thadden.

After air raids had severely damaged the execution site in Plötzensee in September 1943, the penitentiary in Brandenburg-Görden was declared the new central execution site for the appellate court district of Berlin. Plötzensee was intended to serve as execution site only for sentences of the People's Court and the Special Courts in Berlin. Yet with the mass executions after the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, Plötzensee again became a focal point of National Socialist capital punishment. Between August 1944 and April 1945, 86 death sentences against conspirators and accessories to the unsuccessful attempt were carried out, along with executions for other offenses.

The beginnings of the attempted coup of July 20, 1944, go back a long way. Its objectives extended beyond eliminating murdering Hitler to free Germany from his tyranny. Many conspirators were equally concerned about planning a social order to succeed Hitler's fall from power that would end the war and the National Socialist dictatorship. The persons and groups involved in this planning represented a broad spectrum of political and ideological traditions in Germany, bringing together the various attitudes and tendencies of resistance from the entire period of the Third Reich. Civilian and military oppositional groups from a wide variety of backgrounds came together to prepare the coup. Among them were the conservative circles around Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, Ulrich von Hassell, and Johannes Popitz but also members of the Kreisau Circle, who were open-minded with respect to social issues and maintained important contacts to labor union activists and Social Democrats. Centering around Ludwig Beck, Henning von Tresckow, and Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, the military conspiracy involved officers from all parts of Germany with a variety of motives. As in most groups, Christian thinking also played an important role.

It was always difficult to coordinate the various circles because what the participants discussed at secret meetings and in seemingly intimate circles was regarded by the National Socialist state as high treason. The fact that this coup to end the wildly raging war and its millions of crimes was only attempted so late was due in no small part to this problem. Yet had it succeeded, it could have prevented immense sacrifice and many crimes even at this late date.

The assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, that had been months in planning, failed. Only a few hours after the detonation of the bomb von Stauffenberg had smuggled into the Wolf's Lair, Hitler's headquarters near Rastenburg in East Prussia, it was clear that Hitler had survived. This doomed the coup. In the night before July 21, Stauffenberg and three of his closest co-conspirators, Werner von Haeften, Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, and Friedrich Olbricht, were shot by the firing squad in the inner courtyard of the Bendler Block in Berlin, headquarters of the commander of the Reserve Army. Ludwig Beck, the

military mastermind of the conspiracy, was shot dead in his office in the building after seriously wounding himself in a suicide attempt.

The next day, the Gestapo began systematically arresting suspects and their family members. A special commission personally headed by Ernst Kaltenbrunner, chief of the Main Office of Reich Security, began an investigation. The commission continually reported its findings to Martin Bormann, Hitler's secretary and head of the party chancellery. The searches and arrests involved several hundred people, who were detained in Berlin and the surrounding penal institutions. The interrogations involved severe torture and drove many prisoners to commit suicide.

The first staged trial before the People's Court in Berlin with Justice Roland Freisler presiding initiated a wave of death sentences against the conspirators of the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, beginning on August 7-8, 1944. Neither the total number of defendants nor their trial dates and the prison or death sentences passed can now be ascertained precisely. We can only say with certainty that at least 86 people were murdered in Plötzensee between August 8, 1944, and April 9, 1945, as a consequence of July 20, 1944.



Bandler Block viewed from the Bandlerstrasse (now Stauffenbergstrasse), in 1944 site of the headquarters of the commander of the Reserve Army, 1942.

The first eight executions of major conspirators in the coup attempt took place on August 8, 1944. These were preceded by two days of proceedings before the People's Court. Parts of these proceedings (like those on other days) have survived as film documentation. There is no more convincing proof of the injustice of these proceedings than these film scenes. The defendants are visibly exhausted from the interrogations and abuse. Freisler had them brought before the court in tattered clothes, accompanied every step of the way by two policemen. None of the defendants was allowed to speak without interruption, if he was even permitted to speak at all. The defense attorneys were not prepared to give their clients any meaningful assistance. All eight defendants were sentenced to death and brought to Plötzensee for execution immediately after the verdict was pronounced. There, the executions began as so-called special actions and caused fear and unrest in the entire prison.



Erwin von Witzleben.

On August 8, Erwin von Witzleben, Erich Hoepner, Hellmuth Stieff, Albrecht von Hagen, Paul von Hase, Robert Bernardis, Friedrich Karl Klausning, and Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg died by hanging. Inmate Viktor von Gostomski was on duty in the Plötzensee prison library and later recorded his observations:

"Murmurs of a special action went through the building. Special action - that meant prominent people. Wardens spoke of a major event. I assumed they were men involved with the 20th of July. All the prisoners were locked in their cells at about six in the evening. Nobody worked anymore. Even we librarians were in our cells. We placed the table under the window and peeked out into the courtyard. It was probably about seven o'clock. The heavy iron gates of the prison opened. Men in striped prison clothes walked out with their hands tied, their bare feet in wooden shoes, and their heads bare. Each of them was led by two wardens. But they walked upright; they did not need any support. A lot of civilians walked behind the condemned men, probably Gestapo. SS men were filming. A warden spotted us at the window. He shouted, 'Get away from the windows!' We held up a little mirror so that we could keep watching. How much time had passed? Ten minutes, or was it fifteen? I was too excited to notice. This was the special action. Wooden shoes clacked again. Again the sad procession. They were coming from within the prison. Probably the death warrant had been read. One after the other was led into the execution shed, hands tied behind his back and jacket loosely thrown over. It took about five minutes, and then it was the next one's turn. The Gestapo people were in the shed, and so was the cameraman. The whole thing was over within a good forty minutes."

In the eyes of the court, all eight convicts were associated with the military conspiracy. Field Marshal Erwin von Witzleben, who like Colonel-General Ludwig Beck had conspired against Hitler since 1938, had been slated to assume the post of commander in chief of the armed forces according to the written plans of the



Carl Friedrich Goerdeler.



Ludwig Beck.

military opposition. Colonel-General Erich Hoepner had Major General Hellmuth Stieff were also among the major military conspirators involved in the planning. Business attorney Albrecht von Hagen, who was not a career military officer, had helped procure explosives for an earlier assassination attempt. Staff officers Friedrich Karl Klausing and Robert Bernardis assumed liaison duties within the scope of Operation Valkyrie. The plans for this operation had been worked out by General Friedrich Olbricht, who was immediately shot on July 20, 1944, and his chief of staff Colonel Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim in the Bendler Block. Lieutenant General Paul von Hase was the commandant of the city of Berlin and the superior officer of a National Socialist major who disobeyed orders and prevented the government quarter from being sealed off and the National Socialist leaders in Berlin arrested.

Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg, who together with Helmuth James Graf von Moltke formed the core of the Kreisau Circle, was executed at a time when the special commission's investigators had not yet realized the significance of this group. Moltke had already been in custody for a good six months because he had been implicated in the investigations involving former German emissary Otto Carl Kiep. However, the Gestapo was unaware of Moltke's leading role in the Kreisau Circle and of the group's connection with the planning of the assassination attempt, in which he was not involved due to religious reasons.

The Gestapo also failed to grasp the full significance of the roles of two victims executed in Plötzensee two days later after being sentenced to death. Berthold Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, a specialist in international law and senior naval staff judge, was not merely the brother of the conspirator Stauffenberg, murdered by July 20, 1944. Berthold had established contacts to the military and civilian opposition far earlier than his brother. Administrative legal specialist Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg, who had been recalled to military service as a first lieutenant in the reserves, was involved in the drafts of a new constitution prepared by the group around Carl Friedrich Goerdeler, the former mayor of Leipzig. He also established contact between the various oppositional circles. After the coup, either Schulenburg or Social Democrat Julius Leber was to become minister of the interior under the new government (Document p. 74).



Peter Graf Yorck von Wartenburg.

More conspirators died between August 15 and 25, 1944, in Plötzensee. Among them were Berlin police chief Wolf Heinrich Graf von Helldorf, who for years had been a staunch National Socialist, various military officers, and diplomat Hans-Bernhard von Haeften, brother of Werner von Haeften. Otto Carl Kiep was also sentenced with the conspirators of the assassination attempt and executed. One of the central figures in the Kreisau Circle was Adam von Trott zu Solz, who saw himself as the foreign policy ambassador of the opposition and wanted to initiate negotiations with the enemies after a successful coup. He was executed in Plötzensee on August 26, 1944.



Helmuth James Graf von Moltke.

Carl-Heinrich von Stülpnagel, the former military commander in France, was convicted on August 30, 1944. Operation Valkyrie went as planned in his military district in Paris on July 20, 1944, and the local SS and Gestapo commanders were arrested before it became apparent that Hitler was still alive. Colonels Eberhard Finck and Hans-Otfried von Linstow, who had both been stationed in Paris, and Lieutenant Colonel Karl Heinz Rahtgens, a relative of Field Marshal Hans Günther von Kluge, Supreme Commander West, died on the same day as Stülpnagel. Kluge refused to support the conspirators on July 20, 1944, although they thought they had one him over to their cause.

The seven conspirators executed on September 4, 1944, were among the intelligence experts and liaison officers designated in the Valkyrie orders for the individual military districts. Four days later, diplomat Ulrich von Hassell and military officer Ulrich Graf Schwerin von Schwanefeld died along with two officers of the General Staff. Hassell had attempted to establish contact with British foreign minister Lord Halifax in 1940 and had the so-called "Arosa Memorandum" delivered to him, which described the ideas of the German opposition regarding a peace oriented toward the Western powers. On the same day, Catholic lawyer Josef Wirmer was executed. During his trial, Wirmer had faced Freisler, presiding judge of the People's Court, with superior serenity, as is documented in a surviving film sequence.



Ulrich von Hassell.



Wilhelm Leuschner.

Catholic clergyman Hermann Wehrle was among those executed on September 14, 1944. His only involvement in the conspiracy of July 20, 1944, was that he had heard of the planned assassination attempt in a confession and did not advise against it, but left the question of conscience up to the individual. When Ludwig Freiherr von Leonrod cited this advice in court, Wehrle was called as a witness. Shortly after that, he himself was charged as an accessory to the crime and sentenced to death. His execution took place three weeks after Leonrod's.

On September 29, 1944, labor union activist and Social Democrat Wilhelm Leuschner was among those to die. Like his fellow party member Julius Leber, Leuschner played a key role in Carl Friedrich Goerdeler's negotiations for participation of Weimar Republic labor union leaders in a new government. After the deaths of several liaison officers executed on October 12 and 13, Social Democratic educator Adolf Reichwein suffered the same fate on October 20. In his discussions and writings, Reichwein had been a driving force behind the Kreisau Circle. Like Leber, Reichwein was already in custody on July 20, 1944, because his contact with the leaders of the illegal German Communist Party had been betrayed by an informer among the Communists.

The former German ambassador in Moscow, Friedrich-Werner Graf von der Schulenburg, was executed on November 10, 1944. He or Hassell was to have assumed the office of foreign minister under the new government. On November 14, 1944, the first members of a group were executed that had formed in Cologne around former Catholic labor union leaders Bernhard Letterhaus and Nikolaus Gross. Carl Friedrich Goerdeler had included this group in the planning of the coup. The executions on November 30, 1944, concluded another harrowing case involving a married couple, Elisabeth and Erich Gloeden, and Elisabeth Gloeden's mother, Elisabeth Kuznitsky. These three people were murdered for doing nothing more than hiding fugitive General Fritz Lindemann at the request of a friend. They were sentenced to death for doing so.

Former Social Democrat member of parliament Julius Leber was executed on January 5, 1945. Like his friends and sympathizers Theodor Haubach and Carlo Mierendorff, he had been forced to spend several years in concentration camps. After his release, he established new contacts to former Social Democrats and communicated closely with the Kreisau Circle around Moltke and Yorck. Moltke and Haubach were murdered in Plötzensee on January 25, 1945, together with eight other conspirators, among them Nikolaus Gross and former Württemberg state president Eugen Bolz. Educator Hermann Kaiser, who used his extensive travels through Germany to establish contacts for Goerdeler, also died on this day.



Julius Leber.



Adam von Trott zu Solz.

Among the last conspirators of July 20, 1944, to be executed were Alfred Delp, Johannes Popitz, and Carl Friedrich Goerdeler. Alfred Delp, a Jesuit priest, was very deeply involved in the Kreisau Circle. Like his fellow brothers Lothar König and Augustin Rösch, he was among the primary authors of the Kreisau Circle's reflections on social policy. Despite being handcuffed and strictly prohibited from doing so, he wrote hundreds of pages about theological and philosophical issues during his long imprisonment in the Lehrter Strasse jail, which were successfully smuggled out with the help of various people. For the brief period, he was interned in the Tegel prison along with the Protestant prisoners Moltke, Eberhard Bethge, and Eugen Gerstenmaier. Here they further developed the fundamental ecumenical convictions that had influenced the writings of the Kreisau Circle.

Former Prussian minister of finance Johannes Popitz, who had assumed his office in April 1933 and held high government offices even after the dissolution of the German states, always remained a controversial figure among the conspirators of July 20, 1944. As a member of the conservative Mittwochsgesellschaft in Berlin, he drafted a "Provisional Basic Law of the State," a conservative document that was rejected by the other resistance circles. Popitz even trusted the SS under Heinrich Himmler to cooperate in the coup. When he was arrested after July 20, 1944, even his personal ties to Himmler were of no help to him.



The execution site,
February 1955.

Dedication of the monument
"To the victims of Hitler's dictatorship
during the years 1933-1945"
on September 14, 1952.



Carl Friedrich Goerdeler died in Plötzensee on February 2, 1945, as one of the last of the major conspirators. After spectacularly resigning as mayor of Leipzig in 1937, he became active in developing a resistance network from 1938 on. This network was later responsible for planning the attempt on Hitler's life. Goerdeler criticized the National Socialist economic and armaments policy in memoranda and plans and presented his hotly debated proposals for a new order after Hitler's fall from power. As one of the masterminds of the conspiracy, he was slated to assume the office of chancellor. Even before July 20, 1944, the Gestapo had harbored suspicions against Goerdeler, who went underground shortly before the assassination attempt. After the coup failed, he remained in hiding and initially succeeded in evading the Gestapo, only to be betrayed and arrested later. Following his death sentence on September 8, 1944, the Gestapo continued to hold him in custody for several months in order to extract information from him about the extent of the conspiracy.

The historic site of Plötzensee serves to remind us of all of these people. This remembrance includes both the victims of National Socialism's inhuman penal practice as well as those who consciously and decisively contributed to resistance against the National Socialist regime. Their desires and goals for a "different Germany" cannot be reduced to a single formula. Yet they share the hope of those born later. We, too, owe our future to them.

**From the Exception
to the Rule:
The Death Penalty in the
Third Reich**

The Reich Minister of Justice initially designated fourteen prisons as execution sites in 1936. By 1945, these had increased to 21 execution sites. Circular order of December 28, 1936:

Der Reichsminister der Justiz

4417 - III a 29613/36

* Berlin W B, den 28./¹⁴ Dezember 1936
Wilhelmstraße 65
A 1 Jäger 0044

An

- a) den Herrn Reichsanwalt
bei dem Volkgerichtshof,
- b) die Herren Generalstaatsanwälte

Nachrichtlich

dem Herrn Reichsgerichtspräsidenten,
dem Herrn Obergerichtsanwalt,
dem Herrn Präsidenten des Volkgerichtshofs-
und
dem Herren Oberlandeegerichtspräsidenten
(mit Überstücken für die Landgerichts-
präsidenten).

Vertraulich !

5/223

Betrifft: Vollziehung der Todesstrafe.

Anlagen: Überstücke für die
Oberstaatsanwälte.

Im Anschluß an die Rundverfügung vom 22. Oktober 1935
- III a 19569/35 - bestimme ich folgendes:

1. Die Todesstrafe ist künftig im ganzen Reichsgebiet mittels des Fallbeiles zu vollziehen, sofern die Reichsregierung nicht im Einzelfall anordnet, daß das Urteil durch Erhängen zu vollstrecken ist (§ 2 des Gesetzes vom 29. März 1935 - Reichsgesetzbl. I S. 151 -).

Die in einzelnen Bezirken zur Zeit noch geltenden entgegenstehenden Vorschriften verlieren hierdurch ihre Bedeutung.

2. Da der Transport des Fallbeiles sowie die Vorbereitungen für seine Aufstellung die Geheimhaltung gefährden, an vielen Orten auch eine geeignete Richtstätte nicht zur Verfügung steht, sind die Vollstreckungen künftig nur an bestimmten Orten vorzunehmen, und zwar in den nachstehend aufgeführten Vollzugsanstalten, soweit das erkennende Gericht des ersten Rechtszuges in den jeweils angegebenen Bezirken seinen Sitz hat:

- a) in der Strafanstalt Berlin-Plötzensee für den Kammergerichtsbezirk, den Oberlandeegerichtsbezirk Stettin und die Landgerichtsbezirke Meseritz, Schneidemühl, Neustrelitz, Güstrow, Rostock;

b)

"1. In the future, the death penalty shall be carried out throughout the territory of the Reich by means of the guillotine, insofar as the Reich government does not specifically stipulate execution of the sentence by hanging ...

"2. Since transportation of the guillotine and the preparations for its erection could endanger secrecy and many locations lack a suitable execution site, the executions shall be performed only at certain locations in the future, namely the correctional institutions listed below, insofar as the adjudicating trial court is located within one of the respective districts listed:

"a) in the prison Berlin-Plötzensee for the appellate court district of Berlin, the state supreme court district of Stettin, and the state court districts Meseritz, Schneidemühl, Neustrelitz, Güstrow, Rostock; ..."

- b) im Strafgefängnis Breslau für den Oberlandesgerichtsbezirk Breslau;
- c) im Buchturm Butzbach für die Oberlandesgerichtsbezirke Barmstadt, Frankfurt a.M. und Kassel;
- d) im Untersuchungsgefängnis Dresden für den Oberlandesgerichtsbezirk Dresden und den Landgerichtsbezirk Torgau;
- e) im Untersuchungsgefängnis Hamburg-Stadt für die Oberlandesgerichtsbezirke Hamburg und Kiel und die Landgerichtsbezirke Schwerin, Lüneburg und Stade;
- f) im Gefängnis Hannover für die Oberlandesgerichtsbezirke Celle (ohne Landgerichtsbezirke Lüneburg und Stade), Oldenburg, Braunschweig und die Landgerichtsbezirke Bielefeld, Paderborn, Stendal, Magdeburg und Halberstadt;
- g) im Gefängnis Köln für die Oberlandesgerichtsbezirke Köln, Düsseldorf und Hamm (ohne Landgerichtsbezirke Bielefeld und Paderborn);
- h) im Gefängnis Königsberg für den Oberlandesgerichtsbezirk Königsberg und den Landgerichtsbezirk Elbing;
- i) im Strafgefängnis München-Stadelheim für die Oberlandesgerichtsbezirke München, Bamberg und Nürnberg;
- k) im Untersuchungsgefängnis Stuttgart für die Oberlandesgerichtsbezirke Stuttgart, Karlsruhe und Zweibrücken;
- l) im Gerichtgefängnis Weimar für den Oberlandesgerichtsbezirk Jena und die Landgerichtsbezirke Nordhausen, Erfurt, Naumburg, Halle und Dessau.

Ich behalte mir vor, im Einzelfall eine abweichende Anordnung zu treffen.

3. Der Verurteilte ist grundsätzlich alsbald nach Rechtskraft des Todesurteils in die zur Vornahme der Hinrichtung bestimmte Vollzugsanstalt überzuführen. Vor der Überführung soll ihm Gelegenheit gegeben werden, mit seinem Verteidiger wegen der Einreichung eines Gnadengesuchs Rücksprache zu nehmen.

Eignet sich die in Nr.2 bestimmte Vollzugsanstalt nicht zur dauernden Unterbringung weiblicher Verurteilter, so sind diese einseitig in eine in möglicher Nähe des Vollstreckungsorts gelegene andere Vollzugsanstalt überzuführen.

Herrn

Ministerialdirigent Nettgenberg.

351

Nach fernmündlicher Mitteilung des GStA, b.d.KG.
setzen sich die Hinrichtungszahlen in Plötzensee wie folgt
zusammen:

1938	21 VGH.
	12 RKG.
	16 KG.
	<u>7 ausserh. d. KG.</u>
zus.	56
1939	31 VGH.
	47 RKG.
	13 KG.
	<u>3 ausserh. d. KG.</u>
zus.	94
1940 (1.1.-6.4.)	11 VGH.
	33 RKG.
	15 KG.
	<u>7 ausserh. d. KG.</u>
zus.	66

Bitte um Ihre Verfügung auf die gewünschte Weise sehr erz. B.
Berlin, den 8. April 1940

Gyngöner

From 1933 on, the number of executions increased every year. Initial statistics for the first few months of 1940 showed a steep increase. Administrative memorandum of April 8, 1940.

In the fall of 1942, the executions in Plötzensee were shifted from the early morning into the evening. The bodies were given to the Institute of Anatomy and Biology of the Friedrich Wilhelm University. Another execution site was to be established to accommodate the increasing number of executions. Letter from the public prosecutor at the appellate court of October 23, 1942.

"I. It is desired that the execution of death sentences in Plötzensee be shifted to the evening, specifically to 20:00 hours, one specific reason being the disturbances that can occur at night as a result of air raids. Professor Stieve agreed to this and stated that the bodies could then be picked up the same evening and brought to the Anatomic Institute, although the Anatomic Institute has already



fulfilled it cadaver requirements for purposes of research and teaching in the coming semester. A later time would not be acceptable to the Anatomic Institute because otherwise the processing of the cadavers for research purposes would extend late into the night so that the physicians involved would no longer be able to go home by public transportation. Professor Stieve requested that we check whether

the Reich judicial administration could assume the costs of the cadaver cases (RM 17.50 per coffin). Otherwise the Anatomic Institute would be forced to restrict itself to accepting only the cadavers it actually requires. I feel it is advisable, and I hereby request implicit authorization, to procure cadaver cases (under "miscellaneous execution costs A 6 33-5") in order to avoid difficulties in removing

the bodies. If the Anatomic Institute would no longer accept the bodies, they would have to be turned over to the police in coffins. This would entail difficulties with respect to burial."

die Leichenkisten zu beschaffen (unter „Sonstige Vollstreckungskosten A 6 33-5“), um Schwierigkeiten hinsichtlich der Fortführung der Leichen zu vermeiden. Wenn das Anatomische Institut die Leichen nicht mehr abnehmen würde, müssten sie der Polizei in die Hände übergeben werden. Hieraus würden sich Schwierigkeiten hinsichtlich der Bestattung ergeben. Nachträglich habe ich dem wackeligen Bearbeiter des Oberreichsanwalts beim Volkgerichtshof erfahren, daß sich der Sachverhalt insofern geändert hat, als doch nicht die Möglichkeit bestehe, daß das Anatomische Institut alle Leichen abnehmen könne. Der Sachbearbeiter beim Oberreichsanwalt beim Volkgerichtshof, Erster Staatsanwalt Dr. Wrede, hat mich wissen lassen, daß diesbezüglich noch Verhandlungen schwebten, über deren wahrscheinlichen günstigen Verlauf noch Mitteilung ergehen werde. Von dieser Mitteilung bei mir eingegangen ist, werde ich weiter berichten.

Als Zeitpunkt der Verkündung der bevorstehenden Vollstreckung an den Verurteilten bittet der Anstaltsvorstand 13 Uhr festzusetzen, sodaß der Zeitraum zwischen Verkündung und Vollstreckung nicht, sondern nur 7 Stunden betragen würde. Der Anstaltsvorstand hält mit Rücksicht auf den Betrieb des Gefängnisses, wie Essensausgabe und Besucherverkehr, eine Verkündung vor 13 Uhr nicht für möglich.

II. Aus der Verlegung der Zeitpunkte für die Verkündung und Vollstreckung in die Tageszeit von 13 bis nach 20 Uhr ergibt sich, daß die Aufsichtsbeamten, die mit der Beaufsichtigung der Verurteilten und den Vorbereitungen der Hinrichtungen betraut sind, die nur für Nachträglichkeit dieser Art nach dem Erlaß des Reichsministers der Justiz vom 23. Mai 1939 - IIIa-1 481 - vorgesehene Bieferung mit Nahrungsmitteln und Genussmitteln nicht mehr erhalten können. Infolge der stark angestiegenen Zahl der Hinrichtungen ist die Fließensutteilung, eine Zuteilung von Lebensmitteln aus dem freien Handel für diese Zwecke nicht mehr möglich, sodaß die für die Aufsichtsbeamten benötigten Lebensmittel aus den Zuteilungen an die Gefangenenverpflegung entnommen werden müssten. Bei der Ernährungslage der Gefangenen und dem gesteigerten Bedarf der Aufsichtsbeamten infolge der größeren Zahl der Hinrichtungen ist dies fernerhin nicht mehr möglich. Ich bitte daher, anstelle der Lebensmittelzuteilung eine Geldabfindung für die im Erlaß vom 23. Mai 1939 genannten Beamten einzuführen.

III. Bisher wurden für je 1 Verurteilten 2 Aufsichtsbeamte zur Beaufsichtigung von der Zeit der Vollstreckungsverkündung bis

gr

49/3

es zugeteilt. Trotz Heranziehung von Aufsichtspersonal nach aus anderen Berliner Vollzugsanstalten ergeben sich wachsende Schwierigkeiten, da die Zahl der Vollstreckungen dauernd stieg; in einer der letzten Wochen waren es z.B. 47. Ich bitte daher, damit einverstanden zu sein, daß künftighin nach Möglichkeit, unter Berücksichtigung der Persönlichkeit der einzelnen Delinquenten, mit weniger Aufsichtskräften auskommen wird, und zwar indem nicht mehr je 2, sondern für je 2 nebeneinander liegende Delinquentenzellen für die Zeit von der Verkündung bis zur Vollstreckung nur 3 Beamte (je einer in den 2 Zellen und einer auf dem Flur vor den 2 Zellen) eingeteilt werden sollen.

IV. Infolge der Vermehrung der Vollstreckungen und der Vollstreckungstermine ist die Einteilung eines Beamten des gehobenen Dienstes für die Hinrichtungen von Verkündung bis zur Vollstreckung inner mehr zu einer höheren Belastung der Flötzenssee Beamten des gehobenen Dienstes geworden. Der Vorstand des Strafgefängnisses Flötzenssee hat deshalb bei mir angeregt, zu erwägen, ob nicht für diesen Dienst eine Entlastung durch Kommandierung von Beamten des gehobenen Dienstes aus anderen Berliner Anstalten erfolgen kann. Bei der Personallage in den Berliner Anstalten ist es mir unmöglich, dieser Anregung näher zu treten. Die am Zahl Minderer gering bemessenen Beamten des gehobenen Dienstes, die nach den zahlreichen Einberufungen zum Heeresdienst und Abordnungen den meist stark überfüllten Anstalten noch verblieben sind, sind durch dringende Dienstgeschäfte derartig in Anspruch genommen, daß ich ohne schwere Gefährdung eines geordneten Dienstbetriebes niemand mehr auch nur für verübergerende Zeit seiner Tätigkeit entlassen kann. Die Belastung der Flötzenssee Beamten des gehobenen Dienstes durch die Teilnahme an den Hinrichtungen wird im Kauf genommen werden müssen. Ich bitte aber zu erwägen, ob nicht auch diesen Beamten, ebenso wie den Aufsichtsbearbeitern, eine geldliche Vergütung für ihre zusätzliche Tätigkeit gewährt werden kann.

V. Die große Zahl der Vollstreckungen in Flötzenssee legt die Frage nahe, ob nicht die Entlastung der Anstalt durch Schaffung einer weiteren Vollstreckungsstätte herbeigeführt werden kann. Jeweils erscheint es untragbar, Flötzenssee durch Vermehrung seiner Zuständigkeit noch mehr zu belasten etwa dadurch, daß ein Teil der in Brandenburg vorzunehmenden Vollstreckungen auf Flötzenssee übertragen wird. Die Grenze der Leistungsfähigkeit ist für Flötzenssee, wo sich z.Zt. 216 zum Tode verurteilte Gefangene befinden,

voll

voll erreicht. Vollstreckungen, die bisher in Brandenburg erfolgten, können auch dann nicht von Plötzensee übernommen werden, wenn die Verurteilten erst am Tage der Vollstreckung nach Plötzensee übergeführt werden würden.

In Vertretung
gen. P o t j a n
Oberstaatsanwalt.



Beglaubigt:

Laukonig
Justizangestellte.

1. Vorwerk:

101

Es ist damit zu rechnen, daß in nächster Zeit mehrere Todesurteile durch Erhängen vollzogen werden müssen:

a Der französische Kriegsgefangene Jumel ist durch Urteil des Gerichts des Divisionskommandos z.b.V. Nr.409 in Kassel vom 25.7.42 zum Tode verurteilt worden. Der Chef des GEW hat am 21.8.1942 den Vollzug der Todesstrafe durch Erhängen angeordnet. Das Gericht hat den GStA in Frankfurt a.M. ersucht, die Strafvollstreckung zu übernehmen. Das Urteil darf nicht vor Ablauf des 24.12. 1942 vollstreckt werden.

auf Anfrage!

b Durch Urteil des V.G.H. vom 27.11.1942 ist der frühere Marineoffizier Elots wegen Hoch- und Landesverrats zum Tode verurteilt worden. Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels hat angeordnet, die Strafe durch Erhängen zu vollziehen. Es wird die Entscheidung des Führers herbeigeführt.

Def. Bergmann

Ba 55/43 Y

Sept 4/43 Y

c Das Luftfahrtministerium hat heute fernmündlich angekündigt, daß im Laufe der nächsten Woche ^{einige} Todesurteile des Reichskriegsgerichts wegen Landesverrats zu erwarten seien. Der Führer werde voraussichtlich Erhängung anordnen, um deren unfortige Durchführung die Justizbehörden ersucht werden sollen.

d Gestern hat Ministerialdirektor Dr. Lehmann (GEW) fernmündlich mitgeteilt, daß mit weiteren Erhängungen zu rechnen sei. (Es ist allerdings möglich, daß damit die Fälle a c gemeint waren).

Erhängungen werden bisher nur im Warthegau vorgenommen. Nach einer fernmündlichen Mitteilung des KStA Michael-Posen wird dort die Vollstreckung in umschlossenen Räumen durch Beamte des Strafvollzuges ausgeführt, die der Reihe nach sämtlich zu diesem Dienst herangezogen werden. Der Verurteilte wird auf eine etwa 75 cm hohe Bühne gebracht, zu der 3 Stufen hinaufführen. Die Bühne ist mit Klapptüren versehen. Unter der Decke läuft eine Rolle mit dem Strick, der dem Verurteilten als Schlinge um den Hals gelegt wird. Die Klapptüren werden geöffnet. Der Verurteilte fällt dadurch etwa 60 cm in die Tiefe und ist sofort ~~tot~~ *tot* (ausgelöst durch einen ...). Der

4417-B a 49647.42.

At the request of Reich Minister of Justice Otto Thierack, the execution shed in Plötzensee was equipped with eight iron hooks in December 1942 to permit simultaneous execution of several persons by hanging.

On December 22, 1942, Arvid Harnack, Harro and Libertas Schulze-Boysen, and other members of the so-called Red Orchestra were hanged. Memorandum, December 12, 1942:

"It is to be expected that in the near future several death sentences will have to be carried out by hanging:

"a The French prisoner of war Jumel has been sentenced to death by the court of the division command for special duty in verdict no. 409 in Kassel, dated July 25, 1942. The Chief of Armed Forces Supreme Command ordered

Der Aufbau solcher Einrichtungen in anderen Teilen des Reiches erfordert Zeit. Man wird sich daher, wenn die Vollstreckungen alsbald durchgeführt werden sollen, zunächst mit einfacheren Vorrichtungen begnügen müssen. Die Abteilung hält es für zweckmäßig, daß die Erhängungen nach Möglichkeit in den jetzigen Richtsälen vorgenommen werden. Dort kann ein Haken in einen Pfosten geschlagen und mit einer Schlinge versehen werden. Auf Dauer gesehen, würde es wohl richtiger sein, in einigen Städten ähnliche Einrichtungen zu schaffen wie in Jena.

Die Abteilung schlägt vor, Scharfrichter mit der Ausführung zu betrauen. Sie können im Warthegau die Einrichtungen besichtigen und einigen Erhängungen beistehen, um auf diese Weise die erforderlichen Kenntnisse und Erfahrungen zu sammeln. Wüßten jedoch die in Aussicht stehenden Erhängungen sofort durchgeführt werden, so wird es nicht zu umgehen sein, einen oder mehrere Beamte des Strafvollzuges mit der Durchführung dieser Aufgabe zu betrauen.

2.) Herrn Minister

mit der Bitte um Kenntnisnahme.
Die Abteilung steht zum Vortrag
zur Verfügung.

Berlin, den 12. Dezember 1942



execution of the death sentence by hanging on August 21, 1942. The court requested the office of the senior public prosecutor in Frankfurt/Main to execute the sentence. The sentence may not be executed until after December 24, 1942.

"b The former Navy officer Klotz has been sentenced to death for treason and high treason by

verdict of the People's Court of November 27, 1942. Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels suggested that the sentence be executed by hanging. The Führer's decision is pending.

"c The Aviation Ministry today reported by telephone that several death sentences for treason are to be expected from the Reich Military Court within the next week. The Führer will probably order

death by hanging, which the judicial authorities are to be requested to carry out immediately."

12-86	Name	Ergeb. d. d. d.	Ergeb. d. d. d.	Ergeb. d. d. d.
351	Gottknecht Max	Jan. 1934		
352	Rischat. d. d. d.	Jan. 1934		
353	Redlich. d. d. d.	Jan. 1934		
354	Schürmann. Karl	Jan. 1934		
355	Reibel. Wilhelm H. G. Kay	1934		
113. Mai 1943				
	Grüne von Brockdorf, d. d. d.			7/296
2374	Schreier, Karl			7/298 - 7/298
2374	Sudorf, Wilhelm			7/244 - 7/289
2477	Burmann, Walter			7/286 - 7/286
2478	Kiepel, d. d. d.			7/281 - 7/287
2478	Brockhoff, d. d. d., Walter			7/287 - 7/294
2498	Sittwoldt, John			7/289 - 7/290
2498	Sittwoldt, d. d. d.			7/292 - 7/292
2498	Sittwoldt, d. d. d.			7/297 - 7/297
2500	Strohmeier, d. d. d.			7/291 - 7/291
2500	Strohmeier, d. d. d.			7/292 - 7/292
2507	Strohmeier, d. d. d.			7/294 - 7/294
2507	Strohmeier, d. d. d.			7/295 - 7/295
H. d. d.				
77	Kiatsch, d. d. d. Nr. 4107			
372	Kiatsch, d. d. d. Prof. Dr. d. d. d.			
	Gottknecht Max	1934 - 1932		
	Frenzel	1917		
	Kernspoke	1930		
	de Wit	1959		
H. d. d.				
	Keller	1934 - 1937		
	Reibel	1937 - 1943		

On May 13, 1943, thirteen members of the Harnack/Schulze-Boysen organization were murdered at Hitler's personal order. Plötzensee library book with entry of May 13, 1943.

Death sentences were passed increasingly often in Germany during the war. Offenses punishable as treason or high treason accounted for most these. Acts of resistance in occupied territories were also frequently punishable by death. Information service of the Reich Minister of Justice, early 1944:

"The Number of Death Sentences since the Beginning of the War.

This period of time has produced the following totals: ..."

"Pursuant to the Führer's directive to the judiciary to resort to the most drastic measures in combating traitors of the people, saboteurs, social pests, violent criminals, and antisocial habitual criminals during the war, the number of death sentences has steadily risen since the war broke out.

**INFORMATIONSDIENST
DES REICHSMINISTERS DER JUSTIZ**

BEITRAG 46

74
G e h e i m

Die Zahl der Todesurteile seit Kriegsbeginn.

Entsprechend dem der Justiz vom Führer erteilten Auftrag, gegen Volkverräter, Saboteure, Volksschädlinge, Gewaltverbrecher und sonstige Gewohnheitsverbrecher im Kriege mit den schärfsten Mitteln durchzugreifen, hat die Zahl der Todesurteile seit Kriegsausbruch ständig zugenommen. Es ergeben sich für diese Zeit folgende Gesamtzahlen:

1939	99
(vom 1.9. - 31.12.1939)	
1940	926
1941	1292
1942	3660
1943	5336

Über die Verteilung der Todesurteile auf die einzelnen Straftaten unterrichtet folgende Übersicht für das Jahr 1943:

Hoch- und Landesverrat	1745	Todesurteile
Mord, Mordversuch und Gewaltverbrechen . .	250	"
Verbrechen gegen die Besatzungsmacht . . .	262	"
Verweigerung der Hilfe gegenüber Bombengeschädigten	3	"
Brennstiftung	33	"
Gefährliche Gewohnheitsverbrecher (Diebe, Betrüger, Ausnutzung der Verdunklung und der Kriegsverhältnisse).	958	"
Eisenbahndiebstahle	122	"
Ahrtreibung	1	"
Beraubung von Feldpostsendungen	136	"
Plünderung in bombengeschädigten Häusern .	162	"
Kriegswirtschaftsverbrechen	236	"
Sittlichkeitsverbrechen	114	"
Sabotage und Aufzässigkeit ausländischer Arbeiter	138	"
Waffenbesitz von Protektoratsangehörigen	39	"
Waffenbesitz von Polen	2	"
Handfunkverbrechen	11	"
zusammen	4232	Todesurteile

	4252	Todesurteile
Veruntreuung von NSV.-Geldern zum Nachteil von Bombengeschädigten	2	"
Wehrkraftersetzung	108	"
Betrug und Untreue zum Nachteil von Soldaten im Fronteinsatz	2	"
Sabotage im Protektorat	66	"
Wehrpflichtentziehung	19	"
Verbrechen gegen die VÖ. zum Schutze der Hinterwehnsammlung	3	"
Rassenverbrechen	4	"
Sonstige Verbrechen	6	"
Todesurteile aus den eingegliederten Ostgebieten	874	"
Gesamtzahl	5336	Todesurteile

Mass Executions
in Plötzensee:
The "Bloody Nights"
of September 1943

02/332

Vermerk:

Vermerk

59

In Begleitung von Herrn Obergeregierungsrat Eggensperger und Herrn Generalstaatsanwalt Hansen habe ich heute vormittag das vom letzten Luftangriff betroffene Gefängnis Plötzensee besichtigt. Zweck der Besichtigung war festzustellen, was mit den über 300 zum Tode verurteilten Häftlingen zu geschehen hat und zwar auch im Hinblick auf etwaige weitere Luftangriffe. Über die Gesamtzerstörung und Beschädigung in der Anstalt wird Abt. V einen Vermerk fertigen.

Im Einrichtungsraum war das Dach abgedeckt, der Fliesenfußboden teilweise zerstört und das Fall-beil vom Brand angegriffen, aus der Bettung ausgebrochen und lag am Boden. Wieweit es noch verwendungsfähig ist, muß eine nähere Untersuchung ergeben, mit der das Gefängnis Tegel bereits beauftragt ist. Unter der Voraussetzung, daß dieses oder ein anderes Beil in den nächsten Tagen intakt verfügbar ist, glaubt Obergeregierungsrat Voss mit den Mitteln der Anstalt die Einrichtungsvorrichtung spätestens in 14 Tagen wieder betriebsfähig zu haben. Gegebenenfalls muß allerdings in Kauf genommen werden, daß das Dach noch fehlt. Von der Vorrichtung zum Mängen ist die Querstange mit den verschiebbaren Haken noch vorhanden, fraglich ist aber, ob eine der Seitensäulen sicher ist; das soll durch eine nähere Untersuchung durch Bau-sachverständige noch festgestellt werden. In dem an der Hinrichtungsstätte angrenzenden Bau, in dem die zum Tode verurteilten Gefangenen einsaßen, ist soviel zerstört, daß Räumung notwendig war. Durch den Luftdruck, Detonieren der Sprengbomben sind die Zellentüren teilweise aufgesprungen, der Verschluss wurde dabei aus der Hand gerissen. Ein Teil der Außentüren ist ebenfalls aufgesprungen. Eigentliche Hexterseien oder Angriffe sind nicht erfolgt, obwohl die Gefangenen in großer Anzahl im Gebäude umherliefen. In der ersten Verwirrung und auch während des Angriffs sind 4 der zum Tode verurteilten Häftlinge mit Fesselung entwichen. Anscheinend hatten sie sich aus den zerstörten und brennenden Arbeitsbetrieben in der Dunkelheit Leitern besorgt. Zwei der Entwichenen sind inzwischen in den zahlreichen Lagern fremdvölkischer Arbeiter der näheren Umgebung ergriffen worden, obwohl sie von ihren französischen Landsleuten anscheinend begünstigt wurden. Nach den beiden anderen wird gefahndet. Die zum Tode verurteilten Häftlinge sind nunmehr in 2 Teilflügeln eines anderen Gebäudes untergebracht und zwar zu zweien oder vierten gemeinsam. Infolgedessen müssen provisorisch in anderen Teilen des Gebäudes

Häftlinge

In the night of September 3-4, 1943, Plötzensee prison was severely damaged in an air raid. Three days later, senior officials of the Reich Ministry of Justice and the Berlin public prosecutor's office inspected the damage. They recommended immediately executing all of the approximately three hundred condemned prisoners in Plötzensee. Memorandum, September 6, 1943.

02/333

- 2 -

Häftlinge in größerer Zahl zusammengelegt werden. Der Anstaltsleiter bestätigte mir, daß im Falle eines weiteren Falles von ähnlicher Wirkung weitere Anweisungsmöglichkeiten innerhalb der Anstalt nicht mehr bestehen. Er rühnte mir ferner ein, daß sehrwohl die Möglichkeit besteht, daß durch Sprengbomben ganze Mauerteile an den Außenmauern der Gebäude und an der Umwehrung zerstört werden, so daß die Gefangenen ins Freie strömen könnten. Ein großer Teil der Aufsichtsbesetzten sind Hilfsaufseher und über 60 Jahre alt. Maschinenpistolen und Handgranaten sind in der Anstalt nicht vorhanden. Während des Fliegerangriffs herrschte völlige Dunkelheit. Nach der Besichtigung halte ich folgende Maßnahmen für möglich und zweckmäßig:

- 1) Für weiter anfallende Hinrichtungen wird bis zur Reparatur der Hinrichtungsstätte die Straf- und Sicherungsanstalt Brandenburg für zuständig erklärt.
- 2) Das Gnadenverfahren für die in Plötzensee noch einsitzenden zum Tode verurteilten Häftlinge wird so beschleunigt, daß diese in den nächsten Tagen hingerichtet werden können (Listensystem?). In Betracht kommen im wesentlichen Häftlinge des Volksgerichtshofs. Im Übrigen sitzen nur Häftlinge ein, die vom hiesigen Sondergericht zum Tode verurteilt sind (nach roher Schätzung etwa 30); für diese wird das Gnadenverfahren durch bereits erteilte Anordnung des Generalstaatsanwalts beim Kammergericht aufs Äußerste beschleunigt. Die Vollstreckung könnte in der Jungfernhöhe auf Schießständen der Wehrmacht durch Polizei- oder Wehrmachtkommandos erfolgen. Der Transport zu den Schießständen (etwa 20 Minuten Fußweg) könnte durch geschlossene Gefangenenwagen der Strafanstalt Tegel vor sich gehen.

Abteilung V hat zugesagt, dem Strafanstalten Plötzensee und nach Möglichkeit auch Brandenburg so schnell wie möglich Maschinenpistolen zu liefern. Herr Generalstaatsanwalt Hamann erklärte mir, es bestehe Klarheit darüber, daß auf Gefangene, die im Falle eines Angriffs die leiseste Miene machten, sich zu entfernen, geschossen würde.

Berlin, den 6. September 1943

Wittmann

Herrn Minister

unter Bezugnahme auf die obliegenden von Herrn Ministerialdirektor Vollmer diktierete Niederschrift vorgelegt.

Der Leiter der Strafanstalt Tegel hat inzwischen mitgeteilt, daß das beschädigte Richtgerüst in etwa 1 Woche wiederhergestellt sein kann.

Nach dem Ergebnis der Besichtigung muß Plötzensee schnell und stark entlastet werden. Die Abteilung IV schlägt daher vor:

1. Neu anfallende Hinrichtungen werden vorerst in Brandenburg vorgenommen. Die Verurteilten werden unmittelbar nach dort hin überführt. Die Hinrichtungen nimmt der Berliner Scharfrichter vor.

2. Soweit die Verurteilten in Plötzensee einsitzen, muß nach Möglichkeit eine beschleunigte Gnadenentscheidung herbeigeführt werden. Das gilt vor allem für die Verurteilten des Volkgerichtshofs, die den wesentlichen Teil dieser Gefangenen ausmachen.

Die Beschleunigung kann in der Weise erreicht werden:

- a) Die in Hause bereits vorgelegten Gnadenberichte werden von Referenten sofort vorgelesen, und zwar auch diejenigen Sachen, in denen die Stellungnahme einer anderen Stelle bereits angefordert, aber noch nicht eingegangen ist.
- b) Soweit die Gnadenberichte noch nicht erstattet sind, trägt der Sachbearbeiter des Oberreichsanwalts die entscheidungsreifen Sachen vor.
3. Die Entscheidungen zu 2. werden in den nächsten Tagen durch Erschießen vollstreckt.

Berlin, den 7. September 1943

Beauftragung

7
4

The air raid on September 3-4, 1943, damaged the guillotine in Plötzensee, which had to be repaired in Tegel prison. As a result, officials in the Reich Ministry of Justice suggested on September 7, 1943, that death sentences be carried out in the prison in Brandenburg-Görden. At the same time, the public prosecutor ordered the execution of thirty-four prisoners whose clemency proceedings

had been completed. The convicts were to be hanged that very evening in Plötzensee.
Memorandum to the minister, September 7, 1943.

1. Vermerk:

Herrn Minister habe ich den wesentlichen Inhalt des anliegenden Vermerks von 8.9. um 10³⁰ Uhr telefonisch durchgesagt. Er bittet, die Vorträge bei Herrn Staatssekretär solange fortzusetzen, bis sämtliche Vollstreckungen, die n.Zt. möglich sind, erledigt sind. Herr Minister erkundigte sich ferner nach dem Ablauf der Geschwinde in der Anstalt Plötzensee beim letzten Bombenangriff. Schließlich bat Herr Minister, sichergestellt zu werden, daß nirgendwo im Reich eine größere Zahl der zum Tode Verurteilten an gefährdeten Orten zusammen kämen. Notfalls müßten alle zum Tode Verurteilten in ein festes Lager der SS gebracht werden, wo ihre Bewachung durch vollwertige Kräfte sichergestellt sei. Ich habe meine Auffassung dahin geäußert, das hätte ich n.Zt. noch nicht für erforderlich. Es werde genügen, wenn nur bestimmte, nicht besonders gefährdete Anstalten mit Hinrichtungsstätten betraut würden und wenn mit allen Mitteln darauf gedrückt werde, daß dort nie eine irgendwie beträchtliche Anzahl von Verurteilten zusammenströme. Sollte die immer noch zu papierene Arbeitsweise im Gnadenverfahren auf andere Weise nicht abzustellen sein, so müßten Notfalls auch die neuen Bestimmungen über das Gnadenverfahren in Todesachen aufgehoben werden; wir müßten uns dann darauf beschränken, uns bis auf weiteres, etwa binnen 3 bis 4 Tagen nach der Urteilverkündung, das abgesetzte Urteil mit Rechtskraftvermerk ohne alle weiteren Formalitäten übersenden zu lassen. Herr Minister bat, diese Möglichkeit im Auge zu behalten.

2. Herrn Ministerialdirigenten Wetgenberg und
Herrn Kammergerichtsrat Festphal
mit der Bitte um Kenntnisnahme *18.27*
19/

Berlin, den 8. September 1943

The executions in Plötzensee began on the evening of September 7, 1943. One hundred eighty-six people were hanged in the first night, including some for whom a death warrant had not yet been issued. In addition to the written death warrants presented by the public prosecutor, the Ministry of Justice relayed execution orders to Plötzensee by telephone after receiving oral confirmation of a decision in their

clemency proceedings. Errors occurred as a result of this practice. Reich Minister of Justice Otto Thierack was informed of all proceedings on September 8, 1943; in spite of outrageous cases in which the wrong prisoners were mistakenly put to death, he demanded that the executions continue. Memorandum, September 8, 1943.

187/22)	Eintracht Bremen	IV 7 ^{10a}	1725/43g
24) 13)	Kapfer Loth	}	IV 7 ^{10a} 1200/43 17 (off-)
27) 6)	Kapfer Loth		
28) 4)	Kohlschütter		
19) 14)	Ernst Meiner	IV 7 ^{10a}	5490/43g
25) 45)	Herrmann	}	IV 7 ^{10a} 5538/43g
26)	Frankfurt Regard		
28)	Herrmann		
23)	Albert Fick		
24) 161	Herrmann Fick	IV 7 ^{10a}	826/43g (Frankfurt)
25) 97)	Georg Gumbel	IV 7 ^{10a}	1535/43g (Frankfurt)
16) 98)	Herrmann Meißner	}	IV 7 ^{10a} 5491/43g
27)	Herrmann Frank		
28)	Anton Gumbel		
29)	Franz Horn		
30)	Max Frank		
31)	Walter Gumbel		
32)	Frankfurt Gumbel		
33) 11)	Walter Frank Gumbel	}	IV 7 ^{10a} 1687/43g
34)	Felix Frank Gumbel		
35)	Georg Frank Gumbel		

In the night of September 7-8, 1943, in Plötzensee, the public prosecutor supervised the execution of death sentences ordered by telephone by the Reich Ministry of Justice. The ministry initially recorded the convicts' names and the case numbers under which their clemency petitions were rejected in handwritten lists. These lists were later kept in a sealed envelope in the Reich Ministry of

Justice and a typewritten list was subsequently filed in the respective records its place. September 7-8, 1943.

Staatsanwalt Stoltz gab um 9 Uhr folgende Übersicht:

In 194 Fällen ist der Auftrag zur Vollstreckung erteilt worden.

154 Auftrag fernmündlich durchgegeben,
 32 Auftrag lag beim Oberreichsanwalt bereits vor,
 8 Auftrag lag beim Oberstaatsanwalt vor

 194

Von diesen 194 sind 180 vollstreckt.

Nicht vollstreckt sind

7 Frauen,
 1 Flüchtiger,
 6 sitzen nicht in Plötzensee ein

 14

Die Namen der Nichtvollstreckten:

I. Frauen:

1. Elisabeth Loef,
2. Genevieve Conelli,
3. Lucienne Regnant,
4. Renée Tamton,
5. Mathienne Flament,
6. Olga Brodianski,
7. Käthe Tuschella.

II. Flüchtiger:

Lucien Ruella,

III. So sitzen nicht ein:

1. Johann Hromádka,
2. Rudolf Prucha,
3. Johann Benes,
4. Leopold Wolfel,
5. Anton Koller (oder Ketter),
6. Egon Schmidt.

Außerdem

On the morning of September 8, 1943, prosecuting attorney Stoltz reported to the Reich Ministry of Justice about executions that had "mistakenly" taken place.

These were due to the confusing lists that the prison officials had spent the entire night compiling and appending by hand.

In spite of this, the executions were continued in the following nights as the remaining condemned

prisoners were put to death. In his report of a subsequent inquiry, appellate court public prosecutor Hanssen excuses the errors in part by stating that the Czech names in particular often sounded similar. Memorandum (interim report) from the public prosecutor, September 8, 1943.

Außerdem ist in folgenden 6 Fällen vollstreckt worden, obwohl ein Vollstreckungsauftrag nicht vorlag:

1. Franz Vichorec ,
2. Willem Vreeswyk ,
3. Erich Perbandt ,
4. Richard Buchwald ,
5. Erich Buchin ,
- + 6. Bedenek Pospizil .

Das Versehen ist auf folgende Weise entstanden: Auf Grund der fernmündlich durchgegebenen Vollstreckungsaufträge wurden die Personalakten der Anstalt herausgesucht, weil den Vollstreckungsleitern keine anderen Unterlagen zur Verfügung standen. Beim Herausuchen der Personalakten sind versehentlich auch die Personalakten der 6 Obengenannten herausgegeben und dem Vollstreckungsleitern übergeben worden, die daraufhin vollstreckt haben.

In der Anstalt sitzen jetzt noch 116 zum Tode Verurteilte ein, bei denen ein Vollstreckungsauftrag bisher nicht erteilt ist. Die Namen dieser 116 Männer werden in einer Liste zusammengestellt werden, aus der sich ergibt:

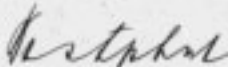
- a) Vor- und Zuname,
- b) Tag der Einlieferung,
- c) verurteilendes Gericht.

Die Liste wird in Laufe des frühen Vormittags überbracht werden.

Der Scharfrichter hat gebeten, nach Möglichkeit eine Vollstreckungspause von 24 Stunden einzulegen. Staatsanwalt Stolz ist zu erreichen unter

39 30 33.

Berlin, den 8. September 1943



11/11/43

1. In der Zeit vom 7. bis zum 12.9.1943 sind in Plötzensee über 250 Todesurteile vollstreckt. Die Wegschaffung der Leichen hat das anatomische Institut übernommen. Sie ist im wesentlichen durchgeführt durch die Institutsdienstler Paschall und Schmalbe. Die Arbeit war unso unangenehmer, als ein großer Teil der Leichen mehrere Tage im Freien (teilweise im Regen) liegen mußte. Der Oberinspektor Eichhorn (beim Generalstaatsanwalt beim Landgericht Berlin), der über Einzelheiten weitere Auskünfte geben könnte, hat angeregt, den beiden Institutsdienstlern aus Justizmitteln eine besondere Zuwendung in Geld zukommen zu lassen.

Nach Rücksprache mit Herrn Ministerialrat Anders habe ich Herrn Oberinspektor Eichhorn gebeten, bei dem Leiter des anatomischen Instituts anzusprechen, ob Bedenken bestehen, wenn dem Institut aus Justizmitteln eine Zuwendung von 400 RM überwiesen wird mit der Bitte, das Geld an die beteiligten Institutsdienstler zu verteilen.

Herr Oberinspektor Eichhorn hat mit Herrn Professor Dr. Stüwe, dem Leiter des anatomisch-biologischen Instituts der Universität Berlin, Berlin NW 7, Luisenstr. 56, gesprochen. Dieser hat gegen den vorgeschlagenen Weg keine Bedenken.

2. Herrn Ministerialdirigenten Hettgenberg
m.d.B.u.E.

3. Herrn Ministerialrat Anders

unter Bezugnahme auf die fernmündliche Rücksprache mit dem Anheingeben der weiteren Veranlassung übersandt.

Abteilung IV würde eine Zuwendung an die beiden Institutsdienstler sehr begrüßen. Die Arbeit lag im Interesse der Justiz.

Berlin, den 15. September 1943

K. Stroph

*früher übertragen von J. St. Berlin - inf. 22.8.43 inf. anw. 10.9.43 mit Anheing
des Abheingeben der weiteren Veranlassung übersandt
von 7. bis 12.9.43 von 200 bis 250 - inf. 10.9.43 - inf. anw. 10.9.43
inf. 10.9.43 - inf. 10.9.43 - inf. 10.9.43 - inf. 10.9.43
Ka 3137.43 r*

An inquiry was launched to investigate the embarrassing "procedural errors" following the approximately two hundred fifty executions from September 7-12, 1943.

However, neither the ministry officials involved nor the prison officials responsible for carrying out the sentences needed to fear any consequences. The Reich Ministry of Justice only found it necessary to correct the unfavorable impression

created by the delay in removing the bodies.
Memorandum from the public prosecutor, September 15, 1943.

**From the Death Sentence
to the Invoice of Expenses:
The Execution as an
Administrative Procedure**

10
Abschrift
2 2 2/44
5 J 16/44

In Namen des Deutschen Volkes !

In der Strafsache gegen
den Eisendreher Walter Erich Kluge aus Schmöln, geboren
am 11. September 1907 in Schmöln, zur Zeit in dieser Sache in
gerichtlicher Untersuchungshaft,

wegen Wehrkraftzersetzung
hat der Volksgerichtshof, 3. Senat, auf Grund der Hauptverhand-
lung vom 5. April 1944, an welcher teilgenommen haben

als Richter :

Volksgerichtsrat Lämle, Vorsitzender,
Kammergerichtsrat Dr. Reimers,
-Brigadeführer Bauskus,
Bereichsleiter Fischer,
Stadtrat Kaiser,

als Vertreter des Oberreichsanwalts :

Erster Staatsanwalt Görlich,

für Recht erkannt :

Der Angeklagte hat in einem Rüstungsbetrieb wiederholt den
Wunsch geäußert, daß wir den Krieg verlieren, damit dann die Bol-
schewisten ins Land kämen, denn der Kommunismus sei ein idealer
Zustand.

Der Angeklagte wird deshalb wegen Wehrkraftzersetzung,
Feindbegünstigung und Vorbereitung zum Hochverrat
zum Tode

verurteilt.

Die Ehrenrechte werden ihm für immer aberkannt.

Gründe :

The civilian criminal justice system alone passed over 16,500 death sentences during the Third Reich, of which over three-quarters were carried out. From the death sentence to the execution, the victim was subjected to a mercilessly bureaucratic administrative procedure. For example in April 1944, hoping for the war to end was sufficient for a person to be sentenced to death for subversion of national

defense and high treason, as was Communist metal lathe operator Walter Erich Kluge.
First page of the copy of the death sentence, April 1944:

"The defendant repeatedly expressed the wish in a munitions factory that we lose the war so that the Bolsheviks would come into the country because Communism is an ideal condition.

"The defendant is therefore sentenced to death for subversion of national defense, aiding the enemy, and acts preparatory to high treason.

"His civil rights are permanently forfeited."

- ✓ Abteilungsleiterin Else I m m e, Urteil vom 30.1.1943, wegen Feindbegünstigung;
- ✓ wissenschaftliche Assistentin Eva B u c h, Urteil vom 3.2.1943, wegen Vorbereitung eines hochverräterischen Unternehmens und Feindbegünstigung;
- ✓ Geschäftsinhaberin Anna K r a u s s, Urteil vom 12.2.1943, wegen Ersetzung der Wehrkraft;
- ✓ Ehefrau Ingeborg K u m m e r o w, Urteil vom 27.1.1943, wegen Beihilfe zur Spionage;
- ✓ Keramikerin Cato B o n t j e s v a n B e e k, Urteil vom 18.1.1943, wegen Beihilfe zur Vorbereitung des Hochverrats und zur Feindbegünstigung;
- ✓ Schülerin Liene B e r k o w i t s, Urteil vom 18.1.1943, wegen Beihilfe zur Vorbereitung des Hochverrats und zur Feindbegünstigung.

Ich lehne einen Gnadenerweis ab.

Der Chef des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht

Kunze

Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof.

Berlin, den 3. Dez. 1942
(Strafgefängnis Plötzensee Haus 11)

10 215 / 41

**Verkündung der bevorstehenden Vollstreckung
* des Todesurteils gegen:**

Hanno G Ü N T H E R.....

Gegenwärtige
als Vollstreckungsleiter:

Reichsanwalt Dr. F. F. A. R. M. M. A.

als Beamter der Geschäftsstelle:

Justizangestellter K a r p e

In Anwesenheit

- a) des Gefängnisbeamten Sekretär J H G e r,
 - b) des Anstaltsarztes Reg. Med. Rat Dr. S o h m i t,
 - c) des ev. Anstaltsgeistlichen Pfarrer O h n e
- d)

eröffnete der Vollstreckungsleiter dem Verurteilten um 13⁰⁰ Uhr
den Erlaß des Reichsministers der Justiz, daß von dem Gnadenrecht
kein Gebrauch gemacht worden sei, und teilte ihm ferner mit, daß
das Urteil heute um 20⁰⁰ Uhr vollstreckt werden werde.

Der Verurteilte verhielt sich während der
Verkündung ruhig und gefaßt.

Upon rejection of the clemency petition, the date and time of the execution were fixed and all participating parties were informed. A few hours before the execution, the convicted prisoners were told they had to die. In the document shown, the responsible public prosecutor, accompanied by other prison officials as regulations required, informed 21-year-old Hanno Günther, sentenced to death

as a member of the so-called Rütli Group, at 13:00 hours on December 3, 1942, that the execution would take place that evening at 20:00 hours. Announcement of pending execution, December 3, 1942.

Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof

Berlin-Platzensee, den 4. 6. 45
(Richtsätte des Strafgefängnisses)

1 J 55 /45

Vollstreckung des Todesurteils
gegen:

Emmi Z e h e d e n
.....

Gegenwärtig:

als Vollstreckungsleiter: ..

IGR.Dr.K.L.U.V.M.F.....

als Beamter der Geschäftsstelle:

Justizangestellter K a s p e r

Um 15⁰⁰ Uhr wurde die Verurteilte, die hands auf den
Hüften gefesselt, durch zwei Gefängnisbeamte vorgeführt. Der
Scharfrichter R u t i g e r aus B e r l i n stand mit seinen
drei Gehilfen bereit.

Anwesend war ferner:

der Gefängnisbeamte *P. Prof. Appelt*

Nach Feststellung der Personengleichheit der Vorgeführten
mit der Verurteilten beauftragte der Vollstreckungsleiter den
Scharfrichter mit der Vollstreckung. Die Verurteilte, die ruhig
und gefaßt war, ließ sich ohne Widerstreben auf das Fallbeilgerüst
legen, worauf der Scharfrichter die Enthauptung mit dem Fallbeil
ausführte und sodann meldete, daß das Urteil vollstreckt sei.

Die Vollstreckung dauerte von der Vorführung bis zur
Vollzugsmeldung 7 Sekunden.

W. Müller

The proceedings of every execution had to be recorded in a written report. The names of the persons executed and the parties present at the proceedings were recorded and the time of execution was noted. The assertion that the convicts were "calm and composed" was included in the text of the printed form. As here in the case Jehovah's Witness Emmy Zehden, who had hidden her foster son and two

other draft evaders, the execution with the guillotine lasted only a few seconds. Record of the execution on June 9, 1944.

The three officially designated executioners and their assistants were only permitted to perform executions upon receipt of a written warrant from the law enforcement authorities. On March 31, 1943, William Bauer was sentenced to death by the People's Court because he, "in the presence of a married couple whom he did not know personally, and therefore in public, attempted to subvert the

will of the German people to active self-defense, specifically with the statement that there were only two possibilities, either Hitler would kill us, or we would kill Hitler." Death warrant, September 2, 1943:

"Warrant.

"Executioner Röttger from Berlin is directed to execute William Bauer, sentenced to death in final judgement, with the guillotine."

**Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof**

Geschäftszeichen: 9 J 36/47g
(Bitte in der Antwort anhängen)

Berlin W 9, den 2. September 1943.
Ballinestr. 15
Fernsprecher:
25 63 41

A u f t r a g .

Der Scharfrichter **R ö t t g e r** aus Berlin wird beauftragt,
den rechtskräftig zum Tode verurteilten
W i l l i a m B a u e r
mit dem Fallbeil hinzurichten.

In Auftrage

1 J 149/39g.

Dem Inhaber dieser Karte wird gestattet, an
der Sonnabend, den 30. März 1940 um 8.00 Uhr
in dem Gefängnis Berlin-Plötzensee stattfindenden
Vollstreckung der Todesstrafe an dem

Emil Bone

teilzunehmen.

Berlin, den 20. März 1940.

Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof
im Auftrage



J. J. J.

h.

1 J 263/39g

Dem Inhaber dieser Karte wird gestattet, an der
Mittwoch, den 18. Dezember 1940 um 6 Uhr
in dem Gefängnis Plötzensee in Berlin stattfindenden
Vollstreckung der Todesstrafe an dem

Norman Schmetz

teilzunehmen.

Berlin, den 16.12. 1940.

Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof

im Auftrage

M. W.

h.

The execution regulations precisely specified which persons were permitted to be present at executions. Various judicial officials and the prison physician were required to attend. Attendance cards were required for the convict's attorneys and other visitors. In October of 1942, the Reich Minister of Justice prohibited the prison chaplains, who until then had been permitted to attend executions, from accompanying the convicts into the death chamber.

Catholic artist Hermann Schmetz was sentenced to death on October 11, 1940, for allegedly cooperating with the Belgian intelligence service. Two admission cards for attending the executions on March 30 and December 18, 1940.

"1 J 149/39g.

"The bearer of this card is permitted to attend the execution of capital punishment against Emil Bone in Berlin-Plötzensee Prison at 06:05 hours on Saturday, March 30, 1940.

"Berlin, March 20, 1940.

"The senior Reich public prosecutor at the People's Court"

The family members of the executed persons were required to assume the costs of the execution. Both the executioner's one-time fee and daily expenses for pretrial confinement and the time spent in the cell awaiting execution were precisely accounted for and invoiced. Even the postage for mailing the invoice of expenses was included. No further details are known about Gustav Neubauer, sentenced to death for subversion of national defense. Invoice of expenses for the family of the executed person, May 1944.

N 784

Rechtsanwaltschaft beim
Volksgerichtshof
- Staatsanwaltschaft
Urteilsnummer: 3 J 301/44

Kostenrechnung

in der Strafsache gegen Gustav Neubauer
wegen Mehrkraftgerüstung

Nr.	Gegenstand des Kostenaufwandes hinweis auf die angewandte Vorschrift	Wert des Gegenstandes RM	Es sind zu zahlen	
			RM	Sp.
	Gebühr für Todesstrafe..		300.—	
	Postgebühren gem. § 72 GKG		2.70	
	Geb. für den Rechtsanwalt Hilsdorf, Berlin-Lichterfelde/Ost Gärtnerstr. 10a.....		81.60	
	Haftkosten gem. § 72 GKG			
	f. d. Unters. Haft v. 24.12.43 - 29.3.44 = 96 Tg. a. l. 50.....		144.—	
	f. d. Strafhaft v. 29.3.44 - 8.5.44 = 40 Tg. a. l. 50.....		60.—	
	Kosten d. Strafvollstreckung			
	a) Vollstreckung des Urteils.....		159.18	
	Hinzu Porto f. Übersendung d. Kostenrechnung		- 12	
			<u>766.80</u>	

Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof
B J 44/44

Berlin N.-O., den 6. März 1945
Belleisustrasse 13
(R) Postleitstelle Potsdam

An

Herrn Rechtsanwalt Dr. Thilo von B o e h m e r
in Berlin-Nikolassee
Prinz Leopold Str. 4

Der ehemalige Oberleutnant Hasso von B o e h m e r
ist wegen Hoch- und Landesverrats vom Volksgerichtshof des
Großdeutschen Reiches zum Tode verurteilt worden.

Das Urteil ist am 5. März 1945 vollstreckt worden.

Die Veröffentlichung einer Todesanzeige ist unzulässig.



Aside from the invoice of expenses, a brief notice that the sentence was executed was often the only news that family members received of the final hours of the executed persons. In many cases, letters and final greetings remained with the execution files and were not released to the family. Like other survivors, the widow of Hasso von Boehmer, who had been sentenced to death for his involvement in the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, tried in vain to learn of the circumstances of her husband's death after the war.

Notice to family members of the execution of the death sentence, March 8, 1945:

"Former First Lieutenant Hasso von Boehmer was sentenced to death for high treason and treason by the People's Court of the Greater German Reich.

"The sentenced was executed on March 5, 1945.

"Publication of an obituary notice is not permitted."

Every execution performed by the judiciary was recorded in the so-called "Murder Register," of which only parts could be found after the war. Today, the names recorded on thousands of file cards are often the only remaining evidence of people executed by the National Socialist judiciary.

Others, such as those involved in the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, became known to the public as active opponents of the National Socialist regime even before the end of the Third Reich. Among them were the conspirators Erich Fellgiebel, Fritz-Dietlof Graf von der Schulenburg, Berthold Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, and Alfred Kranzfelder. Page from the Murder Register (officially designated as such), August 10, 1944.

	684 116	685 116	686 11. 2. 44	687 11. 2. 44
Name:	Fellgiebel	v.d.Schulenburg	v.Stauffenberg	Kranzfelder
Vorname:	Erich	Fritz-Dietlof	Berthold Graf	Alfred
Beruf:	ehem.General	ehem.Oberlin.	ehem.Marine-Oberstabsrichter	ehem.Aurats
Geburtsdatum:	10.10.86	9.9.02	15.1.09	10.2.08
Geburtsort:	Pöpelwitz	London	Stuttgart	Kempten
Volkstum:	Deutsch	Deutsch	Deutsch	deutsch
Staats:	Hoch-Verdammnis			
Erkennendes Gericht:	VGH. Tag des Urteils: 10.8.44 Ergebnis des Urteils: 10.8.44 Aktenzeichen: 10.8.44			
Art der Strafe:	Todesstrafe - Erschiessung			
Bestimmung des Führers des Reichs der Justiz:	Vollstreckung - Vollstreckung			
Tag der Entscheidung:	10. August 1944 - 10. August 1944			
Erstinstanz:	4.9.1944 Berlin	10.8.44 Berlin	10.8.44 Berlin	10.8.44 Berlin

Notizen:

Die Verurteilten waren am 10. August 1944 hingerichtet.

Thaur
14

Der Oberreichsanwalt
beim Volksgerichtshof

O J 47/44

Berlin i. B., den 5. März 1945
Bülowsstraße 15
(2) Postfachstelle Potsdam

An

Herrn Direktor P i r r n a g
in Berlin-Spandau
Löhleinstr. 15

Auf die Eingabe der Ehefrau B o l z vom 24. Januar 1945
teile ich Ihnen als deren Bevollmächtigten mit, daß die Nach-
lassstücke des Verurteilten Bolz zu Ihrer Verfügung stehen.
Gegen der Herausgabe wollen Sie sich mit dem Straßgefängnis
Berlin-Plötzensee in Verbindung setzen.

In Auftrage



1702

Family members succeeded in securing the release of personal effects of executed persons in the last two years of the war only when they were sufficiently persistent. The widow of Eugen Bolz, former state president of Württemberg executed on January 23, 1945, as one of the conspirators of July 20, 1944, only received official permission to reclaim her husband's personal effects in Plötzensee prison after a month and

a half. In most cases, it is still unclear how and where executed prisoners were buried. Notice of the release of personal effects, March 5, 1945:

"With reference to the petition of Mrs. Bolz of January 24, 1945, I inform you as her representative that the personal effects of the convict Bolz are at your disposal. It is requested that you contact Berlin-Plötzensee Prison regarding the release [of same]."

Bibliography

- Balfour, Michael.
Withstanding Hitler in Germany
1933-1945.
London and New York, 1988.
- Bethge, Eberhard.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
London, 1970.
- Conway, John S.
The Nazi Persecution of the
Churches 1933-1945.
Toronto, 1968.
- Coppi, Hans, Jürgen Danyel, and
Johannes Tuchel, eds.
Die Rote Kapelle im Widerstand
gegen den Nationalsozialismus.
Berlin, 1994.
- Deutsch, Harold C.
The Conspiracy against Hitler in the
Twilight War.
Minneapolis, 1968.
- German Resistance to Hitler.
Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1988
- Gostomski, Victor von and
Walter Loch.
Der Tod von Plötzensee:
Erinnerungen, Ereignisse, Dokumente
1942-1944.
Frankfurt/Main, 1993.
- Graml, Hermann, ed.
The German Resistance to Hitler.
London, 1970.
- Haestrup, Jorgen.
Europe Ablaze: An Analysis of the
History of the European Resistance
Movements 1939-1945.
Odense, 1978.
- Hoffmann, Peter.
The History of the German
Resistance 1933-1945.
London, 1977.
- Klemperer, Klemens von.
German Resistance Against Hitler:
The Search for
Allies Abroad 1938-1945.
Oxford, 1992.
- Large, David Clay, ed.
Contending with Hitler: Varieties of
German Resistance in the
Third Reich.
Cambridge, Mass., and
London, 1991.
- Leber, Annedore.
Conscience in Revolt.
London, 1957.
- Ritter, Gerhard.
The German Resistance:
Carl Goerdeler's Struggle Against
Tyranny.
London, 1958.
- Roon, Ger van.
German Resistance to Hitler:
Count von Moltke
and the Kreisau Circle.
London, 1971.
- Rothfels, Hans.
The German Opposition to Hitler.
Hinsdale, Ill., 1948.
- Schmädeke, Jürgen and
Peter Steinbach, eds.
Widerstand gegen den National-
sozialismus: Die deutsche
Gesellschaft und der Widerstand
gegen Hitler.
Munich and Zurich, 1986.
- Schmitthenner, Walter and
others, eds.
The German Resistance to Hitler.
Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1970.
- Scholl, Inge.
The White Rose: Munich 1942-1943.
Middletown, Conn., 1983.
- Steinbach, Peter, ed.
Widerstand: Ein Problem zwischen
Theorie und Geschichte.
Köln, 1987.
- Steinbach, Peter.
Widerstand im Widerstreit:
Der Widerstand gegen den National-
sozialismus in der Erinnerung
der Deutschen.
Paderborn 1994.
- Steinbach, Peter and Johannes
Tuchel, eds.
Lexikon des Widerstandes
1933-1945.
Munich, 1994.
- Steinbach, Peter and Johannes
Tuchel, eds.
Widerstand gegen den National-
sozialismus.
Bonn and Berlin, 1994.
- Steinbach, Peter and Johannes
Tuchel, eds.
Widerstand in Deutschland
1933-1945.
Ein historisches Lesebuch.
Munich, 1994.
- Verein der Verfolgten des Nazi-
regimes Westberlin, ed.
Ehrenbuch der Opfer von Berlin-
Plötzensee: Zum Gedenken
der 1574 Frauen und Männer,
die wegen ihrer politischen oder
weltanschaulichen Einstellung
und wegen ihres mutigen Wider-
standes gegen das faschistische
Barbarentum in der Strafanstalt
Berlin-Plötzensee von 1933-1945
hingerichtet wurden.
Berlin, 1974.

Walle, Heinrich, ed.
Aufstand des Gewissens:
Militärischer Widerstand gegen Hitler
und das NS-Regime 1933-1945.
4th revised and greatly expanded
edition.
Herford, Bonn, and Berlin, 1994.

Wickert, Christl, ed.
Frauen gegen die Diktatur: Wider-
stand und Verfolgung im
nationalsozialistischen Deutschland.
Berlin, 1995.

Zeller, Eberhard.
The Flame of Freedom:
The German Struggle against Hitler.
London, 1967.

Zimmermann, Erich and
Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, eds.
Germans against Hitler:
July 20, 1944.
Bonn, 1960.

Table of Contents

4	Plötzensee: Site of the Victims – Site of the Culprits
5	Any Commemoration Must Pose Questions
11	Criminal Justice in National Socialism
15	Executions in Plötzensee
20	People in Resistance against National Socialism
21	Communists, Socialists, and Social Democrats
23	Youth Groups
23	The Rütli Group
24	The Baum Group
25	The Harnack/Schulze-Boysen Resistance Circle
29	Foreign Prisoners
31	Resistance in Everyday Life
33	Participants in the Attempted Coup of July 20, 1944
42	Documents
42	From the Exception to the Rule: The Death Penalty in the Third Reich
56	Mass Executions in Plötzensee: The "Bloody Nights" of September 1943
64	From the Death Sentence to the Invoice of Expenses: The Execution as an Administrative Procedure
76	Bibliography



German Resistance

German Resistance Memorial Center
Stauffenbergstrasse 13-14 Entrance
through the commemorative courtyard
10785 Berlin-Mitte, Germany

Opening hours:

Monday through Wednesday, Friday
9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Thursday 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday, and holidays
10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Admission free

Registration

Telephone: +4930-2699 5000
+4930-2699 5013
Fax: +4930-2699 5010
<http://www.gdw-berlin.de>
E-Mail: info@gdw-berlin.de

The German Resistance Memorial Center offers a variety of programs for groups by prior arrangement:

Guided tours through the exhibition with discussions of exemplary acts of resistance by individuals or groups or of their motives and goals. Topics may be agreed upon at registration or before the program (lasting from 90 to 120 minutes).

Film presentations

(also available after guided tours through the exhibition).
A wide selection of documentaries and feature films is available (lasting from 30 to 140 minutes depending on the film).

Seminars by prior arrangement, with topics and agenda tailored to the interests of the participants (scope and duration subject to prior arrangement, minimum three and one-half hours).

Continuing education and advanced training sessions for teachers and other personnel involved in education and training (scope and duration subject to prior arrangement).

Project programs for the preparation of special exhibitions on individual topics of resistance against National Socialism (scope and duration subject to prior arrangement).

The dates and times of presentations and other public programs of the German Resistance Memorial Center will appear in the press. Your address can be included in the program distribution list of the German Resistance Memorial Center on request.

The German Resistance Memorial Center is located in the historic section of the former headquarters of the Army High Command on Stauffenbergstrasse (Bendlerstrasse until 1955).

The rooms housing the current exhibition include the former office of Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, the center of the attempted coup of July 20, 1944. After the coup failed and Colonel-General Ludwig Beck was forced to commit suicide, Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, General Friedrich Olbricht, Colonel Albrecht Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, and First Lieutenant Werner von Haeften were summarily executed by a firing squad in what is today the commemorative courtyard.

Opened in 1989, the permanent exhibition Resistance to National Socialism documents with over 5000 photographs and documents in 26 areas the entire broad and varied spectrum of the struggle against and opposition to National Socialism. The scope of the exhibition goes beyond political resistance to National Socialism alone to include the varied forms of resisting

on the basis of Christian beliefs, the coup attempts by the military from 1938 to 1944, the active conspiracy on the part of key opponents of the regime close to the center of power, and also opposition by young people and resistance in daily life in wartime. This involves depicting a variety of traditions and schools of thought as well as the situations and goals which brought forth and shaped resistance between 1933 and 1945.

The German Resistance Memorial Center is a site of remembrance, political studies, and learning. Its goal is to show how individual persons and groups took action against the National Socialist dictatorship and made use of what freedom of action they had.

Publications by the German Resistance Memorial Center

Publications accompanying the exhibition Resistance Against National Socialism: Descriptive summaries of the rooms of the exhibition and facsimiles on individual topics.

Contributions to resistance 1933-1945:

Presentations or essays by period contemporaries and scholars about various aspects of resistance.

Resistance in Berlin 1933-1945: Findings of a long-term research project on resistance in Berlin's individual districts.

Journals of the German Resistance Memorial Center:
New research findings and source editions.

These series will be continued. A list of publications is available on request.

Credits

The Plötzensee Memorial Center is located on Hüttigpfad, 13627 Berlin-Charlottenburg.
Telephone: +4930-344 3226 or
Telephone: +4930-2699 5000 and Fax:
+4930-2699 5010 (German Resistance Memorial Center)

Opening hours:

March until October
daily 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
November until February
daily 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

(Closed on December 23 -26 and
December 31 -January 1.)
Admission free

© 1996
by Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand,
Stauffenbergstrasse 13-14
10785 Berlin-Mitte

Edited by:
Ferdinand Schwenkner
Translated by:
John Grossman
Design:
Atelier Professor Hans Peter Hoch,
Baltmannsweiler
Printing:
Druckhaus am Treptower Park GmbH,

All rights reserved. Printed
in Germany 1996. ISBN 3-
926082-06-2

Die Deutsche Bibliothek -
CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

Plötzensee Memorial Center/[German Resistance Memorial Center Berlin]. Brigitte Oleschinski. [Übers.: John Grossman (aus dem Dt. ins Engl.)]. -Berlin: Gedenkstätte Dt. Widerstand, 1996 Dt. Ausg. u.d.T.: Gedenkstätte Plötzensee. -Franz. Ausg. u.d.T.: Le Mémorial de Plötzensee ISBN 3-926082-06-2 NE: Oleschinski, Brigitte; Grossman, John [Übers.]; Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand < Berlin >

Sources

Illustrations and documents:

Bundesarchiv: 43/44, 45, 46-49,
50/51, 53, 54/55, 56/57, 58, 59, 60,
61/62, 63, 65, 66/67, 68, 69, 74.
Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz,
Berlin: 34.
Diözesanarchiv, Regensburg: 52.
Gedenkstätte
Deutscher Widerstand, Berlin:
2/3, 7, 14, 16, 19(2), 21,22, 23, 24,
25, 26, 30, 31(2), 32, 35, 36(2),
37 (2), 38 (2), 39 (2), 70, 71 (2), 72.
Landesbildstelle, Berlin: 4, 5, 6, 8, 9,
17,18, 20,40(2).
Klaus Lehnartz: title.
Privately owned: 27, 73, 75.

Longer quotations:

Page 4: Text of the document in the
cornerstone of the Plötzensee Memorial
Center signed by Berlin mayor Ernst
Reuter, September 1951.

Page 5: Gostomski/Loch, Der
Tod von Plötzensee, 1993, page
106.

Page 15: Gruchmann,
Hitler über die Justiz, in: Vierteljahrshefte
für Zeitgeschichte 12,1964,
page 96.

Page 19: Poelchau,
Die letzten Stunden, 1987,
pages 48, 49, 50.

Page 35: Gostomski/Loch, Der
Tod von Plötzensee, 1969, page
185.

This brochure may not be used to advertise
for political parties.