

The Documentation of Stutthof Concentration Camp as a Reflection of the Totalitarian System of the Third Reich

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Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo

Abstract

The documentation of the former concentration camp of KL Stutthof, both that produced by its chancellery - including the personnel files of the SS garrison and the inmates - and the accounts of survivors, shows just how consistently totalitarian principles were implemented throughout Germany following Hitler's rise to power. It also reveals how the foundations of totalitarian rule, introduced in the Third Reich before 1939, came to form the basis of occupation rule in the lands conquered by the Nazis. The files of KL Stutthof bear witness to the shaping (fully in accordance with the socio-political tenets of the Third Reich) of the "new man", who was ready to make sacrifices for the fatherland, was loyal to the Führer until death, and who ruthlessly, and often of his own volition, carried into effect the heartless recommendations concerning the treatment of concentration camp inmates, essentially considered as enemies of the "German state" - a broad category which included Jews and all those who did not approve of the National Socialist order. This policy was followed unwaveringly until the end of the camp's existence in April 1945, when the Third Reich was already in ruins.

The documentation of the concentration camp of KL Stutthof, which makes up the “KL Stutthof Fonds”, is the sole nearly completely preserved body of Nazi camp records. Produced by the manifold departments that existed within the site, it not only constitutes the basis for studying the history of the camp itself, but also plays an important role in research into the mechanisms of the totalitarian system that were implemented in Germany from the moment Adolf Hitler came to power in January 1933. The present article, based primarily on the files of the SS garrison, the commandant’s orders from the years 1942–1944, and the personal files of prisoners and their post-war accounts, is, on the one hand, an introduction to the rich literature on the rules and principles introduced by the totalitarian government of the Third Reich, and on the other – a discussion of the material traces of the totalitarian system’s impact on the life of individuals. It reveals the various components of the system, chief among them the recognition of Adolf Hitler as sole leader, the implementation of euthanasia campaigns and racial policy, the influence of Nazi propaganda, and the use of coercive measures against those of the country’s own citizens who failed to comply with orders.

The hallmarks of Nazi totalitarianism were lawlessness, a system firmly based on the “Leader Principle”, the dictatorship of a mass monopoly that pervaded the institutions of the state, police terror accompanied by a state-party monopoly of coercive measures, and a monopoly of communication and state propaganda – all underpinned by an ideology that assumed as its goal the creation of a “new man”. In the Third Reich, the apparatus of coercion included the Geheime Staatspolizei, better known as the Gestapo (secret state police). Its activities were exempted from all control, while its orders and actions could not be challenged in administrative courts (Kogon, 2017, pp. 57–58).¹ A measure commonly used by the Gestapo was “protective custody” (*Schutzhaft*) – essentially indefinite, and typically applied against those whose behavior threatened the status quo, and national and state security. It also constituted the basis for detaining people in concentration camps.

In a totalitarian system, the means of terror used to maintain power are virtually unlimited, and “their purpose is to annihilate, violate, hold people in leash, or force them to one’s side” (Kogon, 2017, p. 35). Once the National Socialists gained power, their opponents were steadily eliminated, initially by incarceration in concentration camps. The camps themselves, ever since the establishment of the first such facility in the Third Reich – Dachau Concentration Camp – in 1933, were just one

1 On 26 April 1933, the then Prussian Minister of the Interior, Hermann Goring, established the Office of the Secret State Police (Geheimes Staatspolizeiamt – Gestapa), initially for the Prussian province only; in 1936, this was transformed into the Gestapo.

of the elements of the system, “a world unto itself, a state within a state – an order without law, into which human beings were thrown” (p. 17). They were a *sui generis* scale model of the SS state that was about to be created (p. 19). But they were in equal proportion the result of the totalitarian state’s introduction of measures aimed at securing the rule of lawlessness. Their documentation reveals that concentration camps were places in which terror, in accordance with instructions given by headquarters, reached unprecedented proportions, whose personnel was trained and received practical grounding in the application of terror, and where collective responsibility was broadly applied, with family members being arrested as hostages to keep oppositionists in check and create a sense of constant fear for the lives of loved ones within the population. It also provides an excellent illustration of the mechanisms of lawlessness that functioned within the Third Reich, and which were extended to German-occupied territories starting in 1939, among others to acquire slave labor (p. 39). In this context, the records of the former concentration camp of KL Stutthof – authentic evidence of how one state conducted racial policy against a vast number of nations and specific social groups – serve as a prime example.

The patterns of behavior created within the Third Reich were eventually to apply wherever a German population lived under foreign rule in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles. This was achieved using the dense communications network that had been emerging since 1919 and connected Germany with German communities in other countries (Ingrao, 2013, p. 59). In Pomerania, which belonged to Poland and where KL Stutthof was later located, the sending of Albert Forster to Gdańsk as *gauleiter* in October 1930 helped build up the NSDAP’s importance and facilitate its future seizure of power in the Danzig Volkstag (Schenk, 2002, p. 47). Gdańsk, then a Free City under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, became the focus of Forster’s political agitation. It proved to be quite effective, as after 1930 there was a noticeable increase in the number of city residents of German descent who joined the NSDAP (Dossier of H. Patzke, *Personalfragebogen...*, 1941).² This process continued in the following years: if we compare the party numbers of SS men, we will see a huge increase in the number of those who became party members between 1930 and 1932, when the aggregate figure rose by more than a million throughout Germany. By 1933, the NSDAP already had more than three million members (Dossier of A. Eichler, n.d.; Daniluk, 2013, p. 66).³ The majority of the garrison of KL Stutthof from the years 1939–1941 had joined the Allgemeine-SS in 1933.

2 Patzke had been a member of the NSDAP since 1 March 1930, with party number 246,364.

3 Along with many others, August Eichler joined the NSDAP on 15 July 1933, receiving number 3,767,726.

Max Pauly, the commandant of Zivilgefangenenlager Stutthof and a native of Wesselburen in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, became a member of the NSDAP on 1 December 1928, receiving the number 106,204 (Dossier of M. Pauly, Personal card, n.d.). He was also a member of the SA, from 1928, and the Allgemeine-SS, from 1 May 1930. He arrived in Gdańsk in 1937 (Dossier of M. Pauly, Record of Service, n.d.). From 21 July 1939 until 31 October 1941, when he was transferred to the Waffen-SS, he was subordinate to the Polizei-Reserve-Bataillon/Danzig (Police Reserve Battalion/Gdańsk). Pauly was also a member of the Lebensborn eingetragener Verein ("Fount of Life" Registered Association) (Dossier of M. Pauly, Record of service, n.d.; Lasik, 2021, p. 181).

The vast majority of SS men serving in the garrisons that were established in September 1939 and until the end of March 1940 remained under the joint command of the Gdańsk POW camps (Kommandantur der Gefangenelager Danzig) – of the camps of Stutthof, Grenzdorf and Neufahrwasser – had joined the NSDAP in 1933, after Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Of the 741 garrison members, identified by name, who passed through Zivilgefangenenlager Stutthof and SS-Sonderlager Stutthof between September 1939 and 7 January 1942, 309 were citizens of the Free City of Gdańsk; of these, 50 were members of SS-Wachsturmbann "Eimann", a guard and assault unit formed on 3 July 1939 by the Senate of the Free City of Gdańsk (Schenk, 2002, p. 172). Following the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939, SS-Wachsturmbann "Eimann" began arresting Poles, while in subsequent months, according to a report sent on 10 January 1940 by Richard Hildebrandt to SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, it carried out the liquidation of 1,400 patients of Pomeranian psychiatric hospitals and of 2,000 incurable mentally ill patients from the facility in Konradstein (Kocborowo, now part of Starogard Gdański) (p. 259).

Members of the camp garrison also came from the so-called Gdańsk police reserve – Polizei-Reserve-Bataillon/Danzig (Police Reserve Battalion/Gdańsk). Extant curriculum vitae and records of service of certain SS men show that they included participants of the battle for the Polish Post Office in Gdańsk, such as SS-Rottenführer Erwin Fiedler (Dossier of E. Fiedler, Vernehmungsniederschrift..., 1941), persons who took part in the implementation of the Säuberungsaktion (cleansing action), such as SS-Rottenführer Fritz Meier (Dossier of F. Meier, Entlassungsverfügung..., 1941), and members of Sonderkommando Konradstein, a unit which executed patients of the psychiatric hospital in Kocborowo in the Szpęgawa Forest, for example, Otto Haupt (Dossier of O. Haupt, Curriculum vitae, n.d.). In his curriculum vitae, Haupt made no secret of his participation in the crimes (his colleagues were similarly uninhibited). A native of Nowy Dwór (Tiegenhof), he joined the NSDAP in 1931, and the SS in January 1932. In 1933, he was employed as a nurse at the Silberhammer sanatorium and nursing home (present-day Srebrzysko

in Gdańsk), while from 22 August to 6 September 1939 he worked as an orderly at PV-Lazarett Weidengasse (Łąkowa Street in Gdańsk), from there he was transferred to Sonderkommando Konradstein.⁴ The Germans commenced the extermination of the mentally ill from the hospital in Konradstein on 22 September 1939. Patients from other psychiatric hospitals, including those in Świecie, Warsaw and Gniew, were also taken to the executions performed in the Szpęgawa Forest. They included Poles as well as Germans and Jews (Kubicki, 2019, pp. 153, 160–161). In this case, occupied Poland, and especially Gdańsk Pomerania, became a testing ground for a host of projects that had been prepared by the Germans even before the war with the objective of sealing their complete victory in the future (Matzek, 2004, p. 29). Otto Haupt was a member of Sonderkommando Konradstein until 20 December 1939. After its dissolution, he was assigned as an SS-Sanitätsgerad (SS orderly) to KL Stutthof (Dossier of O. Haupt, Curriculum vitae, 1940). Passing an opinion on his subordinate, the commandant of KL Stutthof wrote that Haupt was: “Hardworking, reliable, with a soldierly disposition, a former participant of the world war. Easily influenced, politically stable, and a good leader” (Dossier of O. Haupt, Beförderungsvorschlag..., 1944).

His conduct, as well as that of other members of the SS garrison of KL Stutthof, which in the autumn of 1941 included Selbstschutz activists from the Wyrzysk district, exemplifies the moral norms functioning in the Third Reich. According to these, humiliating and persecuting people who were sick, held different views, or were of other nationalities was not reprehensible. On the contrary, such behavior was desired, accepted, rewarded, and indeed considered necessary (Welzer, 2010, p. 73).

That the camp was staffed by SS men was in no way accidental. The SS had, by design, the qualities of a religious order that was at once an organization created for a very specific purpose, and thus stringent requirements were placed on prospective candidates: they were to be 1.80 meters tall, have documented German ancestry traceable to 1750, and be of flawless character – in the National Socialist sense (Kogon, 2017, p. 35). In addition, they had to present the political views of their immediate family, and the race commission issued them with certificates regarding diseases and their heredity (Ternon, Helman, 1973, p. 34; Pringle, 2009, p. 44). The dossiers of certain members of the camp garrison still contain their signed declarations (*Erklärung*) of Aryanness. Erich Hapke, a native of Gdańsk who had been a member of the NSDAP since 1936 and a member

4 Reservelazarett I, Marienkrankenhaus Weidengasse – reserve SS field hospital I, Mariacki Hospital at Łąkowa Street in Gdańsk (Amtliches Fernsprechbuch..., 1942, p. 76). In 1945, the Blessed Virgin Mary Clinical Hospital, known as the Łąkowa Street Hospital, was established in Gdańsk at Kieturakisa Street. It was liquidated in 2004.

of the Allgemeine-SS since 1940, signed a document on 17 November 1939 whereby he declared that he was not aware of circumstances that might suggest that he was not of Aryan descent, or that his parents or grandparents might have been Jewish (Dossier of E. Hapke, n.d., p. 49). According to the declaration of Aryanness signed on 30 January 1941 by Paul Ehle of Gdańsk (who had been in the SS since 15 March 1933 and in the NSDAP since 2 February 1938, and was a senior SS officer – the head of the 3rd Guard Company, serving with the camp garrison from September 1939 to April 1945), members of the garrison were instructed on the definition of the term “Jew” and the circumstances indicating that a person could actually be a Jew (Dossier of P. Ehle, n.d., p. 26).⁵ The penalty for giving false testimony was immediate dismissal from service to the Third Reich and from active military service.

The definition of “Jew” was introduced by the Nuremberg Laws, passed on 15 September 1935. As soon as they assumed power, the National Socialists set about transforming the life of German society according to their criteria. The new provisions, utilizing primarily racist theories, helped create institutional social divisions. Restrictions began to be placed on the public rights of the Jewish population, and the Act on the Reorganization of the Clerical Cadre of 7 April 1933 became the basis for a general “cleansing” of the public administration of public officials whose loyalty was considered questionable. The main victims were the Social Democrats, and also Jews, whom the NSDAP motioned to be excluded from the civil service (Benz, 2006, p. 30).

The extant dossiers of members of the SS garrison of KL Stutthof contain documents indicating that the restrictions introduced by laws “protecting German blood” were directed not only against Jews, but also against people from mixed marriages. If a person had two Jewish grandparents, he or she was referred to as a “Jewish half-breed” (*Mischling*) or “half-Jew”, and a *Mischling* could marry an Aryan who enjoyed full rights only with the consent of the state and the NSDAP. If an SS man withheld information that a member of his family was of mixed blood, he could be expelled from the SS, and even be sentenced to death (Benz, 2006, p. 220). A penalty was also introduced for “dishonoring the race” (*Rassenschande*) (p. 143). On 20 January 1942 one Wilhelm Langlois, who was sent to the SS garrison of KL Stutthof from the 20th Anti-Aircraft Brigade in Stuttgart (20 Flak Brigade Stuttgart) on 23 August 1944, signed a statement regarding the possible “mixed” origin of his family members:

5 The dossier of Wilhelm Langlois contains among others the following document: Extract from the order of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (Auszug aus der Verfügung des Oberkommandos des Heeres) no. 6840/41 g. PA 2 “Ic”, dated 16 July 1941, which cites the definition used in the Nuremberg Laws (Dossier of W. Langlois, n.d., p. 8).

Having carefully reviewed the documents that are available to me, I would like to clarify and dutifully declare that my wife is of German or related origin. I was informed of the meaning of the term Mischling (mixed Jewish race) in this context by my superior on disciplinary grounds. I am aware that in the event that my statement turns out to be false, I will face punishment.

I was instructed that if I give false information to my superiors in order to evade military service, I may receive the strictest punishment, even the death penalty, as I could thus contribute to weakening the military strength of the state.

The invalidity of the above information shall be determined by checking birth certificates, including the data of grandparents (Dossier of W. Langlois, n.d., pp. 4, 8).⁶

Special offices ensured that the purity of the German race and blood was preserved: the Office of Racial Policy (Rassenpolitisches Amt), which was subordinate to the NSDAP, and, on the part of the SS, the Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA) and the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA). From 21 December 1931, the Race and Settlement Main Office conducted studies aimed at determining whether marriage licenses could be issued. These studies covered the physical and mental health of candidates for wives of SS members and their families, and also racial characteristics, in order to ascertain their "Nordicness" (Pringle, 2009, p. 45). This is evidenced by documents relating to the marriage of Franz Fackelmann, a native of St. Martin in Arad county, Romania, who was a member of the 1st SS Guard Company at KL Stutthof (1 SS T-Stuba Stutthof), and Therese Harass, a woman from the same township. The bride-to-be had to fill out a card of hereditary health, and also provide documents presenting the results of examinations carried out by a designated German doctor (Communication from the command of KL Stutthof to RuSHA.... 1943a, p. 4; Communication from the command of KL Stutthof to RuSHA..., 1943b, p. 5; Communication from RuSHA to the command of KL Stutthof..., 1943, p. 6). Whereas the groom-to-be's application to the RuSHA for permission to become engaged and marry had to be made known to his immediate superior, which in Fackelmann's case was the commandant of KL Stutthof (Instruction concerning the procedure for

6 The files of Wilhelm Langlois contain a document, Dienststelle Feldpost No. 26225, dated 2 October 1940, which certifies – among others – that Langlois, being a master shoemaker (*Schumachermeister*), served as a Betriebsführer (factory leader) at the Ulm Chamber of Crafts (Handwerkskammer Ulm) until 31 December 1940. The establishment of the post of Betriebsführer followed from the provisions of the law of 20 January 1934 on the regulation of labor for the nation. The working class was transformed into a semi-military organization, wherein "factory leaders" headed groups of workers (*als Gefolgschat*) (Ryszka, 1985, p. 232).

applying for..., 1943, p. 7). Both the groom and bride had to have guarantors, who should have been party members.

Anyone who had been recognized as a Mischling and concealed this fact was punished judicially and sent to a concentration camp. The German Hans Joachim Kallweit, a resident of Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, was arrested on 11 November 1943 for evading work for 1.5 months and spending days and nights in the company of underage Aryan girls. Sentenced to 56 days of "education", he was incarcerated in Arbeitserziehungslager Stutthof on 4 December 1943. The Danzig Gestapo recommended that he be sent to hard manual labor, as he was hiding his grade I Mischling origins (according to the Nuremberg Laws, this meant that he had two grandparents of Jewish descent). He was supposed to have been released from the camp on 29 January 1944 and sent to the labor office (Dossier of H. J. Kallweit, Einweisungsbeschluss..., 1943), but on 14 January the Danzig Gestapo sent a new decision to KL Stutthof. The camp command was informed that a criminal trial was underway against Kallweit before the Attorney General (*Oberstaatsanwalt*) in Gdańsk regarding the provision of false information about his background. After he had served his sentence at KL Stutthof, his case was to be referred to the Regional Court (*Amtsgericht*) in Gdańsk for the issuance of an arrest warrant. It was also decided that Kallweit, upon his release from the camp, was not to be sent to the labor office, but to a court prison in Gdańsk, and that he was to be escorted from Stutthof by a Gestapo officer (Dossier of H. J. Kallweit, Communication from Gestapo Danzig to KL Stutthof..., 1944). According to Kallweit's account, he was sent from the prison in Gdańsk to the camp in Piła (Schneidemühl), from where he was evacuated to a camp near Erfurt on 10 January 1945 (Drywa, 2001, p. 51).

Until November 1941, soldiers of the SS garrison of Zivilgefängnislager Stutthof were members of the Allgemeine-SS, the so-called general SS – Eugen Kogon called it a great reservoir that Himmler had set up for various purposes, notably to be able to appoint its numerous members to the SS reserve units, which were then used to supplement the pool of officers and soldiers in SS units at the front, without unnecessary formalities (Drywa, 2001, p. 51). And so it was in the case of the garrison of KL Stutthof. That these SS men came from the reserve may be evidenced by the fact that the files of certain of them contain letters from their civilian employers – owners of companies for which they had previously worked – addressed to the camp and asking for their release from service. On 12 February 1941, master potter Bruno Heckendorf requested the furloughing of SS-Rottenführer Johannes Albrecht, who had previously been his employee as a stove fitter, and, as a trained professional, was needed by Heckendorf in connection with the major renovation work which he was conducting for government agencies (Dossier of J. Albrecht, Letter from B. Heckendorf to the Higher SS and Police Commander in Danzig..., 1941). Responding to the letter, SS-Hauptsturmführer Richard Reddig

stated that: “in connection with numerous call-ups to the Wehrmacht and the assignment of manpower to armament factories, the local labor force is so weak that the further release of personnel from Zivilgefangenenlager Stutthof, which is also a state institution, is unacceptable” (Dossier of J. Albrecht, Communication from Reddig to B. Heckendorf..., 1941).

As of 1 November 1941, following the takeover of KL Stutthof by the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (Inspektion der Konzentrationslager – IKL), the facility’s garrison was transferred to the Waffen-SS (Dossier of E. Schendel, n.d.; Report dated 28 October 1941). Eugen Kogon, not without reason, has called members of the Waffen-SS mercenaries who failed to carry out the duties of professional soldiers and did not adhere to the strict canon of moral values which such soldiers follow (Kogon, 2017, p. 437). One such person was nineteen-year-old SS-Unterscharführer Heinz Groth, who came from Słupsk. He was sent to the SS garrison of KL Stutthof on 19 December 1942. His story shows how the young generation was shaped and prepared for war. At the age of 11, Groth joined the Jungvolk,⁷ and at 14 he was transferred to the Hitlerjugend. As an 18-year-old, he volunteered for the Waffen-SS. From 15 March to 2 May 1941, he received basic training at the SS-Kratzfahr-Ersatzabteilung in Berlin-Lichterfelde. Upon completion, he was transferred to the Field Replacement Battalion in Brno (Feldersatzbataillon Brünn), from where he was posted to the SS-Totenköpf-Division on the Eastern Front. In recognition of his courage in combat, he was awarded the Iron Cross Second Class, the Black Wound Badge, and the Infantry Assault Badge (Infanterie-Sturmabzeichens) and the Eastern Medal (Ostmedaille) for the winter of 1941/1942 (Dossier of E. Groth, Beurteilung..., n.d., p. 4). The files contain his physical description and character traits. He was of medium height, slim, with a Nordic stature and appearance. He was not prone to falling ill. The author of the opinion stressed his good behavior and bravery displayed in front line combat. Although his education and knowledge were average, he was nevertheless open-minded, logical in his thinking, and also calm and objective. He did not feel the need for recognition, and instead willingly obeyed the orders of his superiors. He had a strong sense of duty and was stable in terms of his worldview. His performance in the military and in general education was good. He repeatedly performed the tasks of a military instructor, while in sports activities his results were average, although – for example – he did receive the “1 hour swimmer” badge. Finally, it was stated that Groth was a young, ambitious soldier who, as a committed political activist, would, after proper training, acquire the skills necessary to become an SS commander (SS-Führer)

7 Deutsches Jungvolk – an organization within the Hitlerjugend for boys aged 10–14, compulsory from 1939. When they turned 14, its members automatically joined the Hitlerjugend.

or, after passing the requisite exam, perhaps even a platoon commander (SS-Zugführer) (Dossier of E. Groth, Beurteilung..., n.d., p. 4). KL Stutthof was not Groth's last posting. On 8 June 1944, he was transferred to SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Ausbildungs- und Ersatz-Bataillon 3/Warschau (3rd SS Armored Grenadier Training and Reserve Battalion/Warsaw) (Kommandanturbefehl No. 39..., 1944).

Being a totalitarian state, the Third Reich demanded absolute obedience. This applied to soldiers, members of the SS, and ordinary citizens – workers and peasants – who treated submission to the orders of the state, that is, of the Führer himself, as a matter of overriding importance. Freedom of expression was restricted through various repressive mechanisms, while those guilty of failure to maintain secrecy could even receive the death penalty. Confirmation of this can be found in the numerous surviving pledges and declarations signed by members of concentration camp garrisons. Among the extant documents are oaths of allegiance to Hitler, who by an order introduced after the death of President Paul von Hindenburg on 2 August 1934 abolished the title of Reich President and instructed that he be called “Führer and Chancellor of the Reich” – the country's sole leader. The files also contain the documents of SS men who had previously served in the garrisons of other camps. On 20 April 1941 in Auschwitz, SS-Rottenführer Alfred Bublitz, who was a member of the garrison from 25 February 1941 to 9 March 1942, signed an oath before SS-Hauptsturmführer Florin (Dossier of A. Bublitz, n.d., p. 90; Ryszka, 1985, pp. 216–217). On 9 November 1941 in Buchenwald concentration camp, the oath was signed by SS-Rottenführer Erich Dorsch (Dossier of E. Dorsch, n.d., p. 44),⁸ while on 1 February 1942 SS-Hauptscharführer Richard Akolt affixed his signature to the text before the commandant of KL Stutthof, SS-Hauptsturmführer Max Pauly. It was worded thus: “I swear to you, Adolf Hitler, as leader and chancellor of the German Reich, my loyalty and courage. I swear obedience to you and to the superiors whom you have appointed until death. So help me God” (Dossier of R. Akolt, n.d., p. 40).⁹

Adolf Hitler's birthday was celebrated every year on 20 April. An order from Stutthof commandant Paul Werner Hoppe, dated 15 April 1943, has survived, and it details the planned celebration of that year's *Geburtstag des Führers*. The day was to begin with a morning roll call at 7.00 a.m. and short speeches by guard company commanders, all paying tribute

8 Latvian-born SS-Rotenführer Erich Dorsch served in the garrison of KL Buchenwald from 23 October 1941 until 17 January 1942, and was later posted to SS-Sonderlager-Hinzert, Frauen KL Ravensbrück and KL Riga. On 26 September 1944, he was transferred to KL Stutthof.

9 Richard Akolt had joined the Stutthof garrison in September 1939, serving initially as head of the supply company (Führung Stabsscharführergeschate) and later as head of the SS canteen (Leiter der SS-Kantinengemeinschaft). He remained at KL Stutthof until April 1945.

to the Führer. Due to the solemn nature of the roll call, work was to start only at 8.00 a.m. Local NSDAP members from the village of Stutthof held a formal “hour of remembrance” (*Gedenkstunde*) at the Gerber restaurant at 8.00 p.m. Starting at 7.30 p.m., the *Gedenkstunde* was to be accompanied by a local music group, composed of SS members from KL Stutthof. It was added that a soldiers’ choir, which had performed on Wehrmacht Day,¹⁰ was to take part in the evening ceremony. A total of 100 men were to participate in the event (Kommandanturbefehl No. 30..., 1943, p. 71). In 1944, on the other hand, full-blown celebrations were abandoned due to the military situation. It was noted in the plan submitted by the commandant of KL Stutthof that the participation of a music group in the event was not anticipated (Kommandanturbefehl No. 27..., 1944).

In addition to participating in official ceremonies, the camp garrison was required to display absolute obedience. A form – a so-called *Verhandlung* – has survived in the dossier of Alfred Bublitz, this outlining the scope of his duties and obligations as a member of the garrison of KL Auschwitz. In it, he stated as follows:

I have been informed in general about my duties, and in particular the duty to maintain secrecy about all matters that I learned about while on duty. I was also informed that the obligation to maintain professional secrecy would remain in force even when I left the SS. I am aware that I can disobey an order, but I also know that defying an order is tantamount to treason (Dossier of A. Bublitz, *Verhandlung*, n.d., p. 91).

Members of the garrison of KL Auschwitz, as well as of other concentration camps, such as the aforementioned Erich Dorsch, who served in KL Buchenwald, vowed under oath to be obedient, to perform their duties conscientiously and promptly, and to maintain strict secrecy, and at the same time acknowledged that any disobeyal of issued orders was punishable (Dossier of E. Dorsch, *Verhandlung...*, 1941, p. 42). A *Belehrung*, a so-called instruction, signed by one Ewald Gohrt, is dated 26 March 1943. It lists in bullet points the situations that each crew member needed to familiarize himself with in order to know how to react if they ever occurred. Among others, they covered the procedure for escorting prisoners as a guard unit commander and how to act in the event of their escape, what action to take if espionage is detected, and how contacts with inmates in the camp were to be handled. Gohrt, of course, was also informed of his obligation to maintain secrecy and of the regulation on protecting the German blood of SS men and members of the police (Dossier of E. Gohrt, n.d.,

¹⁰ Wehrmacht Day was celebrated on 17 March.

p. 5).¹¹ Also included in the lists of duties and obligations signed by SS men were recommendations regarding the treatment of inmates who were enemies of the state; decisions as to whether they lived or died be taken solely by the camp commandant, while an ordinary member of the SS garrison, even a National Socialist, was not allowed to strike them or mete out physical abuse (Dossier of H. Mankowski, *Ehrenwörtliche Verpflichtung...*, 1942, p. 41).¹²

As regards the SS men who had been members of the garrison of KL Stutthof from September 1939, these statements were submitted after their transferral to the Waffen-SS in November 1941. Subordinate initially to the local police authorities in Gdańsk, they did not follow any rules as to how punishments were carried out, while the majority displayed attitudes that fell far short of the formal standards which Heinrich Himmler had defined for members of the SS. The files of members of the camp garrison, which was made up predominantly of laborers, peasants and artisans, contain documents of investigations initiated in connection with their inappropriate behavior toward superiors, excessive consumption of alcohol, or petty theft. An inquiry concerning the garrison of Matzkau (Maćkowy), a branch of the Stutthof camp, found that some conducted themselves in a manner unworthy of SS men. It was alleged that on 13 September 1940 SS-Unterscharführer Benno Scholl, who served there as a guard, went to the camp canteen while on duty and left working prisoners unattended. In addition, he drank alcohol and left his rifle, loaded, in a corner, although civilians were also present in the room. Furthermore, after consuming a large quantity of liquor, he behaved in an unsoldierly manner towards his superior. He received 10 days of strict detention. This was not the only accusation leveled against Scholl, for on 20 January 1941 he was charged with stealing money from SS-Rottenführer Hans Goertz, while a similar incident had been reported while he was on duty at the camp of Probbornau (Przebrno) in the fall of 1940, when he was alleged to have robbed SS-Rottenführer Bernhard Patzke of money won at cards (Dossier of B. Scholl, *Minutes of the investigation...*, 1940-1941).

The rule that prisoners could be punished only by the Führer – the commandant – was also repeatedly disregarded. Beatings were commonplace, both during work and rest. Among the camp garrison were SS men who were particularly notable for their cruelty, and even Germans who used prisoner slave labor complained about their behavior to the commandant. One such SS man was the commandant of a branch

11 A native of Zipplau (Cieplewo near Pruszcz), Ewald Gohrt joined the NSDAP on 1 February 1933. He was sent to the garrison of KL Stutthof in September 1939.

12 H. Mankowski, from Sobieszewo (Heubude) near Gdańsk, served in the garrison of KL Stutthof from September 1939 to 19 November 1943 as company accountant (Rechnungsführer).

of Stutthof, Aussenstelle Zeyerniederkampen (Kępiny Wielkie), SS-Unterscharführer Franz Mielenz. Mielenz's mistreatment of those working in the Zeyerniederkampen was noted by the head of a water and drainage company, the Society for Dams and Dikes (Deichverbandes Nogathaffkampen), which borrowed prisoners from the facility for work. Concerned that such treatment of employees would be bad for productivity, he lodged a complaint with the commandant. In it, he wrote that he saw with his own eyes how during the unloading of goods Mielenz beat prisoners on the head, face and shoulders with a stick in an inhumane manner (Dossier of F. Mielenz, Communication from Deichhauptmannes..., 1940). Nevertheless, in his opinion of Franz Mielenz, the commandant of KL Stutthof, Max Pauly, wrote that "he is open-minded, honest, reliable, comradely, willing to work, energetic and conscientious" (Dossier of F. Mielenz, Dienstleistungszeugnis..., 1942).

The document signed by Richard Akolt on 17 September 1942 stated clearly that members of the concentration camp garrison were to obey the orders and instructions of the camp commandant without question, and could not attack or punish any prisoner on their own initiative, as this would violate the Reichsführer's order that punishments could only be administered by the commandant himself. Individual garrison members were fully responsible for the prisoners assigned to them, and faced incarceration for causing willful bodily injury. Each SS man was to report to the commandant all and any violations of his orders and instructions, as well as beating of prisoners by other SS men, and all – even the slightest – offenses committed by prisoners. He was further obliged to maintain secrecy in matters that he learned about officially, while on duty (Dossier of R. Akolt, n.d., p. 53). Obviously, these duties and obligations were imposed on the SS garrison in 1942, when KL Stutthof received concentration camp status. Until the end of 1941, the punishment of prisoners at KL Stutthof was not subject to any norms.

This was particularly evident in the case of the first Jewish inmates, who were brought in already in September 1939. These were Jewish citizens of Poland, residents of Gdańsk Pomerania, and citizens of the Free City of Gdańsk. Their incarceration in KL Stutthof was the next stage of the repressions initiated by the anti-Jewish campaign of Albert Forster, which he commenced while leading the NSDAP in the Free City of Gdańsk even before the war. In April 1937, Forster ordered that the full names and surnames of owners must be placed on the signs of stores and industrial and commercial enterprises throughout Gdańsk. This made recognition easy during the anti-Jewish disturbances of 1937–1938. The riots themselves were instigated during the congress of the district NSDAP organization in October 1937, during which it was announced that a close anti-Jewish front would be formed and that from then on the Jewish residents of Gdańsk would find it increasingly difficult to live in the city (Berendt, 1997, pp. 206–209). These events occurred even though directives

were issued prohibiting Forster, for the good of foreign policy, from acting in other countries in the same way as in the Reich (Schenk, 2002, p. 132).

Towards the end of 1938, the racist Nuremberg Laws, which contradicted the provisions of the constitution of the Free City of Gdańsk, began to be implemented in the city.

On 21 November 1938, the Decree on the protection of German blood and honor was proclaimed in Gdańsk, and those accused of violating the racial laws, whether Jews, Catholics or Evangelicals, were to be subject to imprisonment and fined (Jońca, 1998, pp. 196–200). The outbreak of war allowed Forster to carry out his plan of Germanizing Gdańsk Pomerania, primarily through the mass executions of the Polish leadership class and Pomeranian Jews (Bojarska, 1972, pp. 51–52, 58). Speaking on 11 October 1939 as Governor of the Third Reich for the District of Gdańsk-West Prussia in Bydgoszcz, where a bloody retaliation for the prior suppression of sabotage activities by the German minority had started already in September, he said: “it is the duty of Germans to cleanse the area completely, first and foremost of rabble, gangs of robbers, Poles and Jews” (Jastrzębski, Sziling, 1974, p. 89). The campaign to exterminate the Jews of Pomerania was completed swiftly, as is evidenced by a report, dated 15 November 1939, authored by the deputy commander of the 16th Operational Unit, SS-Sturmbannführer Franz Röder. He wrote thus: “In Pomerania, the Jewish question has been resolved. As a result of the cleansing operation, all Jews who did not manage to escape were liquidated” (Bojarska, 1972, pp. 126–127).

Jews who avoided death in direct executions were imprisoned in Stutthof. According to the accounts of prisoners, from September 1939 to the end of 1941, about a thousand were incarcerated in the camp (Drywa, 2001, pp. 19–27). The first were Jews who had come to Gdańsk from various regions of Poland, while on 19 September 1939 citizens of the Free City of Gdańsk were arrested who lived near the route that Hitler was to take from Sopot to the Artus Court that day (p. 19). Those Jews who remained in Gdańsk were placed in a small ghetto, which was initially located in an old people’s home at Milch Kannengasse, and later moved to a specially adapted granary building at 7 Mausegasse (Echt, 1972, pp. 230–231). Between 1940 and 1942, Stutthof was used to “cleanse” the Gdańsk ghetto of the sick and elderly, with all new arrivals perishing in short order. Descriptions of the brutal methods used to murder Jewish prisoners, cited by other inmates, are confirmed by camp documents. In addition to the “suicides by hanging” that recurred from time to time, the primary cause of death for Jews was “shooting” or “crushing of the chest” (Drywa, 2001, pp. 37–42).

Camp punishments applied to non-Jewish prisoners incarcerated between 1940 and 1941 were of a different nature. The majority were refugees from workplaces who were sent to the camp for a period of time specified by the police in order to be “educated”. Due to the shortage

of labor, they were often punished for minor offenses so as to prolong their stay (Drywa, 2020, p. 65). Beginning in 1942, reports concerning the committal of offenses by prisoners were submitted by barrack chiefs, and this formed the basis for requesting the application of specific penalties. Prints with a description of a given offense would be sent to the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (to SS-WVHA Department "D"), where they were stamped and filled in with the recommended punishment, and returned to the camp within a few days; thus, there was a difference of approximately two weeks between the date of committal of an act and the date of administering justice (Dossier of W. Kowalew, Form listing punishments..., 1942). However, in spite of signed orders, even those who administered the official punishment of flogging often turned the sordid spectacle into a form of private entertainment.

Members of the SS garrison of KL Stutthof who disobeyed regulations were penalized, and in extreme cases received the death penalty. The camp commandant's orders include confirmations of performance of executions. Punishments for lesser offenses were meted out by the commandant, as was the case with SS-Rottenführer Albert Behnke, a member of the guard crew at KL Stutthof, who was sentenced to three weeks of strict detention for seriously violating guard duty regulations on 5 September 1942, when he fell asleep and left the prisoners entrusted to him unattended. In addition, when questioned, he denied this deliberately, and reiterated his line of defense when officially reporting to the commandant and when again questioned (Kommandanturbefehl No. 4..., 1942). SS-Unterscharführer Oskar Gottschau was punished with 14 days of strict detention because, while returning intoxicated from an official trip, he drove two of his colleagues (who were also drunk). Through this act, he publicly compromised the good name of the SS. Gottschau served his sentence at SS-Straflager Danzig-Matzkau (SS prison camp Gdańsk-Mańkowsky) (Kommandanturbefehl No. 76..., 1944).

In the event of more serious transgressions, SS men were tried by SS and police courts, such as SS-Schutz Alfred Umland. On 8 October 1943, the SS and Police Court in Gdańsk, IVth District (SS- und Polizeigericht IV Danzig), sentenced him to a term of imprisonment of one year and six months, and expulsion from the SS, for serious negligence while performing guard duty. The verdict and the reasons why it was given were to be discussed in detail at company training briefings (Kommandanturbefehl No. 73..., 1944). SS-Unterscharführer Werner Fenchel, on the other hand, was sentenced to six years imprisonment and six years of disenfranchisement, and also expelled from the SS, for trading in food and money with prisoners while serving at SS-Sonderlager Hinzert (Kommandanturbefehl No. 77..., 1943). In another case, the SS and Police Court in Gdańsk, IVth District, gave sentences of four weeks of strict detention to Ukrainian Wachmann Dimitri Korotkich and Fritz Munchow, who on 17 November 1944 at the narrow-gauge railway station in Nowy Dwór,

while on duty supervising Wehrmacht property, stole bicycle parts that were intended for front-line troops from a wagon (Kommandanturbefehl No. 3..., 1945). An example of the execution of a member of the SS is the story of SS-Sturmmann Albert Wagner. He was deemed unworthy of bearing arms and was expelled from the SS and sentenced to death and thereafter executed for desertion, causing permanent damage to weapons and military equipment, raping a woman, three instances of fraud, and the persistent submission of false accusations (Kommandanturbefehl No. 78..., 1944).

Members of the garrisons of KL Stutthof and other concentration camps were treated as state employees, and as such were grouped in the German Labor Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront), which, after independent labor unions were banned, functioned as the official cell of the NSDAP within the working class. Kraft durch Freunde (KdF), the Front's unit responsible for mass tourism and sports events, was, through its manifold preimposed forms of entertainment and recreation, an excellent propaganda instrument. According to the documentation of KL Stutthof, each district (*Kreis*) had its own branch of the KdF – a *Kreisdienststelle*. The KdF covered the costs of organized performances by various artists. On 28 May 1943 at 7.00 p.m., a show was to be held on the grounds of Stutthof concentration camp for the garrison and soldiers. The camp authorities were to provide rooms for the artists, probably in the command building, which was also intended to be used for training since its construction (Communication from Deutsche Arbeitsfront-Gemeinschaft "KdF"..., 1942).¹³

Building loyalty also took place through indoctrination. Members of the SS garrison of KL Stutthof received constant training, referred to as "philosophical training" (*Weltanschauliche Schulungen*); its topics included "The Jew as the causer of the Second World War", "The establishment and organization of the Schutzstaffel", and "The basic law of the Schutzstaffel and its relevance to our way of life" (Topics of training..., 1943). Materials were prepared for ideological training to provide "spiritual support" to the senior SS officers of the KL Stutthof garrison. Regarding the recommendations of the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps, the commandant of KL Stutthof, Max Pauly, citing the Führer's speech of 26 April 1942 to the Reichstag, said thus:

that we all are filled with only one thought: Victory, and that in this struggle truth shall prevail. But it is with us. In consequence we, the SS-Führer of the homeland units

¹³ The performance was organized by Die Deutsche Arbeitsfront, N.S. Gemeinschaft, Kraft durch Freunde, Abteilung: Feierabend/Wehrmacht from Tiegenhof (German Labor Front, N.S. Community, Strength through Joy, Division; afternoon/Wehrmacht in Nowy Dwór).

[der Heimattruppen], more than ever have to consolidate the ideological views of the individual through propaganda and training, to refute the lies of our opponents, and to do everything in our power to support the individual, so that even the dark times that have made him steadfast for days continue to hammer [into him] the belief in a new, strong Greater Germany.

For training, he recommended booklets containing original illustrations: *Der Untermensche* and *SS in Battle*, because, as he further stated:

More than ever before, units need to focus on ideological training. These brochures show in unambiguous form the means by which the Jews, the Huns of contemporary times, want to eradicate everything Germanic, root and branch, and, on the other hand, with what heroic commitment our army – especially the units of the Waffen-SS, viewed as an order – conducts the fight against the subhumans. Precious German blood is being lost in the senseless fight against our opponents, and so the victory of the “child” must guarantee the existence of the German nation (Training material, dated 29 April..., 1942).

In September 1942, current political issues, such as the German offensive in the Ukraine and the Caucasus, and the throttling of Soviet military and economic power, were discussed within the framework of this training (Training material, dated 29 September..., 1942).

The tone of the statements made by the commandant of KL Stutthof, Max Pauly, as well as the topics of training undertaken, testify to an intensified propaganda campaign aimed at raising the morale of SS members. The camp garrison also participated in the so-called winter relief campaign (*Winterhilfswerk*), which had been introduced in Germany in 1933; initially, it was focused on the collection of donations for the unemployed and their families (Ryszka, 1985, p. 232). Wanting to recognize the involvement of members of the Waffen-SS serving at KL Stutthof in the 1942/1943 winter relief effort (*Kriegswinterhilfswerk*), the Higher SS and Police Commander in Gdańsk, Richard Hildebrandt, sent a letter of appreciation to the camp commandant, stating in its closing fragment that each person who took part in the campaign contributed to the final victory (Kommandanturbefehl No. 30..., 1943, point 1).

German society was subjected to systematic tests, on the basis of which the Research Institute for Race Hygiene and Population Biology (Rassenhygienische und bevölkerungsbiologische Forschungsstelle, RHF) provided individuals with certificates of Aryan origin. Subjects were asked questions about familial illnesses, character traits,

predilections and talents, and numerous measurements were taken – of the width of the forehead, angle of the lower jaw, the zygomatic arch, height of the upper part of the face, and of the length of the epiphysis. Special attention was paid to the shape of the skull, with the ratio between the length and width of the head functioning as an indicator of racial distinction – a long skull signified the “highly valuable Nordic race”, while a short skull was typical of people of “a racially low value” (Matzek, 2004, pp. 31–33, 35). Racial studies based on skull measurements were also conducted among the first inmates of KL Stutthof. The objective was to identify possible candidates for Germanization. The research, which aimed to isolate from the prisoner community those who could be effectively Germanized, was mentioned by the prisoners themselves. Antoni Góralczyk, who was arrested in September 1939 and worked on the construction of the camp’s first barracks, wrote thus:

Generally speaking, the camp commandant, Christoffel, [...], a former butcher from Orunia, was obsessed with studying the structure of skulls of prisoners, and segregating them on this basis. To this end, he would first line up the prisoners, and then divide them into separate groups. These groups would then be mixed again with each other, and everything would remain the same. Once, he examined me for a long time, asking for my name and where I came from, and finally sent me back to our group. Finally, the inmates housed in barracks I and II were divided into the following groups:

- natives of Gdańsk, or persons residing in Gdańsk,
- natives of Galicia,
- natives of Prussia, Silesia and the Poznań region,
- natives of lands forming the historical “Congress Kingdom of Poland”.

The division of prisoners into the aforementioned groups took place in mid-January 1940 [...]. The segregation of inmates was intended to foster hatred directly among them. At the same time, the Germans wanted to create the appearance that Poles from the former Prussian partition stood at a higher level of development than the residents of other Polish districts. In fact, as regards treatment, food and labor, there was no differentiation (Account of A. Góralczyk, n.d., pp. 105–106).¹⁴

14 Born in Częstochowa, Antoni Góralczyk operated a newspaper kiosk at Gdańsk Central Railway Station before the war. He was a shooting instructor at the “Gedania” Sports Club, and administered the shooting department of the program and training section of the Command Troop of the Polish Pathfinders’ Union in Gdańsk. Góralczyk was arrested in mid-September 1939 in Gdynia while attempting to make his way to Oksywie, and was initially detained in the barracks

The segregation of prisoners at KL Stutthof was also mentioned by Franciszek Raclawski:

One Sunday after morning roll call, we were left in the barracks square until the evening, and then segregated into separate groups: natives of Gdańsk, natives of Pomerania, natives of the Poznań region, and [people] from the historical “Congress Kingdom of Poland”. Then the various groups were arranged in long lines, which were inspected by Christoffel and his staff, closely observing the bare heads of the prisoners, who stood with their caps in hands. Some were asked about this and that, while those having birdlike features were ordered to one side with the words “du siehst so komisch aus”. These we never saw again.

A short time later, again a similar racial parade was held in front of the new camp commandant, Gust. Prisoners lined up in the roll call square by rooms, and then approached the commandant one by one, each removing his cap and giving his camp number, first name, surname and place of residence. If the person presenting himself had an Aryan appearance, that is, blue eyes and blond hair, Gust asked a number of questions. For example, if he was married, what his wife’s maiden name was and how did she look, did they have children and what they looked like. Those who matched his racial assumptions were lined up in a separate column. The selected prisoners were released from work for the next few days and subjected to detailed medical or anthropological examinations, with the latter including skull measurements. Prisoners from Gdańsk even had their families bused in for review, which caused some panic in Gdańsk and allegedly brought about the intervention of the Swedish consul. The subjects’ hopes of being released from the camp were soon dashed (Account of F. Raclawski, n.d., p. 39).

Concerned for the racial purity of the younger generation, the German authorities banned all mixed unions – not just German-Jewish. Those who did not comply with the law of “racial purity” were punished with detention in concentration camps. However, even those inmates of KL Stutthof – Poles, Russians and Lithuanians – who had intimate relations

in Redłowo. He was then sent to the Viktoria Schule prison in Gdańsk, from where he was moved to the camp in Nowy Port (Neufahrwasser), and thence to Stutthof. As he recalled, he was released from the camp on 19 February 1940 (Gąsiorowski, 1998, pp. 22, 37).

with German women were screened to determine whether they possessed any Nordic characteristics and would therefore be suitable for Germanization. On 11 September 1942, one Józef Brodziak, a Polish farm laborer who worked for Maria Meins in the township of Benzin Kreis Stolp (Bięcino in the Słupsk district), was arrested. Although he was of ethnic Polish descent (and in fact married), between October 1941 and January 1942 he had sexual intercourse with Meins (who was also married) on several occasions, and regularly from September 1942 onwards. The German woman fell pregnant with him and on 29 January 1942 gave birth to a baby girl. Since she was breastfeeding her daughter, the woman was not arrested, but an order was issued against Józef Brodziak for protective custody (*Schutzhaftbefehl*) as a precautionary measure, pending verification of his background and the obtainment of documents necessary to submit a motion for special treatment (*Sonderbehandlungsvorschlag*) (Dossier of J. Brodziak, Communication from Stapo Koslin to RSHA..., 1942). Brodziak's evaluation, however, was unfavorable, and he was therefore sentenced to life imprisonment and sent for training as a skilled laborer (Dossier of J. Brodziak, Communication from RSHA in Berlin to Stapo Koslin..., 1943). He was eventually incarcerated in KL Stutthof on 13 October 1943 (Dossier of J. Brodziak, Personal card, n.d.).

The fact that the potential Germanization of prisoners arrested for maintaining intimate relations with German women that were forbidden to foreigners, and especially to forced laborers from Eastern Europe, was explored is evidenced by the documentation of a Pole, twenty-five-year-old Teofil Białowąż (camp no. 24,232), who was arrested on 20 March 1943 and incarcerated by Stapo Tilsit at KL Stutthof on 19 July 1943 (Dossier of T. Białowąż, Personal card, n.d.). According to a memo drawn up by Gestapo Tilsit for the RSHA in Berlin and the SS Race and Settlement Main Office, Białowąż had been residing in Kłajpeda (Memel) as a civilian laborer since March 1940 (Dossier of T. Białowąż, Description of what occurred..., 1943). Already in 1940, the German police had informed him that contacts with German women were forbidden. A letter to the RSHA included a racial profile of Teofil Białowąż, which informed that he was "a Pole from the Ciechanów district (East Prussia), unsuitable for Germanization", but noted that his character was "good". He was an efficient worker and showed leadership qualities. The German woman with whom he had coitus, Margaretta Scheffler, was described as liberated and not particularly concerned with being loyal to her husband, who had already forgiven his wife for the adultery committed with Białowąż. Scheffler was eventually placed under protective custody (*Schutzhaft*), while later it was decided to send her to a concentration camp. Białowąż was dealt with similarly (Dossier of T. Białowąż, Communication from Head of Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamtes SS..., 1943).

On 25 January 1944, the Germans arrested one Zygmunt Obalek. A native of Bydgoszcz, he was single and worked as a forced laborer

on the Penner farm in the township of Wernersdorf Kreis Grosses Werder (Pogorzała Wieś in the Malbork district). He struck up a relationship with a local resident, Rosie Dormann; she was seven months pregnant with him at the time of his arrest. It was not until 7 June 1944 that Obalek was incarcerated at KL Stutthof. A letter sent by Gestapo Danzig to RSHA Division IV A 1 c informed that he knew that sexual intercourse with a German woman was a punishable offense. However, they both wanted to get married, and so the man himself applied for Germanization and was ready to voluntarily enlist in the Wehrmacht (Dossier of Z. Obalek, Communication from Gestapo Danzig to RSHA..., 1944). The letter to the RSHA described Obalek as a former Pole of balanced mixed race, with Nordic and Eastern traits. By a decision of the RSHA, on 23 August 1944 he was sent from KL Stutthof to the SS-Sonderlager Hinzert Abteilung für Eindeutschungsfähige (Hinzert Concentration Camp, Department for Persons Suitable for Germanization). After six months, a report was to be sent from Hinzert on Obalek's progress and susceptibility to Germanization. The RSHA took no action against Rosie Dormann, who gave birth during the proceedings (Dossier of Z. Obalek, Communication from RSHA to Gestapo Danzig..., 1944). We have no information as to whether Obalek was ultimately assessed as fit for Germanization, but since on 24 October 1944 he signed a document issued at KL Stutthof, we may infer that the opinion was negative (Dossier of Z. Obalek, Account card, n.d.).

Racist legislation also regulated other aspects of life. Introduced on 29 September 1933, the Law on Hereditary Homesteads introduced as a condition of ownership the possession of "German blood or blood from the same stem" (Benz, 2006, p. 102). German peasants, described as the breadwinners of the Reich, were set as the example of racial purity and a healthy worldview, untainted by Marxism, liberalism and similar social movements. Referencing the German tradition, according to which the peasant was a natural candidate for soldiering, Hitler and Himmler saw therein the ideal human element for colonizing areas conquered in the future war in the East. He was to be the embodiment of the doctrinal model of "German blood" and "German connection to the land" (*Blut und Boden*) (Ryszka, 1985, pp. 249–250). The peasants, in whom such high hopes were placed, were punished for inappropriate behavior. Those who neglected their duty to work for the Third Reich would be sent to an educational labor camp (AEL, *Arbeitserziehungslager*), which from 1 October 1941, pursuant to Himmler's decree of 28 May 1941, was Stutthof. It served this function until the end of its existence, even though it officially became a concentration camp on 7 January 1942 (Drywa, 2020, pp. 57–58).

Fifty-year-old Oskar Kresin from the township of Monchengrebin Kreis Danzig-Land (Grabiny Duchowne in the Gdańsk district) was incarcerated in AEL Stutthof on 3 July 1942 by Stapo Danzig (camp no. 14,346). The justification for referring him to 28 days of "education" was that: "As

a farmer, contrary to the recommendations of the Reichsnährstand,¹⁵ he managed his farm sloppily, left the field unplanted, and did not properly care for his cattle. His indiscipline should be viewed as an act of sabotage, rendering impossible the provision of food to the population” (Dossier of O. Kresin, Einweisungsbeschluss..., 1942). Kresin was released as scheduled, on 31 July 1942, and was to appear at his place of residence (Dossier of O. Kresin, Entlassungsschein..., 1942). Another German farmer, fifty-one-year-old Robert Kuppe (camp no. 19,314) from the village of Biele Kreis Plohn (Biele in Płońsk district), was imprisoned in KL Stutthof by Stapo Schrottersburg on 4 February 1943 for “neglecting his farm”. In the camp, he was classified as a political prisoner (*politische*), which meant that he was not eligible for release. Robert Kuppe died in KL Stutthof on 10 April 1943 (Dossier of R. Kuppe, Personal card, n.d.).

This manifestation of the totalitarianization of the economy was also reflected in areas other than agriculture. The whole of German society was subjected to a total mobilization, with the German state guaranteeing itself the right to influence even the private lives of its citizens – a policy in line with the Third Reich’s legislation, pursuant to which the person was an object of the activity of the state. Legislative action in the world of labor invariably served a simple role – limiting each and every manifestation of freedom. In accordance with the “Leader Principle”, workers were to obey their employer unquestioningly, and were to be guided by one common goal: the benefit of the nation and the state. Additional supervision over laborers was to be executed by “labor trustees” (*Reichstreuhand der Arbeit*), who were also charged with ensuring “labor peace”. Both the newly established employment offices (*Arbeitsamt*) and “employment records” (*Arbeitsbuch*) were intended to prevent people from changing jobs and trying to find better working conditions. Holding or preparing for a strike were grave crimes prosecuted by law. Thus, the worker’s entire life was institutionalized and totally planned – from work treated as an obligation to leisure time spent within the KdF (Ryszka, 1985, pp. 247–249). There was also a unification of the German labor movement through the creation of the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) organization, which brought together all existing trade unions on a “voluntary membership” basis (pp. 218–219). Therefore, anyone who evaded work for the Third Reich would receive punishment, up to and including placement in an educational labor camp or concentration camp.

Young Germans employed in various workplaces and in labor camps were sent to Arbeitserziehungslager Stutthof for “education”, some even twice. A special department for Germans (the Sonderabteilung für

15 Reichsnährstand (State Food Society) – a government organization established to regulate food production and develop new agricultural policies.

Deutsche) was set up within the Gdańsk Gestapo to handle arrests and referrals to the camp. On 26 June 1942, Stapo Danzig resented a nineteen-year-old German girl from Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, Erna Prahm, to the camp. Prahm had first been sent to AEL Stutthof on 21 December 1941 (Dossier of E. Prahm, Personal card, n.d.). Then, she had received a penalty of 21 days of “education” for “refusing to perform the work assigned to her. What is more, what work she had performed, she performed sloppily, directly endangering the lives of our soldiers, because, while employed at an armaments factory, she had stamped gas mask filters as “checked” without actually checking them” (Dossier of E. Prahm, *Aufnahmeverhandlung...*, 1942). On 8 October 1942, Stapo Danzig sent one Gertrude Vollmann, a seventeen-year-old German girl from Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz, for failing to take up work assigned by the Arbeitsamt and walking until dawn along the city streets. She was sentenced to 42 days of “education”, with the date of her release from the camp being set for 19 November 1942 (Dossier of G. Vollmann, *Einweisungsbeschluss...*, 1942). However, because of the punishment that she received while in the camp, Vollmann was released on 27 November 1942, and referred to a labor office in Gdańsk (Dossier of G. Vollmann, Personal card, n.d.). On 7 January 1943, one Ernst Hussendorfer, a nineteen-year-old German from Nuremberg, was resented to KL Stutthof for “education” from Wertlager E Danzig for violating his employment contract (Dossier of E. Hussendorfer, Personal card, n.d.).

Prisoners released from the camp also signed a declaration which was similar to that signed by soldiers of the SS garrison. It comprised the following points: “I will never turn against the National Socialist state or its institutions, either in speech or in writing, while as soon as I become aware of activities aimed against the present government, the NSDAP or its sub-units, I undertake to report the said to the police immediately; I have never fallen ill or had an accident while in Stutthof concentration camp; I am aware that I am not permitted to speak about the facilities of the concentration camp; I have received the items that were taken from me during my arrest; I cannot and will not claim compensation, and, when making this declaration, I was not coerced”.¹⁶

The primary objective of German totalitarianism was to create a new type of man, representing one race, the Aryan race, with a homogeneous set of views, completely devoted to one leader, and blindly following orders. After Hitler took power, it was planned that German youth would be educated “physically, spiritually and morally” in the spirit of National Socialism. The school, acting in accordance with the “Leader Principle”, was to shape a “new man”, who loved the healthy and beautiful

¹⁶ For example, such a document can be found in the files of Tomasz Drzewiecki (Dossier of T. Drzewiecki, *Erklärung...*, 1942).

German body, pure in terms of race, and approached “intellectual education” with disgust (Butkiewicz, 2018, p. 51). According to a law passed in 1936, the only youth organization was to be the Hitlerjugend (for boys), and the associated Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of German Girls) for girls. Education in this spirit became obligatory for boys between the ages of 6 and 18, and for girls between the ages of 7 and 21 (Grünberg, 1984, pp. 98–99).

The new type of man was to be shaped by the Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten NAPOLA – elite schools for national-political education.¹⁷ These were boarding schools, each headed by a director-cum-leader (Führer), which focused on educating youth in the “new spirit”, in accordance with the socio-political tenets of the Third Reich. Schools propagated a cult of the body, and strove to imbue students with a willingness to sacrifice oneself for the fatherland; thus, even classrooms were organized along military lines (Butkiewicz, 2018, p. 91). Between 20 April 1933 and 1942, a total of 39 such institutions were established in the Reich and incorporated territories, as well as in the Netherlands and Luxembourg (pp. 103–105). It is probably also no coincidence that a NAPOLA school was set up in Sztum already on 1 October 1934. Located in what was then East Prussia, close to the Polish border, Sztum had a thriving Polish community that had actively participated in the 1920 plebiscites, while in nearby Waplewo there was the manor house of the Sierakowski family, which exerted a strong influence throughout the area and helped develop its Polishness. The school’s location in Sztum was intended to create a counterbalance to Polish organizations, whereas the proximity of Malbork and Malbork Castle were to facilitate the “Germanic” upbringing of young Germans.

One of NAPOLA’s students in Sztum was Hartmut Schlotke. He was placed in the school as a ten-year-old, by his father. In his own words:

Studying played a somewhat secondary role, especially as the teachers at the NAPOLA school were not really recognized. [...] What was important and relevant was, first of all, purely physical hardening, secondly: a kind of political education which had as its goal the fostering of a fundamental aggressive-military attitude that was considered especially suitable for boys, and, thirdly, developing togetherness within the group under the watchful eye of the group leader (Schlotke, 2004, p. 152).

¹⁷ Nationalpolitische Erziehungsanstalten NAPOLA – literally, National-Political Institutes of Education. Tomasz Butkiewicz has proposed the name “school for national-political education” (Butkiewicz, 2018, p. 89).

Boys placed in the NAPOLA school were given appropriate uniforms:

One of the first paths in the NAPOLA led to the dressing room, where I received clothes. This included a gym kit, a uniform that we had to wear every day, and a black full dress uniform, in which I was photographed once at Chełmickie Lake. We did not wear civilian clothes, while civilians were ridiculed as wimps and unequivocally and openly insulted as having a damaging influence on the new German youth (p. 153).

Schlotke, physically weak and unable to cope with various gymnastic exercises, in addition humiliated by the school's headmaster, found sympathy among a group of older boys, fifteen and sixteen years old:

who accepted me warmly and unanimously, without asking questions, without setting any traps, and without wanting to tease or laugh at me. [...] In my off-hours, I could go to them at any time, crouch down and secretly require them to defend me. Those to whom I retreated were among the few... (p. 160).

Hartmut Schlotke was eventually expelled from the school before completing his "education".

Evidence of the activities of the NAPOLA school in Sztum has also been preserved in the prisoners' documentation. Hartmut Schlotke's recollections of his stay at the facility fully confirm its reputation as the "devil's institution", which was given to the school by two young Poles sent to AEL Stutthof for refusing to work there. These were two residents of Bydgoszcz, Zygmunt Pilarski and Albin Pryłowski, who were referred to NAPOLA as "free workers" (*Freiarbeiter*). They were accused of plotting to resign from their employment and, to this end, going to a doctor - as was stated in the communication - for insignificant reasons in order to obtain medical certificates of disability. However, the doctor concluded that both were fit for work. Pryłowski and Pilarski refused to perform even light tasks in the school garden, because according to them, both the food and the work itself at the NAPOLA school, which they described as the "devil's institution", were bad, inadequate. Therefore, on 14 August 1941 Stapo Graudenz (Grudziądz) transferred Zygmunt Pilarski (camp no. 11,720) and Albin Pryłowski (camp no. 11,719) to the camp "for upbringing" (*zur Erziehung*), which was to last until 3 October 1941 (Dossier of A. Pryłowski, Communication from Staatspolizei Graudenz..., 1941a). A letter sent by the Graudenz Gestapo to KL Stutthof on 14 August 1941 stressed that the two had already been punished by the local police in Sztum (*Ortspolizeibehörde in Stuhm*) with a three-day jail term for leaving their apartment after 9.00 p.m. (Dossier of A. Pryłowski, Communication from

Staatspolizei Graudenz..., 1941b). After serving their sentences at AEL Stutthof, Prylowski and Pilarski were released on 2 October 1941, and on 7 October reported again to the employment office in Sztum. We have no further information as to whether they were both reassigned to the school, or referred to other work.

The so-called antisocials – work evaders (*Arbeitsscheu*), that is, those who did not adhere to established norms of behavior and therefore remained outside the elites and the masses – were doomed from the start. Even before the outbreak of war, German authorities equated “work evasion” with professional criminality and endangerment of social morality. Manhunts were organized for assumed offenders, for example before the 1936 Olympics, when “antisocial” individuals – black marketeers, vagrants, beggars, homosexuals, drunks, etc., considered as the primary *arbeitsscheue Elemente* – were locked up in concentration camps (Musioł, 1968, p. 77). These arrestees were the main labor force available to SS companies, and especially to the Earth and Stone Works Company, founded in 1938 by Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, while the money gained from their exploitation helped raise funds that were used to facilitate the growth of the SS (Padfield, 2005, p. 215).

The same tactics were later adopted towards conquered nations. On 1 and 22 December 1944, and in January 1945, a total of 27 female prisoners from the “antisocial” (*asoziale*) category were sent to KL Stutthof by Sipo Litzmannstadt. All of them had been arrested following roundups or searches carried out at their homes – the Germans had the right to enter a Pole’s home at any time and check the identity documents of the people found there. Those who were unemployed were often informed on by local Germans, as they were required to report such cases to the police. This is evidenced by the surviving files of female prisoners sent to KL Stutthof. After conducting a search, the State Criminal Police (*Staatliche Kriminalpolizei*) would write down a police preventive arrest warrant (*Anordnung der polizeilichen Vorbeugungsschat*), which included a description of the situation determined in the searched premises and the charges leveled against a given person. The most common accusation made against women was that they ignored summons from the labor office or appeals – made to all Poles by the Reich Governor in the Wartheland – to take up employment. Investigations then found that they were not expected to take a job voluntarily, and that the possibility of their improvement seemed doubtful. Confinement in a concentration camp was deemed necessary to accustom them to working life (Drywa, 2023, pp. 52–59).

Until mid-1944, KL Stutthof remained outside the camps which carried out the mass extermination of Jews. On 8 February 1943, the 14 surviving Jews who had been incarcerated in the camp in the years 1939–1942 were deported to Auschwitz (Drywa, 2001, p. 20). Of the 300 residents of the Białystok ghetto imprisoned on 21 November 1943, 253 (119 men and 134 women) were sent to Auschwitz on 10 January 1944 by order of the head

of WVHA Amtsgruppe D-SS (Kommandanturbefehl No. 4..., 1944; Transport list, 1944, pp. 1-2). It was not until the end of June 1944 that KL Stutthof began to receive Jews from camps and ghettos existing in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, as well as from KL Auschwitz. A total of approximately 49,000 Jews were incarcerated there by the end of 1944 (Drywa, 2001, pp. 88-93). But since KL Stutthof did not have gas chambers suited for direct extermination operations, on 26 July and 10 September 1944 some of these people, after selections, were sent to KL Auschwitz; in the main, they were mothers with young children, and the recommendation was that they be treated like the Hungarian Jews, whose deportations to Auschwitz had commenced in May 1944 (pp. 108-110). Others were dispatched to the sub-camps of the concentration camps of Natzweiler, Buchenwald, Dachau, Sachsenhausen and Neuengamme (pp. 108-120). More than 26,251 were sent to hard labor in the sub-camps of KL Stutthof. Work beyond their strength on digging anti-tank ditches at Luftwaffe airfields in East Prussia, the hunger and typhus prevalent in KL Stutthof, killings conducted in the gas chamber, the selections of prisoners carried out prior to evacuation and the evacuation itself, the execution on 30 January 1945 of some 4,000 Jewish inmates at Palmnicken on the Baltic coast, and, finally, the seaborne evacuation of prisoners of KL Stutthof on 25 and 27 April 1945 all resulted in the deaths of more than 28,000 Jewish detainees (pp. 181, 183-258, 344). Even towards the end of April 1945, when they were retreating from the camp, the Germans set fire to the Jewish barracks and thus killed the Jewish women who were trying to hide from deportation (pp. 301-302).

Racial regulations also applied to Soviet prisoners of war. After the German-Soviet War erupted, the Einsatzgruppen were given the task of locating Soviet commissars in the Dulags and Stalags, in addition to Communists, party functionaries, and all Jews. The directives of the OKW (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht - Armed Forces High Command) and the Sipo regarding the selection of prisoners of war and the performance of death sentences upon them remained in effect throughout the war and were followed to the end (Datner, 1961, pp. 124-127). On 16 January 1945, a few days before the first stage of the evacuation of KL Stutthof started, eight prisoners of war were executed at the camp; among them were two Soviet Jews who had been sent there on 9 January 1945 by Sipo Königsberg. Two other Russian Jews, who had also arrived at the camp on 9 January, were executed on the same day on the orders of Sipo Königsberg/Allenstein, and the only explanation for this act is the following annotation in the records: "Jude R [Russland]" (Register, n.d., pp. 195-197).

KL Stutthof is an example of a camp where racial policies were implemented against Jews and selected strata of Polish society and other nations from the very beginning of the war in September 1939 until its end in May 1945. The approximately 2,400 functionaries who formed the SS garrison of the camp between 1939 and 1945 adhered unwaveringly

to their signed oath of allegiance to Hitler (and other pledges). In a situation where prisoners of concentration camps faced death at any moment, where they were executed or forced to do hard labor, the words spoken by the German prisoner Erich Klann to the Polish priest Wojciech Gajdus in KL Sachsenhausen – who longed for freedom and his family – are especially significant:

You see, wherever they (the Germans) are, and wherever the Nazi regime is, it's one big concentration camp. [...] After all, they do not know how to govern differently. For them, everything must be organized like a concentration camp. Otherwise they could not stay in power. With them, there is neither freedom of belief, nor free private property, nor personal freedom, nor anything associated with the word "freedom". [...] Here you sit, but you have freedom of belief, and if you tried to say out loud what you think out there, on the other side of the wires, then trust me, you would be back here in a second. Remember this: in the Third Reich, freedom of belief is possible only in a concentration camp. Here, you can think and believe whatever you like, while out there you must think and believe as commanded from above (Gajdus, 1962, pp. 281–182).

The analyzed documentation fully reflects the totalitarian nature of Nazi rule. Those sent to the camp were "guilty" under a law which governed each and every aspect of their lives, even the most intimate. The rules and principles introduced in the concentration camps were a reflection of the situation prevailing throughout the Third Reich. Both the living conditions of the prisoners, and the reign of terror that perpetually instilled dread and fear for their own lives were meant to inculcate trepidation in the populace, while the very sight of the prisoners was intended to show what would happen to those who tried to oppose the occupation authorities.

The concentration camps were meant to dehumanize not only the prisoners, but also their garrisons. The garrison had to be blindly obedient to its superior – the camp commandant, who was responsible for implementing the orders of the nation's leaders, in line with the "Leader Principle". The attitude of the garrison toward prisoners, as well as the principles which it followed, expressed a hatred of racial and political minorities, a desire to conquer and rule – in essence, it was a profession of the superiority of the German people and the Nordic race over other nations and races. Such behavior was under constant scrutiny, and defying generally applicable norms was punished.

(transl. by Maciej Zakrzewski)

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