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## Dulag Luft West

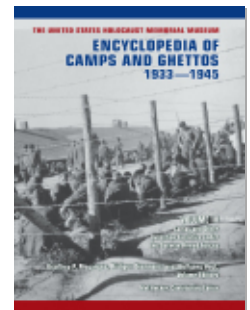
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The garrison officer (*Standortoffizier*), Major Joachim von Hellermann, oversaw prisoner burials. The *Neues Gesellschaftsbaus* (New Society House) building, where there was purportedly a hospital, was recorded as the prisoners' place of death.<sup>17</sup> The first deaths among prisoners were reported on September 23, 1939. Prisoners were buried in a cemetery near the camp, which was later known as the Russian cemetery (*Russenfriedhof*), since most of the prisoners who were buried there were Soviet POWs who died in Stalag II D. The site is now known as the International Military Cemetery.<sup>18</sup>

Dulag L was converted into Stalag II D on October 20, 1939.<sup>19</sup>

**SOURCES** Primary source material about Dulag L is located in ACMJW, BA-MA (RH 49), WAsT, StA Greifswald, and the State Archive in Szczecin.

Additional information about Dulag L can be found in the following publications: Bogdan Frankiewicz, *Praca przymusowa na Pomorzu Zachodnim w latach II wojny światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1969), p. 101; Edward Jan Krutol, *Wrzesień na Oksywiu* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1984); Maciej Maciejowski and Magdalena Dźwiągła, *Zbrodnie niemieckie na Pomorzu Zachodnim i ziemi lubuskiej popełnione w latach 1939–1945 w świetle śledztw prowadzonych przez Oddziałową Komisję Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Szczecinie. Wybór źródeł* (Szczecin: IPN Szczecin, 2013), pp. 44–49; Gianfranco Mattiello and Wolfgang Vogt, *Deutsche Kriegsgefangenen- und Internierten-Einrichtungen 1939–1945. Handbuch und Katalog: Lagergeschichte und Lagerzensurstempel*, vol. 2 (Koblenz: self-published, 1987), p. 66; Czesław Pilichowski, *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich. 1939–1945. Informator encyklopedyczny* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1979), p. 469; Juliusz Pollack, *Jeńcy polscy w hitlerowskiej niewoli* (Warsaw: MON, 1986); Marek Sadzewicz, *Oflag: Pamiętnik jeńca wojennego* (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1948); Kazimierz Szubert, *Niepodległość. Wojna. Niewola. Pamiętnik podporucznika Wojska Polskiego Kazimierza Szuberta*, ed. Agnieszka Jędrzejewska and Przemysław Waingertner (Łódź: Muzeum Tradycji Niepodległościowych, 2012); and Georg Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen der deutschen Wehrmacht und Waffen-SS im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939–1945. Vol. 2: Die Landstretkräfte 1-5* (Frankfurt am Main: E. S. Mittler, 1966), p. 80.

Jolanta Aniszewska and Alexander Kruglov  
Trans. Kathleen Luft

## NOTES

1. Sadzewicz, *Oflag*, p. 62.
2. ACMJW, Oflag XI A, sygn. 5440, 5444; Frankiewicz, *Praca przymusowa*, pp. 107–108.
3. Frankiewicz, *Praca przymusowa*, pp. 107–108. In a document compiled from extracts of OKW reports as of September 18, 1939, on persons in prisoner of war camps in Defense District II, the item Dulag L contains no information; however, this may mean that there was no information to make a report, rather than no prisoners in the camp. ACMJW, sygn. 15, pp. 3–4, 7, 10.
4. State Archives in Szczecin, Compilation of Bogdan Frankiewicz, sygn. 360.

5. Frankiewicz, *Praca przymusowa*, pp. 107–108.
6. Pilichowski, *Obozy hitlerowskie*, p. 469.
7. ACMJW, Oflag XI A, sygn. 5440, 5444.
8. ACMJW, RiW, sygn. 726, p. 5; Szubert, *Niepodległość*, p. 76.
9. State Archives in Szczecin, Compilation of Bogdan Frankiewicz, sygn. 360.
10. Krutol, *Wrzesień na Oksywiu*, p. 102.
11. Szubert, *Niepodległość*, p. 76.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
13. National Archives in Szczecin, Compilation of Bogdan Frankiewicz, sygn. 360.
14. ACMJW, RiW, sygn. 726, p. 5; AIPN Sz., sygn. S 1/66/OKS, pp. 637–640; *Protokół przesłuchania świadka Stanisława Piekarka przez prokuratora Prokuratury Powiatowej w Gdyni* (May 9, 1969).
15. ACMJW, RiW, sygn. 726, p. 9.
16. ACMJW, *Statystyka genewska*, sygn. 15, p. 9; State Archives in Szczecin, Compilation of Bogdan Frankiewicz, sygn. 47; Stadtarchiv Greifswald, Acc. 3/69, Nr. 51, Bl. 69.
17. Headquarters of the Polish Red Cross, Warsaw, sygn. 19880 (*Beibefehl zum Aktenstück Kriegsgefangenen Friedhof*), pp. 1–2.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
19. Tessin, *Verbände und Truppen*, p. 80.

## DURCHGANGLAGER (DULAG) LUFT INSTERBURG

The Luftwaffe established Dulag Luft Insterburg in the town of Insterburg, East Prussia (today Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningradskaja oblast', Russia) (map 4c) in April 1943. The camp was closed in November 1944.

**SOURCES** The only source available on this camp is to be found in Rüdiger Overmans, Reinhard Otto, and Wolfgang Vogt (eds.), *Das Kriegsgefangenenwesen der Wehrmacht* (forthcoming).

## DURCHGANGLAGER (DULAG) LUFT OST

The Luftwaffe established Dulag Luft Ost in 1943. The camp was located in Karlsbad (today Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic), then in Haid (today Bor, Tachov District, Czech Republic), and finally in Gross Meierhöfen (today Velké Dvorce, Czech Republic) (all map 4d). It was disbanded on or before May 8, 1945.

**SOURCES** The only source available on this camp is to be found in Rüdiger Overmans, Reinhard Otto, and Wolfgang Vogt (eds.), *Das Kriegsgefangenenwesen der Wehrmacht* (forthcoming).

## DURCHGANGLAGER (DULAG) LUFT WEST

Dulag Luft West performed a dual function. First, it served as a transit camp for air crews of the Western Allies as a part of the prisoner of war (POW) administration. Second, it was

also the military intelligence center of Luftwaffe Operations Staff Ic/Foreign Air Forces West (*Luftwaffenführungsstabs Ic/Fremde Luftwaffen West*) for the western theater of war: Evaluation Site West (*Auswertestelle West*). Both facilities were located on the same campgrounds in the small town of Oberursel, in what today is the federal state of Hesse (map 4d). However, while Evaluation Site West, along with its interrogation camp, remained in that location until the spring of 1945, Dulag Luft West moved twice.

Only a few days after the beginning of the war in 1939, the Luftwaffe set up several centers for prisoner interrogations. One of these improvised facilities was located in Oberursel, where the authorities used the infrastructure of an assembly point for army officers. When the assembly point shut down, the Luftwaffe took over the property and set up a camp.<sup>1</sup> In this way, Dulag Luft West came into being in mid-November 1939. The camp was disciplinarily subordinate to Luftwaffe Administrative Command Headquarters (*Luftgaukommando*) XII in Wiesbaden, while the superior military-intelligence authority was Luftwaffe Operations Staff Ic in Potsdam.<sup>2</sup> As a result of restructuring, Dulag Luft West was, from early 1941, part of the newly created Luftwaffe Administrative Command XII/XIII before it was placed under the control of Luftwaffe Administrative Command VII in April 1944.

In the spring of 1940, the actual transit camp came into being—a fenced area, secured with guard towers, with three barracks, two of which served to house a maximum of 150 prisoners. In September 1943, Dulag Luft West was separated from the compound at the Oberursel site when the transit camp reached its limits in terms of logistics. At the instigation of Hermann Göring and with the approval of the Armed Forces High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, OKW), the camp was moved, in violation of international law, to a newly constructed building designed for 500 POWs, in the center of Frankfurt am Main, not far from the main railroad station (Grüneburgpark/Palmengarten) (4d). The Allied POWs, it was assumed, would serve as human shields to prevent the bombing of the city, but during the night of March 22–23, 1944, Dulag Luft West was destroyed by fire during a Royal Air Force raid, and two POWs died. Once again, there was a change of location, this time to Wetzlar, 50 kilometers (31 miles) north, to a military barracks formerly occupied by an anti-aircraft unit, in the Klosterwald (4d). This facility was gradually enlarged to accommodate a capacity of almost 800 prisoners.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the war, the prisoners in Dulag Luft West were almost exclusively military personnel from the forces of the Western Allies. Their status under international law as POWs had been verified and registered before they were sent on to the transit camp. As the transit camp for an interrogation center, in which the POWs stayed only briefly, Dulag Luft West was not subject to the control of the Reich Labor Deployment Administration (*Reichsarbeitsersatzverwaltung*). In any case, since many flying personnel were officers, they could only be deployed at labor to a limited extent or not at all.

Nonetheless, starting in July 1942, a voluntary British work detachment came into being on a trial basis. It had its own duty roster, and its members gave written promises that they would neither escape nor speak with German civilians during the construction work in the camp area, in exchange for the “privilege to work in full liberty without any guard.”<sup>4</sup> In April 1943, the protecting power’s representatives learned of its existence through the senior British officer. As a result, the volunteers unanimously requested that they be transferred to Stalag Luft 1 in Barth: They feared that, if their pledge were to become known, the Air Ministry would block their pay. Whether a Western Allied work detachment existed again after this event is not indicated by the sources.

At the beginning of July 1942, the unit’s war diary noted the impending arrival of a group from Litzmannstadt (today: Łódź, Poland), consisting of 31 Soviet POWs, to be deployed as a work detachment.<sup>5</sup> These men probably were members of the Red Air Force who were transferred from Evaluation Site East/Dulag Luft East to Oberursel as a result of a previous labor force requisition. The existence of a sectioned-off “Russian camp” of unknown size, with its own guard force, is documented for the first time in November 1942. With the transfer of the transit sector to Frankfurt, the former Dulag area in Oberursel was changed, beginning in the fall of 1943, into a camp for the Soviet POWs involved in internal Luftwaffe labor deployment, who worked on the grounds of Evaluation Site West.<sup>6</sup>

In total, 42,000 (and, in 1944, 29,000) POWs—bomber crews, fighter pilots, paratroopers, and air landing troops—passed through Dulag Luft West at its sites in Oberursel, Frankfurt, and Wetzlar; around 25,000 of them were interrogated at Evaluation Site West. Until the summer of 1940, the number of POWs in Dulag Luft West usually was below 100. After the conclusion of the campaign in the west, most of the French Air Force (*Armée de l’air*) personnel were transferred. The next phase of the air war led to an increase in Royal Air Force personnel; in July 1941, around 200 POWs passed through the camp.<sup>7</sup> On a regular basis, they were removed from the transit sector, where only the permanent camp staff (around 25 officers and noncommissioned officers) remained. Demographically, the British were the largest national contingent until the fall of 1943. They included men from every part of the Commonwealth and the Dominions, from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Rhodesia, and the British West Indies as well as volunteers from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands. At the end of September 1942 (monthly admissions were around 400), the presence of American POWs was ascertainable during an inspection visit by the Swiss legation. In March 1943, with constantly increasing admission figures in the following months (May: 574, June: 619, August: 1,278) and an even faster pace of transit, the numbers of British and Americans were approximately equal for the first time.<sup>8</sup> The participation of the United States Army Air Forces in the Allied Combined Bomber Offensive resulted in a shift in the proportion: with 1,500 new arrivals in October 1943, the US aircrews became

the largest group (72 percent) in the Dulag Luft in Frankfurt. When the last camp inspection at the Wetzlar site took place in March 1945, 826 POWs were present there—during the previous month, around 40 new arrivals were still being registered each day.<sup>9</sup> The intake always included soldiers who had been wounded or injured when their plane was shot down or crashed or when they made a parachute descent. Their medical care was provided primarily by the Hohemark Reserve Military Hospital, located in Oberursel and equipped with around 50 beds. No deaths are known.

The first commandant of Dulag Luft West was Oberstleutnant Peterpaul von Donat. He had served in the German air service since 1915, in part as an intelligence officer and interpreter, and spoke several foreign languages. He had also been a member of the SA.

Von Donat's successor, Major Theodor Rumpel, was the commandant of Dulag Luft West between June 1940 and November 1941; he had been an interrogation officer there since the end of 1939. He, too, spoke various languages. After tensions with the Reich Security Main Office and under pressure from Heinrich Himmler for treating POWs in Dulag Luft West "too well," Rumpel was replaced in 1941, with a failed escape attempt made months earlier used as the ostensible reason.

Oberstleutnant Erich Killinger assumed command of Dulag Luft West in the winter of 1941 and ran it until the fall of 1943; Evaluation Site West remained under his command until the end of the war. Killinger also had experience in intelligence work.

Oberstleutnant Otto Becker became commandant of the new Dulag Luft West in Frankfurt in September 1943 and coordinated its establishment. In 1936, Becker had joined the Foreign Organization (*Auslandsorganisation*) of the NSDAP. By the early summer of 1943, Becker was an interrogation officer in Oberursel.

Air Fleet Command 4 detailed the three platoons of Reserve Company 14/XVII, which in May 1940 was commanded by Oberleutnant d. R. Erhard Denzler, to guard Dulag Luft West. Leutnant (later Hauptmann) Wilhelm Beer, commander of the 2nd Platoon in December 1941, took command of the company one year later. After the transit camp was relocated, the unit remained in Oberursel as a guard force for Evaluation Site West. The expansion of Dulag Luft West in Frankfurt to more than three times its previous capacity required an increase in the guard forces, so that, in the end, 14 platoons of Reserve troops (*Landeschützen*) were on site; at the beginning of 1944, one company was under the command of Hauptmann Hardje.

The difference between Dulag Luft West and other facilities for POWs was not primarily the existence of a unique camp society made up of Allied prisoners but rather the presence, within the German camp administration, of a camp culture that was quite critical of the regime.<sup>10</sup> This culture sought to evade the exertions of increasingly dominant influence by the Reich Main Security Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*) in particular, and the endeavor led to escalation.

After one commandant, Rumpel, had been removed for being "too prisoner-friendly," the Gestapo pursued an action before a special military court in the fall of 1944 against his successor, Killinger, accusing the officer corps of political unreliability and alleged subversion of the war effort. The proceeding ended in a verdict of acquittal. To the last, the commandant, who was influenced by Christianity and had contacts to the Confessing Church, transferred into Dulag Luft West prisoners whose lives were at risk because of their unresolved or uncertain status as POWs. In Wetzlar, in turn, the POWs remained protected, even in the final phase of the war, from the consequences of arbitrary orders, which probably was due not least to the exploitation of individual room for maneuver by the camp commandant there, Becker.<sup>11</sup>

Morale in the main camp was generally high. Prisoners typically spent no more than several days in the camp before transfer to another location, though those recovering from injuries would often remain some considerable time.<sup>12</sup> Overall, the prisoners found the camp guards to be kind and conditions to be more than adequate. In the summer of 1943, several American POWs wrote about the "excellent food" and "eating like a hog." Another stated, "You sometimes wonder if you are a prisoner of war."<sup>13</sup>

Before they could enjoy such conditions, however, prisoners often had to pass through the trial of interrogation in the Evaluation Site. One international observer "believed that the exceptionally good treatment given prisoners at [the Dulag] is an effort to make them forget the treatment they received at Oberursel."<sup>14</sup> While that treatment did not approach the kind of torture that some other German prisoners experienced, it could include threats, inadequate rations, and extremes of heat and cold.

Owing to the high turnover and short stay of the prisoners, prearranged escape attempts long remained the exception in Dulag Luft West, in contrast to the Stalags. During the entire war, there was only one large-scale escape attempt, by a group of 18 British officers who fled during Pentecost, on the night of June 1, 1941, through a tunnel dug in advance. All the escapees from Oberursel were captured again after a few days. For the other locations (Frankfurt and Wetzlar), three escape attempts, all ending in failure, are known to have occurred.<sup>15</sup>

A few hours after the bombing of Frankfurt, Dulag Luft West, almost completely consumed by flames, was evacuated on the morning of March 23, 1944. A special train took the POWs and the camp personnel to Wetzlar, where Dulag Luft West was constructed anew. The last inspection report by the protecting power's representative documents the fact that the camp was operational until mid-March 1945, with a supply situation that was relatively good overall. A final POW transport from Evaluation Site West to Dulag Luft took place at the same time.<sup>16</sup> Presumably, the majority of the more than 800 POWs in Dulag Luft were liberated on March 27, 1945, by American units that entered Wetzlar.

At the end of 1945, with the authorization of the United Nations War Crimes Commission in the British Zone of Occupation (Wuppertal), the military court for prosecution of

war crimes put five former officers from Dulag Luft West/Evaluation Site West on trial for ill-usage of POWs, committed in May 1943 and in the time period between June and November 1944. The initial plans of the British Foreign Office for passing sentence on those responsible date from the fall of 1944. On December 3, 1945, the military court sentenced the former camp commandant, Killinger, and his deputy, Junge, to five years in prison. Leutnant Eberhard received a sentence of three years, while two of the accused were acquitted. Those who were convicted were imprisoned in Werl Prison and later granted early release after serving two-thirds of the term imposed. The main count in the proceeding was the extortion of interrogation statements, in violation of international law, through targeted overheating of the solitary confinement cells in the interrogation section of Evaluation Site West. The tribunal took it as demonstrated that the camp leadership had been guilty of violations of administrative supervision and, even after initiation of an investigation following a protest by the British government in 1943, had adopted only inadequate countermeasures.

Although hundreds of former POWs were interviewed in the run-up to the trial, only 14 provided evidence for the breach of the Geneva Convention; the indictment is based on 12 witness statements. Even if one assumes that a high number of cases of additional violations went undetected, probably fewer than 1 percent of the Allied POWs channeled through Dulag Luft (West) during the war were subject to treatment that contravened international law. In the US Zone of Occupation, on the basis of an investigation in the spring of 1945 headed by Colonel Allan B. Richardson and conducted by the Army Counter-Intelligence Corps (“I not only found no evidence of war criminality but abundant evidence to the contrary.”), no efforts were made to open an analogous proceeding or to participate in the British trial.

**SOURCES** Primary source information about Dulag Luft (West) is located in BA-MA (RL 2/II, RL 2/III, RL 7, RL 23, and RH 53/7); TNA (WO 32, WO 208, WO 224, WO 235, WO 239, WO 309, FO 916, AIR 22, and AIR 40); NARA (RG 319 and 389); and PAAA (Gesandtschaft Bern, Rechtsabteilung).

Additional information about Dulag Luft (West) can be found in the following publications: United Nations War Crimes Commission, ed., *Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals*, vol. 3, *Trial of Erich Killinger and Four Others: British Military Court, Wuppertal (26th November–3rd December, 1945)* (London: H.M.S.O., 1948), pp. 67–75; Eric Cuddon, ed., “Trial of Erich Killinger, Heinz Junge, Otto Boehringer, Heinrich Eberhardt, Gustav Bauer-Schlichtegroll (The Dulag Luft Trial),” in *War Crimes Trials*, vol. 9 (London: William Hodge, 1952); Arthur A. Durand, *Stalag Luft III: An American Experience in a World War II German Prisoner of War Camp*, 2 vols. (PhD dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1976), pp. 89–126; Andrew S. Hasselbring, *American Prisoners of War in the Third Reich* (PhD thesis, Temple University, 1991), pp. 29–101; Vasilis Vourkoutiotis, *Prisoners of War and the German High Command: The British and American Experience* (PhD thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 2003), pp. 29–30 and 189–195; and Stefan Geck, “Dulag Luft—Auswertestelle

West. Vernehmungslager der Luftwaffe für westalliierte Kriegsgefangene im Zweiten Weltkrieg,” in *Europäische Hochschulschriften*, series III, vol. 1057 (dissertation, University of Würzburg, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008).

Stefan Geck, with Patrick Tobin  
Trans. Kathleen Luft

## NOTES

1. Luftgaukommando XII Verwaltung Az. 63 r 10 Oberursel B 8(c), Bezug: Erlass v. 18.12.1939 Az. B63 h 20 Nr. 15866/39 g(5/3 IA), 9.1.1940, in BA-MA, RL 7: 298, p. 1.

2. R.d.L. u. Ob. d. L. Chef d. Gen. St. Nr. 4000/39 IC/A, Richtlinien für die Gefangennahme von Angehörigen feindlicher Luftwaffen und für die Sicherstellung des Luftwaffen-Beutegerätes, Anlage 2, 14.11.1939, in BA-MA, RL 2 II/1468; R.d.L. u. Ob. d. L. Gen. St. Gen. Qu. 2. Abt. Az. 19 a Nr. 7895/39 geh. betr. Kriegsgefangenen-durchgangslager, 17.11.1939, in RL 2 III/482, p. II.

3. Report Dulag Luft Wetzlar-Klosterwald, Confidential No. 524, Edmond A. Naville, 22.7.1944, in TNA, WO 32/18503, p. 1.

4. Kriegstagebuch des Abwehroffiziers im Dulag Luft, 3.7.1942, in BA-MA, RL 23: 97, fol. 14r., 14v.; 7.7.1942, *ibid.*, fol. 15r.

5. KTB AO Dulag Luft, 8.7.1942, in BA-MA, RL 23: 97, fol. 15r.

6. A.D.I. (k) Report No. 475/1944, Dulag Luft, 22.8.1944, in TNA, WO 309/136, p. 2, No. 10; Dulag Luft Oberursel (from print 3264 of sortie J/742, information dated February 1944) appendix II, *ibid.*

7. Dulag Luft Report, Fred K. Salter, 25.11.1940, in TNA WO 32/18490; Reports, Paul S. Guinn/ Dr. Vance B. Murray, 30.7.1941, *ibid.*, p. 1; Camp History of Dulag Luft (Oberursel), in AIR 40/1909, p. 1.

8. Dulag Luft and Lazarett visited by E. Mayer and Dr. Lehner, 4.3.1943, in TNA, WO 32/18490; Reports on Dulag Luft Nr. 288, Fred O. Auckenthaler, 1.11.1943, in WO 32/18503.

9. Confidential, Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 11436 dated April 14, 1945, from the American Legation, Bern. No. 727 Dulag Luft Wetzlar-Klosterwald, Werner Buchmüller, 13.3.1945, in NARA, RG 389, Box 2147A 290/34/19/3.

10. A.D.I. (k) Report No. 328/1945, Auswertestelle West, 14.6.1945, in TNA, WO 309/136, p. 22, No. 208f.

11. Referat Oberstleutnant i.R. Becker, in BA-MA, MSg 200/1236, pp. 15–17.

12. Report by the International Red Cross (November 15, 1943), NARA, RG 389, Box 2143.

13. Summary of American POW statements, US Office of Censorship (n.d., 1943), NARA, RG 389, Box 2143.

14. Report to US Secretary of State (August 30, 1944), NARA, RG 389, Box 2143.

15. Referat Oberstleutnant i.R. Becker, in BA-MA, MSg 200/1236, pp. 7–8.

16. Confidential Enclosure No. 1 to Despatch No. 11436 dated April 14, 1945, from the American Legation, Bern. No. 727 Dulag Luft Wetzlar-Klosterwald, Werner Buchmüller, 13.3.1945, in NARA, RG 389, Box 2147A 290/34/19/3; Transportliste Auswertestelle West, 14.3.1945, in BA-MA, RH 49: 105, p. 11.