

HALLE 116

116

**VERFOLGUNG
BEFREIUNG
ERINNERUNG**



ERINNERUNGS- UND LERNORT

IM EHEMALIGEN KZ-AUSSENLAGER

**AUGSBURGER ZEITGESCHICHTE
SEIT 1933**

Place of Remembrance and Learning

Exhibition Texts

**HALLE
116**

**ERINNERUNGS-
UND LERNORT**

BAY 1



WILLKOMMEN IN DER AUSSTELLUNG

WELCOME TO THE EXHIBITION

As we make our way through the following rooms we will encounter a challenging chapter in our history. It is not always easy to face up to this past openly. The events addressed here took place in the heart of this very city and involved ordinary people, which makes the question of what the past means for us today all the more important.

What kinds of thoughts do the events shown here arouse in us?

What does this have to do with us?

MACHT

POWER

The success of National Socialism was determined by power relations: by those who granted power and those who seized it. It was facilitated both by the politicians of the Weimar Republic and by the German electorate. The hope was that the Nazi regime would bring an improvement in living conditions and that Germany would become strong again, so that the losers of World War I would ultimately become victors.

The internal social unity required for this vision was generated through exclusion. People needed scapegoats to blame for the crisis, and anyone who did not fit into the German “national community” was humiliated and persecuted. The population could participate directly in this process if they wished to, but it was also sufficient simply to let it happen.

At the same time the National Socialists, or Nazis, were preparing a war of aggression to gain supremacy in Europe. In Augsburg the arms industry was expanded and barracks were built.



INTERVENTION

The Nazis promised the population a new German national identity. At the same time they communicated clearly who no longer belonged to this national community.

Both of these elements won widespread approval.

Exclusion and persecution by violent means together with the incarceration and hounding out of “undesirables” took place in full public view. The more involved people were in this process and the more they derived advantages from it, the greater their loyalty to the regime.

The question each person had to ask themselves was: Should I join in or not?

What options were open to the citizens of Augsburg?

DURCHSETZUNG DER NS-HERRSCHAFT

NAZI RULE IS ESTABLISHED

Until the late 1920s Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP) (1889–1945) was a small party with only a few supporters.

Economic crises, unemployment, and social conflicts helped it rise to become a mass movement. People from all walks of life voted for the nationalist and radically antisemitic NSDAP or even joined it.

On January 30, 1933, Reich President Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934) appointed Hitler Reich Chancellor. Within a short space of time he and his supporters turned the democratic Weimar Republic into a dictatorship.

The Nazis disempowered the federal and state] parliaments, banned other parties, eliminated the rule of law as the foundation of the state, and suspended basic democratic rights. They countered any resistance with extreme brutality.

KRIEGSVORBEREITUNGEN

WAR PREPARATIONS

The National Socialist regime prepared Germany for war at an early stage. This was also felt in Augsburg. In 1935, the city became the headquarters of a Wehrmacht division with infantry and artillery units, an anti-tank unit, an army intelligence unit and a rations depot. In addition, there were air intelligence and air defense units with anti-aircraft positions distributed throughout the city.

Within a few years, seven new barracks for up to 10.000 soldiers were built in the western Augsburg districts of Pfersee and Kriegshaber. At the same time, Augsburg, which was dominated by industry, rose to become an important armaments center. The MAN company and the Bavarian Aircraft Works, from 1938 Messerschmitt AG, were particularly important here. Troop parades and celebrations of "Heroes' Memorial Days" promoted social militarization and were intended to get the population in the mood for war.

ZUSTIMMUNG UND ANPASSUNG

CONSENT AND CONFORMITY

The Nazis' success was based on the support and voluntary engagement of many people. An appealing element of Nazi ideology was the promise heralded by the vision of a German "national community." As an antithesis to the diverse society of the Weimar period, this ideal stood for a sense of community, an overcoming of social conflicts, and a strong Germany. At the same time it defined itself via exclusion: anyone who did not belong was gradually excluded from all areas of life or indeed persecuted.

The regime launched a major propaganda campaign to promote the idea of the "national community." This included mass events designed to arouse a feeling of belonging. The message it communicated to its members was that they were of superior worth and as such it promised them protection and social advancement. The image of a national community remained a propaganda concept and at the same time one of the central guiding principles of Nazi policy and a compass for many people.

MACHTÜBERNAHME IN AUGSBURG

THE NAZIS COME TO POWER IN AUGSBURG

In the elections to the Reichstag on March 5, 1933, the NSDAP won 43.9 % of the vote. Shortly thereafter Hitler passed a law ordering that all parliaments right down to the local level be “brought into line.” Augsburg, where only 32.3% of the electorate had voted for the NSDAP, was forced to appoint a new city council on which the persecuted German Communist Party no longer had any seats. Soon the NSDAP ousted the Social Democrats and Bavarian People’s Party councillors as well. Chief Mayor Otto Bohl (1885 –1969) and Mayor Friedrich Ackermann (1876–1949) were replaced. From 1935 the “Führerprinzip,” which placed the leader’s word above the law, was applied to the city administration. This meant that the new Chief Mayor Josef Mayr (1900 –1956) took decisions largely single-handedly, without consulting the council.

In the months that followed the Nazis used intimidation, pseudo-legal methods, and overt violence to assert their rule over all spheres of life. Politics, the economy, culture, and society were ideologically appropriated, reorganized according to Nazi principles, and brought under the closest possible control.

RÜSTUNGSSTADT AUGSBURG

AUGSBURG AS A CENTER OF THE ARMS INDUSTRY

MASCHINENFABRIK AUGSBURG-NÜRNBERG AG (MAN)

The engineering company Maschinenfabrik Augsburg-Nürnberg AG had already made large profits from arms contracts in World War I. From 1923 it was badly affected by the world economic crisis.

In the 1930s the company began to flourish again, thanks to Nazi rearmament policy. The Augsburg factory produced primarily diesel engines for the navy as well as weapons parts. In 1942 the title “model arms company” was conferred on MAN by the Reich Chamber of Labor. Whereas in 1933 MAN had a staff of 3,500, by spring 1943 this had grown to almost 10,000, including many prisoners of war and forced laborers. As Augsburg increasingly suffered air raids, the company moved some of its production facilities to Günzburg and Krumbach, enabling it to continue producing arms.

A drawing of the Augsburg MAN works, 1930s.

MESSERSCHMITT AG

More than half the fighter planes manufactured in the German Reich between 1942 and 1944 were built by the Augsburg branch of Messerschmitt AG. Until 1938 production had been run under the name Bayerische Flugzeugwerke (BFW). Preparations for war meant the company underwent a major expansion in a short space of time under the new name Messerschmitt AG. It initially built fighter planes, later destroyers, bombers, and transport aircraft. Toward the end of the war 18,000 people were working for Messerschmitt AG.

Thousands of “foreign workers,” prisoners of war, and concentration camp prisoners were forced to labor for the concern under inhuman conditions.

Aircraft production in the Messerschmitt factory during the war.

ZAHNRÄDERFABRIK AUGSBURG (RENK)

The gear wheel manufacturer Zahnradfabrik Augsburg (founded in 1873) was the most important Swabian supplier for the arms companies Messerschmitt AG and MAN AG. In the 1930s it made gear parts for ships, vehicles, and aircraft. Shortly before the war began production expanded to include torpedoes and anti-aircraft guns. Turnover rose from 9 million Reichsmark in 1939 to 20.1 million Reichsmark in 1944. In the penultimate year of the war the company had 1,370 employees. Of these,

220 were foreign civilian workers and 330 were “Eastern workers”; there were also 25 French and 15 Italian prisoners of war.

Factory floor with the tool-making facility, 1937.

MASCHINENFABRIK KELLER & KNAPPICH GMBH (KUKA)

The engineering company Maschinenfabrik Keller & Knappich GmbH (founded in 1898) had already produced arms during World War I.

From 1934 KUKA expanded to become a major company. Its owners joined the NSDAP early on and benefitted from the contacts this gave them. The production of machine tools and machine components for the increasing demands of the arms industry (e.g. as an important supplier for Messerschmitt AG) and of anti-aircraft guns led to a major expansion of the workforce. Whereas the company had 1,000 employees in 1939, this number steadily increased with the use of prisoners of war, “civilian workers,” and concentration camp prisoners. In 1944, 1,400 people working for “KUKA” were housed in Collective Camp II alone.

Drawing of Maschinenfabrik Keller & Knappich, probably 1930s.

HANS DEUTER KG

The Mechanische Segeltuch- und Leinenweberei (founded in 1898) was already producing canvas and linen for the army before World War I and it also rented out large tents. In 1918 the company was renamed Hans Deuter. Products like rucksacks, tents, and tarpaulins brought good business contacts with the NSDAP. Deuter built the “major tent camp” for the Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg in 1933. The company profited from the preparations for war and received contracts from both the army and the navy. In 1930 Deuter had 275 employees, in 1943 approx. 1,200, around 300 of whom were prisoners of war or “foreign workers.” They were accommodated either in the company’s own camp or in Collective Camp II.

View of the production facility, c. 1910.

MICHEL-WERKE

The engineer Johann Michel founded a company producing electrical devices in Augsburg in 1932. From 1938 the company flourished primarily through contracts for the arms industry. A branch opened in Bregenz in 1941, followed by further production facilities nearby. Another facility went into operation in the Augsburg district of Kriegshaber. The production of electrical switching apparatus, sockets, and relais served almost exclusively military purposes. After receiving the title “model war company” Michel was also named a “defence industry leader.” In 1944 around 4,000 people were employed in its factories, including “foreign workers,” prisoners of war, and concentration camp prisoners.

Aerial view of the Michel-Werke, 1942.

MESSERSCHMITT AG

MESSERSCHMITT AG

Willy Messerschmitt (1898–1978) joined the Bayerische Flugzeugwerke (BFW) in Augsburg as chief design engineer in 1927. After BFW almost went bankrupt, he developed several successful aircraft models such as the civilian passenger plane Bf 108.

The one-seater Bf 109 became the German air force’s most widely produced fighter plane.

In 1938 BFW became “Messerschmitt AG” and Willy Messerschmitt the CEO of the new company, which rapidly rose to become a Nazi model company. In 1941, however, the Me 210 fighter plane turned out to be a disaster, since it had a large number of accidents. Willy Messerschmitt was replaced as CEO and transferred to Oberammergau together with his engineering design department. There he worked on the Me 262, an aircraft with jet engines, which became known as the “miracle weapon.”



INTERVENTION

Under the Nazis Swabia became a center of the arms industry. Even today, arms production is a major component of the region’s strong economy.

In which conflicts do these weapons and other armaments play a role today?

Do they serve to secure peace and for defence, or are they sold to countries that use them to wage wars of aggression?

In what ways are we as citizens involved in the conflicts in which these weapons are used?

AUSGRENZUNG UND VERFOLGUNG

EXCLUSION AND PERSECUTION

Having seized power the Nazis set about ruthlessly persecuting their alleged and actual opponents. Members of the opposition were muzzled and the “body” of the German nation freed of all “asocial” and “pathological” elements.

Initially it was mainly communists and social democrats who were threatened, deprived of their rights, and imprisoned. But the “national community” defined its boundaries ever more narrowly so that the repressions extended to anyone who did not fit the Nazi ideal of a human being: these included political dissenters, Sinti and Roma, people with disabilities, homosexuals, and the homeless. Such people were regarded by the Nazis as “asocial,” “inferior,” or “un-German.” Many of them were deported to concentration camps.

A brutal antisemitism was likewise central to Nazi ideology right from the start: Jews were systematically ostracized, robbed, persecuted, and eventually murdered.

GLOSSAR – LAGERSYSTEM UND ZWANGSARBEIT

GLOSSARY - THE CAMP SYSTEM AND FORCED LABOR

The Nazis deported more than 13 million people to the German Reich for forced labor and threatened them with punishment if they did not comply. These **forced laborers** were divided into several categories.

From 1942 large numbers of **concentration camp prisoners** were forced to work, especially in the arms industry. They had no rights and were often exploited until they died in a strategy known as “annihilation through work.”

Prisoners of war were also used as forced laborers, even though they were formally protected by the Geneva Convention.

Civilian workers is the term generally used today for the foreign forced laborers who were neither concentration camp prisoners nor prisoners of war. Some of them had initially come to the German Reich voluntarily, but most of them under violent coercion.

“Foreign workers” was the term the Nazis used for civilian forced laborers. They called the civilian workers who came from the occupied territories of the Soviet Union.

“Eastern workers”, these people were housed in separate camps and treated and fed worse than civilian workers from other countries.

Camps were key elements in the Nazi regime of terror. There were different types with different functions. **Forced labor camps** were used to accommodate workers and keep them under surveillance. The living conditions in them varied considerably.

Between 1936 and 1945 the network of **concentration camps** in Europe encompassed 24 main camps and about 1,000 **subcamps**.

Subcamps and their work details were subordinate to the main concentration camp to which they were attached. Their main purpose was to supply arms manufacturers with prisoners as forced laborers.

The purpose of **extermination camps** such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, and Belzec, located in occupied Poland, was the mass extermination of Jews, Sinti and Roma, and, in smaller numbers, prisoners of war and political opponents.

ZWANGSARBEIT UND KONZENTRATIONSLAGER

FORCED LABOR AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Soon after war broke out it became clear that there would no longer be enough workers to keep the German economy going. The workforce in the Reich particularly lacked men because many blue- and white-collar workers had been sent to the front as soldiers. The Nazis' solution to this problem was to ruthlessly exploit the territories under their power. In the course of the war they therefore deported millions of men, women, and children from all over Europe and forced them to labor in Germany. At the height of production for the war economy in summer 1944, one worker in four in Germany was a civilian forced laborer, a prisoner of war, or a concentration camp prisoner.

In the armaments city of Augsburg forced labor was ubiquitous in nearly all sectors of the economy.

ZWANGSARBEIT IN AUGSBURG

FORCED LABOR IN AUGSBURG

Thousands of men and women from all over Europe had to perform forced labor in Augsburg between 1939 and 1945. They toiled in all sectors of the economy, in large companies, small firms, and public institutions.

After Germany invaded Poland it was initially Polish prisoners of war and civilian workers who were brought to the city in 1939/40. Following the Western campaign in 1940 they were joined by people from Belgium and France. Later, many men and women from Yugoslavia, Hungary, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Italy were forced to labor in Augsburg. However, by far the largest group were workers from the Soviet Union.

Initially these people were incarcerated in various forms of accommodation all over the city. Soon large collective camps were built, financed and used by amalgamations of companies.

BAY 2

GEWALT

VIOLENCE

The aim of the war started by Nazi Germany was the conquest of territory and the subjugation and annihilation of the people living in it. For this purpose millions of soldiers and huge volumes of weapons and ammunition were required.

To produce these, but also keep the overall economy going, millions of men, women, and even children were forced to labor in Germany.

Thousands of these people could also be encountered in the city of Augsburg, especially in its arms factories and in the camps specially built to accommodate them.

Within today's city limits there were three subcamps of Dachau concentration camp. One of them was in this building. Violence, inadequate supplies of food and basic necessities, and inhuman working conditions were the order of the day. Many prisoners died or were murdered. Those who survived were exploited to the very end. They were only liberated when the US army occupied Augsburg in April 1945.



INTERVENTION

Concentration camp prisoners, "foreign workers," and guards participated in clearing bombs from the city of Augsburg. Let us now imagine inhabitants returning to their homes on Königsplatz after the bomb has been defused and watching this event.

How do they regard the participants?

What do they think about the prisoners who were not allowed into the air raid shelters while the bombs were raining down?

GRÖßERE LAGER FÜR ZWANGSARBEITERINNEN UND ZWANGSARBEITER IM STADTGEBIET LARGER CAMPS FOR FORCED LABORERS WITHIN THE CITY

1 COLLECTIVE CAMP II

In 1942 several arms companies built a collective accommodation complex in northern Augsburg designed to house people working as forced laborers in their factories.

MAN AG, Keller & Knappich, Michel-Werke, Eberle & Cie., Hans Deuter KG, Hugo Eckl, W. Zeuner's Nachf. Stärker, Haindl'sche Papierfabrik, and others shared the costs.

The complex, located between Donauwörtherstraße and Äußerer Uferstraße and between Klärwerkstraße and Schrobenhauser Straße, held mainly prisoners of war and "Eastern workers." In mid-1944 more than 3,800 people lived here in very overcrowded conditions. After the war the city used the complex to house homeless people.

2 COLLECTIVE CAMP IV

In summer 1942 the city construction office planned a camp to house 600 Soviet prisoners of war, and 600 female and 1,380 male “Eastern workers.” In August 1943 it counted 1,000 inmates, just under a year later 830.

Around 40 Augsburg companies joined forces to run the camp. They included arms companies like Eisenwerke Frisch and Maschinenfabrik Kleindienst, and textiles companies such as Mechanische Baumwoll-Spinnerei, Weberei Augsburg, and Martini & Cie. The city administration likewise accommodated forced laborers here. South of the site the Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front) ran its own small camp with about 250 places (1944).

3 COLLECTIVE CAMP V

From 1942 Deutsche Reichsbahn (German Railways) and Messerschmitt AG built and ran a large barrack camp in Göggingen. Other companies, such as Zahnräderfabrik Augsburg (Renk) and Alpine AG, housed their forced laborers here, too. In June 1944 almost 2,000 people, including many “Eastern workers,” lived here in cramped and degrading conditions. They were plagued with vermin and suffered from diseases such as typhus and tuberculosis. The inmates were repeatedly maltreated. After the war the former Collective Camp V served as an internment camp and later as accommodation for refugees.

4 THE MESSERSCHMITT AG CAMP

In the beginning Augsburg companies built barracks to house workers on their premises or rented buildings in the city. Messerschmitt AG had several barrack camps accommodating thousands of workers. They were located on Flachs- Frisch- Siebentisch- Haunstetter, and Inninger Straße. The conditions in the camps for prisoners of war and “Eastern workers” were usually worse than those in the accommodation for civilian workers from Western Europe. They were more closely guarded and segregated as far as possible from the German population.

AUSSENLAGER IN SCHWABEN

SUBCAMPS IN SWABIA

The camps in the Augsburg area were subcamps of Dachau concentration camp, which ran a network of 140 subcamps in Southern Bavaria and Austria. By the end of the war more than 200,000 people from 40 nations had passed through these camps.

From 1942 the Nazi regime sought to expedite the use of concentration camp prisoners in the arms industry. The SS therefore established subcamps near companies that were important for the war effort. The prisoners in the Dachau subcamps often had to work in the aircraft factories of companies like Messerschmitt, BMW, and Dornier.

When the factories were subjected to increasingly frequent air raids in the final years of the war, the Ministry of Armaments ordered underground production facilities to be built. The largest subcamp complexes of Dachau—Mühlendorf and Landsberg/Kaufering—were built for this purpose. The chances of survival varied from one camp to another, but the death rate among the Jewish prisoners employed here was very high.



No traces of the concentration camp that was located in this hall have survived. Structural alterations from the time after the year 1945 overlay the original condition.

Suppose we were still to see furnishings, inscriptions, elements of the concentration camp...
Would we be able to better understand what happened here?
Would it be more tangible?

The building did not need much alteration to be used as a concentration camp. Built for other purposes, it could very easily be transformed into a place of violence and death.

In these rooms it became possible because it was planned and implemented by people.

KZ-AUSSENLAGER HAUNSTETTEN

THE HAUNSTETTEN SUBCAMP

In 1943 Messerschmitt AG had a prisoner of war camp on Inninger Straße expanded in order to accommodate up to 3,400 concentration camp prisoners there. A further planned expansion for up to 4,500 prisoners was never realized. The majority of the prisoners were from the Soviet Union and Poland, but also from France, the Benelux states, and the German Reich. Most of them were forced to work on the aircraft production line in the Messerschmitt works on Haunstetter Straße. Others were used for construction or clearance work in the city. The strenuous work, inhumane accommodation, and poor supply of food and other essentials led to emaciation and disease. The SS replaced prisoners who became unable to work with new ones from the Dachau concentration camp. Contemporary witnesses reported ill-treatment by SS guards, Kapos, and some Messerschmitt employees. There were also records of executions in the camp.

KZ-AUSSENLAGER MICHEL-WERKE

THE MICHEL-WERKE SUBCAMP

Five hundred Jewish women from Hungary were accommodated in the Michel-Werken subcamp in Kriegshaber. When they arrived in Augsburg they had already been through forced labor in Hungary, deportation to the Auschwitz extermination camp, selection, transfer to the Cracow-Plaszow camp, transport back to Auschwitz, renewed selection, and transport to Augsburg.

In Augsburg the women had to work in day and night shifts in arms production in the Michel-Werke, for the nearby company of Keller & Knappich, or in the industrial plant Lohwald bei Neusäß. Anyone who was injured, sick, or exhausted was deported. Prisoners from the Michel-Werke camp were taken to Dachau, to the Kaufering subcamp, to Bergen-Belsen or back to Auschwitz.

By April 25, 1945, the camp had been dissolved and the prisoners taken to the subcamp at Mühldorf am Inn. In early May US troops liberated the women from a rail transport near Lake Starnberg.

Zwangsarbeit ungarischer Juden

Hungarian Jews as forced laborers

Initially the Jews living in Hungary (which was allied with the German Reich) remained untouched by the Nazis. Only after the country was occupied by German troops in March 1944 and a puppet government installed did the persecution begin. More than 400,000 Jewish men and women were deported to Auschwitz within a short space of time. About a quarter of them were selected for forced labor in the Reich.

The Hungarian Jews represented one of the last reserves of labor for the German war economy. In order to exploit this the Nazis even deviated for a time from their racially motivated plan to exterminate these Jews.

Two reports by survivors provide information about their tale of suffering in the subcamp. One of them is the autobiographical book *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* (1997) by Livia Bitton-Jackson, born as Elli Friedmann.

Another report is based on an interview held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum with Judith Kalman Mandel, born in the Hungarian town of Hatvan in 1927. Shortly after the occupation of Hungary by the Wehrmacht she was brought together with her mother to Auschwitz in June 1944. Her mother was murdered in Auschwitz. In September 1944 Judith was sent to the Michel-Werke subcamp and survived until her liberation in April 1945. She emigrated to the United States in 1948.

KZ-AUSSENLAGER PFERSEE

THE PFERSEE SUBCAMP

After the Haunstetten subcamp had been destroyed by Allied air raids, those prisoners still fit to work were distributed among other camps. Some of them were sent to the subcamp on the airfield at Gablingen, but had to go on working in the Messerschmitt factories in Haunstetten. In late April 1944 the SS converted a building housing a motor pool on the premises of the Air Force Intelligence barracks in Pfersee – today Halle 116 – into a subcamp. The camp was guarded by members of the Luftwaffe as well as the SS.

The Augsburg-Pfersee subcamp was primarily a labor camp. The plan was to exploit the labor of the prisoners with a minimum supply of food and maximum discipline. Many of them apparently had relevant qualifications, which made them attractive for employment in the Messerschmitt plant. They were supplemented by young unskilled laborers.

DIE HÄFTLINGE

THE PRISONERS

A total of 4,000 prisoners from more than 20 nations passed through Pfersee subcamp. On account of the many transfers to other subcamps, there were probably rarely more than 2,000 prisoners in the camp at any one time.

Most of the prisoners from Western and Southeastern Europe had been captured during campaigns by the resistance against the German occupiers and deported to concentration camps. Polish and “Russian” prisoners were in many cases either civilian workers who had fled or prisoners of war. The “Russian” prisoners came from the Soviet Republics, most of them from Ukraine. “Yugoslav” prisoners came mainly from Slovenia, especially the area around Ljubljana. “Italian” prisoners often came from Istria, which belonged to Italy at that time.

In terms of numbers Jewish prisoners played a minor role. One exception was the transport of prisoners from Cracow, most of whom were in fact destined for the Leonberg subcamp near Stuttgart.

KZ-AUSSENLAGER IN AUGSBURG

SUBCAMPS IN AUGSBURG

In the area that today lies within Augsburg's city limits there were three subcamps of the Dachau concentration camp. The first was built in early 1943 on Inninger Straße in Haunstetten, which at that time was a separate administrative entity. At least 2,700 prisoners had to work there as forced laborers in the aircraft plant of Messerschmitt AG. They came mainly from the Soviet Union and Poland, but also from many other nations. In spring 1944 the camp was destroyed by air raids. As a replacement the SS later converted a building housing a motor pool of the Airforce Intelligence barracks in Pfersee to accommodate some 2,000 prisoners, but their main place of employment remained the Messerschmitt Werke in Haunstetten. A third camp was established by the Michel Werke in September 1944 directly in their factory building on Ulmer Straße in Kriegshaber. The 500 Hungarian Jewish women from Auschwitz had to work here in arms production.

“There are still the same numbers on the doors, I slept in the second section from the back, there were triple bunk beds there. My bed was the top bunk by the wall.

Behind the wall was the sick bay. I recovered from pneumonia there. In the camp there was only dinner. We got breakfast and lunch at Messerschmitt.

We worked in the same factory as we had when we were in Haunstetten. We went to work on foot. It took us about an hour to walk through the city. I wasn't liberated in Augsburg, because after a short stay I was taken to Kottern.”

Eyewitness account by Czesław Kordylewski, former prisoner of the Pfersee subcamp, 1993.

“It was this building we were in. More than a thousand people were accommodated here.

The camp was inside a large barracks. It wasn't divided up by separating walls like it is today. It was all one hall, everything open. The rear part of the room was cordoned off by a fence for the important people, i.e. the Kapo, the orderlies, and so on.

For each section there was one block with triple bunkbeds; everyone had their bed. I was here in the second last block. Even the numbers on the door were the same as back then.”

Eyewitness account by Arkadij Polian, former prisoner of the Pfersee subcamp, 1992.

“If I recall rightly, we were woken at five and taken to the factory. We worked twelve hours a day in two shifts. There wasn't enough food: in the morning there was just tea or coffee without sugar, at midday cabbage soup, and in the evening 300 or 400 grams of bread, a piece of margarine, and tea.

In the factory we were given a snack at 9 o'clock. With rations like those, some people became bloated with hunger and were then taken to the crematorium at Dachau.”

Eyewitness account by Anatolij Afanasjevitsch Lachutkin, former prisoner of the Pfersee subcamp, 1992/93.

“In the first block some prisoners were hanged. In the six or seven months I was here, maybe four people were hanged. They might not have been from our camp but we all had to watch. The prisoners were hanged for trying to escape or for ‘sabotage’.”

Eyewitness account by Arkadij Polian, former prisoner of the Pfersee subcamp, 1992.

WIR ERINNERN ...

We remember ...

... all the people who had to perform forced labor in the midst of Augsburg's community.

In this building, which served from May 1944 to April 1945 as a subcamp of the Dachau concentration camp, up to 4.000 men and boys were imprisoned. Many did not survive this ordeal.

In addition, thousands of men, women and children from all over Europe were exploited in Augsburg between 1939 and 1945 as forced laborers, concentration camp prisoners or prisoners of war.

They were forced to work in private enterprises, factories, for armament firms or for the city, mostly under inhumane conditions.

Their guards, superiors and colleagues often were citizens of Augsburg.

We acknowledge this injustice and the responsibility it entails. We take care that these people and the circumstances of their suffering are not forgotten.

The Augsburg City Society

ZWEITER WELTKRIEG

WORLD WAR II

For a long time Augsburg remained untouched by the direct effects of the war. But even on the “home front” the consequences of the war could be felt. There were shortages of food and consumer goods and ever more workers had to be replaced because they had been sent as soldiers to the front. Yet many people still believed the promises that the German Reich would soon win the war, so they were willing to put up with these hardships.

In the second half of the war the hostilities reached the city of Augsburg directly. As a center of the arms industry Augsburg was the target of many Allied air raids. And an increasing number of Augsburg's citizens were dying as soldiers at the front.

KRIEGSENDE IN AUGSBURG

THE END OF THE WAR IN AUGSBURG

The final months of the war in Augsburg were dominated by the constant sound of air raid sirens going all the time, violence, and material hardship. People were starving, exhausted, and traumatized. The news from the front told them the German Reich was about to be defeated.

For Augsburg the war ended on April 27/28, 1945, largely without bloodshed as the troops of the 7th US Army entered the city. A group of citizens, the “Augsburg Freedom Movement,” had already been working secretly to try to ensure the peaceful surrender of the city to the Americans. The Nazi leadership, Mayor Mayr and Gauleiter Wahl, remained passive.

Around 1.500 Augsburg citizens—plus several hundred concentration camp prisoners, forced laborers, and people from elsewhere—had died in the air raids. Almost a quarter of the residential buildings had been destroyed as well as many buildings of historic and architectural value.

AUFLÖSUNG DER LAGER

DISSOLUTION OF THE CAMPS

To prevent the advancing Allied troops from liberating the prisoners, the SS cleared nearly all the concentration camps in 1945. The prisoners were transported by train to the Reich or driven away from the front on forced treks. These “death marches” took place before the eyes of the German population. Many prisoners forced onto them died of hunger, exhaustion, and disease or were murdered by their guards.

As US troops approached Augsburg, the SS dissolved the Pfersee camp. Prisoners who could no longer walk were taken to Dachau concentration camp on April 21, 1945. The others were driven southwards. After a trek lasting many days they were liberated by the US Army near Klimmach on April 27. At least 26 prisoners did not survive this ordeal or died a few days after being liberated. They were later buried in cemeteries in the region. These graves can today be found in Schwabstadel. In Bergheim, Burgwalden, and Klimmach memorials commemorate the victims.

“So then the prisoners were free and walked across the valley below the Kohlberg toward Klimmach. After arriving there they obtained food, and some of them made a beeline for the faucets and drank. In our house the larder was emptied and my clothes were taken. I got a prisoner’s garb in exchange. In the priory vegetable garden they cut off anything edible with tin knives and completely emptied the garden.”

Interview with Mr. Schorer, eyewitness from Klimmach. Conducted on August 27, 1993.

“At midday we heard the sound of metal. In a meadow on the edge of the forest someone shouted: ‘Americans!’ And suddenly everything was clear: All the prisoners ran out of the forest toward this tank, without paying any attention to the SS men. Prior to that we had already been worried by the way the SS men were behaving. Those standing at the edge of the forest had made a camp fire.

That was on April 27, so it wasn’t that cold. Why were they making a fire, we wondered. I suspect they were burning documents and their ID. They already guessed that the Americans were getting ever closer.”

Interview with Witold Ścibak, former prisoner at the Pfersee subcamp. Conducted on July 23, 2015.

BAY 3

UMBRÜCHE

TURMOIL

When the war ended, large parts of the city of Augsburg lay in ruins. Refugees, expellees, freed forced laborers, and returning inhabitants had to contend with inadequate supplies of food and other essentials and a shortage of housing. Only gradually did everyday life return to normal.

In the meantime the American occupiers were attempting to recreate a democracy from a dictatorship. Their first step was to take concerted action against the main perpetrators of the Nazi regime and those who had held office under it, but these efforts soon subsided. Moreover, Nazi ideology had by no means been banished from the minds of the population. The road to a liberal democracy was a thorny one.

The presence of US troops left its mark both on everyday culture and on the city itself. The Germans' relationship with the Americans was a largely cooperative one, but there were also conflicts. By the late 1990s the Americans had left their military base. Most of the buildings were demolished, some used for other purposes. This is when the history of this building as a memorial site begins.

Epistel an die Augsburgers

Epistle to the Augsburgers

And when it came to the month of May
See, a thousand-year Reich had withered away.

Down the Hindenburg Road they sauntered
Lads from Missouri with cameras and rocket launchers

And asked for directions and where to go looting
And if there was a single German regretted the fighting.

The great deceiver lay under the chancellery ashes
Two, three flat-browed corpses, all with 'taches.

Field marshals lay rotting in gutters, impenitent
And butcher asked butcher to issue the sentence.

The cocks fell silent, wild vetch by the roadside.
The doors were closed. The roofs open wide.

Bertolt Brecht, 1945

NACHKRIEGSZEIT

THE POSTWAR ERA

Following the arrival of the Americans and the unconditional surrender of the German Reich on May 8/9, 1945, all the local administrative structures of the Nazi regime collapsed. This had a devastating effect on the city's infrastructure. Housing was destroyed, water, electricity, and gas supply lines damaged. Thousands of homeless people, expellees, and displaced persons (DPs) waited in Augsburg for accommodation and supplies.

Therefore the first priority of the US occupying forces was to take care of people's basic needs: food, housing, heating, and fuel. In addition they had to quickly reorganize the civilian administration to make a functioning everyday life possible. In parallel the occupiers erected their own local military infrastructure: they continued to use former Wehrmacht barracks and seized many civilian residential and commercial properties for their own purposes.

SICHERHEIT

SECURITY

After the war ended the situation in the city was tense. Many refugees and expellees had come to Augsburg. The prisoners who had been liberated and released from camps and prisons, former forced laborers, and other foreigners deported by the Nazis were unable to return home straight away. A few of them took revenge for the persecution and atrocities they had suffered. Looting by both Augsburg natives and outsiders was a common occurrence. Initially, the US forces of order did little to prevent this. Only gradually did the US Army, with the help of the German police, restore control over life in the city.

VERSORGUNG

SUPPLIES

Following the bombing raids on Augsburg from 1944 onward, thousands of people had fled or been evacuated. When the war ended, they gradually returned and had to compete with the expellees and DPs for basic necessities.

There was a housing shortage until well into the 1950s. Food and heating fuel were likewise in short supply for many years. Goods in short supply were rationed and could only be obtained with food stamps and ration coupons. Faced with the poor supply situation the population tried to cover their needs on the illegal "black market." Often members of the US Army were involved in barter trading, since they had access to sought-after items such as cigarettes, coffee, and chocolate.

WOHNRAUMBESCHAFFUNG

HOUSING

Providing housing was the Augsburg city administration's top priority after the war. Thousands of dwellings had been completely or partially destroyed in the air raids. Initially, buildings that had suffered only slight damage were repaired. But the material for more extensive repairs was lacking. In many cases "bombed out" civilians, refugees, and expellees lived in makeshift housing for years.

Organizing the clearance and recycling of rubble was thus of key importance to procure building materials. The reconstruction of buildings of special historical significance remained a secondary task in this initial phase.

There were fierce debates about whether the historic city should be reconstructed or whether modern solutions were more desirable.

BESTRAFUNG VON NS-TÄTERN

PUNISHING NAZI PERPETRATORS

Potsdam Conference was denazification. The influence of Nazi ideology was to be banished from all areas of public and private life. The removal of the Nazi elites was intended to facilitate a social and political new beginning.

The International Military Tribunal held in Nuremberg (October 1945 – November 1946) showed the world the main Nazi perpetrators and their crimes. Further Nazi perpetrators were tried in war crimes trials in Dachau and sentenced by the German judiciary.

In March 1946 the Americans handed over the denazification process in their zone of occupation to German “Spruchkammer” or lay tribunals. These divided the accused into five groups: major offenders, offenders, lesser offenders, followers, and exonerated.

As the conflict between the Western powers and the Soviet Union intensified in the years that followed, the denazification process waned. Many former Nazi functionaries returned to top positions in the industry, politics, and the administration.

AUGSBURG UND DIE US-PRÄSENZ

AUGSBURG AND THE US PRESENCE

The Allied victory and the period of occupation that followed (1945–1949/55) brought fundamental change to German society and the first moves toward a Western democracy.

For West Germany the presence of the US Army also offered protection against the communist threat posed by the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

During the East-West conflict US soldiers and their families in post-war Germany also stood for Western political ideas. American life in Augsburg became tangible in a variety of ways in the local economy and socio-cultural sphere. The American military presence also left its mark on the city itself in ways that are still visible today. Moreover, the American lifestyle had an impact on everyday culture in Augsburg.

However, conflicts with “the Americans” and protests against the US presence were common during the 1950s.

BESATZUNG

OCCUPATION

From summer 1945 the Allied Control Council in Berlin was the supreme authority in occupied Germany. It was made up of representatives of the four occupying powers (Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union). To implement its orders and laws the US Army formed military governments with regional jurisdiction in its zone of occupation.

In Augsburg various departments of the Office of Military Government were responsible for the city and the county of Augsburg as well as for Swabia as a whole. Their tasks included control over the administration and the demilitarization of the economy.

The US military government also monitored measures for the denazification of the German population. The mayor of Augsburg had to report regularly to the US city commandant.



Defeated or liberated?

The end of the Nazi era was foreseeable but came abruptly nonetheless. Ultimately it was determined by others, because Germany lost the war.

How did the majority of Germans cope with losing the war?

How did people in Germany experience the end of the regime?

What hopes or fears might they have had?

And did they perceive US soldiers as occupiers or liberators?

GLOSSAR

GLOSSARY

Occupying powers: following the unconditional surrender by the Wehrmacht, the **victorious powers** (Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union) divided Germany into four **occupation zones** administered by the four powers.

Allied Control Council: this body was created by the occupying powers and took the place of the German state authority. It was designed to coordinate policy in the occupation zones and was active from 1945 to 1948.

US Military Government: the supreme administrative institution in the US zone of occupation was the Office of Military Government of the United States for Germany (OMGUS) with headquarters in Berlin and Frankfurt. At the local level the initial task of the military authorities was to organize everyday life in post-war Germany.

Displaced Persons (DPs): the term used for the millions of people in central Europe who had been taken from their homes or deported by the Nazi regime and at the end of the war found themselves outside their native countries, for example former forced laborers, prisoners of war, and concentration camp survivors.

Expellees / refugees: German citizens who after World War II were forced to leave their homes in regions which now belonged to the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, or Hungary.

“Everyone was really resentful of the refugees. For many years people would curse us, repeatedly saying things like: ‘Yeah, yeah, the refugees, they had everything, they were all stinking rich and when they came here they pretended to have nothing, and who was going to check up.’ People were very suspicious of us.”

Report by an expellee in Augsburg, postwar period.

DEMOKRATISIERUNG

DEMOCRATIZATION

The occupying powers sought to establish a democratic Germany using various measures. They allowed trades unions, parties, and media to form again, but under strict conditions. In May 1946 Augsburg elected its first city council since the end of the Nazi dictatorship. Between July and October 1945, the US military government published its own newspaper for Augsburg. In fall 1945 it then approved publication of the *Schwäbische Landeszeitung* (later renamed the *Augsburger Allgemeine*).

Until the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in September 1949, anything published in the media required the permission of the military government. The occupiers also conducted regular surveys to gauge the mood of the German population. The results were not very encouraging: even after the end of the Nazi regime, many Germans continued to harbor racist and anti-American sentiments.

STADTENTWICKLUNG

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

After World War II the United States initially reduced their military forces in Germany. However, the Korean War (1950 –1953) led to a considerable escalation in the East-West conflict, and additional US troops were stationed permanently in West Germany. This entailed the building of whole new residential complexes for the US military complete with an extensive infrastructure.

By 1950/51 US troops occupied all of the former Wehrmacht barracks in Augsburg and merged them into three complexes: Sheridan, Reese, and Flak Kaserne. In the western section of the city several new residential areas were built between 1952 and 1957, encompassing almost 2,000 housing units. Newly built roads, such as the highway-like Bgm.-Ackermann-Straße, integrated this “Little America” into Augsburg’s infrastructure. The US housing complexes also came to symbolize the permanent presence of the Allied forces in the Federal Republic.

ALLTAG UND POPULÄRKULTUR

EVERYDAY LIFE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Under the influence of reconstruction and the Marshall Plan the West German economy and consumer culture followed US models. Contact with US troops meant the German population witnessed the modern and casual American lifestyle on a daily basis, and this came to be referred to in German as the “American way of life.” The US military radio station AFN also had a big German audience.

American music and films starring figures like Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, and James Dean inspired the war and postwar generations alike. US soldiers’ families were supposed to serve German families as models of life in a liberal and democratic society.

But racial discrimination existed on the US military bases too. German-American couples earned disapproval among the German population, and children who had one German and one Afro-American parent were often ostracized in post-war society.



INTERVENTION

After 1945 some attitudes that had been encouraged by the Nazis, but also predated them, continued to prevail in German society: antisemitism, anti-Americanism, and racism didn't simply disappear.

Racist attitudes also existed in the US Army. Black soldiers had hoped that fighting a war would bring them greater recognition among their white compatriots, but this did not happen.

How did the citizens of Augsburg respond to the Americans? What were the challenges and opportunities posed by such encounters?

KOOPERATIONEN UND KONFLIKTE

COOPERATION AND CONFLICTS

German-American relations in Augsburg always mirrored the international political situation. As Germany aligned itself with the Western camp, cooperation with the United States became official German policy at all levels. Germans and Americans coexisted in Augsburg mainly peacefully, but there were also tensions. Prostitution and violent disputes with US soldiers regularly made the headlines in the local press. German-American couples were frequently discriminated.

Global conflicts likewise had an impact on the US military presence in Augsburg and indeed on Germans' view of the United States as a model. The moral crisis into which the Vietnam War plunged the country from 1965 onward and the media coverage it received caused some sections of West German society to turn away from what they perceived as the uncritical "Americanization" of West Germany. The 1968 generation used the popular protest culture they had absorbed from the United States.

STANDORTAUFLÖSUNG

DEPARTURE OF US TROOPS

Following the end of the Cold War in 1991 it was only a matter of time before the US troops left Augsburg. The first barracks to be closed was Flak Kaserne in Kriegshaber in 1992. This site was then converted into a commercial zone. This also involved demolishing the new US military hospital, which had only opened in 1988. In 1994 Reese Kaserne likewise closed its gates. The buildings were temporarily leased to civilian trading organizations.

This was how the municipal cultural center "abraxas", housed in one of the last remaining buildings of the US former military complex, came into being. In 1998 the US military also gave up their major listening post in Gablingen, and Sheridan Kaserne closed that same year. Most of the military buildings were demolished and the sites converted into commercial or residential areas, which caused some controversy. The former residential complexes for members of the military were turned over almost entirely to civilian use.

BUILDING 116

BUILDING 116

In the 1950s the US military systematically numbered all the buildings in its Augsburg garrison. This was when "Halle 116" got its name. It was formerly part of Sheridan Kaserne, where various US military units were stationed until 1998. In the first five decades after the war the building was used

for various purposes. From the 1960s it housed the Community Maintenance Center, where vehicles and other equipment from the US base were maintained and repaired.

In the 1970s there was also a snack bar with a street sales section on the ground floor of the western head-end building. This was immediately adjacent to the western gate of the Kaserne, the "Stadtbergen Gate." From 1976 to 1998 the upper floor of the eastern section of "Halle 116" housed a large library for use by the US military.

DER LANGE WEG ZUM ERINNERUNGSORT

THE LONG ROAD TO A MEMORIAL SITE

After the departure of the US Army in 1998, the Augsburg Gesellschaft für Stadtentwicklung und Immobilienmanagement GmbH (AGS), a municipal trust company responsible for the management and conversion of the sites, gradually had all the buildings of Sheridan Kaserne demolished. "Halle 116" was preserved following a campaign by an Augsburg citizens' initiative, which informed the public about the history of the building and called for a memorial and educational site to be established there.

For many years it was unclear whether "Halle 116" would be kept, sold, or demolished. Only in 2009, and again in 2012, did the Augsburg City Council declare its intention to keep the building and use it as a memorial and educational site.

In 2015 the Chair for the History of the European Transatlantic Cultural Space at the University of Augsburg published a concept for the site commissioned by the AGS. However, this was not initially realized. Today it forms the basis for this exhibition. In 2018/19, the Cultural Department of the City of Augsburg yielded to pressure from initiative groups and resumed the "Halle 116" project.

In early 2020 the city bought the building and thus secured its preservation. Between 2019 and 2022 a working group comprised of civil society actors and representatives of victims groups under the leadership of the City of Augsburg's Department for Remembrance Culture took the first steps to create an educational and memorial site in "Halle 116."



And now ...?

We have reached the end of the exhibition.

At the beginning it was said it can be difficult to come to terms with this history.

How do we feel about it now?

What bothers us, what questions arise?

Let's sit down for a moment and talk with each other, also about what all this means for us today.



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