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JOHANNSDORF: A FORGOTTEN FORCED LABOR CAMP FOR JEWS IN WESTERN UPPER SILESIA, 1940–1943

JOHANNSDORF: ZAPOMNIANY OBÓZ PRACY PRZYMUSOWEJ DLA ŻYDÓW NA ZACHODNIM GÓRNYM ŚLĄSKU, 1940–1943

ABSTRACT: Based on sources from several countries, this paper presents a microhistory of the camp in Johannsdorf (Upper Silesia) and also advances knowledge of the two systems of forced labor camps for Jews in Silesia and adjoining areas. From October 1940 to the summer of 1942, Johannsdorf was among the 25 Reichsautobahnlager run by the Reichsautobahn office in Breslau. For a year afterwards, it was one of approx. 170 camps administered by Organisation Schmelt. Aspects discussed include transports, work, access to food, helpers, medical care, camp hierarchies, female inmates, and mortality.

KEYWORDS: Silesia, Jewish forced labor, Reichsautobahn camps Silesia, Organisation Schmelt camps, Johannsdorf (Upper Silesia)

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Śląsk, praca przymusowa Żydów, obozy *Reichsautobahn* na Śląsku, obozy *Organisation Schmelt*, Johannsdorf (Górny Śląsk)

As opposed to concentration camp systems, forced labor camps for Jews continue to receive relatively little scholarly attention. Publications such as Mario Wenzel's impressive recent book on such sites in a small area of western Poland are still rare. For the most part, it is based on 25 of the 85 camps existing in the Krakau (now Kraków) district of the *Generalgouvernement*¹. Perhaps his analysis

¹ Mario Wenzel, *Arbeitszwang und Judenmord. Die Arbeitslager für Juden im Distrikt Krakau des Generalgouvernements*, Berlin 2017, pp. 338–347. I thank my wife Rebecca M. Hoort for much editing assistance.

would have been different if relying on a much larger sample. No similar attempt at an extensive and systematic analysis exists for such camps within *Wehrkreis VIII*, which adjoined the Krakau district. This military district, headquartered in Breslau (now Wrocław), encompassed parts of *Reichsgau Sudetenland*, all of Lower and Upper Silesia, as well as annexed territories to the east of German Upper Silesia, that is to say, highly industrialized Polish Eastern Upper Silesia and the adjoining so-called *Oststreifen*. Most of the Jewish population in the annexed areas lived in the *Oststreifen*, where the major cities were Sosnowiec and Będzin, renamed Sosnowitz and Bendsburg during the German occupation².

In this vast region, Jews toiled in two different types of mostly small forced labor camps, 25 *Reichsautobahnlager* (RAB camps)³ and approximately 170 *Zwangsarbeitslager* (forced labor camps), often abbreviated as ZAL by German authorities and Jewish survivors. The former were run by *Oberste Bauleitung Reichsautobahnen* (OBR), the regional RAB construction management office in Breslau, and the latter by *Dienststelle Schmelt*, situated in Sosnowitz from late 1940 to 1943, which is often referred to as *Organisation Schmelt* by historians. Wenzel demonstrates that the German labor administration managed the supply of Jewish workers for the forced labor camps in the Krakau district, but in *Wehrkreis VIII* it was the *Dienststelle*, a small SS entity, that performed this role for the two camp systems existing there. It was headed by *SS-Oberführer* Albrecht Schmelt (1899–1945), whom Heinrich Himmler presented as Special Emissary (*Sonderbeauftragter*) of *Reichsführer-SS* for the Deployment of Foreign Labor in Upper Silesia at Weichsel Castle on October 15, 1940⁴. Called ZALfJ (*Zwangsarbeitslager für Juden*) or, more accurately, Schmelt camps by researchers, these sites include those RAB camps which were transferred to the *Dienststelle* in summer of 1942. Due to the loss of the archives of *Organisation Schmelt*⁵, the precise total of its camps will

² For the *Oststreifen* see Sybille Steinbacher, „Musterstadt Auschwitz”. *Germanisierungspolitik und Judenmord in Ostoberschlesien*, München 2000, pp. 110–115, 120–123.

³ See Hermann F. Weiss, *Transformations of a Forced Labor Camp: Sakrau (Upper Silesia) 1940–1943*, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 71 (2016), 1, pp. 74–75. Wolf Gruner (*Jewish Forced Labor under the Nazis*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 219–220) lists a number of camps that were not affiliated with the RAB, among them Gräditz and Mechthal (now Miechowice, part of Bytom), and he links others to the wrong region. Klein Mangersdorf (now Magnuszkwiczki) was located in Upper Silesia, not Lower Silesia, and Rostitz in the *Sudetengau*, not in Upper Silesia. Annaberg and Sankt Annaberg refer to the same camp in Upper Silesia.

⁴ Steinbacher, „Musterstadt Auschwitz”, p. 139.

⁵ See Weiss, *Transformations*, pp. 75–76.

never be known. From late 1940 to its liquidation in June 1943, under the leadership of Moniek Merin (1905–1943), the so-called *Zentrale* in Sosnowitz was under constant pressure from *Dienststelle Schmelt* to supply Jewish laborers to workshops and the two camp systems. The large bureaucracy in question, whose archives also no longer exist, was the *Zentrale der Ältestenräte der jüdischen Kultusgemeinden in Ostoberschlesien* (Central Office of the Councils of Elders of the Jewish Communities in Eastern Upper Silesia)⁶. While the total number of Jews in these two camp systems⁷ between late 1940 and early 1945 is unknown, the majority were Polish Jews, who were arrested in tens of thousands in the *Oststreifen*⁸. In addition, 39 Auschwitz-bound trains leaving Belgium, France and the Netherlands between August 26 and December 10, 1942, supplied about 9,000 Jewish men of many nationalities, who were captured in these three countries. Most of them were between 15 and 50 years old. Schmelt's camp system was devolved between 1943 and 1945, with many camps closing and others becoming sub-camps of concentration camps⁹. However, Parzymiechy and St. Annaberg (now Góra Św. Anny) still existed in early January 1945, and it was recently discovered that the *Dienststelle* itself was finally dissolved in late April of that year¹⁰.

In mid-November 2013, following a telephone conversation with Erwin Michalik, a former Cosel (now Kędzierzyn-Koźle) inhabitant living in Germany, I informed several other researchers that the dispersal of the boys and men from these so-called Cosel transports to Schmelt camps did not take place at the main station in the city of Cosel (Upper Silesia), as had been generally assumed, but at the nearby Cosel freight yard (*Güterbahnhof*), a more out-of-sight place. This was subsequently confirmed by the testimony of an ethnic German, who was allowed to remain in that city after the war. In the absence of any document revealing the terrible secret of this unassuming station, reliance on oral history lead to this

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 74, with secondary literature; also see Andrea Rudorff, *Arbeit und Vernichtung 'reconsidered': Die Lager der Organisation Schmelt für polnische Jüdinnen und Juden aus dem annektierten Teil Oberschlesiens*, „Sozial.Geschichte Online“, 7 (2012), pp. 15–16. https://duepublico2.uni-due.de/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/duepublico_derivate_00030285/03_Rudorff_Schmelt.pdf (access: 1 IX 2020).

⁷ A few camps in *Wehrkreis VIII*, which were not part of the two systems, are left out of consideration here; see Steinbacher, “*Musterstadt Auschwitz*”, pp. 144–145.

⁸ For a discussion of the fragmentary statistical evidence, see Hermann F. Weiss, *Peiskretscham (Pyskowice), a Forced Labor Camp for Jews in Upper Silesia, 1942–1944*, „Rocznik Muzeum Górnosląskiego w Bytomiu”, 10 (2016), Seria Historia, p. 13.

⁹ Rudorff, *Arbeit und Vernichtung*, pp. 34–39.

¹⁰ Weiss, *Transformations*, p. 76.

breakthrough¹¹. Under the leadership of Dr. Herman van Rens and his wife Annelies, Holocaust researchers from the Netherlands and several of their colleagues, including Edward Haduch and myself, participated in developing a project for transforming the dilapidated 19th century station building into a site commemorating these 9,000 men as well as their families, who were separated from them at this very place and traveled on to Auschwitz. The inauguration ceremony on September 2, 2016, was attended by diplomats representing several countries, Holocaust scholars, Polish government officials, as well as many local inhabitants.

Each year since 2013, Herman and Annelies van Rens have taken groups of about 30, mostly from the Netherlands and non-Jewish, to nearby places where RAB and Schmelt camps once stood. Starting in 2014, these groups have also visited the station building and read out the names of many Jewish men arrested in France and the Netherlands, who perished in the Schmelt camps. A book co-authored by Herman van Rens and his wife, which will appear in 2020, marks an important step in the investigation of the camp system run by *Organisation Schmelt*. Thematically arranged, it investigates the 55 ZALfJ to which boys and men from the Cosel transports were dispersed. The many depositions submitted shortly after the war by survivors in the Netherlands are its most important source. As a result, aspects of the conditions at many of these 55 sites will become known to scholars and the wider public for the first time¹².

Approximately in 2022, Volume VI of the *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, which is being published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D.C., will finally appear. It will focus on about 1,600 forced labor camps in Nazi Germany and occupied countries, the majority located in the *Generalgouvernement*. However, many small sites, for which next to no information exists, will not be covered in this most comprehensive Holocaust encyclopedia ever. Never before has so much information on forced labor camps for Jews in *Wehrkreis VIII* been assembled. After having written 33 articles for this volume and having edited quite a few submitted by other scholars, I anticipate that, in spite of space limitations, many entries in this volume, especially the more

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Herman van Rens, Annelies Wilms, *Tussenstation Cosel: Joodse mannen uit West-Europa naar dwanarbeiderskampen in Silesië, 1942–1945*, Hilversum 2020. I thank H. van Rens and his wife Annelies for frequent and very generous research assistance, and Szymon Kliszewski for important local information.

densely researched ones, will contain valuable data and insights for future investigations of the two camp systems in *Wehrkreis VIII*.

While innumerable publications deal with concentration camps, a much smaller number of surveys on systems of forced labor camps for Jews exist. This was also true of *Wehrkreis VIII* at the time when the manuscript of my present study was completed in 2020. Building on earlier Polish scholarship, Alfred Konieczny, a doyen of Silesian studies, authored the first important longer paper on the two camp systems discussed here¹³. Published in 2000, Steinbacher's masterful book utilizes a much wider array of archival sources than Konieczny's paper, providing important contextualized information for the study of the two camp systems. A section in Gruner's book, which cites RAB records at Bundesarchiv Berlin overlooked by Steinbacher, familiarizes readers in English-speaking countries with this topic. Unfortunately, the archives of most German companies affiliated with the two camp systems are not extant. Andrea Rudorff's paper is the only one in the group of publications mentioned here to utilize records of one such company, providing important information on the Parschnitz (now Poříčí, Czech Republic) camp.¹⁴ In her path-breaking 2014 book, Rudorff briefly returns to the two camp systems, with special emphasis on Schmelz camps for Jewish women in *Reichsgau Sudetenland*¹⁵. Except for the books by Steinbacher and Rudorff, these publications rarely use interviews with survivors or other witnesses, and the Dutch depositions are not cited by any of these scholars. Overall, in part due to space or other constraints, or, in the case of Steinbacher, because of a much more comprehensive project, the conditions at individual camps as well as their diversity are not much touched upon by these authors, resulting in generalizations not holding up to closer scrutiny. To mention just a few examples, Steinbacher and Rudorff wrongly claim that members of the SS frequently guarded these camps, and Rudorff seems to be unaware of the fact that victims from quite a few camps were buried in

¹³ Alfred Konieczny, „Organizacja Schmelz” i jej obozy pracy dla Żydów na Śląsku w latach 1940–1944, „Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi”, 15 (1992), pp. 281–314. Some of the RAB camps listed here (p. 298), among them Faulbrück and Markstädt (now Laskowice Oławskie), were, in fact, Schmelz camps.

¹⁴ Steinbacher, „Musterstadt Auschwitz”, pp. 138–150, 277–278; Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor*, pp. 214–239; Rudorff, *Arbeit und Vernichtung*, pp. 10–38; for Rudorff's utilization of the records of the Aloys Haase company in Czech archives, see pp. 21–23, 26–28, 30, 37.

¹⁵ Andrea Rudorff, *Frauen in den Außenlagern des Konzentrationslagers Groß-Rosen*, Berlin 2014, pp. 41–54.

existing Jewish cemeteries¹⁶. Steinbacher's statement that mail was not allowed in RAB camps is not correct. Gruner emphasizes the "extremely high mortality in the camps", referring to a few of them, including Brande (now Prądy) and Johannsdorf (now Jańskowice)¹⁷. This paper will demonstrate that in this important respect, Johannsdorf was different from Brande, and Johannsdorf is not an isolated case. An approximate assessment of mortality at these sites cannot be achieved without detailed knowledge of the varying conditions at many of these camps.

Much research on individual sub-camps of concentration camps in *Wehrkreis VIII* and beyond has appeared. However, even though research on the two camp systems in *Wehrkreis VIII* has been progressing over the last three decades, comprehensive studies on individual camps within these systems are still rare, considering the large number of sites involved. Polish scholars have contributed four of these, including a slender monograph on St. Annaberg, a key camp in both systems, and one on Klein Mangersdorf, with special emphasis on the non-Jewish Polish inmates there¹⁸. I have published detailed investigations on the following camps: Schmiedeberg (now Krzaczyzna), Brande, Geppersdorf (now Rzędziwojowice), Peiskretscham (now Pyskowice) and, more recently, Sakrau (now Zakrzów)¹⁹. As opposed to most authors of surveys and of detailed studies of such camps, I have used interviews with Holocaust survivors extensively, and unlike any author mentioned above, I have frequently cited memories of former as well as present local residents. It is to be hoped that further deep descriptions of individual sites will add momentum towards synthesizing research on the two camp systems in *Wehrkreis VIII*.

¹⁶ Steinbacher, „Musterstadt Auschwitz“, p. 148; Rudorff, *Arbeit und Vernichtung*, pp. 19, 29.

¹⁷ Steinbacher, „Musterstadt Auschwitz“, p. 147; Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor*, pp. 224–225.

¹⁸ Alfred Konieczny, *Żydowski obóz pracy przymusowej w Jeleniowie z lat 1943–1944*, „Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi”, 22 (1999), pp. 414–426; Joanna Lusek, *Obozy pracy przymusowej dla Żydów na Górnym Śląsku. „Lager Tarnowitz” w relacjach świadków*, „Rocznik Muzeum w Tarnowskich Górach”, 4 (2013), pp. 5–27; Anna Gruźlewska, *Annaberg. Obóz pracy na Górze Świętej Anny*, Opole 2017; Henryka Maj, *Więźniowie obozu pracy przymusowej w Klein Mangersdorf w prowincji górnośląskiej w latach 1941–1942*, Niemodlin 2011.

¹⁹ Hermann F. Weiss, *Buschvorwerk im Riesengebirge: Eine Gemeinde in Niederschlesien von den Kriegsjahren bis zur Vertreibung*, Herbolzheim 2006, pp. 157–200 (ZALf Schmiedeberg); *idem*, *From „Reichsatobhnlager“ to Schmelz Camp: Brande, a Forgotten Holocaust Site in Western Upper Silesia, 1940–1943*, „Yad Vashem Studies”, 39 (2011), 2, pp. 81–119; *idem*, „Reichsautobahnlager“ Geppersdorf (Upper Silesia), 1940–1942, „Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 67 (2012), 1, pp. 49–66; *idem*, *Peiskretscham*, pp. 11–36; *idem*, *Transformations*, pp. 73–102.

The purpose of the current paper is to present a microhistory of the Johannsdorf camp. One of the fourteen RAB camps affiliated with the Breslau-Gleiwitz RAB, it opened in late October 1940, transitioned to a Schmelz camp in summer of 1942, and closed about a year later. In part, I focus on this particular camp in order to advance the exploration of the diversity within the two camp systems. For example, at Johannsdorf, less human trafficking and violence occurred than at Brande and Sakrau, which likewise belonged to both camp systems. What were the factors resulting in some amelioration at Johannsdorf, in the midst of coercion and suffering there?

As far as sources are concerned, this paper tries to aim at corroboration by citing more than one whenever possible. The only relevant wartime records existing for Johannsdorf are two of the monthly statistics compiled by OBR Breslau about its RAB camps. Unfortunately, none of the surveys from November 1940 through March 1942 and subsequent to April 1942 are extant. As is the case with the majority of camps in the two systems within *Wehrkreis VIII*, research on Johannsdorf has to rely mostly on postwar sources, especially the following sectors of the vast digital holdings at USHMM: the huge International Tracing Service (ITS) archives in Bad Arolsen, Germany (USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7; ITS 6.3.3.2, T/D), depositions made by survivors soon after the war in the Netherlands (USHMM, RG-41.010M (Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie – NIOD), reel 368) as well as in Poland (USHMM, RG-15.840M (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny – ŻIH)). Unfortunately, authorities in several other relevant countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the United States did not make similar efforts to collect survivor narratives within a few years of the war's end. In addition to these digitized sources, an important document supplied by ITS Arolsen Archives is frequently cited in this paper.

Among its approximately 52,000 interviews with Holocaust survivors, the Visual History Archive (VHA) at the University of Southern California's Shoah Foundation holds many hundreds of videotaped interviews featuring sections on forced labor camps in *Wehrkreis VIII*. Even though these were often recorded in the 1990s, many offer varying amounts of useful data. This also holds true for 20 of the VHA interviews containing segments on Johannsdorf. Memories of survivors may have faded in the course of several decades, and interviewers are not always well-trained; nevertheless, such testimonies can be valuable, especially when checked against other interviews or additional sources. Finally, this study draws on some interviews with former and present-day local inhabitants as well as the results of

an investigation by a Polish expert on the preservation of historical monuments. Of the few published survivor accounts containing chapters on Johannsdorf, only Dr. Hans-Werner Wollenberg's (1891–1964) memoir offers a lot of detailed information on Johannsdorf. Published many years after the completion of the manuscript in May 1947, it is one of the earliest extensive reports on Johannsdorf and a few other Schmelt camps, and remains one of the most moving and important ones on Schmelt's camp system²⁰. As camp physician, he had a deeper knowledge of the camps he passed through than most survivors, and as a highly educated German Jew, he knew German history and culture far better than many of his fellow inmates.

Reichsautobahnlager Johannsdorf, 1940–1942

In the course of the Germanization of many place names in Silesia, German authorities renamed Jaschkowitz in Western Upper Silesia into Johannsdorf in 1936 (311 inhabitants in 1939). Western Upper Silesia was within the boundaries of the pre-1939 *Reich*. The Johannsdorf camp was situated near the forester's house²¹, at the edge of the Tillowitz forest, about 400 meters northwest of the village and about 500 meters from the nearest RAB construction site. Nowadays, several shallow depressions in the open fields indicate the positions and dimensions of some of its buildings. They reveal that the camp occupied a rectangle of approximately 75 × 100 meters and that four barracks, each measuring 9 × 33 meters, existed around the *Appellplatz*, where roll calls occurred. Two additional depressions are visible, a small one indicating the latrines in the corner, and one measuring 9 × 17 meters, where probably the kitchen and dining hall stood. Also, a road paved with basalt stones, which provided a connection between the village and the RAB, still traverses this site²². According to one of the monthly surveys compiled by OBR Breslau, Johannsdorf was being set up on September 25, 1940. The following structures are indicated for that date: four barracks for inmates, a *Waschbaracke*

²⁰ Werner Wollenberg, ... *und der Alptraum wurde zum Alltag. Autobiographischer Bericht eines jüdischen Arztes über NS-Zwangsarbeitslager in Schlesien (1942–1945)*, ed. Manfred Brusten, Pfaffenweiler 1992.

²¹ Stanisław Łukowski, *Zbrodnie hitlerowskie na Śląsku Opolskim w latach 1939–1945*, Opole 1979, p. 24.

²² I thank Mirosław Leśniewski (born [henceforth b.] 1980), an official at the Opole branch of the Department for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, for supplying me with maps, drawings, photos, and other information in 2011. His investigation was aided by Marek Łukawski, who spent his early years in Jaśkowice and learned about the camp from his ethnic German neighbors.

(washroom barrack), a *Gemeinschaftsbaracke*, which housed the kitchen and the mess hall, and two latrines. A *Lagerführer* (camp commandant) by the name of Glumm is listed, but not the number of beds. The camp was empty at that time²³.

The first transport of Jews from the *Oststreifen* arrived on October 25, 1940²⁴. Boruch Wadowski, whose account is the most detailed on the RAB phase of this camp, states that it consisted of 150 men from Bendsburg and 200 from Sosnowitz. When the first convoy of 330 Jews came to Brande on October 24, 1940, this nearby RAB camp was so crowded that thirty men were taken to Johannsdorf the next day²⁵. Seventy-two young men, among them Henry Rotmensch, who knew German well, arrived at about the same time. On October 25, 1939, this particular group was taken from Sosnowitz to Breslau where they worked on sewers for a local construction company, Gebr. [Brothers] Hess KG. At this unknown Breslau camp they were guarded by SA men, but the food was plentiful²⁶. This deployment, an early example of the importation of foreign Jewish laborers into the *Reich*, predates the establishment of *Organisation Schmelt* by about one year; it may have been effectuated by the German labor administration in occupied Poland, perhaps the *Arbeitsamt* (employment office) in Sosnowitz.

Additional transports of Polish Jews from the *Oststreifen* to Johannsdorf came from RAB camps Auenrode (now Osiek Grodkowski; summer of 1941)²⁷ and Brande (November 1941)²⁸, as well as from transit camp Sosnowitz (early 1941)²⁹.

²³ Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 4601/1171, pp. 59–60.

²⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C. (USHMM), RG-15.840M (Boruch Wadowski, b. 1910); USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7 (Isydor Czapnik, b. 1917); ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 320261 (Benjamin Dorfberger, b. 1910); T/D 305120 (Berek Weizenberg, b. 1918). Harry Ferens remembers that he arrived in 1940 on Simchat Torah (October 25, 1940).

²⁵ University of Southern California Shoah Foundation, Visual History Archive (VHA), interview no. 10304 (Leo Rosmarin, b. 1922).

²⁶ VHA, interview no. 24726 (H. Rotmensch, b. 1925); for Gebr. Hess, see *Breslauer Adreßbuch für das Jahr 1939*, Part I, p. 255.

²⁷ VHA, interviews no. 40807 and 21328 (Emile Lipshitz, b. 1920; Israel Wolnerman, b. 1922). This convoy resulted from the replacement of Jews by Soviet POWs, who arrived at Auenrode on August 28, 1941 (Unternehmensarchiv Bilfinger Berger, A 13 (Jahresbericht der Niederlassung Breslau zum 31. Dezember 1941). Mirjam Maria Inwart née Freilich (b. 1921) arrived from Auenrode on June 26, 1941 (T/D 284919).

²⁸ VHA, interview no. 6699 (Moritz Pergricht, b. 1924). His brother Zyskind (b. 1921) was also in this transport, which consisted of twenty men (VHA, interview no. 10561). Mania Saks (b. 1916) arrived from Brande in late 1941 (VHA, interview no. 511298). Naftali Sztajnberg (b. 1922) mentions that he was taken from Brande to Johannsdorf by himself (interview by Blima Lorber, e-mail from May 29, 2012).

²⁹ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 278194 (Chaim Schack, b. 1925): February 1941; VHA, interview no. 12040 (Abraham Zarnowiecki, b. 1921): January, 1941. Regina Heller née Weissberger,

Hertha Justitz, who had been forced to relocate from Neu-Oderberg (then the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, now Bohumín Nový, Czech Republic) to Bendsburg in 1940, was arrested there on March 13, 1941, and transferred to Johannsdorf where she stayed for three days³⁰. During Johannsdorf's RAB phase, outbound transfers include the following destinations: ZALfJ Blechhammer (now Blachownia Śląska; 1942)³¹, RAB camps Brande (March 1941)³², Groß Sarne (now Sarny Wielkie; January 1941)³³, Niederkirch (now Dolna; early 1942)³⁴, and St. Annaberg (February 1942)³⁵, as well as ZALfJ Klettendorf (now Klecina, part of Wrocław; February 1942)³⁶, ZALfJ Groß Kotzenau (now Chocianów; 1941)³⁷ and ZALfJ Marktädt (early spring 1942)³⁸. Several survivors indicate that there were about 300 men in RAB camp Johannsdorf, but Abram Freund remembers a precise number, 363, which may derive from statistics compiled at each RAB camp office. His knowledge of German must have been good because he had lived in the German city of Gleiwitz (now Gliwice) for years³⁹.

In late fall of 1941, 60 men were sent from Johannsdorf to ZALfJ Groß Maschwitz (now Maslice Wielkie, part of Wrocław). Only 15 returned three months later, among them Chaim Ayzenberg, Emile Lipshitz and Israel Wolnerman⁴⁰. Polish-Jewish men from other RAB camps were also transferred to Groß Masselwitz at that time. After being trained as a special *Organisation Todt* formation, about 350 were taken to occupied areas of the Soviet Union in order to adjust railroad tracks to German standards. Some, including I. Wolnerman, stayed behind

b. 1924, arrived on May 9, 1941 with men and women (VHA, interview no. 16515; USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 376950).

³⁰ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 649173 (H. Justitz, b. 1912).

³¹ April 1942: N. Sztajnberg, e-mail from May 29, 2012 (interview by Blima Lorber). Spring 1942: VHA, interview no. 6699 (M. Pergricht). Pergricht volunteered with his brother for a group that set up ZALfJ Blechhammer (VHA, interview no. 10561, Z. Pergricht).

³² USHMM, 6.3.3.2, T/D 649173, 279914 (H. Justitz; Chaim Schack); T/D 730806 (Heinrich Schwarzberg, b. 1921); August 1941. M. Inwart left for Brande on December 15, 1941 (T/D 284919).

³³ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 305120, (B. Weizenberg). 50 men were in this transport (VHA, interview no. 6560, B. Weizenberg).

³⁴ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 377980 (Regina Gartner, b. 1920).

³⁵ VHA, interview no. 511298 (M. Saks); USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 513298 (M. Saks).

³⁶ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 376950 (R. Heller).

³⁷ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 303959 (Icak Talmi, b. 1910).

³⁸ VHA, interview no. 42241 (Max Fischel, b. 1921).

³⁹ USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7, fol. 77, pp. 181, 183, 187 (Y. Czapnik; A. Freund, b. 1908; Max Drechsler, b. 1916); USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 750324 (A. Freund).

⁴⁰ USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 278570 (Ch. Ayzenberg); VHA, interviews no. 40807 and 21328 (E. Lipshitz, I. Wolnerman).

at Groß Masselwitz and did not have to experience the brutal *Osteinsatz*⁴¹. Guttermann claims that men from the following RAB camps were sent to Groß Masselwitz: Auenrode, Brande, Eichthal (now Dąbrówka Górna), and Sakrau⁴². Johannsdorf and RAB camp Geppersdorf have to be added to this list⁴³, as well as RAB camps Gogolin, Grünheide (now Sieronowice) and Niederkirch⁴⁴.

When the first Jews arrived, Johannsdorf was not yet completely set up. B. Wadowski notes that initially there was no electricity and running water. Henry Gotlib fixed doors and windows, and Harry Ferens assembled additional barracks with 26 other inmates. The guards were quartered in a separate barrack. L. Rosmarin estimates their number at 20⁴⁵. According to B. Wadowski, 20 women worked in the kitchen and the laundry, and two were assigned to the office, whereas A. Freund recalls that there were 13 women at Johannsdorf⁴⁶. According to B. Wadowski, RAB construction started on October 26, 1940. German foremen forced the Jews to toil quickly. M. Pergricht remembers that inmates removed topsoil and unloaded sand from narrow gauge railroad cars. Y. Czapnik and A. Freund state that Polensky & Zöllner, a major company headquartered in Frankfurt, was active at the site. This firm had a branch in Breslau and an office in the city of Proskau (now Prószków), which was located 3 km. west of Johannsdorf. L. Rosmarin was designated as mechanic for a locomotive operated by the Berlin company, Julius Schallhorn⁴⁷. Mounds of top soil, monuments to Jewish forced labor, can still be seen in the vicinity of Jaśkowice along the Wrocław–Gliwice highway⁴⁸. From the onset of frost until March 1941, construction was halted and everyone stayed in the camp for

⁴¹ For the *Osteinsatz*, see Bella Guttermann, *Jews in the Service of Organisation Todt in the Occupied Soviet Territories, October 1941 to March 1942*, „Yad Vashem Studies”, 29 (2001), pp. 65–107; Weiss, *From „Reichsautobahnlager”*, p. 88; VHA, interview no. 21328 (I. Wolnerman).

⁴² Guttermann, *Jews in the Service*, p. 83. Guttermann mistakenly calls these camps „Organisation Schmelt camps”.

⁴³ Weiss, „Reichsautobahnlager” *Geppersdorf*, p. 62.

⁴⁴ Information based on author’s unpublished entries for Vol. VI of the *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*.

⁴⁵ USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); VHA, interviews no. 36622, 5620, 6699, and 10304 (H. Gotlib, b. 1920; H. Ferens; M. Pergricht; L. Rosmarin).

⁴⁶ USHMM, RG-15.840 (B. Wadowski); USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7, fol. 77, p. 183 (A. Freund)

⁴⁷ USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); VHA, interview no. 6699 (M. Pergricht); USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7., fol. 77, p. 181, 183 (Y. Czapnik; A. Freund); VHA, interview no. 10304 (L. Rosmarin); for Polensky & Zöllner, see *Breslauer Adreßbuch für das Jahr 1941*, Part III, p. 10, and *Amtliches Fernsprechbuch für den Bezirk der Reichspostdirektion Oppeln 1942*, p. 187. This directory, whose deadline is March 1, 1942, lists „Reichsautobahnlager Johannsdorf” under Proskau (*ibidem*).

⁴⁸ M. Leśniewicz, e-mail from November 7, 2011.

a month. Then poorly clothed inmates had to remove snow from the roads in the area on the order of the *Dienststelle*, that is to say, the office of *Organisation Schmelt* in Sosnowitz Hans-Georg Walczyk, a former resident of the nearby village of Frei-Proskau (Ligota Prószkowska), saw columns of Jews marching to work at the RAB and shoveling snow⁴⁹.

Several survivors report that food was insufficient, but M. Fischel and L. Rosmarin say that the inmates did not starve⁵⁰. According to B. Wadowski, food was good at first, but became less nourishing during the winter 1940/1941. By the time the RAB camp construction resumed in March 1941, rations had become so meager that the Jews told the foremen they would stop working because of hunger – an unusual act of resistance in RAB camps. The construction management and the *Lagerführer* did not mete out punishment, and meals improved somewhat. Food packages from home ameliorated the suffering of an unknown number of inmates, even though the more substantial ones were confiscated by German camp personnel⁵¹. H. Rotmensch received a lot of food from the German locomotive driver to whom he was assigned, and a German engineer befriended Josef Zajd and provided him with a less taxing job and frequently a sandwich. H. Ferens reports that a German foreman, an army veteran, often handed bread to his crew and that local women gave bread to Jews marching through their village until that was prohibited. Leon Stopnitsky discussed the war situation with some friendly Germans⁵². However, many inmates probably did not benefit from such material and emotional support. In 1941, twenty “good workers”, including A. Rosmarin and Aaron Berman, were permitted to visit their families for four days. They passed through Dulag Sosnowitz where they were received by *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Ludwig Knoll (b. 1899), a top official of *Organisation Schmelt*⁵³. In 1941, inmates at Johannsdorf were still permitted to correspond with loved ones⁵⁴.

Work-related injuries, which were often due to constant work pressure, occurred frequently. First aid was offered in the sick ward by an orderly and a Jewish

⁴⁹ USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); H.-G. Walczyk (b. 1934), telephone interview July 28, 2011.

⁵⁰ VHA, interviews no. 6699, 11009, 42241, and 10304 (M. Pergricht; Abram Rosmarin, b. 1918; M. Fischel; L. Rosmarin).

⁵¹ USHMM, RG-15.840 (B. Wadowski).

⁵² VHA, interviews no. 24726, 18840, 5620, and 22980 (H. Rotmensch; J. Zajd, b. 1919; H. Ferens; L. Stopnitsky, b. 1917).

⁵³ VHA, interviews no. 11009 and 3237 (A. Rosmarin; A. Berman, b. 1922).

⁵⁴ VHA, interviews no. 36622, 6560 and 13504 (L. Cohn; H. Gotlib; B. Weizenberg).

physician, but on the following day inmates underwent operations for loss of fingers and other severe injuries in the hospital of the nearby city of Krappitz (now Krapkowice). Subsequently, they were transferred to the Jewish Hospital in Sosnowitz. Once recuperated, they were sent to their families. A. Berman, who was among these patients, escaped from his hometown, but was caught⁵⁵. According to A. Rosmarin, hospitalizations stopped after fall of 1941, which constitutes yet another manifestation of deteriorating conditions at this camp. Lotar Cohn, who received his medical degree in Germany in 1937, was camp physician from the beginning of November 1940. Schmelt's deputy, *SS-Sturmbannführer* Heinrich Lindner (1893–1949), enjoined Dr. Cohn to keep the number of patients low. At the end of February 1941, he returned to ZALFJ Neu-Dachs (now Jaworzno) and served as camp physician there. M. Drechsler recalls that Dr. Wolf Lajtner, who saved many lives during *the Osteinsatz* mentioned above, also looked after the inmates, but it remains unknown when he visited Johannsdorf while making his rounds of several RAB camps, including Geppersdorf⁵⁶. According to M. Pergricht, few medications were available in the sick ward. B. Wadkowski remembers that a camp physician, in collaboration with Moniek Merin's office in Sosnowitz, dissuaded the *Lagerführer* from deporting a pregnant Jewish woman to Auschwitz, who had been in a relationship with one of the kapos. Subsequently, Jewish men at RAB camp Johannsdorf were forbidden to have contacts with female inmates. This must have happened between L. Stopnitsky's arrival from Brande in late fall of 1941 and his transfer to Blechhammer sometime in 1942. According to him, the woman in question was Hannah, a tall German Jew, who worked for the *Lagerführer* and in the kitchen. She was removed from Johannsdorf to an unknown destination⁵⁷.

Only H. Rotmensch mentions the *Lagerführer*'s name, Kramer. This official was happy that the inmates extinguished a blaze in the village because firefighters were late in arriving⁵⁸. According to I. Wolnermann, the *Lagerführer* cancelled the brutal Sunday exercises conducted by the commander of the guards (*Wachhabender*). B. Wad-

⁵⁵ USHMM, RG-15.840 (B. Wadowski); VHA, interview no. 3237 (A. Berman). The Krappitz hospital was run by the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Elisabeth (e-mail from Thomas Cebulla, October 11, 2015). Jews from the Ottmuth camp were also treated there.

⁵⁶ VHA, interviews no. 11009 and 13504 (A. Rosmarin; L. Cohn, b. 1913); USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7, fol. 77, p. 187 (M. Drechsler); for Dr. Lajtner (1914–1989), see Weiss, „Reichsautobahn-lager“ Geppersdorf, p. 86.

⁵⁷ VHA, interview no. 6699 (M. Pergricht); USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); VHA, interview no. 22980 (L. Stopnitsky).

⁵⁸ VHA, interview no. 24726 (H. Rotmensch).

owski reports that the *Lagerführer* imposed a relatively mild punishment on some inmates who had appropriated potatoes and also coal to heat the barracks. H. Gotlib actually calls the *Lagerführer* friendly⁵⁹. Since the OBR Breslau monthly surveys from November 1940 to March 1942 are missing, it is not known when Kramer was replaced. A certain Mann is listed as *Lagerführer* in the April 1942 statistics, whereas Kramer had assumed that position at RAB camp Klein Mangersdorf by that time. When L. Stopnitsky arrived in late fall of 1941, Mann, an older man, was already there⁶⁰.

The guards, whom most survivors describe as SA men, became more brutal over time. B. Wadowski states that they did not abuse the Jews at first, but then started beating them. Some inmates gave them valuables in order to be allowed to work at a slower pace. When no more gifts were left, the guards turned violent. H. Gottlieb remembers that they were ethnic Germans. It is not clear whether the German who injured A. Zarnowiecki's hand in 1941, was a guard⁶¹. H. Ferens, who was at Johannsdorf from the beginning to September 1941, reports that Jews were insulted and beaten during his time there, but none were killed until after his departure.

Dogs are rarely mentioned by survivors of Silesian RAB camps, but L. Rosmarin says that an inmate, who relieved himself in the forest close to the construction site, was badly bitten. A guard by the name of "Polatzek" used an acquaintance of Z. Pergricht from Sosnowitz to train his dog, which eventually killed him. This dog also attacked Z. Pergricht, who arrived from Brande in November 1941, and his brother Moritz, as well as inmates who did not stay within a marching column. Without providing details, B. Weizenberg likewise mentions dog attacks⁶². Like many other Nazi perpetrators, Erhard Polaczek (b. 1911), whose additional acts of violence will be discussed below, was extradited by U.S. authorities to Poland, sentenced to death for his crimes at Johannsdorf and Brande, and executed in Bytom on April 28, 1949⁶³. *The Yad Vashem Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names*, which is huge, but – generally speaking – far from complete, lists one Jew

⁵⁹ VHA, interview no. 21328 (I. Wolnerman); USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); VHA, interview no. 36622 (H. Gotlib).

⁶⁰ Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 4602/394, p. 6; VHA, interview no. 22980 (L. Stopnitsky).

⁶¹ USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7 (A. Freund); USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); VHA, interviews no. 36622 and 12040 (H. Gotlib, A. Zarnowiecki).

⁶² VHA, interviews no. 5620, 10304, 10561, and 6560 (H. Ferens; L. Rosmarin; Z. Pergricht; B. Weizenberg).

⁶³ See Weiss, *From „Reichsatobhnlager”*, p. 107. Milosz Malinowski provided information on his relative, E. Polaczek.

under Johannsdorf. According to one of the two testimonials for Pinkhas Luks (b. 1919) on this website, he perished at Johannsdorf in 1942⁶⁴.

Almost nothing is known about the Jewish hierarchy during the RAB phase in Johannsdorf. Without providing details, H. Gotlib claims that Moshe Merin appointed the *Judenälteste* (members of the Council of Jewish Elders) in Sosnowitz. B. Wadowski, who was at Johannsdorf from the beginning to April 1943, refers to a *Judenältester* by the name of Szwajcer from Sosnowitz, who wrote reports for Moshe Merin's office in that city, but did not help his fellow inmates. M. Drechsler, who was at Johannsdorf from June 1941 to early 1943, states that Henrik Reitzenstein was a *Judenältester* there and that he survived. Both were born in Germany, Drechsler in Gleiwitz and Reitzenstein in Breslau, which may have been part of their relationship⁶⁵. Perhaps the latter was Szwajcer's successor. Almost nothing is known about kapos at RAB camp Johannsdorf. A. Berman was aided by a certain Fridlewsky⁶⁶.

As with other RAB camps, it is unknown when exactly in the summer of 1942 Johannsdorf was designated as *Zwangsarbeitslager*, thus becoming part of the camp system of *Organisation Schmelt*⁶⁷. Due to the halt of most RAB construction at the beginning of 1942, work mostly consisted of clean-up operations by the spring of that year. J. Zajd, who seems to have arrived in early 1942, was initially involved in building a bridge, then in removing the tracks of the narrow-gauge railroad. The OBR statistics for April 1942 show that 422 beds were available at RAB camp Johannsdorf. The number of Jews there was 125 on April 5, 1942, 105 on April 15 and 75 on April 25⁶⁸. The transports to Blechhammer and Markstädt listed above probably occurred around that time. B. Wadowski mentions that by the end of April 1942, the 30 remaining inmates were taken to ZALfJ Gołonóg and that other Jews were coming in as his group was leaving⁶⁹. Among them may have been Henocho Zeligman from Sosnowitz who was only 13 at that time⁷⁰.

⁶⁴ I thank Eitan Simanor for translating Hebrew texts.

⁶⁵ USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski); USHMM, ITS, 1.0.0.7, fol. 77, p. 187 (M. Drechsler); USHMM, 6.3.3.2, T/D 177445 (M. Drechsler); T/D 761096 (Heinrich Reitzenstein, b. September 5, 1914); VHA, interview no. 3237 (A. Berman).

⁶⁶ VHA, interview no. 3237 (A. Berman).

⁶⁷ For clues from other camps regarding this transition see Weiss, *Transformations*, pp. 85–87.

⁶⁸ VHA, interview no. 18840 (J. Zajd); Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 4602/394, p. 6.

⁶⁹ USHMM, RG-15.840M (B. Wadowski). The following survivors were probably also in this transport: H. Rotmensch (VHA, interview no. 24726): 1942; Y. Czapnik (USHMM, ITS, 1.1.0.7, fol. 77, p. 381): March 1942.

⁷⁰ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 269718 (E. Zeligman, b. 1928): May 1942.

Schmelt camp Johannsdorf, 1942–1943

Just before Jews arrived from Western Europe, some Jews arrested in the *Oststreifen* were brought to Johannsdorf. Mirjam Inwart, who had already been at RAB camp Johannsdorf from June 26 to December 15, 1941, returned from Brande on July 6, 1942. The fact that she provides exact dates for her stays at several sites suggests that she worked in camp offices where she would have had access to statistics. Since she was born in Beuthen (now Bytom), her German must have been adequate to this job. When Brande was temporarily closed because of its transition to a ZALfJ, eight SA guards took the remaining 60 inmates, among them Pinkus Mendlowicz, to Johannsdorf, which was empty as well. M. Inwart may have been in this transport⁷¹.

On September 11, 1942, Dr. Hans-Werner Wollenberg, whose memoir contains the most detailed account of the subsequent six weeks at Johannsdorf, arrived with a large transport by truck from a selection at the Cosel freight station. After being arrested in France, all of these men were put in Convoy 30, which left Drancy on September 9, 1942. Bredel, a *Gestapo* officer, and members of *Schutzpolizei* accompanied this group⁷². According to P. Mendlowicz, it comprised 420 men⁷³. He may have learned this from someone in the Jewish hierarchy, most of whose members were Polish Jews like himself. This figure seems fairly plausible because among the 999 Jews in Convoy 30, there were 429 men aged between 15 and 50, an unusually high proportion for Cosel transports. However, one has to take into consideration that at Cosel, the Germans did not always pay close attention to this age range, and that 23 additional men from Convoy 30 were selected for forced labor at Birkenau. Of the men taken off Convoy 30 at Cosel, 60 survived the war.

The transport originating from Convoy 30 is the only direct one from Cosel to Johannsdorf. This site was one of seven former RAB camps in Western Upper Silesia, which received such direct transfers: Eichthal (1), Niederkirch (4), Gogolin (6), Ottmuth (now Otmęt, part of Krapkowice; 8), Sakrau (10), St. Annaberg (12). The OBR Breslau survey for April 1942 suggests that the number of beds at each

⁷¹ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 284919 (M. Inwart); ITS Arolsen Archives, Suspension File Brande, questionnaire P. Mendlowicz, 1962. P. Mendlowicz (b. 1923) was a resident of Sosnowitz.

⁷² Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 57–58, 61. Fred Hirsch (b. 1903) was also in this transport (USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 490897), as was Maurice Szmídt (b. 1925); see his *Mémoires de déportation écrits en mai – juin 1945*, Paris 2009, p. 73.

⁷³ ITS Arolsen Archives, Suspension File Brande, questionnaire P. Mendlowicz, 1962.

of these camps does not correlate with the number of direct transports: Johannsdorf (422), Eichtal (498), Niederkirch (276), Gogolin (300), Ottmuth (380), Sakrau (395), St. Annaberg (374). At Brande, which had by far the largest number of beds (708)⁷⁴, the inmates were mostly Polish Jews. Due to the loss of the archives of OBR Breslau, *Organisation Schmelt* and of Merin's *Zentrale*, the logistical planning underlying the immense number of transports connected to Jewish forced labor within *Wehrkreis VIII* remains largely unknown.

On October 3, 1942, Dutch Jews were transferred from ZALFJ Gogolin to Johannsdorf⁷⁵. Jesias Corper, who was on the transport leaving Westerbork on November 10, 1942, was transferred from St. Annaberg to Johannsdorf on November 24, 1942⁷⁶. When a convoy of Dutch Jews came from the closed ZALFJ Königshütte (now Chorzów) in mid-January, 1943, only the camp leadership was present at Johannsdorf. Rosa Horn indicates that she arrived from ZALFJ Ober-Altstadt (now Horní Staré Město, Czech Republic) in January 1943⁷⁷. About the same time a transport came from each of the following ZALFJ: Sakrau⁷⁸, Eichtal⁷⁹ and Bismarkhütte (now Chorzów-Batory)⁸⁰. Just before Jacob de Wolf was taken from ZALFJ Gleiwitz to ZALFJ Blechhammer on March 23, 1943, a group of sick inmates was sent from Gleiwitz to Johannsdorf.

Transports to other Schmelt camps during second phase of Johannsdorf camp include the following destinations: Schwientochlowitz (now Świątchłowice; August 1942)⁸¹, Kochanowitz (now Kochanowice; September 17, 1942)⁸², Oderberg (now Bohumín, Czech Republic; mid-September 1942)⁸³, Blechhammer (October

⁷⁴ Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 4602/394, pp. 5–6.

⁷⁵ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (Maurits Broeks (b. 1916); *ibidem*, Barend Hartog Cozijn (b. 1921): 300 men; *ibidem*, Jacob Davidson (b. 1915): beginning of October, 1942. Davidson reports that 10 children aged 1 to 10 were in his transports from Cosel to Gogolin and from there to Johannsdorf.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, J. Corper (b. 1908).

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, Hartog Waterman (b. 1922): January 14, 1943; *ibidem*, Hartog Tertaas (b. 1918): January 16, 1943, 100 men; *ibidem*, Machiel Wertheim (b. 1905): January 21, 1943; USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 310201 (R. Horn, b. 1922).

⁷⁸ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (Samuel Visschoonmaker, b. 1921): transport of 100 men from Sakrau mid-January, 1943.

⁷⁹ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 428247 (J. Witkowski): January 1943; VHA, interview no. 24823 (J. Witkowski): February 1943; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (H. Tertaas).

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, H. Tertaas. Belgian Jews selected in Cosel from Convoy VIII were in this group.

⁸¹ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 269718 (E. Zeligman).

⁸² *Ibidem*, T/D 510485 (M. Szmidi); M. Szmidi, *Mémoires*, p. 13.

⁸³ Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, p. 69; USHMM, ITS, 6.3.2., T/D 372547 (Abraham Fogiel): October 1, 1942. A. Fogiel (b. 1923) arrived at Johannsdorf from Convoy 30, together with his father

21, 1942)⁸⁴, Schatzlar (now Žaclěb, Czech Republic; November 23, 1942)⁸⁵, Klettendorf (late February 1943)⁸⁶, Kochanowitz (March 4, 1943)⁸⁷, Ludwigsdorf (early March 1943)⁸⁸, Ober Lazisk (now Łaziska Górne; approximately March 1943)⁸⁹, Groß Masselwitz (April 1943)⁹⁰, Breslau-Neukirch (now Wrocław-Żerniki; April 1943),⁹¹ and Blechhammer (spring or early summer of 1943)⁹². J. Zajd was transferred to ZALfJ Sagan (now Żagań) in far-away Lower Silesia sometime in 1943⁹³. Compared to Gogolin, Ottmuth, Sakrau, and St. Annaberg, Johannsdorf was a minor hub within the camp system of *Organisation Schmelt*.

In early 1943, a German physician from Gleiwitz, dressed in civilian clothes, selected inmates unable to work. They were taken to an unknown destination. Then Hauschild appeared in order to sort human beings, a brutal intervention to which Wollenberg also refers⁹⁴. This limping “Jew trader” carried out similar activities at many other Schmelt camps as well⁹⁵, totaling hundreds of selections. Most scholars, among them Gruner, Rudorff and Steinbacher, have not recognized that he was one of the key actors in the Holocaust within *Wehrkreis VIII*, and that he is the only one as yet unidentified. Nobody but me has attempted to find out who this omnipresent but elusive criminal was. I recently revealed that in the summer of 1945, he was unmasked by some of his victims and murdered extrajudicially in Wrocław, which

Aharon and his brothers Avram and Berek. All four went through the same camps until they were liberated at Blechhammer (*ibidem*).

⁸⁴ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (M. Broeks; B. H. Cozijn); *ibidem*, J. Davidson: 20 days after arrival from Gogolin (October 3, 1942), 100 men, including Polish Jews. The ten children mentioned above stayed behind at Johannsdorf.

⁸⁵ USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2 (M. Inwart).

⁸⁶ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (S. Visschoonmaker): about 100 men, mostly Dutch. A week before his departure seriously ill inmates were taken away by bus.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, M. H. Waterman; H. Tertaas: beginning of March 1943. Waterman mentions that several transports left during the week prior to his departure.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, H. Tertaas; Jacob Zilverberg, b. 1915.

⁸⁹ VHA, interview no. 24873 (J. Witkowski): 4 young women.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁹¹ USHMM, ITS, RG-41.010 (NIOD), reel 368 (J. Corper): April 24, 1943. Chaim Trukenberg (b. 1917) from Drancy (France) Convoy 32 (September 14, 1942), was also in this transport.

⁹² USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (M. Wertheim); USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 722886 (F. Gutmacher): April or May, 1943; Felix Gutmacher, *Jamais je ne vous oublierai*, Bruxelles 2005, pp. 39, 41; June 1943, 200 men.

⁹³ VHA, interview no. 18840 (J. Zajd). His T/D (503014) does not indicate the dates of most of his stays in various camps.

⁹⁴ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (H. Tertaas); Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 69–70.

⁹⁵ Gutmacher, *Jamais*, p. 39; Weiss, *From „Reichsatobhnlager”*, pp. 102–103; *idem*, *Transformations*, pp. 93–94.

appears to have been his hometown. Hauschild, who always appeared in civilian clothes, must have been a civil servant. Wollenberg, who was familiar with German bureaucracies, repeatedly calls him *Oberinspektor*⁹⁶. While Hauschild apparently was neither employed by *Organisation Schmelt* nor OBR Breslau, he might have been affiliated with some labor administration entity such as a local *Arbeitsamt* (labor office). Partial searches of pertinent record groups for 1941 to 1944 at the State Archive (Archiwum Państwowe – AP) Katowice have not yielded results⁹⁷. However, further investigations at that archive, which holds many records concerning the persecution of Jews in *Wehrkreis VIII*, may yet lead to documents revealing Hauschild's full name, affiliation or other personal data, which may open a path towards a more detailed narrative concerning this perpetrator.

Johannsdorf is called *Durchgangslager* by only one survivor, but three, who were also there in early 1943, refer to it as *Erholungslager* (recuperation camp)⁹⁸. A French Jew, who apparently arrived with the transport from Gogolin on October 3, 1942 and may have left with the transfer to Blechhammer on October 21, 1942, remembers that Johannsdorf was a “camp de dressage” (training camp). Similarly a Dutch survivor, who was also at Johannsdorf during that month, calls it “Umschulungslager”⁹⁹. Both refer to the OBR Breslau project of retraining inmates of RAB camps for placement at industrial enterprises¹⁰⁰. The various functions of Schmelt camps that were RAB camps previously are less documented for Johannsdorf than for Brande, for example¹⁰¹. When P. Mendlowicz's group came to Johannsdorf in summer of 1942, no company was active there. They had to transfer construction materials to the nearest railroad station, about 2 km away. However, in October 1942, while Wollenberg was at Johannsdorf, Polish Jews were still working at the RAB and some *Westjuden* joined them eventually, but he mentions no specifics. In that month, B.H. Cozijn did little work except storing potatoes, and

⁹⁶ Weiss, *From „Reichsatobohnlager”*, p. 94; Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, p. 93.

⁹⁷ I thank Mirosław Węcki (AP Katowice) for research assistance.

⁹⁸ VHF, interview no. 24873 (J. Witkowski); USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (S. Visschoonmaker); *ibidem*, J. Zilverberg.

⁹⁹ Maurice Obréjan, *L'étrange destinée d'un homme trois fois Français*, Paris 1994, pp. 45, 47; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (B.H. Cozijn).

¹⁰⁰ See Hermann F. Weiss, *Die Oberste Bauleitung Reichsautobahnen Breslau und der Holocaust*, <https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/view/9725468/die-oberste-bauleitung-reichsautobahnen-in-breslau-und-der-> (published May 4, 2012), p.7. Oberregierungsbaurat Hans Lorenz (1900–1975), who became an internationally esteemed expert on freeway construction after the war, was in charge of this undertaking.

¹⁰¹ Weiss, *From „Reichsatobohnlager”*, pp. 101–103.

J. Davidson was assigned to the kitchen. Several Dutch Jews, who were at Johannsdorf from January to early March 1943, report that work details were established only now and then. For example, H. Tertaas mentions that his group loaded RAB construction equipment, including locomotives, on railroad cars and then used it to work in Ottmuth. Trucks took these men there and back.

Around the same time, J. Witkowski cleaned an office and worked in the tailor shop¹⁰². About fifteen Polish-Jewish women were involved in kitchen duties¹⁰³. At many men's camps in the two systems under consideration here, Polish-Jewish women were a very small minority. The fact that they were often housed in a separate barrack does not mean that they were in a *Frauenlager*; after all, they were ruled by the same German and Jewish hierarchies as the men. On the basis of camps investigated so far, it can be hypothesized that these women stood a better chance of survival than most of the men. Not only did they have access to food since many worked in the kitchen, but they were also often protected by members of the Jewish camp hierarchy.

Polish Jews from the *Oststreifen*, who were housed in a separate barrack, constituted much of the Jewish hierarchy at ZALfJ Johannsdorf. Abramczyk, an elegantly dressed 23-year old in riding boots, who spoke German fairly well, was the *Judenälteste*. Circumventing the *Lagerführer*'s intentions, he repeatedly managed to keep families together during selections. During Wollenberg's six-week stay at Johannsdorf, Abramczyk regularly informed the *Ältestenräte* (Councils of Elders) about inmates from their communities who were sick or had arrived at or departed from Johannsdorf. He subsequently became *Judenältester* at ZALfJ Faulbrück (now Mościsko). When S. Vischschoonmaker arrived at Johannsdorf in mid-January 1943, "Unger," a Polish Jew who spoke Dutch well because he had lived in Amsterdam, was the *Judenältester*¹⁰⁴. The person in question is likely to be Erwin Unger, born on May 26, 1903 in Hindenburg (now Zabrze, Upper Silesia). He fled from this German city to Amsterdam in 1938, was deported from Westerbork on September 4, 1942, and taken from Cosel to St. Annaberg. From there, he

¹⁰² ITS Arolsen Archives, Suspension File Brande, questionnaire P. Mendlowicz, 1962; Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 63, 66, 69; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (B. H. Hartog); *ibidem*, J. Davidson; H. Tertaas; J. Zilverberg; VHF, interview no. 24873 (J. Witkowski); USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2., T/D 428247 (J. Witkowski).

¹⁰³ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (H. Tertaas); *ibidem*, B.H. Cozijn.

¹⁰⁴ Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 59–60, 70–71, 59, 215; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (S. Vischschoonmaker).

probably came to Johannsdorf in the transport mentioned above. A good knowledge of German played a major role in the appointments of *Judenältester*.

Inmates in these camps often experienced acts of kindness from fellow prisoners, but frequently also the opposite of solidarity. Wollenberg and other survivors lament the greed and brutality of some kapos, especially Hadda and Kolski. When H. Tertaas arrived in late January 1943, everything of value was taken from him and the others in his group¹⁰⁵. M. Szmids reported that Polish kapos beat new arrivals and that they collected gold and watches. B.H. Cozijn complained that the Polish Jews got food first, and more of it. He also decried the Polish shoemaker's refusal to repair the shoes of the Dutch, and the fact that a Dutch shoemaker was badly beaten when trying to take care of his fellow countrymen's shoes. At other camps, too, cultural rifts between *Ostjuden* and *Westjuden* increased the level of suffering¹⁰⁶, especially since these tensions could be instrumentalized by the Nazis.

According to M. Broeks, the kapos, who were better fed than their fellow Jews, had sexual relationships with Polish-Jewish girls from the kitchen. He calls the room set aside for this purpose a "puff," using the colloquial German word for brothel¹⁰⁷. Such behavior, which must have irked many inmates, led to tragic consequences in a number of ZALfJs. For example, Harry Haubenstock from Teschen (now Těšín, Czech Republic), who also belonged to the Johannsdorf hierarchy by virtue of taking care of the showers, had a relationship with a young woman called Alice. When her pregnancy was discovered at the Peterswaldau (now Pieszyce) camp in 1944, she was sent to Auschwitz in 1944¹⁰⁸. It is not known whether male Jewish functionaries in the two camp systems under discussion here received any punishment for having sexual relationships with female inmates.

Until Wollenberg's arrival, a dentist from Wadowice, Simon Wallner, was in charge of the sick ward. SS-Obersturmführer Alfred Ludwig, an official of

¹⁰⁵ Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 61, 140; Szmids, *M*, p. 75; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (B.H. Cozijn, H. Tertaas).

¹⁰⁶ See Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 61–63. Gogolin, Niederkirch and Sakrau were among the camps where such tensions existed.

¹⁰⁷ Szmids, *Mémoires*, p. 75; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (B.H. Cozijn; M. Broeks).

¹⁰⁸ VHF, interview no. 24873 (J. Witkowski). Referring to his position at Dyhernfurth, Witkowski mentions that Haubenstock later became a *Judenältester*. Haubenstock's ITS record does not list his presence at Geppersdorf and Johannsdorf; see USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 986486 (H. Haubenstock, b. 1913). On Haubenstock, also see Ann Kirschner, *Sala's Gift*, New York 2006, pp. 148–155, 178–183.

Organisation Schmelt, appointed Wollenberg as camp physician after *Gestapo* officer Bredel, who had known Dr. Wollenberg before the war, introduced him to Ludwig. Dr. Wollenberg was joined by Dr. Simons, a German Jew, and 3 other physicians¹⁰⁹. Dr. Erich Simons (b. 1892) was eventually transferred to ZALfJ Gleiwitz. From there, he was deported to Auschwitz because the Gleiwitz *Lagerführer* blamed him for covering up the pregnancy of the married secretary of the women's section. Dr. Simons perished at Auschwitz¹¹⁰. Wollenberg states that initially, not much medical care was needed and that the father of a fifteen-year old named Kurt, both of whom were also in Convoy 30, was one of the medics at Johannsdorf¹¹¹. Wallner continued to be a medic and also served as dentist. By the time Jews from the Netherlands arrived in January 1943, there was a shortage of medical supplies. Bandages and vitamins were taken from the baggage of the new arrivals and used up quickly¹¹².

When P. Mendlowicz arrived at Johannsdorf in summer of 1942, Mann was still *Lagerführer*. Wollenberg states that this official was not a sadist, but that, together with the SA guards, he stole valuables from *Westjuden*. He also told Wollenberg to ignore a physician's moral responsibilities¹¹³. From Polish Jews, who had been at Johannsdorf for a long time, Wollenberg heard about an earlier *Lagerführer*, a brutal and corrupt German called Ackermann¹¹⁴. Since none of the sources for the RAB phase of Johannsdorf camp mention him, it is possible that he took over from Mann for a while in 1942. Shortly after the war, a *Lagerführer* by the name of Hans Laqua, who may have been Mann's successor, was hidden by his ethnic German neighbors in his native village of Jaśkowice when a survivor wanted to take revenge for the wrongs he had suffered at Johannsdorf¹¹⁵. By contrast,

¹⁰⁹ Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 58, 64–65. Dr. Simons arrived with his fifteen-year old son (ibid. p. 70). Gerhard Simons was born in his father's hometown, Cologne, on October 12, 1927.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 70. For a detailed description of this tragic event and the life of Dr. Simons, see *One Shoah, Two Destinies*, a web site created by the Israeli photographer Eitan Simanor in 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9HBwmFQg2s>.

¹¹¹ Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, p. 121. The persons in question are Walter Moses, b. September 14, 1893, and Kurt Moses, b. May 25, 1928.

¹¹² Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 64–65, 72; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (B.H. Cozijn)

¹¹³ ITS Arolsen Archives, Suspension File Brande, questionnaire P. Mendlowicz, 1962; Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 65–66, 71–72.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 66. This may be the same official who was *Lagerführer* at Geppersdorf previously. The date of his departure from that camp cannot be determined.

¹¹⁵ Laqua was born in Jaschkowitz on February 1, 1883, and died in Jaśkowice on December 30, 1969. He is buried in the cemetery of nearby Ligota Prószkowska; M. Leśniewicz, e-mail from

“Lullu,” the *Wachhabende*, a Silesian with a Polish name, did not participate in robbing Jews and even expressed unease about their persecution. When Wollenberg and Wallner were transferred to Brande on October 26, 1942, they experienced a warm-hearted leave from this *SA-Mann*. He was amused when finding ten letters which they wanted to transmit to Brande inmates, and did not make an issue of it. A guard who knew members of J. Witkowski’s family told her to clean the office and gave her sandwiches¹¹⁶. By contrast, Wollenberg considered Lullu’s deputy the most dangerous person at Johannsdorf. Erhard Polaczek, whose brutal behavior during the first phase of the camp has been discussed above, was known for violent outbursts. He tortured Dr. Recht, an attorney from Vienna, who then tried to commit suicide¹¹⁷. M. Obréjan and M. Broeks, who, as mentioned above, were at Johannsdorf in October 1942, reported harsh punishment drills. According to the latter, these led to four deaths, while J. Davidson states that no Jew perished at Johannsdorf during these same weeks¹¹⁸. J. Davidson and H. Tertaas remember that their fellow countryman Raphael Maarsen perished at Johannsdorf, but they may not have been there when this happened¹¹⁹. H. Tertaas recalls that a Belgian Jew by the name of Kaplan, who arrived from ZALfJ Bismarkhütte, had a breakdown and died¹²⁰. Victims were buried at the German-Jewish cemetery in Krappitz, which is located outside of the city by the Odra River, on present-day Kolejowa Street¹²¹. Similarly, German-Jewish cemeteries in Beuthen, Falkenberg (now Niemodlin), Gogolin, Groß Strehlitz (now Strzelce Opolskie), Tarnowitz-Lassowitz (now Tarnowskie Góry-Lasowice) and elsewhere became burial places for victims from nearby forced labor camps.

December 14, 2011, and undated letter (November 2011). No information concerning Laqua exists at Bundesarchiv Berlin.

¹¹⁶ VHA, interview no. 24873 (J. Witkowski).

¹¹⁷ Wollenberg, *Alptraum*, pp. 64–65, 73, 64–65, 71–72. The victim in question is Dr. Leopold Heinrich Recht, b. March 17, 1898. According to a Viennese court, he lay gravely ill at ZALfJ Schoppnitz in December 1942 and did not survive the war (Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, e-mail from November 24, 2014).

¹¹⁸ Obréjan, *L'étrange destinée*, p. 45; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (M. Broeks; J. Davidson).

¹¹⁹ ITS Arolsen Archives, Suspension File Brande, questionnaire P. Mendlowicz, 1962; USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD), reel 368 (J. Davidson; H. Tertaas). Maarsen, born on September 29, 1894, was in the same transport from Westerbork as E. Unger (September 4, 1942).

¹²⁰ USHMM, RG-41.010M (NIOD, reel 368 (H. Tertaas). Since there are 3 Jews from Cosel transports by that name, this victim could not be identified.

¹²¹ Łukowski, *Zbrodnie*, p. 25.

P. Mendlowicz reports that “Motel Roinnerz”, a friend of his from Sosnowitz, was murdered by an unnamed brutal guard at ZALFJ Johannsdorf. The *Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names*, which lists few or no victims from many of the camps under discussion here, has no entry for ZALFJ Johannsdorf. Instead, it links the death of Motl Rejnerz (b. 1919) from Sosnowitz to Auschwitz. According to the testimonial submitted by his sister to Yad Vashem, he was killed there in 1942. However, sometimes Auschwitz is given as the place of death by family members who had insufficient information about the fate of their loved ones. As opposed to Brande, Sakrau and St. Annaberg, for example, Johannsdorf may not have been a *Krankenlager* (camp for the sick), which partly explains its low mortality.

A recent Polish publication lists deceased Jews alphabetically, among them victims from some of the camps under consideration here, especially St. Annaberg, but none from Johannsdorf. It is based on death notices sent by Registrar’s Offices (*Standesämter*) in *Wehrkreis VIII* to the *Statistisches Reichsam*t in Berlin¹²². Innumerable camp-related deaths do not appear in this compilation. For example, not one of the many victims at Sakrau or of the typhoid epidemic at Faulbrück are listed. However, archives at Registrar’s Offices in western Poland may well contain valuable data concerning mortality in the two camp systems discussed here. For example, the Leśnica office holds death certificates for Niederkirch inmates, which even display name and rank of the guards submitting them at the *Standesamt*. However, current archival laws apparently prevent historians from utilizing these sources.

J. Witkowski says that when she was taken to Groß Masselwitz approximately in April 1943, ZALFJ Johannsdorf was gradually being closed¹²³. In all likelihood, the early 1943 transports mentioned above were part of this process. Approximately in June 1943, about a year after P. Mendlowicz had arrived with 60 comrades from Brande, his entire group was returned there. During this two-week stay at Brande, Mendlowicz encountered Polaczek, who had earlier killed a friend of his at Johannsdorf, simply assuming that this Jew was about to escape¹²⁴. Johannsdorf was probably liquidated in summer of 1943¹²⁵.

¹²² *Lista Żydowska – Jeszcze Jedno Świadczenie Holokaustu*, Opole 2014, pp. 9–13.

¹²³ VHA, interview no. 24873 (J. Witkowski).

¹²⁴ ITS Arolsen Archives, Suspension File Brande, questionnaire P. Mendlowicz, 1962.

¹²⁵ R. Horn claims that in January 1944, after a year’s stay at Johannsdorf, she was transferred to Peterswaldau, which was still a ZALFJ at that time (USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2, T/D 310201). No other survivors mention such a late date for Johannsdorf.

Concluding remarks

Unmarked graves affiliated with the approximately 200 forced labor camps for Jews exist throughout the vast area encompassing *Wehrkreis VIII*. As in the case of Johannsdorf, almost no trace is left of the many sites which consisted of wooden barracks. Commemorative plaques have been placed at or near just a few former camps, including Eichtal, Gräditz (now Grodziszczce), Peiskretscham, and Trzebinia. For the most part, these are forgotten sites, which makes it all the more necessary to draw attention to them. And yet, relatively few historians have undertaken this task, which is primarily due to the problematic source situation. Unfortunately, pertinent wartime records are often much more fragmentary than those concerning concentration camp systems. Also, the recollections of survivors and other witnesses are subject to such factors as time elapsed since the war and the position of survivors in the social strata of the camp in question. However, in spite of such limitations, all of these sources, if linked judiciously, frequently provide important insights into conditions at these camps. Throughout my publications, they have enabled me to identify many victims not noted elsewhere. Moreover, by always integrating numerous names of survivors and their murdered comrades together with pertinent narrative elements into my microhistories of camps, I have sought to personalize the immensity of the Holocaust.

While all of these sites focused on exploiting Jewish labor, considerable differences existed between them. My intention is not to be an apologist for Nazi crimes, but I believe it is essential to acknowledge gradations of suffering in the terrible struggle for survival. Survivors themselves often compare camps in their testimonies. For example, Schmelt camps such as Brande, Faulbrück, Peiskretscham, Sakrau, Schmiedeberg, and Wiesau (now Wizów koło Bolesławca), as well as Peiskretscham and the other brutal Schmelt camps associated with *Deutsche Reichsbahn* were considered “bad,” but Klettendorf and Nimptsch (now Niemcza) as relatively “good.” Others, Johannsdorf among them, were ranked somewhere in between. Thus, F. Gutmacher, a Belgian Jew, who may have arrived with Dutch Jews from Königshütte in January 1943, remembers that conditions at Johannsdorf were much better at that particular time than at Sakrau and Königshütte¹²⁶. Such

¹²⁶ Gutmacher, *Jamais*, p. 37. Here Gutmacher (b. 1926) dates his arrival at Johannsdorf to March, 1943, but according to his much earlier ITS record, he was transferred at the end of January, 1943; see USHMM, ITS, 6.3.3.2., T/D 722886 (F. Gutmacher).

assessments by survivors are based on access to food and to helpers, type of work, levels of violence and mortality and, especially, personnel constellations in the German and Jewish camp hierarchies.

German functionaries such as Lehmann, *Lagerführer* at Niederkirch and St. Annaberg, and Karl Demerer, *Judenältester* at Blechhammer, are gratefully remembered by survivors because they frequently and skillfully eased the suffering of inmates. However, for example at Brande, the personnel constellation led to very different outcomes. There, Moishe Gebührer, a brutal *Judenältester*, violent kapos collaborating with a sadistic *Lagerführer*, and some aggressive guards created particularly terrorizing conditions. While Julius Siegel, *Judenältester* at Brande, Sakrau and Groß Masselwitz, who appeared before honor courts in 1946 and 1949 and regular Israeli courts in 1952 and 1953, received a mild sentence in the end¹²⁷, Gebührer, who abused his limited power much more than Siegel and actually murdered Jews, would have been judged more harshly. Nothing is known about his fate after he was transferred to a Schmelt camp near Landeshut, together with Thien, the vicious Brande *Lagerführer*¹²⁸. This paper demonstrates that by comparison, conditions at Johannsdorf offer a mixed picture, also with regard to personnel constellations. Guard Polaczek seems to have been the only person at Johannsdorf comparable to multiple brutal perpetrators at Brande or Peiskretscham, where no German official resembling “Lullu” existed, the kind-hearted *Wachhabende* at Johannsdorf. And the fact that many inmates during Johannsdorf’s second phase did not work all the time, must have had an impact on morbidity and mortality.

It is desirable that differences and similarities within the two camp systems are explored further in the future. As a result, subgroups are likely to emerge among the Schmelt camps, such as *the Reichsbahn* camps. Even though I have been involved in this field of research for quite a few years, I cannot claim to have a full grasp of the histories of all of these approximately 200 camps. I am familiar with conditions at a considerable number of them, but know little about many others. My present interpretation of the two systems might well be shaped somewhat differently if I possessed a deep knowledge about those as well.

¹²⁷ Dan Porat, *Bitter Reckoning: Israel tries Holocaust Survivors as Nazi Collaborators*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2019, pp. 34–40, 64–66, 149–151.

¹²⁸ Weiss, *From „Reichsautobahnlager”*, p. 106, 108, 113.

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł prezentuje historię obozu Johannsdorf (obecna nazwa miejscowości: Jaśkowice) w okresie drugiej wojny światowej. Autor podjął próbę pogłębienia wiedzy o dwóch słabo zbadanych systemach pracy przymusowej dla Żydów w obrębie *Wehrkreis VIII* – obejmującego Śląsk w przedwojennych granicach, anektowane terytoria na wschód od niemieckiego Górnego Śląska oraz część *Reichsgau Sudetenland*. Od października 1940 do lata 1942 r. Johannsdorf stanowił jeden z 25 obozów typu *Reichsautobahnlager*, prowadzonych przez biuro *Reichsautobahn* we Wrocławiu. Potem przez rok był on jednym z ok. 170 obozów nadzorowanych przez będącą częścią struktur SS *Organisation Schmelt*. Mimo iż warunki panujące w obozie stawały się coraz cięższe już w trakcie pierwszej fazy jego istnienia, a jeszcze pogorszyły się w drugiej fazie, śmiertelność w obozie Johannsdorf była znacząco niższa niż w innych obozach zarządzanych przez *Organisation Schmelt*, takich jak Brande, Sakrau i Faulbrück. Inne aspekty funkcjonowania obozu omówione w artykule to m.in. transport, praca, dostęp do żywności, pomoc otrzymywana przez więźniów, opieka medyczna, hierarchia obozowa i los więźniarek. Krytyka wcześniejszych badań i częste porównania do innych obozów funkcjonujących w ramach wspomnianych dwóch systemów mają na celu uchronienie się przed uogólnieniami wynikającymi z niepełnej wiedzy o omawianych placówkach.

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