Spaniards in the Holocaust

Mauthausen, the horror on the Danube

David Wingeate Pike

Routledge/Cañada Blanch Studies on Contemporary Spain

Spaniards in the Holocaust

This new work focuses on the experience of the large Spanish contingent within the Mauthausen concentration camp, one of the least known but most terrible of the Nazi camps. Among the hundreds of thousands of prisoners who entered Mauthausen were 7000 Spanish Republicans who had fought in the Civil War and found refuge in France, only to be arrested by the Germans in the French collapse of 1940. Their story serves as a microcosm of the experience of all who were prisoners, and it possesses a unique historical value. No other national group succeeded in placing its members in all the key clerical positions in the SS administration, and no other group managed to hide and save all its basic records.

This book is the first full-length account in English of the horrors of Mauthausen. It includes not only what the Spaniards endured but what they witnessed, such as the treatment of the Jews, atrocities against Allied prisoners of war, and the mass break-out of Soviet officers in the Death Block. The book concludes with the first account in English of the Battle of Austria and the first account in any language of the assault of the US 'Thunderbolt' Division, which ended with the liberation of Mauthausen.

Spaniards in the Holocaust makes an outstanding contribution to the literature of the Holocaust. It also presents a wealth of material of vital interest to historians of both the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War itself.

David Wingeate Pike is Distinguished Professor of Contemporary History and Politics at The American University of Paris, and a Vice-Chairman of the California Institute of International Studies, Stanford. His many publications include *Vae Victis!, Les Français et la guerre d'Espagne, In the Service of Stalin* and the edited works *The Opening of the Second World War* and *The Closing of the Second World War.*

Routledge/Cañada Blanch Studies on Contemporary Spain
Series editors Paul Preston and Sebastian Balfour
Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies, London

1 Spain 1914–1918
Between war and revolution
Francisco J. Romero Salvadó

2 Spaniards in the Holocaust
Mauthausen, the horror on the Danube
David Wingeate Pike

3 Conspiracy and the Spanish Civil War
The brainwashing of Francisco Franco
Herbert R. Southworth

Also published in association with the Cañada Blanch Centre:

Spain and the Great Powers
Edited by Sebastian Balfour and Paul Preston

Spaniards in the Holocaust

Mauthausen, the horror on the Danube

David Wingeate Pike

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Any passage in this book which appeared in the author's *In the Service of Stalin* (1993) is reproduced with the permission of Clarendon Press, Oxford.

First published 2000
by Routledge

Published 2014 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the US A and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Transferred to Digital Printing 2009

Typeset in Baskerville by Wearset, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Pike, David Wingeate.
Spaniards in the Holocaust/David Wingeate Pike.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Mauthausen (Concentration camp) 2. World War, 1939–1945–Prisoners and prisons, German. 3. Prisoners of war–Spain. I. Title.

D805.M38 P55 2000
940.54'7243'094362–dc21
99–059439

ISBN 13: 978-0-415-22780-3 (hbk)

Publisher's Note
The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original may be apparent.

To Cécile,
who proposes a similar exposé,
of events at a later time,
on a lower reach of the Danube.

Mortuorum sorte discant viventes.

Page Intentionally Left Blank

Contents

List of plates

Preface

The story of Mauthausen covers a little over seven years, from the Anschluss in 1938 to the last week of the Second World War. In that time several hundreds of thousands of prisoners passed through, 200 000 of whom died. While Mauthausen is the name of a village on the Danube as well as that of the granite fortress on the adjacent hill, it served to designate not only the mother camp but also the scores of subsidiaries, large and small, scattered throughout every part of Austria except the Tyrol, but all administered by the Lagerführer in the Hauptlager. It was not technically an extermination camp (*Vernichtungslager*), nor was it a camp designed for Jews, but prisoners were systematically exterminated there, and Jews were among its victims. As were tens of thousands of prisoners of war who, under the Geneva Convention, were entitled to imprisonment in a Stalag or an Oflag. The majority of these POWs were Soviets, but the few score Dutch, American, and British servicemen (numerically in that order) who were interned there were among those treated the worst. So much for the fiction that the SS mind was governed by notions of race, when in fact it was obsessed by the love of power and the frenzy to humiliate, as the SS demonstrated only too clearly in their treatment of the Dutch. But if the largest prisoner of war contingent was Soviet, the second largest was Spanish, who found themselves in Mauthausen for two reasons: the first, because no government (Franco's, Pétain's, or Hitler's) cared whether they lived or died; the second, because the camp where they were sent was designed as the worst of all in Nazi Germany.

Mauthausen was also home, at some time or other, to some 15 000 SS, of which a surprisingly large portion were Austrian.[1] It should not be forgotten that, proportionate to population, more Austrians than Germans were members of the Nazi Party and volunteers for the SS, from Kaltenbrunner and Eichmann downwards. It was not the villagers of Mauthausen alone who were privy to the 'secret', but every community that was close to a subsidiary camp, from Linz to Wiener Neustadt to the Yugoslav frontier.

The Mauthausen archipelago is worthy of a study that would run to many volumes, but it also lends itself to a comprehensive study of a

national group that provides a microcosm of the common experience. In this regard, the Spanish community serves ideally as a case-study. Only two national groups (the Austrians and the Polish) arrived in Mauthausen before them, and unlike the French, Belgians, and Luxemburgers, they were not evacuated by the International Red Cross in advance of the Liberation. But the two predominant reasons why the Spanish merit this selection as a case-study are, firstly, that no national community emerged from Mauthausen with a general reputation as high as theirs; and secondly, that no other national group succeeded in placing so many of its members in key positions as clerks or assistants (the key to personal survival) in the SS administration.

While, then, this book focuses upon the experience of the Spanish community in Mauthausen, it describes not merely what they did but what they witnessed and recorded. In some cases, the evidence that remains, especially the photographic evidence, is entirely the work of the Spaniards. For that reason, considerable material given here was the experience of non-Spaniards, but in most cases only Spaniards survived to record it.

The story opens with the Spaniards, prisoners of the Germans in 1940 while in French uniform, being sent to the Channel Islands and especially to the Nazi camps in Alderney. These camps had no connection with KL-Mauthausen. They were administered instead by KL-Neuengamme, but they are included precisely because they were the first camps to which Spanish prisoners were dispatched. The subject is included for another reason, that of historical interest. The so-called official history of the Channel Islands by Charles Cruickshank is woefully incomplete, and the published report by Major 'Bunny' Pantcheff is equally unsatisfactory. Pantcheff was a British intelligence officer who was sent in at once, after the Liberation, to carry out a full investigation, but to judge from his report, and assuming that his investigation was thorough, his findings were savaged by the censors. Four years after the Liberation, a trial of two of the Nazi criminals in Alderney was held before a military court in Paris. Why in Paris, when the atrocities were carried out on British territory? And why should the official historian (Cruickshank) shrink from the question? And why was the trial in Paris so outrageously conducted that even now no organigramme exists of the structure of the Nazi authorities? These are not questions that win friends in government circles, but history will reveal the answers, sooner or later, and those who obstructed the historians will come to wish they had not.

The story closes with the liberation of Mauthausen, but that had to be fought for, and the Battle of Austria in April–May 1945 was so overshadowed by the Battle of Berlin that it has been virtually ignored by historians. Ironically, as the various subsidiary camps were evacuated, one after the other, in the face of the advancing Soviets (and, a month later, of the advancing Americans), the Mauthausen region and the strip to the

south came to be the last bastion of resistance of the Third Reich, and several of the most infamous of the Waffen-SS divisions were still fighting in this shrinking perimeter of the German defences.

The writing of contemporary history is in part the refusal to be misled by those surviving witnesses who, sometimes with intent, sometimes through a natural laziness or ineptitude, distort, fabricate or invent the experiences that they claim as theirs. 'Old men drooling over their youth,' as A. J. P. Taylor has described oral history. In a famous letter written by a Spanish reader to a Spanish writer, the reader wrote: 'Many times, in reading accounts of our captivity, and especially those of Mauthausen, the great majority of the former prisoners ask themselves the question whether it is not some other camp that is under discussion, so strange and alien are the statements included in them.'[2] Juan de Diego wrote, to the same writer, Mariano Constante: 'It seems that he who inflates his figures most, is right.' The warning made no impression. Constante's performance on Spanish television on 17 January 1976, and the information he presented in a Barcelona daily,[3] drew an angry response from his compatriot Casimir Climent. Climent, who worked in the Politische Abteilung from the day he arrived (25 November 1940), described Constante, who was employed in the Disinfection squad, as a novelist who recounts stories that never happened and a participant who claims ranks and responsibilities he never held. As for his ever more inflated figures, added Climent, 'they all come straight off the top of his egocentric head.'[4]

Indeed, where exaggeration and fabrication are concerned, no writer on Mauthausen has matched Constante, whose distortion of the facts has left him despised by his compatriots. Of all his inventions, perhaps the most blatant was his claim, which the present author had earlier accepted,[5] that his encounter with the SS officer known as 'la Niña' had left him with a permanently deformed hand. In the Hôtel Ibis at Orly Airport on 1 April 1997, the author enticed Constante into rolling both his hands into fists. He did; his hands were in perfect shape. The author also asked him: 'If you were to rewrite all you have written, what would you leave out?' 'Nothing,' replied Constante, without giving the question a moment's thought. Confronted by his fellow-survivors with falsifying the facts, Constante replied: 'I have to earn my living.' The result is that wherever a claim by Constante is not corroborated by a second source, his testimony is not to be considered reliable and has been excluded from the present work.

Constante is by no means the only writer at fault. The French survivor Paul Tillard has described how the Kapo Karl Maierhofer was allowed by the SS to keep for himself a tenth of the gold dental fillings that he extracted in Ebensee's Revier. How much gold? In a book published in 1945, he wrote 3 kg. In a book published in 1965, it was 5 kg. Imagination can increase with age. Ramón Bargueño became known all over Mauthausen when the SS caught him in the kitchen eating jam, and made him

eat, and eat. But how much? 3 kg, it was reported in two authoritative sources.[6] Some years later, Bargueño estimated again: the container was a 5 kg can, and after that he was forced to swallow half a second can.[7] Obviously, the more a story is embellished, the more likely it is to persuade. The rocks that the prisoners of Mauthausen had to carry up the 186 steps weighed indeed a staggering 20 kg, but why does a woman survivor have to claim that for the women it was 40 kg?[8] And why would a biographer of Simon Wiesenthal want to embarrass him, and every other survivor, by claiming that on Himmler's orders the rocks were never to be lighter than 110 lbs?[9] Some survivors who write make it a point never to read, which adds freshness and charm to their accounts, but it leaves truth up in the air. Lagerführer Ziereis was shaved by the Spanish barber Azaustre, says one.[10] Ziereis shaved himself, writes another: 'He was afraid of any prisoner holding a razor.'[11] Others write from the opposite end, with no understanding of the reality of an SS camp. The English journalist Madeleine Bunting, writing on Buchenwald, makes two remarkable claims: first, that the British prisoner Stanley Green smuggled a camera with film into the camp; and second, that he smuggled photographs out of the camp, and that this evidence was used at the Nuremberg trials.[12] Bunting owed it to her readers to explain in what part of his naked body did Green, on his arrival in Buchenwald, hide the camera. The two photographs presented by Bunting as 'the only photographs to be taken inside Buchenwald by an inmate' furthermore came as a surprise to the international association of survivors of Buchenwald, for two reasons: first because the photographs record scenes that logically belong to the Liberation (a sick inmate is being gently lifted on to a truck while a bystander is apparently wearing a nose-mask), and second, because Buchenwald did indeed have its own prisoner–photographer, the modest but highly respected Georges Angeli, who has never heard the name of Stanley Green and who considers Bunting's claim incredible.[13]

The achievement of Constante and others has thus been to set up the revisionists in their attempts to cast doubt on the horror of the camps. The threat from the revisionists is real. This explains why nothing written on Mauthausen up to the present has ever included a reference to a 'canteen' for the prisoners. While the term 'canteen' was indeed used in Mauthausen for what was in fact no more than a nearly foodless locker, the very word is music to the ears of revisionists in their improved version of life in the KZ: 'the canteen, football on Sunday afternoon, the camp theatre and concerts, the lake at Ebensee, the pleasant if rigorous and disciplined life of a camp; no rest camp certainly, but a challenging and stimulating opportunity . . .' No one should assume that the Austrian communities closest to the SS camps have become the most sensitized to the memory of SS barbarism. The town of Wels is no remote community but equidistant from Linz, Vöcklabruck and Steyr, all of them sites of subsidiary camps. In its immediate vicinity, Wels had its own, at Gunskirchen,

where the bodies of 4000 Hungarian Jews, buried in a mass grave, were discovered only in 1985. Wels is also the home of the Austrian film producer Andreas Gruber, who for three years was an elected member of the moderate Conservative Party. When Gruber objected to the erection of a monument in Wels to the Waffen-SS and proposed that a monument be erected instead to the victims of Nazism, and proposed further that 8 November (*Kristallnacht*) be commemorated throughout Austria, his phone never stopped ringing: he was called a *Nestbeschmutzer* (one who fouls his own nest) and threatened with death if he persisted. The proposals had to be abandoned. Meanwhile, the SS veterans hold their reunions undisturbed, Sylvester Stadler, formerly of 'Das Reich', being particularly active in Carinthia. The SS veterans' association has taken the name of Kameradschaft IV, the use of IV being an attempt to persuade the world that the SS was the fourth arm (after the Heereswehr, the Kriegsmarine, and the Luftwaffe) of the Wehrmacht.

Future generations are unlikely to understand why the study of Mauthausen and other camps began so late. It was decades ago that a Mauthausen survivor, then Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the Université de Caën, issued a general warning: 'The definitive study of the KZ system will be produced by our generation, or it will never be produced.'[14] It was a stroke of fortune that the SS, who took such care to liquidate those prisoners who worked in the gas chamber and the crematorium, took no similar action against those, barely a dozen in number, who held the keys to knowledge in the three nerve centres of the Lager: the Schreibstube (administration office), Politische Abteilung (Gestapo office), and Erkennungsdienst (photo identification service). Fate decreed that there would be a Spaniard in a leading position in each of the three. Juan de Diego in the first, with a phenomenal memory which has remained with him through his life, to the extent that the Czech survivor Přemysl Dobiáš reports that he became known as 'Noranta Nou' (Catalan for '99'), based on the percentage of times his memory was found accurate. Casimir Climent in the second, who died insane, but with his secret collection intact. And Antonio García in the third, who reveals here for the first time how the photo service was run and how the precious prints were saved.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go first to the survivors' associations and their members who have helped me over the last 20 years, my first interview being with the Czech communist ex-minister Artur London in 1979. In Paris, the associations include the Amicale de Mauthausen and the Fédération Espagnole de Déportés et Internés Politiques, which produce, respectively, the journals *Mauthausen: Bulletin* and *Hispania.* Among the members of the Amicale, I thank its president, Général Pierre Saint-Macary, and its vice-president, Jean Gavard, for inviting me on a special visit to Mauthausen in April 1997 when the guides included Marie-Jo Chombart de Lauwe, Pierre-Serge Choumoff, Mariano Constante, and Jean Laffitte. At the Spanish FEDIP, I have seen its membership steadily dwindle, but I express my thanks to its current president, Ramiro Santísteban, and to the current editor of *Hispania,* Lázaro Nates, who, being mere boys when they were prisoners of Mauthausen, are relatively young. Among other survivors' associations, whose reunions I attend whenever I can, I would thank especially the Association Française Buchenwald-Dora and its secretary-general, Suzanne Barrès.

In France, I thank the late Père Riquet for speaking, with great clarity, though at the end of his life, of his recollections and the impact of Mauthausen on his faith; Pierre Daix, at the time ideologically opposite to Riquet, but tied to him at Mauthausen by the bond of common humanity; the late David Rousset, Daix's (and Stalin's) most deadly enemy when the Cold War shattered the bond; Professor Léon Schwarzenberg, the oncologist and former French Minister of Health, who was not, as his two brothers were, a prisoner of Mauthausen but is an important source in the search to know their fate; David Trat, one of the very few survivors among those interned in Alderney, and of invaluable help in probing the mystery of the four Nazi camps erected on British soil; Emile Témime, Professor of History at the Université d'Aix-Marseille, who has been interested in Mauthausen as long as I have; the nuclear physicist Professor Georges Waysand, whose personal interest in Mauthausen (now published) also led to an exchange of evidence; and the film producer Madelyn Most, who has also interviewed survivors and shared her findings with me.

Among others in France who have helped me, I would mention especially Dr Denise Mallé-Dupuis, in the remote town of Digne, who kindly invited me to study for some days the voluminous and unpublished memoirs of her late husband Miguel Mallé; Mme Christiane Borrás, the widow of José Borrás Lluch, who sent me a single document, but one of unsurpassed importance: the original of the list, compiled on a little sheet in pencil by Casimir Climent, of the members of the SS who worked in the Politische Abteilung (Gestapo office) in Mauthausen at the time that Climent himself worked as a clerk in that worst of places; Ramón Bargueño, who declined to meet me for two years, until our paths finally crossed through a common interest in the novelist Christine Bravo, after which he provided me with vital information on the working of Mauthausen's inner prison; Baldomero Chozas, who supplied me with important information on the Nebenlager at Schlier, and Marcelino López with the same on Gusen; Rafael Álvarez, who wrote a series of articles on a particular escape from a Nebenlager, and was a useful source on the subject of escape and its consequences; Jacinto Cortés, who received me in his home in Perpignan, and who could have been of much greater help in the story of how the photographs were saved, but who chose instead to speak of other things; Jorge Semprún, the former Spanish Minister of Culture, who met me several times and won for me a contract for a book with Fayard, but whose recollections on Buchenwald tend to be fragmentary: he reveals only what he chooses to reveal. Finally among those in France, Mme Odette Ester, the widow of José Ester Borrás, anarchist and founding-president of FEDIP, with an unparalleled collection of material on the Spaniards of Mauthausen, who promises decade after decade to produce her husband's account but, distrustful of almost all others, prefers to sit on a treasure which, we can only hope, will not be ultimately lost to posterity.

In Austria, I have a number of people to thank in the Linz region and especially in the villages of Mauthausen and Gusen. Manuel García Barrado, the former custodian of the Mauthausen Museum, lives in Mauthausen village. He is one of a dozen or more Spanish survivors of Mauthausen who chose to live in Austria after 1945. These survivors have an association, Gedenkverein der Republikanischen Spanier in Österreich, whose coordinator, Silvia Dinhof-Cueto in Neusiedl am See, provided me with information in my search for other survivors, among them Francesc Comellas in Linz. In Mauthausen, the Bürgermeister Josef Jahn put me in contact with Leopoldine Drexler, one of the daughters of Anna Pointner who saved the photographs. With the help of the Austrian film producer Andreas Gruber, who provided me with other valuable assistance, I could obtain the testimony of Erich Neumüller in Mauthausen village and Valentine Weigl-Hallerberg in St. Valentin. Living in Schardenberg but writing a thesis at Universität Passau, Martina Schröck joined me in an extensive correspondence that investigated many matters, especially the

Jacinto Cortés affair, which she uncovered and which provides the closing to this book. In Gusen, Martha Gammer and Rudolf Haunschmied sent me much material on the underground factories and on the situation in the local area in the tense period leading up to the arrival of the first American units.

Without the information supplied to me by the veterans of the US 11th Armored Division ('Thunderbolt'), I would not have been able to compile the account of the assault on Austria from the west. Colonel Richard Seibel sent me his account, but the greatest contribution by far was made by the former Staff-Sergeant Leander Hens, who sent me everything he could find, while further help came from other NCOs, especially Edward Bergh, Harry Saunders, and Raymond Buch, and from Brigadier-General Michael Greene and David B. Dolese, MD. On the question of resolving the remarkable dispute among American veterans as to who reached Mauthausen and when, the contribution of Pierre-Serge Choumoff was vital. William I. Nichols provided me with reactions of the American press corps to the liberation of the first SS camp in Germany (Buchenwald), and in the follow-up, Alice E. Kennington, of the Office of Special Investigations, Criminal Division, of the US Department of Justice, gave me some important leads.

A number of other survivors or investigators have also helped. Among the Austrians and Czechs, the ex-prisoners Simon Wiesenthal, Dr Drahomir Barta, Dr Přemysl Dobiás, and Josef Klat; and the historians Dr Florian Freund of the Dokumentationsarchiv der Österreichischen Widerstandes in Vienna, Dr Manfred Rauchensteiner of the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum in Vienna, and in Germany the research partners Andreas Ruppert and Dorothee von Keitz in Paderborn. Among the Britons, the survivor Sir Robert Sheppard, the Nuremberg investigator Peter Calvocoressi, and the private investigator Gordon Adams, who died in 1998 and who remains a superb example of the outside amateur who devotes an important part of his life to the pursuit of a limited but significant goal: in his case, the identification of the 47 Allied special agents martyred in Mauthausen in September 1944. In that task he received much help from Lieutenant-Colonel C. G. Stallard at the British Embassy in Vienna, and especially from Henny Dominicus of the Stichting Vriedenkring 'Mauthausen' in Amsterdam. Also in Amsterdam, I thank Mirjam Ohringer for inviting me to speak on Mauthausen at a symposium held there on 21 October 1998 to mark the 60th anniversary of the opening of the camp. In the Italian connection, I owe much to Commendatore Gino Valenzano in Turin, both for his testimony to the valour of the Spaniards whom he came to know in their common captivity, and for his unique knowledge, as a member of the Badoglio family, of the fate of the Marshal's son.

I express my gratitude to the archivists, notably in the Bundesarchiv in Berlin for slightly relaxing the regulations; to Herr Schneider, Richter am

Amtsgericht in the Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltung in Ludwigsburg; to Stephen Walton of the Imperial War Museum in London; and to my friend and fellow-historian P. M. H. Bell for searching in vain in the Public Record Office in London for information on Kaltenbrunner that may well not exist; that in itself is a find, and adds to the value of the unidentified document described in the Bibliography. But I have left the best to the last. The two greatest contributors to the material in this book remain the Spaniards Juan de Diego and Antonio García. Over the 15 years I have known de Diego, during which he has always shown a total readiness to discuss any question, I have always been amazed at the way he has come up, each time, with precise information on an incident never before discussed. Similarly, Antonio García, whom I met in time to receive four years of his hospitality and information, deserves more thanks than this acknowledgement can express. That gratitude goes to him also for those photographs presented here that he saved at a terrifying risk, and in the matter of the illustrations, I wish further to thank Přemysl Dobiáš, Martha Gammer, Rudolf Haunschmied, and the 'Thunderbolt' veterans mentioned above for sending me unpublished items from their collections.

Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to my three technical assistants, Millay Hyatt, Elizabeth Kwok, and David Bornstein, all of The American University of Paris, who over a period of four years provided me with excellent help.

Abbreviations, acronyms, and portmanteau words

AG	Aktiengesellschaft
AMI	Appareil militaire international (Mauthausen)
BV	Befristete Vorbeugungschaft
CIC	Counter-Intelligence Corps (US)
CGT	Confédération générale du travail (communist)
CICR	Comité international de la Croix-Rouge
CNR	Conseil national de la Résistance
CNT	Confederación nacional del trabajo (anarchist)
CTE	Compagnies de travailleurs étrangers
ERR	Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg
FEDIP	Fédération espagnole de déportés et internés politiques
FTP	Francs-tireurs et partisans
GE	Guerrilleros españoles
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei (Heinrich Müller)
GTE	Groupes de travailleurs étrangers
HJ	Hitlerjugend
IRC	International Red Cross
KIM	Kommunisticheskiy international molodyozhi (Communist Youth International)
KL or KZ	Konzentrationslager
Komsomol	Kommunisticheskaya molodyozh (Communist Youth)
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands
NCO	non-commissioned officer
NN	Nacht und Nebel
ODESSA	Organisation der ehemaligen SS-Angehörigen
Oflag	Offizier-Lager (POW camp)
OKW	Oberkommando Wehrmacht (Hitler, Keitel)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services (US)
OT	Organisation Todt
PCE	Partido comunista de España
PCF	Parti communiste français
PCI	Partito communista italiana
POW	prisoner of war

PSUC	Partit socialista unificat de Catalunya (communist)
Pz. K.	Panzerkorps
RSHA	Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Heydrich, then Kaltenbrunner)
RU	*Rückkehr unerwünscht* (prisoner to be executed)
SA	Sturmabteilung (Roehm, then Lutze)
Sch	Schutzhäftling (German red-triangle KZ prisoner)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst
Sipo	Sicherheitspolizei
SOE	Special Operations Executive (British)
SS	Schutzstaffel (Himmler)
Stalag	Stammlager (POW camp)
STO	Service du travail obligatoire
V1, V2	Vergeltungswaffe
WVHA	Wirtschafts Verwaltungshauptamt

A glossary of terms

Appellplatz	roll-call square
Arbeitsdienst	work Kommando
Arrest	prison inside the Bunker
Badeaktion	code for execution by drowning
Baukommando	construction squad
Bunker	execution Block
Drillich	prisoner's striped uniform
Effektenkammer	section holding the prisoners' belongings
Erkennungsdienst	photo lab
Friseur	prisoner–barber
Gaskammer	gas chamber
Genickschluss	execution by shooting in the back of the neck
Gummischlauch	rubber truncheon carried by Kapos
Häftling	prisoner
Hauptlager	the main camp
Himbeerpflücken	'raspberry picking': execution on the perimeter
Kazettler	concentration camp prisoner
Klagemauer	the wailing wall at Mauthausen
Klosettreiniger	prisoner assigned to clean SS living quarters
Kohlenfahrer	crematorium worker
Kommandantur	office of the commandant
Krankenlager	prisoners' hospital
Kugel-Aktion	execution on arrival
Lagerschreibstube	general administration office
Lagerschreiber	prisoner–clerk in the general administration office
Muselmann	derelict prisoner, too weak to work
Mutterlager	mother camp
Pfahlbinden	torture by hanging
Politische Abteibung	the Gestapo office
Prominenter	prisoner selected for a skilled post
Puff	slang term for prisoners' brothel
Rapportführer	SS duty officer at prisoners' muster

Revier	dispensary; usual term for prisoners' hospital
Russenlager	prisoners' hospital
Sanitätslager	formal SS name for prisoners' hospital
Scheissekompanie	squad assigned to latrine duty
Schutzhaftlagerführer	SS officer responsible for security
Siedlungsbau	housing development
Sonderbau	brothel, but also the Arrest
Standortarzt	chief medical officer
Steinträger	trestle for carrying rocks
Strafkompanie	punishment squad
Stück, Stücke	SS term for KZ prisoner(s)
Stubediener	prisoner responsible for cleaning the prisoners' quarters
Todesmeldung	register of deaths
Unterführerheim	NCO's mess
Vernichtungslager	extermination camp
Weckruf	the morning call
Zigeunerkapelle	gypsy orchestra
Zugang	incoming prisoner

Comparative ranks

British Army	*German Army*	*Schutzstaffel*	*Organisation Todt*
		Reichsführer-SS (Himmler)	
Field Marshal	Generalfeldmarschall	SS-Oberstgruppenführer	*no equivalent*
General	Generaloberst	SS-Obergruppenführer	Chef des Amtes Bau-OT
Lieutenant-General	General der Infanterie (etc.)	SS-Gruppenführer	OT-Einsatzgruppenleiter I
Major-General	Generalleutnant	SS-Brigadeführer	*no equivalent*
Brigadier	Generalmajor	SS-Oberführer	*no equivalent*
Colonel	Oberst	SS-Standartenführer	OT-Einsatzgruppenleiter II
Lieutenant-Colonel	Oberstleutnant	SS-Obersturmbannführer	*no equivalent*
Major	Major	SS-Sturmbannführer	OT-Einsatzleiter
Captain	Hauptmann	SS-Hauptsturmführer	OT-Hauptbauleiter
Lieutenant	Oberleutnant	SS-Obersturmführer	OT-Oberbauleiter
Second Lieutenant	Leutnant	SS-Untersturmführer	OT-Bauleiter
Regimental Sergeant-Major	Stabsfeldwebel	SS-Sturmscharführer	OT-Haupttruppführer
Company Sergeant-Major	Hauptfeldwebel	SS-Stabsscharführer	OT-Obertruppführer
Company Quartermaster Sgt		SS-Hauptscharführer	OT-Truppführer
Staff Sergeant	Oberfeldwebel	SS-Oberscharführer	OT-Hauptbauführer
Sergeant	Feldwebel	SS-Scharführer	OT-Oberbauführer
	Unterfeldwebel		
Corporal or Bombardier	Stabsgefreiter	SS-Unterscharführer	OT-Bauführer
	Obergefreiter	SS-Rottenführer	OT-Obermeister
Lance Corporal	Gefreiter	SS-Sturmmann	OT-Meister
	Obergrenadier or Oberschütze	SS-Staffelanwärter SS-Staffelmann	OT-Vorarbeiter
Private, Trooper, or Gunner	Grenadier or Schütze	SS-Mann	OT-Arbeiter

Note: On questions of authority between Wehrmacht officers and SS officers of equal rank, SS officers automatically rose by one rank.

Page Intentionally Left Blank

Part I

The SS archipelago

Es gibt einen Weg in die Freiheit.
Seine Meilensteine sind:
Gehorsam, Fleiss, Ordnung, Sauberkeit,
*Ehrlichkeit, Opfermut, und Liebe zum Vaterland.**

Page Intentionally Left Blank

1 Captives in the Channel Islands

The Spanish refugees in France were among the first to suffer the consequences of the disaster of June 1940. More than 10 000 Spaniards were taken prisoner by the Germans, and the Vichy Government made no attempt to protect them under international agreements pertaining to prisoners of war. Many of them thus found themselves back where they started, in the concentration camps of the south-west.[1] On 27 September 1940, René Belin, the Vichy Minister of Labour and Industrial Production, introduced a law whereby all male foreigners aged 19 to 54 who were a burden on the French economy and who could not return to their country of origin were subject to enlistment in the Groupes de travailleurs étrangers; they would receive no salary, but their families were entitled to aid according to rates fixed by the government.[2] Perhaps as many as 15 000 Spaniards who were enlisted in this way found themselves employed by the Organization Todt (OT) in the building of the Atlantic Wall.[3] Their work included the construction of the submarine bases at Lorient, La Pallice, and in the Gironde estuary, and of an airfield at La Rochelle, despite frequent bombing attacks by the Royal Air Force. A considerable number of these workers were transferred in late 1941 to Vigo, in north-western Spain, where they were employed in the construction of another submarine base, probably intended for German use.[4]

Other contingents of Spaniards, estimated at 4000, were sent to the German-occupied Channel Islands. The four principal islands (Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney and Sark) had fallen, in that order, between 30 June and 4 July 1940. Alderney was special in the sense that virtually the entire population (of 1100) could be evacuated to England in time.[5] A Spanish prisoner, Francisco Font, who was sent to that island made the observation that all the birds had left with them.

When the Islands fell under Nazi rule, they were administered by a military government, at first under Oberst Graf Rudolf von Schmettow. The Wehrmacht forces in the Islands remained fairly constant, with some 12 000 in Guernsey, 9000 in Jersey, and 3000 in Alderney. In October 1941, however, Hitler issued his Directive on the Fortification and Defence of the Channel Islands, requiring immediate and intensive work

on strong concrete fortifications. This was to be carried out by foreign labour, 'especially Russian and Spanish'.[6] Very large stocks of cement and steel reinforcement arrived in the same month, and responsibility for the construction was given to the Organization Todt, which established its headquarters in Saint-Malo on the mainland. Its labour force reached 16 000, with 7000 in Guernsey, 5000 in Jersey, and 4000 in Alderney. These consisted of both volunteer workers, including Germans, and slave workers, including Spaniards, Jews, and Soviet prisoners of war, all of whom provided the labour for a large number of German construction firms engaged in the building of the Atlantic Wall. In the course of 1943 many of these firms would transfer their operations to the mainland, and by mid-1944 almost all had left the Islands.[7]

The Catalan lieutenant Joan Dalmau, who later became a British subject, was among the first batch of 2000 workers (mainly Spaniards, but including Frenchmen, Belgians, Dutch, Poles, and Czechs) who were transported from Saint-Malo to St Helier, Jersey. There they worked on the construction of the sea-wall in St Brelade's Bay, and when that was completed, in the summer of 1942, on the building of tunnels underneath Fort Regent. By that time, by one estimate, 18 000 foreign workers had arrived in or passed through Jersey, and the Ukrainian survivor Vasilly Marempolsky remembers that when he arrived, as a boy of 15 in August 1942, most of the prisoners were either Spanish or Soviet. Spaniards on Jersey were sent also to the OT camp (Lager Himmelman) at St Ouen in the northwest of the island, and a Spanish hospital was set up in another OT camp at St John, north of St Helier. The Spanish custom in practice at the time of allowing male nurses to serve as doctors explains the role of Gasulla Sole, to whom Marempolsky owed his survival.[8] A curious feature of camp life on Jersey was that the workers were allowed, even forced, to leave the camp in order to seek food outside, thus reducing the cost of their upkeep. The people of Jersey did not lack in generosity, even when the local Feldkommandant, a certain Schultz, ordered them to stop providing any food to foreign workers.[9] Despite the help of the islanders, general starvation set in. Spaniards and others were reduced to eating limpets and acorns, and many prisoners, especially those not accustomed to rural life, died as a result of eating poisonous plants, especially nightshade, whose berries were tempting to the famished. Those causing trouble were sent to Elizabeth Castle, where a prisoner could find himself in a cell with 0.2 square metres of floorspace, forcing him to sleep standing. In January 1943, Dalmau and his Catalan friend Vidal were part of a small group taken by boat from Jersey to Saint-Servan-sur-Mer on the French mainland. Schultz himself was in the escort. An opportunity arose: Vidal knocked out the commandant, Dalmau strangled him, and the body was tossed into the sea. The Germans, oddly enough, came to the conclusion that Schultz had been swept overboard, but Dalmau and Vidal still finished up in the island-prison of Alderney.[10]

Alderney, only three square miles in area, had the distinction of housing the only SS camp erected on British soil. In the initial stage of occupation, the fortification of the island was limited to reinforcing the existing forts and building some new strongpoints.[11] With the arrival of the OT in November 1941, the prisoner population reached its peak, between 1942 and 1944, of at least 4000, under the authority of three separate organizations: the OT, the Wehrmacht, and later the SS.[12] The first two had the right to the prisoners' labour, with the OT being contracted principally to Fuchs of Koblenz and Sager und Wörner of Munich. The SS would remain in charge of the camps, which were administered as Nebenlager of KL-Neuengamme, near Hamburg. Four separate camps were established, all named after North Sea islands and numbered 1–4: Helgoland (on Platte Saline, between St Anne and Fort Tourgis), Norderney (near Château à l'Etoc), Sylt (in the southwest, between the airfield and Telegraph Bay), and Borkum (on Longy road). Helgoland under its Lagerführer Johann Hoffmann included 700 Russians, Ukrainians and Poles, out of a detachment of 2000 who reached the Channel Islands in July 1942 after being marched across Europe. Norderney was for slaves in general, but mainly Spaniards, French, Algerians and Moroccans. Borkum housed German skilled workers. Sylt, which opened in October 1942 under its Lagerführer Puhr, at first housed only 500 political prisoners whom the OT put to work in the construction of the Westbatterie.[13] The group included a special punishment squad of 120 Wehrmacht officers and men who had been sent from KL-Neuengamme, and some of the officers were of high rank: the group even included two former members of the SS. They had all been accused of disloyalty to Hitler, and were to remain prisoner until Hitler had won the war (and the world), whereupon they would receive the just punishment for their faithlessness. Sylt won the reputation of being the most terrible of the four camps. It stood on high, almost vertical cliffs, and was exposed even more than the other camps to the frequent gale-force winds. But nature's elements were kinder than man's, and prisoners who died there were not buried but were thrown from the cliffs. Others, such as a group of seven who collapsed on the first day, were still alive when they were thrown over.[14] Meanwhile, Helgoland and Norderney could hardly be called less brutal. The work day was at least 12 hours, seven days a week, with a 10–30 minute break at midday and a half-day on Sunday once a month. No clothes were issued; prisoners continued to wear what they arrived in. The only replacements were wooden clogs, when their shoes wore out. The Russian survivor Georgi Ivanovich Kondakov has described Alderney's prison and recounts the fate of 16 prisoners crammed into a cell no larger than 2.5 by 1.5 metres. They stood together, shoulder to shoulder, for three days, without food and with toilet facilities only in the morning.[15]

Alderney was unusual in that it had a mixed command. The overall command of the island was at first given to Hauptmann Karl Hoffmann, of

the 319th Infantry Division, which was to garrison all the Islands until the end of the war. Hoffmann arrived on 27 July 1941. As the garrison grew, the command was upgraded, and Hoffmann was replaced in January 1942 by Oberstleutnant Rohde.[16] Hoffmann nevertheless remained in Alderney as the specialist for planning the elaborate network of fortifications, and in the process won his own reputation as a sadist in his treatment of the prisoners; the fact that he was an officer from an average Wehrmacht regiment should not be overlooked. It was Hoffmann who allocated the tasks to the OT commander, who in all other respects answered to his superior in Cherbourg.[17] The OT command in Alderney was given to OT-Hauptbauleiter Leo Ackermann, assisted by OT-Bauleiter Theo Konetz. The arrival of the SS naturally altered matters.

It was on 23 February 1943 that the SS Baubrigade I, formed in September 1942, arrived on Alderney, headed by SS-Hauptsturmführer Maximilian List and his two deputies, SS-Obersturmführer Kurt Klebeck and SS-Obersturmführer Georg Braun. They brought with them an SS staff from KL-Neuengamme and some 1000 prisoners, approximately half of them Soviet, from KL-Sachsenhausen. Apart from SS-Hauptscharführer Otto Högelow, few of the other members of the SS garrison were ever identified.[18] The command of Sylt was now given to List, and its existence became top secret. The 1100 prisoners it now held were mainly Soviet and German, but Spaniards were also included. The arrogance, meanwhile, which the SS displayed to all other Germans was not lost on the prisoners. 'Every day,' said a survivor, 'we witnessed acts of insubordination. Even an SS NCO would reply roundly to a colonel or a naval captain.'[19]

Gerhard Nebel, who was a Wehrmacht soldier stationed in Alderney, attests to the fact that the whole of Alderney was 'overrun with Frenchmen, Berbers and Spanish Reds'.[20] Curiously, the Frenchman David Trat, who became president of the Alderney survivors' association, reports that he never saw a Spaniard on the island, and indeed in 1996 there were only three known Spanish survivors of Alderney.[21] Since Trat arrived in 1943, it would seem that the Spaniards in Alderney, like the Spaniards in Mauthausen, suffered their heaviest losses in the period 1940–2, for it was indeed to Norderney, where Trat himself was sent, that most of the Spaniards were also assigned. A convoy of 297 of them were the first to arrive on the island. They were joined by Soviet prisoners of war and a group of 700 Jews, transported from the sorting camp at Drancy, who were kept in separate sections.[22] Another group, classified as ZKZ,[23] was also kept apart from the rest; while cosmopolitan in composition, it consisted mainly of North Africans and Indochinese arrested in Marseilles.[24] Little suggests that Norderney was preferable to Sylt. Some prisoners at Norderney had earlier been held in the French penal colonies that included Devil's Island, and they called that experience '*du caramel*' compared with what they had now. Its first Commandant was OT-Haupttruppführer Karl Tietz, who had previously served as Commandant at Sylt. He was replaced,

first by Konetz up until his promotion to Bauleiter, and then in December 1942 by OT-Haupttruppführer Adam Adler, who also held the SS rank of Untersturmführer and took care to wear its uniform.[25]

Adler, however, was already 44-years-old when he was appointed Lagerführer, an age more than ripe for an SS second lieutenant. Despite his service in Poland, where he was accused (in testimony at his trial) of killing 3500 Poles, he had clearly been passed over for promotion. This was easily explicable. By profession a truck-driver, he thought of nothing but his food, his drink and his women, and, being constantly drunk, he was rarely at his job. He nevertheless retained his post until the end, in May 1944, when the camp was evacuated. His command, of course, was relatively easy, even if, from February 1943, he was answerable to the SS lieutenant Georg Braun. Since there was apparently no chance of escape, security was light. The camp had no barbed wire, watch-towers, or sentries. The SS staff at Norderney consisted of only two officers and four men. Since the prisoners slept in the camp but worked outside, in every corner of the island, the SS at the camp were on duty only at night. Inside the camp, discipline was, as elsewhere in the KZ archipelago, entrusted to selected prisoners of various nationalities, and in Alderney they were known as the 'Todts'. Unlike elsewhere, it was the prisoners who were ordered to hold the victim down when Adler or his deputy administered a whipping.[26]

Again, the standard SS rules of hygiene did not apply here. There were no barbers (Friseur), and the prisoners did not cut their hair.[27] No drinking water was available in the camp, primarily because of the scarcity of wells in the island, and prisoners would suck the grass on the road to and from the quarry where they worked, under the authority of the OT. Many died of disease.[28] The prisoner–doctors, many of them Jewish, did what they could, but they had virtually no medicine or equipment. The help given in these circumstances by a German doctor was especially appreciated. Though none of the survivors remembered his name, this 50-year-old Oberleutnant (reserve) in the Kriegsmarine saved the lives of hundreds of sick prisoners by having them evacuated to Cherbourg.[29]

Adler's immediate predecessor, and now his deputy as Unterlagerführer, was OT-Meister Heinrich Evers, by profession a roof-coverer, and nicknamed 'Mucos' by the Spaniards on account of his perennially runny nose. If Adler was lazy by nature, Evers was the exact opposite, though he was only four years younger. So conscientious was he that he would work from 4 a.m. to at least 10 p.m., and sometimes till midnight. As a roof-coverer, however, he had suffered a fall, in 1926, when he hurt his head and damaged his spinal column. He was also epileptic, and in his epileptic fits he would go into spasms of the most savage fury and then return to a calm. It was also noted that Evers was always more brutal on the occasions that Adler was present, as though he was seeking a good report. Evers had also served, up to the time of his injury, as a football referee in the

Rhineland, and had remained a football enthusiast. This enthusiasm, coupled with the respect he genuinely felt for the medical profession, explains the rapport that formed between Evers and the prisoner Dr Yvan Dreyfus, a French Jew who became Norderney's senior doctor. Dreyfus was a former international footballer, and to Dreyfus, Evers was ready to confide a little. But this did not save Dreyfus whenever Evers went into one of his fits. Dreyfus' ordeal was to have his jaw broken and all his upper teeth smashed, to have to stand still from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., and after that to be dismissed from his post, with his successor ordered by Evers never to allow Dreyfus any medical treatment. Evers then went around the camp Blocks shouting to the prisoners about what he had done to Dr Dreyfus: 'I thrashed him as I've never thrashed any prisoner before.'[30]

Two incidents at the end of 1943 were particularly destructive to the prisoners' morale. On New Year's Eve, Evers arrived in the camp, summoned the prisoners, held high a large pack of letters, and announced: 'Gentlemen, here are letters for you from your families, and here's what I'm going to do with them.' Opening the stove, he threw the whole pack into the flames.[31] On the same night, prisoners were put to work on a tunnel, 25 metres long, under the jetty between the camp and Arch Bay. Of the two ends of the tunnel, one was sealed and the other reduced in its entrance to a narrow corridor only 70 centimetres wide. A machine-gun post was set up outside the entrance, the weapon trained not on Allied invaders from the sea but on the entrance to the tunnel. It was clear to the prisoners that in the event of an Allied landing in France, the prisoners were to be herded into the tunnel to suffocate to death; those working on it succeeded in hiding some pick-axes and spades inside. Evers, of course, told the prisoners that the purpose of the tunnel was to protect them and announced one day that an air-raid drill would be held the following morning at 5 a.m. Accordingly, when the sirens sounded, all the prisoners, taking only a blanket, had to race naked to the tunnel. Several hundred prisoners were herded inside, where they were pressed together like sardines. At the end of 15 minutes, when the rehearsal ended, several emerged half-asphyxiated from the lack of air.[32]

Despite such torments, the Spanish communists claim that in the Channel Islands they succeeded in assembling a radio on which they were able to listen to the BBC and even Radio Moscow, and that they even circulated a news-sheet entitled *Acero*.[33] As for escape, there was virtually no chance at all,[34] and of the estimated 4000 Spaniards sent to the Channel Islands, only 59 survived.[35]

2 Deported to the Stalags

Without taking into account those Spanish workers who later volunteered, over 30 000 Spanish refugees were deported from France to Germany,[1] and of these perhaps 15 000 entered Nazi camps.[2] The great majority of these had served in the Travailleurs étrangers units. If, as we have seen, some of these were at first sent back into the French camps or into the Vichy forced-labour groups, most of them shared the initial experience described by Amadeo Cinca Vendrell and Juan de Diego Herranz, both of whom were former internees in the French concentration camp at Septfonds (Tarn-et-Garonne) and then volunteers in the 103rd Compagnie de travailleurs étrangers. This company, under the command of the French Lieutenant Simon, consisted of some 250 Spaniards, and Cinca Vendrell, a captain in the Republican Army, was given subordinate command. The unit had been assigned to the extension of the Maginot Line to the west, and had been stationed at Saint-Hilaire, near Cambrai. Simon was a courageous officer, but he was a retired veteran of the First World War who understood nothing of Guderian's concept of *blitzkrieg*. Cinca's pleas that the unit be allowed to retreat were brushed aside, and on 20 May 1940, in the forest of Amiens, Simon saw his whole company taken prisoner.

The character of their captors was soon in evidence. The prisoners were marched 25 miles a day in the summer heat almost without food or water, with four to five hours of rest. Several Frenchwomen tried to give the prisoners water, apples, or eggs, but were driven away by the Germans at bayonet point. The Spaniards were also witnesses to the way the Wehrmacht treated their British prisoners of war. Perhaps because the British, unlike the French, did not allow defeat to destroy their morale – 'they whistled all the way' – they were treated, as Captain Cinca reported it, worse than the others. Whenever the convoy encountered dead Germans on the side of the road, it was exclusively the British prisoners who were forced to dig the graves and bury the corpses, at the same time forfeiting whatever rations the Germans made available.

At a cross-roads near the German frontier, the British contingent was separated from the Spanish contingent and the two continued in different directions, the Spaniards marching to Trier. On the way the convoy came

across two cows in a field. The Wehrmacht officers saw an opportunity for some amusement. Killing the cows with their pistols, they then left the animals to the starving Spaniards, watching with glee as the prisoners tore the cows apart like savages. Arriving in Trier, they were herded into Stalag XII-D, where they learned more about the character of their Nazi captors. They were still in French uniform, and prisoners of war with all the rights pertaining, but apparently the Germans had heard that Spaniards were proud, and for that reason they ordered them to drop their trousers, defecate into their hand, then, holding their faeces, walk around the camp for two hours. 'It was for me, for all of us,' attested Juan de Diego, 'the most abominable humiliation. The memory of it will haunt me forever.'[3] After a short stay in Stalag XII-D the Spaniards proceeded to Stalag XIII-A in Nuremberg. There, in the holy city of National Socialism, they were marched through the streets, the German populace spitting at them and making signs with their forefingers slicing their throats, as if to say they were as good as dead already. From Nuremberg they were taken in sealed cattle-cars to Stalag VII-A in Moosburg, north-east of Munich, where to their surprise they were interrogated by the Gestapo. A group of 392, all of them Spaniards, was now assembled for a final destination. Still carrying their meagre possessions, at most a small suitcase, they reboarded the cattle-cars, but in leaving Munich they could at least take away one happy memory: the German railroad workers were dismayed at the condition of the Spaniards and showed their compassion, with some even giving the clenched fist salute, a rare and risky tribute. The worst of the journey was still ahead. They had received food and water before they left Nuremberg, but no more during the 18 hours they spent in the train. The journey took place during the heat of August, some of the men were suffering from dysentery, all physical functions took place within the wagon,[4] and the air was Augean. At 8 a.m. on 6 August 1940, the Spanish contingent arrived at Mauthausen – one of the first non-German groups to do so – and discovered the full horror of the Nazi concentration camp universe.[5]

3 The Spaniards and the KZ universe

Most of the Spaniards who entered Nazi concentration camps passed first through a Stalag, though not necessarily any mentioned above.[1] The German High Command took the decision to refuse the status of prisoner of war to the Spaniards, even if they were captured in French uniform. The belief, prevalent in Spanish Republican circles for the last 50 years, that the German decision was the result of a request by Serrano Súñer to Himmler, has no documentary support whatever, and the evidence on which it rests is a demonstrable fiction.[2] The decision was undoubtedly taken on the harsh but legal basis that Germany was not at war with Spain, that these Spaniards had no passports, and that their status was stateless. The German purpose, however, in sending them to concentration camps went further: the Spaniards were dedicated antifascists who had fought the Germans and Italians in Spain, and as inveterate enemies of Nazi Germany they deserved the worst that Germany could devise. Some passed through the Neue Bremm punishment camp near Saarbrücken, where prisoners were held for only a month but subjected to a regime that broke all but the fittest: physical exercises hour after hour, and circling a pond in the 'frog position', with knees bent and hands behind the head.[3] Beyond that, Mauthausen was the logical terminus. Although Spaniards were sent to several other camps, probably nine-tenths of all Spanish prisoners were sent to Mauthausen and its various Nebenlager throughout Ostmark, the land once called Austria.[4]

Only in the case of Mauthausen and some of its Nebenlager can accurate statistics be presented. The fact that accurate statistics can be given at all is remarkable, and we shall examine later the fortune that came even in such adversity. The monument at Mauthausen to the Spanish dead gives the figure of 7000. The following tableau presents the most authoritative estimates of the number of Spaniards who entered the camps and died there. Preference should be given to the figures of Casimir Climent Sarrión.[5] Not only was he in a most privileged post, as we shall see, but he was also a man of patience and painstaking care. Razola, on the other hand, does not explain his sources, and they surely come from a number of personal and unfounded estimates, based on memory.[6] As for Borrás,

Table 1

	Climent	*Razola*	*Borrás*
1. Mauthausen, including Nebenlager and Schloss Hartheim			
Entering	7186	9067	7189
Exterminated	4765[8]	6784[9]	4761
Transferred to other camps or returned to Spain	238		
Liberated	2183[10]	2283	2428[11]
2. Other Camps			
Auschwitz[12]			unknown
Buchenwald and Dora-Mittelbau			
Liberated			200[13]
Dachau			
Entering, August 1940			500[14]
Liberated			267[15]
Flossenbürg			
Exterminated			14
Liberated			86[16]
Gross-Rosen			unknown
Neuengamme, including Alderney[17]			unknown
Ravensbrück			unknown
Sachsenhausen, including Oranienburg[18]			unknown
Estimated totals:[19]			
Entering			1000
Exterminated			200
Liberated			800
3. Died from Other Causes			
In transit, victims of Allied air-raids, in Gestapo and Vichy prisons			1000[20]

his figures are based on an amalgam of sources, among which Climent remains the most reliable.[7]

A number of observations should be made. The figures for Mauthausen (or at least Climent's) omit those who arrived at the station dead, or who were murdered on the road and taken straight to the crematorium without receiving a number. They also omit those who died during the last days prior to liberation, when no records were kept, and when the mortality rate was highest. Nor do we have accurate figures for such Nebenlager in Austria as Ebensee, where the proportion of Spaniards was very high;[21] or Schlier, near Salzburg, which comprised three parts (Zipf, Redl-Zipf, and Vöcklabruck), with the 350 Spaniards at Vöcklabruck making up the entire penal colony;[22] or Steyr-Münichholz, the munitions factory 30 kilometres south of Mauthausen, where the Spaniards were also in a large majority from spring 1941 onwards.[23] Vilanova adds that Spaniards were in the majority in all three Gusen Kommandos as well as in Ternberg.[24] It is a reasonable estimate that in 1941 Spaniards accounted for 60 per cent of all the prisoners in Mauthausen.

A final general observation concerns the manner of their dying. Razola considers that more Spaniards were murdered by the SS than were killed off by cold, hunger, or forced labour.[25] Vilanova estimates that 95 per cent of all the Spaniards who died were exterminated in the period 1940–2.[26] The reason for this, as we shall see, was the shortage of manpower that the Third Reich faced from 1943. In calculating the proportion of deaths to the number detained, Vilanova takes the figure of 8189 Spaniards interned in Nazi camps and that of 5015 exterminated, and presents the figure of 61 per cent, the highest percentage among all the national groups. In fact, the mortality rate is even higher when it is remembered that 50 per cent of the survivors died in their first year of freedom.[27] But in the story we are about to tell, freedom is a long way off.

4 Classification and stratification

In the first week of 1941, Himmler decided to classify the Konzentrationslager. On 2 January, Reinhard Heydrich, as head of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), issued a secret circular (later produced at the Nuremberg Tribunal) which divided the camps into three principal categories. The first category (known as *Stufe* I) included Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and Auschwitz I (Gleiwitz); its prisoners were considered rehabilitable. *Stufe* II included Buchenwald, Auschwitz III (Buna-Monowitz), Flossenbürg, and Neuengamme; although charged with more serious crimes, the prisoners in these camps were still considered capable of redemption. *Stufe* III (or *Ausmerzungslager*) included only Mauthausen, Gross-Rosen, and Auschwitz II (Birkenau); this category was reserved for 'hardened criminals and antisocial elements incapable of rehabilitation'. This classification was later modified, as we shall see, when the Economic Administration Office (Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt, or SS-WVHA) established three new categories, but the classification *Stufe* III continued to denote a camp where prisoners were never to be released.[1]

Mauthausen never lost this classification of *Stufe* III, the worst. In the offices of the RSHA it was referred to by its nickname *Knochenmühle*, the bone-grinder. One way to punish prisoners at Auschwitz was to send them to work in the quarry at Mauthausen. Buchenwald too had its quarry, but the prisoners there knew what Mauthausen meant, and dreaded the thought of being transferred.[2] Suzanne Busson, who was evacuated from Ravensbrück to Mauthausen, remarked that 'Ravensbrück in hindsight seemed like paradise'.[3] It should be noted here that the KL were different in kind from the extermination camps (*Vernichtungslager*) which is what Auschwitz II (Birkenau) became. All six of the *Vernichtungslager* were located outside pre-1939 Germany, in a great circle in Poland. Though the fate of the inmates could be the same, the difference lies in the essential purpose of the two systems. What distinguished *Stufe* III was the long-drawn-out agony of those condemned to it. The purpose was to make the inmate suffer the maximum before death came as a merciful release.

None of this implies that a camp classified *Stufe* I was less technologically advanced than others. Even lowly Dachau had its gas chamber and its

crematorium, and camps of every category were engaged in medical experiments. Like medieval universities, they had their specialities. For typhus, it was Buchenwald and Auschwitz; for sterilization, Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, Flossenbürg, and Buchenwald; for experiments on twins, Auschwitz; for the effects of freezing temperatures and high altitude, Dachau; for surgical operations, Gusen and Dachau; for tuberculosis, Gusen and Dachau; for cancer, Auschwitz; for bone transplants, Ravensbrück; and for malaria, Dachau.[4] At the centre of all this scientific research was the SS medical academy in Graz.

When an SS physician was not engaged in such experiments, there was always some other work to do, or services to render. Lieutenant-Colonel Eleuterio Díaz Tendero, of the Spanish Republican Army, was in an advanced state of tuberculosis when he arrived in Sachsenhausen. He was transferred to Dachau, where he was at once given a fatal injection of phenol in the heart.[5] At Flossenbürg, Dr Schmidt had a mania for operating. Any prisoner who asked for an aspirin or complained of pain in any part of the body would discover that Dr Schmidt's remedy in all cases was to open the patient's stomach, to practise his hand, as he put it.[6] The anaesthetic used for such operations was called, by the SS and the prisoners alike, the *Holznarkose*, or wood narcotic. It consisted of the prisoners who served as hospital orderlies beating the patient on the head with his own wooden clog or similar object. When the patient had lost consciousness, the operation was ready to begin.[7] What the SS doctors never did was care for the sick.

The charts on page 16 describe the administrative structure of a KL, and the identification colours worn by every *Kazettler*.[8] Every prisoner, on his arrival in a camp, received a classification by the Politische Abteilung in the form of a coloured triangle, which he wore, point downwards, on his camp jacket and trousers.

In some camps, certain categories predominated. Before the war, Sachsenhausen, Flossenbürg, Gross-Rosen, and Mauthausen were all used primarily for Greens, and Sachsenhausen (with Neuengamme) continued in this role. But in general, the classifications were mixed. Although the classification Blue was intended for all stateless prisoners, in fact it was worn only by the Spanish Republicans and some stateless Russians. In selecting prisoners to fill the Kapo positions, the SS looked to the Greens and the Blacks, in that order, giving priority to Germans and Austrians[9] though some of the Kapos were Poles.[10] This was the situation in Mauthausen when the Spaniards arrived.

Those who filled the Kapo positions were responsible only for the work units (Kommandos), and the term Kapo is not to be applied to those responsible for the Blocks. For their sleeping quarters, the Kapos were distributed throughout the camp, irregularly, so that one Block might have one and another Block five. They slept in the privileged section, closest to the entrance, with the Blockältester, the Blockschreiber, and the Friseur.[11]

Table 2

Lagerführer	Camp commandant
Verwaltungsführer	Chief of staff
Schutzhaftlagerführer	Chief security officer
Rapportführer	Inspector, responsible to the Schutzhaftlagerführer
Blockführer	Officer in charge of up to three housing units (Blöcke), each of 250–500 prisoners, and responsible to the Rapportführer
Kommandoführer	Officer commanding a work detail
Lagerältester	Senior prisoner, or prefect, selected by the SS and responsible for discipline in the entire camp
Lagerschreiber	Prisoner serving as administrative clerk for the entire camp
Blockältester	Prisoner responsible for the unit
Blockschreiber	Prisoner clerk, responsible to the Blockältester
Blockfriseur	Prisoner responsible for unit hygiene
Stubenältester	Prisoner responsible for his half-unit (Stube)
Stubendienst	Prisoner responsible for hygiene to the Blockfriseur and the Stubenältester

Triangle insignia worn by prisoner:

Table 3

Red	Political[12]	1933 on
Green	Common criminal[13]	1933 on
Pink	Homosexual[14]	1934 on
Purple	Conscientious objector[15]	1935 on
Yellow	Jewish[16]	1938 on
Brown	Gypsy	1938–40; thereafter black
Black	Antisocial[17]	1938 on
Blue	Stateless	1940 on

None of these had his own room, but each had a mattress of fresh straw in his bunk, and even sheets. It was important for the three Block leaders to maintain good relations with the Kapos in their Blocks. They could never tell, from one day to the next, how long they would retain their posts, and if they lost them, they would find themselves at the mercy of the Kapos.

As for the triangles, they could even be exchanged. The shoemaker Josef Schweiger, with 18 previous convictions, entered Mauthausen with a Black triangle, but the shoes he made for Karl Schulz, the handicapped Gestapo chief, won him such favour that Schulz rewarded him with a Green. Once he could sport the proud emblem of a criminal on his vest, Schweiger later declared, everyone showed him respect and left him in peace.[18]

Schweiger the shoemaker belonged to the corps of service personnel known as the *Prominenten*, representing some 10 per cent or more of the prisoner population. A Konzentrationslager was a traffic in survival, from

top to bottom. Those at the top could skim off all kinds of perquisites. Those at the bottom, who needed food the most because they were being worked to death in the quarry, received the least, including the thinnest of the soup, precisely because it reached them last. While the *Prominenten* did not enjoy all the privileges of the Kapos, they shared the most important: they were safe, however precariously, from extermination, and they were free to move about the camp. They were also in direct contact with the SS officers, and in a position to identify them closely and to observe their conduct. These *Prominenten* included all those working in the offices, in the workshops, in the kitchens, in the stores, in the tailor's shop, and in the shoeshop; servants of the SS and of the senior Kapos; assistants to the SS doctors, dentists, and pharmacists; barbers, Block orderlies, painters, chimney-sweeps, firemen, garage mechanics, and electricity and hydraulic workers.[19] Like the Kapos, the *Prominenten* were drawn at first exclusively from the Greens and Blacks. But murderers, thieves and vagabonds were not likely to give satisfaction in such jobs; nor were surgeons, engineers, or skilled workers, who could serve as specialized assistants, to be found among the Blacks and Greens. Reluctantly, the administration turned to the Red triangles to fill the posts: first to the Germans and Austrians, and then to other nationals who understood German.[20]

In something of a special class were the camp's prisoner-police, who were responsible for maintaining order in the alleys and for mustering the prisoners on the Appellplatz. Almost all of them were German; they carried sabres and wore the spiked helmets used by the German Army in the First World War. All the Kapos and the top *Prominenten* (down to the level of Blockältester) wore armbands. They might wear jacket and trousers or might continue to wear their *Drillich*, but their living conditions were strikingly different. A *Prominenter* would have his own bed in a two-bed bunk, again with sheets, changed every two weeks to the very end.[21] Jorge Semprún, a survivor of Buchenwald, defines the secret of survival in terms of three factors: sufficient knowledge of spoken German, skill in a trade (or the pretence of having it), and pure luck.

The rest of the KZ universe, over 85 per cent, were slaves condemned to die. Among the quickest to die were those placed in a *Strafkompanie*, and for the Jews there was virtually no hope of survival. A change in the character of KZ life could indeed be seen at about mid-point in the war, but overall it did not affect the chances of survival. In the early years the Nazis did not consider the use of their slaves in scientific terms; at the same time, they were prone, in the flush of victory, to express their sense of racial superiority more readily. Then came the German defeats at El Alamein and Stalingrad, and arrogance gave way to rage.

5 Opposing programmes

Extenuation versus extermination

Even before El Alamein, the failure to take Moscow before winter set in, in 1941, had altered the character of the war. The German High Command saw that it would not be so simple a matter after all. This was evident in the decision taken on 30 April 1942 to establish a new organization, the SS-WVHA, headquartered at Berlin-Lichterfelde, with overall responsibility for the KL. Its command went to SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl, and his decisions were hereafter enforced on every KL commandant by SS-Brigadeführer Richard Glücks who, as head of Amt D, served as inspector-general of the camps.[1] On the day of his appointment, Pohl wrote to Himmler: 'The war has quite clearly changed the purpose of the KZ. Our task is now to redirect its functions towards the economic side.' To the camp commandants, Pohl wrote:

> The camp commandant is the sole person responsible for the employment of the work-force. This employment must be total in the true sense of the word, in order to obtain the maximum output. There are to be no limits to working hours. The limits are to depend upon the type of work, and the hours are to be fixed by the commandant. All factors tending to reduce the work schedule must be limited to the maximum. The break for food at noon must be reduced to the very shortest period possible.

The industrialization programme of the WVHA accelerated a development already under way: the creation of a constellation of subsidiary camps, known as Nebenlager.[2] In the case of Mauthausen, the Nebenlager extended throughout all of Austria except the Tyrol, and even into Germany (at Passau) and Slovenia. These subsidiary camps, still administered by the mother camp (Hauptlager, Stammlager, or Mutterlager), were attached to one or other of the major industrial groups. In order to make these factories invulnerable to Allied bombing, the prisoners were put to work excavating hundreds of subterranean tunnels. The result was that most prisoners arriving in Mauthausen stayed there only for the quarantine period and what the SS called basic education. They would then be

sent to any of the Nebenlager: the quarries at Gusen and Ebensee, the mines at Eisenerz, the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, the agricultural factory at St Lambrecht, the SS school at Klagenfurt, the construction of dikes at Gross-Raming, the building of a tunnel into Yugoslavia at Loibl-Pass, and above all, to the arms factories. These included the Hermann Goering Werke in Linz, the Messerschmitt factory at Gusen (the largest in Austria),[3] the Siemens plant at Ebensee, the Heinkel aircraft factories at Floridsdorf and Schwechat, the Daimler factory at Steyr, the Florians factory at Peggau, the Nibelungenwerke tank factories at St Valentin,[4] and the missile experimental centre at Schlier.[5]

The camp commandants thus received a new title, Betriebsleiter, or industrial manager, and earned as such a second stipend, supplementary to the pay they received as camp commandant. But the new policy was not without its critics. If the WVHA represented the policy of realism, there were still the idealists in the RSHA who resented this interference in the policy of programmed extermination, especially where the Jews were concerned. It was, after all, only three months earlier, on 20 January 1942, that the top-level meeting at Grossen-Wannsee had decided upon the *Endlösung*, or final solution to the Jewish question. To those in the SS administration who thought it more important to liquidate the Jews and other enemies than to fight for victory (and by 1945 this faction would predominate), Pohl's programme sounded like betrayal. But for the moment the realists had the upper hand over the idealists, and the Jews able to work would be allowed to work, and to work themselves to death.

Pohl's directives meant that the Reich was no longer to be denied the maximum output of every prisoner by the premature termination of his life. The average life expectancy of the KL Häftling was now calculated, in the carefully compiled tables of the central offices, at nine months. The average profit accruing from a slave-labourer's nine months of life was calculated at RM 1631; this included on the credit side the average value of each prisoner's confiscated property, and on the debit side the cost of feeding and clothing him, but the estimate, it was specifically stated, did not include the value of his bones and ashes. In actual practice, the various camp commandants intensified or attenuated the directives according to their individual temperament. An example of the wide range of their temperaments can be seen in the vivid contrast between the commandant of Mauthausen and the commandant of Dachau. Though operating under the same orders, the commandant at Dachau actually punished a Kapo in 1940 for savagely beating a Jewish prisoner. At Mauthausen, in the words of Karl Schulz, the Gestapo officer who was finally brought to trial, 'such a proceeding was unthinkable'.[6] Let it be said that in most cases the camp commandants intensified rather than attenuated the directives, and in most of the camps life expectancy was less than the prescribed nine months.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. The SS and the Kapos

continued to murder the prisoners, which they did in all manner of ways. These included beating them to death with their clubs, hurling them to death from the cliffs, and seizing their berets and throwing them on the wire, then forcing the prisoners to recover them, and be electrocuted or shot from the watchtowers in the process. To try to put an end to this regrettable violation of the rules, the Gestapo moved in with a solution. The Gestapo office in every camp now included an officer responsible for investigating every case of 'unnatural death', for opening proceedings against anyone charged with misconduct, and for submitting a report to the SS courts in Vienna (in the case of Mauthausen) and to the RSHA in Berlin.

Such reports were indeed filed, and many escaped destruction at the end of the war. In every case, of course, they absolve the SS of responsibility in what is described as an attempt at escape, or an accident at work, or an act of suicide. Since the falsification of these reports was admitted to the Cologne Tribunal in 1966–7 by SS-Rottenführer Erich Walter Krüger,[7] the reports serve only to reveal the bizarre workings of the SS mind, incapable even of taking pride in achievement.

Where the WVHA showed genuine concern was the discovery, at the end of 1942, that the mortality rate showed no sign of decreasing. It responded with a letter to the senior medical officer of each Lager (with a copy for the information of the respective commandant), deploring the fact that of the 156 000 prisoners who had so far arrived in the camps, over 70 000 were already dead. At that rate, ran the letter, the total prison population would never reach the level desired by the Reichsführer-SS. It should be remembered, the letter concluded, that the best doctor is not the one who distinguishes himself for his severity, but the one who preserves the working capacity of the prisoner for the longest possible time.

Sound medical opinion at this point would have proposed an increase in the food supply. Occasionally this desperate remedy was adopted, but with little or no effect, since the supplementary rations usually fell victim to the rapacity of the SS or the Kapos. Well might it be said that the Lager by now was a mechanism that functioned according to its own logic.

The Reichsführer-SS himself seems to have taken a middle position between the 'realists' and the 'idealists'. In 1943 he still raged against the high mortality rates, and on 15 May of that year his subordinates, Pohl and Glücks, issued an order providing for rewards to prisoners who behaved well and performed well.[8] But in 1944 Himmler showed indifference, no doubt consoled by then, by the apparently inexhaustible supply of slave labour from every corner of Europe. This explains why he allowed his underling, the Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller, to issue a decree on 4 March 1944 in defiance of the WVHA. All military personnel who escaped and were recaptured were to be sent in the strictest secrecy (not therefore by train) to Mauthausen, and only Mauthausen, there to be executed on arrival by a bullet in the back of the neck. It was the birth of the *Kugel-*