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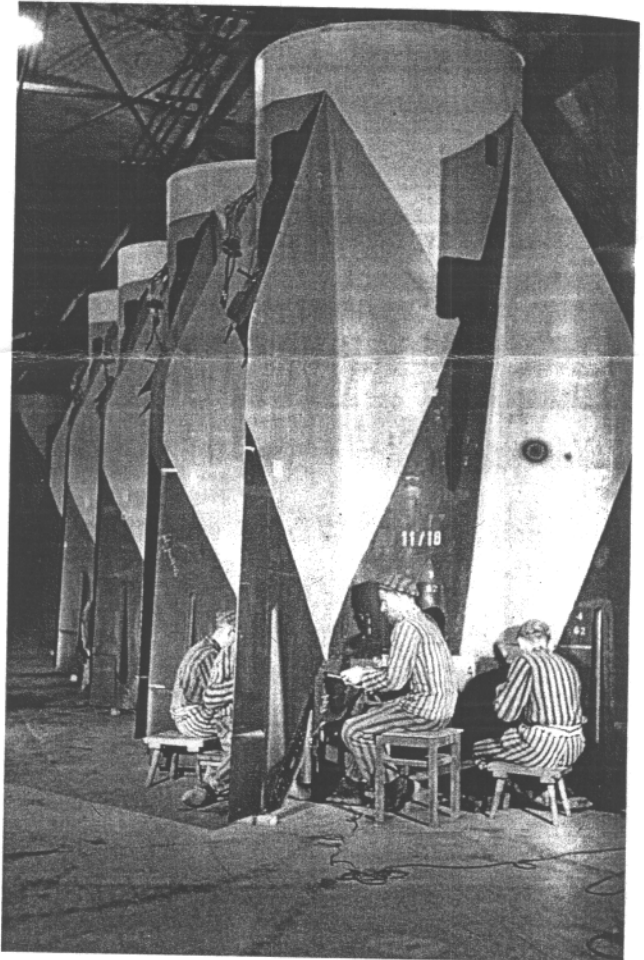
MITTELBAU MAIN CAMP [AKA DORA]

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U.P., 2009)

The Mittelbau (Central Construction) concentration camp was the last main camp created by the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) and the only one not named after a specific place. It officially came into being on October 28, 1944, but its origins stretched back to the founding of a subcamp of Buchenwald, code-named "Dora," on August 28, 1943. On that date, the SS trucked 107 Buchenwald prisoners to tunnels in the southern Harz Mountains, near the small central German city of Nordhausen. These unlucky individuals were to pave the way for the thousands of their comrades tasked with converting a central petroleum reserve for the Reich into a secret factory for the A4 (*Aggregat 4*) ballistic missile, later christened the Vengeance Weapon (*Vergeltungswaffe*) 2, or V-2. While Dora was far from the first location where prisoners were sent out of a main camp to be used in the armaments industry, rather than exploited in SS camp industries, it also proved to be highly influential—a model for the many new and often grotesquely unrealistic underground projects that the Nazi leadership ordered into existence in response to the Anglo-American strategic bombing offensive. The Nordhausen region got a number of such projects, and Mittelbau emerged as the camp system that embodied in its purest form the final phase of the SS concentration camps: that of large-scale exploitation of prisoners for work in the war economy.

In the end, Mittelbau proved true to its name. In a system of up to 40 subcamps attached to Dora, most of the prisoners worked in the construction of underground and aboveground facilities under murderous conditions. Other than the V-2, and later V-1, missiles that came out of the underground plant, very few weapons were actually produced in Mittelbau camps. Thus, the emphasis on Mittelbau as a weapons production complex in much of the historiography is certainly exaggerated, as German scholar Jens-Christian Wagner has pointed out. In fact, out of the approximately 40,000 prisoners in Mittelbau in March 1945 (of whom approximately 16,000 were in the main camp), under 6,000 at the main camp and those at a few small subcamps were actually employed in production. The majority were construction workers and miners, supplemented by thousands of utterly ill and exhausted survivors of the evacuations of Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen since the beginning of the year.

The first seven months of Dora's existence were devoted entirely to the conversion into a V-2 factory of tunnels owned by the Wifo (Wirtschaftliche Forschungsgesellschaft mbH, Economic Research Co., Ltd.), a state-owned enterprise devoted to strategic underground war reserves. A British air raid against the German Army rocket research center at Peenemünde on the Baltic on August 17–18, 1943, had provoked precipitate action on the part of Adolf Hitler, Albert Speer, and



Mittelbau prisoners work on the tail assembly of the V2 rocket, possibly in Hall 35, 1944.

USHMM WS #31596, COURTESY OF ULLSTEIN BILD

Heinrich Himmler to evacuate rocket production to an underground site. The assembly-line machinery had to be moved to the Nordhausen region from Peenemünde and also from two other unfinished V-2 assembly plants at Friedrichshafen and Wiener Neustadt. Along with them eventually came the SS prisoners who had been in subcamps at Peenemünde and the Rax-Werke in Wiener Neustadt, along with civilian personnel. On September 21, Speer's Armaments Ministry created a state-owned firm, Mittelwerk GmbH (Central Works Ltd.—a veiled reference to the geographic location) to assemble the missiles and, together with the army, struggled to maintain the upper hand vis-à-vis the SS. During the discussions at Führer headquarters immediately after the Peenemünde raid, Himmler had named as his key man SS-Brigadeführer Dr.-Ing. Hans Kammler, the head of WVHA Amtsgruppe C, Construction. Kammler was an exceedingly energetic, ambi-

tious, and ruthless man. While the Mittelwerk company would never formally leave the control of Speer's ministry, and the camp reported to Buchenwald and later directly to the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL), WVHA Amtsgroupe D, Kammler would be the decisive personality throughout the history of Mittelbau.

Camp commandant throughout most of the short history of Dora and Mittelbau was SS-Sturmbannführer Otto Förchner, who had served in subsidiary positions at Buchenwald since February 1942, after service on the Eastern Front. Förchner was a noncommissioned officer (NCO) in the Reichswehr before transferring to the SS in 1934 as a military instructor. He was thus not of the cadre of long-serving camp SS officers schooled at Dachau and elsewhere and was not noted for particular cruelty—but neither did he care much about the horrendous suffering at Dora in the early months. On the Buchenwald model, he relied on “red triangle” German political prisoners in non-SS administrative positions, notably Communists like Albert Kuntz, who supervised camp construction; Georg Thomas; and Ludwig Szymczak, the camp elder (Lagerältester). When the latter two refused to carry out an execution of a prisoner in March 1944, they were removed from their posts and thrown in the Bunker, and a “green triangle” criminal prisoner, Willi Zwiener, was briefly put in their place. But Thomas and Szymczak were released back to the barracks, and Förchner put other political prisoners, notably Christian Beham, into the position of Lagerälteste again in the summer and fall of 1944.

During the first phase of Dora, Kammler placed little emphasis on the aboveground camp on the south side of Kohnstein Mountain, next to the tunnel exits, because it diverted labor from the building of the infrastructure and the conversion of the tunnels, both subcontracted through the local Wifo office. Thus, the unfortunate inmates of Dora were forced to sleep and live underground, in some cases, not to see daylight for months. Early arrivals from Buchenwald lived in tents near the entrance to main tunnel B, but by the end of September 1943, the ever-growing number of prisoners were bedded on straw on the bare rock of cross-tunnel 39 until wooden bunks four levels high were built into dead-end tunnels 43 to 46 at the south end of main tunnel A. (The tunnel system formed a ladderlike network connecting the north and south sides of the mountain, with 46 cross-tunnels between the two main tunnels.) Tunnel A had not been completed when Mittelwerk took over, so mining and blasting operations to break through to the south side of the Kohnstein continued right next to the “sleeping tunnels” (*Schlafstollen*).

The noise, dust, and noxious gases from the blasting and from trains hauling rock exacerbated an already catastrophic health situation for the prisoners. Water was in short supply; the only toilets were oil barrels cut in half with boards over them, but they were too few in number; many relieved themselves in the tunnels. The stench became intolerable, and disease and vermin proliferated. Soon cases of pneumonia, tuberculosis, typhoid, and dysentery took a dreadful toll, combined with total exhaustion inflicted by 12-hour days of

backbreaking labor with poor sleep and minimal equipment. Registered deaths shot up from 5 in September 1943 to 669 in January 1944. By the end of January, there were 12,682 registered prisoners, the highest total in the early history of Dora; and 8,000 to 10,000 of them still lived underground. The catastrophic death rate continued in February and March 1944, and three transports, each of 1,000 extremely ill and dying prisoners—to Lublin-Majdanek on January 15 and February 6, and to Bergen-Belsen on March 27—raised the de facto death toll to nearly 6,000 by the beginning of April. The camp population in these months was all male and non-Jewish; the predominant prisoner groups in order of size were Soviet, Polish, French, German, Belgian, and Italian.

From the standpoint of Kammler, Speer, and others, however, the catastrophic working conditions of the winter of 1943–1944 served their purpose: V-2 assembly began in late December. But production numbers only rose slowly in the spring, and quality was poor. “Sabotage” inevitably became a great concern; prisoners were hanged for it, often with little proof. It appears, however, that the mostly individual attempts at sabotage do not explain the frequent failures of the V-2s, which were riddled with technical problems.

With the arrival of better weather, the evacuation of the remaining prisoners from the tunnels into the barracks camp, and the beginnings of V-2 production in the Mittelwerk, the situation in Dora much improved; the death rate fell dramatically. At the same time, Kammler's many new underground projects in the Harz region necessitated the creation of new subcamps, the largest of which were Ellrich (“Erich”) and Harzungen (“Hans”). Although subordinate to Buchenwald, they increasingly came under the control of Dora, to which they were closely tied, in part because they gave Förchner a new mechanism for ridding Dora of exhausted and unskilled inmates. The best educated and technically qualified prisoners, primarily from Western Europe, were selected to serve on the missile assembly line, while the others were put on the harsher outdoor, transport, and construction Kommandos. In the words of Wagner, the SS in Mittelbau-Dora developed a system of “mobile selection,” where inmates who were worn out or less valuable were transferred to Kommandos, subcamps, infirmaries, or “death blocks” of increasing harshness, so that the weakest died off.

In this system, the best-treated inmates, other than the mostly German and Czech “reds” and “greens” in administrative and Kapo positions, were the assembly-line workers for the Mittelwerk company, which employed between 5,000 and 6,000 prisoners (and 2,000 to 3,000 German civil workers) on two 12-hour shifts, six days a week. (A roughly equal number of Dora prisoners worked on Wifo construction projects.) In an effort to secure better labor, Mittelwerk supplied shoes and other items to the SS camp and instituted a premium wage system, where chits could be earned for use in the camp canteen. Yet however much the factory came to resemble a modern high-technology enterprise, as demonstrated in color propaganda photos from mid-1944, it remained a fundamentally barbaric production site. In June, the company

Table 1
Prisoner Population and Deaths in Mittelbau-Dora August 1943 to March 1945

Month	Number of Dora Prisoners	Deaths in Dora	Number of Sub-Camp Prisoners	Deaths in Sub-Camps
Aug. 1943	107	0	0	0
Sep. 1943	3394	5	0	0
Oct. 1943	6918	22	0	0
Nov. 1943	9887	170	0	0
Dec. 1943	10475	630	0	0
Jan. 1944	12682	669	0	0
Feb. 1944	12242	570	0	0
Mar. 1944	12263	721	200	0
Apr. 1944	10948	240	1663	10
May 1944	12386	136	4787	21
June 1944	11757	101	8161	18
July 1944	11804	89	9349	38
Aug. 1944	12537	54	14387	105
Sep. 1944	14643	56	15729	56
Oct. 1944	13816	160	18659	120
Nov. 1944	14226	48	19067	235
Dec. 1944	14959	64	18838	507
Jan. 1945	14867	129	16144	634
Feb. 1945	19360	306	22714	1035
Mar. 1945	18398	300	20280	2250

Source: Jens-Christian Wagner, *Produktion des Todes: Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2001), Anlage 5, p. 647, based on sources in Yad Vashem, National Archives microfilm M-1079, Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf/Zweigarchiv Kalkum, and Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar. Prisoner numbers are totals at the end of the month.

directors found it necessary to issue a confidential decree to the German civilian workers forbidding them from beating the prisoners and even stabbing them "with sharp instruments"! Cold, hunger, accusations of sabotage, and the threat of violence were constant companions for the Mittelwerk prisoner workforce.

As time went on, and subassembly production was evacuated into the tunnels because of Allied air attacks, the number of prisoners working for companies other than Mittelwerk GmbH increased to several hundred in number. Askania was among the firms with Kommandos. V-2 production was disrupted, however, by political interventions because of the slowness of the weapon to develop technically and also by a takeover of 40 percent of the tunnel area by the state-owned Junkers Aircraft Co., which set up the Nordwerk (North Works) aircraft engine plant in the northern part of the tunnel system in late spring. With a tiny number of exceptions, Junkers did not employ SS prisoners but, rather, moved its civilian forced laborers to the Nordhausen area. Mittelwerk

then consolidated its V-2 production line into tunnels 21 to 42 and, in August 1944, accepted a contract for production of the V-1 cruise missile. The former "sleeping tunnels" (43 to 46) were outfitted for this purpose, and 300 skilled Hungarian Jewish SS prisoners were transferred from the Volkswagen company, which ultimately lost the V-1 lead contractor role to Mittelwerk in October. Earlier in the summer, Dora got 1,000 other Hungarian Jews from Auschwitz via Buchenwald, but these Jews were employed primarily in the worst construction jobs in Dora, Harzungen, and Ellrich.

The creation of the Junkers Nordwerk and the rise of the Mittelbau subcamps beginning in March 1944 were provoked by the same phenomenon: near panic in the Nazi leadership as a result of American daylight assaults on the aircraft industry in late February. On March 1, Speer created a "Fighter Staff," led by the Armaments and Air ministries, with its primary goal the rapid increase in fighter production for air defense. This gave powerful backing to plans already under way to transfer aircraft production underground; SS-General

Hans Kammler thus came to play a central role through his new position as Sonderstab Kammler (Special Staff Kammler). He supervised a number of underground projects given "A" or "B" numbers, as well as some of the SS-Construction Brigades (Baubrigaden) that were transferred to the region beginning in May 1944 for various road and railroad-building projects. The prisoners of the Baubrigaden were subordinated to Dora/Mittelbau until January 1945, at which time they were put under the jurisdiction of Sachsenhausen. The largest and most important underground projects in the Nordhausen region were on either side of the valley on the northeast side of the Kohnstein, especially B3, near Woffleben, and B11 and B12, on the other side of the existing Mittelwerk tunnels. On April 1, 1944, the SS founded Harzungen, which supplied laborers to B3 and later also to B11. It was originally built as a civilian labor camp and was thus better outfitted; the SS guard force was also supplemented with transfers from the Luftwaffe, which lessened the brutality but certainly did not eliminate it. The main camp for B3, however, was founded on May 2 at the town of Ellrich in the Juliushütte, an abandoned gypsum factory that had processed the anhydrite rock mined from the original tunnels. The conditions in this camp were especially disastrous and the treatment of the prisoners especially brutal. Further subcamps in the region proliferated to the end of the war, for the Mittelwerk and for the Geilenberg program of underground oil production but mostly for Kammler's various projects.

The formal subordination of these new camps to Buchenwald did not prevent the growing centralization of authority under commandant Förschner in Dora in order to save resources and gain flexibility. On June 8, the main camp received the designation "Mittelbau I," while Harzungen and Ellrich-Juliushütte were grouped as "Mittelbau II"; in mid-July the SS guard force at the various subcamps in the region was unified into one Mittelbau Kommando under the supervision of the Buchenwald Death's Head Unit. On September 10, Förschner renamed Ellrich "Mittelbau II" and Harzungen "Mittelbau III" and reorganized the subordination of various Kommandos. The official WVHA order creating Mittelbau, which was made on September 30 and which came into effect on October 28, 1944, was thus almost a formality. On November 1, the SS counted 32,471 prisoners in the system, of which 13,738 were in the main camp still informally known as Dora; over half were Russian or Polish.

During the last phase of Mittelbau's existence, the production lines in Mittelwerk continued to run smoothly almost to the last day before evacuation, but the persecution and suffering of the prisoners in the main camp, not to mention the subcamps, dramatically increased. Although Mittelwerk never reached its specified output of 900 V-2s per month, beginning in September it produced between 600 and 700 monthly—over 20 complicated ballistic missiles per day. Between November and March, the company also assembled 6,000 much simpler V-1s, about equivalent to its total production of V-2s during the war. The death toll in Dora did not begin climbing again until after the beginning of the year, when large num-

bers of evacuated prisoners from Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and other eastern camps began arriving, but November marked a significant change in atmosphere. An alleged plot among the Soviet prisoners to stage an armed uprising on the anniversary of the October Revolution provoked the Gestapo not only to arrest alleged ringleaders but also to smash the informal resistance leadership in the camp, which included the German Communists Thomas, Kuntz, Szymczak, and Beham, as well as prominent French prisoners. Those arrested were thrown in the Mittelbau-Dora Bunker and other local Gestapo prisons and tortured. The pace of executions increased. Förschner and his SS subordinates now permanently installed "green" criminal prisoners in positions of responsibility, including Roman Drung as Lagerältester.

The repression was ratcheted up yet further when on February 1, 1945, Himmler replaced Mittelbau commandant Otto Förschner with Richard Baer, the last commandant of Auschwitz. The Gestapo-SD security apparatus had criticized Förschner for his reliance on Albert Kuntz and other "Reds" who turned out to be resistance leaders, but the last straw was the discovery that he failed to report a 10,000 Reichsmark (RM) bonus he had received from Mittelwerk. The evacuation of Auschwitz in late January left many hardened SS camp officers without posts, and Baer promptly installed his former subordinates throughout the Mittelbau hierarchy. Yet the great increase in executions in February and especially in March, including a number of mass hangings in the camps and in the tunnels, was largely the responsibility of SS-Obersturmbannführer Helmut Bischoff, the head of security for Mittelwerk and the V-weapons program. Effectively Bischoff reported directly to Kammler. The executions reached grotesque proportions after an attempted breakout of about 20 Soviet prisoners in the Mittelbau-Dora Bunker on the night of March 9. Two days later, 57 Soviets were hanged, and on March 21 and 22, 30 again each day. The German Communist leaders who had survived torture were shot in the last days of the camp.

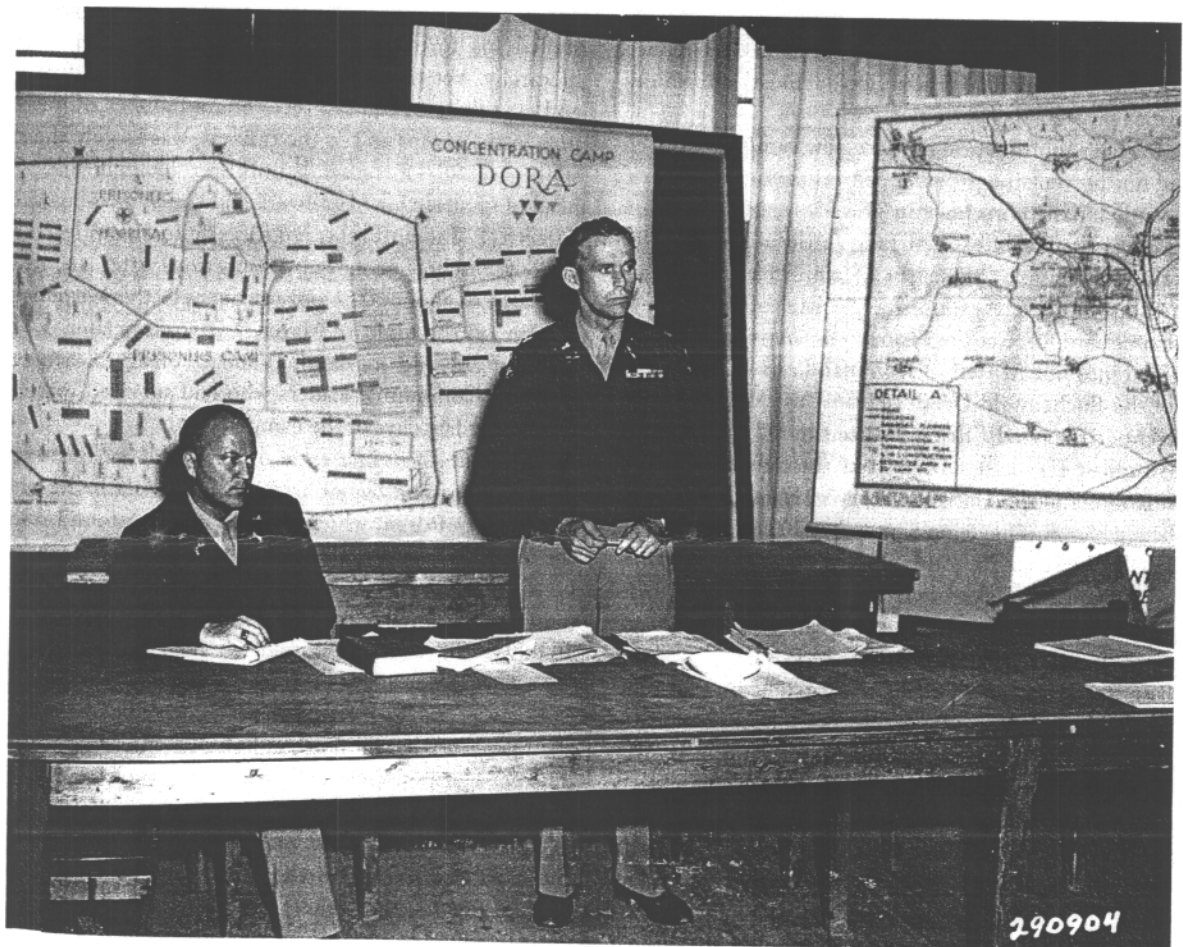
At about the same time as Baer became commandant, evacuation trains began arriving from Auschwitz and later from Gross-Rosen, which had the most profound impact on the Mittelbau camp system of all events of the last few months. Over 16,000 inmates, many in disastrous condition, were dumped into the Mittelbau system by the end of March, 10,000 of them from Gross-Rosen alone and a large percentage of them Jewish. These trains also had many dead who were not even registered; the corpses were piled up, and when the crematoria could not handle the load, they were burned outside. Dora's population temporarily shot up from 14,000 to 21,000 in February, before many were transported to Ellrich-Juliushütte and other subcamps, including a new location for mass suffering, the former Luftwaffe base in Nordhausen, Boelcke-Kaserne. The seriously ill were dumped onto straw laid out in the airplane hangers and left to die. Even before the final evacuation, 2,250 from there and Ellrich were shipped off to Bergen-Belsen in an "annihilation transport."²

The end came at the beginning of April. On April 1, work stopped in Mittelwerk. On April 3 and 4, the Royal Air Force burned down much of Nordhausen in two raids that also killed up to 1,500 at Boelcke-Kaserne. Baer and the camp leadership began the evacuation on April 4 by train and foot, abandoning only several hundred seriously ill in Dora and Boelcke-Kaserne. The ensuing death marches and trains had the same catastrophic and senseless pattern seen elsewhere; surviving Mittelbau inmates ended up at Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück, and many other places as far away as Austria, with a death toll in the thousands. The most infamous crime of the evacuation took place at the village of Gardelegen, where 1,016 marchers from Mittelbau and Neuengamme subcamps were locked in a barn and burned alive or shot if they tried to escape. Only 20 to 25 prisoners survived. Wagner estimates that over 8,000 died during the evacuations, raising the final Mittelbau toll to over 20,000.

On April 11, 1945, elements of the U.S. 3rd Armored and 104th Infantry Divisions reached Nordhausen and discovered the horrific situation at Boelcke-Kaserne, where sick and dying survivors lay with the corpses of the prisoners burned in

the air raids. Not much later, the liberators also found the Mittelwerk tunnels and Dora. The scene in Nordhausen provoked outrage among the occupiers; the U.S. Army made a propaganda film that made the name of the city briefly infamous. But soon afterward came a different set of U.S. Army personnel who were only interested in the technology. Before the Soviets could move forward into their prescribed occupation zone, U.S. forces removed large numbers of missile parts and personnel. The operation to exploit German science and technology that came to be known as Operation Paperclip had one of its most important origins here. After the Soviets moved forward on July 5, they too were eager to grab the fruits of German rocket and missile technology and used some Mittelwerk facilities to assemble and refurbish some V-2s and later sent many German engineers and technicians to the USSR.

The first SS functionaries from the camp to be tried were 12 charged by the British in the Bergen-Belsen trial of fall 1945; 3 were hanged, including the last Mittelbau Schutzhaftlagerführer, Franz Hößler, better known for his role at Auschwitz. The longtime commandant, Otto Förschner, was



US prosecutors Captains John J. Ryan and William F. McGarry listen to testimony during the Nordhausen trial, September 19, 1947. In the background is a map of Mittelbau-Dora.

USHMM WS #43067, COURTESY OF NARA

executed in May 1946 by the U.S. Army for his actions in the Dachau subcamps at the end of the war. At Dachau in late 1947, the army also held the only dedicated Allied trials for Dora/Mittelbau; of the 18 SS members and 5 Kapos tried, 1 was executed, and 18 received prison terms. Also tried was the general director of Mittelwerk from May 1944 to the end, Georg Rickhey, but he was acquitted because of the narrow focus on individual mistreatment of prisoners. In the Soviet Zone and German Democratic Republic (GDR), 1 SS officer was sentenced to 20 years, another executed, but during most of the 1950s, little further interest was paid to the issue on either side of the border. After the founding in 1958 of a central authority in West Germany for investigating war crimes, however, renewed investigations were made into Mittelbau. Ultimately, they led to the "Dora Trial" in Essen from 1967 to 1970. Richard Baer had earlier been discovered living under an assumed name during the investigations for the Auschwitz Trial, and he committed suicide in prison in 1963. So the court tried Helmut Bischoff, security chief of the Mittelbau region; Erwin Busta, an infamous SS guard; and Ernst Sander, a Gestapo officer. Just before the announcement of the sentencing on May 8, 1970, Bischoff was released on grounds of poor health (yet somehow lived to 1991); Busta and Sander got terms of 7.5 and 8.5 years, respectively, but also were allowed on health grounds to avoid further imprisonment.

Thus ended the last trials on this subject, but the name Dora has lived on because of its connection to the group of German rocket engineers around Dr. Wernher von Braun who became so prominent in the U.S. space program. The case of Arthur Rudolph, a close subordinate of von Braun and a key figure in the Apollo lunar landing project, attracted particular attention; he left the United States in 1984 rather than fight a denaturalization hearing initiated by the Justice Department for his role as production manager for Mittelwerk. Rudolph settled in Hamburg, but the German prosecutor decided that there was no longer sufficient evidence to make a case; he died at the beginning of 1996. One thing definitely came of the Rudolph case: the story of Mittelbau-Dora can no longer be left out of the history of the German rocket program, as it was for much of the Cold War.

SOURCES The first person to take a scholarly interest in the Mittelbau camp was a native of the Nordhausen region, Manfred Bornemann. His article with Martin Broszat, "Das KL Dora-Mittelbau," in *Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager*, ed. Martin Broszat (Stuttgart: Deutsche-Verlags-Anstalt, 1970), pp. 154–198, and his book *Geheimprojekt Mittelbau* (1971; repr., Bonn: Bernhard & Graefe, 1994) focus on the underground plant, V-2 production, and Dora, the primary emphasis of most historians until recently. The lit-

erature on the rocket program is large; see especially Michael J. Neufeld, *The Rocket and the Reich* (New York: Free Press, 1995). For V-1 production in the Mittelwerk, see the relevant sections in Hans Mommsen and Manfred Grieger, *Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf: ECON, 1996). Recently discovered stunning color photographs of the underground plant and French prisoner art from Dora are featured in the exhibition catalog of Yves Le Maner and André Sellier, *Images de Dora 1943–1945* (St. Omer: La Coupole, 1999). Recently three new histories of the camp and camp system have ushered in a new era of scholarly work on Mittelbau. Joachim Neander's *Das Konzentrationslager "Mittelbau" in der Endphase der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur*. (Clausthal-Zellerfeld: Papierflieger, 1997) is strongest for the evacuation of the camps. A French survivor of Mittelbau-Dora, André Sellier, has published *Histoire du camp de Dora* (Paris: Éditions la découverte, 1998), which emphasizes the experience of French workers in the Mittelwerk. In English, it is available as *A History of the Dora Camp*, trans. Steven Wright and Susan Taponier, foreword by Michael J. Neufeld, afterword by Jens-Christian Wagner (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, published in association with USHMM, 2003). But the standard scholarly work on the camp is that of Jens-Christian Wagner, *Produktion des Todes: Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora* (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2001), which is superbly researched and for the first time sets the whole Mittelbau camp system in balanced perspective. This book is based upon the author's dissertation, "Verlagerungswahn und Tod: Die Fiktion eines Rüstungszentrum und der KZ-Komplex Mittelbau-Dora 1943" (Ph.D. diss., Göttingen, 1999).

Only remnants of KL Mittelbau and Mittelwerk GmbH records survive, most notably in the BA-BL in RG NS 4 Anhang but also in R 121, Industriebeteiligungsgesellschaft, which includes Mittelwerk GmbH, and R 125, Wifo. There are also Mittelbau-Dora records in the THStA-W, RG NS 4/Bu, in the Buchenwald records. For the Nordhausen trial at Dachau in 1947, see NARA, *United States of America vs. Kurt Andrae, et al.*, Microfilm Publication M-1079, 16 Reels (originals in RG 238, NARA); and for the Essen trial of 1967 to 1970, NWHStA-(D), Zweigarchiv Kalkum, Gerichte Rep. 299; duplicates of the latter are in the ZdL (now BA-L). Also useful are the Peenemünde correspondence with Mittelwerk GmbH, in the DMM, Peenemünde records, File GD 638.8.2, and ITS records on Buchenwald and Mittelbau in the YVA, Microfilms BD3-Bu19-44 and BD11-Do1-6.

Michael J. Neufeld

NOTES

1. Rickhey and Kettler, "Sonder-Direktions-Anweisung," June 22, 1944, BA-BL, NS 4 Anh./3.
2. Jens-Christian Wagner, "Verlagerungswahn und Tod: Die Fiktion eines Rüstungszentrum und der KZ-Komplex Mittelbau-Dora 1943" (Ph.D. diss., Göttingen, 1999), p. 223.

the Turmalin construction project are to be found in the Mittelbau monograph by Jens-Christian Wagner, *Produktion des Todes: Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora* (Göttingen, 2001).

The relevant sources left by the SS have been microfilmed and are held in YVA (Microfilm BD11-Do1-6, ITS records on Mittelbau). There are other documents relating to forced labor in the collection of the ASt-Blb. Details on the Turmalin Relocation Project are contained in a report prepared by Allied experts after the war: CIOS, "Report on Underground Project Turmalin, 1945," Report No. XXXIII-38.

Jens-Christian Wagner
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

NOTE

1. CIOS, "Report on Underground Project Turmalin, 1945," Report No. XXXIII-38, p. 49.

BLEICHERODE

From the autumn of 1944, prisoners from the Mittelbau concentration camp were forced to construct power lines in Bleicherode. Initially, they were not accommodated in Bleicherode but in the main camp. At the end of each shift, the SS brought them back to the camp. In October 1944, the SS established a small labor detachment of 15 inmates in the cellar of the Bürgerhaus Hotel (the present-day city cultural center), all of whom were Italian military internees (IMIs). They worked for the construction and excavation firm Ohl & Vattrodt. There are contradictory statements about the nature of their work; it is possible that the Italians felled timber and transported materials, but they also could have been used to construct the power line from Frose to Bleicherode. The latter possibility is supported by the fact that in other sectors IMIs were forced to work on overland power lines (see Mittelbau/Trautenstein) but also because of the allocation of the camp to the SS-Baustab B-13, which coordinated all important infrastructure projects for the Mittelbau enterprise (Unternehmen Mittelbau).

There are no records of any deaths in the camp. The last time the camp is mentioned is in a surviving SS file from March 5, 1945; the camp most likely was in operation until April 1945. Its inmates were probably not evacuated by the SS but liberated by the Americans when they entered Bleicherode on April 10, 1945.

SOURCES The AG-MD holds a few reports on the Bleicherode camp.

Jens-Christian Wagner
trans. Stephen Pallavicini

ELLRICH ("ERICH," "MITTELBAU II")

[AKA ELLRICH-JULIUSHÜTTE]

Founded May 1 or 2, 1944, Ellrich began as a subcamp of Buchenwald but was always intimately linked to the Dora subcamp in the southern Harz Mountains near the city of

Nordhausen. On October 28, 1944, Dora became the Mittelbau main camp. Ellrich was officially named "Erich" and later "Mittelbau II," designations that were scarcely used outside SS correspondence. It has also been called Ellrich-Juliushütte by later historians to distinguish it from other, much smaller camps in and around the town that gave it its name. It quickly became the largest subcamp of Mittelbau—and its most infamous. Health conditions were disastrous in the abandoned gypsum factory, the Juliushütte, that provided the main buildings for the camp, and the suffering caused by the exhausting construction work and long hours getting to and from the main work sites were further compounded by a particularly callous SS camp leadership.

The SS founded the camp to absorb part of the rapidly growing number of forced laborers needed for its many new underground projects in the region, which were created in the wake of great concern in the Nazi leadership over the Anglo-American bomber offensive. A particularly concentrated series of attacks on the German aircraft industry in late February 1944 led Armaments Minister Albert Speer to create a joint government-industry "Fighter Staff" on March 1 to promote a rapid buildup in fighter production. On the model of the Mittelwerk, the underground V-2 rocket factory moved to Dora, where much of this production was to be evacuated to tunnels, retrofitted or dug out by concentration camp prisoners, with construction leadership given to SS-Gruppenführer Hans Kammler, chief of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) Amtsgruppe C (Construction). Kammler initiated a number of new tunnel projects in the soft anhydrite rock of the Harz Mountains near Dora, the most prominent being B-3, between the towns of Ellrich and Woffleben, and B-11 and B-12, on either side of the Mittelwerk tunnels. After taking over a camp intended for civilians, creating subcamp Harzungen ("Hans") on April 1, and a large estate house at Bischofferode, where a small camp, "Anna," was set up at about the same time, the SS decided to make use of the Juliushütte buildings for another large camp. But these facilities were in such poor condition that they had to be repaired for some weeks in April. Even so, when the first 300 prisoners arrived on May 1, 1944, from "Anna," there were not even roofs over some blocks housed in the abandoned factory, and the washroom and toilet facilities were disastrously inadequate.

Ellrich's first commandant was SS-Untersturmführer Hans Joachim Ritz, but he is little mentioned in survivor accounts. In about August, he was replaced by SS-Untersturmführer Karl Fritzsich, an infamous sadist who had served as the first Schutzhaftlagerführer of Auschwitz from 1940 to 1942. After allegedly being removed from that position for incompetence at the behest of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss, the SS sent Fritzsich to Flossenbürg and then Ellrich. Fritzsich, who was an early Nazi Party and SS member, had been trained in Theodor Eicke's school of terror as a camp guard in Dachau in mid-1933. Survivors stated that Fritzsich personally murdered and tortured prisoners and also harassed the guard force, which was largely drawn from the

Luftwaffe and officially transferred to the Waffen-SS only on September 1, 1944. At some point in the fall, Mittelbau commandant SS-Sturmbannführer Otto Förschner sent Fritsch to the Eastern Front and replaced him with Wilhelm Stötzler, who, like Ritz, made little impression on the prisoners, in large part because shortly thereafter SS-Hauptscharführer Otto Brinkmann was transferred from Mittelbau as de facto Schutzhaftlagerführer. Brinkmann rapidly acquired a reputation for sadism and brutality as appalling as Fritsch's. Stötzler and Brinkmann served until the dissolution of the camp on April 5, 1945. Also infamous for his indifference to the suffering of the prisoners and for the poor condition of the make-shift infirmary was the camp physician, Dr. Günther Schneeman, originally from the Luftwaffe. The vicious, arbitrary, and sometimes incompetent camp leadership was rounded out by a series of "green triangle" (criminal) prisoners who served in prisoner administrative positions; although Förschner ran Mittelbau on the Buchenwald model, using educated Communists, Ellrich became a dumping ground for both SS men and prisoners that Förschner did not want. Ellrich often received the most ill and exhausted prisoners from Mittelbau and other camps, apparently on the assumption that they would have low chances of survival.

The impact of the bad sanitary and living conditions on the prisoners' health was greatly exacerbated by the work in outdoor construction and tunneling at B-3, B-11, B-12, and other sites but also by the incredibly long hours of work, plus travel times by rail and foot and the roll calls that had to take place before and after each activity. A typical schedule in the summer and fall of 1944 was awakening at 3:30 A.M., "breakfast" and roll call, march to the train station at 5:10, and labor from 6:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M., with a one-hour break. With luck the train would come on time to return the exhausted prisoners to Ellrich, followed by another roll call and watery soup that passed for dinner. All that was left was about five hours for sleep, assuming that there were no lengthy delays with train transport and roll calls. Chief SS physician Professor Dr. Joachim Murgowsky, later hanged in 1948 after the Nuremberg "Doctors Trial" for his role in human experiments, warned Kammler that with this schedule "many prisoners [were dying] without any acute cause, only out of exhaustion. In no other camp does this appear so often."¹

Ellrich's all-male prisoner population grew rapidly from 1,696 at the end of May 1944 to 4,104 at the end of July, to 6,187 at the end of August, and to 8,189 by the end of September. During the last months of 1944, it stabilized at around 8,000. The camp population paralleled that of Mittelbau, the predominant groups being Soviet, Polish, French, Belgian, and German, but Ellrich did receive a large number of the 1,000 "qualified" Hungarian Jews that arrived in Dora from Auschwitz at the end of May, many of them scarcely more than boys. Also in evidence were a number of Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), some of whom served in positions of authority. The SS registered only 17 deaths in Ellrich up to the end of August, in part because very ill prisoners were transferred to the Mittelbau and Harzungen infirmaries, but the situation then

deteriorated catastrophically, despite further transfers: 29 deaths in September, 107 in October, 144 in November, 381 in December, 498 in January 1945, 541 in February, and 1,021 in March.

A particularly appalling manifestation of the disastrous health and living conditions were the presence in late 1944 of over 1,000 "un clothed." With no wash facilities, either for inmates or their clothes, the Ellrich camp population soon became filthy, infested with lice, and dressed in rags. When an emergency delousing of uniforms was attempted in about October, many disintegrated, leaving a significant fraction of prisoners with nothing. The camp leadership showed its usual indifference and lack of initiative; the ample supplies of civilian clothes confiscated from prisoners were not touched until after new transports from Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen began arriving in January–February. Many of the "un clothed" had to spend the entire day in bed shivering under thin covers in filthy, unheated blocks, and some had to make outdoor roll calls in their underwear. Because these prisoners did not work, their rations were eventually cut in half, accelerating starvation and death. As the clothing situation improved in early 1945, the food situation deteriorated further to an episodic state of outright famine. There were even cases of cannibalism, and organized bands of prisoners stole from and terrorized the weak. As the transports from the east arrived with their utterly exhausted, mostly Jewish prisoners, overcrowding and disease only grew worse—hence the massive death toll in March. Yet this toll did not even include the 1,602 in bad condition who had been sent to the dumping ground of the Boelcke-Kaserne in Nordhausen on March 5.

As with the other Mittelbau camps, evacuation took place on April 4 to 5, 1945, with the approach of U.S. forces. Most of those evacuated were sent by rail in the direction of Bergen-Belsen. One survivor report stated that the last SS man shot a dozen sick prisoners in the head just before leaving, so that no one was liberated at Ellrich—the camp was empty when the U.S. 104th Infantry Division occupied the town on April 12. Soon thereafter the camp fell into almost complete obscurity; it straddled an old political boundary that became the demarcation line between West and East. Only the survivor groups remembered Ellrich, especially the French, who constituted a disproportionate fraction of the dead. Justice was also scarcely served. In the Mittelbau-Dora trial at Dachau in 1947, only 2 of the 17 convicted were singled out for their role in Ellrich: Otto Brinkmann, who received a life sentence, later commuted, and Richard Walenta, a camp elder (Lagerältester) noted for his collaboration with the SS in denunciations, who received a 20-year sentence, also later shortened. It was only with the increased attention paid to Mittelbau-Dora in the later 1980s, as a result of growing interest in rocket production in the Mittelwerk, that Ellrich finally began to be more widely remembered.

SOURCES Other than Manfred Bornemann's chronology, *Chronik des Lagers Ellrich 1944/45: Ein vergessenes Konzentrations-*

tionslager wird neu entdeckt (Nordhausen: Landratsamt Nordhausen, 1992), there are no significant secondary publications that focus exclusively on this subcamp. All scholarly work on the topic has taken place within the general studies of the Mittelbau camp system cited in the main camp bibliography, most notably Jens-Christian Wagner's *Produktion des Todes: Das KZ Mittelbau-Dora* (Göttingen, 2001), which is based on his "Verlagerungswahn und Tod" (Ph.D. diss., Göttingen, 1999).

Similarly, what little is left of the Ellrich archival record must be sought in the Mittelbau records discussed above, especially those in Weimar and the ITS microfilms at YV. A Dutch memoir, Edgard Van de Castele, *Ellrich* (1946; bilingual ed., Bad Münstereifel: Westkreuz, 1997), is the only other significant publication.

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NOTE

1. Murgowsky to Kammler, July 20, 1944, BA-BL, NS 48/26, quoted in Jens-Christian Wagner, "Verlagerungswahn und Tod" (Ph.D. diss., Göttingen, 1999), pp. 315–316.

ELLRICH/WOFFLEBEN (LAGER B-12)

Woffleben was a spin-off of Ellrich, the largest subcamp of the Mittelbau concentration camp. On January 3, 1945, the SS moved 242 Ellrich prisoners from the night shift of tunnel project B-12 to a barracks outside the tunnel entrance, near the village of Woffleben. This project to dig out a new underground factory was just to the west of the north entrances of the Mittelwerk/Nordwerk underground complex, in which Junkers Aircraft assembled aircraft engines and parts in the north section using civilian forced laborers, and Mittelwerk GmbH assembled V-2 missiles in the south section using SS prisoners from the Mittelbau main camp. The new tunnels of B-12 were to be used by Junkers for the assembly of last-minute weapons such as the Heinkel (He) 162 fighter but were never finished, as was the case with virtually all of the new tunnel projects launched in the spring of 1944.

For the prisoners, the January 1945 move was an immediate improvement, as conditions in Ellrich had been catastrophically bad, and the long transport by train to and from the work site, with accompanying marches and roll calls, made life even more miserable and cut significantly into their time to sleep. A further transport of 102 prisoners from Ellrich on February 4 and 650 from the main camp on February 21 greatly enlarged the camp, ushering in a period of overcrowding in spite of the addition of new barracks. The camp fluctuated in size from about 800 to 900 prisoners through the end of March. The first camp commandant is unknown; in mid-March, SS-Oberscharführer Kleemann, a Waffen-SS veteran who had been transferred in 1941 to camp duty after a war injury, took over Woffleben. He had been camp commandant at Bismarckhütte, a subcamp of Auschwitz. The camp elder (Lagerältester), Bruno Brodniewicz, was also a veteran of Auschwitz, and both contributed to a further brutalization of prisoners in the camp. The death toll is unrecorded, as the

dead were sent to Ellrich for cremation; some severely ill were transported to the infirmaries at Ellrich and the Mittelbau main camp. On April 1, immediately before the evacuation of the camp, Mittelbau transferred around 700 very ill survivors of transports from Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen to the Woffleben subcamp, where they were scarcely able to work. The camp was dissolved on April 4 with an evacuation of prisoners by train in the direction of Bergen-Belsen. In 1951, Kleemann was tried in Itzehoe in Schleswig-Holstein for his barbaric behavior at Woffleben and during the evacuation but was set free because of insufficient evidence.

SOURCES Virtually nothing has been published on the Woffleben subcamp other than passages in Wagner's and Sellier's books (cited in the Mittelbau main camp bibliography) and a section in Manfred Bornemann's chronology *Chronik des Lagers Ellrich 1944/45* (Nordhausen: Landratsamt Nordhausen, 1992), pp. 63–68.

The trial of Kleemann is to be found in Adelheid L. Rüter-Ehlermann, H.H. Fuchs, and C.F. Rüter, eds., *Justiz und NS Verbrechen: Sammlung deutscher Strafurteile wegen nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945–1966* (Amsterdam: Universitäts Press of Amsterdam, 1972), 8: 333–350. Transports to and from Ellrich can be found in the YVA microfilm of ITS records (see the Mittelbau entry). See also the THStA-W Record Group NS 4/Bu., Buchenwald and Mittelbau records.

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GROSSWERTHER

On Thursday, March 15, 1945, 294 women prisoners arrived at the Mittelbau-Dora main camp. They came from Morchenstern, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen, in the Sudetenland east of Gablonz. After registration, 290 of them were marched to the nearby village of Grosswerther. There, the SS had requisitioned the dance halls of two neighboring inns situated in the village center, Gaststätte Nolze and Zur Weintraube (aka Schöнемänn), to set up a new concentration camp—Aussenkommando Grosswerther, a subcamp of Mittelbau. The women were divided into two groups of roughly equal size, and each took up quarters in one of the dance halls.

All the women were Jewish, and all had started their odyssey through the gamut of Nazi concentration camps at Auschwitz: 248 of the prisoners were from Hungary and had been arrested in the course of the *Judenaktionen* during the spring and summer of 1944; 44 were of Polish origin; 1 came from France; and 1 from the Soviet Union. Most of the women were between 20 and 25 years old, and many of them had worked in textile manufacturing before their arrest.

There is evidence that during the three weeks of Grosswerther camp's existence, only one single work detail of about 30 women was sent to a—still unidentified—factory at Nordhausen. No sooner had they begun work when they were interrupted by heavy air attacks of Nordhausen by Allied aircraft.

The Grosswerther camp's provisional character was clearly evident by both its appearance and the living conditions.