

# blickpunkt

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Zeitung der DKP für Mörfelden-Walldorf

## *Dear Attendees and Guests of the Work and Study Camp:*

When the Walldorf Lager was rediscovered back in 1978, the US Army Newspaper "Stars and Stripes" was among the first to provide press coverage.

Their article, reprinted here, did not fail to mention that the three young men from Mörfelden-Walldorf unraveling the story were members of the German Communist Party (DKP). Our party has a long standing tradition in this town. Mörfelden was the first town in Germany to elect a communist mayor (in 1932), and the local CP is still represented in town parliament. Its members are active in a number of antifascist projects. We would like to welcome you all in Mörfelden-Walldorf. For more information about our opinions and activities, feel free to call

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we thought it was a mistake, there are a lot of „Walldorfs“ in Germany, but it really turned out to be our hometown.“

Back in Walldorf, Oswald and Arndt began questioning older citizens. Some said there was „some kind of prisoner camp out there at the end of Nordendstrasse“ in 1944, but no one had any exact information.

„All the politically active people such as Socialists and Communists and the Jews, of course, had been imprisoned or killed at that time and didn't know about the events in Walldorf during the war,“ Oswald said.

„Those of us who have never lived under a totalitarian regime find it difficult to believe that people who live in a small town like Walldorf wouldn't know about the existence of a forced-labor camp managed by SS staff,“ Arndt said.

„The fact is people DID know. But it was a time when knowledge of such things was dangerous. People knew 'something was out there' but it only existed a few months and right after the liberation

## Place of Infamy

Quiet German town finds out now it was site of brutal concentration camp

WALLDORF, Germany (S&S) — If you leave Rhein-Main Air Base by the rear gate next to the railroad tracks, you'll find a two-mile footpath that winds through an idyllic wooded area before reaching this small town.

Because this path is used by many German employees who live in Walldorf, it was officially named „The Path of Friendship“ at a German-American ceremony. Many Americans who live in towns on that side of the fence also use the path through that bit of forest. It's doubtful that few who tread „The Path of Friendship“ know it covers a place of infamy.

The past has a way of catching up. That is perhaps why this small town is currently haunted by the specter of a Nazi forced-labor camp that existed within its boundaries.

This jolt to the town's citizens came from two young men, Herbert J. Oswald and Alfred J. Arndt, both Walldorf residents. Oswald said unraveling of the story began in 1972 when they visited East Germany.

„At the monument of the former concentra-

tion camp Buchenwald, was a large map showing locations of the Nazi camps throughout Europe. We were surprised to see our hometown on the map. At first



Three young residents of Walldorf in the German state of Hesse gaze down at what in 1944 was the sewage opening at the Walldorf labor camp. From left: Herbert Oswald, Gert Schulmeyer and Alfred Arndt. Oswald and Arndt learned about the camp at an East German exhibit of Nazi concentration camps.

by the Americans, the camp was destroyed, reforested and the awareness of the camp repressed", Oswald said.

Oswald and Arndt didn't get far in researching the camp at first. Their break came in 1975.

„There was a meeting of survivors of the Ravensbrück concentration camp near here and a Hungarian woman, Zsuzsanna Farkas, who attended the meeting, wanted to lay a wreath at the memorial of the camp where she spent several months. But she had a problem finding it. Even city hall couldn't help. Finally, a German friend found somebody who knew where it was.“

After establishing the fact of the camp's existence, with the aid of the German Red Cross, the Ludwigsburg Central Archives and the Union of those Persecuted by the Nazis, Oswald and Arndt were able to locate and reconstruct the plan of the camp based upon testimonies of the survivors they could find.

„You can imagine how difficult it was for me, a 20-year-old German to interview survivors in Israel and Hungary," Oswald said.

The history uncovered by Oswald and Arndt, and substantiated by documents and eyewitness reports, says the camp existed from Aug. 27 to Oct. 31 in 1944. It was a so-called branch of the concentration camp Natzweiler-Struthof in Alsace, where many medical experiments were carried out on inmates.

According to the documents from Ludwigsburg, the first shipment of 1,700 prisoners arrived in Walldorf on Aug. 26, 1944. There were all women — Jews mainly from Hungary, but also some from Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

The women were all from Block C of the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The camp, when it opened was run by one Waffen SS officer, three Waffen SS non-commissioned officers, 27 Waffen SS enlisted men and four SS women guards.

„Waffen SS" was the designation for the military arm and largest branch of the SS.

„The German air force had a military airport where the Americans are now, but it was much smaller. The women were put to work cutting down and transporting trees for runways and filling in bomb craters and maintaining the existing runways. camouflaging planes and laying cable," Arndt said.

They also know that the women had inadequate clothing, covering themselves with potato sacks to ward off the cold and they worked barefooted.

„We know from eyewitness reports, that the women were brutally treated. If they fainted during the work, they were shot. We know they were tortured and raped by the SS, we know that pregnant women were told they were to be sent on a 'mother's rest holiday' and then shot, and we know that the Waffen SS commander of the camp was a man called Hans

Loehs, a big, strong blond man between the ages of 36 and 40, the witnesses claim. They said he looked much like the infamous doctor Mengele, who the women knew from the selection ramp at Auschwitz," Oswald said.

Natzweiler was taken over by the Americans in October 1944, Oswald said, thus leaving Walldorf without an administrative headquarters. At that time the official reports ended.

„We think it was at this time that the brutality of the SS increased. Before, at least formally, they had to report to Natzweiler, so deaths in the camp were euphemistically ascribed to 'heart failure' or shot in attempt to escape.'

„Now, only answerable to himself, Loehs and his girlfriend, whose name sounded like 'Herta' to the prisoners, killed, raped and tortured at will. We heard that many women were killed and buried on the spot. One woman was put into the dog kennel and torn to pieces by the watchdogs for picking up a potato that a German passing by let fall for her," Oswald said.

Oswald and Arndt have filed suit against Loehs with the state prosecutor in Darmstadt.

„We think he must be still alive; otherwise the prosecutor's office would have told us immediately that there is no point in the suit. We also know that we are not the first to file such a suit against Loehs," Arndt said.

Oswald and Arndt, who are members of the German Communist Party, said their intentions in bringing the camp to light was to, „enlighten the youth about the past. We don't want Walldorf to become known as the 'concentration camp town', but we don't think the youth should be kept in the dark about our recent past."

„We are concerned that students of the high school could be so misinformed that they formed an Adolf Hitler Fan Club. We think that could only happen because the schools have been negligent in teaching about the Nazis," Arndt said.

Bernhard Brehl, mayor of Mörfelden-Walldorf said all political parties are agreed that some form of monument be erected at the site. „The question now being discussed is if we should wait until after the trial of the camp commander or not. We don't want to make a mistake in stone."



The "three young residents" of 1978 today: Gerd Schulmeyer, Herbert J. Oswald and Alfred J. Arndt (from r to l) attending a ceremony at the Lager memorial with Peter Härtling, a famous author also living in Walldorf