

Michael Mooslechner

Prisoner-of-war Camp
STALAG XVIII C
„Markt Pongau“



Death Camp for Soviet Soldiers.
History and Background of a National-Socialist Crime
in St. Johann im Pongau during World War Two

Instead of a preface



Gabi Burgstaller



O. P. Zier



Ernst Hanisch



Philipp Selle

It is and always will remain our duty to objectively relate the facts so as to wrest from oblivion our country's involvement in and the horrors of the NS terror regime in our country. Contrary to what critics of a culture of remembrance often decry this is not about „reopening old wounds“. Quite the opposite: only when we honestly face the truth about what really happened can we actively contribute to healing the wounds that dictatorship and racism caused. This has been proved not only by the discipline of history but also by the modern science of human psychology. The study of the tragic history of STLAG XVIII C by Michael Mooslechner's research into current history finally closes this painful gap in Salzburg's culture of remembrance.

Mag. Gabi Burgstaller (former Governor of Salzburg)

A Way To Remember - 60 years after the end of horror only a few memorials remember the Soviet soldiers who perished in NS-STALAG St: Johann im Pongau - even in the so-called Russian Cemetery, which is literally inaccessible by road. This profound analysis of what occurred then is a valuable path to memory.

O. P. Zier, author

Most people have certain moral resources at their disposal that help us to encounter others with a measure of respect. The drama of history lies in the fact that during conflicts such as wars or civil wars the moral conduct is limited to one's own ethnic, political or religious group while dehumanised „enemies“ are frequently treated cruelly. It is an arduous learning process to universalise the moral standard and to respect the dignity of every human being, including the enemy's. The prisoner-of-war camp

of St. Johann is a place of remembrance which can support this learning process so as to tame the beast within us.

Univ.Prof. Dr. Ernst Hanisch, historian

A few years ago we learned about St. Johann's National Socialist past at school. In connection with these lessons we held a memorial ceremony in the „Russian Cemetery“ and conducted a study with passers-by. It turned out that many didn't even know that there existed a Russian cemetery. This brochure is meant to inform and to contribute to the effort never to forget and thus to prevent something as inhuman as that from ever happening again.

Philipp Selle, student

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The invasion of Poland by the German Wehrmacht at dawn of September 1st, 1939 unleashed the most terrible war in human history, which was to claim more than 60 million lives. Only the allied military victory in May 1945 and Hitler Germany's unconditional surrender finally ended this inferno. The war was to lead to a complete reorganisation of Europe.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In this war St. Johann mourned 122 fallen, 80 soldiers missing in action and many wounded. All inhabitants of St. Johann were confronted with a prisoner-of-war camp officially called STALAG XVIII C (317) Markt Pongau. The name of this parent camp (Stammlager) refers on the one hand to Wehrkreis XVIII (military district), which comprised Vorarlberg, the Tyrol, Salzburg, Carinthia and Styria, on the other hand to „Markt Pongau“, as St. Johann was called during the era of National Socialism from 1938 - 1945. Number 317 was added later.

Planning and erecting the camp

As early as August 15th 1940 a group of 25 French POWs (prisoners of war) had arrived at St. Johann. They were put up at the local primary school and apportioned to farmers and the municipality. ¹

On March 25th 1941, mayor Hans Kapbacher for the first time informed the town council about plans to erect a POW camp for between 8000 and 10,000 prisoners plus 1000 staff.



The camp is believed to have started operating as early as 1941, while still being built by French POWs from Brittany. And from August 1941 French prisoners from STALAG Spittal an der Drau as well as recently captured Serb POWs arrived at the camp. Camp facilities were more or less finished before the winter of 1941.

The complex consisted of the so-called northern camp, where almost exclusively Soviet prisoners were interned, and the southern camp where French, Serb, Belgian (from 1942), English and Italian (from 1943) prisoners were kept.

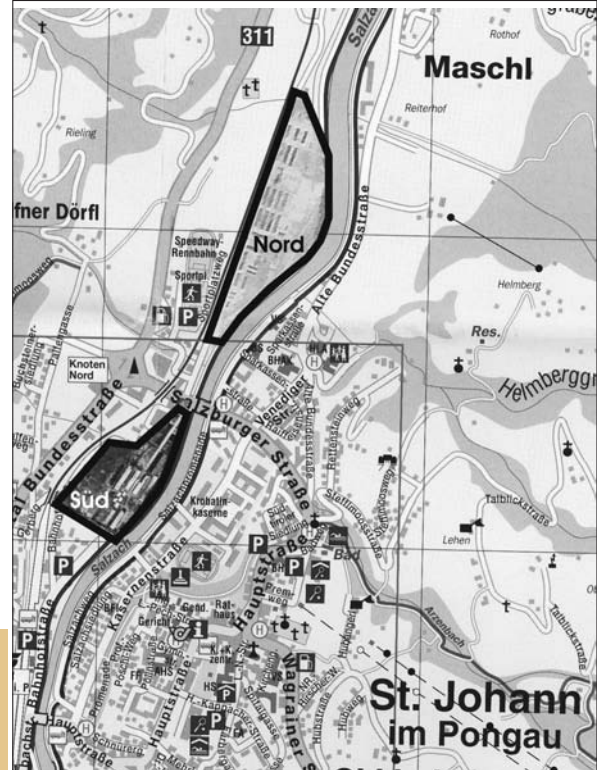
CAMP ROAD of STALAG Markt Pongau. The barracks were erected by various St. Johanner firms as well as prisoners already interned at the time. In September 1941 construction was finished and the camp filled up with more than 10,000 men. After completion the majority of internees was put to work outside the camp.

The so-called southern camp was situated on the left bank of the river Salzach opposite today's Krobatin Barracks. The northern camp comprised 8 hectares in the area of Einöden, near the Altach estate (owned by the Fischbacher family), north of the Schörg Bridge, extending from Rainerhof to the now defunct Baumann factory. Each camp consisted of 25 - 30 huts, which complied with German Wehrmacht norms and which were about 45 - 50 metres long. Due to overcrowding tents were put up to accommodate ever more prisoners.

By September 1941 over 10,000 prisoners of war were already concentrated in St. Johann. While the prisoners were exclusively employed in the erection of the camp during the summer of 1941, nearly all of them were allocated to various work gangs outside the camp by the job centre.

For their labour the prisoners received 70 Reichspfennig per day.² The staff of about 1000 guards were housed in the military barracks on the opposite river bank.

Situation of the northern and southern camps in the current map of the town. The camp complex dominated the landscape of St. Johann during the war. In the camp north of Schörg Bridge mostly Soviet POWs were held under woeful conditions.



The so-called Franzosenlager for French prisoners south of the bridge offered far better living conditions.

The camps also boasted workshops and stores and an infirmary each, which were combined in the northern camp from 1944.

According to Josef Höller, who helped build the barracks as an apprentice carpenter together with seven French POWs in 1941, each hut was divided into two equal halves which were separated by a passage. At one end of such a structure a latrine was provided. Like the bunks and washing facilities the latrines were just as inadequate for the great number of men, therefore the prisoners were ordered to dig a ten-metre trench in front of their hut, which, equipped with upright posts and a horizontal pole served as a latrine.

The camp being notoriously overcrowded innumerable people were put up in tents, even in winter. On several occasions hygienic conditions were criticised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

POWs who for some reason or other were under arrest were only allowed to use the latrines during the two hours they were allowed outside their cells. Besides, such convicted POWs frequently had their rations halved and their daily walk reduced to a mere quarter of an hour.

Discipline in the camp was enforced by a special camp police. They were recruited from among willing prisoners, who were armed with clubs and who received double rations.

Auxiliary police armband for use inside camp. These auxiliary forces were recruited from among the prisoners.



One camp – two systems

The southern or French camp (Franzosenlager)

Between the two camps there existed fundamental differences in every respect. The prisoners of the southern camp received mail and Red Cross parcels. In the camp there was a chapel, where regular services were held, as well as leisure facilities. In the theatre auditorium concerts were held, later even films were shown. And most important of all a sports ground was available too.

In addition, this part was visited by a delegation of the ICRC and inspected by a „protecting power commission“. This supervisory mechanism was fairly effective in so far as conditions for German prisoners of war in enemy camps would deteriorate should the German side face criticism for its treatment of POWs.



Left: Photo of French prisoners of war who arrived at STALAG on June 22nd, 1940, after being captured in the Vosges. ³

Right: British prisoners displaying the Union Jack in front of tents. ⁴



The first and most adroit of all POWs to organise themselves were French citizens. As early as November 1941 their first journal „Le STALAG XVIII C vous parle“ appeared. Theatrical performances and concerts were staged by the „Theatre des Deux Masques“ and the „Orchestre des Canards Tyroliens“. Over the years the southern camp could even dispose of two movie projectors. Several clergy, partly POWs themselves, provided religious services. On Bastille Day the sounds of the Marseillaise could be heard by the population outside the walls.

Among the French prisoners there also existed a „Cercle Petain“, named after the French collaborator General Petain, which was formed in May 1942. On the one hand the Germans appreciated this group as an instrument of collaboration, on the other hand it afforded an opportunity for members of different political persuasions to meet undisturbed.

STALAG Markt Pongau enjoyed a poor reputation among English and American prisoners of war, who only arrived at the camp from 1943 and were partly held there for only a short period of time. They were housed in a hut near the southern entrance of the northern camp.

They were segregated from other nationalities by a fence. All their warm civilian clothes were confiscated. For the British neither physical activities nor religious services were provided. These conditions improved in 1944, once Colonel Pehrens assumed command of the camp.

Camp report about an American prisoner of war

American Sergeant George Lynch:

He was taken prisoner by German troops on Jan. 24, 1945, at Colmar, France. Lynch had a long road ahead of him. He had to march through snow up to his hips all the way to Austria.



„If someone would fall, they would shoot them,“ said Lynch, who served as a State Patrol officer for 31 years after he returned from the war. „I saw many people killed.“ Lynch, has many memories of his three and a half years in Africa and Europe during World War II. The cement block prison camp at Markt Pongau, Austria, was one of the worst ones. Lynch was captured in January so when he arrived at the camp, it was the dead of winter and the cells had open windows. „It was as cold as a refrigerator“. „The snow blew right through the window.“ The six pieces of wood they received each day and thin blankets

were n't enough to keep the prisoners warm so they slept four men to a bunk to utilize body warmth. Lynch said the food was terrible. For five months, they survived on watery barley soup, sawdust bread and an occasional charred potato. With the undernourishment, Lynch developed jaundice, a disease that affects the liver and causes yellowing of the skin, eyes and urine. He also vomited regularly and couldn't eat much at a time for several months after he was freed.

Nearly all the prisoners – 5,000 British, 5,000 Russian and 500 American soldiers – suffered as Lynch did. When they were freed, some of the troops gorged themselves with food and died because their bodies had been starved for so long and couldn't handle it. Lynch wasn't one of them; he weighed a mere 98 pounds. When he started his basic training at Camp Walters, Texas, in 1942, he had weighed 154 pounds.⁵

A British POW's report

British infantryman Harold Padfield, who was captured in the Battle of Arnhem Bridge in Holland on September 20th, 1944 and subsequently interned in STALAG „Markt Pongau“ describes life in the camp as follows:



The camp itself was large, but it was split up into nationalities, British, Poles, Indians and Russians. Our enclave was quite small. The perimeter fence was electrified and there were two searchlight towers that covered our exercise yard. The hut was about 75yds by 10yds and contained two tier beds to house 200 prisoners.

Water, for drinking and washing was drawn from a well. The outside exercise yard had an area for the toilets, which was a deep trench about 15yds long with a horizontal pole, supported at intervals, to sit on and another pole slightly higher to support your back and stop you falling in. The whole structure was covered with a corrugated roof and sides, the remainder of the yard provided a walking area with a circumference of about 100yds. We used to walk round in twos or threes for probably an hour at a time some three or four times a day.⁶



Group of Serb soldiers in „Markt Pongau“. After the French and the Russians about 5000 Serb POWs made up the third largest group.

The Soviet prisoners in the Russian camp („Russenslager“)

After the invasion of the Soviet Union by the Wehrmacht in June 1941 the first contingents of Russian prisoners of war reached St. Johann in November. Many of their fellow sufferers had not survived weeks of forced marches and journeys in open cattle cars and freight wagons from the Eastern Front to Pongau. Those who reached St. Johann alive did so in an advanced state of starvation and partly seriously ill. 30 - 40% of the first contingent of prisoners did not survive the first night. Every day horse-drawn carts took the bodies of deceased Russian prisoners through the town to a mass grave in the local cemetery. When this grave no longer sufficed for the great number of dead the town allotted an area „am Fischbachgrund“ to the STALAG.

Apart from infectious diseases like typhoid, malnourishment was the main reason for the high rate of mortality.



French POW Louis Pichereau remembers: „About 40 Russians died there from hunger and various diseases every day. And every day Russian POWs were shot dead.“

Eye witness Alois Stadler describes the catastrophic nutritional situation of Soviet prisoners:

„The Russians were often forced to eat grass and worms and daily Russian prisoners were also shot dead.“⁷



Soviet prisoners in winter. Thousands did not survive their transport in cattle cars from the Eastern front to „Markt Pongau“. On average 40 of them died in the camp from exhaustion, hunger and disease every day.

When they left the camp for some labour, hunger drove them to digging up roots and eating them.⁸

Salzburg journalist Franz Janiczek, who frequently rode the train between Schwarzach and Salzburg during the war, remembers:

„... With their arrival in St. Johann the real tragedy of the POWs only just began: parched with thirst and burned out they dragged themselves to the river Salzach to drink from its icy water. This resulted in an epidemic of dysentery with innumerable casualties who were dumped in a mass grave; they were no longer even registered...

It was only later that lists of inmates were drawn up; from them it became apparent that in Camp St. Johann im Pongau over 3700 of those unfortunates literally starved to death. Those who had eyes to see, for example while passing the camp by train, could not discover one leaf of grass within the enclosure...”⁹

The onset of winter 1941/42 found the Russian prisoners of war completely exposed to the elements. The Russians in the northern camp received far inferior rations than other nationalities. They received neither mail nor Red Cross parcels, which enabled members of other nations to augment their rations.

This triggered mass mortality, which coincided with the same phenomenon in other camps inside the Reich.

It was not before the end of October 1944 that Russian inmates received the same rations as prisoners from other countries. This wasn't due to humanitarian considerations, however, but because the increasing shortage of labour required the employment of Russian POWs too. Considering the course of the war the shortage of labour could not be compensated for by demobbed German soldiers.



Former Soviet POW Dmitri Borissowitsch Lomonossow remembers:¹⁰

„In the same camp in which Soviet POWs were mistreated, where thousands of them died from hunger, wounds and diseases, prisoners from other countries drank beer, occupied themselves with amateur arts and certainly didn't go hungry. Sometimes this happened in adjacent zones which were only separated by barbed wire.

Observing the life of our allied fellow sufferers we couldn't help wondering: WHY?”

Thousands of Soviet soldiers didn't survive the harsh winter. Many fell victim to typhoid. The dead were taken to burial on sleds and wooden carts, initially to a mass grave in the town cemetery.

From 1942 they were buried in a newly dug mass grave, the so-called Russenfriedhof on Fischbachgrund, right next to the current trunk road escarpment. After the war this burial grove was dedicated as a memorial.

Background to the extermination policy towards Russian prisoners

The explanation for the „special treatment“ of Soviet prisoners lies first and foremost in the National-Socialist racial ideology, according to which there exists a hierarchy of superior and inferior ethnic groups.¹¹

This was then elaborated into a ranking scale. At the top of the hierarchy stood the British, later on together with the Americans. For a long time Hitler regarded them as „natural“ allies. Moreover, many German soldiers were in British and American captivity. Further down the scale ranked the French and the Belgians, followed by Greeks and Serbs. Until the arrival of Soviet prisoners the Poles occupied the lowest rung. Italian army internees too were denied visits and inspections by IKRK and protecting power commissions. Only for Soviet soldiers the STALAGs were to prove veritable death camps. Under

certain conditions Ukrainians might receive favourable treatment.

Gradual dehumanisation

For years Nazi propaganda had disseminated racist, ethnocentric slogans and thus lowered the threshold of inhibition among the civilian population to mistreat the so-called „Untermenschen“. In his groundbreaking study „No Comrades“ historian Christian Streit states: Except for the Jews, Soviet POWs were the group of victims who met with the harshest fate in NS Germany.¹² Of a total of 5.7 million Red Army soldiers captured by the Wehrmacht during the Second World War only 930.000 were still alive in German camps by the war's end. Historians estimate that 3.3 million (i.e. 57.5% of the total) perished.¹³ By compar-

ison, of the 232.000 British and American POWs „only“ 8.348 (i.e. 3.5%) died in captivity. Burial statistics of Markt Pongau confirm this dramatic finding.

Deceased POWs buried in St. Johann im Pongau according to nationality:¹⁴

USSR	3,709
Yugoslavia	51
France	15
others	7

Apart from the above-mentioned racist motives the cruel treatment of Soviet POWs also derived from legislation, decrees and specific orders of NS leaders and institutions.



Above: Erich Fried with Christina Beck at the Alpenland Hotel in May 1986

The great Austrian-British poet Erich Fried visited St. Johann im Pongau in May 1986 to give a poetry reading. In response to an account of POW camp STALAG XVIII C he composed this hitherto unpublished lyric „Fragelied“ for his hosts’ the Beck family’s visitor’s book.

In 2005 „Fragelied was set to music by composer Thomas Doss. It serves as the leitmotif for his Symphony of Hope.
(www.symphoniederhoffnung.at)

QUESTION SONG

By Erich Fried

St. Johann, St. Johann im Pongau,
what path was that
you chose at a time
of which one will not speak?

What path was that
Which you then took?
You let grass cover it,
for who goes still to the graves?

To the right of the path
Prison camps were:
Englishmen, Scots, Canadians -
Of them dead only few.

But to the left of the path
There they almost all still lie:
Yugoslavs, Russians; Ukrainians -
Nigh on 4000 dead.

Different the mortality
To the right and to the left of the path;
The ones fed as it is right,
the others allowed to starve.

The dying finished off with spades.
St. Johann, St. Johann!
Your right hand did not know
What your left was about.

Even today it still wants not to know,
St. Johann im Pongau!
You have let grass grow
Over the grave-strewn path.

Political and legal basis of the extermination policy towards Soviet prisoners of war

1) War aims in the East

Hitler and his generals considered the famine on the so-called home front during World War One as the decisive reason for Germany's defeat. Thus the exploitation of food resources in „Lebensraum“ East was intended to feed the German nation like in peace times to boost morale during the war. The leadership of the armed forces (OKW) was under no illusion that this would entail the death by famine of tens of millions of people in the East. Accordingly Russian POWs received only below-subsistence rations. The Army High Command took mass starvation of Soviet POWs into account. Tens of thousands lost their lives en route from the front to the camps. Orders were issued to shoot dead all exhausted POWs.¹⁵ During rail transports in open freight cars between 25 and 70 % of all prisoners died in winter 1941/42.¹⁶

2) Special guidelines regarding the treatment of Soviet POWs

The Convention about the treatment of prisoners of war signed in Geneva on July 27, 1929 constitutes the legal basis of the treatment of POWs in German hands. The Third Reich ratified the Geneva Convention in February 1934. As to Soviet prisoners of war different guidelines were brought to bear which perverted the spirit of the Geneva Convention and served as the basis for the systematic annihilation campaign against Bolshevism as an ideology and the citizens of the Soviet Union as presumable „Untermenschen“.¹⁷ An edict dated June 16, 1941 about „The Organisation of the POW issue in the context of Barbarossa“ says literally: „Bolshevism is the mortal enemy of National Socialist Germany. Extreme detachment and caution are mandated toward Red Army prisoners. Treacherous behaviour,

especially by POWs of Asian origin has to be reckoned with. The slightest sign of insubordination, particularly by Bolshevist agitators, has to be met with ruthless retribution. Any form of passive resistance has to be nipped in the bud.“¹⁸

3) The Barbarossa Decree¹⁹

Hitler's decree about the execution of court-martial powers within the Barbarossa theatre of war and specific measures by the armed forces from May 13, 1941 paved the way for the conquest of Russia already weeks before the actual outbreak of hostilities. „Freischärler“, i. e. partisans, were to be liquidated without mercy during battle or flight. The same norms applied to civilians who tried to resist orders given by German soldiers. Under threat of punishment members of the Wehrmacht were ordered not to take suspects into custody but execute them on the spot. Actions that were thought to undermine troop morale were criminalised. On the other hand impunity was extended to those who participated in purges („Säuberungsaktionen“) and thus violated martial law.²⁰

4) The „Kommissarbefehl“

In its „Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars“ from June 6, 1941 the NS leadership required the troops to scour the masses of POWs in search of Red Army political commissars and liquidate them. Also this decree constitutes a clear breach of the Hague Land Warfare Convention of 1907.



In STALAG „ Markt Pongau“ prominent Polish officers were interned too. The photo shows the leader of the Polish Home Army and the Warsaw Uprising of August 1944, General Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski among his faithful in St. Johann after the liberation.

Parallels between the Holocaust and the mass murder of Soviet prisoners

The will to wipe out the Jews and Soviet prisoners of war is expressed in propaganda pamphlets as well as concrete orders in many different ways. Over a month before the attack on the Soviet Union Colonel General Erich Hoepfner, commander for the deployment of Panzergruppe 4 in the East instructed his troops: Both in strategy and tactic each fight must be guided by the iron will to merciless and complete annihilation of the enemy ...“²¹

Also Field Marshall General Walter von Reichenau, the Commander-In-Chief of Heeresgruppe Süd deployed in the East announced in October 1941: „The overriding objective of this campaign against the Jewish-Bolshevist system is the complete destruction of its resources and the elimination of any Asian influence on the European cultural sphere. This brings with it tasks for the troops which go beyond the traditional one-dimensional art of soldiering. In the East the soldier is not only a fighter to the best of his capabilities, but also the carrier of a pitiless nationalist idea and the avenger of all the atrocities that have been inflicted on the Germans and their brother nations.“²²

It may not have been coincidence that the method to industrialise the mass murder of the Jews, in other words: the use of the poison gas Zyklon B, was developed by the SS in Auschwitz to facilitate the murder of hundreds of selected Soviet POWs.²³ In his inner circle Hitler himself had frequently mentioned that the death of Soviet prisoners was the way to the desired decimation of the „Slavic masses“.²⁴

International Law and Soviet Prisoners of War

Why were Soviet POWs not treated according to the Geneva Convention like prisoners hailing from other nations?

When the Third Reich issued its criminal decrees about the treatment of Soviet military personnel and the civilian population prior to the attack on the Soviet Union, the Regime exploited the fact in its propaganda that the Soviet Union had not ratified the Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War of 1929.²⁵ The Soviet Union had merely ratified the Convention for the improvement of the situation of the wounded and sick in the field. The legal vacuum created by the Soviet non-ratification of the Geneva Convention was to be compensated for by the Decree Concerning Prisoners of War, which was passed by the Central Executive Committee and the Council of the People's Commissars of the Soviet Union on March 19, 1931.²⁶

The German justification why not to treat Russian POWs in compliance with international law was only a pretext, because on July 17, 1941, i.e. shortly after the inception of war, the Soviet Union, motivated by Mr. Max Huber, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, conveyed a diplomatic note to Nazi Germany via its protecting power Sweden to the effect that it would recognise and implement the Hague Land War Convention of 1907, provided Germany would do the same. Thus the Soviet Union had effectively joined the convention. Being optimistic about victory Hitler Germany did not want to tie itself down but wanted a free hand for its conquest of the East. There were however German personalities, like for instance Count Moltke in the High Command's department of international law, who addressed a memorandum to Field Marshall

General Keitel, the Wehrmacht Commander in the East, expressing their disgust with the dishonourable treatment of Soviet POWs. In vain. Being involved in the assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944 Moltke was to be executed himself in January 1945.

As late as December 1941 the USA, represented by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, tried to get the Soviet Union on board the more comprehensive Geneva Convention in the interest of Soviet POWs in Germany. This was declined by the Stalinist leadership in its distrust of regular inspections of POW camps by neutral commissions.

Besides, by the end of 1941 the brutal work of annihilation by special units, the SS and the Wehrmacht in the East had already created faits accomplis, which made a solution on the basis of international law ever more improbable. At a meeting with President Roosevelt Soviet Foreign Secretary Molotov declared to have „information about the brutal and inhumane treatment of Soviet POWs in Germany. His government was not prepared to sign any agreement that would enable Germany to claim acting in compliance with international law. Germany was violating the Hague Land War Convention, while the Soviet Union was making every effort to honour it.“²⁷

The last days of STALAG – liberation and return

Due to the withdrawal of German troops and the concomitant relocation of prisoners from camps near the front the St. Johann camp was dreadfully overcrowded during the last half year before its dissolution. No more Red Cross parcels arrived, the food supply deteriorated even further and hygienic conditions were disastrous. Under these conditions the camp staff more and more lost control of things. The low point of this development was the storming of a freight train by about 300 prisoners of war.

From May 7th, 1945 the camp was de facto run by the prisoners themselves. On the evening of May 8, 1945 soldiers of an American parachute regiment from Berchtesgaden arrived at Markt Pongau, where the camp was entrusted to their care.²⁸

In the weeks prior to liberation prisoners from different quarters had been transferred to the so-called Alpenfestung (Alpine Fortress).

British POW Eric Fearnside, who had been held in STALAG Wolfsberg, recalls the long march from Eastern Styria to St. Johann as follows:²⁹

„At four o'clock in the morning, we heard the cries, "Raus! Raus!" and we were tumbled out of bed for the last time at Wolfsberg. Shivering with cold on the parade ground, we were told by the Commandant that we were being evacuated to a safer area. Taking only essentials, we marched off into the unknown. At first, the going was easy, but as we reached the mountains, it became more tiring.

We scrambled over the Tauern Pass, bitterly cold walking through snow; twenty miles every day for eleven days. We finally arrived at Markt Pongau prison camp, where the German guards offered us their rifles. The date was the 10th of May, 1945. The war had been over for two days.”

(Prisoners of War: Eric Fearnside)

On May 11th the newly freed prisoners of war assembled in St. Johann parish church



American soldiers in Markt Pongau after May 10, 1945.³⁰

to celebrate their liberation with a solemn Te Deum.

In the weeks that followed groups of different nationalities left St. Johann for home. The last to do so were surviving Soviet POWs on June 5, 1945.

Repatriated Soviet soldiers were by no means met with a friendly welcome but with distrust and the generalised suspicion of „collaboration“.

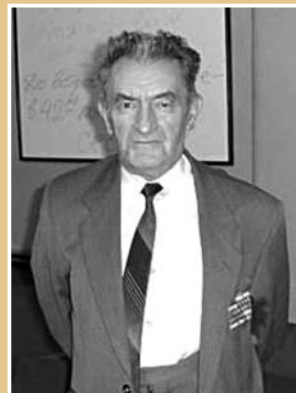
Many only exchanged the STALAG for the Soviet GULAG system. The onset of the Cold War and its concomitant hysterical fear of agents and saboteurs exacerbated the situation of returnees. In compliance with the Yalta agreements nearly all Soviet soldiers were forcefully repatriated. This taboo subject has only been looked into since the Gorbachev era.³¹

As former Russian soldier and prisoner of war Dmitri Lomonossow writes in his preface to his memoir³²:

For decades the belief was drilled into my compatriots that captured members of the Red Army had violated their oath and with their labour and participation had supported the enemy's military and industrial potential.

Many surviving POWs were subjected to unjust reprisals after the war. Others, who escaped this fate, were persecuted and mistreated for many years to come. Until 1956 the period of captivity was not recognised as wartime activity and service to the nation. The entry about my captivity in my military identity card automatically entailed further entries to the effect: no active service in war, no war wounds, irrespective of any lesions the body demonstrated.

Until the 1990s there existed restrictions regarding employment, admission to university, business opportunities and recreational trips, even to other Socialist countries.



It was not before 1995 that former POWs were finally rehabilitated and accorded equality with other Russian citizens. (Re „The Restitution of Rights to Russian citizens, former prisoners of war and those civilians who were repatriated during the Great Patriotic War and the post-war period.“) *

* Ukas of the President of the Russian Federation, January 1995, Nr. 63



Above: cenotaphs in the Russian cemetery

Below: Dedication of the memorial in the town cemetery (year unknown)

Memorials in the Russian Cemetery

In the years following the war several memorials were erected by the Soviet Army in memory of soldiers who perished in the camp. In the grove of the so-called Russian Cemetery those memorials commemorate the 3600 prisoners buried there, among them 3542 from the Soviet Union. Another memorial for 167 dead is situated in the municipal cemetery, besides the one near the swimming pool.



These memorials are maintained by the Austrian Black Cross and are accessible to visitors.



Prisoners of War according to national origin in „STALAG 317 (XVIII C) Markt Pongau“³³

Date	France	England	Belgium	Poland	Serbia	USSR	Italy	USA	Netherlands	Total	Forced labour
01/07/41	1,041				1,486					2,527	
01/08/41	399				2,172					2,605	2,367
01/09/41	7,916		46		2,276					10,238	10,126
01/12/41	11,311				6,119	2,677				20,107	16,853
01/05/42	10,028				5,521	1,322				16,871	13,734
01/06/42	9,533				5,219	851				15,603	13,761
01/08/42	9,286		163		5,039	527				15,014	13,914
01/10/42	9,090		163		4,971	5,179				19,403	18,200
01/12/42	8,818		163		4,956	5,343				19,280	18,325
01/03/43	8,503		160		4,984	5,253				18,900	17,648
01/05/43	8,179		161		4,955	6,019				19,314	18,407
01/06/43	8,151		161		4,958	6,109				19,379	18,300
01/08/43	7,895		160		4,874	5,921				18,850	16,228
01/09/43	7,900		161		4,861	5,343			200	18,465	15,653
01/10/43	7,920	1,255	161		4,873	5,290	2,754		199	22,452	16,198
01/05/44	7,755	566	161		4,847	6,735	2,582		54	22,700	18,482
01/06/44	7,721	581	160		4,845	6,568	2,423	42	54	22,394	18,200
01/09/44	8,739	779	292		4,755	6,698	2,417	35		23,715	18,346
01/10/44	8,710	841	293		4,762	6,830	67	35		21,538	16,148
01/11/44	8,757		292	600	4,762	7,000	59	967		22,437	16,553
01/12/44	8,951	982	293	997	4,783	7,009	52			23,067	16,881
01/01/45	8,939	990	293	980	4,779	7,000	48			23,029	

FOOTNOTES

- 11** The following account of the history of the camp is based on the following research papers: Stadler, Robert; Mooslechner, Michael (1986): St. Johann 1938-1945. Das nationalsozialistische „Markt Pongau“, Der „2. Juli 1944“ in Goldegg: Widerstand und Verfolgung. Salzburg: Eigenverlag.; Speckner, Hubert (1999): Kriegsgefangenenlager in der „Ostmark“ 1939-1945. Zur Geschichte der Mannschafstammlager und Offizierslager in den Wehrkreisen XVII und XVIII, Phil. Diss., Wien, Wien.; Dohle, Oskar; Slupetzky, Nicole (2005): Arbeiter für den Endsieg. Zwangsarbeit im Reichsgau Salzburg 1939-1945, Wien: Böhlau.; Mooslechner, Michael (1991): Das Kriegsgefangenenlager „Stalag Markt Pongau“, in: Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (Hrsg.): Widerstand und Verfolgung in Salzburg 1934-1945 (p. 528-555). Wien/Salzburg: ÖBV.
- 22** Report by Rudolph E. Denzler (Swiss Embassy / Department for Protecting Power Matters, Berlin) on the inspection of the Markt Pongau prisoner-of-war camp on 18 November 1943, O. D. DÖW E 21.089
- 3** Source: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/aetius/kg/KGGettiaux01.htm>
- 4** Source: www.btinternet.com/~stalag18a/
- 5** Further information on George Lynch: http://theindependent.com/Archive/053199/stories/053199/Fea_lynch31.html
- 6** This detailed report on everyday life in the camp is available at http://www.pegasus-one.org/pow/harold_padfield.htm
- 7** Conversation between Andreas Stadler and Louis Pichereau, a former prisoner of war, on his detention in STALAG Markt Pongau, Juli 1985
- 8** Conversation with Rupert Emberger 1986
- 9** Record by Franz Janiczek, Private archive Mooslechner/Stadler
- 10** One of the few available recollections by former Soviet soldiers of the war imprisonment: <http://ldb1.narod.ru/de>
- 11** Cf. Stelzl-Marx (2000) p. 40 f
- 12** Streit (1986), p. 74
- 13** Ibid. p. 75
- 14** Correspondence between the Municipality of St. Johann and the “Austrian Black Cross”, 18 February 1948 and 24 March 1953, as cited in Dohle/Slupetzky (2004), p. 158

- 15** Field Marshall General v. Reichenau's order to the 6th Army, as cited in Streit (1997), p. 379
- 16** Streit (1986), p. 79
- 17** Stelzl-Marx (2000), p. 46
- 18** Streit (1997), p. 73
- 19** Detailed legal account of important orders in the Russian campaign: Streim, Alfred (1981): Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im „Fall Barbarossa“. A documentary report, taking into account the documents of German law enforcement agencies and the materials of the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the investigation of National Socialist crimes, Heidelberg: C.F.Müller Juristischer Verlag.
- 20** Süß, Dietmar in http://de.encarta.msn.com/text_761563737___9/ Weltkrieg_Zweiter.html
- 21** As cited in: Wette, Wolfram (1996): „Rassenfeind“, Antisemitismus und Antislawismus in der Wehrmachtpropaganda, in: Walter Manoschek (Hrsg.): Die Wehrmacht im Rassenkrieg (p. 55-73). Wien: Picus.
- 22** Order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Group South, Field Marshall General von Reichenau of 10 October 1941 regarding the “Conduct of the troops in the Eastern region”, as cited in: Wette (1996), p. 66
- 23** Streit (1996), p. 83
- 24** Ibid. p. 86
- 25** Streit (1997), p. 224
- 26** Polian, Pavel (2001): Deportiert nach Hause. Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im „Dritten Reich“ und ihre Repatriierung. München/Wien. p. 29
- 27** Recording of the conversations in Foreign Relations 1942, III, p. 567f, 572. As cited in Streit (1997), p. 402.
- 28** Report by the Swiss Protecting Power Commission of 7. 5. 1945. Zit. Nach Speckner, (2003) p. 314-315
- 29** Source: www.btinternet.com/~stalag18a/
- 30** Ibid.
- 31** Recommended in this regard: Polian , (2001)
- 32** <http://ldb1.narod.ru/de>
- 33** 13 Inventory reports OKW/Abt. Kgf. bzw. Chef KGW. As cited in Speckner (1999), p. 238-240

LITERATURE

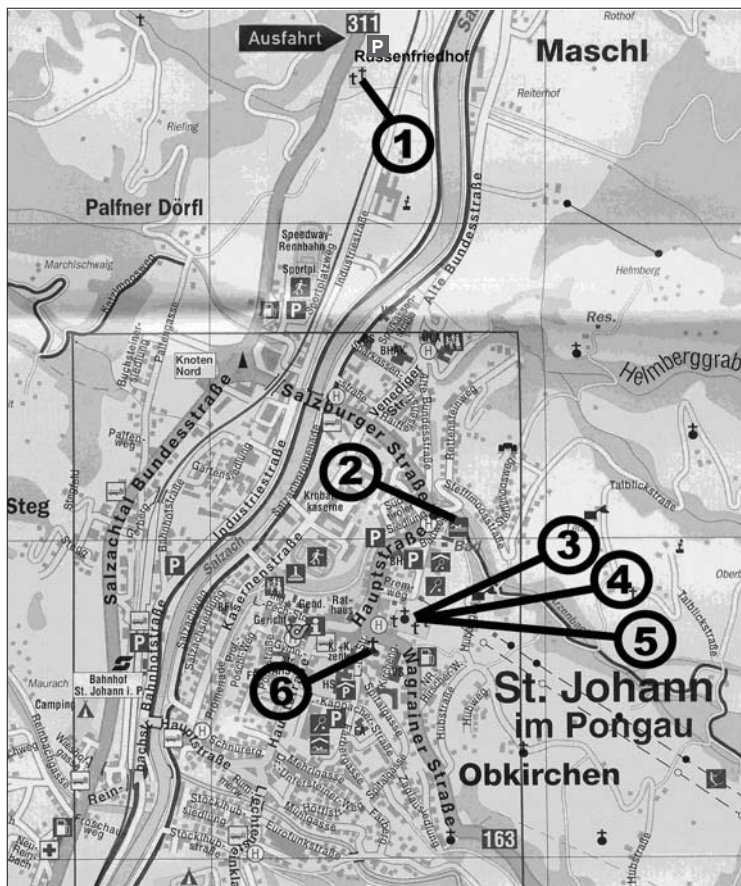
- Dohle, Oskar; Slupetzky, Nicole (2005): Arbeiter für den Endsieg. Zwangsarbeit im Reichsgau Salzburg 1939-1945, Wien: Böhlau.
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- Front page, p. 4, 5, 9, 10, 18, 23: Archiv Mooslechner/Stadler p. 6: www.germanmilitaria.com
p. 7 left: <http://perso.wanadoo.fr/aetius/kg/KGGettiaux01.htm>
p. 7 right: www.btinternet.com/~stalag18a/
p. 8 left: http://theindependent.com/Archive/053199/stories/053199/Fea_lynch31.html
p. 8 right top: http://www.pegasus-one.org/pow/harold_padfield.htm
p. 8 right bottom: www.pegasus-one.org
p. 12: Visitors' book of the Beck family, St. Johann/Pg. p. 16: www.btinternet.com/~stalag18a/
p. 17: <http://ldb1.narod.ru/de>

This personnel card was kindly provided to us by the Archive of STALAG 326 (VI K) Senne Documentation Centre. „Developed through an international joint project, financed by funds from the Commissioners of the Federal Republic of Germany for Culture and Media and funds from the Ministry of the Interior of the Federal Republic of Germany within the framework of the Joint Commission for Researching the Recent History of German-Russian Relations“.

Identifizierung des Gefangenenkartei Nr. <u>40412</u>		Klassifizierungsdaten u. a.		Kabinen-Nummern		Wohnort	
Name <u>Slabdin Nagorow</u>		Grund der Verhaftung		Geburtsort		Geburtsdatum	
Geburtsdatum <u>1915</u>		Grund der Verhaftung <u>Stalag XVIII B</u>		Grund der Verhaftung <u>Stalag XVIII C</u>		Grund der Verhaftung	
Charakteristika während der Haftzeitpunkte		Charakteristika		Charakteristika		Charakteristika	
Datum <u>23.03.42</u>		Grund der Verhaftung <u>Stalag XVIII B</u>		Grund der Verhaftung <u>Stalag XVIII C</u>		Grund der Verhaftung	
Kommandos		Kommandos		Kommandos		Kommandos	
Datum <u>13.06.42</u>		Grund der Verhaftung <u>Stalag XVIII C</u>		Grund der Verhaftung <u>Stalag XVIII C</u>		Grund der Verhaftung	

Identity card of Soviet prisoner of war Slabdin Nagorow, born 1915, agricultural worker. He was transferred to St. Johann from STALAG XVIII B (Oberdrauburg) on March 23, 1942. Died June 13, 1942, STALAG XVIII C (Markt Pongau). Cause of death: exhaustion.

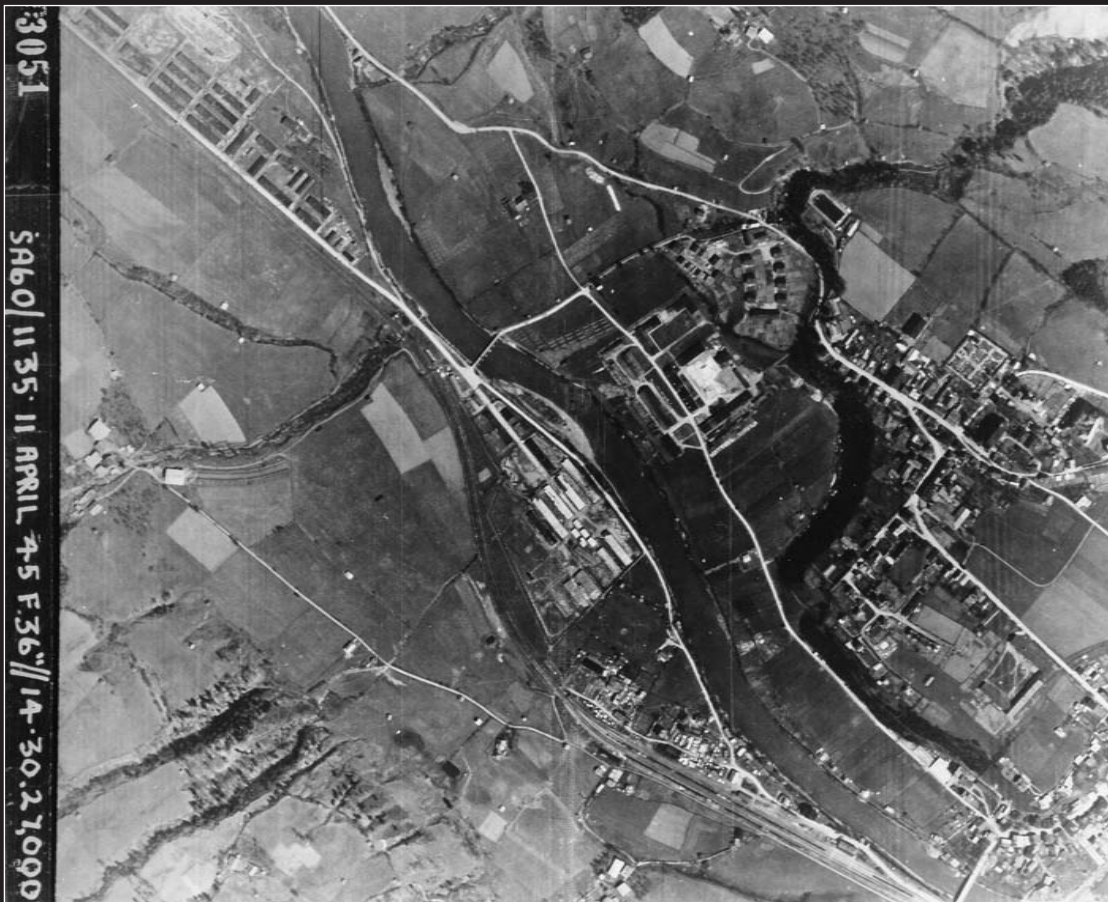
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Name: <u>Nagorow Slabdin</u>												Dienstgrad: <u>Soldat</u>											
Geburtsdatum: <u>1915</u>												Dienstzeit: <u>1935</u>											
Geburtsort: <u>Kubary</u>												Militärischer Dienstort: <u>Landsberg</u>											
Religion: <u>orth.</u>												Militärischer Dienstort: <u>Landsberg</u>											
Name des Vaters: <u>Alhas</u>												Ob gesund, krank, verwundet einget. ist: <u>ges</u>											
Familienname der Mutter: <u>Salazonia</u>												Ob gesund, krank, verwundet einget. ist: <u>ges</u>											
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Name und Wohnort der zu benachteiligten Person in der Heimat:												Name und Wohnort der zu benachteiligten Person in der Heimat:											
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Register of memorials commemorating the victims of National Socialism in St. Johann im Pongau

- 1) "Russenfriedhof" ("Russian Cemetery"): it is located on the road from Bischofshofen to St. Johann (B 311). Access: Going to Bischofshofen turn right about 500 metres north of St. Johann. Here you can park your car and walk to the Russian Cemetery where 3600 Russian and Serbian prisoners are buried. There you will also find several memorial stones and an information kiosk.
- 2) Memorial in honour of 3709 Soviet POWs.
Location: access road to the outdoor swimming pool behind the district council building (Bezirkshauptmannschaft)
- 3) Commemorative plaque in honour of resistance activists Alois and Theresia Buder and Kaspar Wind.
Location: right side of the entrance to the urn chapel in the town cemetery
- 4) Memorial to 167 Soviet soldiers buried in the town cemetery
Location: cemetery, incline
- 5) Marble plaque in memory of French POWs
Location: entrance to town cemetery, right side
- 6) Monstrance fashioned from scraps of sheet metal by French POWs in STALAG
Location: parsonage





St. Johann from the air.
RAF photo, April 11, 1945

Source: Air Photo Library, Department
of Geography, University of Keele,
ST5 5BG, England

Prisoner-of-War Camp STALAG XVIII C „Markt Pongau“