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# The Involvement of the Criminal Police in NS-Euthanasia



**SIMONE LOISTL,**  
*Historian, Memorial  
Site Hartheim Castle.*

Hartheim Castle, near Linz in Upper Austria, was one of six euthanasia centres<sup>1</sup> in the German Reich from 1940 to 1944. During “Aktion T4”<sup>2</sup>, people with disabilities and mental illnesses were murdered between May 1940 and August 1941. After the “Aktion” was stopped, operations at the “Hartheim Regional Centre” (“Landesanstalt Hartheim”)<sup>3</sup> went on, with the murder of inmates from the concentration camps at Mauthausen, Gusen, Dachau and Ravensbrück (“Special Treatment 14f13”<sup>4</sup>) and forced labourers continuing into the late autumn of 1944. A total of 30,000 people were murdered in a gas chamber in Hartheim during this period. One might initially be tempted to hold the medical sector responsible for organising Nazi euthanasia, but the fact that the police – in particular the criminal police – played a decisive role in all phases requires closer consideration.<sup>5</sup> The following article is intended to outline how diverse the involvement of the criminal police was by bringing together the current state of research on the criminal police with the history of the Hartheim killing centre and the murder of people who were accommodated in psychiatric institutions.

## IDEOLOGICAL BASIS

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the study of eugenics had spread from Great Britain around the world and underwent radicalisation in the German-speaking countries, especially after the First World War, in response to the huge losses of young men eligible for military service. Low-level propaganda was used to try to explain to the people the difference between “superior” and “inferior” members of a community, and thus strengthened this movement in society. With the coming to power of the National Socialists, who had embedded this theory in their ideology as “Racial Hygiene” (“Rassenhygiene”), the “Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily

Diseased Offspring” (or “Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses”) of 1933 created the possibility to obstruct people in their reproduction. Discussions on the killing of people viewed as “unworthy of life” – above all people with a mental and physical disability or mental illness – were already being held in the inter-war period. The shutting down of all democratic forces in the German Reich led to the realisation of the negative eugenic measures in their worst form. People who, in the interpretation of the National Socialists, could not be integrated into the “National Community” (“Volksgemeinschaft”) on the contrary “caused harm as ballast existences”, were denied the right to life.

## THE FIRST MURDERS IN POLAND AND THE REICH CRIMINAL POLICE OFFICE IN BERLIN

The first patients at psychiatric institutions were murdered shortly after the invasion of Poland by the police units that followed the Wehrmacht into the country.<sup>6</sup> The question as to why the executions took place remains unanswered, because it appears that the patients “were not in the focus of the preparations for the crimes”<sup>7</sup>. There is also no such instruction to act in this way in the units’ orders. “Were there ‘pragmatic’ reasons for murdering the occupants, perhaps with the argument that the building was needed or because they wanted to get rid of so-called useless eaters? Or was it rather the ideological primacy that followed familiar stratagems of inclusion and exclusion, also followed in the “Altreich” (Germany), and ultimately required the goal of a pure National Community?”<sup>8</sup> What can be reconstructed is that the murder of the patients at those institutions could be traced to the initiative of the regional Gauleiters and took place independently of the responsible bodies of the “T4”.<sup>9</sup> In October 1939, in the casemates of the former Fort VII in Posen (now Poznan), which was used by the National Socialists as an SS camp, patients were murdered with carbon monoxide for the first time. The chemist August Becker seemed to have been involved in this first “trial” of the method.<sup>10</sup> Becker worked at the Forensic Institute (Kriminaltechnischen Institut (KTI)) of the Reich Criminal Police (Reichskriminalpolizei) of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA)) in Berlin.

On 27 September 1939, the Criminal Police together with the Gestapo and the Security Service (SD) were merged into the RSHA, which was led first by Reinhard Heydrich and after his murder in 1942 by Ernst Kaltenbrunner.<sup>11</sup> “The RSHA [...]

was not a conventional police authority, but has to be seen as new type of institution, one that was directly connected with the national socialist idea of the ‘National Community’ (‘Volksgemeinschaft’). The Reich Security Main Office formed the conceptual and executive core of an ideologically orientated police force that understood its duties in political terms, aimed at the ‘racial purity’ of the German ‘National Body’ (‘Volkskörper’).”<sup>12</sup> Arthur Nebe<sup>13</sup> was appointed as head of Office V (Criminal Police), Paul Werner<sup>14</sup> as his deputy. Both belonged to that generation of criminal police officers who felt their opportunities for fighting crime had been curtailed in the Weimar Republic, and who accused the justice system of taking too lax an approach to crime. In a biologically defined society, the detective was to act as a “doctor on the National Body”<sup>15</sup> and be given the opportunity to “eradicate” the crime. The implementation of this requirement, which had already been represented by certain groups within the police since the 1920s, seemed to move within reach due to the seizure of power by the National Socialists. Crime was defined as something hereditary. The seeming passing down of “criminal assets” over generations should now be stopped through preventive measures, and the “Criminal Biological Institutes” (“Kriminalbiologischen Institute”)<sup>16</sup> were required to support these theories and use the results of their research to justify their methods.

### “AKTION T4”

Given this basic ideological understanding of the criminal police and the professional competence, it is not surprising that those in charge of “T4” approached this office to consult on the method of killing used in Nazi euthanasia. A few months before the outbreak of war, planning for the euthanasia action later known as “Aktion

T4” got under way. An authorisation drafted at a later date by Adolf Hitler on his personal letterhead states “that incurably ill people can be granted a mercy death if their illness is assessed as critical”.<sup>17</sup> Reichsleiter Phillip Bouhler, Chief of the Chancellery of the Führer (KdF), and the physician Dr Karl Brandt were tasked with organising this. The senior officer of the euthanasia campaign was Viktor Brack, who worked in the KdF. The Reich Justice Minister of the time, Dr Franz Gürtner, held on for a long time to a demand for a corresponding law, but after receiving a copy of the authorisation from Brack in August 1940, he accepted “the ‘will of the Führer’ as a ‘source of law’”.<sup>18</sup> Subsequently, several prosecutors were informed, and in April 1941 the remaining high-ranking officers of the justice system were informed in the “Haus der Flieger” in Berlin – nobody raised any objections.

The head of the chemical department at the KTI, Dr Albert Widmann, was, according to his own statements, appointed to the euthanasia campaign in autumn 1939 by Arthur Nebe during a meeting with representatives of the KdF. Widmann reported on this meeting in an interrogation after the end of the Second World War: “During the conversation, the first question my head of office [Nebe] asked was: ‘Widmann, can the KTI procure large quantities of poison?’ To which I asked: ‘What for? For killing people?’ The answer I received: ‘No,’ [...] My question: ‘For killing animals?’ Answer: ‘No.’ My question: ‘So what for?’ Answer: ‘For killing animals in human form, by which I mean the mentally ill, who can no longer be called human beings and who can never be expected to recover.’”<sup>19</sup> Widmann recommended using gas instead of medicines or poisons – specifically carbon monoxide (CO). The “T4 Headquarters” may have learned about the trials in Posen through Becker or other

channels. It seemed likely that they were the reason for the decision to opt for the gas recommended by Widmann. In the first few days of January 1940, the first “trial gassing” under the Nazi euthanasia programme took place in Brandenburg an der Havel in the presence of Widmann, Becker and leading persons of the T4 organisation – the later office manager of Hartheim, Christian Wirth, is also thought to have been present.<sup>20</sup> However, the fact that everyone was already sure of the method was proven just 14 days later when a second killing centre opened in Grafeneck. Becker subsequently became responsible for the technical affairs of the centres and travelled to them to carry out maintenance and train the doctors in charge.<sup>21</sup> The KTI was also responsible for procuring the gases from I.G.-Farben in Ludwigsburg and distributing them to the institutions.<sup>22</sup>

To this day, it remains difficult to fully reconstruct why Hartheim Castle was selected as a killing centre. Those in power locally seem to have influenced the decision through their connections. The castle was also remote, although it had good transport connections to Linz.

The Renaissance castle was gifted in 1896 by the Starhemberg family to the Upper Austrian State Welfare Society for the creation of a nursing home for people with disabilities. The institution, which as opened in 1898 on the fiftieth jubilee of Emperor Franz Joseph I, was run by the Merciful Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul (Barmherzige Schwestern vom Hl. Vinzenz von Paul), who took care of around 200 mentally and multiply disabled people, mainly from Upper Austria. After the “Anschluss” in 1938, the association was expropriated and the castle transferred to the Reichsgau Upper Danube. As a result, the sisters and the people they cared for had to leave the building and were distributed amongst

other institutions in Upper Austria.<sup>23</sup> Immediately after the castle had been vacated, work on its conversion began in March 1940 with the installation of the killing facilities. The murders began in May 1940.

At the top of each centre's hierarchy was the medical director. In the case of Hartheim Castle that was the Linz psychiatrist Dr Rudolf Lonauer, who was also the director the regional psychiatric and care institution in Linz.<sup>24</sup> His deputy was Dr Georg Renno, who hailed from Alsace.<sup>25</sup> Both also functioned as consultants to the "T4 Headquarters". The data needed for the logistics of "Aktion T4" were supplied by a survey of the people in the institutions, either through feedback forms or committees of consultants held on site. The forms had to be filled out by the staff and returned.<sup>26</sup> In Berlin, transport lists were drawn up on the basis of the consultants' decisions. These lists were then used to collect the patients from the care facilities and take them to the killing centres by train and/or bus. The victims were told they were being relocated, which is why all their belongings and medical files were taken along on the transports, which were accompanied by nurses. The task of the medical director was to "examine" the victims again on site, in order to preserve the appearance of being readmitted, to check their identity, as well as to establish a fictitious cause of death. It was also the doctor's responsibility to open the gas tap.<sup>27</sup> Contrary to some reports, the doctors (not the office managers) were the superiors of the nurses who worked in the centre.<sup>28</sup> In addition to accompanying the transports, their task was to undress the patients after their arrival in Hartheim, present them to the doctor for the examination and take them to the gas chamber, which was disguised as a shower room.

Apart from the medical director, there were also the office managers. In Hartheim,

these were the criminal police officer Christian Wirth and his deputy and later successor Franz Reichleitner. Detective Superintendent Christian Wirth from Baden-Württemberg was already deployed as an office manager in Brandenburg and Grafeneck, before he moved to Hartheim.<sup>29</sup> Franz Reichleitner and his deputy Franz Stangl, also a criminal police officer, had met while training together in 1935. Unlike his deputy Stangl, little is known about Reichleitner, who hailed from Steyr in Upper Austria. Franz Stangl, born in 1908, grew up in Ebensee in Upper Austria and completed an apprenticeship in weaving.<sup>30</sup> Like many others at the time, doubts about his future job opportunities probably led him to strive for a career in the police, in the hope of being able to build up a secure existence for himself.<sup>31</sup> Contrary to his later assertions, there is much to indicate that Stangl was already working actively for the National Socialists from 1934 onwards.<sup>32</sup> That also underscores his recruitment to "T4", which selected trustworthy and ideally "long-serving" National Socialists for the action. A personal recommendation on the part of Reichleitner is also suspected.<sup>33</sup> According to Stangl's own account, he was ordered to Berlin and informed by Paul Werner about the euthanasia action, and then inducted into his new position in the headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse 4.<sup>34</sup> The office manager and his deputy were responsible for keeping everything secret from the outside world and ensuring everything ran smoothly. Upon his arrival, the staff<sup>35</sup> were informed about his tasks and the purpose of the "Hartheim Regional Institution" by the office manager and sworn to secrecy.<sup>36</sup>

In Hartheim, a special registry office was set up which certified the deaths and kept a book of urns.<sup>37</sup>

Correspondence with the dispensing institution, cost units and relatives was carried



**Figure 1: Photograph taken in front of the castle at a wedding of staff of the euthanasia centre (1940)<sup>38</sup>**

out by the “Hartheim Regional Institution”, with additional means of deception being used to this end. Files were exchanged between the euthanasia centres to enable certification of the victims’ deaths in places other than their actual place of death. The death dates were also falsified. The aims behind this falsification included stopping relatives from going on long journeys to make further inquiries at the institutions. A local police station was also set up in the castle. Stangl reported having been promoted for the office in order to rank above the head of the gendarmerie post in Alkoven (responsible for the village of Hartheim). Stangl, who had since moved from the criminal police to the Gestapo in accordance with common practice, also joined the uniformed department.<sup>39</sup> The uniform was intended to underscore authority and was probably for the external effect. There was no security at the castle – there was probably no need for it due to the nature of the building. The inside of the castle could not be seen from outside, and the building was also surrounded on three sides by farm buildings and a wall. After the little buses initially used for the transports were replaced by larger ones of the Reichspost, which no longer fitted through the gate of the farm building, a shed, into

which the buses could drive and the gates locked behind them, was built on the west side of the premises. The “Grey Buses”, as they were later called, had tinted windows to prevent anyone from looking in – or out. If external persons wanted to enter the castle, they had to ring the bell on the gate of the farm building. A sign was affixed here, which read: “Due to the danger of disease, relatives may only be visited with special permission and only when escorted by a member of the care staff.”<sup>40</sup> Someone posing as a porter would come to the gate and pretend to answer questions seriously; however, access was ultimately refused.

Although Hartheim Castle was in a remote location, there was still a small village right next to the castle – an inn, a general store, a bakery and several farms. From one of these farms, which belonged to the Schuhmann family, which was active in the resistance against the Nazi regime, a photograph was taken of the castle with smoke rising from the crematorium furnace – an image that has since become an icon of Nazi euthanasia.

Over time, personal connections between the local residents and the staff appear to have deepened. At the beginning, however, everything was very distanced. When the first rumours about what had actually taken place in the castle started circulating, Wirth called a meeting in Gasthof Trauner (in the neighbouring village of Alkoven), at which he concealed the true purpose of the centre and threatened the local population with consequences, should further “rumours” be spread.<sup>41</sup>

The office manager was also responsible for the correct administration of the victims’ personal items of luggage and belongings. At their express request, the relatives had the estate, i.e. objects owned by the victims, returned to them. In many cases, however, the belongings of the murdered remained in the castle. Hermann

Source: Karl Schuhmann



**Figure 2: Hartheim Castle with smoke rising from the crematorium furnace**

Merta, a male nurse at the time, noted the following: “The clothes, underwear and other effects that belonged to the mentally disabled who had no relatives were distributed to me and other people who worked there. From [...] Wirt (sic!), I received 2 suits, 5–6 men’s shirts, 2 pairs of underwear, 3 pairs of men’s shoes, 2 pairs of ladies’ shoes, a few ladies’ dresses, approximately 12 handkerchiefs. Other than that, I received nothing.”<sup>42</sup> If the objects – like the clothing mentioned here – were handed out by the office manager, that was viewed internally as a correct procedure. The unauthorised appropriation by staff of effects from the victims’ estate was prosecuted and punished by the criminal police. In the event of such investigations, the local office manager was also taken to task.<sup>43</sup> Theft was “officially” not tolerated and did not match up with the oft-quoted “decent” comrade of the

people.<sup>44</sup> Items of value had to be sent to the headquarters by courier, as did gold teeth, which were pulled from the victims after their death. The KTI was in turn charged with the utilisation of the teeth, the extraction of the gold.<sup>45</sup>

### “SPECIAL TREATMENT 14f13”

When Hitler ordered the cessation of “Aktion T4” on 24 August 1941, around 18,000 people had already been murdered in Hartheim. However, after “T4” was stopped, inmates unfit for work were taken from the concentration camps at Mauthausen, Gusen, Dachau and Ravensbrück to Hartheim and murdered as part of “Special Treatment 14f13” from August 1941 to autumn 1944. Reichsführer SS and head of the German police, Heinrich Himmler, approached the head of the KdF, Phillip Bouhler, at the beginning of 1941 with the question: “How could the capacities of T4 be used for the concentration camps?”<sup>46</sup> After the two men agreed on the killing of inmates, the coordination of “Special Treatment 14f13” was transferred to “T4”.<sup>47</sup> Certification of the death was no longer performed by the killing centres, but by the concentration camps themselves. Nurses were therefore no longer needed, which is why staff at Hartheim were made redundant or assigned other tasks. No longer were there any criminal police officers on site either, although they had already played the decisive role in the fate of this group of victims. Admissions to concentration camps were actually often carried out by the criminal police, including through the “Crime Prevention Act” (“Gesetz zur vorbeugenden Verbrechensbekämpfung”).

The collaboration between the Reich Criminal Police Office and the health authorities should also be mentioned in this context. In September 1939, the health authorities issued the directive “given the

general safeguarding measures in times of war,” for people declared mentally ill who appeared “suspicious”, “who cause unrest among the population”, to be taken into preventive custody as “criminal psychopaths”.<sup>48</sup> In autumn 1942, this group of victims once again came into focus in connection with admissions to a concentration camp. In cooperation with the Reich Justice Ministry, a survey was done on the “criminally insane” still living in the sanatoria and care institutions. The task of the two former “T4” consultants commissioned with this survey was to register such persons for transport “who were fit for work and appraised ‘as no longer in need of treatment in a lunatic asylum’”.<sup>49</sup> The people destined for the concentration camps were frequently collected by the criminal police. Not to be underestimated in this selection process is the role of the institution’s doctors, whose evaluations had a big impact on whether someone stayed or was transported.

### “DECENTRALISED EUTHANASIA”

As in many other psychiatric institutions, the end of “Aktion T4” in August 1941 also marked the beginning of the phase of so-called “Decentralised Euthanasia” in the Niedernhart regional psychiatric and care institution in Linz, which saw patients murdered through the combination of cutting food rations and administering overdoses of medicines. The barbiturates<sup>50</sup> used for these killings were initially administered orally and later intravenously. The death rate in Niedernhart rose sharply at the end of 1941 and remained high until the military conscription of Rudolf Lonauer, the medical director.<sup>51</sup> The KTI was also involved in the procurement of barbiturates from the outset. In the early summer of 1939, newborn babies, children and adolescents (up to 16 years of age) with disabilities were murdered in

hospitals in so-called “specialist children’s departments”.

As it was not so easy for the KdF to procure the necessary quantities of medicines, it turned to the RSHA and Office V. Arthur Nebe commissioned the KTI with the procurement of the preparations – which also specifically included the Chemistry section headed up by Albert Widmann. The first delivery of medicines by the KTI took place at the beginning of 1940.<sup>52</sup> Following the decentralisation of euthanasia in the hospitals from 1941, demand rose further, but “with the expansion of the war, the KTI was able to receive a wide range of poisons from the health office of the Waffen-SS [...] without any problem”.<sup>53</sup> According to sources, the supply of medicines was thus assured until the end of the war. The KTI forwarded the medicines either to the KdF for distribution or sent them directly to the relevant institutions.<sup>54</sup>

### THE GAS VANS

Another development of the KTI was the gas vans. “The gas, which was fatal for the van’s occupants, was introduced from CO cylinders into an airtight, enclosed trailer coupled to a tractor unit. Unlike the stationary gas chambers, this method no longer required taking the victims to the killing site. The advantage to the perpetrators of the killing machines, which bore the inscription “Kaiser’s Kaffee Geschäft” (“Kaiser’s Coffee Business”) probably for reasons of deception, was that they could be driven from care institution to care institution as required to pick up their victims. [...] Its use was tailored to the SS ‘Special Commando’ specially created for the purpose under the leadership of the Crime Commissioner and SS-Untersturmführer Herbert Lange.”<sup>55</sup> The Special Commando killed several thousand patients from Polish institutions between January 1940 and July 1941. Following

the attack on the Soviet Union, Heinrich Himmler was personally present at shootings of people with mental disabilities in Ukraine. Himmler commissioned Arthur Nebe, who was also present, to search for a “more humane method of killing”, although he mainly made reference to the “stress” experienced by the execution squad.<sup>56</sup> And so this resulted in the development of a “second generation” of gas van,<sup>57</sup> into which the exhaust gases were piped instead of carbon monoxide (CO). As it was virtually impossible to transport sufficient quantities of CO cylinders to areas of the Soviet Union in which the task forces were active, the KTI had to find an alternative. The method of killing using exhaust gases was first tested not in a lorry trailer, but in a completely bricked up room in the sanatorium in Mogilew, into which several patients had been locked.<sup>58</sup> The “new” gas vans were put into use in the second half of November 1941.<sup>59</sup>

### “OPERATION REINHARD”

The method of killing using the exhaust gases of running vehicle engines was also used in “Operation Reinhard”. This closes the circle with “Aktion T4” and the people who worked in the killing centres. “Operation Reinhard” saw the construction in Poland of three extermination camps: Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. The construction and management of the camps and the organisation of the killings drew upon the experience and know-how of the “T4” staff.

In February 1964, Simon Wiesenthal sent a letter to the then Austrian justice minister Christian Broda, in which he described Hartheim as the “school of murder”, at which the perpetrators of “Operation Reinhard” had learned their craft.<sup>60</sup> If one looks at the commandants of the camps, this statement is totally justified: Franz Stangl ran Sobibor and Treblin-

ka, Franz Reichleitner was his successor in Sobibor, and Christian Wirth started out in Belzec, before he was made inspector of all three camps.<sup>61</sup> Apart from these leading positions, many other former employees from the six euthanasia centres numbered among the staff at the time.<sup>62</sup> The rotation of staff was planned by the headquarters of “T4” with Heinrich Himmler and the SS and police chief Odilo Globocnik in Lublin district<sup>63</sup>. “The ‘euthanasia’ personnel sent to Lublin for Operation Reinhard consisted entirely of men. [...] The men were under Globocnik’s direct command, but formally they remained employees of ‘Aktion T4’. ‘T4’ officials took care of all staffing matters for the new ‘Reinhard’ recruits, including pay and social security benefits.”<sup>64</sup> In Belzec, CO cylinders were still used for the gassing at the beginning; later on, they changed to using the exhaust gases from running vehicle engines. This practice for operating the gas chambers was used at all three camps. From March 1942 until the closure of the camps in autumn 1943, 1.7 million Jews, Roma and Sinti were murdered in the camps. The personnel of “Operation Reinhard” were then relocated to Trieste and placed under the command of Christian Wirth, because the National Socialists had unfettered access to the Jewish population following the collapse of the regime in Italy. Units led by Stangl, Reichleitner and others brought the Jewish population to the new established San Sabba camp, a former rice mill, in which a gas chamber and crematorium had been built.<sup>65</sup> The number of victims of the camp, which was also used as a police detention camp and collection centre for transports to Auschwitz, is difficult to determine accurately because of gaps in the records. It is assumed to be several thousand people.<sup>66</sup> Christian Wirth and Franz Reichleitner were both killed in Italy in 1944. Franz Stangl managed to flee to

Brazil after the war. He was extradited in 1967 and sentenced to life in prison for his part in “Operation Reinhard”. The agreed extradition to Austria, where proceedings were planned in connection with his position in Hartheim, never came about, as Stangl died in prison in 1971.

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATION

For a relatively long time, the criminal police was able to maintain its image as a non-political, strictly law-focused unit – as part of the conglomerate of the felonious

police service dominated by the SS, above all the Gestapo office, which was also based in the RSHA. More recent research decisively demolishes this image to reveal the unbelievable extent to which the criminal police developed, planned and acted. The intertwining of the history of Nazi euthanasia with that of the criminal police is a complex set of issues that has been and will be accorded increasing attention in the research work of Hartheim Castle – Place for Learning and Remembrance

<sup>1</sup> *Apart from Hartheim, these were Bernburg, Brandenburg, Grafeneck, Hadamar and Pirna-Sonnenstein.*

<sup>2</sup> *Named after the location of the headquarters at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin.*

<sup>3</sup> *In the context of correspondence in the designation given in the letterhead during the Nazi period.*

<sup>4</sup> *The file number “14f13” was used in the administration of the concentration camps. “14f” stood for the death of a inmate, the number that followed for the cause of death – “13” stood for the murder of inmates who were ill, disabled or selected for other reasons. Cf. Schwanninger 2013, 158.*

<sup>5</sup> *The criminal police succeeded in presenting itself as a non-political and integral part of the police for a very long time after 1945. The breaking open of this narrative by the historic research carried out since the mid-1990s clearly revealed the role of the criminal police during the Nazi period. Cf. Roth 2011, 44.*

<sup>6</sup> *Numerous criminal police officers numbered in their ranks. Ibid., 51.*

<sup>7</sup> *Parzer 2019, 63 f.*

<sup>8</sup> *Parzer 2015.*

<sup>9</sup> *Section: The murder of ill people in the occupied or annexed areas of Poland and the Soviet Union. Cf. Loose n.y., online: <https://www.gedenkort-t4.eu/de/wissen/aktion-t4> (10.08.2021).*

<sup>10</sup> *Ley 2011, 94.*

<sup>11</sup> *Cf. Wildt 2019, 7 f.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid., 7.*

<sup>13</sup> *For the biography of Arthur Nebe, cf. Wagner 1996, 183 f.*

<sup>14</sup> *Cf. Friedlander 1997, 107.*

<sup>15</sup> *Wagner 2002, 12.*

<sup>16</sup> *For the work of the Criminal Biology Institute, cf. e.g. Bachhiesl 2005.*

<sup>17</sup> *Klee 2018, 114 f. The authorisation bears the date of 1 September 1939; in all actuality, it was probably formulated in October and back-dated. Volker Rieß writes: “Although Hitler had already given a verbal instruction before the outbreak of war, the back-dating to the start of the war makes sense. On the one hand, this was supposed to symbolise a paradigm shift; on the other, it also centrally legitimised the ongoing or imminent killing of ill people in occupied Poland.”*

*Cf. Rieß 2010, 127.*

<sup>18</sup> *Wachsmann 2004, 345.*

<sup>19</sup> *Questioning of the remand detainee Dr Albert Widmann on 19.05.1960, SK. ZSt. III/-23/60, HHStA Wiesbaden, 631a/310a, Sheet 11–16, here Sheet 12. Quoted after Ley 2011, 91.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid., 95. For the biography of Christian Wirth, cf. Rieß 2004, 239–251.*

<sup>21</sup> *Cf. Friedlander 1997, 340.*

<sup>22</sup> *Cf. Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv (OÖLA), Landesgericht Linz, 15 VR 363/64 Korrespondenzen über die Beschaffung von CO-Flaschen bzw. Medikamenten. This contains correspondence on the procurement of CO cylinders for Hartheim and also later for medicines used for decentralised euthanasia in Niedernhart.*

<sup>23</sup> *Cf. Kepplinger 2013, 63 f.*

<sup>24</sup> *For the biography of Rudolf Lonauer, cf. Loistl 2019, 89–116.*

<sup>25</sup> *For the biography of Georg Renno, cf. Horsinga-Renno 2006; Kohl 2000.*

<sup>26</sup> *Cf. Scholta/Rittmannsberger 1988, 33; Kohl 2000, 89.*

<sup>27</sup> *Cf. Kepplinger 2013, 70.*

- <sup>28</sup> Cf. OÖLA, LG Linz, Sondergerichte, VG 8 Vr 2407/46, *Beschuldigtenvernehmung Franz Sitter*, 20.03.1947. Male nurse Franz Sitter was the only one of more than 70 employees in 1940–1944 who refused to participate in the killings in Hartheim. He was relocated back to the psychiatric and care institution in Ybbs and later conscripted into the medical service. Cf. Eigelsberger 2019, 128.
- <sup>29</sup> Christian Wirth was subsequently appointed to a higher position than the office managers of the institution and was responsible for supervising all of them.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Gürtler 2019, 79.
- <sup>31</sup> Cf. Hesztera 2010, 21.
- <sup>32</sup> Cf. Gürtler 2019, 83.
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. *ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> Cf. Sereny 1995, 55–57.
- <sup>35</sup> Apart from the nurses, these were the secretaries who handled the correspondence, photographers who depicted selected victims, the vehicle drivers who drove the buses, the crematorium operators who were responsible for burning the bodies, a cook, building services engineers and staff who worked in the kitchen and laundry. Located on the upper floors of the castle were offices and the dining room, as well as staff apartments. The killing rooms were on the ground floor.
- <sup>36</sup> Cf. OÖLA, LG Linz, Sondergerichte, VG 8 Vr 2407/46 *Beschuldigtenvernehmung Franz Sitter*, 20.03.1947; *Aussage Hermine Gruber*, 26.09.1945.
- <sup>37</sup> The victims' bodies were burned in a purpose-built crematorium in Hartheim. Cf. Friedlander 1997, 171.
- <sup>38</sup> Wedding of Elisabeth Gust and Josef Vallaster on 6 September 1940. From left: Christian Wirth (witness), Franz Reichleitner, Elisabeth Gust (nurse), Josef Vallaster (crematorium operator) and Gertrude Blanke (witness; senior nurse). The majority of those employed in Hartheim also lived in apartments in the castle and thus made new acquaintances, some of them also falling in love, like this married couple. NARA II.
- <sup>39</sup> Cf. Sereny 1995, 57 f.
- <sup>40</sup> Letter from Gerda Zappe to her father of 17.08.1940. Private ownership. Copy in the Documentation Centre Hartheim.
- <sup>41</sup> Cf. Kepplinger 2003, 110.
- <sup>42</sup> OÖLA, LG Linz, Sondergerichte, VG 8 Vr 2407/46 *Aussage Hermann Merta* 23.09.1945.
- <sup>43</sup> Cf. Bundesarchiv, Berlin, Bestand R 179/5619 *Krankenakt mit eingelegtem Polizeibericht*.
- <sup>44</sup> Cf. the so-called Posen Speech of 4 October 1943 made by Reichsführer SS and head of the German police Heinrich Himmler. Wachsmann 2016, 436.
- <sup>45</sup> Cf. Friedlander 1997, 339.
- <sup>46</sup> Cf. Schwanninger 2013, 160 f.
- <sup>47</sup> However, executive staff are found in this phase of the euthanasia not only as perpetrators, but also as victims. Ludwig Becchinie von Lazan, a high-ranking gendarmerie officer in the inter-war period, was arrested as a political opponent of the National Socialists following the "Anschluss" in 1938 and interned in a concentration camp. He passed through several camps, and his family's efforts to have him released were in vain. In summer 1941, he was taken to the Pirna-Sonnenstein euthanasia centre by a so-called transport for "invalids" and murdered. Cf. the biography of Ludwig Becchinie von Lazan (1879–1941) in Böhm/Schulze 2003, 130–148. The biography of Becchinie is also dealt with in the educational programme of Hartheim Castle – Place for Learning and Remembrance developed for police trainees, which was conceived in cooperation and with the support of teaching staff at the education centres of the Security Academy (SIAK). A five-hour programme spent pouring over biographies produces an approach to the history of the Nazi euthanasia centre at Hartheim Castle and the history of the police in the Nazi state. Light is shed on both political structures and developments and on decisive key moments in the lives of victims and perpetrators working for the police. The focus is established on the tour of the exhibition and memorial site, as well as a through topic-specific work done in small groups.
- <sup>48</sup> RKP decree of 12.09.1939. Quote after Wagner 1996, 331.
- <sup>49</sup> Wachsmann 2004, 347.
- <sup>50</sup> Barbiturates were originally used as sleeping pills and sedatives.
- <sup>51</sup> From this point of time, from September 1943 onwards, the death rate sank to pre-war levels.
- <sup>52</sup> Cf. Friedlander 1997, 108.
- <sup>53</sup> Wildt 2002, 328.
- <sup>54</sup> Cf. Friedlander 1997, 108.
- <sup>55</sup> Beer 2011, 157.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 161.
- <sup>60</sup> Cf. Segev 2012, 247.
- <sup>61</sup> Cf. Heberer 2011, 166.
- <sup>62</sup> According to Sara Berger, 120 men were transferred. Cf. Berger 2013, 9.
- <sup>63</sup> For the function of Odilo Globocnik, cf. Perz 2019, 31–59.
- <sup>64</sup> Heberer 2011, 169.
- <sup>65</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 174 f.
- <sup>66</sup> Cf. San Sabba Rice Mill National Monument and Museum

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