



MINISTÈRE DE LA DÉFENSE

Direction régionale des Anciens combattants et victimes de guerre d'Alsace
(*Alsace regional administration of War Veterans and War Victims*)

Centre européen du résistant déporté (*European Centre on Resistance and Deportation*)

TEACHING FILE

What is a concentration camp? The example of KL-Natzweiler

Levels: Y10 and Y12-13

Teachers,

This file is designed to accompany your pupils during their visit to the historic site of the former Natzweiler concentration camp, generally known as “Struthof camp”.

The answers to the questions posed to both middle-school and high-school students can be found in the exhibition spaces, some in the European Centre on Resistance and Deportation and especially inside the former camp.

Nevertheless, do not hesitate to use this file in class to prepare or complete your visit.

The questions will be tackled both chronologically and by theme. You are recommended to work through the file from start to finish to obtain a better understanding of the Nazi concentration camp system through the example of KL-Natzweiler.

The quotations given in red throughout the file are designed to encourage a spirit of reflection and vigilance with the teenagers.

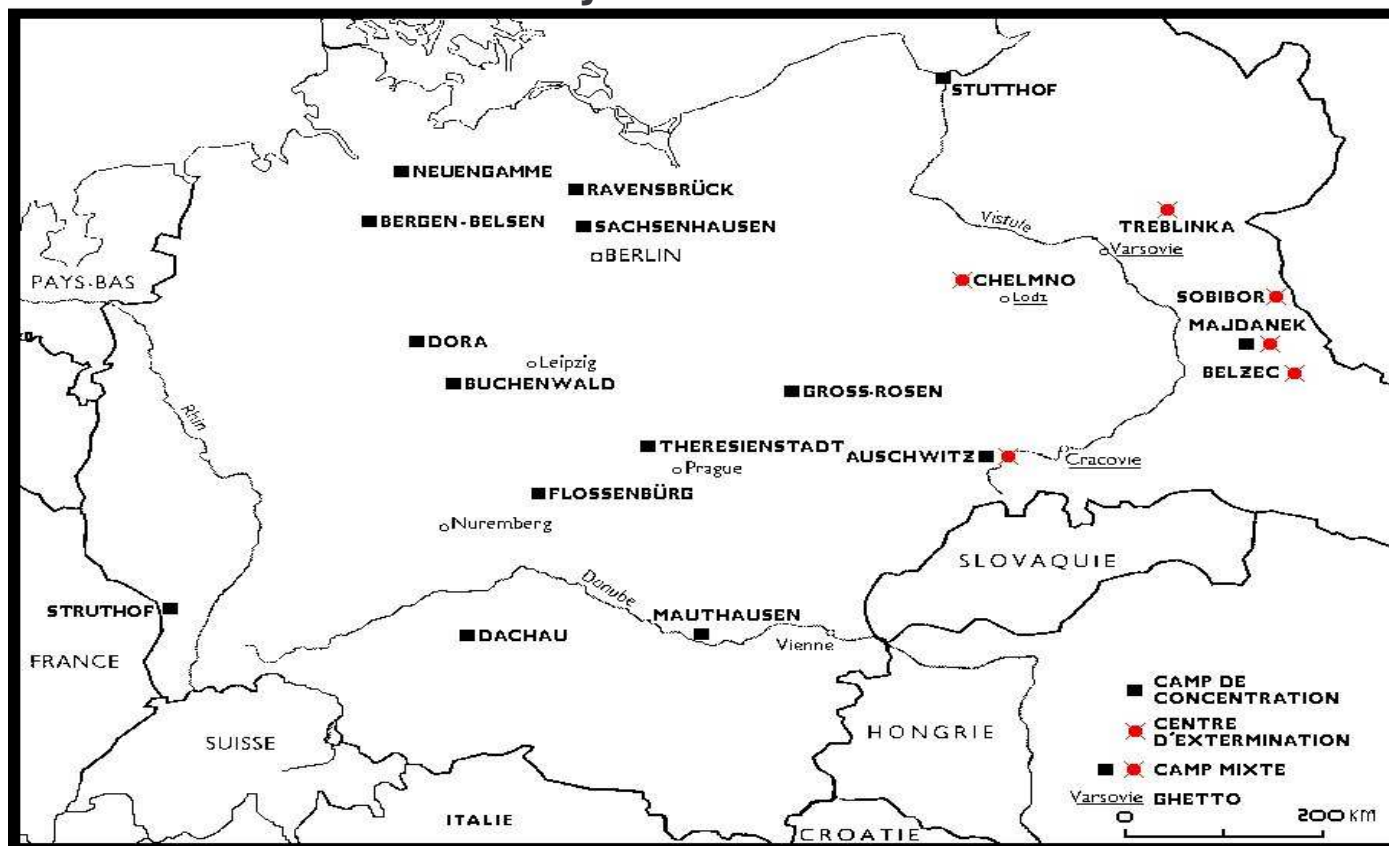
We thank you for your interest in this document and remain at your disposal for any further information
by phone **+33 (0)3 88 47 44 52 or 58**
by e-mail **pedagogie@struthof.fr**

You want to visit the European Centre on Resistance and Deportation and the historic site of the camp
Booking is mandatory
by phone **+33 (0)3 88 47 44 57**
by e-mail **resa.groupes@struthof.fr**

In the darkness of this exterminating regime, our history has been a flame which gave the world its humanist brightness.

Roger MONTY,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee

The Nazi concentration system



Indicate the dates when the camps shown on this map opened:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Why and by whom were the camps opened from 1933?

.....

.....

Who were the prisoners of these first camps?

.....

.....

I learned how to withstand without reacting pain that would have been intolerable for a normal human being, but I also learned to appreciate small pleasures: a ray of sunshine, light playing on the mountainside, a few moments of peaceful sleep ...

Jean LEGER,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee

From Struthof to KL-Natzweiler

The site before creation of the camp
1900-1940



Private collection

What was “The Struthof” before the Second World War? What did people do there?



Struthof museum collection



Where is it? At what altitude? What is its orientation?

.....

.....

Keeping one's eyes open requires an effort and shakes our comfortable beliefs.

Marie-José CHOMBART DE LAUWE
Resistance fighter
deported to Ravensbrück and Mauthausen

1940 – 1941

After what events were the frontiers between France and Germany modified?

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.....

.....

What happened to Alsace and Moselle in 1940?

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.....

Why do we speak of “de facto” annexation?

.....

.....

What did the Nazi expect the Alsace and Moselle populations to do?

.....

.....

What does this Nazi propaganda poster encourage people to do?

.....

.....



Strasbourg town archives collection

*What is worse than oblivion?
In the same way as there are crimes against humanity,
there are crimes against memory.*

Elie WIESEL,
Survivor of the Nazi camps, Nobel Peace Prize

What is forced enrolment? What were the men enrolled called?

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.....
.....

What happened to those who refused to be enrolled in the Wehrmacht?

.....
.....

In the exhibition, find the example of young men who refused to accept forced enrolment

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.....
.....
.....

Which village did they come from? Where were they executed on 17 February 1943?

.....
.....

V. DRECHSLER photograph

**“Those who will admire the natural beauty of this peak will never believe that this mountain is cursed, for having been a scene of hell for free men”
Léon BOUTBIEN, deportee**

Creation of the camp 1941



Struthof museum collection



photograph by Lucien Kohler, Struthof museum collection

What work was required to set up the camp on the side of Mont Louise?
When did it start?

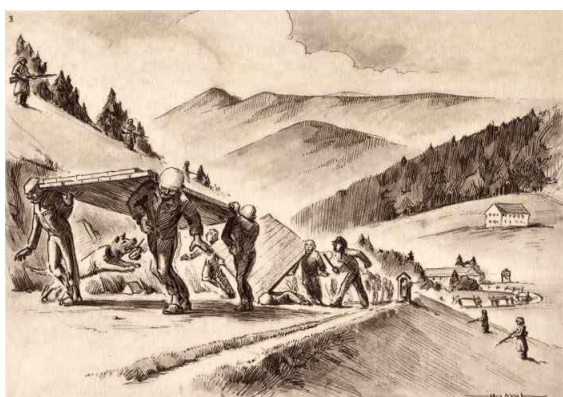
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What is special about the way the barracks were laid out?

.....
.....

Who did the work? Under what conditions?

.....
.....
.....



Engraving by Henri Gayot, Struthof museum collection

Where did these people live before February 1942?

.....
.....

*No man can be seen,
Only shadows in striped clothes.*

**Lobel KLEIN,
Deported to Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Dora**

Why did the Nazis want to open a concentration camp on the site of Struthof?

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.....
.....

What was the name of the company responsible for operating the granite quarry? What is the meaning of its initials?

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.....
.....



photograph by Lucien KOHLER, Struthof museum collection

Who did the company work for, and for what?

.....
.....

What labour force was used?

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.....

Why? Can we still speak of "labour"?

.....
.....
.....

“We were ordered to immediately get out of the cars. A tall SS man, Hermanntraut (...) was wildly gesticulating with his huge legs and arms and waving a whip in one hand. Life in hell began. We moved quickly, quickly – schnell, schnell, the word we constantly heard all day long from now on. We quickly lined up on the railway platform (...) They pointed to three lorries and we had to run and climb as fast as we could over and through lines, tracks and platforms to reach them, chased by dogs and S.S. armed with clubs (...)

The lorries struggled to climb up a steep hill with lots of switchbacks. We reached the snow (...). I just had a suit on, no overcoat, and started to feel cold. I said ‘kalt’ [cold] to an S.S., who let loose a torrent of insults against me. I couldn’t understand a word he was saying. That would come later. Every day we lived in an atmosphere of continuous, brutal shouting...

We reached the top of the hill, which was completely bare of trees. The cold wind was howling, kicking up whirlwinds of snow. On our right we passed a big farm with lots of outbuildings: - Struthof - before walking near a little villa on the left, with a swimming pool, if you please! That was the commander’s house (...) and a few hundred metres later we were at the camp’s gate, staggered on the hillside.”
André RAGOT, deportee

Arrival at the camp

At which station did the deportees arrive? How far was it from the station to the camp?

.....

How were they taken to the camp?

.....

A sketch of the camp made by a Norwegian deportee, Rudolf Naess, is shown below



Sketch by Rudolf Naess, a Norwegian deportee, Nasjonalbiblioteket collection, Oslo

Write numbers on the sketch to locate the following places:

1 the quarry, 2 the camp, 3 the gate, 4 the watchtowers, 5 the crematorium, 6 the prison, 7 the kennels, 8 the Commander's house, 9 towards the gas chamber, 10 the hotel

What are the main features marking out:

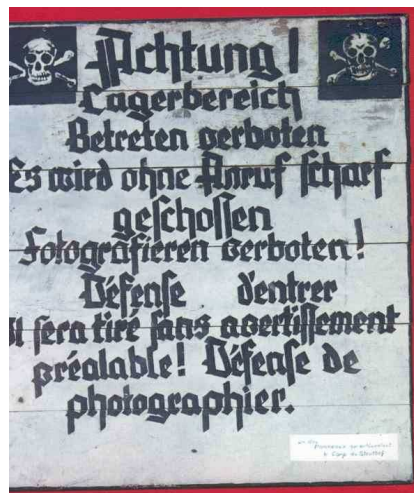
- the outside of the camp:.....

.....

- the inside of the camp:.....

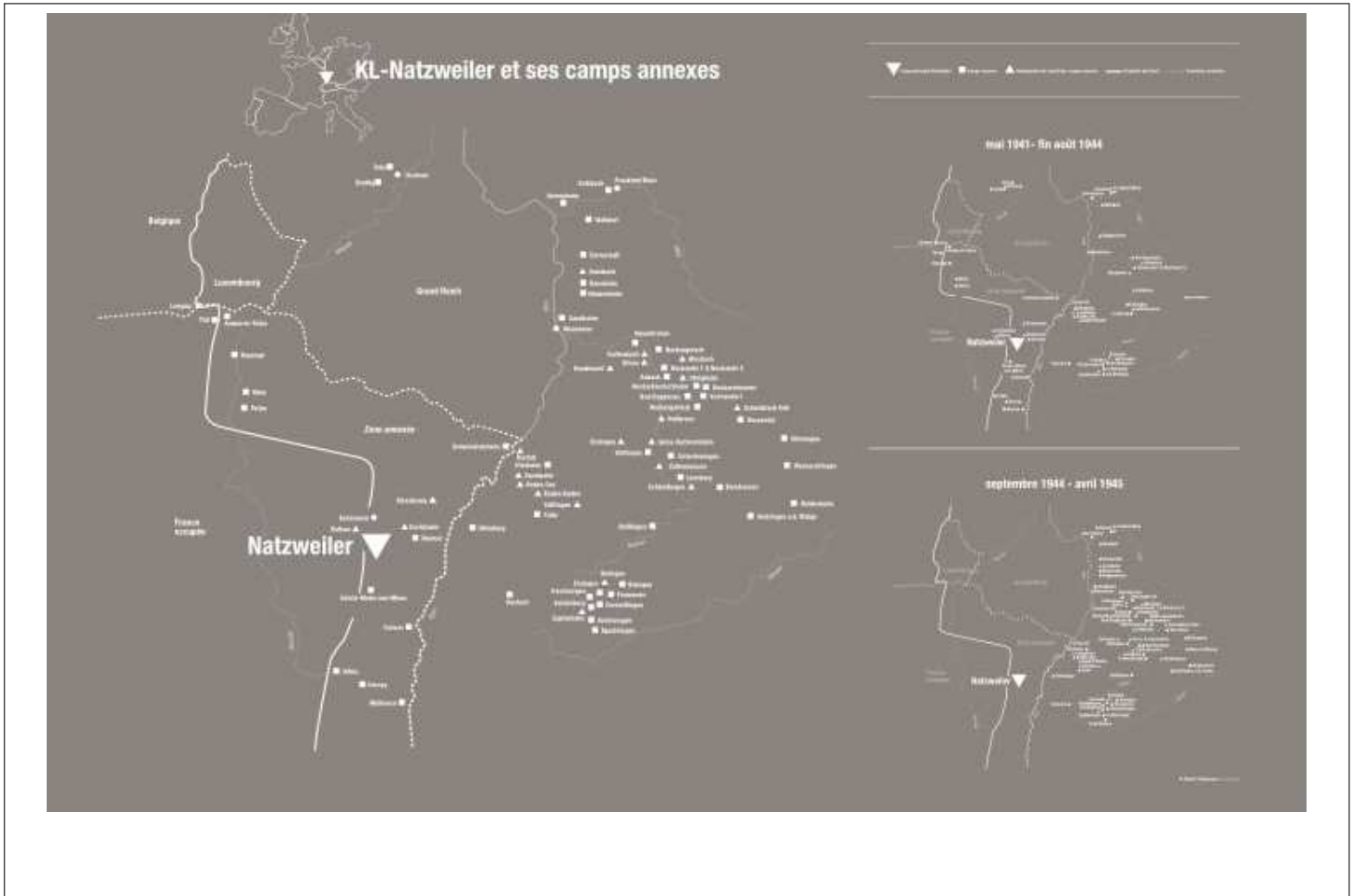
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Why did the Nazis make this perimeter a "prohibited zone"?



.....

The satellite camps of KL-Natzweiler 1941-1945



By Robert Steegmann

How were these satellite camps (or external “Kommandos”) positioned?

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.....
.....
.....

What were the two main groups of kommandos?

.....
.....

How many kommandos were there?

It our duty to strive unceasingly for the future of our children, for the future of young generations and for Humanity...

Pierre SUDREAU,
Resistance fighter, Buchenwald deportee, minister

Which kommando opened first?

What work was carried out in the *Wüste* kommandos?



Deportees at Schöenberg
photograph taken secretly, Ernest Gillen collection

Which kommandos worked for the SS?



Queuleu Fort entrance. The prisoners were locked in casemate A of the fort.
Private collection

Which kommandos worked for the war economy?



Kochendorf, drawing by Ludovic de La Chapelle

More than an act of pity, the plate or the piece of stone we place on a mound is an attempt to fight against the oblivion of men, the weakness of their imagination, the instability of their fluid conscience.

Boris PAHOR,
Slovenian writer, resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee

Which kommandos worked for the German army?

.....

.....

Why were some of them underground?

.....

.....

.....



Neckarelz, drawing by Jacques Barrau



Leonberg tunnel entrance
Leonberg e.V. Initiative collection

What was special about the kommandos of Calw, Frankfurt (Walldorf), Geisenheim, Geislingen, Hayange?

.....

.....

.....

And the Vaihingen kommando?

.....

.....



Vaihingen

The everyday life of the deportees

The camp administration

For which camp were the first “rules” drawn up, used afterwards as a model for all the other camps?

.....



Roll call at Dachau
DachauKZ.Gedenkstätte collection

Which organisation was responsible for administering all the camps?

.....
.....

How was the camp hierarchy organised?

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.....

What was the role of the camp commander?

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.....

What was the role of the SS?

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What was the role of the guards? Who were these guards?

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.....

Who was at the very bottom of the camp hierarchy?

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.....
.....
.....

Dehumanisation

Carefully read these extracts from testimonies:

At Auschwitz:

“With the absurd precision that we were to get used to later on, the Germans called the roll. At the end, the officer asked “Wieviel Stück?” (how many pieces) and the corporal answered, clicking his heels together, that there were six hundred and fifty “pieces” and that everything was in order. We then had to get into the buses which took us to Carpi station. The train was waiting for us when we arrived, with the escort which was to accompany us during the voyage. This is where we received the first blows, and it was all so unexpected and so crazy that we felt no pain in the body or the soul, we were simply in a state of shock: how could one possibly hit a man without anger?”

P.LEVI, deportee

*Si c'est un homme, Paris, Julliard, 1987.
(Auschwitz deportee).*

At KL-Natzweiler:

“(…) Last barracks at the bottom of the hill, a few metres from a pine wood. But the spider web between it and us shattered any dreams of escaping under cover of night. We had to keep our heads about us. Now we were in the shower room. “Everybody off with your clothes! And fast!” It was one of our fellow detainees who yelled that order. He looked well-dressed and well-fed (...) We obeyed him as though we were a single man, as though we were in a hurry to wash off all those insults, all those blows, all the shame of our pitiful condition. Ah, the water felt so good! We didn't know yet that it was heated by the crematory oven in the room next door, just the thickness of a piece of wood away (...)

We became, or we were going to become, robots. Rags were thrown down on the floor in front of each one of us. A pair of trousers, underwear, a shirt, a jacket, a cap, two rags – one for each foot – and a pair of ‘tap shoes’, wooden soles surmounted by braids to keep them on. Our clothes were as mismatched as you could imagine. There was every colour. (...) And it was absolutely forbidden to exchange them with each other. Now we looked like scarecrows (...) They gave each of us a red fabric triangle with an F in the middle, and a small white fabric rectangle with a number on it. The next day we had to sew them over the heart on our ragged uniforms (...)*

***Numbers, that's all we were now. We were no longer men.
I was no longer Eugène Marlot,
I was number 6149. The time of degradation had come (...)***

Eugène MARLOT, deportee

** NOTE: Eugène MARLOT was designated as a “political deportee”, identified by a red triangle, the F corresponds to the nationality. You will find in the museum a table explaining the deportee “categories” defined by the Nazis*

What are the various steps in the process to “dehumanise” a prisoner:

- Free man

- arrested.....

-.....

-.....

-.....

-.....

-.....









- death



KL-Natzweiler today, photograph by Jacques Robert, SGA/DMPA

In all the camps, the deportees were assigned categories, according to their nationality, origin and the reason for their deportation.

Categories and colours: complete this classification

-  political prisoners watched carefully.
- 
-  gypsies and work-shy.
-  members of "religious sects"
-  Jews
- 
- 
- 

Why did the SS classify the prisoners?

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.....

Do you know any other distinctive marks worn by the prisoners in the camps?

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.....

What were the main categories represented at KL-Natzweiler?

-
-
-

And the main nationalities?

-
-
-
-
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-

How many different nationalities were represented at KL-Natzweiler and in its satellite camps?
What can you conclude?

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What is the meaning of the letters NN which were sometimes written beside the name of a deportee?

(write the words in German and translate them into English)

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.....

Who issued "*Nacht und Nebel*" (Night and Fog) decree?

.....
.....

What nationalities could this NN status affect?

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.....

Can you give the names of three other camps to which NN prisoners were deported?

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.....

What do the words "*Nacht und Nebel*" bring to mind?

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.....

**What they expect from us
Is not grief, but an oath.
Not sobs, but action.**

**Pierre BROSOLETTTE,
French resistance fighter**



Deportees on the roll call squares, drawing by Rudolf Naess
Nasjonalbiblioteket collection, Oslo

Find the names of at least 3 NN deportees in the museum exhibition of the camp:

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.....
.....

What did the NN deportees have in common?

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What made them different from the other deportees in the camp organisation? Did they have the same "rights"?

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.....

What can you say in particular about the French NN prisoners?

.....
.....

*Your hands will bleed, your feet will bleed, you suffer,
the mountain hits you,
On your tired back, your bruised arms, on your gasping chest, on your clear head.
You will fall!*

Léon BOUTBIEN,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee

“You had to run under a hail of very painful blows to fetch a spade and a pickax, run again to gather in small groups, run some more to reach your designated spot and start working immediately (...) The blows doubled. (...) they rained down thick and fast. Everybody took turns being in the wrong spot so that the same guy wasn't always the one to get it. Alex, Fernandel's [nickname of SS Ehrmantraut] dog, was often in on the fun. When it was ordered, it bit all the calves within its reach, except the kapos'. When the guards would break a pickax or spade handle across our backs, they would deftly and quickly replace it with another one and start all over again or, rather, continue.”

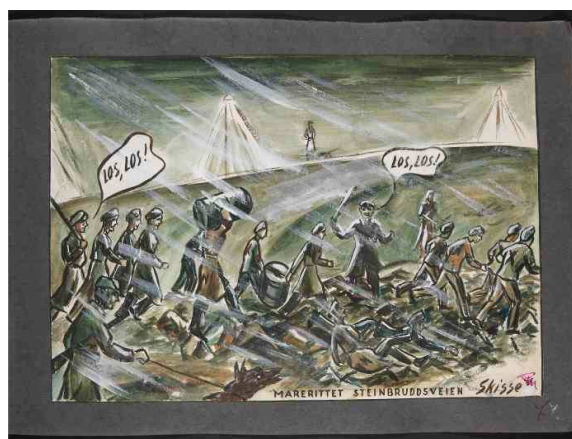
Max NEVERS
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee



Engraving by Henri Gayot, Struthof museum collection



drawing by Jacques Barrau



Watercolour by Rudolf Naess, Nasjonalbiblioteket, Oslo

“Kartoffelkeller”⁽¹⁾ is German for “potato cellar”. Nobody ever gave us any other explanation, but based on rumours that were going around the camp we eventually realised that the plan was to dig a huge cellar to store potatoes overlooked by S.S. barracks (...) What an idea.

What awaited us was sheer slavery. It consisted of hacking away at a huge mound with picks. First we had to level part of the mountain, then dig the cellar out of solid rock, granite (...) With picks and spades? Yes! And while being hit with those tools’ handles. The spades and picks were waiting for us. There were also eight little wagons that rolled on rails.

The French in the first convoy, who had already gone through a terrible ordeal when the S.S. unleashed their fury on them, ‘inaugurated’ the Kartoffelkeller worksite on 12 July, in particular by laying the rails for the little wagons.”

**(1) This is the large building you discovered on visiting the European Centre
Max Nevers**

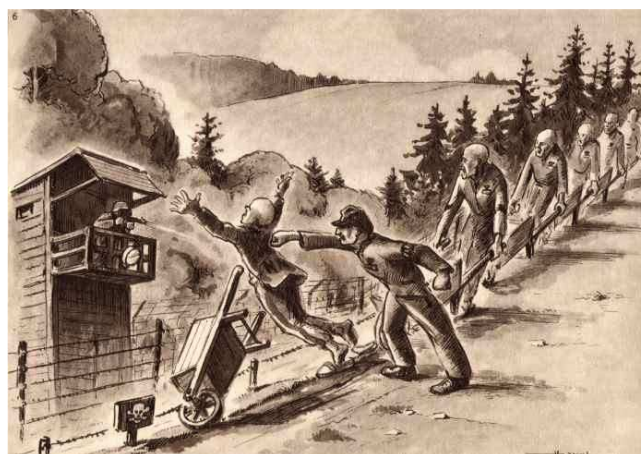
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee

Describe in particular the “wheelbarrow” and “Kartoffelkeller” kommandos

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.....
.....



The Kartoffelkeller, as it was discovered by the allies in November 1944



The death ravine
Engraving by Henri Gayot, Struthof museum collection

Which deportees were assigned to these two kommandos? Why?

.....
.....

What work was done at the quarry?

.....
.....



Work at the granite quarry, drawing by Rudolf Naess
Nasjonalbiblioteket collection, Oslo

Why were halls built? What were they for?



workshops at the granite quarry



And never stop shouting "Long live freedom", to prove that these friends did not die in vain.

**Eugène MARLOT,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee**

Slow death

"We had all lost nearly a quarter of our weight in less than three weeks (...) The food portions were quite insufficient, in quality and quantity, especially in view of the terribly exhausting work we had to do. The weight loss right from the first month was staggering. Most of us lost fifteen or twenty kilos. Over several months, although we did not lose weight at the same rate as after the first or second, the results were spectacular. One of use, who weighed 90 kg when he arrived had shrank down to 40 kg before the end of the year ... he died because of this, of course..."

**Roger LINET,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee**

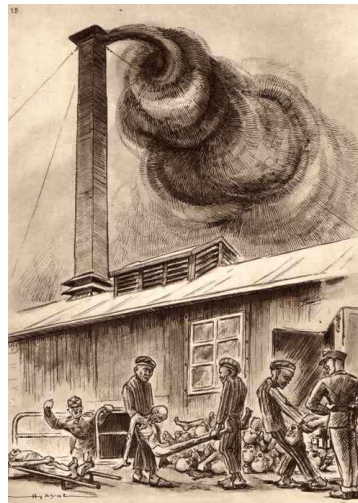
Torture, sickness, death

Why can we say that death was "omnipresent" in the camp?

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What are the various parts forming the building at Natzweiler where the crematorium block is located?

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Engraving by Henri Gayot, Struthof museum collection

What happened on the 1st and 2nd of September 1944?

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.....

What do these dates correspond to in the history of the camp?

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.....
.....

Vigilance is the sole weapon of the peaceful citizen.

Roger BOULANGER,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee

Pseudo “medical” or “scientific” experiments were carried out at the camp.

Who conducted them?

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Typhus epidemic in the camp

Engraving by Henri Gayot, Struthof museum collection

What did these experiments consist of?

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Where were they conducted?

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Which were conducted in the building opposite Struthof inn?

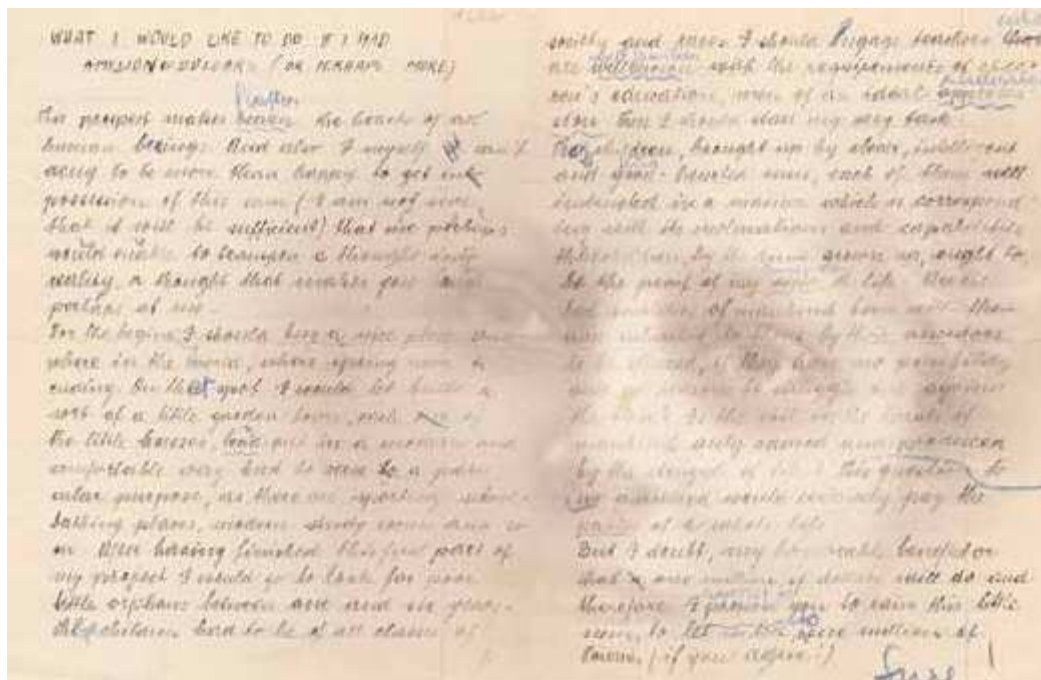
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What project did Professor Hirt want to accomplish by transferring Jews from Auschwitz to KL-Natzweiler?

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Elisabeth Klein , «Ce que j'aimerais faire si j'avais un million de dollars... (ou peut-être plus) », fin 1939-début 1940
Maman d'un petite Nelly, Elisabeth Klein, juive allemande, est déportée à Auschwitz, puis transférée à Natzweiler où elle est gazée en août 1943, sacrifiée à la collection de squelettes de Hirt.
Apprenant l'anglais, elle avait glissé ses rêves et son idéal humaniste dans cette rédaction :
« ... D'abord, j'achèterais un joli terrain, dans un endroit où le printemps ne finirait jamais. Là, je ferais construire une sorte de ville-jardin... Après ça, je recueillerais des petits orphelins de 1 à 6 ans, de toutes les conditions sociales, de toutes les races ... »
© collection particulière, Nelly Sturm, née Klein

Elisabeth Klein, “What I would like to do if I had a million of dollars (or perhaps more)”, end 1939-early 1940

Mother of a child called Nelly, Elisabeth Klein, a German Jew, was deported to Auschwitz, then transferred to Natzweiler where she was gassed in August 1943, sacrificed to the skeleton collection of Dr. Hirt. Studying English, she had expressed her dreams and humanist ideal in this text:
"... For the begin I should buy a nice place some where in the world, where spring never is ending. On the spot I would let build a sort of a little garden town... I would go to look for poor little orphans between one and six years. This children had to be of all classes and society and races ..."

What do the words of Elisabeth Klein, who was to be gassed in August 1943 at Natzweiler, bring to your mind?

.....

.....

.....

Commander Josef Kramer describes the murder of 86 people:

"I then placed a handful of the substance in a hole made in the floor. I made the women enter the gas chamber and I locked the door. It was then that the women started to cry and scream. From the outside, I poured water into a funnel prepared for this purpose. The water flowed through a pipe, equipped with a tap, into the hole containing the small granules.

After half a minute, all cries in the chamber ceased."
Extract from the second deposition made by **Josef Kramer, commander of the Natzweiler-Struthof camp,** before the Lüneburg military court, 6 December 1945

*One day, truth will be strength.
"If you know, you can"
is the most beautiful word ever said.
So,
Never again...*

**Jean-Jacques MORVAN,
Painter for the Navy, sculptor**

End of the camp

Some of the camps were evacuated, others were liberated.
What is the difference?

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.....

What was the situation at KL-Natzweiler and its satellite camps?

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Can you define the expression: "death march"?

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.....

At the time of the evacuation, there were 6050 prisoners at Natzweiler, including 1200 sick.

Why did the Nazis decide to evacuate the camp?

.....
.....

Where were the prisoners transferred to?

.....
.....

By when was the camp completely evacuated?

.....
.....

*And I know that there are those who say:
they died for almost nothing (...)
To such people, I can only respond:
“It's that they were on the side of life (...)”*

**Jean PAULHAN,
Resistance fighter, poet**

Which soldiers discovered the camp in November 1944?

.....
.....

What happened the next day in Alsace?

.....
.....
.....

Look at the map of the satellite camps in 1944 again.
From November 1944, was special about Natzweiler?

.....
.....

Where did the “death marches” from the Natzweiler satellite camps go?

.....
.....

Why were these prisoners kept in the satellite camps “until the last minute”?



evacuation of the Vaihingen satellite camp

*You will fall!
But energy, the will to live
For a child, for a mother,
For a woman or for your God,
You will stand back up, grit your teeth,
You will start walking again.*

**Léon BOUTBIEN,
Resistance fighter, KL-Natzweiler deportee**

The trials

Several trials concerned the Nazis who ran KL-Natzweiler. Name at least two and say what they were for:

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.....
.....
.....



Struthof museum collection

Was the camp commander, Joseph Kramer, tried for his actions at KL-Natzweiler?

.....
.....

What was he accused of? What was his sentence?

.....
.....

What sentences did the 3 doctors receive?

August Hirt?

.....
.....

Otto Bickenbach?

.....
.....

Eugen Haagen?

.....
.....

That is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation.

Elie WIESEL,
Survivor of the Nazi camps, writer,
Nobel Peace Prize

Memory



Destruction of the camp barracks in 1954 by Prefect Paul Demange
Sruthof museum collection



Memorial “to the martyrs and heroes of the deportation” and the national necropolis
photograph by Jacques Robert, SGA/DMPA

What important events took place on the site of the camp in 1954 and 1960?

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.....
.....

Define the word “necropolis”:

.....
.....

Locate the necropolis on the site and describe the monument which dominates it. What does it symbolise?

.....
.....

Where is the national necropolis of the First World War soldiers?

.....
.....

What is the meaning of the expression “Place of national remembrance” which has qualified the site of the former camp since 1960?

.....

*If the echo of their voices becomes weak,
We will perish*

**Paul ELUARD,
French poet**



Who are these men?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Why are their testimonials important?

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.....

Write here a quotation which struck you during your visit or on reading this file:

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Explain your choice

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FURTHER READING...

www.struthof.fr

BOULANGER Roger

La déportation racontée à des jeunes. Reims, C.R.D.P. de Champagne-Ardenne, 2003.

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WIESEL Elie
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Photographs
Jacques Robert, SGA/DMPA,
Jean Simon collection,
and collection of the European Centre on Resistance and Deportation/Struthof museum

Drawings and engravings provided to the European Centre on Resistance and Deportation by
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