

Andreas Schrabauer, „... und der Block war judenleer“. *Die NS-Verfolgung von Juden in den Niederlanden und ihre Ermordung im Konzentrationslager Mauthausen*. Mauthausen-Studien. Schriftenreihe der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen 15 (Vienna/Hamburg: new academic press, 2021, 178 pp., ISBN 9783700321972).

Since long, the Mauthausen concentration camp and its subcamps have been the subject of intensive historical examination. The exhibition at the Mauthausen Memorial and the publications of its Research Center¹ especially have been instrumental in documenting and stimulating research on the position of Mauthausen in the system of National Socialist concentration camps. Specifically, these studies have focussed on the staff of this Austrian concentration camp, on the extremely exploitative forced labour, and on the ‘prisoner society’ that was involuntarily herded together there between 1938 and 1945.² The significance of this camp in the months before the collapse of the German Reich in the context of the so-called death marches also has attracted historiographical attention.

To throw light on the meaning that the Mauthausen concentration camp had for Jews from the Netherlands, Viennese historian Andreas Schrabauer has revised his master thesis, submitted to the University of Vienna in 2018, for print. His monograph complements the volumes on particular prisoner groups, such as Slovenes, Hungarians and Soviet prisoners of war, that have appeared so far in the Mauthausen-Studien series.

Schrabauer identifies a total of 29 transports with which 1,695 Jews from the Netherlands were deported to Mauthausen in 1941 and 1942. Most of the Jewish men had the Dutch nationality. Among the victims of the 29 transports, however, were also Jews of German, Polish, Hungarian, Belgian, British and Czechoslovakian nationality, as well as Jews without nationality who lived in the Netherlands during the early 1940s. Measured against the total number of about 190,000 prisoners held at Mauthausen until the end of the Second World War, the proportion of prisoners from the Netherlands was relatively small, but ‘the mortality rate was higher than for any other group’ (12) – even amounting to 98 percent in 1941. While the majority of the Jews deported from the Netherlands were killed due to the prison conditions and the hard labour in the main camp and the numerous subcamps of Mauthausen, 107 Jews were further deported to Hartheim Castle 35 kilometres away. These people were gassed as part of ‘Aktion 14f13’ because they were classified by the Nazi regime as sick, decrepit or no longer fit for work.

The two aspects that form the title of the book, namely the persecution of Jews in the Netherlands and their fate in Mauthausen, are not treated evenly by the author. In quantitative terms, the focus is clearly on the National Socialist occupation policy. Schrabauer specifically addresses the repressive measures taken by the German occupiers in the Netherlands since the suppression of the strike of February 1941. These harsh policies were imposed by the offices of Reich Commissioner Arthur Seyß-Inquart and the ss apparatus under the Higher ss and Police Leader Hanns Albin Rauter. In this first part of his study, the author confines himself to summarising the current state of research without presenting substantially new results. With good reasons, he associates the deportations to Mauthausen, which took place before the mass deportations to the extermination camps in Eastern Europe started, with the ‘increasingly repressive occupation policy regulations’ (97) with which the occupying power in the Netherlands wanted to speed up the social segregation of the Jewish population.

The fate of the Jews deported from the Netherlands to Mauthausen accounts for less than a quarter of Schrabauer’s book. From a historiographical point of view, however, this aspect represents the more valuable part of the study. In addition to records of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the author was able to evaluate the metadatabase and the access lists kept by the Concentration Camp Memorial on the prisoners in Mauthausen. On this basis, he traces the various arrest actions and the 29 deportations from the Netherlands to Mauthausen. In addition, the data analysis makes it possible to determine that the Jews who were deported from the Netherlands in 1941 made up a share of almost 67 percent among the Jewish concentration camp prisoners at Mauthausen. Finally, significant quotations lead to oppressive insights into the suffering of Jewish concentration camp prisoners from the Netherlands in Mauthausen. The Dutchman Engel Maat, for example, summarised his memories after the war as follows (145): ‘The Jews had to work very hard all day. Loading and unloading wheelbarrows with stone and sand, transporting the whole thing at a run and then running back again. The ss and the Kapos also beat these poor miserables. Sometimes they were “chased” through the “chain of posts”’. Jews were shot by ss guards

1 See its self-portrayal on <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/en/History/Research-Center>. See also the contribution ‘Mauthausen – Stammlager’ by Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz in Wolfgang Benz and Barbara Distel (eds.), *Der Ort des Terrors. Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager* 4 (Munich 2006) and *Die Geschichte des Konzentrationslagers Mauthausen. Dokumentation*

(Vienna 2006) by Hans Maršálek who had himself been a prisoner of the concentration camp.

2 For this purpose, the first two of four volumes of the series ‘Europa in Mauthausen’, which focus on the experiences and memories of the prisoners, were published in 2021. These can be accessed in full text at <https://www.vr-elibrary.de/series/maut>.

who received an extra ration of cigarettes for each inmate they killed, part of which they gave to the Kapos. While the fate of the Geiringer family, to which the author devotes a special digression, is already well known, a statement like Maat's vividly illustrates the brutality to which the Jewish Mauthausen prisoners were subjected.

Ultimately, Schrabauer assigns two layers of meaning to Mauthausen. For the Jews concerned, the concentration camp near Linz had a highly real significance due to the inhumane living and working circumstances. For the Dutch population in general, including its Jewish part, Mauthausen gained an eminently symbolic meaning, which in turn was based on its real importance: long before Auschwitz became a synonym for the Shoah, National Socialists deliberately used information about the brutal conditions in Mauthausen to avoid or break resistance in the occupied Netherlands and to induce the Jewish population living there to 'voluntarily' comply with calls for deportation to Eastern Europe. The fact that the name Mauthausen at the time 'stood as a symbolic expression for death' (114) and is still anchored in the collective memory of the Netherlands today as a negatively connoted *lieu de mémoire* can probably be deduced from the combination of the two layers of meaning.

By unearthing new sources and evaluating them systematically, Schrabauer makes clear that Mauthausen played a special role for the Netherlands during the Second World War and that the Jews deported from the Netherlands involuntarily left their traces on the concentration camp in the then Reichsgau Oberdonau. Although the majority of the more than 100,000 Jews deported from the occupied Netherlands were killed in the extermination camps in Eastern Europe from July 1942 onwards, Mauthausen was the first concentration camp to which Jewish men from outside the borders of the Greater German Reich were deported to the Ostmark. Schrabauer also makes clear that within the 'prisoner society' of Mauthausen, the Jews deported from the Netherlands met a particularly violent and deadly fate. His study thus represents a further contribution to the history of the Netherlands under German occupation as well as to that of the Mauthausen concentration camp.

Johannes Koll, Vienna University of Economics and Business