



WER IST WALTER?

International Perspectives on
Resistance in Europe during
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Edited by

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Researching and Communicating the Diversity of Resistance Since 1967: *Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945*

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The history of the *Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945*¹ is inextricably linked to post-war German history. The *Studienkreis*' founding in 1967 was a response to the omissions in the historical confrontation with National Socialism and the marginalisation of the political left in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. During the era of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, German politics were strongly anti-communist. By governmental decree, the so-called "Adenauer-Erlass" in 1950, members of two right-wing and eleven left-wing organisations were suspended from state services. Among them were the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* – KPD) and all their related suborganisations as well as the Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime (*Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Nazi-Regime* – VVN), an organisation founded in 1947 by victims of Nazi persecution.² In 1956 the KPD was banned altogether.

The founding of the *Studienkreis* was also an answer to the deficiencies of the early research on resistance. Most researchers of the time concentrated on military resistance and the 20 July 1944 plot to assassinate Hitler, churches' opposition and resistance and the group of student resistance known as White Rose (*Weißerose*). The broad research field of resistance from the labour movement, especially pertaining to communist organisations, was scarcely noticed in academic research in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).³

1 The full name of the *Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945* is *Studienkreis zur Erforschung und Vermittlung der Geschichte des deutschen Widerstandes 1933-1945 e.V.* The English translation is "Study Group for Research and Communication of the History of the German Resistance 1933-1945".

2 In 1971, the VVN added the League of Antifascists (*Bund der Antifaschisten* – BdA) to the organisation and changed the acronym to VVN-BdA.

3 The situation was quite different in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), where communist resistance was emphasised while other areas of resistance were neglected.

Last but not least, the *Studienkreis*' founding was a reaction to political developments in the early and mid-1960s with the strengthening of right-wing extremism in the FRG. In the second half of the 1960s, the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD)⁴ was a part of seven federal state parliaments. The experiences of resistance and the history of resistance were seen as a basis for a democratic society in Germany. When Max Oppenheimer, one of the founders of the *Studienkreis*, wrote about the two main founders, Joachim Heydorn and Wolfgang Abendroth, he emphasised that:

Both came from the resistance and knew from their own experience about the brutality of the Nazi dictatorship: both were concerned about the re-emergence of fascist activities and propaganda in the Federal Republic. Both saw the main tasks in the analysis of fascist rule and its causes as well as in the research of workers' resistance in order to develop antifascist counterstrategies on the basis of this knowledge. The *Studienkreis* plans its work in their spirit, which should help to preserve the intellectual and moral values of the resistance struggle, make them known to the public and pass on its militant tradition to the younger generation in particular.⁵

Therefore defending democracy is seen as one legacy of resistance. In the words of Joseph C. Rossaint, a former Catholic resistance fighter, at the founding conference in 1967: "Resistance itself was a school in which many things were learned and can be learned. It opens up the realisation that the conscious step into history means a choice, a choice in which one must accept the consequences. It was not a comfortable thought, but a struggle [...]."⁶

4 The *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, literally translated as the National Democratic Party of Germany, was an extremist right-wing party founded in 1964.

5 Max Oppenheimer, "Antifaschismus und demokratisches Identitätsbewusstsein", *informationen* 27 (März 1988), 10.

6 J. C. Rossaint, "Sinn und Wert der Vermittlung der Geschichte des Widerstandes", in *Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945. Aspekte der Forschung und Darstellung im Schulbuch*, ed. Edgar Weick (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1967), 15.

Organisational and structural development

The *Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945* was founded in February 1967 by former resistance fighters, scientists and pedagogues. Among them was the aforementioned university professor Wolfgang Abendroth, the “partisan professor in the country of followers” (“*Partisanen-Professor im Land der Mitläufer*”), as Jürgen Habermas once called him. Abendroth, lawyer and political scientist, joined the dissident communist group *Kommunistische Partei-Opposition* (KPO) in 1928, and was involved in the *Neu Beginnen* resistance group (also known as the Miles group) after 1933. In 1937, he was imprisoned with a four year sentence because of his work in the resistance. Then, in 1943, he was ordered to join the Penal Battalion 999 (*Bewährungsbataillon 999*) to fight as part of the German Wehrmacht in Greece. Once there, he deserted and joined the Greek resistance and partisans.

Other members of *Studienkreis* included Professor of Education Heinz Joachim Heydorn, who had been a member of the Confessing Protestant Church and deserter from the Wehrmacht in 1944 and Max Oppenheimer, a Jewish socialist who emigrated to Great Britain through Switzerland after a short internment in Dachau concentration camp. There he was involved, until the end of the war, in the national group of German trade unionists in Great Britain.

The starting point for the *Studienkreis* was a conference on history textbooks and the presentation of resistance in Germany after World War II. Here the gaps in the representation of the resistance became clear. One of the most central deficits was the insufficient representation of the resistance of the labour movement in West German textbooks.⁷

7 Edgar Weick, “Die Widerspiegelung des Widerstandes gegen den Nationalsozialismus in den Schulbüchern”, in *Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945*, ed. Weick, 123-136. For an overview of the development of the scientific research about German resistance see: Johannes Tuchel, “Vergessen, verdrängt, ignoriert – Überlegungen zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Widerstandes gegen den Nationalsozialismus im Nachkriegsdeutschland”, in *Der vergessene Widerstand. Zur Realgeschichte und Wahrnehmung des Kampfes gegen die NS-Diktatur. Dachauer Symposium zur Zeitgeschichte Bd. 5*, ed. Johannes Tuchel (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 7-35; Gerd R. Ueberschär, “Von der Einzeltat des 20. Juli 1944 zur ‘Volksopposition’? Stationen und Wege der westdeutschen Historiographie nach 1945”, in *Der 20. Juli 1944. Bewertung und Rezeption des deutschen Widerstandes gegen das NS-Regime*, ed. Gerd R. Ueberschär (Köln: Bund-Verlag 1994), 101-125; Wolfgang Wippermann, “Geschichtspolitik und Widerstand”, in *Der aufrechte Gang. Antifaschistischen Widerstand neu bedenken, verstehen, weitergeben. Reader zur Tagung vom 28.11.1998 in Frankfurt a.M.*, ed. Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945 (Frankfurt: 1998), 1-12; Thomas Altmeyer, “Widerstand

The *Studienkreis* was therefore established to research and convey the social and political extent of the resistance movement. The work was also done to give the German resistance more appreciation in post-war West Germany. A look at surveys of these times shows that only 43 percent of men and 38 percent of women had a positive view of the “Men of July 20” in 1951. In 1956, an overwhelming majority of the population rejected the idea of naming a school after Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg or Carl Friedrich Goerdeler. In the following decades the proportion of positive assessments towards the conspirators of 20 July 1944 changed only marginally. It was not until 2004 that a representative survey of the German population showed a predominantly positive assessment of the 20 July plot.⁸ Former resistance fighters were often seen as traitors. Additionally, such resistors confronted the narratives of many Germans who said that they didn’t know about the crimes or could not do anything about them.

In the first years, the work focused especially on giving a broad space for resistance from the workers’ movement. The first travelling exhibition on antifascist resistance was established in 1971 and had its première in the *Paulskirche* of Frankfurt, the place of the first all-German democratic parliament in 1848. The exhibition was a collaboration between the *Studienkreis*, the VVN and two other organisations. Afterwards it was shown in many West German cities. The exhibit’s opening had 20.000 visitors, and 34.000 visitors came to the exhibition when it was shown in Dachau near Munich during the 1972 Summer Olympic Games. The exhibition gave broad attention to the resistance of the workers’ movement, for example, the illegal activities of trade unionists between 1934-1936. Resistance groups and networks like the Schulze-Boysen-Harnack-Group, also called Red Orchestra (*Rote Kapelle*), the communist resistance group around Robert Uhrig in Berlin or the Lechleiter Group in Mannheim were portrayed as well as the resistance group around Herbert Baum in which young communists and Jews were active. However, other aspects such as religious resistance, the White Rose resistance group or the 20 July plot were also important parts of the exhibition.

gegen das NS-Regime. Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung”, in *Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Perspektiven der Vermittlung*, ed. Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945 (Frankfurt: VAS, 2007), 24-42.

8 Johannes Tüchel, “Zwischen Diffamierung und Anerkennung: Zum Umgang mit dem 20. Juli 1944 in der frühen Bundesrepublik”, *APuZ* 27 (2014): 23.

This exhibition was followed by numerous other travelling exhibitions. Topics included the resistance of young people, women, unionists or children and their drawings and poems in Theresienstadt, or Nazi terror against children.

In 1977, an archive and a library were opened in Frankfurt to make information about the German resistance accessible for anyone who was interested. The initial material came from the VVN and other organisations of persecuted or camp communities. Visitors can find numerous documents of the antifascist resistance such as leaflets, newspapers, camouflage writings, stickers and flyers, as well as memoirs and interviews. Documents of persecution as well as compensation files, lists of graves, documents from associations of former prisoners and the establishment of memorials are also collected in the archive. A special part of the archival stock are bequests from former resistance fighters and objects from the resistance movement and the persecuted, including handicrafts from the women's concentration camps Moringen, Lichtenburg and Ravensbrück, as well as the Waldheim prison. An important part of the collection are the files of the *Süddeutsche Ärzte- und Sanitätshilfe* (SÄS), created by the *Centrale Sanitaire Suisse* (CSS) in order to provide medical and humanitarian support for resistance fighters and victims of Nazi persecution after 1945.⁹ These files concern 5.000 resistance fighters, victims of persecution and their relatives who can be researched.¹⁰

With the establishment of the archive, the *informationen* magazine was founded and published. In the beginning, it was more or less a printed newsletter. The aim of this project was again to make resistance more publicly known, in addition to raising awareness of the *Studienkreis* through its archive and research. Over the years, the character of the magazine has changed. It has become a scientific newspaper, with a very diverse range of topics and authors.¹¹

9 The CSS, a long-existing Swiss organisation, created the SÄS to provide medical care to victims and their families. These organisations' names can be translated literally as the Swiss Medical Centre (CSS) and South German Doctors and Medical Help (SÄS).

10 Hermann Unterhinninghofen, "Die Verfolgten von gestern sind die Erbauer der Zukunft." Zur humanitären Hilfe der Centrale Sanitaire Suisse für NS-Opfer", *informationen* 62 (November 2005): 5-13.

11 Authors include the staff of the universities and memorial sites as well as teachers, students and young academics, local researchers and in earlier times, former resistance fighters. The variety of topics can be seen here: http://widerstand-1933-1945.de/shop/?swoof=1&product_cat=zeitschrift-informationen.

A large-scale project of visualising traces of resistance, persecution and remembrance for different federal states on a local level, even in small towns and villages, started in the 1980s and ended in 2003. The *Studienkreis* added and documented commemorative plaques and streets named after resistance-fighters or a victim of the Nazi era in the federal states of Baden-Württemberg, Bremen, Hesse, Lower Saxony, Saarland, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia. The books printed in this project also show places without any commemorative signs such as places where resistance fighters lived or met or where the persecution took place. This was possible by our own research, as well as with the help of local researchers or local history associations and communal archives.¹²

A follow-up to this project was the creation of a website about memorial sites elsewhere in Europe.¹³ The initiative for this project came from *Studienkreis* volunteers, who realised that information about the crimes of the German occupation is almost non-existent in German travel guides. They started visiting small local resistance museums during their holidays in Italy and France (later the project expanded to other countries), searching for commemorative plaques and memorial sites. Many of the *Studienkreis* volunteers at the core of this project are now close to or over 80 years old, so it is unclear if and how this project can be continued. For the future a new team and new findings are needed.

Besides these projects, *Studienkreis*' everyday reality consists of librarian and archival activities, answering scientific questions, giving lectures or being part of discussion events, giving workshops, city tours and many other activities.

Looking at the history of the *Studienkreis*, one can see that the organisation is currently going through a process of institutionalisation, professionalisation and historicization, like all memorial sites do.¹⁴ The *Studienkreis* started as an association with 18 members. Now there are more than 200

12 For example: Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand ed., *Heimatgeschichtlicher Wegweiser zu Stätten des Widerstandes und der Verfolgung 1933 – 1945. Thüringen* (Frankfurt: VAS 2003).

13 The website www.gedenkorte-europa.eu provides information about memorial sites in France, Italy, Greece, Lithuania and Poland. It also has short biographies of resistance fighters and information about the German occupation and the resistance movements of these countries.

14 About the history of memorial sites in Germany see for example: Habbo Knoch, *Geschichte in Gedenkstätten. Theorie – Praxis – Berufsfelder* (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2020); Thomas Lutz, "Zwischen Vermittlungsanspruch und emotionaler Wahrnehmung. Die Gestaltung neuer Dauerausstellungen in Gedenkstätten für NS-Opfer in Deutschland und deren Bildungsanspruch" (PhD Diss., Technische Universität Berlin, 2009).

members, 30 of whom joined in the last three years. The committee board has evolved since the *Studienkreis*' founding. In the beginning, former resistance fighters played a major role, but they never made up more than one third of the board committee. Today, a diverse group of people serve as board members: unionists, pedagogues, scientists and curators. In the past, descendants of resistance fighters were also part of the committee, but at present, there are no descendants serving on the board. Some are members of the association.

Following the VVN's organisational connection with the League of Antifascists in 1971, in 1974, the *Studienkreis* also formulated the goal of attracting young progressive antifascists, be they historians, educators, political scientists, work councillors, trade union functionaries or youth functionaries. At the same time, the *Studienkreis*' aim was to go beyond just the research of the persecuted associations and camp communities. The above-mentioned development process was therefore deliberately initiated by the founding generation.¹⁵

Unlike classic resistance museums or memorial sites, the *Studienkreis* is a hybrid structure. On the one hand, it is an association with a mixed membership of descendants, scientists, students, unionists, political activists and people who think that it is important to support an organisation to spread the knowledge about antifascist resistance in Nazi Germany. *Studienkreis*' meaning – study circle – is a good example of this: People of different ages and professions come together to do projects on history, education and remembrance. As part of the association, members can develop or join forces to collaborate on projects. The curating team for an exhibition is for instance usually a mixture of employees, project staff and volunteers. Another example for this kind of work is a research project on women who were deported from Frankfurt to Ravensbrück women's concentration camp. In this case, five female volunteers, the *Studienkreis*' former director among them, researched documents in different archives and published their findings in a book.¹⁶

15 Archive of the Studienkreis/*Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945/Dokumentationsarchiv des deutschen Widerstandes*, Max Oppenheimer, Vorlage zur Tätigkeit des Studienkreis zur Erforschung und Vermittlung der Geschichte des deutschen Widerstandes 1933-1945, 5 June 1974, Vereinsunterlagen (no archival number).

16 Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945 ed., *Frankfurt am Main – FrauenKZ Ravensbrück – Lebensspuren verfolgter Frauen* (Bad Homburg: VAS, 2009).

On the other hand, the *Studienkreis* is a memorial site not tied to a special historical landmark. It is also an archive aiming to research and support research from others, as well as an educational organisation with exhibitions and varying pedagogical offers.

As a membership-based organisation it is unsurprising that some debates and conflicts have occurred throughout the years. Some conflicts were with members of the political left concerning the *Studienkreis*' work. For example, members of the board committee decided to leave the association because of debates about the Prague Spring in 1968 or the Gulf War in the early 1990s.¹⁷

An existential crisis occurred at the end of the GDR in 1990. This was a consequence of the crisis of the VVN-BdA.¹⁸ At the time, the VVN-BdA was the most important financier of the *Studienkreis*' work. It received funds from the GDR through the German Communist Party (*Deutsche Kommunistische Partei* – DKP). As a result of the end of financial support from the VVN-BdA, the *Studienkreis* had to clarify if and how the work could be continued. Even closing the archive and transferring the documents and archival materials to another archive or memorial site was an option.

A new start was made. A new board committee was elected and the city of Frankfurt's cultural department could be won as a financial sponsor. Nonetheless, the *Studienkreis*' existence was still in jeopardy. Funding was cut from 110.000 deutschmarks to 60.000 deutschmarks with plans to reduce it again to half of this amount. Protests prevented this from happening. Again, proposals to give the archive documents to other archives like the Frankfurt city archive were still debated.¹⁹ Luckily, the *Studienkreis*' existence could be secured, albeit with a current municipal institutional funding of just under 25.000 euros for research on resistance.²⁰

17 Ludger Fittkau, "50 Jahre 'Studienkreis deutscher Widerstand'. Ziviler Ungehorsam als Teil der Bürgerkultur", *Deutschlandfunk*, 16 February 2017, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/50-jahre-studienkreis-deutscher-widerstand-ziviler-100.html>. All internet sources were last accessed on 1 March 2024.

18 Karl Kropotnik, "Deutsche Kommunisten stoßen VVN in die Pleite", *TAZ, Die Tageszeitung*, 7 December 1989, <https://taz.de/Deutsche-Kommunisten-stossen-VVN-in-die-Pleite/!1788649/>. For the BdA, see footnote 2 above.

19 "Vergessene Opfer der Diktatur. Studienkreis in Finanznot", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 20 November 1997; Studienkreis Widerstand, "Begräbnis letzter Klasse", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 28 February 1996; "Kein Geld mehr für den Widerstand", *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, 28 November 1996.

20 The funding of the memorial site is separated from this. Unfortunately, the federal state of Hesse does not provide sufficient funding for memorial sites. There are just two memorial sites pertaining to the Nazi era which are institutionally funded and not just by short-term funds for projects.

New beginnings and growth

Reunification in 1990 led to an important development in Germany. Two different perceptions of resistance came together, each selective but at the same time related to one another: a main focus on conservative resistance in Western Germany, and on communist resistance in Eastern Germany. In this process, it was important that the German Resistance Memorial (*Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand*) in Berlin, located where the 20 July plot was organised, defended an inclusive and pluralistic concept of resistance, even in the face of strong political opposition. It was stipulated, for instance, that communist resistance must be part of the permanent exhibition. According to the former director Peter Steinbach, the story of resistance must be told in its plurality, even if the political goals and motives are alien to oneself. Furthermore, the crimes of National Socialism must be clearly named.²¹

At the same time, one can see that the *Studienkreis* has expanded into new fields of research. This is presumably because of new members in the association and in particular in the board committee, as well as the discovery of new research topics. Originally, the representation of resistance's social and political aspects specifically meant the representation of resistance from the labour movement. But since the 1980s, resistance from women and women in prison and concentration camps have also been important research topics. Several exhibitions have been developed. These range from the first travelling exhibition in 1984, "Sisters do not forget us!" (*Schwwestern, vergesst nicht: Frauen im Konzentrationslager Moringen, Lichtenburg, Ravensbrück 1933-1945*), to *Nichts war vergeblich. Frauen im Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus* (Nothing was in vain: Resistance of women against Nazi Germany) a book about Frankfurt women imprisoned in the concentration camp of Ravensbrück, guided city walks or lecture events.

Another good indicator for how *Studienkreis* became more open to different topics are the different editions of the *informationen* magazine. These editions explored topics such as: Jewish resistance in Europe (1991), Sinti and Roma (1993), "forgotten" victims (1996), and Wehrmacht soldiers between refusal and resistance (1997). Besides topics directly linked to resistance, the editions also take a look at topics like perpetratorship or the Nazi Euthanasia

²¹ Peter Steinbach, *Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus in der zeitgeschichtlichen Auseinandersetzung* (Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, 1995), 52.

Program, on movies, arts, photos and exhibitions, or they have a regional focus within Europe (e.g. Poland, the Benelux countries or the Balkans).

Another indicator of change was the work group researching “excluded victims”, based in the *Studienkreis* archives from between 1998 and 2006. Representatives from the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the “Euthanasia” victims, the Sinti and Roma communities, and others collaborated on the project together.

Over the past decade, one can observe that educational work has taken on a larger role in the *Studienkreis*’ projects. In 2010, materials for historical-political education became an important element of the *informationen* magazine. This is demonstrated by the rising requests for guided city walks, workshops or talks with survivors, by schools, groups of unionists and adults. Additionally, the *Studienkreis* was given the task of developing the *Geschichtsort Adlerwerke: Fabrik, Zwangsarbeit, Konzentrationslager* memorial site.²² Since its opening in March 2022, the association has become more visible in Frankfurt’s society and beyond.

A new memorial site

With the conception and implementation of the *Geschichtsort Adlerwerke*, the *Studienkreis* has had to fundamentally change how it works. The memorial and educational site opened on 25 March 2022 and is dedicated to the “Katzbach” concentration subcamp in Frankfurt’s *Adlerwerke* and the topic of forced labour in Frankfurt.²³

22 The English translation of the memorial site’s name is: Historic Memorial Site Adlerwerke: Factory, Forced Labor, Concentration Camp. For more details about the memorial see the next chapter.

23 Andrea Rudorff, *Katzbach – Das KZ in der Stadt. Zwangsarbeit in den Adlerwerken. Frankfurt am Main 1944/45* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021); Ernst Kaiser and Michael Knorn, *Wir lebten und schliefen zwischen den Toten. Rüstungsproduktion, Zwangsarbeit und Vernichtung in den Frankfurter Adlerwerken*. (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1998). About the curators ideas for the memorial site: Thomas Altmeyer and Gottfried Kößler, “Geschichtsort Adlerwerke: Fabrik, Zwangsarbeit, Konzentrationslager”, *Gedenkstättenrundbrief* 207 (7/2022): 22-32. “Katzbach” is a camouflage name given to the concentration camp. It was usual to give camouflage names to subcamps with armaments projects. The name Katzbach was a reference to the 1813 Battle of Katzbach, when the Silesian army under Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher’s command defeated the Napoleonic troops. The phrase “He’s going at it like Blücher at the Katzbach!” was regarded as a paraphrase for an energetic and determined approach to the implementation projects of any kind. The camouflage name “Katzbach” appears for the first time one day before the arrival of the first prisoners. See Rudorff, *Katzbach*, 60-61.

Why did this memorial site become part of the *Studienkreis*' work? After a long period in which demands from civil society for a memorial site at the former concentration camp went in vain, the situation changed beginning in 2016. A new support association for a memorial site was founded to bring different people and associations together. At the same time, a new Deputy Mayor in charge of culture and science in the city of Frankfurt was elected, opening a new window of opportunity. New scientific research was funded by the city of Frankfurt and the *Studienkreis* was asked to develop the new exhibition in cooperation with the supporting association. Experiences in creating exhibitions and the work of the *Studienkreis*' scientific director in another memorial site as well as his pedagogical experiences were all arguments for this decision to be made. Another reason was the *Studienkreis*' collaborative and participative nature. The city of Frankfurt wished for the memorial site to be a part of civil society, which the *Studienkreis* association could offer. Therefore the memorial site is partially funded by the city of Frankfurt but is not an integral part of the municipal museum landscape.

In just 15 months, a small team set about to build a new memorial site. Two initial considerations were taken in establishing the memorial. First, the exhibition was to tell the historical site's story, in particular the history of the concentration camp at the *Adlerwerke* factory as well as forced labour in Frankfurt. Second, the exhibition was to create a space for school groups and other visitors to work and debate in.

The *Adlerwerke* factory was a traditional Frankfurt company and an important employer. The company made industrial history as the producer of the first German low-profile bicycles with pneumatic tires and the first typewriters in Germany. In the early 1900s, the company started producing motorcycles and automobiles as well. The *Adlerwerke* benefitted from National Socialist policies, becoming part of the armaments production and profited from the "Aryanization" of land from four companies owned by Jewish entrepreneurs. During World War II, the *Adlerwerke* was closely involved in the Nazi dictatorship's armaments industry. They mainly produced half-track vehicles, engines and vehicle parts for the Wehrmacht. When the shortage of labour became more and more pressing because of the war, the factory management attempted to continue production by exploiting forced labourers. From 1941 onwards, civilian forced labourers and prisoners of war had to work in the factory. However, their numbers were not enough to meet production demands. In August 1944, the Katzbach

concentration camp was set up on the factory premises. On 22 August 1944, the first 200 concentration camp prisoners arrived from Buchenwald concentration camp. Later, Viktor Heitlinger, the labour deployment engineer at *Adlerwerke*, went to the Dachau concentration camp to select 1.000 concentration camp prisoners for Frankfurt.

A total of 1.616 concentration camp prisoners worked for the *Adlerwerke*. The majority of these men came from Poland; others came from the Soviet Union, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, France and Czechoslovakia. One third of the prisoners died in Frankfurt, while others lost their lives after being transferred to other concentration camps or on the death march to Buchenwald.

On the one hand, the memorial site is linked to European resistance: 85 percent of the prisoners were arrested during the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 and were then deported to Frankfurt via Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps. On the other hand, the site's central story is that of the German society in which the camp was situated, or, what was called the *Volksgemeinschaft*²⁴ in Nazi terminology. The memorial site asks questions such as what is the history of exploitation, denouncement, torture, or looking away? When was support extended, even if it was just giving some food, cigarettes and so on? The memorial site focuses on these questions and the lack of remembrance of the existence of a concentration camp in Frankfurt over the past decades.

The exhibition mainly consists of documents. These documents include transport lists and documents from the Arolsen Archives which provide historical framing for the areas of forced labour and the “Katzbach” concentration camp in the exhibition. The exhibition contains photos, drawings, documents and explanatory texts. The exhibition space is bright and open. This is intended to counteract the heavy topics on victims and forced labour related to the “Katzbach” concentration camp's brutal history.

The exhibition space's openness reflects the emphasis placed on not overwhelming visitors. This was formulated as a pedagogical guideline in the Beutelsbach Consensus.²⁵ Instead, the exhibition aims to invite visi-

24 *Volksgemeinschaft* can either be translated as “People's Community”, “National Community, or “Racial Community”.

25 Based on a conference in the city of Beutelsbach in 1976, the Beutelsbach Consensus gathers pedagogical guidelines which became the foundation for civic education in Germany. Markus Gloe and Tonio Oeftering, “Der Beutelsbacher Konsens”, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, 17 February 2022, <https://www.bpb.de/lernen/inklusiv-politisch-bilden/505269/der-beutelsbacher-konsens/>.

tors to participate in learning and discussing these topics. That is why the exhibition has a large workshop area for groups as well as with a small thematic library and archive boxes with opportunities for individual in-depth study.

The exhibition is designed to be flexible and interchangeable and strives to be participatory. New research findings will become part of the exhibition. Works from workshops with pupils and students or other history enthusiasts are also to be exhibited and included at the memorial site. For example, in workshops, students are to research and write biographies of the forced labourers which will become a permanent part of the exhibition. Visitors are invited to rearrange the panels about the companies and locations of forced labour in the exhibition. The exhibition section on the “Struggle for Work, Compensation and Remembrance” (*Konflikte um Arbeit, Erinnerung, Entschädigung*) was also designed in a participatory manner with those who are or were involved in remembrance work in Frankfurt.

The media stations and interactive elements in the exhibition appeal to the visitors’ different senses. Biographies can be heard or read and a large interactive map shows the locations of forced labour in Frankfurt. The urban environment is integrated into the educational offerings through district tours and geocaches for school groups.

With the addition of the *Geschichtsort Adlerwerke*, a significant organisational change has taken place for the *Studienkreis*. More employees and volunteers are now a part of our daily responsibilities. New projects have been started and are adding to the already existing ones, whether they are a database project on forced labour or new pedagogical offers. One of the projects focuses on the workers at the *Adlerwerke* factory. There are reports about leaflets circulating within the factory and donation collections for the Spanish Civil War as well as workers who were imprisoned. This new research will be added as a new guided city walk and collected in our learning boxes.

Additional exhibitions

Even though the *Geschichtsort Adlerwerke* needed a lot of attention the first year, the *Studienkreis* was able to present two new exhibitions to the public in 2023/2024. These exhibitions differ from previous ones. The first is about

scopes for action (*Handlungsspielräume*) from within the Frankfurt police department during the National Socialist period.²⁶ This exhibition looks at acts of resistance and (partly) dissident behaviour of police officers and came about by chance. The starting point was the research of a young historian and her master's thesis on resistance and dissident behaviour within the Frankfurt police.²⁷ Additionally, the president of the Frankfurt police contacted the *Studienkreis* upon being confronted with racist behaviour and right-wing activities within the police department. The *Studienkreis* was asked to give a city walk for police officers on the anti-Nazi resistance in Frankfurt. After a call for projects on resistance by police officers, the *Studienkreis* decided to develop an exhibition intended for the Frankfurt police.

The exhibition presents ten biographies of police officers and their (partly) resistant actions during the Nazi era, contextualised within the broader picture of the police's role as a criminal agency in the Nazi Party apparatus. The biographies are framed by an introduction panel titled "An Instrument of the Unjust State" and a concluding panel titled "New Beginnings and Old Comradeship". It clearly states that the police as an institution and the vast majority of individual officers took part in the crimes of National Socialism. Each biographical text is accompanied with a context panel. On these panels, the history of the police in the Nazi state is traced from the *Gleichschaltung* – the Nazification of state and society after 1933 – through police participation in the deportations and mass shootings in the East, police service in the ghettos, to continuities in the police apparatus after 1945. They illustrate police officers' involvement in the crimes of National Socialism, including officers who were also involved in acts of resistance or smaller points of nonconforming actions. The exhibition makes clear that all police officers who remained in service after 1933 were therefore also part of the instrument of terror – even if they sometimes said "no".²⁸

The second exhibition, which opened at the beginning of 2024, tries to bridge the gap between the Nazi era – which began on 30 January 1933 – and the Weimar Republic in the years before. The first thoughts for this

26 Exhibition organised by: Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand 1933-1945, *Handlungsspielräume. Frankfurter Polizeibeamte im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt 2023.

27 Lisa Schrimpf, "Polizeibeamte! Vergeßt nicht". *Widerständiges und resistentes Verhalten Frankfurter Polizeibeamter im Nationalsozialismus* (master's thesis, Frankfurt: Verlag für Polizeiwissenschaft, 2022).

28 Nevertheless, there are some members in the association who doubt that the *Studienkreis* should deal with this topic. For others, it is seen as a good additional aspect to the work.

exhibition were formulated in a workshop in 2019. The starting point was the goal of making an exhibition in a different manner than the two previous ones. One guiding principle was the search for a new type of narration, rather than individual biographies. Another goal was integrating more media stations within the exhibition, making the exhibition more interactive and participatory. Overall, the aim was to encourage visitors to think and reflect upon the presented topics. The last goal was to create a new mode of displaying information for this travelling exhibition, rather than the standard roll-up banners. Unlike other exhibitions, this one focuses on the time period prior to 1936.

The new exhibition looks at opposition to the right-wing nationalist-ethnic movement, which had formed long before 1933. This opposition was initially directed against the emerging Nazi movement and after the NSDAP came to power, against its establishment as a dictatorship. The exhibition's chapters are: "Weimar Republic: A contested democracy" (*Die Weimarer Republik: Eine umkämpfte Demokratie*), "Together! Against the Right" (*Gemeinsam! Gegen Rechts*), "Public! Debate and Propaganda" (*Öffentlich! Debatte und Propaganda*), "Secret! Hidden Resistance" (*Geheim! Widerstand im Verborgenen*) and "Exile! Flight and Resistance" (*Exil! Flucht und Widerstand*). They show how people opposed the Nazis in the crisis-ridden Weimar democracy and then under the conditions of the Nazi dictatorship. The exhibition also shows the role of the trade unions at the end of the Weimar Republic, until trade unions were banned in May 1933, as well as the failed attempts to establish a united front within the political left against the Nazi dictatorship.

Conclusion

Without volunteer employees, the *Studienkreis* could not have accomplished all that it has. On the one hand, this is a result of limited financial resources, on the other hand it is an enrichment for the work it does. It enables a democratic and participatory remembrance culture, with different ages, sexes, origins, levels of knowledge and professions working together. The volunteers are also advocates for the *Studienkreis*' topics and goals.

At the same time, the complex structure of volunteer workers and paid staffers can be challenging. Besides the many volunteers at *Studienkreis*,

the staff currently consists of one full-time and two part-time employees, plus many project staff at the memorial site and at the archive. That is why it is important to create enough space for conversation, explanation and supporting volunteers, trainees and guests regarding content and technical questions. The process is an ongoing dialogue and understanding within the team and the members about resistance: What do we understand when we talk about resistance? What meanings does resistance have today? The perspectives on resistance may differ between historians, students, political activists, descendants, or unionists. People who were part of the 1968 movement and who confronted their parents about their activities during the years 1933-1945 may see things differently than younger people with other scientific, political or social socialisation. For the former, discussing Nazi Germany was an act of opposition in a society that did not want to talk about the past. They joined the fights of the survivors of Nazi terror to establish the first memorial sites in FRG. Now there are a large number of memorial sites, but as right-wing parties contest that consensus, it is important not to forget about the crimes committed in and by Nazi Germany.

One aspect of this are web-talks, lectures and discussion events in which the *Studienkreis* gives space for perspectives of the descendants of resistance fighters. These descendants tell their parents' and grandparents' stories and share how post-war German society has dealt with the legacy of the past and with the resistance movement and former resistance fighters.²⁹ One topic that often comes up in these talks is a feeling of being different from a broader society that consists mainly of bystanders and perpetrators and their descendants. A special sensitivity is conveyed and there is often a special relationship with people and families with a connection to resistance or persecution.

Another important challenge relates to financial questions. The institutional funding from the cultural department of the city of Frankfurt is modest, while institutional funding from the Hesse state government is completely lacking. In times of increasing costs for energy, wages and beyond, more and more time is needed to find funding for our work. At the moment, funding for new projects is possible. Smaller projects with a budget under 5.000 euros are easier to fund than larger projects. Some funding is more generous but has the disadvantage that the time between

²⁹ Studienkreis Deutscher Widerstand, Youtube Channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-9Q0P2LG9Kdb5HedQaFagoQ>.

authorization and project start and the prescribed project end is sometimes just around half a year.

With upcoming right-wing protests in Germany and the rise of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AFD) as a right-wing populist and extremist party in the past few years, the use of the term “resistance” has become more popular. Demonstrators against measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, for instance, compared their situation to those of resistance fighters in Nazi Germany. One major task of the *Studienkreis*’ work is to now clarify the differences between opposition and (even critical) democratic participation in democracies and resistance in a totalitarian dictatorship. One workshop in particular addresses this issue for students. Even the new exhibition about early resistance leads to questions about political engagement today, hoping to stop the rise of right-wing extremism in Germany. The exhibition as well as the sources in the archives provide materials to reflect on the question of why the engagement over 90 years ago did not stop the NSDAP. With this historical experience, maybe new conclusions for today can be drawn. In the words of Peter Gingold (1916-2006), a German Jewish communist resistance fighter, who was engaged in the resistance in Nazi Germany, in the French Resistance and the Italian Resistance:

1933 would have been prevented if all Hitler’s opponents had created a united front. There was only one excuse for the fact that it didn’t come about for Hitler’s opponents of my parents’ generation: they had no experience of what fascism meant once it was in power. But today we all have this experience, today everyone must know what fascism means. For all future generations, there is no excuse if they do not prevent fascism.³⁰

30 “Porträt Peter Gingold”, Trotz alledem! Ein Porträt des antifaschistischen Widerstandes im Rhein-Main-Gebiet, <http://www.widerstand-portrait.de/portraits/peter-gingold.html>.

WER IST WALTER?

Resistance against Nazism, fascism, occupation and collaboration occurred throughout Europe during World War II. But how much do we know about this history in other European countries? Gathering 32 contributions and case studies on the history of this resistance, as well as on its transmission after 1945, especially in museums, the present book is an invitation to look at resistance in Europe in an interdisciplinary, international, transnational and comparative perspective. It is the result of the international research project “Wer ist Walter? Resistance against Nazism in Europe” which gathered historians, curators and other researchers mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France and Germany.



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