
BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

PRISONERS
IN THE BERGEN-BELSEN
CONCENTRATION CAMP

Volume 1

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Foundation for Memorials in Lower Saxony
Bergen-Belsen Memorial
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„I will give them an everlasting name,
that shall not be cut off.“
(Isaiah 56,5)

Dedicated
to the children, women and men
who were humiliated, tormented and murdered
in Bergen-Belsen.

A name is closely bound to the personality and dignity of each and every person in each and every culture. The National Socialists sought to debase their prisoners in the concentration camps by reducing them to mere numbers. With the loss of their names, the prisoners were supposed to lose their personalities and eventually their will to live. This process of the destruction of millions of human lives ended in the burning or anonymous burial of the bodies in mass graves. In Bergen-Belsen even the camp records office was burnt down in order to wipe out the traces of the crimes and the names of the victims.

None of these crimes can now be reversed. However, humanity requires that the names of the victims of National Socialist persecution should not be forgotten.

This applies not only to the dead in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The list of names presented here also includes the survivors from this concentration camp, whose further life was marked by the traumatic memories of the sufferings and humiliations during their imprisonment in Bergen-Belsen.

It is of great importance to give their names back to the victims at their place of suffering, since in this way the right to their own names, which was once forcibly taken from them, is to be returned to them in a symbolic form. In addition, the list of names in the Book of Remembrance is a warning reminder of the crimes committed in Bergen-Belsen – to which each individual name bears witness.

The first edition of this Book of Remembrance, which was published in 1995 and contained roughly 25,000 names, was received with much approval and grateful recognition by the former prisoners and their relatives. This obliged us to continue the work on the list with all the resources at our disposal.

Through the numerous personal contacts with survivors from Bergen-Belsen and their relatives the work on the Book of Remembrance assumed an ever-growing importance. Many have received precise information about the fate of their relatives as a result of the work on this list of names. Hundreds of enquiries of former prisoners have been received by the Bergen-Belsen Memorial, requesting written confirmation of their imprisonment in Bergen-Belsen, without which they were unable to make applications for compensation. The list of names formed an indispensable basis for dealing with these enquiries.

Producing the Book of Remembrance would not have been possible without the support of institutions from all over the world. They are too numerous for all of them to be thanked individually here.

I am especially grateful to the survivors of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and the families of former prisoners who made available the numerous names and biographical data, which could never have been obtained in any other way.

Bernd Busemann

Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs of Lower Saxony
Chairman of the Board of the
Foundation for Memorials in Lower Saxony

Sources

The total number of prisoners in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp is estimated to have been around 120,000. Shortly before the liberation the SS burnt the camp's records. Thus the most important name-related source concerning the history of this camp and of the people detained in it was irretrievably lost. In order to draw up a new list of names it was therefore necessary to compile the prisoners' names and biographical data from parallel and alternative records. These parallel records were made at different times by different authors for a wide range of motives. This is why the existing sources occasionally contain contradictory information about a person.

This made a particularly careful examination of the existing data necessary, as well as the drawing up of registration criteria which can be justified from the historic point of view and can be applied to each individual case. In addition, it was necessary to agree on a formal standardization with regard to the way names were written, additions to names, abbreviations, and the use of capitals and small letters. As a matter of principle, the information about a person found in the individual sources was included in the list of names in the form in which it was found. An exception was when the data proved to be incorrect after a comparison with other sources or as a result of additional information from survivors of Bergen-Belsen or from relatives of former prisoners.

The person-related sources still in existence are not evenly distributed over the various camp sections, groups of prisoners and phases of the camp's history. While the records are comparatively good for the "Detention Camp", in which the Jewish prisoners intended for exchange were detained, there are significantly fewer names and biographical data for the prisoners deported to Bergen-Belsen after the end of 1944 in the course of the evacuation of camps near the front.

Almost all the names of the roughly 5,500 prisoners of the "Star Camp" are known. Josef Weiss, the deputy "Senior Jewish Prisoner" of this section of the camp, had the lists held by the SS secretly copied and kept the copies until his liberation.

The names and associated data of more than 6,000 prisoners in the „Hungarians’ Camp“ have been almost completely salvaged. In part thanks to the deputy „Senior Jewish Prisoner“, Ladislaus Török, who secretly made copies of official lists and in part also thanks to the contemporary list of names of the Kasztner group taken to Switzerland at the end of 1944. Most of the prisoners of the considerably smaller “Neutrals’ Camp” are also known. In contrast, the names and data of most of the people in the “Special Camp”, especially those of the approximately 1,800 Polish Jews deported to Auschwitz in October 1943 and murdered there, are still unknown.

The information on those prisoners who came to Bergen-Belsen from other camps and working commands of other concentration camps within the system of concentration camp forced labour, many of whom were deported further from here, is fragmentary. The lists of transports (e.g. from Buchenwald) and number books from other concentration camps (e.g. Flossenbürg) provide a source here.

The gaps in the information are especially large, above all, during the last months before liberation. Thus, of the more than 15,000 male prisoners who were taken from the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp and its external camps in April 1945 and moved to the nearby Wehrmacht barracks complex, only a few hundred are known. The transports with tens of thousands of people from Auschwitz, Groß-Rosen, Natzweiler, Neuengamme, Ravensbrück, Sachsenhausen and the attached external camps, which arrived in Bergen-Belsen in 1945, are just as poorly documented. There is better information only concerning the transports from the concentration camps in Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen and the male camp in Ravensbrück.

Of the female prisoners in the “Camp of Tents” and the “Small and Large Women’s Camps” a total of more than 18,000 names have now been determined, and of the male prisoners in “Prisoners’ Camps I and II” roughly 13,000 names are now also known.

Of the more than 50,000 people who died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and immediately after liberation, only a total of 9,900 names are known so far. The sources on which these are based are, above all, the copies of the registers of deaths compiled in the special registry office of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and the documentation to be found in the special registry office in Bad Arolsen. In addition, various lists exist of the people who died after liberation and were buried in the cemetery in the grounds of the nearby barracks.

Unfortunately, no complete list of the survivors of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was made immediately after the liberation. Among other things, the reason for this is that the British were primarily interested in giving the freed prisoners medical help and in providing them with food. There was no time for a comprehensive registration during the evacuation of the survivors to the nearby barracks complex. However, a number of the national committees established immediately after the liberation did prepare their own lists of liberated prisoners. Various lists with the names of repatriated survivors have also been included in the Book of Remembrance.

A large number of additional person-related sources were included in the list of names in addition to the records already mentioned, above all published reports from memory, investigatory and trial documents, compensation files, obituaries etc. In addition, the Memorial is in contact with many more than 2,000 former prisoners of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The Memorial received numerous questionnaires from them with biographical details about themselves or friends and relatives, this information could not have been obtained in any other way. As a result of their comprehensive reports, and often interviews over several days, they have made an important contribution to drawing up the history of this place.

Using the Book of Remembrance

As a matter of principle, this Book of Remembrance includes only those people who were prisoners in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. They are included without regard to the length of their detention in Bergen-Belsen. The following data on a prisoner are included in the Book of Remembrance:

- Family name and first name
- Date and place of birth
- Date and place of liberation
- Date and place of death resulting from imprisonment and shortly after liberation

If the sources contain no information on these data fields this is indicated by a dash (-). In some sources the name is not entirely legible. If only single letters could not be deciphered, then this is also indicated by a dash at the appropriate place in the name.

The list is compiled in alphabetical order by family name and first name. In each case the name is included which a prisoner had when he or she was deported to Bergen-Belsen. In contrast to the first edition of the Book of Remembrance, the spelling of the names now includes special characters and accents, provided that the sources contain this information. Double-barrelled names are separated by a hyphen. In the case of married women the maiden name is given after the family name and separated by a hyphen. Additions to names, such as “de”, “von” or “van” are placed after the family name; academic titles, such as “Dr.” are given after the first name.

All the dates are given with eight figures, e.g.: 13.06.1901 (DD.MM.YYYY). If the complete date of birth or death is not given by the sources, only the year and, if applicable, the month, are given.

If it is known, a prisoner's place of birth is included. In exceptional cases this can also be the last address at which he or she lived. In accordance with the principle of including names and dates in as close accordance with the sources as possible, and as a result of changes to borders during the Second World War, and thus the renaming of places, in some cases the Book of Remembrance has different names for one town (for example Cluj / Klausenburg / Kolozsvár).

This revised and extended Book of Remembrance contains 50,000 names of former prisoners of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Such comprehensive documentation cannot be without mistakes, and this is partly due to the large number and varying quality of the sources described above. The users of this book are therefore requested to inform the Bergen-Belsen Memorial of corrections or additional information (Bergen-Belsen Memorial, 29303 Lohheide, Germany).

This information is collected at the Memorial and included in the computer-aided database on which the Book of Remembrance is based. This database contains far more information about a person than is printed in this Book of Remembrance, for example information about nationality or religion, and also the path of persecution.

As a result of the destruction of the sources by the perpetrators it will no longer be possible to reconstruct the names and biographical details of the greater proportion of prisoners in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

The Lower Saxony State Government and the German Federal Government provided the financial means necessary to write this Book of Remembrance.