

## P6

### **2 responsables? 2 torturers? at the Urbès camp: Josef Janisch and Arnold Brendler**

**Ernest Gillen** – former deportee from Luxembourg in the camp of Urbès mentions in his testimony the trial of Metz against war criminals of the KL Natzweiler-Struthof and its secondary camps.

The trial began on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1954 and ended on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1954.

The « Hauptsturmführer » Josef Janisch and the SS-soldier, who had shot the Alsatian works foreman, Josef Tschol, were the only ones to be held responsible for the whole of the Urbès camp. Both were judged in absentia.

Drawing by Henri Gayot  
Museum, Natzweiler-  
Struthof.



Photocopy of the official document from the « Bundesarchiv » [German Public Records Office]: end of the legal action against Janisch, after his death in 1964.

Source: documentation of the Bundesarchiv given by Hans-Peter Goergens – Memorial Offenburg-Rammersweier (Germany).

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Beglaubigte Abschrift

**Staatsanwaltschaft  
bei dem Landgericht**

Geschäfts-Nr. 19(86)Js 65/75      Stuttgart, den 19. Januar 1976  
Bitte bei allen Schreiben angeben!      (Ort und Tag)  
Fernsprecher Nr. 212-4135

In der Anzeigesache gegen  
**Josef Janisch**  
geb. am 22.4.1909 in Salzburg

wegen **NS-Verbrechen im Konzentrationslager Natzweiler**  
wird – das Verfahren eingestellt – ~~das Angeklagte keine Folge gegeben~~ –  
Die Kosten trägt die Staatskasse.

**Gründe:**

Dem Beschuldigten Janisch war vorgeworfen worden, im Konzentrationslager Natzweiler - Nebenlager Urbes-Wesserling - 4 unbekannte Häftlinge getötet zu haben.


Das Ermittlungsverfahren hat durch den Tod des Beschuldigten seine Erledigung gefunden.

Der Beschuldigte ist am 26.7.1964 verstorben; sein Tod ist beim Standesamt Gries am Brenner unter der Sterbebuch-Nr. 13/64 beurkundet. Das geht hervor aus dem Antwortschreiben des Bundesministeriums für Inneres der Republik Österreich vom 16. Dezember 1975, ergangen auf ein entsprechendes Rechtshilfeersuchen der Zentralen Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen in Ludwigsburg.

Beglaubigt!  
Stuttgart, den 26. Jan. 1976  
Staatsanwaltschaft  
bei dem Landgericht  
– Geschäftsstelle –

(gez.) Frick  
(Frick)  
Staatsanwalt

Zum Durchschreiben mit Nr. 3003

 Nr. 3003 • Einstellung des Verfahrens (allgemeine Akz.) • StA. — — Din A 4 — LL

## Josef Janisch:

He was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1909 in Salzburg (Austria) and died on 26<sup>th</sup> July in Griesam am Brenner (Austria).

There are very few documents concerning him.

It is clear from several testimonies that Josef Janisch had the rank of « SS-Hauptsturmführer » (captain) and occupied the function of « Obersturmbannführer » (lieutenant colonel) as well as the function of « Oberbevollmächtigter » (plenipotentiary leader) in the forced annexed country Alsace-Lorraine. These testimonies include those of former prisoners like Georg Neutz but also those recorded during the thorough interrogations which the former Nazi heads of the Urbès camp underwent in 1961 at diverse justice courts in Germany,

He was also responsible for overseeing the fitting-out of the former railway tunnel at Urbès into an underground factory for the assembly of diesel engines for DB-605 planes of the Luftwaffe.

**Georg Neutz**, former German prisoner in Urbès, also specifies, that he was feared by all in the camp, be it the prisoners or the Nazi staff.

**Ernest Gillen**, a former Luxemburg prisoner, testifies in "*Ein kleines Nebenlager mit blutiger Bilanz, Urbis-Wesserling* » [A small secondary camp but with bloody outcome, the camp of Urbès-Wesserling]:

*« The Hauptsturmführer Janisch led the building site and he obliged the prisoners to work constantly. When he considered, that they didn't work rapidly enough, he shouted at them and beat them using both hands and feet. I personally saw how he beat one of the prisoners (...) ».*

*« I saw how Janisch intended to throw a bowl of boiling soup at the head of a prisoner. But the latter ducked at the same moment and Janisch missed his aim. Then he beat him using both his hands and feet ».*

**Anton Koehler**, former German deportee and capo in the camp in Urbès, considered Janisch as an "absolute bastard"!

*"I remember, that the SS-Obersturmführer" Janisch had witnessed the hanging of 4 Russian prisoners inside the camp. In good conscience, I can say that he was an absolute bastard"!*

The only positive point about Janisch can be read in the testimony of Georg Neutz in which he explains, that Josef Janisch made sure that the hardworking prisoners received enough to eat.

He often said, that if the prisoners had to work hard, they needed to be fed and treated accordingly.

Nevertheless, Georg Neutz knew, that Janisch didn't utter these words out of humanitarian concern!

Source: Arno Huth, « *Das Natzweiler Außenlager Wesserling als A-Projekt des „Jägerstabs“*, Neckarelz, p 9-30.



Photo made by Hans-Peter Goergens, member of the Memorial Offenburg-Rammersweier, Baden, Germany.

## **Arnold Brendler:**

„Obersturmführer“ or lieutenant at the Urbès camp, Arnold Brendler was born on 3 October 1916 at Isabelow near Zdunska-Wola in Poland.

After the Nazi invasion of Poland, Brendler's native region Posnan/Posen became „Reichsgau Posen “ and as of 9 January 1940 „Reichsgau Wartheland“.

This region had to become a model of political and ideological “nazification”, as well as a place where racial theory was to be put into practice, that's to say the classification of local people into masters and slaves.

As a result, only 1,3% of the local Jewish population in the Reichsgau Wartheland succeeded in surviving Nazi occupation.

In his handwritten testimony, Arnold Brendler wrote on 3 June 1941:

*„At the beginning of March 1933, I started working in the Jewish weaving workshop until January 1939. In February of the same year, I was mobilized and joined the Polish Army, until the war broke out.*

*Then I became prisoner of the Russians, a little later I was released and handed over to the Reich, as I was considered a German.”*

This moment struck the debut of Brendler's „German career “.

On 15 February 1940, he joined the SS and was given Number 384404. He was put in charge of running the group [the „NSV-Kreisamtsleitung “] of Zdunska-Wola.

Then, Arnold Brendler requested to become a member of the „Waffen-SS “.

From 5 June 1941, he was assigned to the „Flak-Division Ost “, [East] and from 19 July 1941, he joined the 1/SS-Totenkopf-Sturmabteilung in Dachau, [Totenkopf = skull].

On 1 June 1942, Brendler obtained the rank of „SS-Sturmmann “ [corporal].

On 6 May 1943, he was appointed „SS-Untersturmführer “ [second lieutenant] and had a dazzling ascension within the Nazi hierarchy.

Indeed, he succeeded in climbing 8 ranks in less than one year!

After 15 March 1944, Brendler was transferred and promoted member of the „Kommandatur “ staff at the camp of Lublin/Majdanek.

In 1944 he became Head of the secondary camp in Urbès.



Badge of the Third SS Panzer Division  
« Totenkopf » [skull].

Website Wikipédia, Internet.



Image from Internet

### **Testimonies of some former deportees at the Urbès camp relating to Arnold Brendler:**

Considering all of the testimonies, it is agreed that Brendler's behavior towards the prisoners was slightly more „humane“ than that of Josef Janisch!

Following are some excerpts from testimonies of former prisoners concerning Arnold Brendler:

### **Ernest Gillen:**

*« Due to the escape of Russian prisoners, Commander Brendler received the order from above to punish all prisoners at the camp. Brendler undertook the biggest thrashing I have seen in my life. 800 to 1000 Russians received 10 blows on their backsides. This punishment lasted for a few days ».*

(Source: M<sup>r</sup> François Wehrbach's book, « *Urbès 1944, un tunnel ferroviaire devait devenir une usine souterraine d'armement de la Luftwaffe* », « *KL-Natzweiler-Block W, Baustelle U* » / Edition du Colombier).

### **Anton Koehler:**

*« Towards us, he behaved correctly. Brendler was the only SS who ensured that our shoes were adequate (...) ».*

According to **Georg Neutz**, Brendler attempted to deal with widespread lice infestation. Furthermore, he is reported as gradually abolishing in Urbès camp corporal punishment through kicks and beatings using sticks (despite the testimony of Ernest Gillen, above). Finally, he did his best to provide the prisoners with correct shoes .

From 1 September 1944, he became "Kompanieführer" [ company commander ] of the « *Zweite Wachkompanie* " [2nd Guard Company] – "Erster Wachsturmbann" of the Natzweiler-Struthof camp.

Therefore, he also had under his command guard units or "Wachmannschaften » at secondary camps of Natzweiler-Struthof, for example at the Rhine-Main Airport in Mörfelden -Waldorf, at the Company "Adlerwerke" in Frankfurt, as well as in Geisenheim on the Rhine until he was replaced by Johann Schaak from January 1945. The latter was promoted new leader or new "Kompanieführer" of the 2nd Guard Company or "2. Wachkompanie".

Brendler had been company leader or « *Kompanieführer* » at the camp of Leonberg at least as of 6 November 1944.

On 30 January 1945, he was promoted « *SS-Obersturmführer* » or lieutenant colonel.

(Source: Baur/Wörner, „*KL-Leonberg* “, treated again by Arno Huth in his work “ *Das Natzweiler Außenlager Wesserling als A-Projekt des Jägerstabs*“, Neckarelz, p 6, 9, 24).



Photo made by Hans-Peter Goergens in the Museum of Pawiak, Poland, May 2016.



## Arnold Brendlers's fate after World War II:

The following document is a photocopy of the official sentence from the German Public Records Office or Bundesarchiv in Ludwigsburg (Germany), see paragraph 1.

According to the trial against Nazi criminals from the main camp Natzweiler-Struthof and its secondary camps, this document from the Justice Court in Ludwigsburg clearly stipulates that on 23 August 1962 the charges against him were dismissed for lack of sufficient proof against Brendler in his implication or not in the hanging of 4 Russian prisoners at the entrance of the tunnel inside the Urbès camp.

In the second paragraph, legal proceedings against Josef Janisch were abandoned following his death in 1964.

Summary Judgment, 22 February 1971, Landesgericht Stuttgart [equivalent of High Court].  
(document)

Im Entwurf abgezeichnet: Dr. Schn.

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Staatssanwaltschaft  
bei dem Landgericht Stuttgart

- 86 Js 541/70 -

Verfügung vom 22. 2. 1971

In der Anzeigesache gegen

- 1) den ehemaligen SS-Untersturmführer  
Arnold Brendler
- 2) den ehemaligen SS-Hauptsturmführer  
Josef Janisch

wegen NS-Verbrechen im Nebenlager Wasserling-Urbis  
des KZ Natzweiler-Struthof

wird das Verfahren eingestellt.  
Die Kosten trägt die Staatskasse.

Gründe:

Im Sommer 1944 wurden in dem Arbeitslager Wasserling-Urbis/Elsaß, einem Nebenlager des Konzentrationslagers Natzweiler/Elsaß, vier Häftlinge auf Weisung des Reichssicherheitshauptamts erhängt. Die Häftlinge waren aus dem Lager geflohen und kurze Zeit später wieder eingefangen worden.

Nach der Aussage des ehemaligen Häftlings-Kapo Herbert Könen waren der Lagerführer, SS-Untersturmführer Arnold Brendler,

./.

- Bl.10 sowie der Leiter des "SS-Bau-Sonderinspektion Wesserling-Urbis" SS-Hauptsturmführer Joseph Janisch, bei der Erhängung zugegen. Janisch habe vor der Hinrichtung noch eine Ansprache gehalten. Außer den beiden Beschuldigten waren noch auswärtige SS-Offiziere anwesend.
- Bl.225/ Wegen dieser Erhängung wurde schon im Jahre 1962 bei der Staats-  
226 anwaltschaft Stuttgart ein Ermittlungsverfahren gegen die beiden Beschuldigten durchgeführt ( 17 Js 177/62 ).

- 1) Gegen den Beschuldigten Brendler wurde das Verfahren mit Verfügung vom 23.8.1962 eingestellt, wobei dahingestellt blieb, ob der Beschuldigte bei der Erhängung anwesend oder, wie er behauptet, mit dem Motorrad auswärts gewesen war. Es war nicht festgestellt worden, daß Brendler bei der Erhängung irgendeine Funktion ausgeübt hat, sodaß seine bloße Anwesenheit bei der Erhängung nicht als Mord oder Beihilfe zum Mord angesehen werden konnte.

Das vorliegende Ermittlungsverfahren hat insoweit keine neuen Erkenntnisse erbracht, sodaß es bei der Einstellung vom 23. 8. 1962 verbleibt.

- 2) Gegen den Beschuldigten Josef Janisch wurde das Ermittlungsverfahren seinerzeit nur vorläufig eingestellt, da er unbekannten Aufenthalts war.

- Bl.245 Inzwischen ist festgestellt worden, daß Janisch, geb.am 22.4.09 in Salzburg, am 26. 7. 1964 verstorben ist. Sein Tod ist beim Standesamt Gries am Brenner unter Sterbebuch-Nr. 13/64 beurkundet.

Insoweit hat sich das Verfahren erledigt.

Für die  
Verfahrensverwaltung  
ausgegeben

- 4. 3. 71

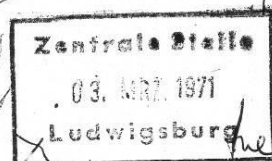
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II. Ohne Mitt.

( Schreitmüller  
Erster Staatsanwalt

✓ III. Abschrift d. Einstellungsverfügung an  
Z.St. zu IV 419, AR-Z 177/69

IV. Bericht an Justizmin. über Generalstaatsanwalt

V. Weglegen bis 1991.





## The hierarchy within the SS at the Urbès camp:

The documents of the Bundesarchiv provided in the photocopy below, provide the list of the SS military in charge of the camp (Nazi's terminology)

- 1) Le SS-Obersturmbannführer [Lieutenant-colonel], Josef Janisch
- 2) Le SS-Obersturmführer [Lieutenant], Arnold Brendler
- 3) Le SS- Oberscharführer et Rapportführer [Quartermaster-sergeant], Josef Brandauer
- 4) Les Stabsfeldwebel [Warrant officer], Franz Seeholzer et Ernst Pöschke
- 5) Le Rottenführer [First class caporal], Daun ? Daum ?
- 6) Les Obergefreite [Caporal], Heinrich Philipsen et van Well
- 7) Les Gefreite [Caporal] Döhler et Franz Riedl.

- 2 -

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1) Wie groß war das Lager, wieviele Häftlinge umfaßte es?

2) Was kann der Zeuge über den Lagerführer aussagen?  
In Wessertling-Urbis war Lagerführer der SS-Untersturmführer Arnold B r e n d l e r .

3) Erinnert sich der Zeuge noch an ehemalige SS-Angehörige oder Wachleute des Lagers? Kann er zu den folgenden Personen Angaben machen (Herkunft, Verbleib):

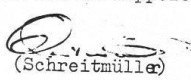
- a) SS-Obersturmführer J a n i t s c h (Österreicher)
- b) SS-Oberscharführer Josef B r a n d a u e r  
(soll Rapportführer gewesen sein)
- c) Obergefreiter Heinrich P h i l i p s e n
- d) Obergefreiter Ernst P ö s c h k e
- e) Obergefreiter v a n W e l l
- f) Gefreiter D ö h l e r
- g) Gefreiter Franz R i e d l
- h) Stabsfeldwebel Franz S e e h o l z e r

4) Erinnert sich der Zeuge noch an Namen von Häftlingen (Lagerälteste, Kapos usw.)?

5) Kann der Zeuge Häftlingstötungen oder -exekutionen in den beiden Lagen Angaben machen?

Nach Zeugenangaben sollen etwa im Mai oder Juni 1944 im Tunnel vier geflüchtete und wiedereingefangene Häftlinge erhängt worden sein.

Das Ermittlungsergebnis erbitte ich in doppelter Fertigung.

  
(Schreitmüller)  
Staatsanwalt

After the war and throughout the 1960s, most Nazi officials underwent various interrogations in numerous judicial courts in Germany, in order to determine their respective roles within the camp and their treatment of the prisoners, as well as their involvement in Nazi crimes against camp prisoners and humanity in general.

In fact, Nazi criminals often received very lenient sentences and in many cases the legal proceedings against them were abandoned or never took place!

According to **Ernest Gillen** in the above-mentioned document, Janisch was sometimes overcome by uncontrolled fits of anger.

At such times, he even ordered the civilian camp staff to be merciless towards the prisoners, to beat them in case of need, which Alsatian civilian employees inside the camp refused to do.

Janisch even threatened Fender, an Alsatian site foreman, because he seemed to him to be too “kind” towards the prisoners.

Following this menace, Fender asked to be transferred.

Besides, Janisch and Brendler got along like cat and dog!

Janisch was responsible for building and outfitting the underground factory in the former tunnel, as well as the management of the entire site together with Alsatian civilians, like the Alsatian site manager, Joseph Tschol, his draftsman and his secretary.

Several private firms, like Degler, AEG and some local or regional transport companies also intervened on the site.

These firms, in turn, brought in civilian employees, among them skilled workers, and were asked to make prisoners work, although in an indirect way: indeed, the detainees were always under the command of an “Oberkapo” or superior capo, who was himself under the command of Janisch and Tschol.

Furthermore, every “Oberkapo” had 6 capos under his orders.

At Urbès, the capo leader of the prisoner camp was German and named Schütz.

Ernest Gillen also mentions the presence of a “Lagerschreiber” [Campscribe], who was German too, as well as the presence of a “Revierkapo” responsible for the “Block” of sick prisoners, a Polish deportee; and finally the presence of 10 men considered as “helps”.

Gillen also mentions the fact that some capos struck poor prisoners in such a rough and wild way, that some of them collapsed, severely wounded.

According to Gillen, reportedly no prisoner died as a result of the beatings inflicted by some of the capos.

Source:

Our sincere thanks to M<sup>r</sup> Hans-Peter Goergens – member of the Memorial Offenburg-Rammersweier (Baden, Germany) for all the lent documents.

Our sincere thanks to M<sup>r</sup> Arno Huth – vice-president of the Memorial Neckarelz (Baden, Germany). Excerpts from the book written by Baur/Wörner, the “KL-Leonberg”, taken back by Arno Huth in “*Das Natzweiler Außenlager Wesserling als A-Projekt of Jägerstabs*”, Neckarelz, (p 6, 9, 24).



" The small camp of Buchenwald ",1945 by Boris Taslitzky, Museum of Modern Art, Georges Pompidou Center, Paris.

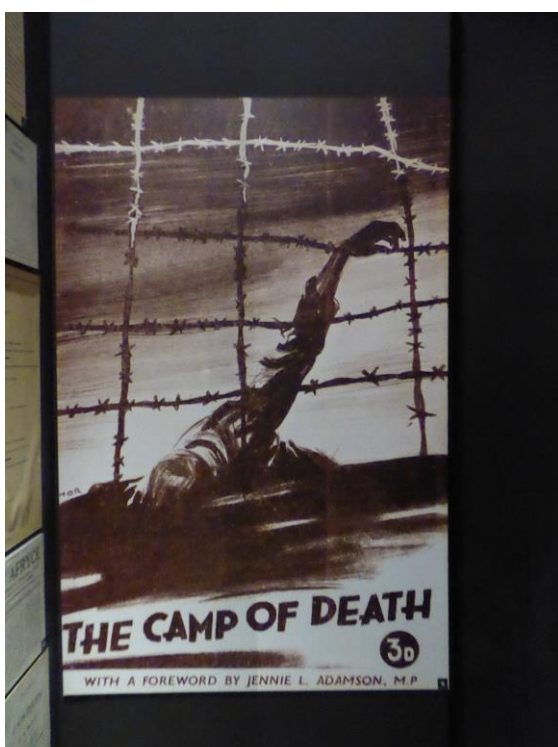
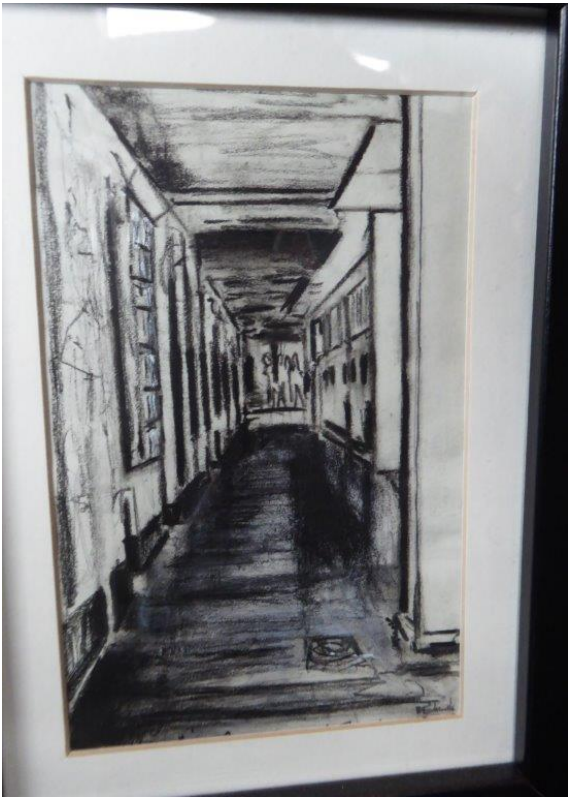


Photo made by Hans-Peter Goergens in May 2016, Museum of Pawiak, Poland.





Drawing by Deborah Edwards,  
Exhibition at the Struthof Memorial, 2015.  
Photo made by Hans-Peter Goergens, 2015.

Many thanks to M<sup>rs</sup>. Margot Roullier for her rereading and correction in English.

Scheurer-Kestner High-School in Thann,

T STMG2 Class.

2016 / 2017.

German Teacher, Marguerite Kubler.

