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THE STRATEGY OF THE SECURITY SERVICE OF THE THIRD REICH FOR KEEPING HIGH-RANKING PRISONERS IN THE “ALPINE FORTRESS” AND ITS IMPACT ON POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The article examines a layer of questions related to the issue of the use by the security service of the Third Reich of the strategy of capturing and keeping high-ranking hostages from occupied countries in special institutions for VIP prisoners, some of which were located on the territory of the “Alpine Fortress”. This topic is a “white spot” on the background of research in the field of world history, because there is a rather limited amount of research carried out by German, American and English historians. Despite their undeniable value for science, these studies were carried out to highlight a clearly defined range of questions, which, however, do not give an idea of the problem as a whole. At the same time, the purpose of this article is to focus on the implementation of a comprehensive approach to the study of this problem and the formation of a global view of the strategy of the Third Reich to keep VIP-prisoners on the territory of the “Alpine Fortress”. The main tasks are the description of the process of creating two separate specialized prisons, the verification of those VIP prisoners who passed through them and the outline of a possible global strategy of the leadership of the Third Reich for keeping high-ranking prisoners. Based on the results of the tasks set, the article reconstructs the ways of implementing the mentioned strategy, identifies its executors from among the servicemen of the SS and SD, and determines its impact on postwar international relations. The article emphasizes that the global strategy of the Reich’s leadership is characterized by situationism and ill-consideredness. The Nazis invested great resources in the process of converting castles and hotels into prisons for VIP prisoners and provided them with reliable security. At the same time, it is extremely difficult to determine whether the German leadership had specific plans for what to do with VIP

prisoners. However, no matter how paradoxical it may sound, it was the ill-conceivedness of this strategy that made it possible to create the prerequisites for phenomenal events that preserved for Europe and the world outstanding political and military figures who had considerable influence on their post-war system.

Keywords: *World War II, “Alpine Fortress”, VIP prisoners, castle Itter, hotel “Pragser Wildsee”, Province of Tyrol, Ehrenhaftlinge, security service of the Third Reich.*

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СТРАТЕГІЯ СЛУЖБИ БЕЗПЕКИ ТРЕТЬОГО РАЙХУ З УТРИМАННЯ ВИСОКОПОСТАВЛЕНИХ В'ЯЗНІВ У «АЛЬПІЙСЬКІЙ ФОРТЕЦІ» ТА ЇЇ ВПЛИВ НА ПОВОЄННІ МІЖНАРОДНІ ВІДНОСИНИ

У статті досліджується пласт питань, дотичних до проблематики використання службою безпеки Третього райху стратегії із захоплення та утримання високопоставлених заручників з окупованих країн у спеціальних закладах для VIP-в'язнів, деякі з яких розташовувалися на території «Альпійської фортеці». Ця тематика являє собою «білу пляму» на тлі досліджень у царині всесвітньої історії, адже існує доволі обмежена кількість досліджень, здійснених німецькими, американськими та англійськими істориками. Незважаючи на їх беззаперечну цінність для науки, ці дослідження здійснювалися для висвітлення чітко окресленого кола питань, які, однак, не дають уявлення про проблему загалом. Водночас, метою цієї статті є сфокусування на реалізації комплексного підходу для дослідження цієї проблеми і формування глобального уявлення про стратегію Третього райху з утримання VIP-в'язнів на території «Альпійської фортеці». Основними завданнями є характеристика процесу створення двох окремих спеціалізованих в'язниць, верифікація тих VIP в'язнів, які пройшли через них, та окреслення можливої глобальної стратегії керівництва Третього райху з утримання високопоставлених

в'язнів. За результатами виконання поставлених завдань у статті реконструйовано шляхи реалізації названої стратегії, встановлено її виконавців із числа військовослужбовців СС та СД і визначено її вплив на повоєнні міжнародні відносини. У статті наголошується, що глобальна стратегія керівництва Райху вирізняється ситуативністю та непродуманістю. Нацистами були вкладені великі ресурси у процес перебудови замків та готелів у тюрми для VIP-в'язнів та забезпечено їх надійну охорону. Водночас, визначити, чи були в німецького керівництва конкретні плани щодо того, що робити з VIP в'язнями, вкрай важко. Однак, як не парадоксально це б не звучало, саме непродуманість цієї стратегії дозволила створити передумови для феноменальних подій, що зберегли для Європи та світу видатних політичних та військових діячів, які мали неабиякий вплив на їх повоєнний устрій.

Ключові слова: Друга світова, «Альпійська фортеця», VIP в'язні, замок Інтер, готель «Прагсер Вільдзее», провінція Тіроль, *Ehrenhaftlinge*, спецслужби III Райху.

Despite the fact that a fairly large number of diaries, testimonies and memoirs of political, military or cultural figures (VIP prisoners) who passed through Nazi prisons have survived to our time, the process of their processing and analysis leaves much to be desired. Usually, the above-mentioned sources are interpreted by researchers as allowing to look at the process of forced stay in Nazi prisons through the prism of the personal worldview of the prisoner himself. Undoubtedly, such an approach allows to single out certain aspects important for the researcher, but it also causes a one-sided consideration of such sources, because the prisoners themselves are very unusual individuals, and from the point of view of logic it is clear that their experience is much different from the situation of an ordinary prisoner.

A certain departure from this template was proposed by the German researcher Volker Koop, who in his scientific work tries to focus not only on the experience of VIPs staying in special prisons, but also highlights the importance of their personal factors, and most importantly, makes an attempt to look at their imprisonment in a wider context, which consisted in their systematic localization in prisons on the territory of a certain region¹.

For his part, the American researcher Stephen Harding, focusing his efforts on one specific prison for VIP prisoners and its, so to speak, residents, obtained data not only on the local dimension of the functioning of these institutions, but also managed to follow the process of conversion of ordinary castle or hotel to a prison for VIP-prisoners².

The German scientist Hans-Günther Richardi attempted to globalize the theory proposed by Volker Koop and focused on those VIP-prisoners who

were on the territory of Austria. As a result, the German researcher established that a rather large number of prisoners of particular importance to the Nazis were located on the territory of this country³.

The publication of the scientific efforts of English researchers Ian Sayer and Jeremy Dronfield was a big and currently the last step forward in the study of this issue. In their work, in addition to paying considerable attention to the events that preceded the imprisonment of 139 VIP prisoners, they also try to explain the purpose of this imprisonment, which, in their opinion, was the desire of the leadership of the Third Reich and Adolf Hitler personally to murder them⁴. The truth or falsity of the assumptions made by the above researchers will be discussed separately in the text of the article.

Thus, it can be concluded that the problem of keeping high-ranking prisoners by the Nazi leadership does not enjoy conditional popularity among researchers. One can try to find a partial explanation for this at least in the fact that a really thorough study of this issue requires a scientist not only to carefully study historical sources, but also to know the specifics of the vicissitudes of political intrigues among the Nazi leadership, as well as the role of Austria in the plans of the Third Reich.

At this stage, there is not even an attempt at historical research to find out what the Third Reich's global strategy for keeping VIP prisoners was, or if it even existed. That is why, in the context of this article, the author will try to implement a complex approach in the study of this problem, because it will allow to reveal it most fully and provide a comprehensive consideration of the specified range of scientific problems.

Given the fact that the mentioned issue will be considered in Ukrainian historiography for the first time, in the opinion of the author, it would be very appropriate to conduct a small historical excursion that would be able to explain in more detail the events and how VIP prisoners from different countries ended up in the prisons of the Third Reich.

As of April 1941, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, Greece and even part of Great Britain — the Channel Islands — were under occupation by the troops of the Third Reich. The occupation of such a large number of countries led to the appearance of a considerable number of prisoners of war and deported "unfortunate" persons, however, forced deprivation of liberty befell not only them. Many representatives of the government and administration of the occupied countries were also subjected to systematic persecution by the Nazis, which ended in imprisonment. The security service of the Third Reich paid special attention to the active members of the Resistance Movement and those people who sympathized with them in every way. The category of "non-benevolent" also included figures of science, sports and art who did not agree with the idea of the Nazi "new order".

From this small historical excursion into the events of the past, we can conclude that along with ordinary citizens of the occupied countries, the Gestapo also fell into the hands of people who can be classified as “Especially important”, i.e. VIP prisoners. Keeping them together with ordinary prisoners in concentration camps was risky, because, after all, influential politicians or popular figures of culture and the arts could not only spread anti-Nazi appeals among them, but also agitate for more radical methods of struggle, which could well pour into the rebel in the camps. That is why the Nazi leadership decided to start the practice of creating special VIP prisons, which would allow keeping important prisoners separately from the main mass.

The security service of the Third Reich immediately faced the question of where to imprison these people, because such a prison should provide not only the possibility of reliable protection, but also a relatively good level of comfort for a VIP prisoner. It is quite possible that, according to the German plan, the rather comfortable conditions of imprisonment should have inclined VIP persons to collaborate with the Nazis.

In search of similar places, the leadership of the security service of the Third Reich, in particular, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, turned their attention to the province of Ostmark, that is, to Austria annexed by Germany as a result of the Anschluss in 1938, with its mountainous landscape and a whole system of castles and hotels in places remote from the human eye⁵. However, the Nazi leaders liked the territory of Austria not only because of this. The role of Austria in the plans of the Nazi leadership deserves to be discussed separately.

It is worth noting that at the final stage of the Second World War, the territory of Austria was considered by the German High Command as the last possible bastion of defense of the Reich. Austria was a place where industrial production could be transferred⁶ and, by blocking the mountain passes, the war could be continued. The generalized image of this last bastion of defense was called the “Alpine Fortress”⁷. However, one should not approach the problem of the existence of the “Alpine Fortress” too complimentary, because this area served not only as the last possible line of defense, but also as an area capable, due to its difficult landscape, of becoming a reliable hiding place for secret documentation, material resources and weapons. In particular, at the bottom of Lake Toplitz, the Nazis hid a large number of boxes with various documents and designs of new weapons samples⁸, and in the tunnels of Altaussee, a collection of works of art was hidden that were taken out by the Nazis from the occupied countries and which was prepared for destruction⁹.

The region of the Austrian Alps itself was considered by German military and political figures as a safe area to which they could evacuate if necessary¹⁰. Their motives are understandable, because the territory of Austria was not

subjected to such powerful bombings as the territory of Germany. For example, Reichsmarschall and commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring, left for Austria on April 12, 1945, together with his staff¹¹. The action of the Reichsmarschall should not be regarded solely as a manifestation of cowardice, because according to the plan of the German high command, in the event that the offensive of the allied troops and the Red Army divides Germany into northern and southern parts, the high command of the forces of the south should be located on the territory of Bavaria and Austria¹².

Another important factor that clearly had an impact on the role of Austria in the plans of the German High Command cannot be excluded. During the offensive in the Ardennes (Operation “Wacht am Rhein”), documents related to Operation “Eclipse” were captured by the German military¹³. In particular, among them were detailed maps showing the occupation zones into which Germany was to be divided after its surrender. However, the territory of Austria remained unpainted on these maps¹⁴, so it can be assumed that the Nazi leadership could hope that this territory would remain on the periphery of the main hostilities and later either restore its independence or fall under the jurisdiction of the Allies. For the German military officials, who had something to fear, Austria looked more attractive and stood before them as a promising place of possible hiding place, in which they can wait for the end of the war. As already mentioned, Austria, due to its mountainous landscape, provided potential fugitives with much better opportunities for hiding than the same west of Germany, which was also supposed to fall into the sphere of influence of the Allies, but, in contrast to Austria, was subjected to heavy bombing and was in the epicenter of hostilities.

As can be understood from the above facts, the territory of occupied Austria became the place of directing the last military efforts and hopes of the leadership of the Third Reich, which was living out its last days. In the context of this article, the fact that VIP prisoners also fell under the category of conditional secrets, which the Nazis intended to guard to the last, is important. Given the fact that most of the famous prisons were located on the territory of Austria, their “inhabitants” were released only at the very end of the war — in May 1945, and some of the prisoners could not live to be released, because they were murdered by the Nazis.

The author of the article is definitely aware of the operation of at least two special prisons for VIP prisoners on the territory of Austria. We are talking about castle Itter in North Tyrol and Hotel Pragser Wildsee in South Tyrol. It is not known for certain what factor influenced the decision of the security service of the Third Reich to choose the region of Tyrol to place two special prisons there. We can only assume that the mountainous landscape of this region, as well as the fact of the proximity of the Swiss and Italian borders,

were quite important for the security services when choosing the location of the prisons, however, the explanation may be somewhat simpler, because Heinrich Himmler's department could trivially choose the territory for factor in the presence of real estate there for sale. As you can guess, in 1938–1945, the territory of Austria was not very attractive for tourists, so a castle or a hotel could not be classified as profitable real estate, and the desire of their owners to put them up for sale would seem quite logical.

I propose using concrete examples to analyze the very system of functioning of prisons for VIP prisoners on the territory of the "Alpine Fortress".

Let's start with **castle Itter** in North Tyrol. After the Anschluss of Austria in 1938, this castle immediately attracted the attention of the German authorities, so it seems quite logical that it was bought from the previous owner Franz Grüner in 1940 (the castle used to be a hotel) for further use for, as stated in the German documentation of that time, "special needs"¹⁵.

SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler became interested in this castle in November 1942 for a rather pragmatic reason. At that time, there was a very large number of "Important prisoners" (German: "*Ehrenhaftlinge*")¹⁶ in the prisons of the Reich, who, for the obvious reasons indicated at the beginning of the article, had to be kept separately from ordinary prisoners.

At this stage, it is necessary to dwell on the conditional gradation of the status of prisoners that existed in the camps of the Third Reich. According to the memoirs of Countess Karolina Lanckorońska, certain groups of prisoners in Nazi camps received names from the camp administration that helped to identify them, as well as colored triangles on their robes that marked their affiliation. "Professional" criminals were called "*Berufsverbrecher*", scoundrels and gypsies were part of the "*Asoziale*" group, people who fell out of favor with the Nazis because of their religious beliefs were called "*Internationaler Bibelfoscher Verein*"¹⁷. The category "*Sonderhaftling*" was considered the most privileged in the camps, which united prisoners who, literally, "needed special treatment"¹⁸. At the same time, the category "*Ehrenhaftlinge*" stood outside the camp and marked people who, in the opinion of the Nazi leadership, were worth keeping in specialized institutions, separate from the main mass of prisoners.

The importance of creating such specialized institutions can be said at least by the fact that already in November 1942, Heinrich Himmler handed Adolf Hitler an order for SS Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl (who, at that time, already held the position of head of the main administrative and economic department of the SS¹⁹) regarding the acquisition of the castle and its outbuildings for the "special use of the SS". As of February 7, 1943, the castle and its adjacent buildings were officially requisitioned by Oswald Pohl's employees²⁰.

In the official documentation, the castle Itter was from that moment called the "Evacuation Camp" (German: "*Evakuierungslager*") and was administratively subordinated to the Dachau concentration camp. Immediately after the requisition of the castle, a security detachment of SS soldiers from the Dachau "Death's Head" units²¹ and a group of prisoners from the Dachau and Ravensbrück concentration camps arrived to convert the castle for further use as a prison for VIP persons²².

According to the German researcher Volker Koop, the reconstruction of the castle was supervised by Albert Speer, Hitler's personal architect, and as of February 1942, the Minister of Armaments and Munitions²³. Actually, this very fact raises certain questions for the author of the article, because according to German researchers, by order of February 19, 1942, Oberführer Hans Kammler was appointed head of Department C of the main administrative and economic department of the SS²⁴. It was Department C that was responsible for "general and special construction projects", so a natural question arises why, instead of the head of Department C Kammler, the rebuilding of castle Itter was personally supervised by the Minister of Armaments and Ammunition, Albert Speer, who obviously had much more important things to do in his ministry? There may be several explanations. The first is that due to the importance of such a prison for VIP prisoners, the leadership of the Reich decided to entrust this project to Albert Speer. However, on the other hand, Hans Kammler was also an experienced construction project manager and a well-respected and well-known high-ranking official in the SS system, which raises legitimate doubts about this explanation. So, in search of a second explanation, you can turn to the biography of Oberführer Kammler. According to her, starting in August 1943, he was appointed head of the A-4 program²⁵ (the German program for the construction of V-2 ballistic missiles in underground factories), so it can be assumed that the Nazi leadership, knowing in advance that Kammler would be busy on another responsible task, decided to give priority to Speer's talent. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that the initiative to get involved in the reconstruction of castle Itter came from Speer himself, who was known for his passion for architecture.

In any case, at least the fact that the transformation of the castle Itter was entrusted personally to the Minister of Armaments and Munitions clearly demonstrates the high priority given by the leadership of the Third Reich to the problem of creating VIP prisons.

Reconstruction of the castle lasted until April 25, 1943²⁶. It was after this date that the castle was officially ready for the arrival of VIP prisoners. The leadership of the security service of the Reich remained only to appoint the heads of this, so to speak, institution. SS Hauptsturmführer Sebastian Wimmer, who was officially subordinate to the commandant of the Dachau concentration

camp, SS Obersturmbannführer Eduard Weiter, was appointed commandant of castle Itter.

VIP-prisoners were to be guarded by a “special unit of the SS "Itter"” consisting of 14 servicemen. The young SD (SS security service) officer Stephan Otto²⁷ became the deputy commander of the special SS unit Itter (commandant Wimmer was the unit commander, as it is not difficult to guess).

In the event of a threat that could not be dealt with by the forces of the “special squad”, Wimmer had the opportunity to call in reinforcements from the Wehrmacht’s mountain rifle school for non-commissioned officers, located in the town of Worgl, not far from castle Itter²⁸. Such unprecedented security measures, combined with the mountainous landscape of North Tyrol, made any escape attempts virtually impossible.

Since the system of hierarchy, those people and institutions that ensured the maintenance of VIP prisoners in castle Itter, presented in the text version, may seem confusing for the reader to understand, it is not superfluous to present a small diagram within this subsection, which would aim to visually demonstrate a possible hierarchy system, reconstructed on the basis of data obtained during the study of the process of rebuilding castle Itter into a special prison for VIP prisoners.

***Hierarchy of subordination of the system of holding VIP hostages
(reconstruction attempt):***

*Reich Security Main Office (RSHA)
(Heinrich Himmler)*

*The main economic and administrative department of the SS
(Oswald Pohl)*

*Dachau concentration camp
(Edward Waiter)*

*Castle Itter
(Sebastian Wimmer)*

After familiarizing with the hierarchy of the above-mentioned system, it will be appropriate to go to the list of VIP-prisoners who were kept in castle Itter²⁹:

— Edouard Daladier — ex-prime minister of the French Republic, during the invasion of German troops on the territory of France — minister of war in the government of Paul Reynaud. One of the first inmates of castle Itter (along

with Paul Reynaud and Maurice Gamelin). Arrested on September 6, 1940, arrived at the castle on May 2, 1943³⁰.

– Léon Jouhaux — the head of the French trade union, the most influential leader of trade unions in France, an active member of the Resistance Movement. Arrested on November 26, 1941. He arrived at the castle on May 2, 1943.

– Maurice Gamelin — general, until May 18, 1940 — commander-in-chief of all armies of the French Republic, chief of staff of the army, inspector general of the army and president of the Supreme Military Council. Arrested on September 6, 1940, arrived at the castle on May 2, 1943.

– Paul Reynaud — until June 16, 1940 — Prime Minister of the French Republic, sworn political rival of Edouard Daladier. Arrested on September 6, 1940, arrived at the castle on May 12, 1943³¹.

– Jean Borotra is a professional athlete, tennis star, known by his name “Bounding Basque”. In the Vichy government, he was the commissioner for sports. He was dismissed from his post due to his refusal to actively collaborate with the Third Reich. Arrested on November 22, 1942, arrived at the castle on May 12, 1943.

– Augustine Brüchlen — the secretary and future wife of Leon Jouhaux, came to the castle voluntarily on June 12, 1943.

– Christina Mabire — secretary and future wife of Paul Reynaud, came to the castle voluntarily on July 2, 1943.

– Marcel Granjer — a reserve officer of the French colonial troops, a member of the Resistance Movement, a relative of the French army general Henri Giraud. He was captured by the Gestapo in April 1943 and arrived at the castle on July 2, 1943.

– Maxime Weygand — general, since May 18, 1940 — commander-in-chief of all armies of the French Republic, sworn rival of General Gamelin. After the capitulation of France, he held the position of commander-in-chief of the French forces in Africa. Arrested on November 12, 1940, arrived at the castle on December 5, 1943.

– Marie-Rene — Josephine Weygand — Maxim Weygand’s wife, joined her imprisoned husband voluntarily. She arrived at the castle on December 5, 1943.

– Michel Clemenceau — the son of Georges Clemenceau, a private entrepreneur, after the beginning of the Second World War — a major in French intelligence. After the surrender, he opposed any collaboration with the Germans. Arrested in May 1943, he arrived at the castle on January 9, 1944.

– François de La Rocque — retired colonel of the French army, founder of the right-wing organization “Croix de Feu”. After the surrender, he continued to engage in politics, but spoke with the slogan “No collaboration under

occupation!”. Active member of the Resistance Movement, cooperated with British intelligence. Arrested on March 9, 1943, arrived at the castle on January 9, 1943.

– Marie-Agnes and Alfred Cailliau — a French couple, members of the Resistance, arrested in April 1943, because Marie-Agnes was the sister of the leader of the Free France, General de Gaulle. They arrived at the castle on April 13, 1945.

From this list, somewhat supplemented by encyclopedic information about the VIP prisoners of castle Itter, certain conclusions can be drawn about what kind of people ended up in the castle: they were military, politicians, members of the Resistance Movement and members of the Vichy government who refused to collaborate directly with by the Germans Perhaps Augustine Brüchlen and Christina Mabire, who, in fact, voluntarily went to prison in castle Itter, following their beloved husbands, should be singled out in a separate category.

In the context of this section, it is particularly important that it provided an absolutely complete list of all the prisoners held there. In modern historiography and even in foreign archives, you can find all sorts of speculations about historical figures who supposedly stayed there. So, for example, the Polish researcher Janusz Pekalkiewicz notes in his book that the political figure Francois Ponce (French ambassador to Germany, and from 1938 to Rome) was also imprisoned in castle Itter³². In fact, this political figure was never held by the Nazis in this castle, but instead served his imprisonment in the Ifen Hotel in the village of Ritzlern in Austria³³.

However, the case of misrepresentation of historical data mentioned in the previous paragraph is not isolated. In one of the collections of the public library of the city of New York, you can find a photo depicting a group of Polish officers, among whom is the famous general Tadeusz Bur-Komarowski. The attribution for the photo states that it was taken shortly after they were released from castle Itter, where they had been held as prisoners³⁴. In the memoirs of Paul Reynaud³⁵ and Edouard Daladier³⁶, there is no mention of the Poles being in castle Itter, although they provide detailed information about all those who were imprisoned with them. Since the castle Itter is not a very large building in terms of its area, it seems unlikely that Reynaud and Daladier, having spent two years there, could not have met the Poles who were also staying there. There can be only one explanation: Polish officers were indeed held in Austria, perhaps even in a specialized facility for VIP prisoners, the name of which is not yet known to science, but they were definitely not among the enslaved residents of castle Itter.

Thus, as of April 13, 1945 (the day the Cailliau arrived), there were 14 VIP prisoners at castle Itter. It is worth noting that, ironically, the prisoners of the

castle were people who, under normal circumstances, would never have gathered under the same roof: the leader of the French left and the leaders of the right parties, two former prime ministers, two commanders in chief, relatives of de Gaulle and also a tennis player. In addition, among the prisoners there were people who did not tolerate each other — they were political rivals or blamed each other for the defeat of France. It is not known whether the security service of the Third Reich specifically selected such a composition of prisoners for the castle Itter, thus trying to make it impossible for them to cooperate and escape, or whether it happened by chance. It cannot be ruled out that they were all imprisoned in castle Itter purely because of their common nationality. In any case, the fact remains that the prisoners not only made friends with each other, but also, for obvious reasons, did not intend to prepare an escape or any attempt at rebellion.

For the sake of objectivity, it is also worth mentioning that at the same level as the VIP prisoners, there was a group of women from the Ravensbrück concentration camp who did housework, and two masters who worked in the castle on the farm: the Croatian Andreas Krobot and the Yugoslav Zvonimir Kukovich³⁷. In total, during 1943–1945, according to the data of German researchers, there were 27 ordinary prisoners in the castle who ensured the functioning of this institution³⁸.

Since there were a large number of VIP prisoners in the castle, a very logical question arises as to what the leadership of the Third Reich actually had for their future fate. It is not known for certain whether there were any plans for the rational use of such important prisoners, however, as the Second World War in Europe drew to a close, rather interesting and extraordinary events took place at castle Itter.

The castle guards, led by Commandant Wimmer, escaped and the castle prisoners were theoretically freed, however, the remnants of the 17th SS Division Goetz von Berlichingen were active in the woods near Itter, intending to exterminate the prisoners. These events forced the squad of US Army Captain Jack Lee and the platoon of Wehrmacht Major Joseph Gangl and SS Hauptsturmführer Kurt-Siegfried Schrader to unite to protect the castle's prisoners from the SS³⁹. They were joined by fighters of the Austrian Resistance Movement, with whom Major Gangl was in contact. The Battle of castle Itter (May 4–5, 1945) was one of two officially documented cases where Germans and Americans fought on the same side⁴⁰. Despite the fact that these events are undoubtedly quite interesting for research in the field of military history, the topic of the article, however, concerns a slightly different layer of issues, so for us it will be important only the fact that as a result of such a phenomenal alliance of servicemen of the American army and German soldiers, all the prisoners of castle Itter were saved.

How could it happen that the most valuable prisoners of the Third Reich were tried to be banally physically murdered without using them in negotiations with the advancing Allied troops? First, it is worth understanding the purpose of the SS soldiers who stormed the castle. Judging by the memoirs of one of the VIP prisoners, Edouard Daladier, during the battle the SS fired artillery at the castle, so, in the author's opinion, this completely annihilates the possible assumption that the SS simply wanted to capture prisoners again⁴¹. Firing high-explosive shells from an 88-mm cannon, the SS soldiers practically destroyed the chances of survival of those people who were in the castle. But what could be the reason why they suddenly decided to murder VIP-prisoners, whose health was monitored and cared during almost the entire war?

In my opinion, there can be several explanations. The first of them appeals to the anthropological factor: servicemen of the 17th SS division "Goetz von Berlichingen" retreated to Austria after the unsuccessful offensive in the Ardennes — the failed counteroffensive operation "Wacht am Rhein", so it could be assumed that they simply wanted someone get rid of your anger⁴². At the same time, the question arises as to how ordinary SS soldiers could know about the stay of important prisoners in the castle and how they knew that the guard led by the commandant simply escaped? Given the presence of such questions, to which it is extremely difficult to find a logical answer, it is quite safe to consider it necessary to reject this version.

The second version most appeals to one episode that happened in the Führerbunker on April 22, 1945. It was on that day that Adolf Hitler had a conversation with the head of the SS General Directorate, Gottlob Berger, during which they touched on two important issues: manifestations of separatism among the population of Bavaria and Austria and the problem of VIP prisoners and their future fate. The Führer, who was obviously enraged by the news of similar sentiments in his native Austria, answered all questions simply: "Shoot them all! Shoot them all!"⁴³ The world-famous researcher William Shearer, analyzing the above-mentioned episode, concludes that Berger apparently did not understand whether this order referred to separatists or VIP prisoners, but he, who knew how to carry out any orders well, decided that Hitler meant everyone⁴⁴. This assumption is also supported by the fact that researchers Trevor Ropert and William Shearer, analyzing the personality factor of Gottlob Berger, emphasize that this man was not distinguished by deep intelligence, or in other words, he was the embodiment of the image of a fanatical Nazi officer who knows how to follow orders well.

Thus, it becomes clear that this version of the origin of the order to eliminate VIP prisoners is the most likely. It is she who makes it possible to explain from whom this order came, who gave it to the SS soldiers and why, in the end, the SS men obeyed it. Gottlob Berger, as an SS general, had enough

authority to convey his interpretation of Hitler's order to the remnants of the Goetz von Berlichingen division, at the same time, he was the commissioner for prisoners of war, so the VIP prisoners were within his direct control impact. The very fact that Berger, in his opinion, was carrying out Hitler's personal assignment only increased his importance in the eyes of ordinary SS members. In other words, the prisoners of the castle Itter could die only because of the possibility of a double interpretation of the remark of Adolf Hitler, who at that time was known among his entourage for sudden outbursts of anger.

It can be said that as a result of this research, a more or less complete picture emerged, which allows you to explore castle Itter as a special prison for VIP prisoners. However, in the opinion of the author, it is impossible to project the characteristics of the activity of one such institution on the whole system, therefore it will be very appropriate to get acquainted with another example of a special prison for VIP prisoners.

Hotel "Pragser Wildsee" was located in South Tyrol. It, in turn, cannot boast of the same history of transformation into a special prison for VIP prisoners as Itter Castle. If the latter was conceived by the Nazi leadership as a specialized institution from the very beginning, the hotel "Pragser Wildsee" took over the role of a prison by force when a large number of VIP prisoners were brought there on April 27, 1945. Therefore, in view of the coming of the final period of the war in Europe, no work on the reconstruction of the hotel was carried out, however, the German researcher Hans Richardi notes that officially the hotel, like the castle Itter, was subordinate to the Dachau concentration camp and had its own guard unit called "squad special purpose SS "Plansee"" under the leadership of SS Hauptsturmführer Hugo Erfurt⁴⁵. Although, it should be noted that this security unit, despite its name, was not attached to the hotel according to the territorial principle. Most likely, this squad was simply responsible for guarding the VIP prisoners, which is why they arrived with them at the hotel.

"Pragser Wildsee" had a much larger number of prisoners than Itter Castle, which is why only the easily recognizable names of famous political and military figures will be given in the main text of the article, because a complete list of the hotel's inmates could take up a dozen pages. The approximate list of prisoners of "Pragser Wildsee" will look like this:

– Kurt von Schuschnigg — former chancellor of the Republic of Austria. Arrested by the Nazis in 1938 after the Anschluss of Austria.

– Vera and Maria-Dolores-Elisabeth von Schuschnig — wife and daughter of Kurt von Schuschnig. They were not officially prisoners, because they voluntarily joined Kurt von Schuschnig. As can be seen from the examples given in the article, the practice of voluntary imprisonment was quite common among the families of VIP prisoners.

– Leon Blum — former Prime Minister of the French Republic. Arrested by the Nazis after the surrender of France.

– Jeanne Blum is the wife of Leon Blum. Voluntarily joined the imprisoned husband.

– Hjalmar Schacht is the former president of the Reichsbank, a participant in the assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944.

– The family of Colonel Klaus-Schenck von Stauffenberg (one of the most effective participants in the attempt on Hitler on July 20, 1944): Nina (wife), (brother), (nephew); children: Konstanze, Valery, Franz-Ludwig, Heimeran, Bertold-Maria.

– Vasyly Kokorin — “lieutenant, nephew of Vyacheslav Molotov” (according to him); in fact, a poor Soviet paratrooper-prisoner of war, who, being surrounded and frostbitten, was taken prisoner by the Germans in the forest near Demyansk. In order to survive in the conditions of the concentration camp, he called himself the nephew of People’s Commissar Molotov⁴⁶. It is interesting that in the works of foreign researchers you can often find information that Kokorin is Molotov’s real nephew⁴⁷.

– Richard-Henry Stevens and Sigismund Pay-Best — British intelligence officers. Captured by the Nazis in 1939 during the “Venlo Incident”.

– Participants in the conspiracy against Hitler on July 20, 1944 and their families, among them: General Franz Halder, General Alexander von Falkenhausen, Colonel Bogislaw von Bonin (exact number and name list under development).

– Representatives of the Catholic clergy, among whom was Pastor Martin Niemöller — one of the biggest opponents of Nazism among the German clergy.

This is by no means a complete list of all those VIP prisoners who ended up in South Tyrol in the last days of the war, but the author of the article is working on supplementing this list and also information about the prisoners.

It would be appropriate to make one more small caveat. Despite the fact that the lists of prisoners of the castle Itter and the hotel “Pragser Wildsee” are quite voluminous and take up a lot of space in the text of the article, the author still decided to leave them, because even nowadays it is sometimes impossible to find information about stay of this or that prisoner in the prison for VIP prisoners. However, creating a list of absolutely all high-ranking prisoners of the Reich is a topic for a separate study.

Never the less, let us return to the hotel “Pragser Wildsee” and its inmates. As already mentioned in this article, it became a prison due to a coincidence of circumstances. The Nazi leadership had to transfer its important prisoners to a place where they could not be freed by the American troops, who had already, as of April 1945, approached the borders of Austria. Therefore, it is quite

possible that the choice fell on this particular hotel due to the fact that it was located in South Tyrol, not far from the borders of Italy, at that time the so-called Republic of Salo, the territory of which was still under the control of the German armed forces and where no active hostilities were conducted.

It is not known for certain whether the leadership of the Third Reich planned to use these prisoners as the last trump card in negotiations with the advancing Allied forces, but it can be assumed that, in view of their timely evacuation, they were remembered and considered necessary to keep in safety.

The fate of the prisoners of the hotel “Pragser Wildsee” was such that they played an important role in the negotiations between the German command in Italy and Allen Dulles, a US intelligence officer⁴⁸. As of the end of April 1945, the guards of these prisoners were at their posts and, unlike the detachment guarding castle Itter, did not even think of escaping. Nevertheless, it is currently difficult to establish whether the lives of these prisoners were in danger of physical destruction. In view of the episode that took place in the Führerbunker in Berlin on April 22, 1945, which was already mentioned in the article, it can be assumed that Hitler’s order also applied to them. In particular, this assumption can be considered completely scientifically justified.

At that time, a stalemate had developed in Italy under the control of German troops: the SS command led by Obergruppenführer Karl Wolff was inclined to surrender, while the leaders of the Wehrmacht advocated a fight to the end⁴⁹. Since Obergruppenführer Wolf had already had the experience of negotiating with representatives of the Allies in the framework of Operation “Sunrise”, it seems quite logical to assume that it was much more profitable for a high-ranking SS officer to see the prisoners of the hotel alive, because, in the end, this fact could well have played a role in its use after the end of the war and the beginning of the trial of war criminals, among whom were SS servicemen.

The fate of the prisoners of “Pragser Wildsee” was determined by an accident. Due to the fact that one of the prisoners of the hotel, Colonel von Bonin, was able to briefly slip out of the hotel to the nearby village of Niedendorf, reach a telephone and call the headquarters of the German army in the Italian city of Bolzano, a squad led by Captain Wichard von Alvensleben went to help the prisoners. In the context of this study, it seems particularly interesting that during his conversation with General Rötiger (he was at the headquarters at that time), whom Bonin knew personally, the colonel claimed that the SS had orders to shoot prisoners so that they would not fall into their hands allies — so this confirms the assumption put forward in the previous paragraph⁵⁰.

Thanks to the timely arrival of Captain Alvensleben’s squad and further reinforcements, the SS men agreed to lay down their arms and release the

prisoners. According to the information provided by one of the participants in the negotiations with the leadership of the Italian group of the German army, Allen Dulles, in the village of Niedendorf, near the hotel, about two hundred VIP prisoners from various special prisons of the Third Reich gathered — this information provides the basis for further research of this issue.

In general, it can be said that the VIP-prisoners of the hotel spent quite a bit of time in this place. This can be easily explained by the arrival of the final stage of the Second World War in Europe and the fact that the German leadership, deprived of clear orders due to the collapse of the entire political management system, was forced to act according to its own vision of the situation. It can even be assumed that the lack of clear control over the activities of the hotel “Pragser Wildsee” guard unit ensured the survival of the prisoners and the surrender of the SS unit.

After studying the history of the creation of two prisons for VIPs and their residents, the question remains open as to what the Nazi leadership actually had plans for their future fate. It is worth emphasizing once again that the leadership of the security service of the Third Reich made considerable efforts to create a system of VIP prisons, organize their security and ensure the relative comfort of prisoners. Resources to maintain the comfort level of VIP prisoners continued to be allocated even when they were woefully lacking for the Germans themselves. Moreover, the maintenance of the castle and the hotel, as well as at least two guard units, continued even in April and May 1945, when all the forces of the Reich were mobilized for the needs of the front.

It is not known for certain whether the leaders of the Third Reich even intended to use the VIP prisoners as the last trump card in negotiations with the Allies. Since the latter rejected any possibility of a separate peace with the Third Reich, the negotiations themselves took place not at the state level, but at a more local level and mainly concerned the surrender of the group of German troops in Italy, which was already discussed in the article.

The lack of a clear plan meant that, in fact, one misinterpreted order, prompted by a fit of rage from Adolf Hitler, almost ended the lives of many prominent figures. In other words, in the last days of the war in Europe, the fate of VIP prisoners, whose lives and health were protected throughout the war, depended on the situational desire of Adolf Hitler.

However, it can be assumed that there was still a benefit that the leadership of the Reich was still able to get. As already mentioned in this article, the assistant commandant of the castle Itter was the SD officer Stefan Otto. Since he was an officer of the SD service, one of whose divisions was directed to the collection and analysis of classified information, it can be assumed that his appointment can be interpreted as having the purpose of listening to the

conversations of the prisoners of the castle in order to obtain data that could interest the Nazi leadership. Looking ahead, it is worth saying that after the release of the prisoners of the castle, no listening equipment was found there, but Stefan Otto, who literally disappeared shortly before the end of the Second World War in Europe, could well have taken it with him or destroyed it. The same applies to the work documentation that this officer had to keep without a doubt. According to Stephen Harding, Stefan Otto's name appeared on many post-war lists of wanted Nazi criminals, but he was never arrested. It is not even known for certain whether this officer even survived the war. We cannot rule out the possibility that Otto died in the chaos of the last days of the war. However, given the popular practice among Nazi officers in post-war times of using "rat tracks" to travel to Latin American countries using forged documents, it can be assumed that Stefan Otto lived out his old age under a different name. We can only hope that his documents will be found and handed over to scientists for further study.

Thus, the Nazi policy of keeping VIP prisoners on the territory of the "Alpine Fortress" is characterized by its intransigence and situationality. Great efforts were made to ensure the survival and comfort of prisoners, but the lack of global understanding of what this strategy was for made it futile for the Third Reich. As already mentioned in the article, in the end, the lives of all VIP prisoners ended up depending on the will of Adolf Hitler, who, given the deterioration of his moral and psychological state, could hardly make balanced and logical decisions in the last days of the war.

However, paradoxically, it was precisely this lack of thought in the Nazi strategy and the lack of direct control over the activities of the guard units that created the conditions for the rescue of VIP prisoners in the last days of the war in Europe.

Among the rescued prisoners of castle Itter and hotel "Pragser Wildsee" were many figures who returned to political activity after the end of the war. So, for example, Léon Jouhaux, not only headed the French Workers' Union, and in 1947 was elected chairman of the French Economic Council, but also directed considerable efforts to overcome the post-war famine in Austria and help the population of countries affected by the war⁵¹. In 1949, Jouhaux was one of the leading politicians who advocated the creation of a United States of Europe, explaining his desire that "Europe should be peaceful and united, despite all its diversity, in its efforts against human poverty and all the suffering and dangers that they are caused⁵²". For this activity Léon Jouhaux was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1951.

Another prisoner of the castle, Paul Reynaud, also returned to the maelstrom of big politics. Since 1949, he has been a member of the organization created at the initiative of the Council of Europe, with the aim of providing

collective guarantees for the observance of human rights. He continued to be an active participant in the meetings of the Council of Europe. At the same time, in the same way as Leon Jouhaux, he actively supported the idea of creating a United States of Europe. At one time, it was Reynaud who had the idea of establishing the Ministry of Defense of Europe, which may have served as a prototype of the European Defense Society, which was founded in 1952 and became one of the steps towards the creation of NATO.

Thus, political figures who can rightly be considered the godfathers of the future “European Union” were released from the VIP prisons of the Third Reich, because they were its inspirations and stood at the first origins of this idea.

However, Léon Jouhaux and Paul Reynaud were not the only former prisoners who, after their release, had an impact on the post-war life of Europe, because the rescue of the prisoners of the castle Itter and hotel “Pragser Wildsee” saved for humanity other talented military figures, politicians, entrepreneurs, ambassadors of peace and figures of science and art, in particular:

- Edouard Daladier was a member of the French Constitutional Assembly, in 1953–1958 he held the post of mayor of Avignon.

- Michel Clemenceau — member of the First and Second National Constitutional Assemblies.

- Martin Niemöller — President of the World Council of Churches (since 1961).

- Leon Blum was a member of Charles de Gaulle’s provisional government. In 1946, he was the temporary head of the government. Official representative of France in UNESCO.

- Franz Halder — since 1950, an expert under the government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Since 1959, consultant on historical relations with the US Army.

- Jean Borotra was a professional athlete, vice-president of the French Tennis Association.

- Augustine Brüchlen — French Legion of Honor team.

- Bogislav von Bonin — Head of the Department of Military Planning in the Federal Ministry of Defense of Germany.

This list can be continued, however, even this brief fact allows us to understand that the people rescued from the Itter Castle and the Pragser Wildsee Hotel, after their return to their native countries, became politicians, soldiers, opinion leaders who influenced the political course of their countries. Thus, it can be safely asserted that completely local episodes of hostilities that took place in the Austrian province of Tyrol had an impact not only on the post-war political life of individual countries, but also, to a certain extent, on Europe⁵³.

However, the indisputable fact remains that if it were not for the situational alliance and exceptional heroism of Major Josef Gangl, who sacrificed his life for the protection of prisoners who were strangers to him, Hauptsturmführer Kurt-Siegfried Schrader, Captain John Lee and their soldiers, then all the prisoners of the castle Itter would have been murdered by the soldiers of the SS division “Götz von Berlichingen” and would not have been able to contribute to the development of post-war Europe. The same can be said of the ingenuity of Colonel Bogislaw von Bonin and the courage of Captain Wichard von Alvensleben, which ensured the survival of a large number of enslaved guests of the hotel “Pragser Wildsee”. Such phenomenal alliances and local events are understudied in modern historiography, despite all their unprecedented and significant contribution to the post-war European system.

As a global conclusion, it can be noted that the castle Itter and the hotel “Pragser Wildsee” were only two of the 197 affiliated facilities of the Dachau concentration camp, which, in turn, was only one of the 44,000 camps and places for deprivation of liberty created by the Nazis⁵⁴. One can only imagine how many other similar special facilities for VIP prisoners existed in the occupied Czech Republic, France, Holland, Belgium, Denmark or Norway. And how many prisons were located directly on German territory and how many of their prisoners did not live long enough to see the victory? How many talented teachers, soldiers, musicians or politicians were murdered in the last days of the war?

The number of VIP prisons unknown to modern science is tens, if not hundreds, however, the author hopes that thanks to this article, “white spots” will become at least two less.

¹ Koop V. In Hitler's hand: Die Sonder-Und Ehrenhaftlinge Der SS. Bohlau Verlag, 2010.

² Harding S. The Last Battle: When U.S. and German Soldiers Joined Forces in the Waning Hours of World War II in Europe. Boston: Da Capo Press, 2013.

³ Richardi H-G. SS-Geiseln in der Alpenfestung. Die Verschleppung prominenter KZ-Häftlinge aus Deutschland nach Südtirol. Edition Raetia, 2015.

⁴ Sayer I., Dronfield J. Hitler's Last Plot: The 139 VIP Hostages Selected for Death in the Final Days of World War II. Da Capo Press, 2019.

⁵ Ширер В. Злет і падіння Третього Райху. Київ: Наш формат, 2018. Т. 1. С. 389.

⁶ A large number of caves and man-made mines and tunnels made possible the production of military products underground, which, in turn, made such underground factories protected from bombing by Allied aircraft. So, for example, at the final stage of the Second World War in Europe, mass production of He-162 “Salamander” jet fighters was organized in Austria as part of an emergency program for the construction of fighters. See Forsyth R. He 162 Volksjager Units. Oxford, 2016. P. 1–3.

⁷ In historiography, the names “Alpine”, “Deutsche” and “National Redoubt” can also be found. However, the most common name is “Alpien Fortress” (German: “Alpenfestung”). See

Kennedy-Minnot R. The fortress that never was. The myth of Hitler's Bavarian stronghold. New York, 1964. P. ix.

⁸ Кнюпп Г. СС Инквизиция Гитлера. Москва: Родина, 2021. С. 328–329.

⁹ Edsel. R., Witter B. The monuments men. New York: Back Bay Books, 2009. P. 373.

¹⁰ Lytvyn V. Peculiarities of the final stage of the Second World War on the territory of Austria: anthropological, political and military aspects. *Pages of Military History of Ukraine*. 2022. № 25. P. 215–216.

¹¹ Керсоди Ф. Герман Геринг. Второй человек Третьего рейха. Москва, 2014. С. 665.

¹² Villatoux P., Aiolfi X. The final archives of the Fuhrerbunker. Casemate, 2020. P. 117.

¹³ Куровски Ф. Битва за Рейх. Москва, 2015. С. 81

¹⁴ Allied Forces. Supreme Headquarters Operation ECLIPSE. Appreciation and Outline Plan. AG 381-7 GCT-AGM. 25 November 1944.

¹⁵ Harding S. The Last Battle: When U.S. and German Soldiers Joined Forces in the Waning Hours of World War II in Europe. Boston: Da Capo Press, 2013. P. 11.

¹⁶ Koop V. In Hitler's hand: Die Sonder-Und Ehrenhaftlinge Der SS. Bohlau Verlag, 2010. P. 10.

¹⁷ Lanckorońska K. Those who trespass against us. One woman's war against the nazis. London: Pimlico, 2005. P. 202–204.

¹⁸ Ibid. P. 204.

¹⁹ Trials of war criminals before the Nurnberg military tribunals under control council law, № 10, Volume V. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950. P. 290.

²⁰ Harding S. The Last Battle... Boston: Da Capo Press, 2013. P. 11–12.

²¹ Initially, SS units "Death Head" ("*Totenkopf*") were created to guard concentration camps, the number of which in Nazi Germany, starting from 1933, increased rapidly. Since the castle Itter was in fact a subsidiary unit of Dachau and the resources for its maintenance and operation were allocated from there, it seems logical that the prisoners were guarded by soldiers of the SS "Death's Head" units. See Butler R. Hitler's death's head division: SS-Totenkopf Division. Barnsley, S. Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military Classics, 2004. P. 14-15.

²² Bayerisches Staatsministerium fur Wissenschaft und Kunst, Abteilung 10: Außenlager und Außenkommandos des KZ Dachau. URL: https://www.hdbg.de/dachau/dachau_die-ausstellung_02_Abteilung-10.php

²³ Koop V. In Hitler's hand: Die Sonder-Und Ehrenhaftlinge Der SS. Bohlau Verlag, 2010. P. 32.

²⁴ Beamte nationalsozialistischer Reichsministerien. Hans Kammler Baudirektor im RLM. URL: <https://ns-reichsministerien.de/2020/04/16/hans-kammler/>

²⁵ Dorbert F., Karlsch R. Hans Kammler, Hitler's last hope in American hands. Cold War International History Project. Working Paper 91. 2019. № 91. P. 13.

²⁶ Harding S. The Last Battle... Boston: Da Capo Press, 2013. P. 27.

²⁷ Ibid. P. 28.

²⁸ Ibid. P. 26.

²⁹ Information about the number of prisoners and their names is given in the memoirs of Paul Reynaud and Edouard Daladier.

³⁰ Daladier E. Prison Journal. Westview Press, 1995. P. 200.

³¹ Reynaud P. In the thick of the fight. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc, 1955. P. 651–652.

³² Piekalkiewicz J. Secret Agents, Spies and Saboteurs. William Morrow & Company INC, 1973. P. 520–521.

³³ Richardi H-G. SS-Geiseln in der Alpenfestung. Die Verschleppung prominenter KZ-Häftlinge aus Deutschland nach Südtirol. Edition Raetia, 2015. P. 159.

³⁴ The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. (1945). General Bor-Komorowski... with Polish officers... [in] Innsbruck, Austria, shortly after their liberation. Retrieved from URL: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-abf9-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

³⁵ Reynaud, P. In the thick of the fight. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc, 1955.

³⁶ Daladier, E. Prison Journal. Westview Press, 1995.

³⁷ In fact, this assignment saved their lives, as other Dachau concentration camp prisoners were exterminated by the Nazis following news of the approach of American troops in the final days of the war. See Harding S. The Last Battle... Boston: Da Capo Press, 2013. P. 13.

³⁸ Außenlager und Außenkommandos des KZ Dachau. URL: https://www.hdbg.de/dachau/pdfs/10/10_ri/10_ri_02.PDF

³⁹ Major Josef Sepp Gangl — Ein Ludwigsburger Soldat im Widerstand (2020), Militärgeschichtliche Gesellschaft Ludwigsburg (MGLB) e.V., Garnisonmuseum Ludwigsburg, 2020. P. 272–275.

⁴⁰ The second case is considered to be the events of Operation “Cowboy”, during which the German-American unit opposed the SS and Red Army units. See Felton M. Ghost Riders: When US and German Soldiers Fought Together to Save the World's Most Beautiful Horses in the Last Days of World War II. New York: Da Capo Press, 2018.

⁴¹ Daladier E. Prison Journal. Westview Press, 1995. P. 337–338.

⁴² Rikmenspoel M. Waffen SS: the encyclopedia. Garden City, N.Y.: Military Book Club, 2002. P. 38.

⁴³ Roper T. The last days of Hitler. Toronto: The Macmillan company of Canada, 1947. P. 127.

⁴⁴ Ширер В. Злет і падіння Третього Райху. Київ: Наш формат, 2017. Т. 2. С. 527–528.

⁴⁵ Richardi H-G. SS-Geiseln in der Alpenfestung. Die Verschleppung prominenter KZ-Häftlinge aus Deutschland nach Südtirol. Edition Raetia, 2015. P. 159.

⁴⁶ This trick really managed to save Vasyl Kokorin from the fate of an ordinary Soviet prisoner of war with all its possible horrors, however, it is worth noting that the attitude of the German leadership towards high-ranking and important prisoners of Slavic nationality varied greatly depending on the personal factor, as in prisoner, as well as the German official or officer who will actually decide the fate of this prisoner. As an example, we can mention the figure of the Polish Countess Karolina Lanckorońska, who, despite her status, was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. All the “special treatment” of the German leadership towards the countess led to the fact that, unlike other “ordinary” prisoners, she was kept in a solitary cell in a separate block (ironically, her neighbor in the block was Christiane Mabire, who would later be transferred to Itter Castle). In other words, the example of Vasyl Kokorin can be considered rather a lucky exception for him from the rules. Regarding the imprisonment of Karolina Lianskoronska and her acquaintance with Mabire, see Lanckorońska K. Those who trespass against us. One woman’s war against the nazis. London: Pimlico, 2005. P. 219–221.

⁴⁷ In particular, Jean Lacouture — the author of the study of the personality of Leon Blum and Allen Dulles also provide information that Vasyl Kokorin is the real nephew of Molotov. See. Lacouture J. Leon Blum. New York, N.Y.: Holmes & Meier, 1982. P. 463; Dulles A. The Secret Surrender. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967. P. 243.

⁴⁸ Трубайчук А. Друга світова війна. Київ: Наукова думка, 1995. С. 135.

⁴⁹ Dulles A. The Secret Surrender. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1967. P. 224–230.

⁵⁰ Ibid. P. 243.

⁵¹ Литвин В. Глобальні наслідки локального бою. Бій за Іттер: спроба історичного переосмислення. *Війна: держава, суспільство, особа*. Київ, 2023. С. 367.

⁵² Irvin A. *The Nobel Peace Prize and the laureates: an illustrated biographical history, 1901–1987*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988. P. 157.

⁵³ For more details on the role of castle Itter's prisoners in the political life of post-war Europe, see Литвин В. Глобальні наслідки локального бою. Бій за Іттер: спроба історичного переосмислення. *Війна: держава, суспільство, особа*. Київ, 2023. С. 370.

⁵⁴ Енциклопедія Голокосту. Нацистські табори. URL: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/uk/article/nazi-camps>

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