
OST
The vanished traces
of the forced labourers
from Ukraine, Russia
& Belarus in Luxembourg
1942 — 1944
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OST

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of the forced labourers
from Ukraine, Russia
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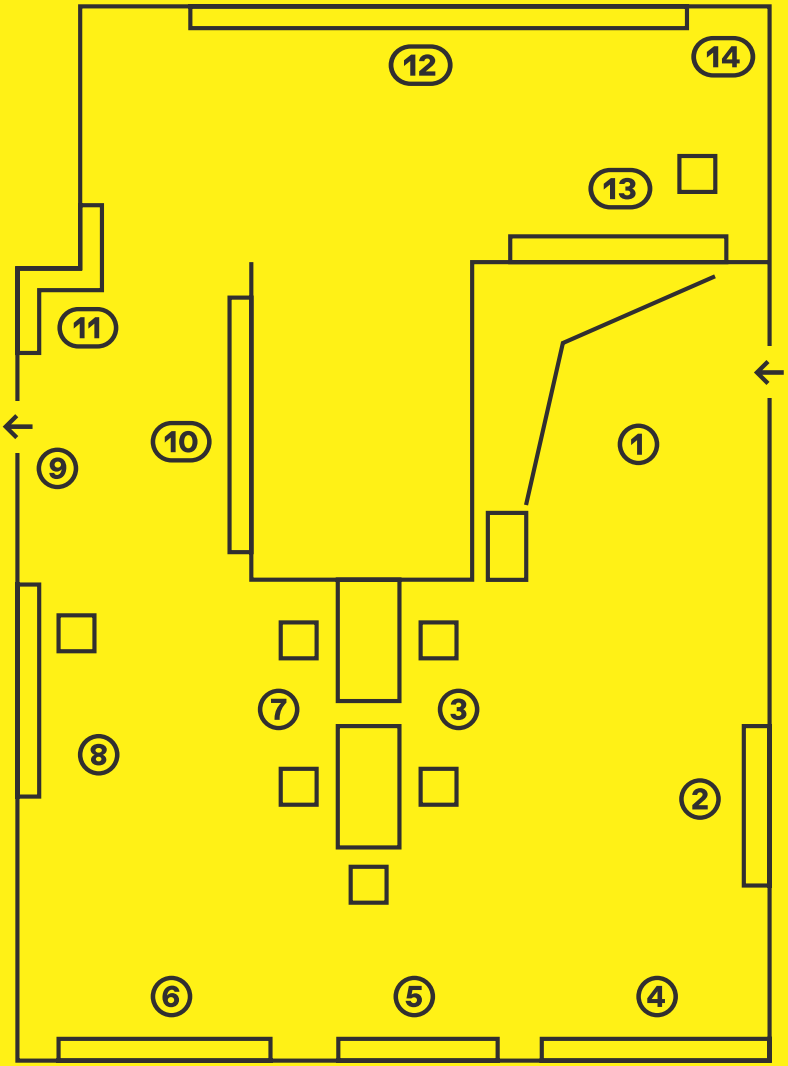
1942 — 1944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Archives Nationales de Luxembourg

→ You are an “Ostarbeiter” now

“From these wagons—it was unbelievable that such a thing was possible—men and women climbed out, including women who were pregnant, one child in their arms, another by the hand. There were little boys and girls, children aged two to three. [...] Their faces were marked by fatigue, fear, hunger, and illness. They had very little on their bodies. What they wore was wrinkled, tattered, and torn. They were neither combed nor washed; in short, they were dirty and unkempt, as was only possible on such a miserable journey.” [1]

These photographs were taken for the official registration documents of forced labourers from the Soviet Union in Luxembourg. They were called the “Ostarbeiter” (“Workers from the East”) and were employed in Luxembourg’s factories, while being housed in various camps, especially in the south of the country. Each worker was assigned a number and forced to wear a blue square marked with the white letters OST (German for “East”). This sign indicated to other workers and the local population that they were not allowed to speak to them, except for work-related reasons, nor to provide them with clothing or food.

The first civilian forced labourers were brought to Luxembourg by the Nazi occupiers in the autumn of 1942 and remained exploited until their liberation by the US Army in September 1944. One of the main reasons for their arrival was the conscription of Luxembourgers into the Wehrmacht, which created labour shortages in industry. Luxembourgish steel companies such as ARBED and HADIR were also involved in arms production, and the demand for workers grew steadily. To fill the gap left by qualified male workers, untrained teenage girls from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus were forced into these positions.

[1] Jean Haas, 1979/2001.

②

I

Дорогая Вера (дета) как ты
тронула душу нашу ~~так~~ то время
что мы пережывали малолетками
извини — через слёзы нимогу писать хорошо
как нас обижали, перед кем мы
провинились ещё детьми что нас брюквой
кормили за что? Наши юные года за
проволкой быть. К стенке на растрел
ставили, а мы и ничево незнали.
сколько мы вшей, клопов покормили.

ето моя сёза

Нимогла спойко написать, тревожно
всё вспомнить, как будто бы я ету минуту
в то время, в лагере, за номером 134
Вера, опишу как я после расформировки
доехала домой, на границе в Берлине
я ещё была 6 месяцов в госпитале
ухаживала за душевно больными
и ранеными, потом я розвозили их
по союзу ешолон целыи, а и потом
домой добралась, как мне трудно было
добратся домой, в меня украли все
докумонты из части мне давали.
в меня есть свидетели из той часты
но надоб их разыскать, но я решила
мне некчему. Иногда обидно, что
тут дома какая сволоч еще и взывает
нимецкой проститутной, если б она
то перенила что мы.

Collection Victor Klimontov

→ Testimonies

Aleksandra Apryshko's letter is soaked with tears, and she even traced the drops of tears with a pen:

"I cannot write about it calmly because of my tears remembering how they (the Germans) mistreated us! What did we do wrong as children that they fed us beets, kept us in our young age behind barbed wire, lined us up against the wall, and exposed us to lice and bedbugs? I cannot write about it calmly because of the turmoil that overwhelms me when I remember as if I were transported back to that time when I was No. 134 in the camp." [2]

The history of around 4,000 Soviet forced labourers in Luxembourg during the Nazi era has largely remained in the shadows of public attention. In 1998, however, the German government, together with companies that had once employed forced labourers, began paying "symbolic compensation" to former workers from the Soviet Union. To receive this compensation, applicants were required to provide proof of their forced labour.

Requests and personal letters seeking such confirmation were sent to Luxembourg. People from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus described their work in cement factories, steel mills, and mines, as well as in agriculture and private households, where they had been forced to work in the Grand Duchy during the Second World War. Written by elderly survivors, these letters also recalled memories of their pre-war childhoods under the Soviet regime, the Holodomor famine they had endured, life under German occupation, and the circumstances of their deportation to Luxembourg.

To investigate not only these individual fates but also to systematically study this overlooked chapter in the history of the Grand Duchy, the Luxembourg Ministry of State funded a university research project led by Dr. Inna Ganschow from 2021 to 2024. During this project, 2,621 names were recovered.

[2] Letter by Aleksandra Apryshko to Vera Vinichenko, late 1990s.

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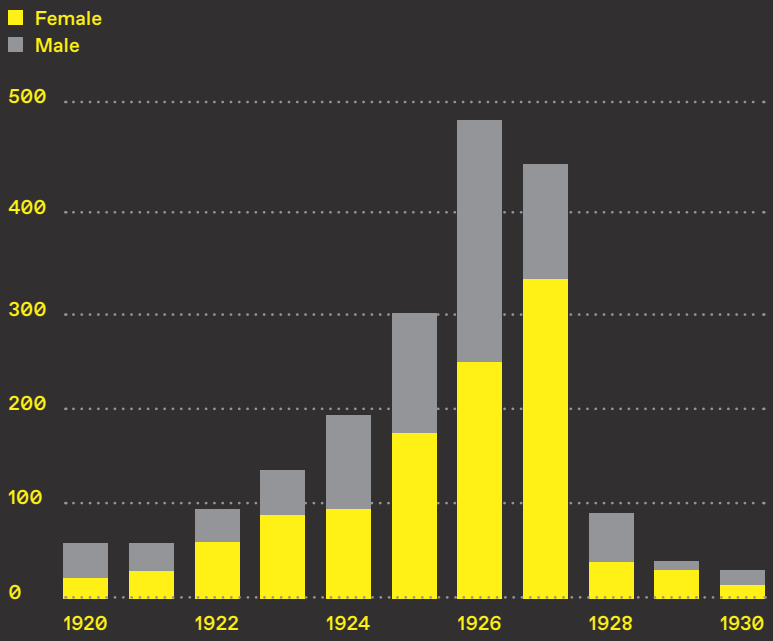


Visualization of the project database on the age and gender of forced labourers in Luxembourg born between 1920 and 1930.

OST

P.10

→ Restoring Names

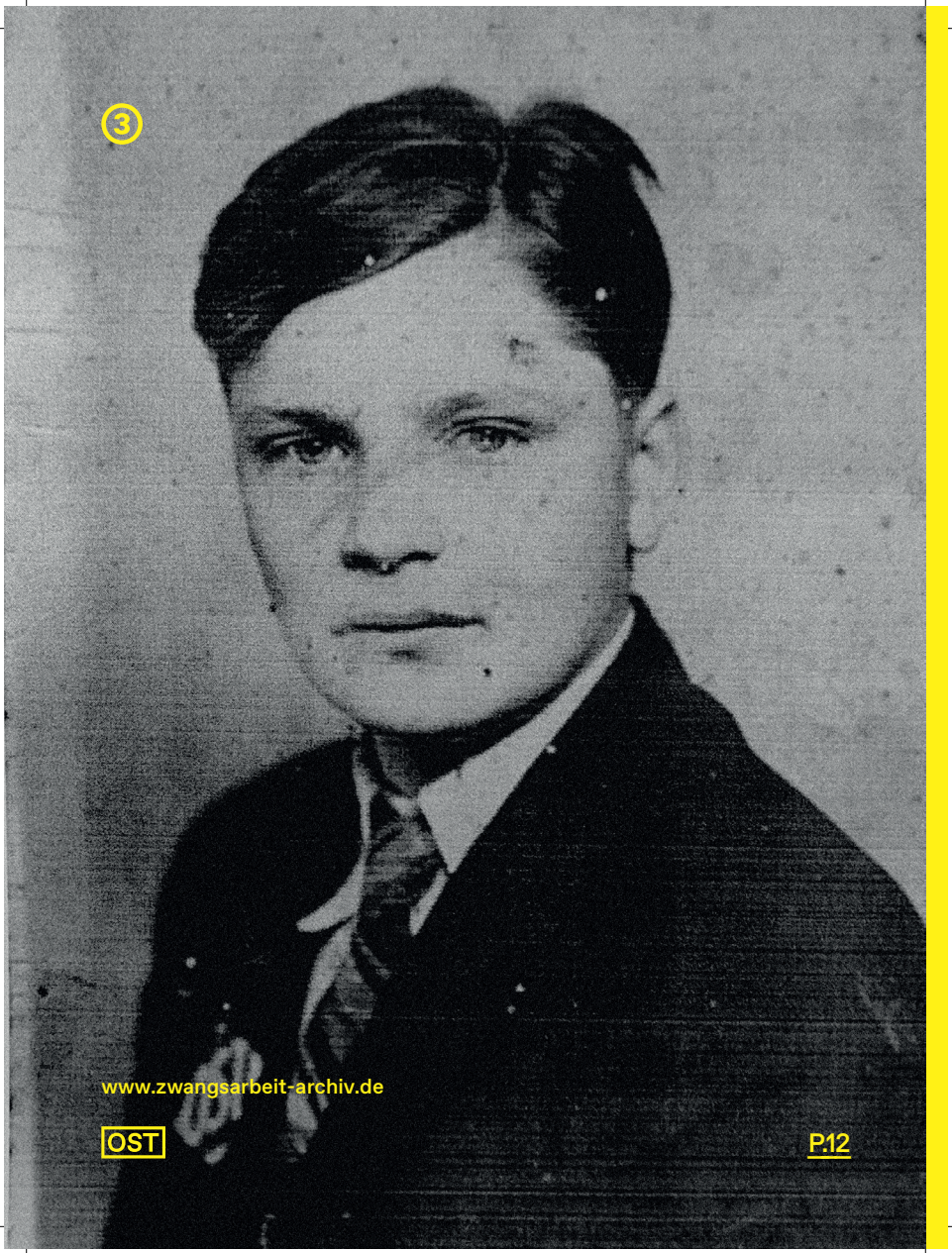
“It is still dark when we arrive in Differdange. Former Russian and Belarusian students older than us had arrived earlier, and eight grandmothers with their grandchildren, who had been grazing cattle by the tracks, were taken by the Germans to Germany with their cattle. They cry, “Dear girls, why did you come here? This is forced labour.” [3]

The 2,621 restored names, together with limited personal information, were collected in the project database. They came from 40 different sources in eight countries.

Reconstructing the age at which forced labourers arrived in Luxembourg required knowing both their year of birth and the date of arrival—information that was not always available. In 80% of cases, however, the age could be reconstructed.

The largest group was born in 1926 and 1927, meaning they were 16 and 15 years old at the time of arrival in Luxembourg. Among the 16-year-olds, 50% were female, while among the 15-year-olds, 75% were girls. 200 persons were under 14 and 117 children of them were under the age of 12. Only 30 of them were accompanied by their parents. These children and adolescents lived in camps behind barbed wire and performed work that had previously been carried out by adult men.

[3] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.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www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de
OST
P.12

→ Konstantin Adamez, 17 years old

“At the Luxembourg border, we had to line up in rows, and [...] then the farmers there selected some of us, pointing their fingers at those they wanted to take on for agricultural work”. [4]

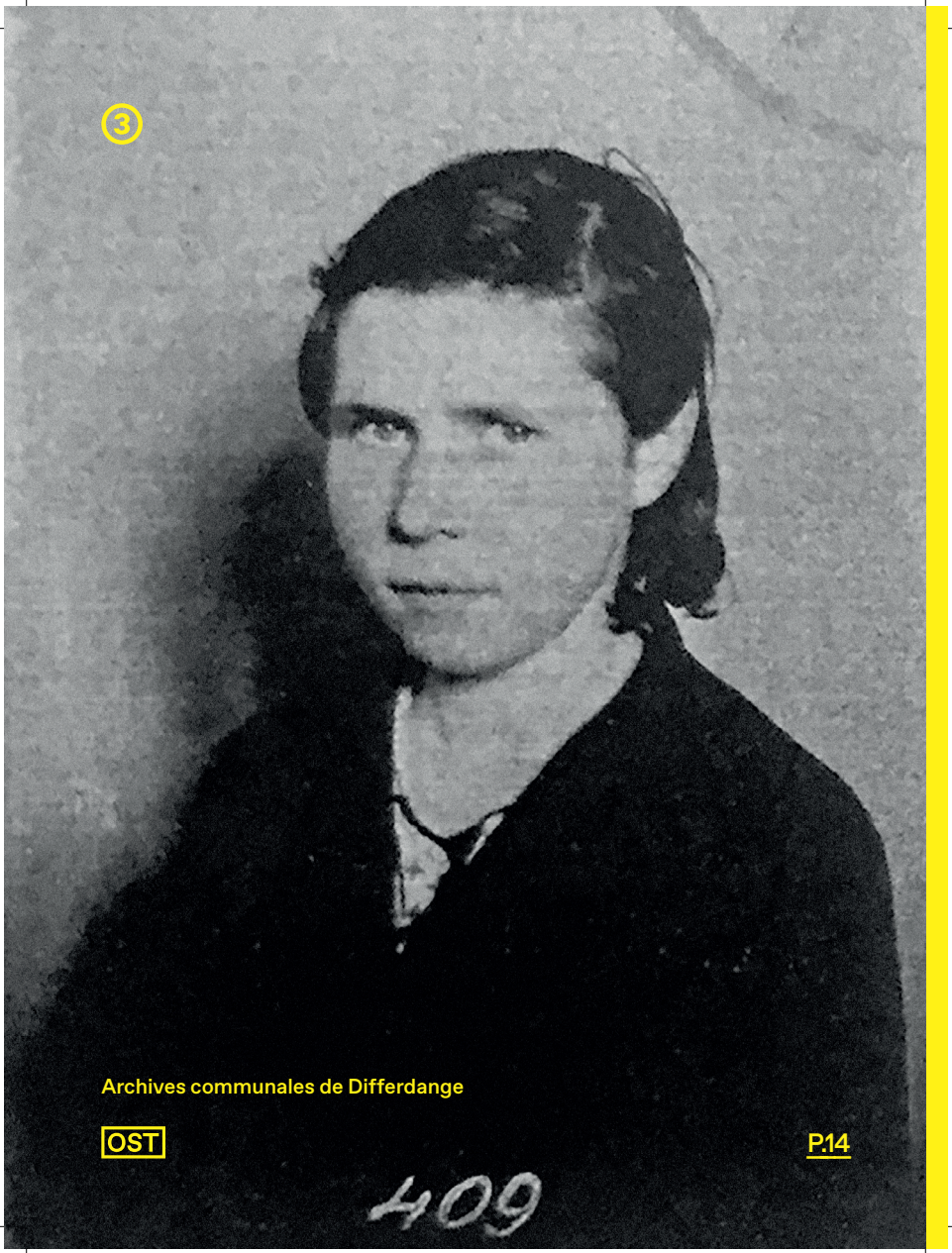
1925 →	Born in the village of Stasi, Dikanka District, Poltava Region.
1942 →	Arrested, interrogated, and taken to work in an iron mine near Esch/Alzette.
1943 →	First and second escape from the camp.
1943 →	Imprisoned in Grund, Luxembourg.
1944 →	Worked at ARBED Esch/Alzette under a new identity.
1945 — 1948 →	Drafted into the Soviet Army.

Adamez was born into a family of four siblings: three brothers and one sister. His father, a Czech cashier, was arrested by the NKVD in June 1941 and never returned home. His mother, a Ukrainian, worked as a cook. During the Second World War, two of his three siblings were also forced labourers; after liberation, they emigrated first to Brazil and later to the United States.

After undergoing the filtration process in the Soviet zone, Adamez was drafted into the army, where he served for three years. He later worked in Kharkiv, Kazakhstan, Siberia, and Orenburg. He married and had two daughters. In retirement, he settled in Minsk, Belarus.

From 1993 to 1998, he served as chairman of the Belarusian Public Association of Former Prisoners of Fascism “Les.” Throughout his life, Adamez faced discrimination in his home village, during his studies, and at work because of his past as a forced labourer, being accused of collaboration through weapons production in Luxembourg.

[4] Interview with Konstantin Adamez, 2006.



Archives communales de Differdange

OST

→ Bronislava Astrowko, 13 years old

“My mother clung to the car, screaming loudly, ‘Where are you taking her? She’s just a little girl! Where?’ until someone, either a German or a local policeman, I don’t know which, kicked her in the hand with his boot. She fell down – that was it”. [5]

1930 →	Born in the village of Vyemka, Pleshchenitsa District, Minsk Region.
1943 →	Astrovko was captured and taken to Differdange, Luxembourg, where she worked for HADIR in construction.
1944 →	Transferred to a camp near Hanover and forced to work in a rubber goods factory.
1945 →	During the advance of the Allied troops, all prisoners were driven out of the camp into the forest outside the city and abandoned there. From there, Astrovko made her way to a filtration camp in the Soviet zone.
1945 →	Returned to Minsk, then walked 86 km over four days to reach her home village of Litvinichi.

Astrovko was born into a farming family to Adeliya Grinkevich and Michail Astrovko, who was arrested in 1938. On the day she was deported to Germany together with other villagers in May 1942, the German convoy was attacked by partisans. In retaliation, the Nazis burned down the village of Litvinichi, killing her mother and siblings in the fire. She only learned of their fate in 1945, when she returned home, walking four days on foot.

After the war, she worked on a collective farm until 1949, when she moved to Minsk to study at the Institute of Agriculture. She later married a fellow countryman from the same village, who had also been subjected to forced labour in Germany. After her graduation, both worked on a collective farm. Throughout their lives, they struggled with social rejection because of their past as forced labourers, often being accused of collabouration with the enemy. They had two children.

[5] Interview with Bronislava Astrovko, 2006.

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Archives communales de Dudelange

OST

P.16

→ Occupied Dudelange

“And don’t even cry, do you hear me?” [6]

On May 10, 1940, Luxembourg was occupied by the Nazi German army. Membership in National Socialist organizations became mandatory for adults, teenagers, and children. In August 1942, the new authorities, represented by Gauleiter Gustav Simon, announced the draft of Luxembourgers into the Wehrmacht, the German army. The general strike in September 1942 was brutally suppressed, resulting in 21 people sentenced to death, 195 sent to concentration camps, and 290 adults and 40 students deported to forced labour in Germany. Many young resistance fighters were drafted into the Wehrmacht as punishment. Dudelange was no exception.

After the draft of young men began in autumn 1942, many camps were established for forced labourers, including those from the Soviet Union and Belgium. Two camps were created in Dudelange. One was called Lager Düdelingen (today located at Halle Polyvalente, Rue de Bettembourg), and the other was called Lager Am Sportplatz, also known as Camp Rellent after the war, designed to hold 200 people (today located at Rue Comte de Bertier, near the former soccer field of CS Le Stade).

[6] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.

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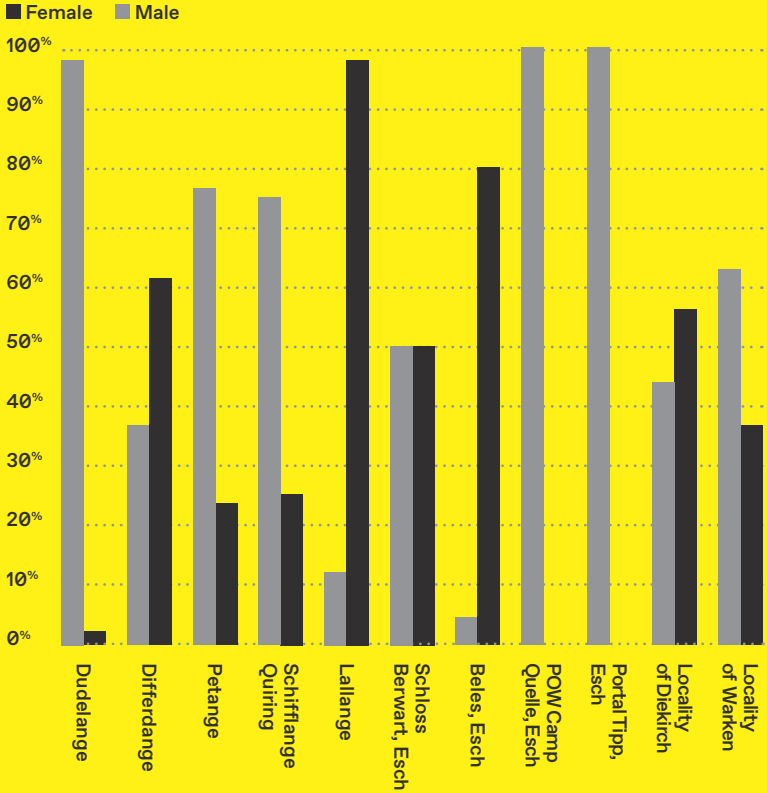
Archives communales de Dudelange

OST

→ Behind the Barbed Wire

Forced labourers were spread throughout Luxembourg. In some localities, such as Warken near Ettelbruck or Diekirch in the North, the Ostarbeiter mostly worked in agriculture, living in private farmers' households. In other locations in the South, where they were employed in industry, they lived concentrated in camps.



Numbers displayed are based on identified individuals; the actual populations exceeded these figures

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Photo Gilbert Schmit

→ Labour

“The work was hard, unloading sand, gravel, bricks, and cement from the cars, and at the factory, we unloaded coke and coal. (...) The boys had to carry heavy 50 kg bags of cement, and if they dropped them, they were beaten, and we cried in secret.” [7]

The forced labourers from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus worked in cement factories, steel mills, mines, agriculture, private households, and on the railways.

Bronislava Astrovko, who was thirteen at the time, remembered working as a construction worker in Differdingen, where part of the factory was built by Ostarbeiter:

“There was a German standing there shouting, ‘Hurry up!’ And he would beat us if something went wrong. When cement was delivered, we were forced to run quickly with the carts—as fast as possible so that the cement wouldn’t harden. We even worked at night when we had to concrete this smokestack. You came back half dead. I was there, then there was Sonka, a girl from our village, a year older than me. And there was another girl from our region, born in 1931.”

The work was carried out without the aid of machines to save fuel, while there was no need to economize on the strength of the forced labourers. The tasks were almost impossible for the girls and women to accomplish:

“Suddenly we came across a stone that we could neither move nor break. We weren’t strong enough, so we stood there and cried.” [8]

Numerous memories of mining also describe the work in the pits and the living conditions in the camps as “unbearable.”

[7] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.
[8] Interview with Bronislava Astrovko, 2006.

7

Collection Liudmyla Sherdiy

OST

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→ Maria Talpa, 17 years old

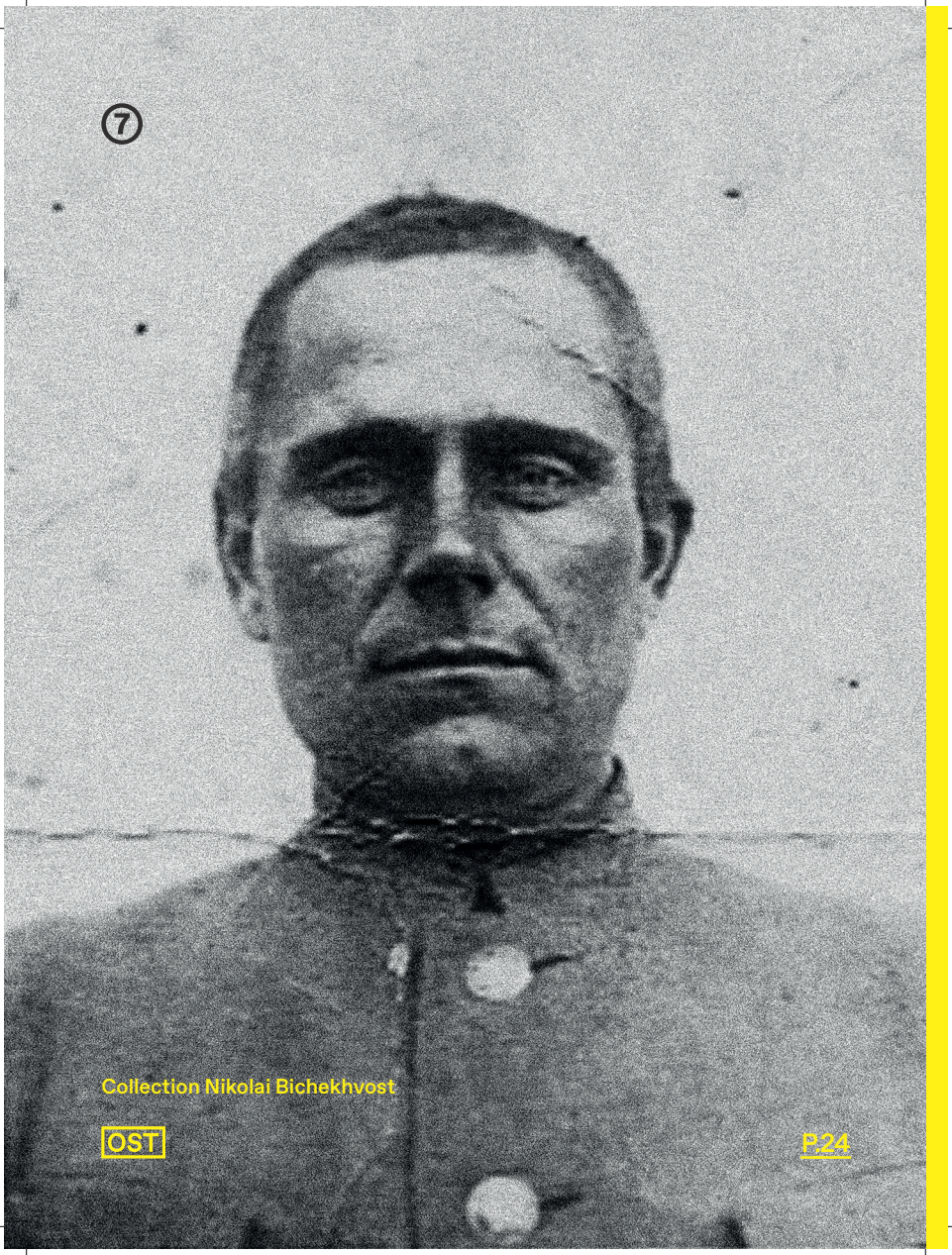
"We had two interpreters. One was Nikolsky, also one of ours, an emigrant — he was the main one, a real snake. The other was Hryshchenko, a good man from Donbas, who said he missed the Motherland. He marched us in formation to work, to lunch, back from lunch, and in the evening to the camp." [9]

1925 →	Born in Velyka Vyska near Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine.
1933 →	Survived the Holodomor.
1943 →	Deported to forced labour in Luxembourg.
1945 →	Returned to her home village and reunited with her parents.

Maria Talpa, born in 1925 in Velyka Vyska near Kropyvnytskyi, and her sister survived the Holodomor of 1933 as two of twelve children in their family. In August 1943, at the age of 17, she was deported to Luxembourg for forced labour.

After the liberation in 1944, she lived with Théophile Binsfeld family in Differdange. Following repatriation through Soviet filtration camps, she returned to her home village in November 1945, where she was reunited with her parents, although their house had been destroyed during the war. After the war, she worked in the clothing industry. She married in 1947, and the couple had a daughter in 1948. In the 1950s, she fell seriously ill as a result of the hardships endured during forced labour. In 1996, she wrote down her memoirs about the time she spent in Luxembourg.

[9] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.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Collection Nikolai Bichekhvost
OST
P.24

→ Fiodor Bichekhvost, 27 years old

"He (Eugene Flammang) rescued me from German captivity and took me to his home, where I hid and lived for three months. Dear friends who have unfortunately ended up back here in Luxembourg! After reading this letter, do not be shy or afraid. He will help you as well as all of us former prisoners". [10]

1915 →	Born in Novokievka Village near Volgograd, Russia.
1936 →	Drafted into the Red Army and participated in the Soviet-Finnish War 1939-1940.
1942 →	Captured by German forces in Stalingrad and deported to Buchenwald concentration camp.
1943 →	Forced labour in Luxembourg (Differdange).
1944 →	Served as officer of the repatriation mission in Luxembourg and Paris.
1945 →	Returned to his home village.

Fiodor Bichekhvost was born in 1915 near Volgograd into a farming family and served in the Soviet Army from 1936. As a prisoner of the Second World War, he was transferred from Buchenwald to Trier and then to Luxembourg for forced labour in 1943, arriving at a weight of 45 kg and a height of 180 cm.

After the liberation, he became the right-hand man of the Soviet representatives in tracking down his compatriots. Bichekhvost was likely motivated by a desire to prove his loyalty to the regime and to avoid potential punishment. Under Soviet law, penalties were imposed on those who fell into German captivity. In Differdange, he met Tatiana Kotova and married her after the war. They had three children, two of whom later wrote about their parents' story in a book and a monograph. Bichekhvost wrote down his memoirs of his time in Luxembourg in the 1980s.

[10] Letter by Fiodor Bichekhvost to Eugene Flammang, 1944.

⑦

Collection Gilbert Weber

OST

P.26

→ Secret Support

"On the side of the jacket, in white on blue fabric, we had to wear OST. The shoes were completely wooden clogs, so you had to wrap rags around them, otherwise your feet will get sore. We walked past the camp of our prisoners of war on our way to work. Their camp commander didn't allow us to say a word to them, otherwise we would be in troubles." [11]

Despite the ban on communication between forced labourers, prisoners of war, and the local population, secret contacts were maintained—at work, on the way from the camp, and in cases of illness when medical assistance was unavoidable. Some locals gave them food or clothing to ease their hunger and poor living conditions:

"When my mother would see prisoners, she would make sandwiches, then she would call me, so I could bring them the food. They knew me because of it. So, one of them gave me this toy as a thank you," recalls Gilbert Weber from Esch/Alzette.

Jean Kramp from Rumelange remembered a similar story. His grandmother dressed him in a winter coat in summer, stuffed sandwiches into the inner pockets, and sent him across the street to the old market square: "Stand there on the yellow steps and wait until the Russians come." When the "Russians"—the Soviet forced labourers—passed by, one of them would always manage to search him in an instant and find the sandwiches. Sometimes, Kramp later recalled, he would discover a carved pinecone or a "chicken plate" in his empty pockets afterward.

[11] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.

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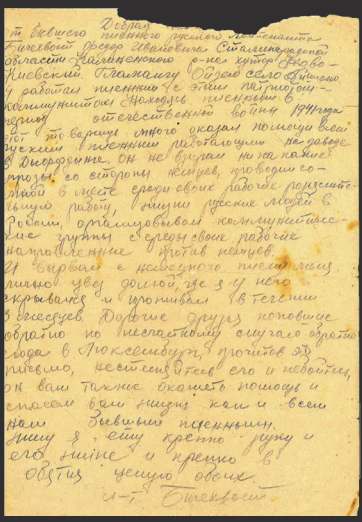

Spoon → collection Pierre Deibener
Letter → collection Jeannot Flammang

→ Solidarity

"Since I knew that the American front line was near Differdange, I decided to hide in a factory locker and not return to the camp". [12]

The prisoner of war Fiodor Bichekhvost was one of the Soviet prisoners held in Differdange and was also among those making the wooden toys. In August 1944, when the prisoners were being taken back to Stalag XII D Trier, he was smuggled out of the factory by Jean Deibener and Eugene Flammang.

Deibener provided him with civilian clothes and another worker's pass. At the end of the working day, Bichekhvost simply walked out of the factory with Deibener and other colleagues. Deibener advised him to pretend to be engrossed in conversation if a German guard spoke to him, saying, "Laughter has no accent". [13]

Bichekhvost spent the first few weeks hiding in the Deibeners' basement and carved a wooden peacock for their young son, Pierre, born in 1933. As a sign of gratitude, he left the Deibeners the most valuable object he owned—his spoon—which the family kept for decades.

Bichekhvost left his spoon behind but took his knife when he moved to the family of other resistance fighters to continue carving wooden toys—this time for the son of the Flammang family, Jeannot, born in 1936. He stayed there for three months and, upon his departure, wrote a letter in Russian to protect the family, explaining that Eugene Flammang had fearlessly helped many Soviet prisoners and had never cooperated with the Nazis.

[12 & 13] Interrogation File Fiodor Bichekhvost, 1947.
Collection Aleksandr Bichekhvost

⑦

Collection Vanna Colling

OST

→ Faith and Illness

René Englebert (1926-2016), who worked at the rail station alongside other Ostarbeiters, recalled that during air raid alarm, Soviet forced labourers were not allowed to go to shelter: "They hid behind a stone, under a barrel, covered their ears, and crouched down".[14]

Being injured during a bombardment or at work was just as dangerous for adults as being infected with disease, especially in conditions of malnutrition, poor hygiene, and exhaustion. The family of Dr. Colling, a physician from Esch/Alzette, preserved a collection of Russian Orthodox crosses and icons that forced labourers gave to him in gratitude for his help. The palm-sized crosses resemble those traditionally used by Old Believers in northern Russia.

According to the project database, the Korendovich family from Nizhny Novgorod may have been the donors of the crosses, as this region was an important center for that branch of Russian Orthodoxy. Despite Dr. Colling's efforts and the parents' generosity, their two-year-old son still died and is buried in the collective grave of Soviet citizens at the Lallange Cemetery in Esch/Alzette.

[14] Interview with René Englebert by Inna Ganschow, 2015.

⑧

Archives communales de Dudelange

OST

→ Propaganda vs. Reality

ARBED's central administration was asked to photograph the celebrations of the forced labourers "insofar as they are suitable for propaganda purposes." [15] These photographs were to be used to "increase job satisfaction" and serve as material for recruiting additional volunteer Ostarbeiters in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

Most of the surviving photographs from the camps were taken by professional photographers for propaganda purposes. They were intended to boost job satisfaction and serve as material for recruiting additional volunteer Ostarbeiter.

However, some photographs were taken secretly and reveal a very different reality. The image of a clean, well-maintained camp with smiling, happy workers was a fabrication. According to the testimonies and memories of the forced labourers, the barracks were overcrowded, cold, and damp, with inadequate bedding and widespread bedbug infestations.

After the liberation of Luxembourg, American camps for displaced persons were established in the former forced labour camps. Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians formed music and theatre groups that performed for the local population.
The Tageblatt newspaper from October 1944 contains a description of a play written by the former prisoners themselves, giving insight into life in the camp:

"Russian (Soviet) girls are led to their workplace by an SA man and a camp policeman: dirty and miserable, starving, as was to be expected. A Luxembourgish worker hands a girl a package. The SA man intervenes, striking him as is to be expected."

[15] Archive Nationales de Luxembourg, ARBED, Occupation allemande.

⑨

National Archives and Records Administration,
College Park, Maryland

OST

→ Repatriation

“The train arrived, we got on, and as we were leaving, they brought us cardboard boxes weighing 12 kg each, one for every four people. American soldier rations – chocolate, cigarettes, dried eggs, milk powder, stew, cookies, sausage, coffee, bagged tea”. [16]

Most of the former Soviet forced labourers and prisoners of war were removed from Luxembourg in two cohorts bound for Bordeaux. The first group, which left Luxembourg on December 31, 1944, consisted of 1,127 people. The second group, which left on January 2, 1945, included Maria Talpa, whose memories are quoted in this exhibition, and consisted of 1,273 people:

“We came (to the train station in Esch/Alzette) at dawn, and two hours later the train arrived. (...) And again, a plane flew overhead. Our long train was shelled: the front locomotive was hit, the front tank punctured, and the locomotive driver and his assistant were killed. The rear tank was also punctured. We all ran into the forest, still undressed. Four men who were transporting us died because of us. It rarely snows there, but it had snowed before. Blood was coming down the locomotive, and thick steam was rising from the tanks.

No one cried; there were no tears left. We froze badly during the night, undressed, and some older man shouted: ‘Everyone get in the cars!’ Whatever happens, we can’t run away anymore. In the morning, someone pushed our train, removed the damaged locomotives, and hooked up others to continue the journey. What if the Germans are taking us? Or are they good people? No one knows.

When we arrived, we reached the French city of Chalon. We stayed for three days and then set off again. The sick and elderly travelled by bus, while the rest walked 60 km to the DP camp in Bergerac.” [17]

[16 & 17] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.

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National Archives and Records Administration,
College Park, Maryland

OST

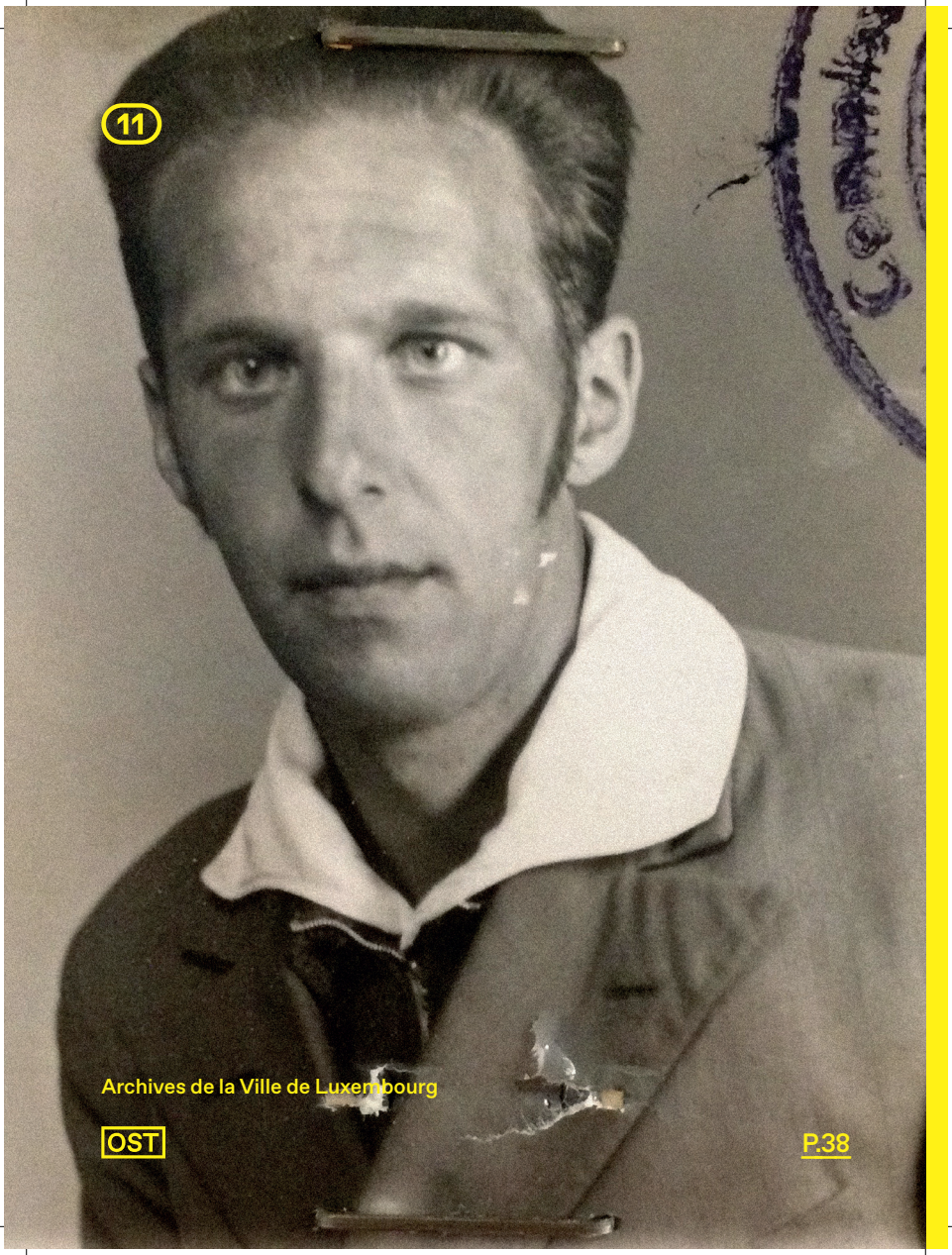
→ Liberated, but not Free

"In the car, she [the former forced labourer] tried to escape, scratching, biting, and tearing one of their uniforms," recalled Bichekhvost later. [18]

Even after liberation of the South of Luxembourg, including Dudelange, the former Ostarbeiter did not truly become free. First, they were forced to stay in the same camps now functioning as Displaced Person (DP) camps by the Luxembourger and American authorities. Second, they were forced to repatriate to the Soviet Union, sometimes with officers forcibly taking them to assembly points if they didn't want to go back home. The reasons for staying in Luxembourg were varied from pre-war experiences in the USSR to humiliating post-war experiences in Soviet filtration camps in Germany, from which some people even fled back to Luxembourg.

For the women who returned to the Soviet Union, stigmatization and bureaucratic hurdles were unavoidable. The period of homesickness ended for those able to return to their hometowns and reunite with their families, but it was replaced by the pain of publicly expressed insults and accusations of betrayal, including claims that they had prostituted themselves in Germany.

[18] Unpublished memoirs by Fiodor Bichekhvost on forced repatriation to the Soviet Union, 1980s. Collection Nikolai Bichekhvost.



11

Archives de la Ville de Luxembourg

OST

→ Yuri Yezersky, 25 years old

"My dear mother impulsively clasped her hands around my neck and broke into sobs. Knowing her to be a self-possessed and strong character and seeing her in such a state for the first time, I was at a loss and didn't know what to do... Someone was calming her down, reminding her that I was not going away for long - only for 2 [army] years!... The door slammed shut and resonated through the house where I grew up and spent the best and most carefree years of my life." [19]

1920 →	Born in Moscow to a Russian mother and Ukrainian father.
1940 →	Drafted into the Red Army.
1941 →	Captured by Nazis; endured forced labour camps and Buchenwald; escaped three times
1945 →	Fled to Luxembourg, worked as a sculptor under the name Juri Wiardo; exhibited locally.
1946 →	Escaped Soviet repatriation, fled to Paris, adopted the name George Virine, exhibited alongside Picasso.
1951 →	Migrated to Australia.

Yuri Yezersky was the son of Ukrainian-born historical novelist Miliy Yezersky (1891–1976) and the nephew of the writer Vyacheslav Yezersky (1890–1963). Both authors struggled to publish their works in the Soviet Union, as they were considered too bourgeois, too Ukrainian nationalist, or too focused on historical themes, according to Yuriy Yezersky's daughter, Galina. Yezersky did not want to repeat his family's fate and work as an artist under the Soviet regime.

To escape repatriation to the Soviet Union, Yezersky, spotting Soviet officers outside his studio in Hollerich, jumped out of a window into the backyard and managed to catch a train to Paris. He married Iryna Pavlenko, a Ukrainian born in Audun-le-Tiche whom he had met in 1944 after Luxembourg's liberation while working for Villeroy & Boch. They had three children. In 1945, he started working on his memoirs about the wartime, but only finished the first part, covering up to 1944.

[19] Unpublished memoirs by Yuri Yezersky, 1945.

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Former forced labourers from Differdange Maria Talpa (on the left) and Aleksandra Davydova, 1950. Collection Liudmyla Sherdiy

OST

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→ Life Goes On

“I arrived at my parents’ house. I entered the yard, my father was in the yard, oh my God, he was crying, my mother was crying in the house, and the cat jumped on my shoulder...”. [20]

“When we arrived [at home], there was also mistrust; you couldn’t study or get a respectable job because you had been in Germany—in other words, you were a criminal. [...] But was that our fault? Was it my fault that I was taken there when I was thirteen? [...] So, in general, we lived as second-class citizens”. [21]

Of the roughly five million DPs from the USSR registered for repatriation in 1944, between 450,000 and 1,300,000 did not return. In Luxembourg, 39 individuals were not located, and at least seven remained with new partners. Some women never saw the children they had left in the USSR, while others became mothers or stepmothers to Luxembourgish children. Family conflicts often arose from prejudice, and the Cold War fuelled suspicions of being “red,” especially when the Luxembourgish husband was active in communist, socialist, or trade union activities.

Several former forced labourers married Luxembourgish partners: Yevgeniya Matveyeva (Dorogobuzh) married Alex Olinger and had a daughter, Olga; Valentina Ivanova (Smolensk) married Jean Gansen and had two children; Shura Shevchenko (Luhansk) married Nestor Charpentier; Yevdokiya Gritsay married Marcel Ostreicher; Antonina Tcharopkina (Vitebsk) married Théodore Spanier; Yefrosiniya Vorobieva (Borodino) married Jules Juncker, while her 16-year-old son was repatriated; and Tina Boschko (Nizhyn) married Mathias Hoor.

In 2022, Boschko’s granddaughter, Magali De Rocco, hosted the great-grandchildren of her grandmother’s brother after the Russian invasion of Ukraine forced them to flee.

[20] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.
[21] Interview with Bronislava Astrovko, 2006.

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Drawing Anton Stepine

OST

→ Commemorative Plaque

"I wish to nobody to experience, what our generation had to survive." [22]

To commemorate the fates of former forced labourers from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus in Luxembourg, and to prevent the traces of their suffering from disappearing forever, the City of Dudelange, following an initiative by Tiago Flores from the History Club Geschichtsfrënn, decided to install a commemorative plaque. This is the first commemorative plaque in Luxembourg dedicated to former citizens of the Soviet Union who became victims of the Nazi regime in the country, installed at the site of their imprisonment. After the exhibition concludes, it will be placed next to the location of the former barrack camp in Dudelange — Lager Am Sportplatz.

The camp was likely built in autumn 1942 and housed approximately 250 male forced labourers in 1943–1944. It consisted of several barracks behind barbed wire. After the war, the site was used as a US Army military camp and later as a training camp for the Luxembourgish army, called Rellent. During the war, the camp had a staff of 25, including 14 local residents. The forced labourers worked in the ARBED steel mill, at construction sites, and on the railway.

Today, new houses occupy the site, so the plaque will be installed in front of the chapel at the cemetery, approximately 50 meters from the former camp fence. To further commemorate the former forced labourers, visitors can also go to the Lallange Cemetery to the collective grave of Soviet citizens who died under Nazi German occupation in Luxembourg. Of those identified, 18 were Russian, 8 Ukrainian, and 1 Belarusian. Across Luxembourg, a total of 67 Soviet citizens are buried in various localities.

[22] Unpublished memoirs by Maria Talpa, 1996.

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Archives communales de Dudelange

Archives communales d'Esch/Alzette

Archives de la Ville de Luxembourg (VdL)

Archives Nationales de Luxembourg (ANLux)

Bibliothèque Nationale du Luxembourg (BnL)

Conseil National de la Résistance (CNR)

Déifferdenger Geschichtsfrënn

Diddelenger Geschichtsfrënn

Geschichtsfrënn vun der Gemeng Péiteng

Musée National d'Histoire Militaire, Diekirch (MNHM)

Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains, Esch/Alzette

National Archives and Record Administration, College Park, Maryland (NARA)

Financial and institutional support:
Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines (CDMH)

Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C^2DH)

City of Dudelange

The Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: Ministry of Culture, Ministry of State, Comité pour la Mémoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale

University of Luxembourg

Jeannette Busch-Charles (private donation for the university project)

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Book Realization:
Susanne Jaspers
→ Publishing House Capybarabooks

Exhibition Printing:
Olivier Plumet
→ LuxVisual

Designers:
Paulo Tomás, Alex Dias
(LOLA, Esch/Alzette)
→ Exhibition identity,
Brochure, posters & invitations

Petra Soeltzer
(Graphic Design, Düsseldorf)
→ Book

Anton Stepine
(Skin s.a r.l., Luxembourg)
→ Commemorative plaque

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Administrative and Technical Assistance:
CDMH team, and in particular Tiago Flores and Mohammad Zaki

The City of Dudelange's Administrative and Technical Services

KEINER WEINTE, ES GAB KEINE TRÄNEN MEHR

Learn more about the Ostarbeiters from Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus in Luxembourg during World War II in Inna Ganschow's book [capybarabooks, Luxembourg 2025].

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland

Exhibition

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Opening:
23 October 2025
→ 19h00

Address:
Rue Gare-Usines, L–3481
Dudelange, Luxembourg

Visiting Days:
Thursday → Sunday

Opening Hours:
15h00 → 18h00

Curation:
Dr. Joëlla van Donkersgoed

Scientific Supervision:
Dr. Inna Ganschow

Price:
Free Entry

More Information:
www.cdmh.lu

Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines

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