



Heinrich Niemann lived at Dankwatsgrube 66.

Heinrich Niemann was born in Lübeck on 7 April 1906. His parents were the married couple, Adolf Wilhelm Martin and Louise Wilhelmine Ida Niemann, née Bracht. He was baptized in the St. James Church (protestant) but as an adult he left church. While an infant he lived on Hundestraße but later the family moved to the Domviertel section of Lübeck. The majority of his childhood and youth was spent in an orphanage.



Dankwatsgrube 68 and 66 [1]

On 30 November 1935 he married Mariechen Kähler, who was not quite a year younger than he. He met Mariechen while working at the Lübeck Harbour. The newly weds moved to Dankwatsgrube 66. Nine months later their daughter, Lotti, was born. When she was born he had just turned 30 and was being detained for interrogation due to his illegal political activities. His daughter would never see him.



Marriage Certificate [2]

Heinrich Niemann found employment as an unskilled labourer. From 14 November 1924 until 17 March 1926 he worked in the Dampfbäckerei (Steam Bakery) "Hansa" of Johannes Junge, was then as a migrant worker, for example finding employment at Kunstgärtnerei (Artistic Nursery) Stroop in Delbrück in the state of Westfalen from 28 July 1930 to 10 December of the same year and later he worked at the blast furnace at Lübeck-Herrenwyk. At the time of his arrest he did not have a permanent job but worked as a day labourer at the Lübeck Harbour.

He was an official of the "Rote Hilfe" (Red Aid), and a member of the "Freidenkerverband" (Association of Free Thinkers) and the "Interessengemeinschaft für Arbeiterkultur" (Syndicate for Workers' Traditions). He concentrated his efforts in supporting the arrested members of the "Rote Frontkämpferbundes" (The Red Frontfighters League), SAP (Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei) (Socialist Workers Party), KPD (Communist Party of Germany), unions, and those individuals not associated with any political group, as well as their families.

He himself was a member of the KPD and was politically active in resisting the NSDAP (Nazi Party). He was in close contact with the Bringmann family, which was especially active in the

Inscription at the installation:

HIER WOHNTE
HEINRICH NIEMANN
JG. 1906
VERHAFTET 1935
'HOCHVERRAT'
NEUENGAMME
1944 SS-
STRAF-BATTAILLON
'DIRLEWANGER'
TOT 8.12.1944
SLOWAKEI

installation
20. September 2012

communist resistance movement and further associated with Jonny Ring and Hans Holz, who were also active in the resistance against the Nazis. Another stolperstein for Karl-Heinz "Johnny" Ring was laid in 2011.

After the fire at the Reichstag (the Parliament Building) on 27 February 1933 there began a nation wide persecution of members of the KPD which was carried out in Lübeck by Police Chief Mehrlein even though he himself was a member of the SPD. On 2 and 3 March 1933 all leading KPD officials the political police could get hold of were arrested just days before the 5 March 1933 national parliamentary elections. The KPD's offices were searched by large police contingents. Any and all records were seized. All publically displayed election posters were taken down. Because of these actions for all practical purposes the KPD found itself being declared an outlawed party.

In the first months of 1933 individual members of the resistance movement or small groups of them were arrested but the resistance was not abated. Starting at the end of March the press reported on many antifascist activities, such as the displaying of red flags on buildings and the hoisting of them on chimneys, antifascist slogans being painted on the walls of buildings and on the streets, streets given new names, distribution and sales of leaflets and newspapers. Collections for those who were detained were organized.

On 23 September 1933 Heinrich Niemann himself was arrested because he had sold four copies of the banned "Norddeutschen Zeitung" (North Germany Newspaper) on 18 September 1933. He was detained in a wool warehouse, where he was interrogated day and night without anything to eat or drink for up to 12 hours and was forced to stand motionless for hours with his face to the wall. Two days later on 25 September he was convicted by a county district/court in Lübeck of selling a banned newspaper thereby committing "a treasonous act against the German people according to paragraph 6 of the 28 February 1933 decree of the Reichspresident" and was sentenced to one year from 28 September 1933 to 25 September 1934 which was served in the Lübeck Lauerhof prison. [<typo3/#sdfootnote1sym>](#)



Certificate of Release from Lauerhof Prison, Lübeck [3]



Judge's Ruling Concerning the Pardon of Prison Sentence [4]

On 26 June 1934 he was convicted by a jury of contravening paragraph 2 of the "Reich President's Decree of 3 May 1932 for the Elimination of the communistic Godless Society*)" and sentenced to three months in prison. However on 31 August 1934 he was pardoned by an amnesty declared on 7 August 1934. Immediately after his release he again began participating in banned activities. During this time he occasionally found work as a day labourer.

*) translator's note: This decree was aimed at the "Proletarian Association of Free-thinkers", a left-wing branch of the German free-thinkers.

In November 1933 the Gestapo was able to eliminate the leaders and a majority of members of the resistance movement through mass arrests. In spite of this wave of mass arrests sections of the KPD resistance cells remained intact. In June of 1933 the Member of Parliament Ernst Puchmüller, who himself was blind, was released from the Fuhlsbüttel Concentration Camp in the now northern suburb of Hamburg and a rebuilding of the resistance movement began under his leadership. Heinrich Niemann once again became a member of this movement.

The movement smuggled magazines, newspapers and books from Scandinavia into Lübeck through the Lübeck Harbour and distributed them in the harbour's pubs and bars. In 1934 and '35 an anti-fascist Lübecker May Day Newspaper was produced, printed in Oslo and smuggled into Lübeck on a ship. Thus 3,500 copies of the newspaper were distributed. A variety of handbills were produced in Lübeck itself.

In October and November of 1935 over 250 suspects were arrested in a dragnet and the resistance movement was basically finished. Over 120 members of the movement were tried in more than 17 different court sessions in the Free City Provincial Court and the Constitutional Court between the summer of 1936 and the end of the year. Most of the accused were sentenced to lengthy

prison terms. All of the court sessions took place in the Lübeck Court House. After this roundup there were only scattered attempts at resistance. After the beginning of the war the noose was drawn even tighter around any resistance. In turn even more additional communists were hunted down and arrested.

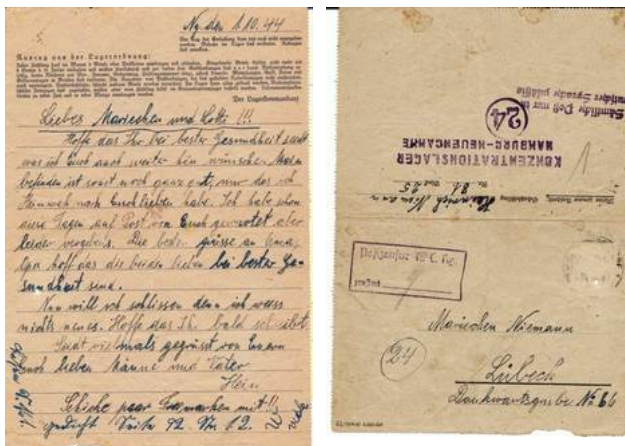
On Christmas day 1935, not even four weeks after his marriage to the domestic Maria Johanna Luise Kähler, Heinrich Niemann was arrested and interrogated at the Lübeck Detention Centre. Three days later the secret police took him into so called "Protective Custody" (Schutzhaft) *

Nine months later on 22 September 1936 in a session of the Free City Provincial Court of Hamburg held in the Lübeck Court House on Burgstraße 4, second floor, Room 40, he was convicted of "Intent to Commit Treason" being sentenced to four years in prison and the forfeit of all of his civil liberties for an additional four years. He was given an eight months reduction for time served while awaiting trial. He served his sentence in the Börgermoor Prison (on the Dutch border, 80 km east of Bremen, 250 km westsouthwest of Lübeck), a sub-camp of the notorious Emslandlager (Emsland Camp). The guards of the one time concentration camp were members of the SA (Sturmabteilung/Assult or Storm Division) Pionierstandarte 10. Their methods of harassment and terror, honed in the days of the concentration camp, continued when dealing with prisoners. The majority of the prisoners were hardcore criminals, even when using today's standard of justice. The work the prisoners' were forced to do on the moors was murderous. Heinrich Niemann was officially released on 22 January 1940 but he was a marked man.



Hanseatic Appeals Court
Hamburg Criminal Division
Summons [5]

Like many of his comrades in the resistance movement he was not released after he had served his sentence, but was imprisoned in a concentration camp. On 28 March 1940 he was transferred to the Neuengammer Concentration Camp, (65 km/40 miles south southwest of Lübeck). He was given the low prisoner number of 81. It is not known what he was required to do while in the camp.



1 Oct. 1944 Letter from
Neuengamme Concentration
Camp [6] and [7]

His wife did receive the letters he wrote to her. They contained only mundane comments about life in the camp and his longing for his wife and young daughter. The letters were censored, which made it impossible to give any real details about life in the camp.

On 10 November 1944 he and other political prisoners were drafted into the SS Special Forces cynically named "Probation or Penal Battalion 999" or "Dirlewanger" and then shipped out to the Eastern Front, where he many times saw action in firefights with Soviet troops.



Heinrich Niemann in uniform [8]

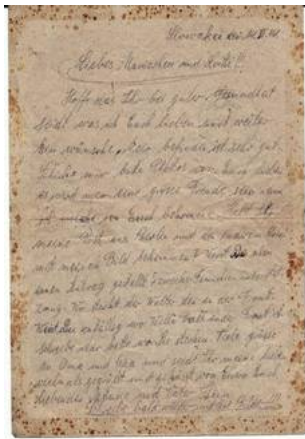
The "Dirlewanger" Special Forces was established in May 1940 and afterwards reorganized many times namely: On 1 September 1940 as Special Battalion, on 29 January 1942 as SS-Special Battalion, at the end of 1943 and the beginning of '44 as SS-Special Regiment, in Juli of '44 as SS-Special Brigade and finally on 19 February 1945 as the 36th Armed Infantry Division of the SS.



Certificate of Induction into the Armed Services [9]

Starting on 7 November 1944 the first contingents of the recruited concentration camp prisoners arrived in Cracow, Poland, forming the "Dirlewanger" SS-Infantry-Replacement Company. A short time later the Company was deployed to Diviaky, Slovakia, where they were to join other troops of the "Dirlewanger" Storm Brigade. Almost all of the political prisoners were assigned to the 3rd SS-Regiment, the "Dirlewanger" Storm Brigade. A few of them were sent to the 2nd Battalion. On 9 November 1944, the official Day of Remembrance for those Killed In Action Serving the NS Movement, Marie Niemann received a postcard from Berlin-Charlottenburg. She still received another Field Post from her husband on 24 November 1944.

[<typo3/#sdfootnote2sym>](#)



Field Post Letter dated 14 November 1944 [10]



(Post Mark from 24 November 1944) [11]

Around the end of November the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were deployed to the area of Novaky/Slovakia. Their assignment was to more or less drive the partisans of the Upper Nitra together. The 3rd Battalion was shipped out by train, while the 2nd Battalion had to march. Anyone who lagged behind during the march was shot by the SS Guards. This might explain why it is reported that the members of the two battalions were treated differently. The prisoners in the 3rd Battalion were more likely to remain together and had spoken of half decent treatment. The prisoners of the 2nd Battalion faced ever increasing brutality. In December of 1944 there were even exemplary executions of members of the battalion.

On 13 December 1944 both battalions were deployed to Ipolysag, Hungary and were assigned to hold the line at this important position of the front. Many prisoners deserted and ran over to the Soviet lines.

At the end of January 1945 the "Dirlewanger" Special Formation was shipped out from Prievidza, Slovakia, to Guben, Germany, where they were again assembled. It is assumed that by this time

most of the prisoners of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had already been killed in action.

Heinrich Niemann's field post of 5 December 1944 was the last indication he was still alive. It is not known what his final fate was. It can only be assumed, that he met his demise in the Czech Republic or Hungary in the same year as many of the other members of this unit did. After waiting six years in the hope of his return his widow had to go through the heart-breaking process of having the courts declare him dead.

As a result the courts fixed his date of death as 8 December 1944.

Photo Credits

[1] Fotoarchiv der Hansestadt Lübeck

[2] Private Family Photos

Specific References in Addition to Standard Reference Material

- Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck
 - Ordnungsamt
 - Meldekartei-Archiv
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 - KSHA, Nr. 1664 NIEMANN, Marie.
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- Schleswig-Holsteinisches Landesarchiv (LAS) Abteilung 357.3 (Strafanstalten-Lübeck) Akte Nr.
 - LAS Abteilung Abteilung 761 (Kreissonderhilfsausschuss) Akte Nr.
- Archiv KZ-Gedenkstätte Neuengamme, Datenbank
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- Hans-Schwarz-Archiv
- WHVA (Totenliste Hamburger Widerstandskämpfer und Verfolgter)
- Wehrmachtsauskunftsstelle (WAST) Berlin Schreiben vom 22.09.2011
- Zeitzeugengespräch mit seiner Tochter Frau Spahrman, geb. Niemann, am Donnerstag, den 28. Juli 2011 in Lübeck
- Persönliche Briefe an seine Frau aus der Haft in Neuengamme, Feldpostbriefe (Privatbesitz)

Christian Rathmer, 2012

Translation Glenn Sellick and Martin Harnisch 2013.

*Schutzhaft/Protective Custody: In the Informationen zur Schleswig-Holsteinischen Zeitgeschichte (AKENS 2008) (Information on Schleswig-Holstein Contemporary History) Reimer Möller explains among other things in his article "Schutzhaft" in der Innenstadt Das Konzentrationslager Glückstadt 1933/34 ("Protective Custody" in the City Centre, the Glückstadt Concentration Camp 1933/34) that "The heads of the district authorities, who had meanwhile all become NSDAP-followers could impose "protective custody" on a person - a security and political repression measure which allowed indefinite custody and was subjected to no judicial scrutiny. The affected individuals had no legal recourse against it. This radical curtailment of personal liberties - found in the "order for the protection of the German people" of the 4th of February -was augmented by the 28 February 1933 "order of the President of the Reich for the protection of people and state" which also became known as "Reichstagsbrandverordnung" ("The Reichstag Arson Order" was named such, since it was passed just after an arsonist set the German Parliament building on fire). In the course of the National Socialist rule the "Schutzhaft" measures were broadened by decrees and as an "arbitrary measure of the Gestapo " acquired a "general-preventive character in the beginning of 1938". (Taken from Susanne Schledt-Önal's February 2012 biographical material "Krausestraße 1 - Martha Hindel")

