

## Lernen aus der Geschichte e.V.

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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

## Creation of the song

One night in 1933, the prisoners of the Börgermoor concentration camp near Papenburg are brutally beaten. After this "night of the long sticks," the inmates develop a plan to do something to uphold their honor. One Sunday they want to enact a play, the "Concentrazini Circus" to show their tormenters that they haven't lost their will to live. The song "The Peat Bog Soldiers" is secretly composed for this presentation. At the end of the performance, the song is heard for the first time. One of the composers, Wolfgang Langhoff, remembers:

"The prisoners then heard for the first time the '*Börgermoorlied*' ['Peat Bog Song'] which had meanwhile become as popular as a folk song. One person said: 'Comrades, we will now sing the '*Börgermoorlied*,' the song of this camp, for you. Listen carefully and then join in on the refrain.' Gravely and somberly, the chorus began singing, in a march rhythm:

'Far and wide as the eye can wander...' ['Wohin auch das Auge blicket...']

Intense silence. Everyone sat numbly, as though paralyzed, unable to sing along, and again listened to the refrain:

'We are the peat bog soldiers, we're marching with our spades to the bog...' [*Wir sind die Moorsoldaten und ziehen mit dem Spaten ins Moor...*]

Softly and mournfully, some of the prisoners began to hum along. They looked neither left nor right. Their eyes looked past the barbed wire — to the place where the sky met the endless moor.

I looked at the camp commandant. He sat with his head down, shuffling his feet in the sand. The SS stood quietly, without moving. I looked at my fellow prisoners. Many were in tears.

'Up and down the guards are pacing, no one, no one can break through. Flight would mean a sure death facing...' [*Auf und nieder gehn die Posten, keiner, keiner, kann hindurch. Flucht kann nur das Leben kosten...*]

My comrades had sung this stanza very softly, but suddenly they joined in loudly and harshly at the last lines:

'But from us there's no complaining, winter will in time be past. One day we shall cry, rejoicing: 'Homeland dear, you're mine at last!' Then will the peat bog soldiers march no more with their spades to the bog.' [*Doch für uns gibt es kein Klagen, ewig kann's nicht Winter sein! Einmal werden froh wir sagen: 'Heimat, du bist wieder mein!' Dann ziehen die Moorsoldaten nicht mehr mit dem Spaten ins Moor.*]

This ended our performance, and each group of prisoners dispersed in a quiet and orderly way back to their quarters.

The song was banned by the camp commandant two days later. But the SS guards approached us frequently, asking if we had the song. We wrote it down often. We even wrote the song on pieces of wood, cut off diagonally in the carpenters' workshop. The song helped us enormously. Whenever there was a performance of any kind, or when a prisoner was released, we sang the first and usually also the last stanza for him."

(In: Wolfgang Langhoff: "Wir sind die Moorsoldaten" ["We Are the Peat Bog Soldiers"], Stuttgart, 1974. p. 190ff.)