

## 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.

### The Perpetrators and the Legal Prosecution of the Crimes Committed at the Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp

The number of staff members of the command structure and of the camp guards was growing steadily during the camp's history. In February 1943, there were 73 staff members of the command structure, and in the end, the camp had 3,222 SS-men to guard about 52,000 male prisoners and 906 female guards for almost 26,000 female prisoners. Three different camp commanders followed each other at Gross-Rosen: SS-Obersturmführer Arthur Rödl from 1 May 1941 to 15 September 1942; SS-Hauptsturmführer Wilhelm Gideon from 16 September 1942 to 10 October 1943; SS-Sturmbannführer Johannes Hassebroeck from 11 October 1943 until the end. The latter was born on 11 July 1910 at Halle, where he went to school and finished his training as a commercial clerk. He became a member of the SA already in 1929 and joined the Nazi party in 1930. In 1934, the Nazi management of the Gau of Halle-Merseburg appointed him managing director of the fishery association of the Province of Saxony-Anhalt. In the same year, he moved to Merseburg, where he was employed by the tax authorities. He became a member of the SS in 1934. Before he became commander of Gross-Rosen, he had already headed an extension camp of Sachsenhausen.

After 1945, there was no special trial dealing with the crimes committed at Gross-Rosen. Only a few commanding staff members, camp guards and prisoners with special privileges were legally prosecuted at all. Until the end of 1948, eight former members of the Gross-Rosen commanding staff were sentenced by allied military courts, some of them to death; Hassebroeck was one of them. Having been sentenced to death by a British military court because of the execution of British officers, he was pardoned to life-long imprisonment in 1949. In 1950, his life-sentence was decreased to 15 years imprisonment, and as early as 15 September 1954, Hassebroeck walked away a free man because the rest of his sentence had been remitted. Some of the Gross-Rosen perpetrators were sentenced and punished by Polish courts.

Only very few perpetrators had to answer to German courts. When Hassebroeck was accused a second time and brought before a German court in 1967, the trial ended with his acquittal in 1970. The court saw his crimes as manslaughter and being an accomplice to manslaughter, not murder. Therefore, his crimes had already come under the statute of limitations in the legal sense.

Hassebroeck died at Westernstede on 17 April 1977.

The numerous trials against National Socialist crimes in the Soviet occupation sector or in the GDR did not deal with the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. The Hassebroeck case is one example of more than 70 preliminary inquiries in connection with Gross-Rosen in the Federal Republic of Germany, most of which ended with the abandonment of court proceedings. Almost all perpetrators of Gross-Rosen could continue to live and work without being molested at all.