

# Dutch Resisters In KZ Mauthausen 1940-1945

## Introduction (1)

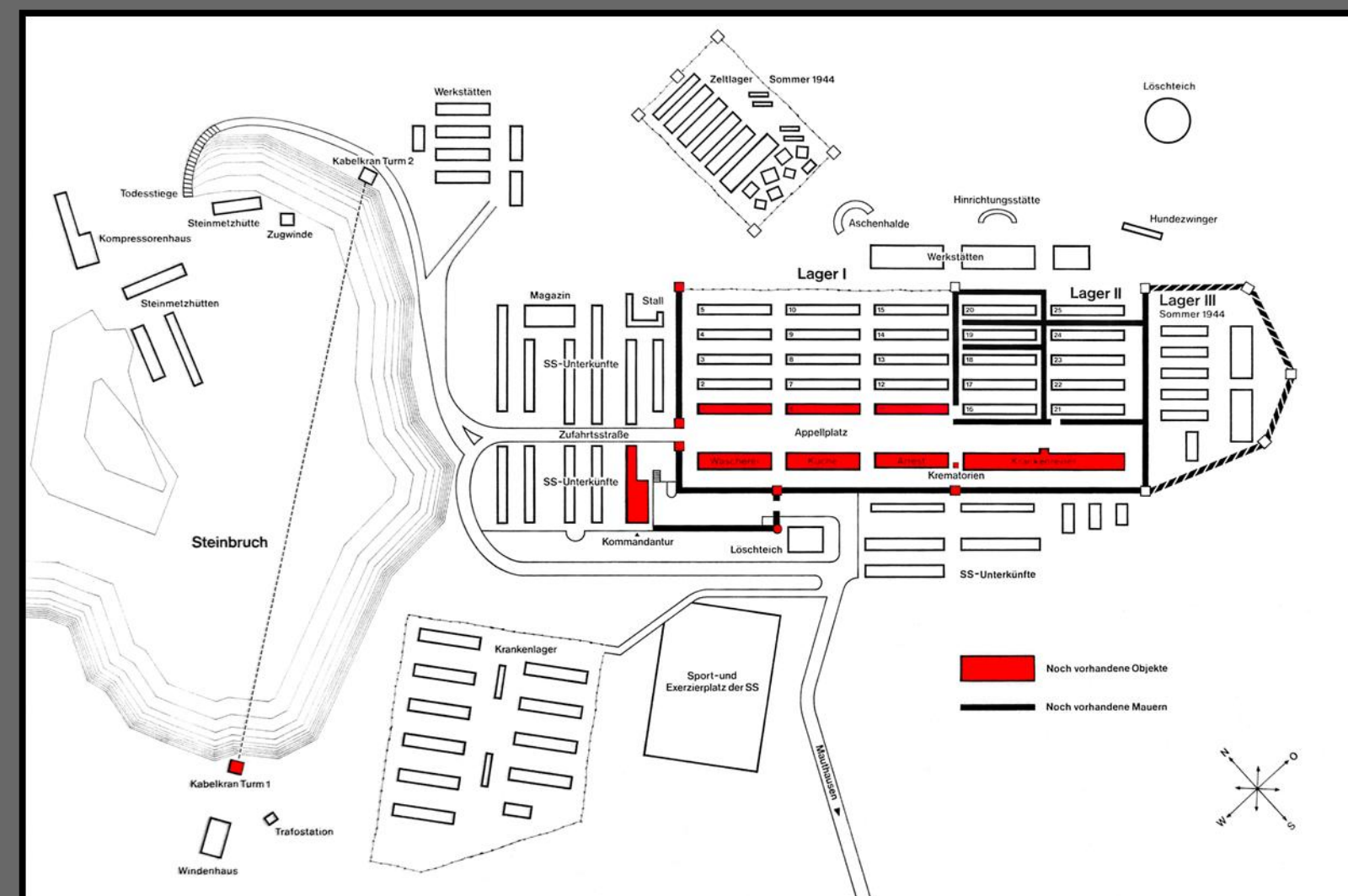
During the Second World War, many Dutch Resisters were transported to Nazi concentration camps. The camps reflected the broader developments during the war and the SS focused on creating a system of 'terror', which made the daily situation in the camp for prisoners a horrible ordeal. The Nazi's racial-biological ideology was used to create a hierarchy in the camps, where Germans and Austrians were at the top of the hierarchy and Jews at the bottom. The prisoners were treated accordingly and the Nazi's used a method of divide-and-rule, based on nationality, with which they aimed to prevent the establishment of resistance. However, different forms of resistance did develop in these camps.

My study focuses on the impact the concentration camp Mauthausen (1938-1945) had on Dutch resisters.

## Theoretical Perspective/ Methodology (2)

Based on the theoretical perspective of *Histoire Croisée*, I focused on three research areas:

1. What was the perspective of the Dutch resisters on the processes in Mauthausen?
2. What kind of power structures could be identified? This provides an insight into the way in which resistance could be practiced and in which it was shaped.
3. What kind of intercrossings could be identified?



**KZ Mauthausen Map**



## Steps (3)

1. Identifying the Dutch resisters that were sent to Mauthausen by using primary sources, such as postwar lists of the Red Cross (*Rode Kruis*).
2. Establishing a database to identify the different resistance groups and to elucidate their journeys. Most of them were transported to multiple other camps before arriving in Mauthausen.
3. Studying secondary literature to identify key aspects of the camp system, to research the opportunities of prisoners to manipulate the system and to organize and mobilize resistance.
4. Studying testimonies of Dutch resisters about their experiences in Mauthausen.

## Results (4)

The established database revealed that many members of the Dutch resistance group called *De Geuzen* were sent to Mauthausen. Many of them were often put on the same transport. The testimonies show how Dutch resisters merged into prisoner networks in Mauthausen. According to one Dutch resister, this could mean the difference between 'life and death'. This alignment seemed, for a large part, to have been determined by the hierarchical system in the camp. Alignment to nationalities, that were at the top of the hierarchy, were preferred while, according to another resister, Jewish prisoners were ignored.

Organized forms of resistance were present. Pre-established networks, based on mutual trust, seemed to have been used to organize the armed resistance group in 1944, to which, according to one testimony, Dutch resisters also contributed.

Although nationality played an important role, it can be argued that these networks of resistance were transnational. The group consisted of different nationalities. The members shared a common enemy (the SS), they suffered much alike under the system (some groups more than others, though) and they formed a bond in which their survival depended on mutual trust. This might have led to the establishment of a shared framework of ideas and actions, in which resistance was shaped.

## Reflection on the Results (5)

The testimonies turned out to be very valuable to study the camp processes from the perspective of the Dutch resisters, and to identify intercrossings between Dutch prisoners and prisoners of other nationalities. The downside of using these sources, is the scarcity of the material. Therefore, I broadened the scope and also included some general statements of Dutch resisters that were incarcerated in other concentration camps.

Both primary and secondary sources needed to be scrutinized because some of the sources contained errors. This proves the need to use additional sources to confirm the reliability of a source.

Within the literature, the perspective of nationality is dominantly used to explain camp processes. Transnational resistance, in this context, thus is a new and promising framework. My study contributes to the broader project by studying the way in which Dutch resisters merged into the prisoner (resistance) networks and the encounters they had with other prisoners.

## The broader project (6) A Transnational Approach to Resistance in Europe, 1936-1948

The project aims to re-evaluate and recast the history of the resistance to hegemonic and occupying empires in Europe between 1936 and 1948. It explores the trajectories of transnational resisters – defined as active behind enemy lines outside their country of origin – encounters and exchanges between them, the forging of their identities in different contexts during the war and the post-war transformation of their lives and memories.

