



Fig. 1: Moabit cellular Prison, draw by F.A. Borchel, engraved by F.Foltz, 1855 (Landesarchiv Berlin)

HISTORY OF STRUCTURE AND USE SINCE 1842

Prison Reform in Prussia and Construction of Moabit Cellular Prison

The cellular prison in Moabit, constructed between 1842 and 1849 on the site of a former royal powder mill beyond Berlin's city walls, was Prussia's first model prison. The building was constructed according to a design by Carl Ferdinand Busse, a student and emulator of Carl Friedrich Schinkel. Its erection followed the prison reform introduced by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

In lieu of communal cells and corporal punishment, the reformers devised a system of isolation with individual cells. Corporal punishment was to be supplanted by solitary confinement for the moral betterment of prisoners because to some measure crime was considered a communicable disease.

The institution was modelled on Pentonville prison in London, which employed a panoptic system. Four cell blocks and an administrative wing branched off from a domed central structure in a star-like formation. The advantage of this style building was that it required fewer security personnel. After a visit to London, Busse was so taken by the Pentonville prison concept that he convin-

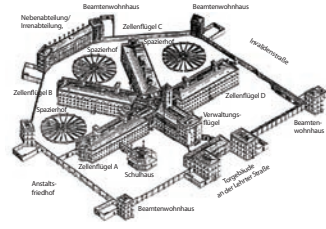


Fig. 2: Moabit Cellular Prison, perspective of the overall complex, captioned

ced the King of Prussia to build a copy of the English model, changing only the architecture of the façades.

After the cellular building with about 520 individual cells was erected, the overall complex was augmented by dwellings for prison personnel, gardens, cemeteries, a chapel, a school building and a place of execution.

Solitary Confinement

As part of the strict regime of solitary confinement, the inmates had to wear a cap with a visor to cover their face upon leaving their cells. In chapel and in the classrooms they sat in vertical wooden crates which only allowed them to see straight ahead.

To prevent whispered discussions which continued to take place during exercise despite heavy surveillance, three exercise yards were constructed a few years later. Each contained 20 individual courts. High walls prevented all contact between prisoners.

This system of strict solitary confinement was maintained until near the end of the 19th century, when regulations were gradually relaxed. The exercise grounds, however, remained partitioned until 1910.

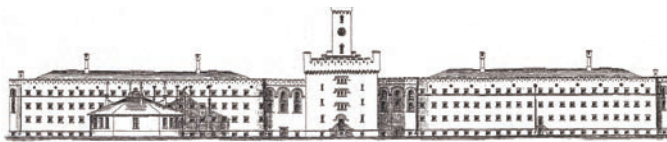


Fig. 3: Moabit Cellular Prison, view of main facade and gate building with adjoining residential buildings for administrative personnel (Fig. 2&3: lithographic tables from Wilke, Karl: Baueinrichtung und Verwaltung der königlichen neuen Strafanstalt (Zellengefängnis) bei Berlin, Berlin 1872)

HISTORY OF STRUCTURE AND USE SINCE 1939

Second World War to Demolition in 1958

The prison survived the Second World War relatively unscathed. Parts of a cell block and the chapel on the second floor of the administrative wing were destroyed. Following provisional restoration, the Allies used the building as a detention centre until 1955.

Planning to build an expressway, the Westtangente, led to the demolition of the cellular prison in 1958. All that remained were six residences for prison officials, the inner prison wall and a large chunk of the outer enclosure.

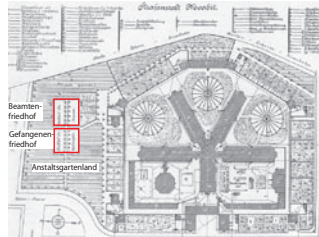


Fig. 4: Layout of the overall complex (from Krohne, Carl/Über,R.(eds.): Die Strafanstalten und Gefängnisse in Preußen, Berlin, 1901)

Provisional Uses and Road Planning

After the site ceased to be used as a prison, the "Facility Gardenland", north of the inner wall, was claimed by gardeners, as were the former gardens for prison officials along the inner prison wall. In 1958 the grounds of the prisoner graveyard were turned into individual allotments. The separate officials' graveyard is still intact.

Due to the division of the city, the grounds were now on the urban periphery. They were intermittently used as junkyards, car repair workshops and storage facilities.

From 1970 to 1973 high-rise apartments were built along Lehrter Straße on the site of the former main entrance (Fig. 5) and a multi-storey carpark was erected in 1973-74. Four of the officials' quarters had to be torn down to make way for the development.

A series of extremely diverse plans was proposed for the site. An autobahn, high-rise residences with star-shaped access roads



Fig. 6: Liberation of Poles from Moabit Cellular Prison on 20 th March 1848 (bpk Berlin)

CHRONICLE OF EVENTS 1847-1933

Even before the building was completed, the prison was the setting of an 1847 show trial against 256 Polish freedom fighters who planned an uprising in Prussian-occupied Poznan. These convicts were subsequently incarcerated in the cellular facility. They were freed during the revolution of 20 March 1848 (Fig. 7).

The shoemaker William Voigt (the Captain of Köpenick) was one of the prison's most prominent inmates. At the age of 17 he was sentenced to three years (1866-69) in Moabit. In 1878 Max Hödel, 21, was executed in the compound for attempting to assassinate Kaiser Wilhelm I.

During the First World War, the prison was predominately used to detain Social Democratic peace advocates such as Reichstag member Georg Ledebour, and the Communist Karl Radek.

Fig. 7-9



Wilhelm Voigt („Hauptmann von Köpenick“) (Landesarchiv Berlin)



Ernst Busch (bpk Berlin, Foto: Archiv Serkis, 1932)



Oberst Wilhelm Staehle (Gedenkstätte deutscher Widerstand)

National Socialism 1933-45

The fall of the Weimar Republic ushered in the cruellest chapter in the history of Moabit Cellular Prison. It became a symbol of political oppression, torture and murder, despite the fact that the events between 1933 and 1940 have yet to be investigated.

In 1940, the Wehrmacht occupied Section C and set up a branch of the pre-trial custody facility at Lehrter Straße 61 and the Ge-

stapo occupied sections of the prison. One detainee was writer Wolfgang Borchert. In 1944 he spent nine months in solitary confinement for "conduct detrimental to military preparedness". In Moabit he penned the tale "Unser kleiner Mozart". It was inspired by the 800 daily repetitions of the words "Lehrter Straße, Lehrter Straße" from the loudspeakers at Lehrter Station "from four thirty in the morning to half twelve at night".

In 1941 the Gestapo moved into the so-called Auxiliary Division, previously known as the "insanity ward". Most of the fates of people detained here can no longer be traced. One of many dissidents incarcerated here under the worst imaginable conditions was Ernst Busch, a singer and actor who disappeared behind Moabit walls in 1943. He was accused of propagating communism in his lyrics.

Wings B and D had to be vacated in 1944 on orders of the Reich Justice Ministry to make room for resistance fighters involved in the 20 July 1944 assassination plot. Only 35 of the 306 prisoners who were registered at the prison between October 1944 and April 1945 survived the Nazi regime.

Among those detained at the prison during this time were publisher Baron Guttenberg, Paul Graf York von Wartenberg, French resistance leader Paul Bernard and lawyer Friedrich Justus Perels. Geographer-poet Albrecht Haushofer composed the "Moabit Sonnets" during his imprisonment there in winter 1944-45.

In the final days of the war 16 political prisoners were taken from their cells at night and shot in the ULAP park near the prison in a last desperate attempt to dispose of witnesses. Wilhelm Staehle, Rüdiger Schleicher, Albrecht Haushofer and Klaus Bonhoeffer were among those executed on 23 and 24 April 1945.



Fig. 10: View into Wing A from the central hall (Landesbildstelle/ Suss, Bert, 1950)



EXPLANATION OF PARK DESIGN

The design for the history park is the result of an intensive study of the site's history, beginning with Moabit Prison construction 150 years ago. The park is replete with hints and references to the physical layout and the former use of the grounds.

The park is enclosed on three sides by the five-metre-high prison wall which remains intact. The wall and the three former guard dwellings (No 18) give visitors a good idea of the size and shape of the prison.

Visitors can enter the park through three variously designed entrances (Nos 1-3). Inside the park, sheltered by the high walls, the star-shaped layout of the former prison building is recreated. Wings B-D (Nos 5-7) are depicted by sunken or elevated lawn levels. Hedges show the arrangement and size of the solitary cells (No 4). Visitors can explore a reconstructed cell in its original dimensions (No 4a) while listening to a recording of several of Albrecht Haushofer "Moabit Sonnets" written during his incarceration in winter 1944-45.

The former central surveillance area of the prison, which enabled guards to monitor all wings simultaneously, is designed as a circular space framed by a concrete shell cube in the middle (No 9), the Panoptikum. Adjacent is a copper beech cluster which portrays the site of the former administration building (No 8).

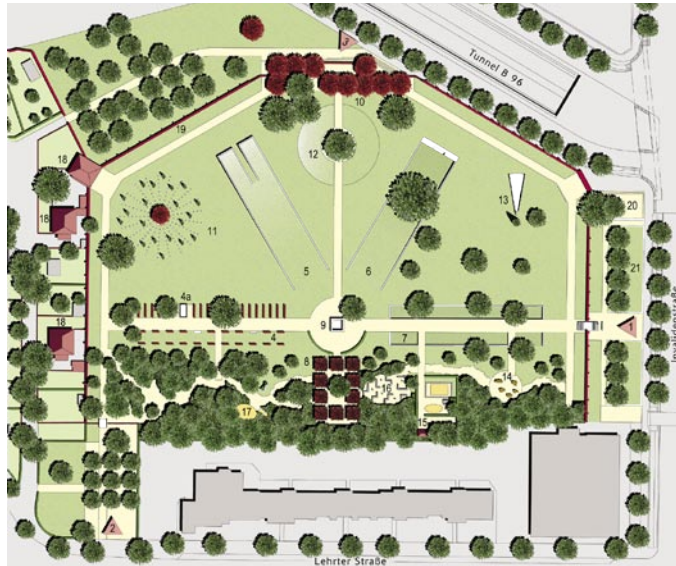
The three circular exercise yards used until 1910 to prevent any communication among prisoners on their outdoor walks are alluded to in a variety of ways, all conveying their magnitude and absurdity. (Nos 11-13). "In Fetters", a passage from the "Moabit Sonnets", is

inscribed in large letters on one of the prison walls (No 19).

When entering the park, visitors immediately become aware of two different sectors: the spacious empty lawn depicting the former prison buildings and the gradually overgrown western part, which shields the park from the adjacent housing. The sparse wooded area can be toured on a trail-like network. The routes incorporate recreational and rest areas constructed with materials from the Civil Engineering Office which used the space as a storage location for nearly 60 years. These include natural stone paving, old granite curbs, slate bloc remnants of the fountains in front of Berlin Zoo and leftover red sandstone from Moltkebrücke.

The Moabiter Ratschlag Association, a local citizen's group, organized a project to involve community children and young people in the creation of the play area (Nos 14, 16, 17). Working together with artists, they produced edutainment facilities inspired by the area's history.

Proprietor:
 Berlin-Mitte Borough Office, Senate Department for Urban Development
Financing:
 Revenue sharing from Parliament, Government quarter and Berlin Central Station construction measures, sponsored by the Land of Berlin and the federal government
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 Glaßer und Dagenbach, Landscape Architects, Berlin, www.glada-berlin.de



- 1 Invalidenstrasse entrance
- 2 Lehrter Straße entrance
- 3 Entrance from federal route B-96
- 4 Former A Wing. Cell shapes are conveyed by copper beech hedges.
- 4a Reconstruction of a cell in its original dimensions as a walk-in sculpture with a sound installation by Christiane Keppler
- 5-7 Former Wings B-D, depicted by sunken or slightly elevated lawns
- 8 Plantation of hewn copper beech trees indicating the layout of the former administration building
- 9 Panoptikum, central surveillance room, symbolized by a cubic concrete sculpture
- 10 Site of the "insanity ward", used by the Gestapo from 1944
- 11 Depiction of the exercise yard complex. Concrete circles illustrate the individual yards. Columnar junipers symbolize the "yardbirds".
- 12 Circular indentation in the lawn to show the overall size of an exercise yard complex
- 13 Recreation of a former exercise yard where prisoners took solitary walks (original size)
- 14 Materials found on the site (slate block from the fountains in front of Berlin Zoo, red sandstone from Moltkebrücke, surplus natural stone paving, etc.)
- 15 Former weighing house
- 16 Star labyrinth by sculptors Gabriele Roßkamp and Serge Petit, made of surplus granite curbs and leftover stone from the storage yard
- 17 Climbing wall and sitting wall reminiscent of a key created by children and neighbours with the assistance of sculptor Bärbel Rothhaar
- 18 Former administrator housing
- 19 Passage from the sonnet "In Fetters" by Albrecht Haushofer inscribed on the preserved prison wall
- 20 Remains of the former 1910 laundry
- 21 White mulberry bushes in memory of the former Moabit mulberry plantations



Passage from the sonnet "In Fetters" by Albrecht Haushofer inscribed on the preserved prison wall



Entrance park Invalidenstrasse

