

Where was the concentration camp?

Take a look out the window. The “Katzbach” concentration camp was diagonally opposite on the third, fourth and fifth floors of the building on the other side of the courtyard. The inmates were not lodged in barracks but right in the factory building. The walls had holes in them, the windows no windowpanes. Instead they were gridded or walled up. The heating was broken. The SS had their lodgings right next to the inmates. That put the inmates under constant threat of attacks by guards.

The third floor housed the kitchen, the camp officer’s lodgings, the infirmary and the dining room. The inmates’ dormitory was on the fourth floor. It was furnished with double- and triple-tier beds arranged in four rows. There were not enough beds to go around. Many inmates slept on the floor; others slept two to a bed. They lay on sawdust and wood shavings or on bare boards. There were hardly any blankets. Owing to the broken windows and ceilings, the dormitory was extremely damp and partially flooded.

The sanitary facilities were also on the fourth floor, and insufficient. They consisted of long, grooved basins with a few faucets, of which only some worked. Warm water was rare. There were neither soap, towels, nor showers. Nor were there enough toilets for the number of inmates.

Owing to damages from bombing, part of the roof over the fifth-floor rooms was missing. The inmates referred to this area as the “terrace”. It was there that the roll calls took place. The roofed section of the fifth floor was used to store the bodies of dead inmates until they were fetched. Hanging executions also took place there.