

## POLICE, POLAND

# Hydrierwerke Pölitz

This now-defunct synthetic fuel plant was once a major cog in the Nazi war machine.

Constructed in 1937 in what was still considered Germany, this synthetic fuel manufacturing plant used high pressured hydrogenation processes to convert powdered lignite coal into liquid fuels. This included a good deal of high-grade gasoline. The process was called the Bergius process, named after its inventor and Nobel prizewinner, Freidrich Bergius. The plant was jointly owned by IG Farben, Rhenania-Ossag, and a German subsidiary of Standard Oil.

Throughout World War II, the plant also acted as a subcamp for the Stutthof, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück concentration camps, whose prisoners made up a majority of the plant's labor force. About 30,000 laborers were forced to work at the plant from 1939 to 1945. Around 13,000 died.

The plant suffered from at least 12 major air raids (the last one involved 250 bombers). After the war, the site fell into the state of decay seen today. This was made even more complete when the Red Army overran the site. The Soviet army removed any surviving technical parts of the plant and sent them back to the USSR.

The scale of the site is impressive. At its peak, the plant was producing a large amount of Germany's liquid fuels. Without this plant, Germany's initial success during WWII, particularly their invasion of Russia, would have been impossible.

## Know Before You Go

The site is not officially open to the public. It's gradually being overtaken by woodland and the interiors of the remaining structures are a bit unsafe. The structure is best admired from a distance.

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