

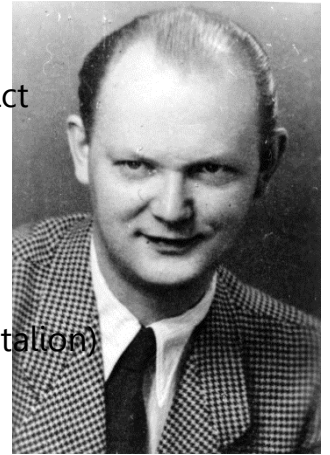
Notes on the folder:

The text passages are taken from a transcript of Heinrich Bunke's testimony before the Frankfurt/Main Regional Court. He himself was a defendant in this trial.

Some terms are highlighted. They are explained in the glossary on the last page. Spelling, grammar and punctuation errors have been taken from the original.

Short biography

Surname, first name	Bunke, Dr. med. Heinrich
Date/place of birth	July 24, 1914, Wohlde/District of Celle (Lower Saxony)
School education	A-levels, medical studies
Previous place of residence	Ratzeburg (replacement battalion)
Profession/former occupation	emergency doctor (junior doctor course)
mediated by	acquaintance
in Bernburg	from October 1940 to October/November 1941
Entry age	26
Activity after Bernburg	Organization Todt



Excerpt from the hearing before the Frankfurt/M Regional Court on June 11, 1963

"My name is Dr. Heinrich Friedrich Karl Bunke, I was born on July 24, 1914 in Wohlde, district of Celle, [...] I am a specialist in gynecological diseases, German, with no criminal record. [...] My parents, siblings, wife, and children are healthy. There are no known mental illnesses."

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"Then [after graduating from high school in 1934] I [...] did six months of compulsory national service near Wilhelmsburg, immediately followed by a year of military service in the motor vehicle division in Hanover. I left there as a non-commissioned officer in the reserves in order to formally take a semester off from medical studies at the University in Göttingen. During this semester, however, I only attended the university to take notes and tests. I did not attend any lectures.

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After being discharged from military service, I continued studying medicine. [...] So at the start of the war I had a total of 6 semesters, 4 of which were clinical semesters, plus all my certificates. So I belonged to the group that could get **an emergency license to practice medicine based on** the status of their current training."

"I had done two military exercises over the years, the so-called NCO exercise and the sergeant exercise. I couldn't quite finish the latter, I was two days late because the war broke out. So I was discharged early only to have to turn myself in the very next day.

I was sent to the reserve hospital in Rendsburg as a medical sergeant. I was there for maybe 6-8 weeks, then went to Kiel for a day, got my emergency medical certificate there and went back to Rendsburg."

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"Around this time I must have received the mentioned letter from the **Führer's office** . [...]

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I can no longer say who signed this letter. I received it at the time from the **typing pool**, if I'm not mistaken A, in a sealed envelope. In any case, this request came as a complete surprise to me.

On remonstrance:

It is true that I later learned that someone in the Führer's office had named me."

"This meeting in the Führer's office [...] was quite confusing for me as a young junior doctor and I can probably summarize today that I was a bit 'run over ' by these circumstances alone."

"I was now faced with a difficult decision. [...] If I accepted the proposal in Berlin, I would have the opportunity to work with experienced professors, I would have the chance to work academically and complete my education. Such an opportunity was certainly not to be expected in the military.

So I finally agreed. I had not the slightest thought that I could get involved in something that was somehow ' not right' . On the one hand, I had been told about an order from the Führer, and on the other, I had been made aware of two **ordinaries** who were clearly active in this context. It never occurred to me to do anything illegal. Even later, when I was working in Brandenburg and Bernburg, it never occurred to me to be active in a matter that was incompatible with the law. "

"As a rule, the institution sent its buses to the so-called intermediate institutions in the morning. However, if these were further away, the buses left the day before. However, this memory is very uncertain. They were buses as we knew them from the former Reichspost. I can no longer say whether the buses still had the old red color or whether they were painted differently. You couldn't see through the windows. I think they were closed, or maybe they were painted over. Usually three or four buses left at once and then returned after an appropriate time. If my memory doesn't fail me, a total of 50 sick people must have arrived on each such transport. It should not be forgotten that each bus also carried nursing staff and that a number of patients had to be transported lying down.

The physical condition of these patients was quite varied, ranging from good to in need of care. When I'm asked about the age groups, it's quite difficult to say after such a long time. I think the patients were between their mid-20s and old age. [...] As far as I remember, there were no pure 'malformations' among them. I cannot say how severe the cases of mental illness were. Firstly, the intervening period is too long, secondly, I was a novice in the field of psychiatric diagnosis at the time and lastly, I only saw these patients for too short a time to be able to make a judgment.

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The patients were led into the rooms, they were undressed and, as far as possible, their personal details were established. This was a matter for the nurses [...].

I spent the first 14 days standing behind Dr. Eberl and looking over his shoulder, so to speak. That's how I got to know my job. The doctor's main task here was to determine the cause of death to be used later. In other words, he checked which wrong cause of death should be used. This diagnosis had to be justified in subsequent correspondence, if one was found.

The sick people's papers came with them. At the top was a photocopy of the so-called registration form. We added the cause of death at the bottom left."

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"It was said that we had the right to defer individual patients from being killed. As far as I can see, however, the main focus here was probably on cases that had been treated incorrectly for bureaucratic reasons, i.e. when a completely different patient appeared or when there was a blatant misdiagnosis. However, in some cases I myself have deferred patients for scientific reasons. In one case, for example, there was a rare bone disease in addition to a mental illness, the observation of which was in the medical interest."

"According to my memory, the euthanization of the sick took about 3-5 minutes. I remember that the chief disinfectant opened the gas taps. I can't say whether Dr. Eberl did this once. However, I think this is possible because Dr. Eberl was a man who tried everything himself and did it himself. He also interfered in purely office matters, for example.

On remonstrance:

I never operated the gas tap in either Brandenburg or Bernburg. I therefore never allowed gas to flow into the so-called shower room in either of the two institutions for the purpose of killing the mentally ill or other people. - Nor did I give injections, tablets or powder to people in Bernburg or Brandenburg in order to cause their death. I am not aware of anything of this kind from either institution."

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"I noticed [...] the effect of the gas through a window in the so-called shower room. According to existing regulations, the people in this room had to remain lying there for another 50¹ -60 minutes under the influence of the gas. The gas was then extracted through **exhausters** and the dead were taken away. I never saw the bodies being taken out or the rest of the process. Only in Bernburg did I see individual corpses again. [...]

I soon brought up the subject in Brandenburg that I thought it would be irresponsible in the interests of science to leave so much patient material unused for scientific purposes. So I suggested dissecting the brains of individual corpses in order to make these brains available to the **Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research** [...]. This was not yet an urgent issue in Brandenburg because the necessary facilities were lacking. In Bernburg, however, when the institute was set up, I insisted that the necessary facilities be created immediately."

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"On remonstrance:

It is true that I signed the name 'Dr. Keller' on so-called **consolation** letters. When I am asked why I did not sign my own name, my recollection is that we were supposed to sign with a different name in order to remain anonymous. When I am asked why all this was kept so secret, why false causes of death were invented, why the population was not informed if everything was legal, I can only say that, if I remember correctly, it was explained at the time that the population should not be alarmed at the moment."

"I was of the opinion that Hitler was allowed to decide such things. Incidentally, at the time I was **inwardly** convinced that the comrades who had

¹ Number is not clearly legible. It could also be a 30.

to shoot at other soldiers or drop bombs on the population had a much heavier moral burden to bear than those who had to kill the mentally ill."

Source: Federal Archives / Ludwigsburg Department AR-Z 340-59 Letter Bub - Buu

What happened to Heinrich Bunke after his time in Bernburg?

According to his own statements, Bunke was no longer an employee within the "euthanasia" program from October or November 1941, i.e. after the first phase was stopped in August 1941. In July 1945, he was given an assistant position at the State Women's Clinic in Celle, trained as a specialist in gynecology and set up his own practice in 1951.

Bunke was arrested on April 12, 1962, but released a week later **under conditions**. This allowed him to continue practicing.

The trial before the Frankfurt/Main Regional Court began on October 3, 1966, and the verdict was handed down on May 23, 1967: **an acquittal**. The reason given was that he had not been aware of any wrongdoing.

In August 1970, the Federal Court of Justice overturned the verdict due to factual errors. Before the new trial could begin in December 1971, Bunke presented a medical certificate in July 1971 stating that he had suffered a serious, life-threatening heart attack and was no longer fit to stand trial.

On November 26, 1971, the proceedings against him were provisionally discontinued. Despite his alleged inability to stand trial, Bunke continued to run his gynecological practice and treat patients.

When Bunke was due to appear before the Frankfurt/Main Regional Court again on January 29, 1986, he submitted a confirmation that he was only able to be questioned once a week for two hours. On May 18, 1987, the Frankfurt/Main Regional Court sentenced him to four years in prison for aiding and **abetting** murder in at least 11,000 cases. On December 14, 1988, the Federal Court of Justice reduced the sentence to three years in appeal proceedings on the grounds that **accessory to murder** could only be proven for 9,200 people.

Bunke was released after 18 months in prison.

He died on September 16, 2001 in Celle.

Source: Bundesarchiv /Außenstelle Ludwigsburg AR-Z 344/59 Letter Bub - Buu

Glossary:

Bunke was only charged with **accessory to murder**. The judges were of the opinion that he had no personal interest in the murder of the people. He had only implemented the plans of the Führer's chancellery.

Dr. Eberl was the director of the "euthanasia" institutions in Brandenburg and Bernburg.

Exhausters are fans for sucking in or extracting gasses or dust.

The **Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Brain Research** (KWI), based in Berlin-Buch, was part of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. From Bernburg, 181 brains of victims of "euthanasia" were sent to the KWI.

The **Chancellery of the Führer (KdF)** was one of the party organizations of the NSDAP and was subordinate to Adolf Hitler. It was primarily concerned with processing petitions and requests for clemency to Hitler. From 1939, its tasks also included the organization of "euthanasia".

An **emergency license** is a license to practice medicine without having fulfilled all the criteria usually required for this. This was often the case in times of war.

Full professors are holders of a chair at a university.

The **Todt organization was founded in** 1938 and was responsible for the construction of protection and armament projects (e.g. defensive positions, bases or air-raid shelters for the civilian population).

Schreibstube is an old word for office.