

## Love between Enemies

*Love between Enemies* explores the forbidden relationships that formed between foreign prisoners of war and German women during the Second World War. From the desire to have fun to deep love commitments, this study examines the range of motivations that lay behind these relationships, tapping into new documents and drawing on thousands of court cases to offer a transnational analysis of personal relations between enemies. Highlighting gender roles, the contradictory reactions of the communities surrounding the couples, and the diplomatic tensions resulting from the severe punishments, this is a history of everyday life that throws light on this subversive aspect of intimacy in wartime Nazi Germany. Comparing the “transgressing” couples to other groups persecuted for their cultural or private choices, Raffael Scheck demonstrates how the relationships were silenced or justified in the postwar memory of prisoners, while the German women, who had been publicly shamed, continued to live with the stigma, and even illegitimate children, for the years that followed.

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*Western Prisoners of War and German  
Women in World War II*

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Raffael Scheck

Colby College



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*To the fifteen Soviet prisoners of war who saved the life of  
my grandfather, August Wache, in April or May 1945*

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While writing this book, I could not avoid thinking of my maternal grandfather, August Wache, who guarded prisoners of war (POWs) during World War II. He was born on August 31, 1906, as the eighth

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child of a landless laborer in a tiny village in East Prussia, very close to the German–Russian border and in one of the poorest regions of pre-1914 Germany (today in the southeastern corner of the Russian Kaliningrad exclave, not far from the Polish and Lithuanian border). August Wache experienced the Russian invasion in August 1914. When Russian soldiers arrived and asked him for a match, he feared they would burn down the village, as had happened in other places. But the Russians just made a fire in the central square to prepare cocoa taken from the village store (a scene also described, albeit in a different village, in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s great novel *August 1914*<sup>1</sup>). When August Wache saw the Russians retreat after the battle of Tannenberg a few days later, with many wounded, he felt sorry for them. He vividly remembered their sad faces, and he witnessed some Russians being hit by the shots of the pursuing German troops.

After the war, in which he lost a brother, August Wache became a gardener. He wanted to get a master’s degree in gardening, but there was no money for that. Finding no steady work in East Prussia, he moved to Berlin, but he remained unemployed or underemployed for many years there, too. During the Great Depression, he lived with one of his sisters, sleeping in a cubbyhole and looking every day for an opportunity to earn a few marks with random work. In 1934, he finally received employment by the still secretive German air force and was tasked with planting green foliage on top of air force bunkers for camouflage. His job allowed him to get married, to have a child (my mother), and to rent a small apartment in a working-class neighborhood of Berlin–Haselhorst.

When the war broke out, he continued working as a gardener for the air force. He did not have to fight because he was blind in one eye (a result of a kick in the face by a horse during his childhood). In early 1943, however, he was drafted into a guard unit and assigned to a work detachment of fifteen Soviet POWs on a nobleman’s estate northwest of Berlin. He realized that the prisoners were starving, and he secretly supplied them with peas from the barn of the estate. When one of the prisoners became sick, he took him to Berlin on the suburban commuter train, so that my grandmother could prepare her chicken soup for him – a risky act that would have led to severe punishment for all three. He sent my mother to the corner store to buy milk for the prisoner, and my mother was so honored by this task that she proudly told the lady running the store that she needed milk for a Soviet prisoner her father had brought home. My mother was sorely disappointed when the lady

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *August 1914* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 306.



admonished her never to say this in public, but nobody denounced my grandfather, and the prisoner recovered. On the last New Year's Eve of the war, an allied plane dropped a bomb in the courtyard of the estate, but the bomb did not explode. Together with volunteers among his POWs, August Wache loaded the bomb onto a hay cart and transported it to a nearby swamp. He received a medal for this action (which he threw away later during his flight). When the Red Army approached Berlin, the prisoners warned him that he would be killed by their troops if they captured him. The prisoners gave him their secret possessions – charms and food – and urged him to run away. He fled westward and became a British POW south of Hamburg, but he soon escaped and walked back to Berlin across the Soviet occupation zone because he wanted to know whether his wife and daughter were still alive. He found them in their apartment, which was undamaged except for the windows, which had been blown out by the bombs hitting houses nearby. They shared the apartment with two other families, refugees from eastern Germany.

What happened to the fifteen Soviet POWs is unknown. They may very well have ended up in the Gulag as alleged traitors. August Wache, like a number of guards who appear in this book, felt a humane duty to care for the POWs under his command, an attitude severely condemned by the Nazi authorities. In turn, the POWs saved his life.

# Abbreviations

AN	<i>Archives nationales</i> , French state archives, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine
BA-MA	<i>Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv</i> , German military archives, Freiburg im Breisgau
BAR	<i>Bundesarchiv</i> Bern, Swiss Federal Archives, Bern
BLHA	<i>Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv</i> , Brandenburg main state archives, Potsdam
BStA	<i>Bayerisches Staatsarchiv</i> , Bavarian state archives
CEGESOMA	<i>Centre d'études et de documentation guerres et sociétés contemporaines/Studie- en Dokumentatiecentrum oorlog en hedendaagse Maatschappij</i> , Center for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society, Brussels
DSL	<i>Délégation du Service de liaison avec les prisonniers de guerre</i> , Belgian commission for prisoners of war
HHStA	<i>Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv</i> Wiesbaden, Hessian main state archives
HStAD	<i>Hessisches Staatsarchiv</i> Darmstadt, Hessian state archive Darmstadt
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMI	<i>Italienischer Militärinternierter</i> , Italian Military Internee
KStVO	<i>Kriegsstrafverfahrensordnung</i>
LASH	<i>Landesarchiv Schleswig-Holstein</i> , state archives of Schleswig Holstein, Schleswig
NACP	National Archives College Park (Maryland)
NLA	<i>Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv</i> , state archives of Lower Saxony (Oldenburg and Hannover)
OKW	<i>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</i> , German High Command
OTAD	<i>Office des Travaux de l'armée démobilisée</i> , Office for the (Belgian) demobilized army

Abbreviations		xiii
PAAA	<i>Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes</i> , German Foreign Office archives, Berlin	
POW	prisoner of war	
RSHA	<i>Reichssicherheitshauptamt</i> (Reich Main Security Office), a central office of the SS	
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i> (storm troopers)	
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> (security service of the SS)	
SDGP	<i>Service Diplomatique des Prisonniers de Guerre</i> (Diplomatic Service for Prisoners of War)	
SHD	<i>Service Historique de la Défense – Division des Archives des Victimes des Conflits Contemporains</i> , archives for French victims of war, Caen	
StLA	<i>Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv</i> Graz, county archive of Styria	
STO	<i>Service du travail obligatoire</i> , mandatory labor service for France	
WStLA	<i>Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv</i> , Vienna city and country archives	

## Current Place Names

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Note: for an interactive map with all major German POW camps, see Moosburg online ([www.moosburg.org/info/stalag/laglist.html](http://www.moosburg.org/info/stalag/laglist.html))

Auschwitz – Oświęcim (Poland)  
 Bautsch (Sudetenland) – Budišov nad Budišovkou (Czech Republic)  
 Beuthen – Bytom (Poland)  
 Bielitz – Bielsko-Biala (Poland)  
 Bismarck (Memelland) – Žalgiriai (Lithuania)  
 Blechhammer – Blachownia Śląska (Poland)  
 Breslau – Wrocław (Poland)  
 Bromberg – Bydgoszcz (Poland)  
 Danzig – Gdańsk (Poland)  
 Eger (Sudetenland) – Cheb (Czech Republic)  
 Ehrenforst – Sławęcice, now part of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (Poland)  
 Elbing (West Prussia) – Elbląg (Poland)  
 Godullahütte – Godula (Poland)  
 Graudenz – Grudzyń (Poland)  
 Groß-Tychow – Tychovo (Poland)  
 Hagenau (Alsace) – Haguenau (France)  
 Hammerstein – Czarne Czluchowski (Poland)  
 Heydebreck – now part of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (Poland)  
 Heydekrug (Memel) – Šilutė (Lithuania)  
 Hugoslust – now part of Kędzierzyn-Koźle (Poland)  
 Kattowitz – Katowice (Poland)  
 Königsberg (Ostpreußen) – Kaliningrad (Russia)  
 Königshütte – Królewska Huta, now part of Chorzów (Poland)  
 Komotau (Sudetenland) – Chomutov (Czech Republic)  
 Lamsdorf – Łambinowice (Poland)  
 Leitmeritz (Sudetenland) – Litoměřice (Czech Republic)  
 Liegnitz – Legnica (Poland)  
 Marienburg – Malbork (Poland)

## Current Place Names

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Mechtal – Miechowice (Poland)  
Memel – Klaipeda (Lithuania)  
Neisse – Nysa (Poland)  
Neustettin – Szczecinek (Poland)  
Odrau (Sudetenland) – Odry (Czech Republic)  
Pless – Pszczyna (Poland)  
Posen – Poznań (Poland)  
Reichenau (Sudetenland) – Rychnov u Jablonce nad Nisou  
Reichenberg (Sudetenland) – Liberec (Czech Republic)  
Sagan – Żagań (Poland)  
Schubin – Szubin (Poland)  
Stettin – Szczecin (Poland)  
Stolp – Słupsk (Poland)  
Stuhm – Sztum (Poland)  
Teplitz-Schönau (Sudetenland) – Teplice (Czech Republic)  
Teschen – Český Těšín (Czech Republic)  
Thorn – Toruń (Poland)  
Trebnitz – Trzebnica (Poland)  
Troppau (Sudetenland) – Opava (Czech Republic)  
Znaim (Sudetenland) – Znojmo (Czech Republic)

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Major sites of military tribunals and courts mentioned in the text