

The Execution of Simone Michel-Lévy, Hélène Lignier and Noémie Suchet

The code groups below are the ciphertext of a message sent by SS-Gruppenführer Richard Glücks to KL Flossenbürg giving the order for the immediate execution of three French women prisoners.

Funkstelle:	Abgang:	Funk-
Abs. Dienststelle:	Tag: / / 4	Spruch Nr.:
	Zeit:	30
An:	Eingang:	
	Tag: 5 / 4 / 45	
qzs 30 - qru	Zeit: 2056	

Kopf: 1914 - 157 - KPY SBI -

SRRFM DWWMY YXKWB RXKIE
PQXJI TLUHW ETOAE MZSUQ
PCVHA AGIGP LEQEG ZKDRQ
YLSLW JPTOJ ULQHX MBNZR
JPQTW WLNAZ IREKC FEHRS
OTKKT LVJWT CMHWU QLIKX
MZXCR WCPRO **TH**DAO FPYVW
FWFGR CTPBK FZEUB QH

The message was composed at 19:14 on 5 April 1945 and received at KL Flossenbürg at 20:56. The message number in red indicates that it is an incoming message.

The Enigma concentration camp key (KL-Maschinenschlüssel) for 5 April 1945 is given below together with a few of the message keys for this day's incoming messages. The message key for message Nr. 30 is indicated in red.

Enigma Keys for: 05.04.1945

UKW : B
W/O : 354 (with rotation)
Stecker : AV, CI, DF, EO, GT, JP, LW, MS, NX, QY
Rings : GER

Message keys:

No:	Part:	1st.	CY	Indicator:	Start:	Stop:
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group

W/O for 12:00 - 17:29: 543 / **ERG**

29		UHYKT 133	DXC GDM	ATT AZW / IZW ICL
30		SRRFM 137	KPY SBI	QYL QDS / UDS UEM
31		EFSEB	FUY TPL	YGW ZLP
32		TNBVR	MTF HYR	UXM UCA
33		AROOP	NUN ZSQ	NJF ONN
34	1t1	WDXZU 129	WLW RGW	SZY SEX / YEX YIO

34 2t1 SJYYQ DEX UAF GRP GSC

05.04.1945 - Nr. 30 - SRRFM - 1914 - 157 - KPY SBI

EXEKUTION DER WEIBL X FRANZ X HAEFTL X SUCHET X
 SUCHET X LIGNIER X LIGNIER X UND X MICHEL X BERY X
 MICHEL X BERY VOM X RSHA X GENEHMIGT X
 SOFORT VOR ANGETRETENEN X SDO X
 CYUV
 DURQFUEHREN X GLUECKS X

The concentration camp messages use a large number of abbreviations. 'X' is used as full stop and as the point in abbreviations. Furthermore, it is used to indicate quotation marks to set out the name of persons and places. The four-letter group CYUV is an indication for the cipher operator to set one of the Enigma rotors (the leftmost wheel) to the letter U before he continues to decipher the rest of the message. Therefore this group is not part of the message text. Other common abbreviations are Q that is used to represent CH and SZ which stands for β – double-S ligature.

*Exekution der weiblichen Französischen Häftlingen Suchet,
 Lignier und Michel-Bery vom RSHA genehmigt.
 Sofort vor angetretenen SDO durchführen.
 Glücks.*

English translation:

The execution of the French female prisoners Suchet,
 Lignier and Michel-Bery approved by RSHA.
 Immediately carry out the execution in front of
 the preventive detention prisoners of this camp.
 Glücks.

The execution order gives the name of Michel-Lévy as Michel-Bery; in the plaintext her name has even been repeated twice to guard against transmission errors. It was initially suspected that she had tried to hide the Jewish sounding name Lévy, even if there seems to be no Jewish blood in the Michel-Lévy family. However, a recent communication from Mr. Jean Michel-Lévy, who has tried to establish her family history, makes clear that on the list of prisoners being transported to Ravensbrück and on the documents for her later transfer to Holleischen her name is correctly spelt as Michel-Lévy. Therefore, the most like explanation for the use of Michel-Bery in this text is that it is the result of a clerical error.

We do not know what SDO means and with three non-repeated letters it is always possible to have at least one single letter corrupted. The three ciphertext letters are OTH and they have been marked in red in the message. One guess at the meaning of SDO is *Schutzhäftlingen des dortigen Ortes*. If the last letter was received in error as H (Morse: di di di dit – 4 dots) instead of S (Morse: di di dit – 3 dots) the plaintext word will be: SDK. This could mean: *Schutzhäftlingen des dortigen Konzentrations-lagers*. This seems the better solution. That it probably refers to the camp prisoners is indicated by two other execution orders sent by SS-Gruppenführer Glücks to KL Gross-Rosen. The first is a message sent by teleprinter (telex) on 24 August 1944.

ORANIENBURG Nr. 8457 24.8.44 1919 -KOE-
 AN DEN KOMMANDANTEN DES KL. GROSS-ROSEN.
 SS-STURMBANNFUEHRER HASSEBROEK,- O.V.I.A.: -
 ''ALS GEHEIME REICHSSACHE ZU BEHANDELN.--

BETR.: EXEKUTION DES RUSS. SCHUTZHAEFTLINGS PIOTR
 P O N O M A R E N K O, GEB. 27.12.25 IN KURSK. --

BEZUG.: DORT. GEH. TGB. NR 38/44 VOM 16.4.44.---

DER RFSS HAT MIT SCHREIBEN VOM 16.8.44 - B.NR.
 358/44 II ADS. FE. GRS.- DIE GENEHMIGUNG ZUR EXEKUTION
 DES P O N O M A R E N K O ERTEILT.--
 DIE EXEKUTION DES P. IST NACH DEN VON HIER ERGANGENEN
 BESTIMMUNGEN VOR DEN ANGETRETENEN HAEFTLINGEN DES
 DORTIGEN LAGERS UNTER BEKANNTGABE DES STRAFGRUNDES
 DURCHZUFUEHREN.--
 EXEKUTIONSPROTOKOLL IST MIR VORZULEGEN.--

SS- WVH- CHEF D- GEZ. G L U E C K S +++

The other execution order is in the form of a letter from SS-Gruppenführer Glücks to SS-Sturmbannführer Hassebroek, the camp commander of KL Gross-Rosen, dated 19 July 1944. The complete order will not be repeated here only the final instructions on how the execution should be performed.

*Die Exekution der Vorgenannten ist nach den von hier ergangenen Bestimmungen vor den **angetretenen Häftlingen des dortigen Konzentrationslagers** durchzuführen.*

Exekutionsprotokoll ist mir vorzulegen.

The form and style of these orders are more or less the same and it is to be expected the abbreviation SDO or SDK carries a similar meaning.

The source for these two execution orders is:

Tuchel, Johannes. 1994. *Die Inspektion der Konzentrationslager 1938 – 1945. Das System des Terror* [The Inspectorate of the Concentration Camps 1938 – 1945. The System of Terror]. Berlin: Edition Hentrich, pp. 109–110.

Funkstelle:	Abgang:	Funk-
Abs. Dienststelle:	Tag: / / 4	Spruch Nr.:
	Zeit:	130
An: npv	Eingang:	
Kr	Tag: 15 / 4 / 45	
	Zeit: 1841	

Kopf: 1811 - 111 - QDA UTP -

ERZGB XYVKY QKRNU PITNT
 XLQTR ECDZS JTYHI OTIEM
 ATDJI GVPTJ IGWFJ ZIMVN
 TMEXQ IKYQC TSJDK OHNZP
 WLFSX AZYCY GWBKW GJSCZ
 JEQUH YNCGM R

The code groups above are the ciphertext of a message sent by the commander of KL Flossenbürg, SS-Obersturmbannführer Max Kögel, from Flossenbürg at 18:11 on 15 April 1945. It carries the priority code “Kr” (urgent) and was transmitted 30 minutes later at 18:41 from the radio station at KL Flossenbürg. The message number in blue indicates that it is an outgoing message.

The Enigma concentration camp key (KL-Maschinenschlüssel) for 15 April 1945 is given below together with a few of the message keys for this day’s outgoing messages. The message key for message Nr. 130 is indicated in red.

Enigma Keys for: 15.04.1945

UKW : B
 W/O : 342 (with rotation)
 Stecker : BI, CP, DH, EO, FK, GL, MX, NR, QS, UV
 Rings : NVG

Message keys:

No:	Part:	1st. group	CY	Indicator:	Start:	Stop:
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W/O for 12:00 - 17:29: 234 / GNV

128	1t1	AVBPH	94	LEQ WES	MDU MHO / THO	TMG
128	2t1	KOSEB		SDF YGA	OAN	OBE
129		KCRPT		DIN CLJ	HMR	HQN
130		ERZGB		QDA UTP	NPV	NTC
131		CPHMK		HLN RNZ	QDV	QJB
132		PBWMB		SAG ATA	YHB	YPM

15.04.1945 - Nr. 130 - ERZGB - Kr - 1811 - 111 - QDA UTP

DIE KOMMANDANTUR X KL X FLOSSENBUERG X MELDET
 DEN VOLLZUG DES X DORT X FT X V X FUENF X VIER X
 VIER FUENF X EINS NEUN EINS VIER X UHR X KOEGEL X

*Die Kommandantur KL Flossenbürg meldet
 den Vollzug des dortiges Funktelegram von
 5.4.45, 1914 Uhr.
 Kögel.*

English translation:

The command of KL Flossenbürg reports the
 execution of the order in your radio telegram of
 5.4.45 at 19:14.
 Kögel.

Message Nr. 130 refers to a radio message sent from Oranienburg on 5 April 1945 at 19:14. This message is message Nr. 30 with the execution order for Simone Michel-Lévy, Hélène Lignier and Noémie Suchet. Because the message is sent relatively late in the day and with the priority code “Kr” (urgent) it strongly indicates that the execution took place some time this day, 15 April 1945. However, the date that is officially recorded as the execution date for Michel-Lévy, Lignier and Suchet is 13 April 1945. We do not know on what evidence this date is based, if it is on written evidence like surviving execution protocols from KL Flossenbürg or if it is on witness evidence. If the execution did take place on 13 April, it is very unusual that the completion report was sent two days later. The camp commander, SS-Obersturmbannführer Max Kögel, sent several seemingly less important messages on both the 13th and 14th April. This shows that it cannot have been the unavailability of the camp commander or the lack of time that could have delayed the completion report. That for some reason it was forgotten to report in time can of course not be excluded.