

Johannes Julius Behrends (1896–1965)

Overview

Johannes Julius Behrends, known throughout his life as “Hanns,” was born on 25 January 1896 in Wesermünde/Geestemünde, a port district of Bremerhaven in northern Germany. He was evangelisch-lutherisch, reflecting the mainstream Protestant culture of his North German upbringing.

Hanns was the only child of Heinrich Behrends, born in Leer in Ostfriesland, and Marie Behrends (née Warneke), born in Geestemünde. Both parents came from the North Sea coast, linking the family to the maritime commerce of Bremerhaven and East Frisia.

According to family accounts, his father Heinrich moved in Bremen’s theatrical and artistic circles and was homosexual. He is said to have worked as a businessman and architect. Surviving documentation is sparse, and his birth, marriage, and death dates remain unestablished.

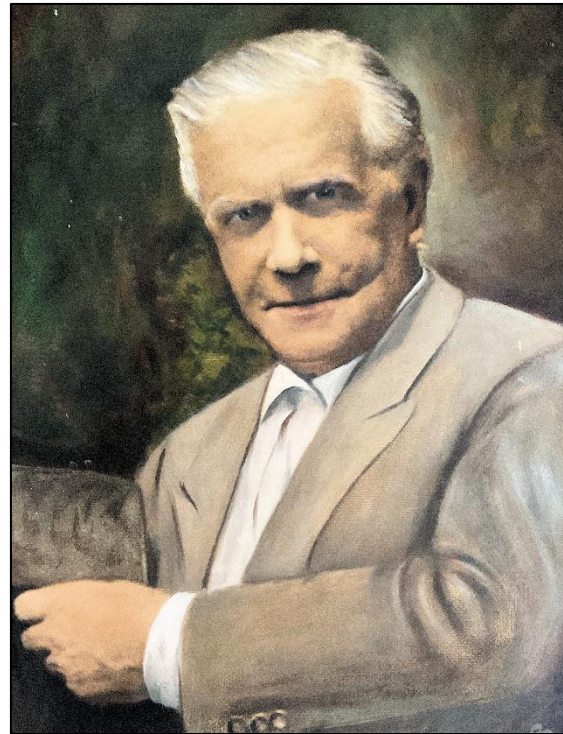
Family recollection holds that Heinrich and his male partner died by suicide by hanging, and that Hanns, as a child, discovered them. These details have not been confirmed in archival records and may never be. The manner of Heinrich’s death, his sexuality, and the social climate of the period combined to create a difficult legacy for his son. Hanns’ 1945 prisoner-of-war documentation confirms that his mother, Marie, died before the end of the Second World War.

Hanns served in the First World War and faced the hardships common to soldiers on the Western Front.

He practised continuously as a lawyer and notary on Sylt from 1926 until his death in 1965. In 1933 he purchased a section at the corner of Nicolai- and Victoriastraße from the widow Theunis and built a combined residence and legal office, later described in the local press as a *schmuckes Haus* (“handsome house”). The house stood as a local landmark for nearly eight decades before it was demolished in 2010 to make way for a modern apartment complex.

Hanns professional path combined everyday notarial work and property matters with occasional cases that placed him in politically difficult circumstances during the Nazi era.

Archival records show a complex pattern of affiliations and conflicts that reflect the political realities of the period: early Party membership followed by withdrawal, disagreements with local officials, periods of surveillance, a brief detention in 1944, forced-labour assignments, wartime conscription, and a lengthy denazification process that ultimately confirmed his right to continue practising.



DR. HANNS BEHREND'S
RECHTSANWALT UND NOTAR
WESTERLAND/SYLT
TELEFON 438

In 1928 Hanns married Gertrud Ida Helene Jäger (born 8 December 1908, Geestemünde, Bremerhaven). They raised four children in the home they built in Westerland and later purchased an old Frisian house in Morsum.



Left: Residence and Office at Victoriastraße 6, Westerland, Sylt
Right: The summer house at Ruar Ört 26, Morsum. The children are Jochen, Jana and Jost Behrends, grandchildren of Hanns Behrends.

Early Life, Education and Legal Formation (1896–1920s)

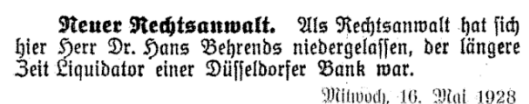
Hanns' early education followed a conventional path for a young jurist of his generation. From 1902 to 1914 he attended the humanistisches Gymnasium in Bremerhaven, receiving a classical education in languages, history, literature, and philosophy. After the First World War he undertook university legal studies, passing the Referendar examination (junior legal civil-service exam) in Celle in 1921, completing a doctorate in law at Göttingen in 1923, and achieving the Assessor qualification (full legal civil-service status) in Berlin in 1925.

During his student years he joined the Marburg fraternity Alemannia, a traditional *schlagende Verbindung* (duelling fraternity). The duelling scar (*Schmiss*) visible in surviving photographs reflects participation in the ritualised Mensur fencing that shaped the social networks and culture of many young jurists of his generation. He later recorded an ehrenvoller Austritt ("honourable withdrawal") from the fraternity.

After completing his legal studies in Marburg and Göttingen, Hanns spent several years in the German Fisheries Administration, with postings in Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Berlin. He also served as a liquidator at a Düsseldorf bank, a role requiring legal, financial, and administrative expertise. This work formed the final stage of his urban career before he chose to establish himself permanently on the North Sea coast.



Top: Engagement notice.
Bottom: Birth notice of daughter Moiken Peters.



"New lawyer. Dr Hans Behrends has established himself here as a lawyer; he was for a long time the liquidator of a Düsseldorf bank. Wednesday, 16 May 1928."

From 1926 to 1928 he established himself in Westerland as Rechtsanwalt und Notar (lawyer and notary), where his notarial seal and legal availability became essential to property conveyancing, probate, and the civil matters of a rapidly expanding tourist economy.

World War I Service

Hanns belonged to the wartime generation mobilised as teenagers and young men in the final phase of the Kaiserreich. Born in 1896, he entered military service in late 1914. He joined the 7th Company of Reserve Infantry Regiment 7 (7./R.7.R.214), which operated under the 23rd Reserve Corps (23. Reserve-Armeekorps) on the Western Front.

The 23rd Reserve Corps was raised rapidly at the outbreak of the war. Known as a “Student Army,” it was heavily staffed by young *Kriegsfreiwillige*—

D deutsch Nr.	V (Vor- name) F (Famili- name)	Regiment usw., Compagnie usw.	Dienst- grad	Vornamen (Rufname unterstrichen und Familiennamen oder Erkennungsmarke	Tag und Jahr		Geburtsort, Kreis, Provinz usw.	Reli- gion	Bürger- licher Beruf	a. Sämtliche Vornam- (Rufname unterstrichen) und Familienname, b. Wohnort, Kreis, Provinz usw., der Frau, oder Bemerk., dass der Kranke ledig ist			a. Sämtliche Vornam- b. Stand oder c. Wohnort, Kreis des Vaters		
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367.	D	7. R.7.R.214 23.R.A.K.	Ar. frei.	Hann Behrends	25. 1. 96	24. 9. 14	Opfhamünde Jannover	E.	Stud. jur.	a. ledig. b.	a. b.	befreit f. 13.			

university students and senior school pupils who volunteered en masse in August 1914. The corps was thrown into the First Battle of Ypres, where catastrophic losses among these inexperienced volunteers gave rise to the sombre Langemarck Myth (Langemarck-Mythos), the legend that young German volunteers charged to their deaths near Langemarck in November 1914 while singing “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,” transforming a military disaster into a story of patriotic martyrdom.

By early 1915 the regiment was entrenched in the same sector north of Ypres. After the shattering losses of late 1914, the regiment settled into the frozen, waterlogged misery north of Ypres. Continuous shellfire had destroyed the region’s drainage network, turning the low-lying ground into stagnant, contaminated mud. Disease spread rapidly through the ranks, and waterborne infections proved as dangerous as enemy fire.

This environment cut Hanns’ front-line service short. Stricken with severe typhus and acute intestinal complications (*Darmkatarrh*), he was moved step by step down the German medical-logistical chain—from the regimental aid post behind the Ypres line, through the divisional dressing stations, and into Reserve-Feldlazarett 91 at Moorssele—before being evacuated further to Kriegslazarett I in the Passionist monastery at Kortrijk (Courtrai), the principal hospital hub behind his sector of the German Fourth Army. The hospital ledger notes that he had been vaccinated for typhus (*Fleckfieber*) three times.

His condition was grave enough to require prolonged treatment and eventual removal from the war zone, first to a convalescent home in Exloo in the neutral Netherlands, then to Reserve-Lazarett I in Jülich, Germany.

Thirty years later British prisoner-of-war forms from 1945 note the same diagnosis—“chronischer Darmkatarrh nach Typhus”—a reference to his 1915 hospitalisation in Kortrijk. The permanent damage to his digestive system altered his medical profile for the rest of his life, repeatedly shielding him from front-line conscription during the Nazi era until the final, desperate mobilisation of the Second World War.

The Warisch Defence, Early Party Membership and Local Antagonism (c. 1930)

In late 1930 Hanns joined the NSDAP (Nazi Party). His membership card records entry on 1 November 1930, shortly after the founding of the Westerland *Ortsgruppe* (local Party

supervision as foreign-owned property, a category considered politically suspect under wartime regulations. Although the work was legally routine, the combination of British ownership, suspected Jewish connections, and wartime controls made it a politically sensitive assignment subject to close oversight.

Alongside these administrative duties he undertook defence cases that increasingly brought him into conflict with Party officials and the Gestapo. Among them was the representation of a young soldier before a military court in Strasbourg, a politically sensitive case that required him to travel across occupied territory. The soldier was Alsatian, a conscript from a region whose loyalty the regime doubted, and defending him was regarded with suspicion, ensuring the case attracted the attention of the security services.

In contrast to his professional work, the purpose of Hanns' political affiliations seemed primarily to satisfy bureaucratic expectations of Party officials and National Socialist-leaning colleagues and customers than rather than any genuine ideological commitment. A statement made at the time by government building inspector Carl A. Ruhnke sheds light on this. The so-called P.T. Reserve or SA Pioneer Reserve on Sylt—nominally responsible for dyke protection during storm tides—was, in Ruhnke's words, little more than occasional gatherings "with beer and tea," with only two brief training sessions between 1939 and 1941. Hanns was "a rare guest," frequently excusing himself from attendance, and "appearing in civilian clothing was, so to speak, a criticism without words." He "never performed any kind of service." Ruhnke's testimony underscores how nominal these memberships were, and how little Hanns participated in the organisations listed in his file.

Arrest, Wife's Intervention and Forced Labour Assignment (March 1944)



Gertrud Behrends (08 Dec 1908 – 03 May 1987)

In March 1944 the Gestapo arrested Hanns "with a two-man detail and a large car" after intercepting a letter in which he criticised the Party, expressed doubts about the war, and commented unfavourably on leading local officials. He was detained in the small cell in the Westerland town hall, where Dr Frithjof Marcussen examined him. His wife, Gertrud, immediately travelled off the island to the Gestapo headquarters in Kiel. After being turned away several times, she was eventually admitted to the director of the Gestapo for Schleswig-Holstein. He told her that her husband had long been known to the authorities for his criticism of the regime's armament policy, for refusing to support the war, and for showing an "attacking spirit" toward senior Party members. The arrest, he said, was not solely

because of the intercepted letter but the culmination of concerns that had been building since 1940.

Gertrud persisted. When she threatened to take the matter to Berlin and report on the conduct of the Gestapo officers on Sylt, the tone of the meeting shifted. She proposed that, if the authorities believed her husband required "re-education," he would accept an assignment in an armaments factory, and she would take a convalescent female armaments worker into their home. The director accepted this arrangement. A release order was issued, and Hanns was free to return home.



Left: The Westerland Rathaus on Andreas-Nielsen-Straße — the street named for Mayor Andreas Nielsen, the SPD leader and former concentration-camp detainee who later supported Hanns Behrends during the post-war investigations.

Right: The Gestapo regional headquarters in Kiel — the *Staatspolizeistelle Kiel*, seat of the Gestapo director for Schleswig-Holstein, where Gertrud Behrends secured the order for Hanns's release after repeated refusals.

As *Arbeitsverpflichtung* (forced-labour assignment) Hanns was ordered to undertake work in the armaments sector at Suhl in Thuringia and in Eckernförde. Although the assignment was coercive and carried a degree of public humiliation, it allowed him to return to his family and further damaged his standing with the Party and the security services, who thereafter treated him with heightened suspicion.

To understand why the Gestapo acted as they did in 1944, it is necessary to look more closely at the defence work that had drawn their attention over the preceding years and formed the core of their suspicions.

Defence Work and Notable Cases (1941–1944)

Throughout the early 1940s Hanns continued to act as defence counsel in politically sensitive cases involving soldiers and civilians accused of *Wehrkraftzersetzung* (undermining military morale), defeatism, or other offences that fell under the expanding jurisdiction of military and special courts. These cases often involved individuals who had made careless remarks, expressed doubts about the war, or fallen foul of local Party officials. His willingness to defend such clients, and his habit of arguing procedural and evidentiary points vigorously, kept him in the rifle scope of the *Kreisleitung* and the Gestapo.



One of the most consequential cases of this period involved the Keitum farmer Ludwig Borstelmann, who had been arrested on 15 October 1941 and charged under the *Heimtückegesetz* (“malicious statements law”) for “offenses against the Treachery Act” and refusal to give the Hitler salute.

Hanns collected the evidence on Borstelmann's behalf, and the Special Court of Schleswig-Holstein acquitted him on the application of the public prosecutor. The victory proved short-lived, and Hanns' hope of returning him to his wife, Sophie, and their two young sons was not realised. The Gestapo arrested Borstelmann again shortly afterwards and deported him first to Buchenwald concentration camp. From there he was transferred to Groß-Rosen concentration camp,



Ludwig Borstelmann and his “Stolperstein” - a small memorial stone. A street in Keitum is named after him.

where he died on 9 October 1942. It was widely believed on Sylt that the entire family had been taken into a concentration camp following his rearrest, but post-war compensation files show that Sophie and the two boys survived and applied for reimbursement as victims of political persecution—a fact unknown to Hanns at the time. He later recalled that this episode, and the Gestapo's conduct surrounding it, left a lasting impression on him and reinforced his determination to defend those targeted for political reasons.

Another ideologically charged case that Hanns handled in the final phase of the war involved the young naval artilleryman Harald Bickenbach, a reserve officer candidate born in 1926.

In July 1944 Bickenbach came under investigation for remarks he had made among his comrades. According to the indictment order issued at Heiligenhafen on 28 September 1944, he was accused of attempting to “weaken or undermine the will of the German people for armed self-assertion” by expressing contempt for the Party and the institutions of the state. He had reportedly said that he had “few points of contact with the National Socialist state,” that both National Socialism and Bolshevism were “dictatorial propaganda constructs,” and that Goebbels should concern himself with the welfare of the people rather than propaganda. He also criticised the Party's conduct in the aftermath of the 20 July assassination attempt on Hitler and told a comrade that Party membership was something one undertook “out of compulsion,” since one could no longer advance without it.



A young Kriegsmarine recruit, photographed in a Schiffsstammabteilung training unit during the Second World War.

These statements, made in the tense and punitive atmosphere after the failed plot, were treated as a serious offence under §55 of the Wartime Special Penal Code. The case was politically explosive. The authorities regarded it as evidence of ideological unreliability within the armed forces at a moment when the regime was increasingly intolerant of dissent. Hanns' decision to defend Bickenbach placed him once again in the crosshairs of the Gestapo, who already viewed him with suspicion for his earlier defence work, his refusal to support the war, and his perceived “attacking spirit” toward senior Party officials.

The Borstelmann and Bickenbach cases thus became part of the cumulative dossier the Gestapo had been building on Hanns since 1940. They reinforced the Gestapo's view of him as an “anti-Nazi” lawyer who repeatedly involved himself in politically sensitive matters, defended those accused of undermining the war effort, and refused to align himself with the expectations of the Party.

When Hanns was arrested in March 1944, the Kiel Gestapo director explicitly told Gertrud that the intercepted letter was not the sole reason for the action: it was the culmination of years of concern, and cases like Bickenbach's formed part of that pattern.

Although he had rejoined the NSDAP in 1937 and received a new membership number, his continuing conflicts with local Party officials culminated in a second formal expulsion in 1944, meaning he ended the war not as a Party member but as someone the Party itself had cast out.

Conscription Pressure, Medical Status and Political Context (1944–1945)

Hanns' Second World War service cannot be understood without reference to his longstanding medical condition. Since 1915 he had suffered from chronic intestinal damage following typhus contracted on the Western Front. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s he was classified as wehrunfähig (unfit for military duty), a status that protected him from conscription even as the war intensified.

By 1944, however, the political climate on Sylt had shifted. His arrest in March, the forced-labour assignment that followed, and the growing hostility of local Party officials placed him in a vulnerable position. Surveillance reports described him as politically unreliable, and his defence of individuals accused of defeatism further antagonised the authorities. These factors set the stage for the events of early 1945, when Party pressure overrode medical and military objections and led to his conscription.

In early 1945 the island command and Party officials clashed over Hanns' status. The island command valued him in his role as the island's notary and as a defender before the naval war court, while county and Party officials pressed for his conscription. Despite the command's objections, and despite his longstanding classification as unfit for active duty owing to illness and multiple operations, Party pressure prevailed. His conscription was ordered in early February 1945 by the Kreisleiter (district Party leader).

Korvettenkapitän Trippen: *"the island commandant placed great value on Dr Behrends remaining on the island for all legal representation"*

Kreisamtsleiter Mätzen: *"And we place great value on Dr Behrends becoming a soldier."*

Deployment, Capture, and POW Registration (February–September 1945)

His Erkennungsmarke (identity tag) was issued through the *Sammel-Batterie der schweren Flak-Ersatz-Abteilung 62* (collection battery of the heavy anti-aircraft replacement battalion). British prisoner-of-war documentation completed after his capture records him as an Unteroffizier (Corporal) serving within the 8th Flak Division, the Luftwaffe formation responsible for anti-aircraft defence in northern Germany. Within that division he belonged to the 13th Flak Regiment, specifically its 117th Battalion, 1st Battery—a frontline heavy anti-aircraft unit deployed around Bremen during the final months of the war.

He served from 5 February to 7 April 1945 under Oberleutnant (First Lieutenant) Hillnecker. On 25 April 1945 British forces of the 2nd Army pushed through Bremen's last defensive positions as German resistance collapsed under sustained pressure. The remaining Flak and infantry units were overrun in rapid succession, and by the following day the city had surrendered to the advancing elements of the 21st Army Group. Hanns was taken prisoner on 25 April 1945 during this fighting. World War II officially ended in Germany with the unconditional surrender of the Nazi armed forces on 8 May 1945.

His POW registration card was issued on 3 May 1945 upon arrival at Camp 2232 in the Kluisbergen/Renaix region of Belgium—one of the British "agricultural camps"—

STAMP OF P/W CAMP OR MEDICAL UNIT.		2232 PoWCamp
Date of Arrival at Camp or Medical Unit		
Surname	BEHRENDTS DR JUR	
Christian Names	HANNS	
Date of Birth	25. 1. 1896	
Place of Capture	BREMEN	
Date of Capture	25. 4. 45	
Particulars on Identity Disc.	9873 SCHW.	
Rank	UFFZ.	
Number or Name of Division	8. FLAK DIV.	
Unit or Ship, Number of Regiment.	13. REGT.	
Battn., Coy., Squad., Batty.	1. BATTR. 117. BATT.	
Nationality	DEUTSCH	
Occupation	RECHTSANWALT	
Religion	EVANGEL.	
Signature of Prisoner of War	<i>Hanns Behrends</i>	
Medical Report (if sick or wounded). Recent wounds should be recorded even if the prisoner of war has not been in hospital or has been discharged from hospital. Amputations should be entered, the extent of amputation being indicated.	CHRONISCHER DARMKATH. NACH TYPHUS.	

established only one day earlier. The camp was under British military administration, with guard duties carried out by Belgian Fusilier battalions attached to the 21st Army Group, including the 57th and 52nd Fusilier Battalions. Intended to absorb the sudden influx of German prisoners in the final days of the war, the camp housed several thousand men; by November 1945 records list a population of 7,166. Accommodation at the outset consisted of large canvas tents, with more permanent structures introduced only gradually.

His registration card records his occupation as Rechtsanwalt (lawyer), his home address as Victoriastraße 4, Westerland, and his wife Gertrud as next of kin. British medical officers noted the same diagnosis recorded in 1915: “chronischer Darmkatarrh nach Typhus.”

He was released from captivity on 7 September 1945.

“At a time when it almost looked like a great achievement to send political opponents to concentration camps — I myself was sent to the Neuengamme concentration camp — you openly, and with success, represented Mr Borstelmann of Keitum before the Special Court, and after the Gestapo nevertheless took Borstelmann to the concentration camp despite his acquittal, you supported his family. You would almost have gone the same way yourself if your brave wife had not pulled you out. One only realises what all this means when one considers that the concentration camp was almost certain death. In public opinion here, you were increasingly regarded as an opponent of the Nazi Party. I can well believe that you joined in good faith at the beginning. The propaganda was indeed seductive. But all supporters have been thoroughly cured — you certainly among them.

Mayor Andreas Nielsen—24 October 1945

Retained (beibehalten wird)

Behrends may be approved a/lawyer and notary public
(decided by 5 votes; one vote cast for dismissal).

Post-War Practice, Reputation and Death (1947–1965)

How Hanns and Gertrud managed in the intervening seventeen months with four children aged two to fifteen is unknown, though life for any family on Sylt in those years, marked by shortages and uncertainty, cannot have been easy.

Hanns, reinstated, resumed his legal and notarial work on Sylt. Municipal correspondence and the denazification file show that island civic leaders continued to regard him as an important figure in the reconstruction of civil life, property settlement, and legal administration. His early Party membership and later pragmatic affiliations remained part of the record, but the weight of local testimony and the documented Gestapo attention were decisive in the review boards' final assessment.

In the years that followed, he continued to serve as Westerland's principal notary and one of its most experienced legal practitioners. His practice handled the steady flow of property conveyances, probate matters, and civil disputes that accompanied the island's post-war recovery and the rapid expansion of tourism. Local authorities, civic organisations, and private clients relied on his expertise.

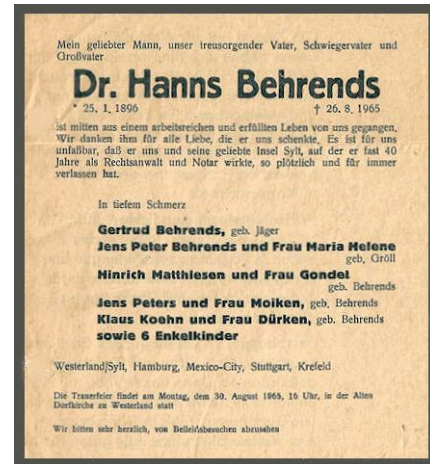
The administrative texture of his post-war practice is visible in surviving municipal files. A directive of 21 September 1948 shows the city administration consulting him on the financial and procedural handling of the Volksküche (public kitchen). He was informed that the rent for September would no longer be paid by the city.

Alongside his professional work, Hanns devoted considerable time to voluntary service. His great passion was gardening, and for many years he was active in the local beautification and tourism committees, contributing to the creation of green spaces and to efforts aimed at improving traffic and noise conditions in Westerland. He was involved in civic projects such as the establishment of the seawater swimming pool, and he also undertook work for the scientific and tax departments of the German Taxpayers

Association. In his later years he spent increasing time at the family house in Morsum, where the garden became the centre of his daily life. His family noted that he also spent increasing time drinking more red wine than was probably good for him—a habit they viewed with concern, and one perhaps shaped by the pressures and experiences he had carried with him from earlier years.

Hanns died suddenly on 26 August 1965. His family's obituary described him as a beloved husband, father, and grandfather, and noted that he had served the island of Sylt as a lawyer and notary for nearly forty years.

Gertrud outlived Hanns by more than two decades, remaining closely attached to the family home he had built in Westerland. In her later years she struggled with periods of emotional strain that were not widely discussed at the time, and in 1987 she died by suicide after accumulating medication and taking an overdose. These circumstances, like those surrounding the death of Hanns' father many years earlier, come from family recollection and have not yet been corroborated by any surviving official record.



Timeline

- **25 January 1896** — Birth of Johannes Julius (“Hanns”) Behrends in Wesermünde/Geestemünde.
- **1902–1914** — Attends the humanistisches Gymnasium in Bremerhaven.
- **1914** — Enters military service. Assigned to 7./Reserve-Infanterie-Regiment 214, 23. Reserve-Armeekorps.
- **1915** — Contracts typhus and severe intestinal illness in the Ypres sector. Hospitalised at Kriegslazarett I “Passionistenkloster”, Kortrijk (Courtrai). Convalescence in Exloo (Netherlands). Chronic intestinal damage becomes permanent.
- **1918–1921** — Post-war legal studies; *Referendar* examination in Celle (1921).
- **1923** — Doctorate in law, University of Göttingen.
- **1925** — Assessor qualification in Berlin.
- **1926** — Establishes legal and notarial practice in Westerland, Sylt.
- **1928** — Marries Gertrud Ida Helene Jäger.
- **1 November 1930** — Joins NSDAP shortly after founding of Westerland *Ortsgruppe*.
- **31 October 1931** — Resigns from NSDAP after Warisch defence case and conflict with local Party officials.
- **1933–1937** — Increasing political pressure on legal professions. Administrative affiliations recorded (SA Reserve; later Allgemeine SS). Continues legal practice; defends politically sensitive cases.
- **1 May 1937** — Rejoins NSDAP with new membership number.

- **1939–1943** — Continues defence work before military and naval courts. Increasing friction with local Party officials and Gestapo.
- **March 1944** — Arrested by Gestapo for critical remarks about the Party and war. Wife Gertrud intervenes; he is released after several days. Forced-labour assignment imposed in the armaments sector, including periods in Suhl in Thuringia and in Eckernförde. Family required to house a convalescent armaments-factory worker.
- **1944–early 1945** — Heightened surveillance; considered politically unreliable. Island command values his legal expertise; Party officials push for punitive conscription.
- **February 1945** — Despite objections from naval command, conscripted under Party pressure. Assigned administratively to schwere Flak-Ersatz-Abteilung 62.
- **5 February – 7 April 1945** — Serves under Oberleutnant Hillnecker.
- **25 April 1945** — Captured by British forces during the assault on Bremen.
- **3 May 1945** — Registered at POW Camp 2232. British medical officers note chronic intestinal damage dating from 1915.
- **7 September 1945** — Released from captivity.
- **1945–1947** — Initial refusal of licence by British Military Government. Strong defence by Mayor Andreas Nielsen and other civic leaders. Denazification committee concludes he is “much more to be regarded as an opponent of National Socialism.”
- **14 February 1947** — Reinstated as lawyer and notary.
- **1947–1965** — Resumes full legal and notarial practice on Sylt. Continues to serve as principal notary during post-war reconstruction. Consulted by municipal authorities on administrative and financial matters.
- **26 August 1965** — Dies suddenly. Obituary notes nearly forty years of service to the island.

People named in the Denazification files and other sources:

- **Baurat Bauer** — Recipient of Hanns' February 1944 letter; cited in the exclusion proceedings.
- **Harald Bickenbach** — Naval artilleryman defended by Hanns in 1944.
- **Else Bickenbach** — Mother of Harald; thanked Hanns for his defence efforts.
- **Theunis Bonßen** — Widow from whom Hanns purchased the Nicolai-/Victoriastraße plot in 1933.
- **Ludwig Borstelmann** — Defendant in a politically charged case; acquitted 1942; later died in camps.
- **British Military Government (Special Branch)** — Initially recommended removal of Hanns' licence based on Party membership.
- **Helmut Dilthey** — Provided supportive testimony during denazification.
- **Dr. Frobe** — Landrat who overheard Party court proceedings.
- **Feddersen** — Lawyer in Niebüll referenced by Kreis manager Katzen.

- **Dr. Ernst Grote** (b. 27 November 1881) — Physician in Westerland; NSDAP member no. 343 332 (re-entered 22 May 1936); active in the Ortsgruppe.
- **Gestapo Director (Kiel)** — authorised Hanns' conditional release; cited long-standing political unreliability.
- **Gestapo Officers (Westerland)** — Arrested Hanns in March 1944.
- **Dr. Harald Gantzel** (b. 26 May 1899, Keitum) — Physician; NSDAP member no. 381 978 (joined 1 December 1930); identified in the denazification file as "Sturmführer (2nd Lieutenant) Gantzel"; stated he had not seen Hanns at Party meetings.
- **Otto Franz Heilmann** (b. 17 October 1886) — Architect living at Nordmarkstraße 5, Westerland; NSDAP member no. 8 473 839 (joined 1 January 1941) and participant in the P.T. Reserve (Polizeiliche Technische Reserve); recalled hearing local remarks that "Dr Behrends must now be thrown out."
- **Oberleutnant Hillnecker** — Commanding officer during Hanns' 1945 Flak service near Bremen — late-war emergency mobilisation of older reservists.
- **Mr Hernich** — Operator of the Volksküche in 1948 municipal correspondence.
- **Katzen** — Kreisgeschäftsführer (District manager); compared Hanns unfavourably to lawyer Feddersen and participated in the Party-administrative pressure that contributed to the 1944–45 actions against him.
- **Kreisleiter (Südtondern)** — Issued the 26 February 1944 Party exclusion order.
- **Kreisamtsleiter Matzen** — Senior district Party official in Südtondern; involved in attacks on Hanns after the Warisch case, initiated Party-court proceedings in 1944, and pressed for Hanns' punitive conscription in 1945.
- **Andreas Nielsen** (b. 20 October 1883, Morsum, d. 5 October 1958, Westerland) — Mayor of Westerland (1946–1951); SPD; former concentration-camp detainee; defended Hanns post-war.
- **Niebüll / Kreis Südtondern Denazification Committee** — Concluded Hanns was "more to be regarded as an opponent of National Socialism."
- **Rudolf Ostermann** — Jeweller/watchmaker; testified about the inactive P.T. Reserve.
- **Hans Petersen** — Provided supportive testimony during denazification.
- **Provincial Review Board (Schleswig-Holstein)** — Approved reinstatement in February 1947.
- **Carl A. Ruhnke** — Government building inspector; described the P.T. Reserve as inactive.
- **Karl Schültz** (b. 13 Oct. 1886, Westerland) — Maurermeister (master mason); NSDAP member no. 316 886 (joined 7 October 1930); co-signatory of the 1944 declaration supporting Hanns Behrends during the Party court proceedings initiated by Kreisamtsleiter Matzen.
- **Dr Kurt Struve** — Teacher; provided supportive testimony during denazification.
- **Strakosch-Konstantin** — Likely referring to the actress Leopoldine Konstantin (widowed Strakosch), who built a house in Westerland in 1923 and whose property Hanns Behrends was required to manage during the war.

- **Spiro** — English property owner whose affairs Hanns administered. The property was placed under wartime trusteeship as Feindvermögen (enemy/alien property).
- **Storck** — Naval artilleryman referenced in the Bickenbach indictment.
- **Korvettenkapitän Trippen** — Naval officer; testified conscription was punitive.
- **Unnamed armaments-factory worker** — required by Gestapo to be housed by the Behrends family as a condition of Hanns' release.
- **Warisch** — Jewish furrier trading at Friedrichstraße 6 in Westerland (the town's main commercial street), defended by Hanns Behrends in 1930; the case provoked hostility from local Party activists.
- **Ernst Wiedermann** — Local Party activist involved in attacks on Hanns after the Warisch case.
- **Elizabeth Bergner** — Jewish Actress whose property was classified "enemy property". Hanns was appointed trustee.
- **Hane Wrede** — Acting Ortsgruppenleiter mentioned in Hanns' statement.

Endnotes/Sources

1. **Bundesarchiv–Militärarchiv (BA-MA), Freiburg.**
Kriegslazarett I "Passionistenkloster", Kortrijk (Courtrai), patient ledger entries for *Johannes Julius Behrends*, 1915. Includes diagnosis of typhus and *Darmkatarrh*, vaccination record, and transfer to Exloo.
2. **Reserve-Lazarett I Jülich, Krankenbuch, 1915.**
Secondary medical entry confirming service start date (1914) and convalescence pathway.
3. **British Military Government, POW Camp 2232 (Bremen), Prisoner Registration Card, 3 May 1945.**
Lists occupation (*Rechtsanwalt*), home address (Victoriastraße 4), next of kin (Gertrud Behrends), and medical note: "chronischer Darmkatarrh nach Typhus."
4. **NSDAP Membership Card, Berlin Document Center (BDC).**
Membership entry 1 November 1930; resignation 31 October 1931; re-entry 1 May 1937 with new number.
5. **Party Court / Kreisleitung Westerland correspondence, 1930–1931.**
Includes statements by Hanns Behrends and *Gemeindeinspektor* Karl Schulz regarding the Warisch case and subsequent attacks by *Ortsgruppenleiter* Wiedermann.
6. **Declaration of Carl A. Ruhnke, Regierungsbaumeister, 1946.**
Describes the SA Pioneer Reserve on Sylt as a nominal, non-operational group; confirms Behrends' minimal participation.
7. **Gestapo Flensburg, Arrest Record, March 1944.**
Detention for critical remarks about the Party and war; release conditions including forced-labour assignment and requirement to house a convalescent armaments-factory worker.
8. **Statement of Gertrud Behrends, 23 October 1945.**
Details circumstances of arrest, her intervention at Gestapo office, and conditions imposed on release.

- 9. Marinekommandantur Sylt, Service Note by Korvettenkapitän Trippen, January 1945.**
Objection to Behrends' conscription; describes call-up as punitive and contrary to island command's needs.
- 10. Wehrmacht Personnel Office, Erkennungsmarke Register, schwere Flak-Ersatz-Abteilung 62, 1944–45.**
Administrative assignment and identification number.
- 11. British Capture Report, Bremen, 25 April 1945.**
Unit listed as "8. Flak-Div., 13. Rgt., 117. Abt., 1. Batterie"; confirms date and location of capture.
- 12. Mayor Andreas Nielsen (SPD), Letter of Attestation, 24 October 1945.**
Testimony regarding Behrends' defence of political opponents, his own imprisonment in Neuengamme, and Behrends' near-arrest.
- 13. Statements of Dr Kurt Struve, Dr Frithjof Marcussen, and Helmut Dilthey, 1945–46.**
Support for reinstatement; attest to Behrends' defence of politically targeted individuals.
- 14. Denazification Committee, Niebüll / Kreis Südtondern, Recommendation, 21 June 1946.**
Concludes Behrends is "much more to be regarded as an opponent of National Socialism."
- 15. Provincial Review Board, Schleswig-Holstein, Decision, 14 February 1947.**
Approves reinstatement as lawyer and notary.
- 16. Stadt Westerland, Verwaltungsakte, 21 September 1948.**
Correspondence regarding *Volksküche* rent and municipal consultation with Behrends.
- 17. Family Obituary, Sylter Rundschau, 28 August 1965.**
Notes sudden death and nearly forty years of service as lawyer and notary.
- 18. Personal Papers of the Behrends Family (private archive).**
Includes photographs, correspondence, and unpublished notes relating to early life, wartime experiences, and post-war practice.
- 19. Secondary Literature (Contextual Works).**
Used for contextualisation of units, institutions, and legal frameworks; no direct claims about Behrends. Examples include: – Works on the 23rd Reserve Corps and the "Langemarck" myth – Scholarship on denazification in Schleswig-Holstein – Histories of Sylt during the Third Reich and immediate post-war period

Dr. Hanns Behrends †

Gestern in den Morgenstunden setzte ein Herzschlag dem Leben von Rechtsanwalt und Notar Dr. jur. Hanns Behrends ein Ende, nachdem das Leiden sich bereits vor einem halben Jahr angekündigt hatte, er stand im 70. Lebensjahr. Wieder einmal war's eine harte Hiobsbotschaft für die, die ihn noch am Vortage scheinbar so rüstig und beweglich, wie man ihn nicht anders kannte, gesehen und mit ihm gesprochen hatten. Am Vormittag hatte er noch Termine wahrgenommen und nachmittags in seinem Büro gearbeitet.

Hanns Behrends stammte von Bremerhaven, wo er auch sein Abitur bestand. Im Jahre 1914 begann er mit dem Rechtsstudium an Marburg, doch meldete er sich sofort nach Kriegsausbruch freiwillig, den Krieg überstand er gut, das Studium wurde in Marburg und Göttingen fortgesetzt. Er war dann eine Reihe von Jahren in der Fischereiverwaltung Köln, in Düsseldorf und Berlin tätig. Es war wohl ebenso Flucht aus der Großstadt wie ihm aus seiner Küstenheimat überkommene Liebe zur Nordsee und den Inseln, als er sich im Jahre 1926 in Westerland niederließ. 1928 holte er sich seine Lebensgefährtin aus Bremerhaven hierher, im Jahre 1931 entstand das schicke Haus mit Wohnung und Praxis in der Victoriastraße. Im zweiten Weltkrieg wurde Dr. Behrends gegen Ende noch Soldat und geriet für kurze Zeit in englische Gefangenschaft.

Vorbildlich pflegte Hanns Behrends seinen Garten, aber diese Liebe übertrug er auch auf seine Nachbarschaft im weitesten Sinne, sie ließ ihn zum Vorsitzenden des Verschönerungsausschusses im Fremdenverkehrsverein werden. Mit in erster Linie war es sein Werk, wenn Westerland zunehmend eine „grüne“ Stadt mit netten Anlagen und vielen sehenswerten Vorgärten wurde. Zahllose Vorschläge wurden verwirklicht und frühzeitig sah er auch den Weg, den Westerland mit der Zeit zum Heilbad nahm, so forderte er schon Jahrzehnte vor der Verwirklichung die Errichtung eines Hallenbades mit Nordseewasser. Insbesondere waren auch die Verkehrsprobleme sein Steckenpferd mit der Triebfeder der Lärmbekämpfung. Als Mitglied der Wissenschaftlichen und Steuerrechtlichen Abteilung des Bundes der Steuerzahler hat der Verstorbene wertvolle Dienste geleistet.

Hier wird man auch die Motive suchen müssen, die Hanns Behrends vor einigen Jahren in Morsum in einem alten Bauernhaus den Sitz für den Feierabend finden ließen. Der erwartete Lebensabend in dieser Beschaulichkeit war ihm nicht vergönnt, so mag es ihm ein Trost sein, daß die Anwalts- und Notariatspraxis mit dem geliebten Garten in den Händen der Familie bleibt und in seinem Sinne weiterbestehen sollen.

Ihren Verletzungen erlegen

Ist jetzt Frau Krüger, die sie kürzlich bei einem Verkehrsunfall, der sich am Trift bei der Abzweigung zum Güterbahnhof ereignete, erlitt. Wie es zu diesem Unfall hatte kommen können, ist immer noch nicht ausreichend geklärt.

Dr. Hanns Behrends †

In the early hours of yesterday morning, Dr. Hanns Behrends, lawyer and notary in Westerland, passed away due to heart failure. With him, Westerland loses a man who had been closely connected with the town for decades and who had earned great respect through his professional work and his civic engagement.

Born in Bremerhaven, he completed his Abitur there. In 1914 he began studying law in Marburg, but his studies were interrupted by his military service in the First World War. After the war he entered the fisheries administration, with postings in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Berlin.

In 1926 he settled in Westerland. Here he built his home and established his legal practice on Victoriastraße. During the Second World War he again served as a soldier and was later held for a time as a prisoner of war in England.

His great passion was gardening. For many years he was active in the local beautification and tourism committees, where he worked tirelessly for the improvement of the town. He played a leading role in the creation of green spaces and in addressing traffic and noise problems. Among the projects in which he was involved was the establishment of the seawater swimming pool. He also carried out valuable work for the scientific and tax departments of the German Taxpayers Association.

In recent years he lived in Morsum, where he devoted himself to his garden and to his family.

Anlage E.

Erklärung von Frau Gertrud Behrends
geb. Jäger Westerland.

Ich bin niemals in der Partei und Frauenschaft gewesen. Als mein Mann im März 1944 von 2 Gestapobeamten abgeholt wurde, bin ich nach Kiel zur Geheimen Staatspolizei gefahren. Nach dreimaligem Abweisen wurde ich endlich dem Direktor der Gestapo vorgelesen. Er sagte, mein Mann wäre schon lange bekannt, nämlich durch Kritik an der Aufrüstung, keinen Einsatz für den Krieg, aber Angriffsgeist gegen führende Leute der Partei und gegen die Partei. Mein Mann wäre nicht nur wegen des Briefes an Baurat Bauer, sondern aus allen diesen Gründen verhaftet, und deren könne er nichts ändern. Ich sagte darauf, dann würde ich nach Berlin fahren und dort über die Haltung der Gestapobeamten auf Sylt das berichten, was mir gute Bekannte in Westerland berichtet hätten. Zum ersten Male während unserer Unterhaltung sah mich der Gestapochof an. Ich glaube, er überlegte, ob er mich festnehmen sollte. Ich musste das Zimmer verlassen. Eine Stunde wartete ich auf dem Gang. Dann wurde ich wieder hereingeholt. Die Unterhaltung war jetzt freundlicher. Ich wagte, ein Angebot zu machen, und sagte, wenn er meinte, dass mein Mann "erzogen" werden müsste, würde mein Mann einen Einsatz in einer Rüstungsfabrik machen. Ich würde während der Zeit eine Arbeiterin aus einer Rüstungsfabrik zu uns ins Haus nehmen und verpflegen, damit sie sich erholen könne. Dieser Vorschlag wurde angenommen. Mein Mann hat in Suhl in Thüringen und in Eckernförde gearbeitet. Für unsere Familie war das ein Glück. Wir bekamen meinen Mann zurück, welcher hier schon abtransportiert war. Westerland, den 23. Oktober 1945.

gez. Frau Gertrud Behrends
geb. Jäger.

**Statement by Mrs. Gertrud Behrends, née Jäger,
Westerland**

I was never a member of the Party or the Women's League. When my husband was taken away by two Gestapo officers in March 1944, I travelled to Kiel to the Secret State Police. After being turned away three times, I was finally admitted to the director of the Gestapo. He said that my husband had long been known to them—namely for his criticism of rearmament, for refusing to support the war, but for showing an attacking spirit toward leading members of the Party and toward the Party itself. My husband had not been arrested only because of the letter to Building Councillor Bauer, but for all of these reasons, and he could do nothing to change that. I replied that in that case I would go to Berlin and report there about the behaviour of the Gestapo officers on Sylt, as good acquaintances in Westerland had told me. For the third time during our conversation, the Gestapo chief looked at me. I believe he was considering whether to arrest me. I had to leave the room. I waited for an hour in the corridor. Then I was called in again. The conversation was now friendlier. I dared to make an offer and said that if he believed my husband needed to be "re-educated," my husband would take on an assignment in an armaments factory. During that time, I would take a female worker from an armaments factory into our home and provide for her so that she could recover. This proposal was accepted. My husband worked in Suhl in Thuringia and in Eckernförde. For our family, this was a blessing. We got my husband back, who had already been prepared for transport away from here.

Westerland, 23 October 1945

Signed: Mrs. Gertrud Behrends
née Jäger.

Attached report to the special questionnaire.

I never practiced any political activity.

1931 I became a member of the party for the first time, I retired again in the same year.

I had attended to the interests of the Jewish fur salesman Warisch, who is expected to return from America soon, in an offence suit. For this reason some party members as the then Ortsgruppenleiter Dr. Grote Westerland and Fritz Wiedemann Westerland showed much enmity to me. I had pleaded for the truth only and the Jew did get his right. The criticism of my acting induced me to retire from the party. After my retirement I was summoned before an arbitration committee, which excluded me. I did not enter a protest because I had retired by own resolution.

1934 I became SA expectant, 1937 party expectant, 1939 party member. The so called service in the SA reserve was composed some hours of attendance on a few evenings with following card playing and drinking.

My relations to the „leading men“ of Sylt have been so, that I was looked at with very much distrust, this was the usual treatment of every so called intellectual. I never made a speech which would have been obvious. During the war the acting Ortsgruppenleiter Hans Wrede Westerland told me, that they had no confidence in me except in professional matters.

1936 they published my name in the „Stürmer“ because I was a customer of the Jewish commercial firm Grünfeld, Berlin.

1944 I have been excluded from the party again. A copy of the decree is enclosed. According to the decree my behaviour had shown clearly, that I could never be a Nationalsozialist at all. In a letter, which I had written to Baurst Bauer Westerland, I had stated, that certain persons, who were real Nazis, consider the recklessness to be the foundation of the community spirit.

After a 3 hours examination by the Gestapo they told me that I was ripe.

A short time before this I had defended the farmer Ludwig Borstelsmann of Keitum at the special court of Schleswig Holstein; he has been accused of an offence against the „Heimtückegesetz“. I collected the evidence on the behalf of the accused and Borstelsmann was acquitted on the application of the public prosecutor. My hopes of bringing him back to his wife and to his two boys, who were minors, were not realized. The Gestapo arrested him again, some time later he died in a concentration camp as a result of disordered circulation. I have never been able to keep silence about this experience with the Gestapo. In many disciplinary cases before the naval court in Westerland I had defended young and old soldiers, charged with alleged undermining of the war effort, both as officially appointed and as freely chosen counsel for the defence. This also was known to the Gestapo. On behalf of a young Alsatian I even travelled as far as Strassbourg to take part in the proceedings of a military court. The Gestapo knew, that I administered English owned property and in fact I was to a certain degree responsible for the economic interests of the house owners Spiro and Strakosch Konstantin; this also created enmity.

After my exclusion from the party the Gestapo arrested me. I was taken to a cell in the cellar of the townhall in Westerland, there I had to stay, even when hundreds of bombers flew over the town, the door remained locked, nobody cared for a father of 4 children. My wife travelled to Kiel at once to see the chief of the Gestapo. There she succeeded to have my arrest being cancelled, I was ordered to work in ammunition factory. Without the energy of my brave wife I probably would have never returned home; she has also been appointed for the administration of the English owned property during the war.

I was forced to enter a protest against my exclusion from the party otherwise I would have lost my office as notary and the admission as lawyer, I would not have been able to support my family. In the party court of Niebüll I was treated like an accused. The Kreis manager Metzen referred to me and to the lawyer Peddersen of Niebüll as being both the same scoundrels; „you have fear in the bones“ the chairman said to me.... the Landrat Dr. Fröbe hearkened at the door and heard it. My exclusion has been cancelled then, but I was threatened to be excluded a third time, if I would not become active in the party. The Sturmführer Gantzel declared that he had not seen me at any party meeting since 1936 with one exception during the war.

Though I am 50 of age and I have been a.v. (3 C) only, that means not fit for military service, the party ordered me to be called in (not the Wehrdienst), so I had to do active service with the heavy anti aircraft guns. The commander of the Island has tried hard to have it cancelled to have at least one notary left on the island but it was in vain, the chairman Metzen declared that even if the military authorities want me to be preserved as defender for the war court, the party wants me to become a soldier, they did not care if the last lawyer left the island or not.

1944 I was forbidden to act as gratuitous legal adviser for the poorer part of the population, this was a great disadvantage to them as I was the only one here, the Amtsgericht Westerland was closed on the 25th April I became prisoner of war (British) from where I returned on Sept. 7th 1945.

Translation of the German Document (28 September 1944)

Annex K.

Excerpted copy.

Heiligenhafen, 28 September 1944.

Bill of Indictment

The naval artilleryman (reserve officer candidate) Harald Bickenbach, born 10 November 1926 in Berlin, etc., is charged with being sufficiently suspected of having, in July 1944 and thereafter, publicly attempted to weaken or undermine the will of the German people for armed self-assertion.

Bickenbach has, among his comrades, repeatedly expressed himself negatively about the Party and state institutions, and in doing so stated, among other things, that he had only few points of contact with the National Socialist state and was not yet a National Socialist. National Socialism, he said, had been drummed into the Germans through constantly repeated propaganda, but it consisted only of phrases that could not be proven. Goebbels too merely persuaded but did not convince. The Wehrmacht wanted nothing to do with the Party, and National Socialism and soldiering had nothing to do with one another.

Regarding the perpetrators of the assassination attempt of 20 July 1944, he said that one could hardly blame them for what they had done, since they were actually the military leaders, and not a National Socialist who had made himself into the highest officer. The events of 20 July were only the logical consequence of a clear development.

In reference to a Party speaker, he said: „What does this Party bigwig want here,“ and declared: „The more insignificant the organisation, the more flamboyant the uniform“.

He asked the naval artilleryman Storck what kind of functionary he was in the Party. When Storck replied that the term „functionary“ sounded so Bolshevist, Bickenbach answered that it was probably more or less the same thing. He also expressed the view that there was too much coercion in Germany; one had to allow other political views as well. They worked with coercion because they could not convince people.

(Offence punishable under §5 of the Wartime Penal Code.)

For the commanding authority:

The investigating officer.

[signed]