

PRORA THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Planned 'Strength Through Joy' holiday resort, large-scale barracks for GDR army, future beach resort

A project by Prora Solitaire and DenkMALProra. For more information and reports by contemporary witnesses, visit www.denkmal-prora-solitaire.de



Prora stands as a symbol of Germany's turbulent and eventful history over the past near-century. Plans by the National Socialist regime envisaged Prora as the location of one of the biggest holiday resorts in the world, destined for use by the 'Aryan community'. However, the eight blocks did not progress beyond mere shells. After the Second World War, the Socialist dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic used much of the remaining structures as a large-scale barracks carefully screened from the public eye; it would play a significant role in the history of the GDR and, at international level, in the 'battle against global imperialism'.

After German reunification the site fell into decay for many years before the first residential and holiday apartments were completed in Block II from 2013 onward. Prora Solitaire opened the first hotel in Prora in 2016. Prora has been a state-recognized health resort since 2018 and is currently undergoing development into a Baltic coastal resort. The seven information pillars opposite Block II were erected as a joint project by Prora Solitaire and DenkMALProra. They trace the history of use and transformation undergone by the individual buildings. For more information and reports by contemporary witnesses, visit www.denkmal-prora-solitaire.de.

- 1936 **First construction phase:** the foundation stone was laid for the KdF sea resort on Rügen. The National Socialists planned to construct a total of five vast seaside resorts on the Baltic coast, to be executed by their leisure organization, 'Kraft durch Freude' (Strength Through Joy). These plans were aimed at capturing the leisure time of the German people while at the same time monitoring their activities. Actions designed to further social wellbeing were designed to encourage visitors' approval of the National Socialists' policies, which would eventually culminate in wars of conquest and acts of genocide.
- 1937 The draft plans of the KdF resort won a Grand Prix at the Paris World's Fair. The architecture of the resort largely reflected contemporary trends, incorporating developments from the 1920s.
- 1938–1939 Construction of the original eight blocks. Only the foundations of the planned communal facilities were built. The shells of seven blocks and of the buildings along the southern perimeter of the ceremonial arena were completed.
- 1945–1949 The building shells were partly demolished and looted; the most southerly block and part of the unfinished northern perimeter of the ceremonial arena were blown up, as were individual parts of the development to the north. Block II was demolished for use as construction material.
- 1949–1955 **Second construction phase:** demolition was halted and an infantry training college was opened for almost 1,000 men. After increased staffing, this was converted into a mixed emergency police department in 1950. During the Cold War, five blocks were rebuilt as a large-scale Stalinist-style military barracks to house up to 19,000 troops. The Kasernierte Volkspolizei (Barracked People's Police, KVP), a paramilitary organization which later became the Nationale Volksarmee (National People's Army, NVA), was deployed to suppress the people's uprising in Berlin on 17 June 1953.
- 1956 Foundation of the Nationale Volksarmee (National People's Army, NVA) from the Kasernierte Volkspolizei (from 1952). Deployment of the 29th Infantry Regiment, later the Motorisiertes Schützenregiment (Motorized Rifle Regiment, MSR-29) of the 8th Motorized Rifle Division (8. MSD). The regiment occupied what is today Block II, and later also Block IV and part of Block V. Block II received the greyish-brown roughcast plaster finish that characterized the complex up to the third construction phase.
- 1957–1969 Block II became a centre of military training for party and state functionaries and reservist training for students. Although the NVA was a 'voluntary' army up to 1962, young people were heavily pressured to join its ranks. In 1961, MSR-29 was deployed to provide security for the construction of the Berlin Wall. The tough military drill in Prora was summed up by a three-word saying among recruits: "Drei Worte genügen, nie wieder Rügen!" (Three words suffice, never again Rügen!)
- 1970–1990 The last remains of the MSR-29 moved out, freeing up space for the Technische Unteroffiziersschule (Technical NCO School), founded in 1969 in Block III and later the Militärtechnische Schule (Military Technical School). Over the next two decades the block housed various faculties of the school, which occupied the buildings between the rocket training centre at the northern end and military music school at the southern end. These faculties were Tank Engineering, Auto Mechanics, Chemical Services and Communications and Military Engineering, together with their accommodation facilities. Many young people signed up to a minimum of three years' military service in order to be able to study, and completed specialist qualifications here. The school for middle-ranking military-technical squads trained specialist soldiers, conscripted and professional non-commissioned officers, and later also cadets.
- 1990–1992 The West German armed forces took over the complex on 3 October 1990; the location was then abandoned as West German troop numbers were reduced during the 1990s.
- 1996 Prora was classified as a historic monument, ending the debate over demolition of the complex.
- 2006 After approval by the German Bundestag, Blocks I and II were purchased by property developer Ulrich Busch.
- 2007–2012 Building rights were granted in the form of a new development plan and award of planning permission for Blocks I and II; the German heritage protection commission approved the addition of balconies.
- 2013 **Third construction phase:** refurbishment works began, funded by private investors in Prora. Block II became the blueprint for all further refurbishment.
- 2016 Prora Solitaire opened the first hotel operation in the modern Prora complex.
- 2018 Prora received the status of state-recognized health resort.



Shell of the KdF Rügen beach resort, view from north to south (approx. 1940).



Block II after demolition and looting, view from north to south (approx. 1950).



The Technische Unteroffiziersschule (Technical NCO School), from 1979 the Militärtechnische Schule (Military Technical School), expanded to become a college with ten faculties. As a 'bulwark in the Cold War', Prora was not officially shown on maps. This section from a rare secret map shows the designation of 'Kaserne' (Barracks).



Block II, here still the ruined barracks that made Prora such a sombre place (2011).



Block II during its transformation in 2014.



Block II, now gleaming and modern, shortly before completion (2018).

Picture sources: 1: Prora Solitaire; 2: Archive of Hans Schack; 3: SLUB / Deutsche Fotothek; Abraham Pisarek; 4, 5: MTS Erich Habersath; 6, 7, 8: DenkMALProra.