

FOREWORD BY SIMON WIESENTHAL



Auschwitz has become synonymous for the biggest crime of all mankind and is well documented. Auschwitz is the site where the planned and organized genocide took place; its victims were not buried, but burnt and their ashes spread over the fields in the vicinity.

In Auschwitz, at least one and a half million innocent people of many nations died, 90 percent of them Jews. Human language is too poor to describe all those cruelties that the inmates - men, women and children - had to face and go through every day. They were not only killed in the most atrocious way, they also die from starvation, and numberless human beings had to work hardest under unbelievable conditions until they died from exhaustion.

Four years of Auschwitz mean the realization of a deeply inhuman ideology which exterminated people by means of industrial methods after they had been selected according to "racial principles".

Today, the remains of the camp cannot give an overall insight into what happened there to hundreds thousands of people anymore. The young generations, who never had to face a German concentration camp, can hardly believe, and even less understand, what cruelties the Nazis committed in Auschwitz as well as in other similar places. They are unbelievable in their dimensions and brutality, but they happened!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, followed by the printed name "Simon Wiesenthal" below it.

Simon Wiesenthal

FOREWORD BY THE
AUSTRIAN **C**AMP
COMMUNITY **A**USCHWITZ
AND THE INTERNATIONAL
AUSCHWITZ **C**OMMITTEE

What effect can a presentation of an exhibition, showing an image of Auschwitz which students had when they were there, have? Which value does Auschwitz represent in the Internet?

The "World Wide Web" has remained uncontrollable so far and thus is an important medium for Neonazis, right-extremists and revisionists. Users can get information about technical details how to construct bombs or can support undemocratic ideologies which call for destabilization of democracy.

"Auschwitz - Final Station Extermination" was an important exhibition; therefore, it's only a logical consequence that the issue should become a milestone within the analysis of the Third Reich and the NS-extermiation policy. The Internet should not belong to revisionists only. Both historians and survivors of the concentration camps must not be afraid of using the computer when talking about the past. The Internet is a very important didactic source and auxiliary.

Today, Auschwitz is too often seen as a part of the past, as something which doesn't hurt anymore, since the generation of the eye-witnesses is dying out and because we have other problems. But many of these problems can only be solved by talking about the past and taking responsibility for it. The world wide renaissance of extreme right tendencies in politics, society, economy and culture did not occur in a vacuum. The great German poet Bert Brecht said that the womb where it all came from is still fertile. He said so after the end of the

Third Reich, well knowing that the past is still alive. The steady confrontation with one's own, tragic history is necessary in order to recognize antidemocratic and ant emancipating tendencies in time - and in order to warn. If the death of at least one and a half million Europeans in Auschwitz - the majority of them Jews and Gypsies, but also political and social opponents - had any sense, then is the sense to warn. Knowing what once happened in Auschwitz, nobody can say anymore that he hadn't known what did not go on, nor can he forget what would happen if democracy was destroyed and people stigmatized and persecuted.

Just like the sword of Damocles, Auschwitz hangs above us all. In order to not let history repeat itself, the study of Auschwitz is necessary - as a synonym for the biggest crime of all mankind. Only those who take responsibility for the past and are aware of it, have a chance for a positive and consciously lived future. The exhibition "Auschwitz - Final Station Extermination" has assumed this responsibility and we would like to thank the organizers for it.

Hoping that the memory will not end with the death of the survivors, the generation of KZ-victims whose story will be told on the following pages, put the care into the hands of those who never had to face Auschwitz themselves. But even somebody who did not experience the concentration camp, who didn't survive the daily horror and therefore cannot really understand because of the lack of sensual and emotional or physical knowledge, can contribute to fight any inhuman tendencies, any contempt for people and can work for democracy in the most vivid way.

History loses its direct authenticity with its last survivor, but not its meaning. Maybe it will once be possible to overcome the pessimism of the poet Ingeborg Bachmann who wrote: "History teaches, but doesn't find any students." Auschwitz was a hell for those who survived it, but Auschwitz was a real place with people who tortured and killed and people who were tortured and killed. All that is happening again today, under different circumstances - but as bureaucratically planned and organized mass murder of millions of innocent people, a mass murder which was made possible by an administration that pursued that aim, it could not be repeated after Auschwitz. Today, Auschwitz is a part of our history and thus very present. In order to honor the dead, it is obviously most important to fight all tendencies that once led to Auschwitz: Racisms, xenophobia, hate against minorities, against women, anti-Semitism, indifference, the search for a new leader... That is the story that Auschwitz will

go on telling - forever. Auschwitz is more than a village, a place, but it is the name of a whole attitude which undoubtedly is in the air whenever somebody demands "Foreigners out". Auschwitz is a fact far beyond all facts; it has become a symbol, and therefore is so important - for everybody. What remains is the hope that Auschwitz will go through the world in the Internet and will leave its traces in the heads of those who will read these texts. In order finally to let history find its students...

Mag. Susanne Kowarc
International Auschwitz Committee
Austrian Camp Community Auschwitz



AN EXCURSION TO AUSCHWITZ...

Auschwitz - Final Station, Extermination

The survivors of the Holocaust are important to us, who were born after the war, because they speak as witnesses, not as interpreters; in order even to basically understand the dimension of the crimes in Auschwitz, one has to see it!

A group of 45 students of the Linz University participated in an excursion to Auschwitz from May 11-15, 1994 which was organized by the Institute of Social and Economy History. The common interest was to face personally the former concentration camp. We went to Auschwitz, since it is the symbol of the genocide and stands as well for all other concentration camps.



The students were guided through the site by former camp inmates. They tried to tell what they had experienced, how life looked like in Auschwitz, but still, in many moments, the students had to recognize that they could not feel what it means to lose one's best friend on the gallows, near the Christmas tree.

Experiencing those deeply touching impressions, some students decided to go on working with the topic, to make Auschwitz a public theme. The idea of an exhibition was born.

Nobody could foresee how difficult it would be to work up that issue "50 years afterwards". Should the exhibition reflect the feelings and impressions or become an objective treatment by focusing on facts and data? Being in touch with diverse opinions - some finding the engagement necessary, others irrelevant for our times - made the problem of immediate interest. "You should rather deal with the violence in front of our own doors instead of digging into the past. Others were no better than Hitler - think of Mao or Stalin." This new

repression, connected with the reference to the present problems and to the fact that Hitler had "only" killed six, but Stalin 20 million people, give right radical groups a new chance.

The dispute, how many people were killed in Auschwitz, the obscene question, whether the crematories were "technically able" to burn that many bodies, the question if Hitler himself ordered all that, the question, why the allied troops did not react earlier, though they had known about Auschwitz, leave the smell of rationalizing the unbelievable. The revisionists don't sleep, on the contrary: A pseudo-science which tries to explain the "Auschwitz lie" scientifically, gains more and more supporters.

**All those opinions encouraged the organizers to bring the
incomprehensible closer to us.**

It was tried to find a mixture between personal impressions and hard facts.



THE AUSCHWITZ CHRONOLOGY

Auschwitz - Final Station Extermination

A Historic Survey

Spring 1940	F irst prisoners from Dachau arrive in Auschwitz and start building up Auschwitz concentration camp . Rudolf Höss becomes first camp commander.
June 4, 1940	A rrival of the first prisoners' transport (728 Poles)
March 1, 1941	R eichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler visits Auschwitz and gives order to commander Höß to enlarge the camp. Auschwitz I should seize 30.000 prisoners, Auschwitz II (Birkenau) 100.000.
August 1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heinrich Himmler orders the mass extermination of Jews in Auschwitz
September 1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First gassing with caclone B gas in Auschwitz: Soviet POW'S and 298 sick inmates were killed.
October 8, 1941	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birkenau camp started to be erected.
January 20, 1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the "Wannseekonferenz" in Berlin, the organization of mass extermination was decided.
January 1942	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Birkenau is set to be the place of mass murder; in the beginning a reconstructed farm house was used by the SS to gas Jews.
March 22 to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four new crematories with gas chambers were put into

June 25, 1943	operation.
November 20, 1943	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruction of Auschwitz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Auschwitz I - main camp: camp for men ◦ Auschwitz II - Birkenau: women's' and men's camp, mass extermination in the gas chambers; ◦ Auschwitz III - subcamps at the industrial and agricultural plants such like the Buna-factory in Monowitz
May 2- Sep.21, 1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extermination of Hungarian Jews: between May 2 and July 9, 1944, 437.402 Jews from Hungary were deported to Auschwitz
August 1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D155.000 people are imprisoned. The SS starts liquidating the camps.
October 10, 1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uprising of the Sonderkommando: Jewish inmates burn crematorium IV.
November 1944	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gassings in Auschwitz are being suspended. Heinrich Himmler gives order to disassemble the killing institutions and to destroy the gas chambers and crematories
January 17, 1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evacuation of Auschwitz and all subcamps starts. All prisoners who seem to be able to move are sent to a so-called "Death March" towards the West. At the last roll-call, 66.020 prisoners are counted in the KZ and all sub camps.
January 27, 1945	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops. They find some 5.000 prisoners left behind but unable to move.

The former concentration camp Auschwitz is located in a swampy area, about 60 kilometers from Krakow. The location - favorably situated as regards transport facilities - seemed adequate to the SS, and so they chose former Austrian imperial barracks for the site of a concentration camp.

The complex included an area of 40 square kilometers and also an extensive prohibited area. The construction of the camp began under the first commander, [Rudolf Höss](#), in May 1940, which was later called Auschwitz I or "Stammlager" (original camp). The first enlargement was planned for 7.000 prisoners and consisted of 28 two-storied brick buildings and wooden side-barracks. The average occupancy was 18.000 prisoners. The whole camp was surrounded by an electrically charged barbed wire fence. Above the entrance gate, the watchword "Arbeit macht frei" ("Work liberates") was written.

In October 1941, the building of Auschwitz II Birkenau started according to an order of [Heinrich Himmler](#). This much bigger camp included 250 wooden and stone barracks. The highest occupancy of Birkenau was about 100.000 inmates in 1943. In contrast to the Stammlager, Birkenau was always planned as an extermination camp. Here the "Rampe" was located, where the [selections](#) of people who had just been deported, took place. Birkenau was divided into the following protective custody camps:

- The camp for men
- The camp for women (since March 26, 1942),
- The quarantine camp,
- The family camp Theresienstadt (since autumn 1943),
- The camp for Hungarian Jews (since May 1944),
- The Gypsy camp (since spring 1943),
- The prisoner's sanitary block,
- The camp "Mexico",
- The stock camp "Canada".

In Birkenau stood the crematories II to V (completed between March 22 until June 25, 1943), which were each equipped with a [gas chamber](#) and - according to SS notes - could burn 4.756 bodies every day. During an uprising on October 7, 1944, prisoners blew up the gas chamber of crematorium IV. In November 1944, the SS detached the extermination plants and blew up all crematories.

There were industrial firms located near Auschwitz concentration camp, which leased KZ-prisoners from the SS as cheap slave-workers. The "IG-Farben-"plant in the suburb Monowitz for example produced synthetic rubber (Buna). The SS started to build the sub-camp Auschwitz-Monowitz for the inmates who worked there on May 31, 1942 until December 1943 center of Auschwitz III concentration camp. Besides, the SS also had own enterprises and mines. Altogether, there were 50 of such sub-camps.

Auschwitz concentration camp was evacuated from January 17 till 19, 1945 by the SS. Until then, 405.000 inmates had been counted with tattooed numbers, among them some 132.000 women. (The ones who had immediately been sent to the gas chamber, did not receive any number. Their figure is estimated as at least 1,3 million people). The closer the Red Army came, the more frightened became the SS; they started to evacuate the camp and sent all prisoners who still were able to move, on the "Death marches" to other concentration camps. On January 27, 1945, the Soviet Army liberated the camp with some 5.000 ill and dying inmates left behind, in it.



WOMEN IN AUSCHWITZ

Auschwitz - Final Station: Extermination



In March 1942, the first women's department was established in Auschwitz I by dividing the former men's camp with a brick wall two meters high. The first women were 999 inmates of Ravensbrück concentration camp.

On August 16, 1942, the women's camp in Auschwitz I was dissolved and transferred to Birkenau. During this time, the first [mass extermination](#) of female prisoners took place: 4,000 out of 12,000 female inmates were still gassed in Auschwitz I, the rest was brought to Birkenau.

The first women's camp in Birkenau was soon overcrowded, thus it had to be supplemented by an additional part of the men's camp. Again in 1944, more parts of the camp were added to the women's camp.

Since there were only few German political prisoners in Birkenau, their share of camp officials was rather low. The majority of camp officials were recruited by German prostitutes. Besides, there was a small group of Jewish camp prominents, such as some Slovak Jews, who were an absolute exception, because they were seen as "inferior people" - together with gypsies and slaves. Usually, their place in the social camp hierarchy was at the bottom.



Women suffered more than male inmates from the jam of people in the barracks, from the completely insufficient sanitary equipments, the endless roll-calls and the tortures of the SS-guards.

Many of the female guards were just as brutal and cruel as their male colleagues. SS-Men and Women were even competing in the brutality against the prisoners. One of the most feared women was the women's camp "Oberaufseherin" [Maria Mandel](#), who also participated in selections.

Women lost their shape faster than men and therefore reached more quickly the condition of the so-called "[Muselmann](#)". The average life expectancy for women was generally twice as short as for men.



The expectation of life was a bit higher, when female inmates were able to work in "good commandos", such as kitchen, secretaries in the political section, sewing works, serving the family of the commander etc.. All other women had to work as hard as men.

German prostitutes could also work in the camp whorehouse, which was located on the first floor of block 24 in Auschwitz I and which had been established for specially "honored", usually "Aryan" prisoners. Some SS-officials ignored all prohibitions of the racial laws and took up relationships with female prisoners, who - to a certain extent - could benefit a while from such relations. But mostly, SS-guards would not hesitate to kill their lover if she endangered him.

Women were also used as test models for pseudo-medical tests. The most cruel SS-doctors were [Dr. Schumann](#), who sterilized women with X-rays, [Dr. Clauberg](#) who sterilized with chemical preparations, who artificially fertilized women and castrated men and [DDr. Mengele](#) who undertook the so-called "Zwillingsforschung" (experiments with twins), racial research with gypsies and Lilliputians.

THE QUARANTINE HUTS

Theoretically, the Quarantine Huts were intended to prevent the spread of diseases in the camp. Their actual role was to break any inner resistance on the part of newly arriving prisoners. Nobody told them what they were allowed to do and what was forbidden, there was no written camp order. Whoever was unable or unwilling to accept these new life conditions, was immediately thrashed or slayed. Primitive equipments, the overcrowded huts, mud and dirt all over, no possibility for personal hygiene and the everlasting terror influenced the souls of the inmates very destructively, especially those who spent some time in the Quarantine Huts close to the mass-extermination plants. Concerning food, the new prisoners were also treated worse, they received less nutrition than "older" camp inmates.

The Quarantine Huts were centers of systematic pauperization and misery, where the SS wanted to exhaust the people. Those areas were extermination camps within the KZ.

The few prisoners who were released from the camp, also had to pass the Quarantine Huts. If the SS-doctors did not consider the condition of these people as good enough, they had to stay longer in the Quarantine. If they finally did not recover, they finally had to stay in the camp. Many of them never saw their release.

FAMILY CAMP THERESIENSTADT

During half a year, a part of Auschwitz concentration camp was organized like a ghetto. On September 8, 1943, two transports with 5.006 Czech Jews from the ghetto Theresienstadt arrived in Auschwitz. These transports were not selected, but altogether directed to a special part of the Birkenau quarantine camp. Women, men and children were indeed housed in separate blocks, but able to move freely in that part of the camp. The social relations among the prisoners could thus be maintained. For that reason, this camp section was also called "Theresienstädter Familienlager "(Theresienstadt Family Camp.)

The committal orders were affixed with the note "Sonderbehandlung (SB, meaning: gassing) - six months", which meant, that the Theresienstadt Family Camp inmates were deceived in their life expectation for six months because they did not know anything about the note and, due to the rather good treatment, thought that they were to be kept alive.

The Czech Jews were not assigned to labor commands, they were allowed to receive parcels and to write letters - they were even asked to inform their relatives. But despite that privileged treatment, 1.140 people died within these six months in the Theresienstadt camp section. After the time limits had ended, all those who had stayed alive were killed on March 9, 1944 in the gas chambers.

The Theresienstadt family Camp can be seen as SS-stage-production for the world outside the camp.

The function of the family camp was to reassure the population of the ghetto in Theresienstadt and to maintain that image of preferential treatment. In order to deceive the International Red Cross (IRC) which had announced a visit, a so-called "Klein Theresienstadt" ("Little Theresienstadt") was to be erected in Birkenau.

After the successful visit of the IRC in Theresienstadt, the [RSHA](#) told the German Red Cross under its chief [Oswald Pohl](#), who also was the leader of the [SS-WVHA](#), that from that time on, no further parcels would be sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau any more. The deportees from December 1943 were killed by a second big gassing, the family camp dissolved by the end of June/beginning of July 1944. On the one hand, the feint was obviously successful, but on the other hand, could hardly be maintained because of the reports given by escaped prisoners.

THE CAMP OF THE HUNGARIAN JEWS

Before German troops invaded Hungary and the government was reformed on March 19, 1944, Hungarian officials opposed the deportation of Jews. But the new administration under Sztojay, who was pro-German, accepted the German requests and started concentrating Jews in ghettos and transit camps before deporting them to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The first two transports left Kistarcsa on April 29, 1944 (1.800 Jews) and Topolya on April 30, 1944 (2.000 Jews). After an interruption of two weeks the main phase of deportations started on May 15, 1944. Until July 9, 1944, 437 402 Jews were deported from Hungary to Auschwitz. Due to the pressure of neutral countries and the Vatican, "Reichsverweser" Horthy forbade any further deportation. Germany was unwilling to risk a conflict with Hungary at that time, and therefore did not undertake any decisive steps. Nonetheless, some few hundred Hungarian Jews from the camp for political prisoners in Kistarcsa arrived in Auschwitz in August.

The arrival of the first two transports were largely prepared. The crematories were carefully renewed, the ovens covered with fire-clay and the chimneys reinforced with iron rings. Behind the crematories, pits were dug, the number of members in the "Sonderkommando" and the cleaning commandos was increased. Despite the enlargement of the number of inmates in these two commandos, it was not possible to handle the mass of people and their goods arriving in the camp.

The average travel time of the Hungarian Jews amounted to at least four days. Since the vans were always overcrowded, people didn't get enough air to breathe, nothing to eat or drink. Many suffocated or died from thirst. Especially little children, old and ill people died under these transport conditions.

Since the transports were too huge, the SS selected many people for the camp and began to send them to be gassed later. Though, the number of gassed people was so high that the crematories were not able to burn all the bodies - they were piled up in the prepared pits and burnt. In order to accelerate the burning, grooves were dug to which the fat of the braised bodies would flow. The fat was used to pour it over the bodies in order to make them burn even faster. Sadists among the SS-guards enjoyed themselves by throwing living kids or old women into the braising fat or the fire. The relatives of the deportees and the rest of the Hungarians who noticed the disappearance of so many people, were calmed down by forcing the Hungarian Jews to write post-cards saying: "I'm fine." The sender-address was purely fictional: Labor camp Waldsee. It only existed in the fantasy of the camp-Gestapo. Even those people, who directly had to march to the gas chamber, received such cards in the dressing-room of the crematories with the order to write to their homes.

THE GYPSY CAMP

On December 16, 1942, Himmler ordered that all gypsies be interned, since they - like the Jews- should be exterminated. The first gypsy transport, organized by the [Reichssicherheitshauptamt](#), reached Auschwitz on February 26, 1943. Many trains followed. Gypsies were not submitted under selections. The gypsy camp was constructed as a family camp, e.g. all family members came to the same camp section. Gypsies were brought to Auschwitz from the whole of Central Europe, many thousands of them in a very short time.

But there were also some transports which the SS killed in the gas chambers immediately after their arrival. Mostly, these transports came from the East and were suspected of carrying epidemic diseases.

The SS promised the gypsies that their stay in the camp would only be temporary before they should be resettled in new areas in Eastern Europe. The majority of them died already in the camp because of the disastrous life conditions and the bad treatment by the German prisoners. When infectious diseases broke out in the gypsy camp (above all typhus), the inmates of two blocks were gassed "in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic". In spring 1944, the SS started to dissolve the gypsy camp. Men and women able to work were sent to Germany to labor assignment, the rest -about 3.000 people - were gassed in the evening of August 6, 1944.

THE PRISONERS' HOSPITAL

In the specific camp language, the prisoners' hospital was called "Revier". This block was just the same as any other residential hut: beds full of lice, straw mattresses soaked with human excrements. The patients were unable to turn around because the beds were overcrowded. People with different illnesses were not separated. Prisoners who suffered from dysentery for example, lay in the upper parts of the plank-beds, their excrements running down on the patients below. Often, the sick persons lay together with dying and dead people. There was no medical treatment nor medicaments available. For a long time, imprisoned physicians were not allowed to work in the revier. No washing-room, water, soap nor towels existed. The food was the same for ill and healthy inmates.

The first selection in the camp hospital took place on July 28, 1941. The prisoners were subjected to a "Sonderbehandlung" (SB, "Special Treatment"). "SB" stood for the murder in the gas chambers. Selections took place, whenever the Revier was too full of men, twice a month the order came to put together transport lists for a "special treatment". The SS decided how many prisoners should be gassed, the responsible inmates ("Capos") of the Revier had to deliver the number of people. They looked for people who seemed to be too weak to go on living, wrote down their numbers and threw them out of the block the next morning in order not to let anybody disappear, the doomed received second tattoo under the inmates number: The letter "L", possibly meaning "Leiche", the German word for corpse - but this is not scientifically proved.

THE MEXIKO CAMP

In the last phase of the war, when the armament industry required more and more slave workers, the deportees kept alive because they still were able to work, were transferred into a part of the camp which was called "Mexico".

This section of Auschwitz-Birkenau was not completely finished. The inmates waited for a further transport to one of the labor camps. Since they should not remain in Auschwitz, they did not receive a prisoner's number typical for Auschwitz.

In this new camp section, the indescribable conditions which had such horrible consequences in the Birkenau women's camp and the gypsy camp, went on just the same. The lack of even the most primitive hygienic installations, the absence of water caused a high rate of mortality.

In the camp jargon, the new section was called "Mexico". The inmates neither had prisoners' clothes nor blankets. They received blankets of different colors and styles from the stock-camp section "Canada", where all goods of the deportees were collected. Covered with all these blankets, the prisoners in that camp section appeared like Mexicans.

THE CANADA CAMP

"Canada" was the stock camp, where all goods, valuables and objects of daily life, which the prisoners had brought with them, were sorted out, packed and sent back to the Reich. These objects were directly brought from the ramp to the Canada camp section.



The prisoners who worked there, received the name "Commando Canada". Canada obviously was synonymous for wealth and richness.

The national socialist regime enriched itself on those who would die. Until fall 1944, 2000 kilogram of gold were melted down, gold, which came from the teeth of the killed people. Also jewels, suitcases filled with money and other valuables were appropriated by the NS-Regime. The SS-guards had the possibility of enriching themselves; the inmates had to "organize" things if they wanted to stay alive.

The members of the labor commando Canada, who had to sort out the objects, secretly brought valuables to the camp under the risk of their lives, and received food, clothes, shoes, alcohol and cigarettes for it. Civilian employees and SS-guards smuggled the valuables to the camp. That was called "organizing".

It was an open secret that only those, who "organized" stayed alive for a longer while. Whoever could freely move within the camp because of his/her function, was able to get in touch with the Canada commando.

RUDOLF HÖSS

Rudolf Höß (SS-Obersturmbannführer), born in 1900 in Baden-Baden, grew up in a very Catholic family. Being only 15 years old, he signed up as a volunteer in World War I and was sent to Turkey, where he became "Unteroffizier" (non-commissioned officer) and received some distinctions. After the defeat, he fought within the "Freikorps" (volunteer corps) in the Baltics, in Upper Silesia and in the area of the river Rhur. In 1923, he participated in the so-called "Parchimer Fememord" (Parchimer vehme murder) and was therefore sentenced to 10 years, but released in the course of an amnesty in 1928. In 1933, he joined the SS as so-called Anwärter (aspirant) and was accepted as full member one year later.

In 1934, Rudolf Höß came to Dachau concentration camp was nominated as "Blockführer" and constantly promoted, until he was transferred to Sachsenhausen concentration camp as adjutant, where he was in charge of the commander's office. In 1940, he was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp as commander, where he started organizing mass murder technically. Later he was characterized as a zealous petty bourgeois.

Höß remained commander of Auschwitz until December 1, 1943, then he was followed by [Arthur Liebehenschel](#) as camp commander. Höß on the other hand took over Liebehenschel's function as chief of the department D I within the so-called [WVHA](#), but on May 8, 1944, he returned to Auschwitz on [Heinrich Himmlers](#) wish in order to prepare the "Action Höß": He was to organize the installation for the mass murder of Hungarian Jews, and he personally supervised the works. Later, when he was imprisoned, he remembered:

"(...) According to the wish of Reichsführer SS, Auschwitz became the biggest extermination place of all mankind... Whether this mass extermination of Jews was necessary or not could not be estimated by me, I could not see that far. There was no doubt for an old National Socialist, even less for an SS-Führer, when the Führer himself had ordered the [final solution of the Jewish question](#)."

(Source: Auschwitz state Museum: Auschwitz in the eyes of the SS)

Captured in 1946, Höß testified at the Nuremberg trial as witness for Kaltenbrunner and in the trials against [Oswald Pohl](#) and IG-Farben and was surrendered to Poland in the same year. In April 1947, he was sentenced to death and hung on the site of Auschwitz concentration camp.

HEINRICH HIMMLER

Heinrich Himmler was born in Munich in 1900 as the son of a Catholic high school head master. After World War I, which he had gone through as officer's candidate without combat experience, he passed a study to become an academically qualified farmer. In 1922, he joined the NSDAP with the number 14 303 and, in 1925, the SS under the number 168. He was involved in Hitler's coup d'etat in 1923 and then became secretary of Gregor Strasser and vice Gauleiter of Lower Bavaria. In 1929, he was nominated as "Reichsführer SS", which then still belonged to the SA. Entering the Reichstag (Parliament) as delegate in 1930, he established the Security Service within the SS as a party-internal secret service. In 1933, he became police president in Munich and, little later, commander of the political police in Bavaria. Hermann Göring put him in charge of the Gestapo. In the year 1936, he became "Reichsführer SS" and chief of the German police in the Ministry for the Interior.

Eight years later, he had a few more titles and functions: "Reichskommissar für die Festigung des deutschen Volkstums" ("Reich's Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German People") since October 1939, Minister for the Interior and plenipotentiary for the administration of the Reich (since August 1943), high commander of the reserve army and chief of military armament (since July 1944) and temporary high commander of two army groups. He was the head of the common SS, the armed SS ("WaffenSS"), he was also responsible for the resettlement of the "Volksdeutsche" (Germans out of Germany), and the evacuation of the occupied areas, the trusts of the SS-owned firms and companies, the whole administrative bureaucracy of the Reich, the countries and the new "Reichsgaue" (provinces), the military and civilian secret services with an army of agents all over, the reserve army and training battalions and - to a certain extent - for the military questions of the "Volkssturm".

Chairing all these institutions, Himmler practiced terror and violence against opponents of the Third Reich and turned his fanatic racial ideology into concrete policy - such like the concentration camp system..

At the end of the war, Himmler - disguised as a member of the secret field police - tried to escape capture and committed suicide after his capture on May 23, 1945.



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF AUSCHWITZ

Auschwitz - Final Station Extermination



This photo of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp complex, which had been taken by allied aircraft observers on June 26, 1944, shows the proportions of Auschwitz I, the main camp, and the (extermination) camp Auschwitz II - Birkenau.

The distance between the two camps amounts about 3 kilometers.