



# AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

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# BEFORE AUSCHWITZ

“JEWS ARE A RACE THAT MUST BE TOTALLY EXTERMINATED”.  
Hans Frank, Governor General of occupied Poland.

“WE MUST FREE THE GERMAN NATION OF POLES,  
RUSSIANS, JEWS AND GYPSIES”.  
Otto Thierack, Reich Minister of Justice.

“THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK IS TO ROOT OUT  
ALL POLISH LEADERS [...] IN ORDER TO RENDER THEM  
HARMLESS. [...] ALL SPECIALISTS OF POLISH DECENT WILL BE  
EXPLOITED FOR THE NEEDS OF OUR WAR INDUSTRY.  
AND THEN ALL POLES WILL DISAPPEAR  
FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH”.  
Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer SS.

## NAZI IDEOLOGY

The basic elements of Nazi ideology were: hatred of Communism, Jews and democracy, and the conviction that the German nation was superior to all other nations. In their attempt to create a “racially pure” society the Nazis planned the extermination of Jews, as well as Slavs, Gypsies (Romanies), and others.

One of the reasons behind German aggression and the outbreak of World

War II was the Nazi ambition to gain new territory on which Germans were expected to settle. In November 1937 Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Third Reich and the founder of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) which gained power in Germany in 1933, summed up war objectives in the following manner: “In our case it is not a matter of vanquishing people, but of exclusively gaining space for agricultural purposes.”

## OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR II

After the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, and the occupation of the country by German soldiers, followed by the Soviet invasion of 17 September, Poland was divided. One part, Oświęcim and its surroundings, was incorporated into the Third Reich. The central part of Poland became the so-called Generalgouvernement, totally controlled by the Germans and man-

aged by the Nazi administrative and police apparatus. The territory to the east, in accordance with the German-Soviet treaty of August 1939, was incorporated into the Soviet Union. It was only in June 1941, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, that these lands were occupied by the Germans.

The occupation of Poland was followed by aggression against other



Photo: Heinrich Hoffmann

Nazi Party Convention  
in Nuremberg in 1937.  
Members of the Hitlerjugend  
greet Adolf Hitler, who addresses  
them as follows: “We will educate  
our young so that the entire  
world will shake in front of them.  
I want the young to be capable  
of violence, imperious,  
indomitable, cruel.”

countries, which led to the majority of Europe being occupied by Germany. In April 1940 the German army attacked and occupied Denmark and Norway, in May 1940 it attacked Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg and then started occupying France. In April 1941 it turned on Yugoslavia and Greece. In June 1941 it struck its ally – the Soviet Union.

Auschwitz was located almost in the heart of occupied Europe. The Third Reich and the satellite countries were marked black, the wartime occupied or controlled territories were marked grey. State borders prior to 1939.



## NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The Germans started creating concentration camps in Germany in 1933. The political opponents of the Nazi regime, people seen as “undesirable elements”, and Jews were imprisoned. After the outbreak of World War II the Germans started opening concen-

tration camps in other countries they occupied.

Konzentrationslager (KL) Auschwitz, much the same as other Nazi concentration camps, was a state institution, managed by the German state central authorities. It was run directly by

the SS Central Economic-Administrative Office (Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt, WVHA) whilst human deportation to the camp and extermination was the responsibility of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheits-hauptamt, RSHA).

# AUSCHWITZ 1940-1945 AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE CAMP

## ESTABLISHMENT

The world has come to associate the Nazi German concentration camp Auschwitz as the symbol of the Holocaust, of genocide and terror. It was set up by the German occupying forces in mid-1940 in the suburbs of Oświęcim, a Polish town that the Nazis incorporated into the Third Reich. Its name was changed to “Auschwitz”, which also became the name of the camp: Konzentrationslager Auschwitz.

The immediate reason for creating the camp was the growing number of Poles arrested by the German police, which led to prisons becoming overcrowded. At first, this was to be yet another concentration camp, created as part of the Nazi terror machine active since the early 1930s. This was indeed the function of the camp throughout its existence, even when – from 1942 onwards – it started becoming the largest centre of mass murder of Jews.

KL Auschwitz personnel comprised SS members (Schutzstaffeln). These units were created to act as an elitist guard, whose initial task was to offer protection at NSDAP assemblies. Over the years the meaning of the SS in the Third Reich grew immensely; the organization took over many state administration functions, as well as the role of the police and army. SS units also acted as personnel at concentration camps.

AUSCHWITZ WAS SET UP BY THE GERMANS IN THE SUBURBS OF OŚWIĘCIM, A POLISH TOWN THAT THE NAZI INCORPORATED INTO THE THIRD REICH. ITS NAME WAS CHANGED TO AUSCHWITZ WHICH ALSO BECAME THE NAME OF THE CAMP: KONZENTRATIONSLAGER AUSCHWITZ.



Photo: SS

SS camp staff. During its existence the camp saw more than 8,000 members of the SS.

The SS acted as camp management and guard authorities, and also participated in the mass extermination of Jews and in executions. Initially only Germans and Austrians were members of the SS. Later on recruits included the so-

called Volksdeutsche, i.e. citizens of other states with proof of German descent who had signed the Volksliste. Throughout the existence of KL Auschwitz the camp saw more than 8,000 SS male and 200 female supervisors.

## EVICITION OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

In 1940-1941, the Germans evicted the inhabitants of one of the districts of Oświęcim where the camp was set up as well as the local population of eight villages in its vicinity. All the Jews, who constituted about 60% of pre-war Oświęcim, were also evicted and sent to ghettos, whilst many Poles were deported to Germany and submitted to forced labour.

One thousand two hundred houses were demolished in the town and the surrounding area. The immediate surroundings were developed as the camp's technical support sector with workshops, warehouses, offices and barracks for the SS. Part of the

buildings, left behind by the evicted, were occupied by SS officers and NCOs employed at the camp, many of whom resided there with their families. Other buildings were allocated to German families of re-settlers, clerks, and policemen. The Germans took over pre-war local industrial plants, some of which they expanded, whilst others they closed down in order to create new space for the Third Reich war production. These factories, particularly the huge IG Farbenindustrie chemical plant, were filled by 11,000 forced labour workers, mainly Poles, Russians and French.

Unknown photographer



Tarnów. Polish political prisoners guarded by the Germans prior to being deported to KL Auschwitz. The first transport arrived at the camp from the prison in Tarnów on 14 June 1940.

Unknown photographer



Uprooting the Polish population from areas around the camp. Wartime photograph.



Unknown photographer

April 1941.  
Germans displacing Jews from Oświęcim.  
Before the War this town of 12,000  
was inhabited by 7,000 Jews.



Photo: SS, 1943

The building of a camp bath.  
In the background Gas Chambers  
and Crematoria Nos. IV and V  
(amongst the trees).



National Archives in Washington

Aerial photograph  
taken by the Allies in 1944.  
The photograph includes Auschwitz I,  
Auschwitz II-Birkenau,  
Auschwitz III-Monowitz,  
and the IG Farben chemical plants.

Arbeitslager Trzebinia.  
One of dozens of Auschwitz sub-camps.



Unknown photographer

## EXPANSION

The location of the camp – almost in the centre of German-occupied Europe – and its good communication routes led to the German authorities expanding it on a massive scale and deporting people to it from virtually the whole of Europe. At its peak, **KL Auschwitz comprised three main sections:**

- **the first and oldest was Auschwitz I**, the so-called Stammlager (the number of prisoners here was between 12,000 and 20,000), created in mid-1940 in pre-war Polish barracks which was gradually expanded according to the needs of the camp;
- **the second part was Auschwitz II-Birkenau** (in 1944 the camp had more than 90,000 prisoners). This was the largest in the complex. The Nazis started building it in the autumn of 1941 in Brzezinka, a village 3 kilometres from Oświęcim.

The Polish population was expelled from the village and its houses were demolished. In Birkenau, the Nazis built their largest installations of mass murder in occupied Europe – the gas chambers – and exterminated the majority of Jews deported to the camp;

- **the third part was Auschwitz III-Monowitz** (also called Buna; in the summer of 1944 it held more than 11,000 prisoners). Initially it was an Auschwitz sub-camp. It was set up in 1942, in Monowice, six kilometres away from Oświęcim, next to the Buna-Werke synthetic rubber and fuel factory, built during the war by the German IG Farbenindustrie concern. In November 1944, the Buna sub-camp became independent, and was called KL Monowitz. Most of the other Auschwitz sub-camps were controlled by it.

# AUSCHWITZ SUB-CAMPS

In 1942-1944 a total of close to **50 KL Auschwitz sub-camps and external commands** were established, using prisoner slave labour. They were

established mainly in the vicinity of German coal mines, steelworks, and other industrial plants in Upper Silesia and near stock and crop raising farms.

IN 1943 THE AUSCHWITZ CAMP COMPLEX COMPRISED THREE LARGE CAMPS: AUSCHWITZ I, AUSCHWITZ II-BIRKENAU, AUSCHWITZ III-MONOWITZ AS WELL AS DOZENS OF SMALLER SUB-CAMPS.

## CUT OFF FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The Germans isolated all Auschwitz complex camps and sub-camps from the outside world and surrounded them with towers and barbed-wire fencing. All contact by prisoners with the outside world was strictly forbidden. However, the area managed by the Commandant and controlled by KL Auschwitz SS personnel went beyond the fenced-off barbed wire pe-

rimeter. It occupied approximately a further 40 square kilometres (the so-called Interessengebiet – zone of interest), extending around Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Furthermore, dozens of sub-camps, some of which were located at a considerable distance from the main camp, were subject to Auschwitz administration.



Photographs of prisoners registered in the camp: a Jewish boy, a young Gypsy woman and a Polish girl.

Personal Card of a Polish prisoner arrested for helping Jews.



Witold Pilecki, a Polish political prisoner, one of the instigators and leaders of the resistance movement at the camp, responsible for secret dispatches sent outside the camp.

## RESISTANCE IN THE CAMP AND ITS ENVIRONS

Despite the difficult conditions in the camp and the constant terror prisoners tried to maintain their human dignity. One example of this was the resistance movement, which was either spontaneous or organized. Camp prisoners mainly concentrated on saving their fellow comrades from death. There were various forms of resistance, such as military, political, cultural and religious.

cil was called into being. Its objectives included the preparation of an armed uprising.

An important aspect of camp resistance activities involved informing the world about Nazi atrocities in Auschwitz. This was possible thanks to contacts with the active resistance movement alongside the camp. This movement participated in transferring to the outside world information gathered in the camp.

The first camp resistance organizations started forming in the latter half of 1940. These were mainly founded by Poles, who were the largest group of prisoners at the time. Irrespective of the Polish groups in late 1942 and early 1943 other nationality prisoner organizations were also created. In 1944 the international Auschwitz Military Coun-

From the beginning of the existence of the camp the Polish population of Oświęcim and its surroundings employed every method, and even risked their lives, to help prisoners by providing them with food, medicine and organizing escapes.

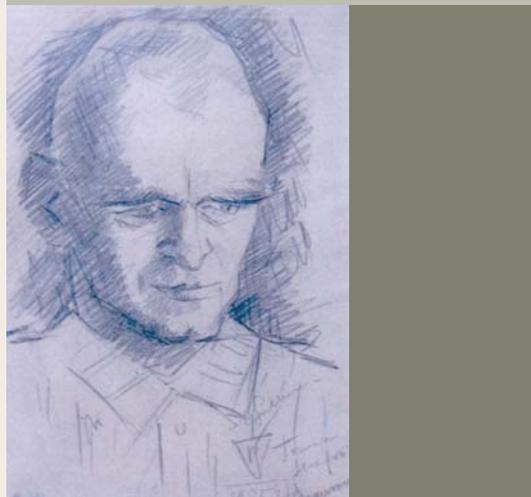


Photo: SS  
Auschwitz-Birkenau, State Museum Archives  
Stanislaw Curlikewicz, Auschwitz, 1942

# AUSCHWITZ AS A CONCENTRATION CAMP

Throughout its existence, Auschwitz always functioned as a concentration camp. With time, it became the largest German Konzentrationslager. Initially, mainly Poles were sent there by the occupiers. The Nazis chose those whom they regarded as a particular threat: members of the Polish elite, political, social and spiritual leaders,

the intelligentsia, representatives of culture and science, people in the resistance and officers.

The first transport of Polish political prisoners, 728 prisoners in total, arrived at the camp from the prison in Tarnów on 14 June 1940. It is regarded that the camp started operating from this date on. The Nazis sent Poles to the camp throughout its existence. Among them were also people rounded up and taken to the camp during street raids or during operations to remove people from their homes, including entire families from locations earmarked for German settlement such as the Zamość area and from Warsaw during the 1944 uprising.

With time, the German authorities also started deporting groups of prisoners from other occupied countries as well as Romanies (Gypsies) and Soviet POWs. They were registered and given a number. From 1942, Jews were transported en masse to be executed

in Auschwitz. During selection by SS doctors, those classified as fit to work or selected to undergo criminal medical experiments, were registered in the camp.

Of at least 1.3 million people deported to Auschwitz, around 400,000 people were registered and placed at the camp: approx. 200,000 Jews, around 140,000 Poles, approx. 21,000 Romanies (Gypsies), approx. 12,000 Soviet POWs and 25,000 prisoners belonging to other nationalities. More than 50% died in Auschwitz of hunger, excessive forced labour practices, terror, executions, appalling conditions, illness and epidemics, punishment, torture and criminal medical experiments. Almost 200,000 prisoners were transferred by the Germans to other concentration camps, where a significant number of them died. At the time of liberation, there were about 7,500 people still in the camp.



Photo: SS



Zofia Szejtler-Bator, Auschwitz, 1944

Edward Galiński (a Polish political prisoner) and Mala Zimetbaum (a Jewish woman from Belgium) escaped from Auschwitz during the summer of 1944. Two weeks later the young couple who were in love with one another were caught and sentenced to death by the Gestapo.

## CATEGORIES AND MARKING OF PRISONERS AT KL AUSCHWITZ

	Jews	– from 1942 they were the most numerous group of prisoners in the camp. About 200,000 were registered.
	Political prisoners	– Most of these were Poles arrested during various repressive operations, or for their activities in the resistance movement.
	Asocial prisoners	– this category mainly included registered Romanies (Gypsies) – around 21,000.
SU	Soviet POWs	– 12,000 were registered.
EH	Correctional prisoners	– imprisoned for real or alleged breach of discipline at work. They are estimated to number of around 11,000.
PH	Police prisoners	– these were exclusively Poles. They were not formal KL Auschwitz prisoners. As a result of the nearby Gestapo prisons in Katowice and Mysłowice becoming overcrowded these prisoners were directed to the camp, where they were tried by summary court and usually sentenced to death by shooting. Their number is estimated at several thousands.
	Criminal prisoners	– primarily with German nationality. The camp authorities frequently chose from among them functionary prisoners to help the SS maintain order at the camp.
	Jehovah's Witnesses	– these were imprisoned in the camp for their religious behaviour and attitudes. There were more than 100 Jehovah's Witnesses, mainly of German origin, registered in this category.
	Homosexuals	– at least a few dozen prisoners, mainly of German origin.



Photo: SS

KL Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Jews from Hungary on the unloading ramp. The gas chambers and crematoria can be seen in the background.

## AUSCHWITZ AND THE EXTERMINATION OF JEWS

In 1942, the camp was given a second role – it became the centre of extermination for European Jews. The only reason that they died was because they were Jews, irrespective

of their age, sex, profession, citizenship, or political convictions. After selection most of the new arrivals classed by SS doctors as unfit for work were murdered in the gas chambers.

These included the ill, the elderly, pregnant women, and children. These were never recorded in the camp as they were never registered and given numbers.



Photo: SS

The furnace hall area in the Gas Chamber and Crematorium No. II building in Birkenau.

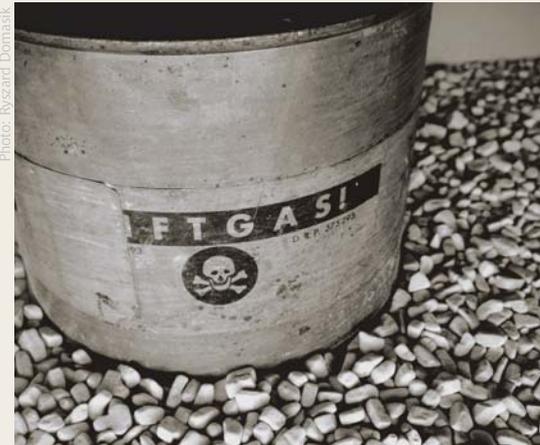


Photo: Ryszard Domisławski

An empty Cyclone B canister and clods of diatomaceous earth from which gas was released.



IN 1944 THE NAZIS DEPORTED TO AUSCHWITZ ALMOST 430,000 JEWS FROM HUNGARY. DURING THIS PERIOD GERMAN PHOTOGRAPHERS TOOK ALMOST 200 PHOTOGRAPHS AT AUSCHWITZ II-BIRKENAU. THESE PHOTOGRAPHS INCLUDE IMAGES OF THE SS CARRYING OUT SELECTIONS ON NEW ARRIVALS, PEOPLE GOING TO THE GAS CHAMBERS OR AWAITING DEATH, AS WELL AS THE SORTING OF THINGS WHICH BELONGED TO THE MURDERED.





## COUNTRY<sup>a</sup> LIST OF JEWS TRANSPORTED TO AUSCHWITZ

	Hungary	430,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Poland	300,000
	France	69,000
	Holland	60,000
	Greece	55,000
	Bohemia and Moravia – Theresienstadt	46,000
	Slovakia	27,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Belgium	25,000
	Germany and Austria	23,000
	Yugoslavia	10,000
	Italy	7,500
	Norway	690
	Concentration camps and unknown locations	34,000
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,100,000</b>

<sup>a</sup> pre-war borders

<sup>b</sup> borders during the war

*Prepared by Franciszek Piper*

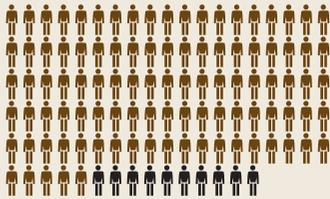
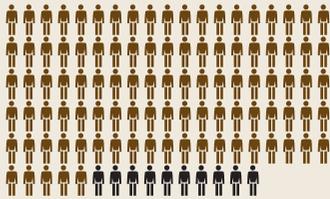


# LIBERATION

Towards the end of 1944, in the face of the Red Army offensive, the camp authorities decided to cover up all traces of crime. Documents were destroyed, some buildings were demolished, whilst others were burnt or blown up. Those prisoners capable of marching were evacu-

ated between 17 and 23 January 1945, deep into the Third Reich. At this time, Soviet soldiers were just 70 kilometres from the camp, liberating Cracow. About 7,500 prisoners were liberated by the Red Army on 27 January 1945.

## VICTIMS OF KL AUSCHWITZ (ESTIMATED DATA)

Nationality	 No. of deportees	 No. murdered
Jews	1.1 million 	1 million 
Poles	140,000 -150,000 	70,000 -75,000 
Romanies (Gypsies)	23,000 	21,000 
Soviet POWs	15,000 	14,000 
Others	25,000 	10,000 -15,000 
<b>Total</b>	Approx. 1.3 million	Approx. 1.1 million

Birkenau. The corpses of Jews gassed to death. They were later burnt in the open air.

The photograph was taken illegally by the Sonderkommando in the summer of 1944 and smuggled out of the camp by the Polish resistance movement.



Liberated prisoners leaving Birkenau.

A scene from a film shot after liberation by Soviet cameramen.



Amongst the 7,500 Auschwitz prisoners liberated on 27 January 1945 there were almost 500 children.

A scene from a film shot after liberation by Soviet cameramen.

# ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL

## BEGINNINGS

A few months after the end of the war and the liberation of the Nazi camps, a group of former Polish prisoners started publicly propagating the idea of commemorating the victims of Auschwitz. As soon as it was possible, a number of them arrived at the former camp in order to protect the remaining buildings and ruins. They organized the so-called Auschwitz Permanent Protection Scheme and looked after the thousands who came flooding in soon after the end of the war in order to search for traces of close ones, to pray, and to pay homage to those murdered.

Prior to the official opening of the Museum, former prisoners prepared an exhibition on its premises. The exhibition opened on 14 June 1947. About 50,000 people participated in the opening ceremony, including former prisoners, relatives of the murdered, pilgrims from almost every corner of Poland, official Polish delegates, representatives of the Supreme Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes, the Central Jewish Historical Committee, and delegates from the British, Czechoslovak and French Embassies

A scene from a film shot after liberation by Soviet cameramen.



Mass grave of Nazis' last victims

A scene from a film shot after liberation by Soviet cameramen.



Funeral of those who died in the last few days of the camp.

## CALLED INTO BEING

On 2 July 1947, the Polish Parliament passed an Act on the preservation "for All Time of the Site of the Former Camp" and called into being the

Oświęcim-Brzezinka State Museum. This name was changed in 1999 into the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim.

THE MUSEUM WAS CALLED INTO BEING IN JULY 1947. IT COMPRISES THE TWO FORMER CONCENTRATION CAMPS: AUSCHWITZ I AND AUSCHWITZ II-BIRKENAU, WITH A TOTAL AREA OF 191 HECTARES. IN 1979 ON POLISH APPLICATION, THE AREA OF THE FORMER CAMP WAS ENTERED ONTO THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST.

## MUSEUM OR MEMORIAL?

IN KEEPING WITH THE ACT PASSED BY THE POLISH PARLIAMENT IN 1947, THE TASK OF THE MUSEUM WAS TO SAFEGUARD THE FORMER CAMP, ITS BUILDING AND ENVIRONS, TO GATHER EVIDENCE AND MATERIALS CONCERNING GERMAN ATROCITIES COMMITTED AT AUSCHWITZ, TO SUBJECT THEM TO SCIENTIFIC SCRUTINY AND TO MAKE THEM PUBLICLY AVAILABLE.

DESPITE THIS, THERE IS STILL MUCH DEBATE AMONGST FORMER PRISONERS, MUSEUM EXPERTS, CONSERVATIONISTS, HISTORIANS, TEACHERS AND THE MASS MEDIA ON HOW TO ORGANIZE, MANAGE AND DEVELOP THE MUSEUM.

EVEN BEFORE THE MUSEUM WAS OPENED, PEOPLE WONDERED WHETHER IT SHOULD LIMIT ITSELF TO RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY, OR RATHER EXPLAINING AND CLARIFYING THE PRINCIPAL MECHANISMS UNDERLYING THE CRIMINAL SYSTEM. VIEWS ON THE MATTER DIFFERED RADICALLY: SOME BELIEVED THAT THE SITE SHOULD BE PLOUGHED OVER, OTHERS DEMANDED THAT EVERY SINGLE OBJECT BE RETAINED AND PROTECTED.

THE VERY WORD "MUSEUM" IS ALSO A TOPIC FOR DEBATE. NOT EVERYONE ACCEPTS THE NAME "AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU STATE MUSEUM". SOME BELIEVE THAT THE FORMER CAMP IS A CEMETERY, OTHERS THAT IT IS A PLACE OF MEMORY, A MONUMENT, OTHERS STILL REGARD IT AS A MEMORIAL INSTITUTE, A RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTRE ON THOSE WHO WERE KILLED. THE MUSEUM IN FACT FULFILS ALL OF THESE FUNCTIONS, AS THEY DO NOT CANCEL OUT, BUT RATHER COMPLEMENT ONE ANOTHER.

Shoes of those who died in Auschwitz, found after liberation (fragment of the exhibition).

Photo: Wiesław Zieliński



## MUSEUM SURFACE AREA

The Museum comprises two parts of the KL Auschwitz complex – the main camp (Auschwitz I) in Oświęcim and the Birkenau camp (Auschwitz II) in Brzezinka.

The actual surface area of the Museum and how much it should cover caused heated discussion in Poland in the latter half of the 1940s. Various Auschwitz sub-camps were located dozens of kilometres from the main camp. It was finally decided to place under protection Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, covering 191 hectares of land.

Finally established, the Museum occupied an area that included almost

every item of equipment used for the mass murder of Jews. It also included more than 150 different types of original camp structures, such as blocks, prisoner barracks, latrines, camp administrative and management buildings, SS guardhouses, buildings for the intake of new prisoners, watchtowers, camp gates, several kilometres of camp fencing and in-camp roads, as well as the rail ramp in Birkenau. The Museum also includes a mass grave of hundreds of prisoners, who died before the Red Army marched in or who died after the camp had been liberated.

A large number of structures were destroyed before the liberation of the

camp. Some structures were dismantled or destroyed in 1944 and January 1945, when the camp was being closed down and the SS were covering up their crimes. Some of the wooden barracks were dismantled after liberation.

In 2002, the Museum extended the site to include the location of the first gas chamber in Birkenau, the so-called Little Red House. In 2004 it further included the so-called Old Theatre building (where the camp stores were located during the war) and the surrounding area (the former Gravel Pit, the location of inhumane labour and the site of frequent executions).

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Museum is run under the authority of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and is supported by Poland. It was only in the 1990s that international financial support started coming in: thanks to the Ron-

ald S. Lauder Foundation the Museum was able to open its professional conservation workshops. Support offered by Germany, other states, a number of associations – including the French *Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah* – and

private individuals has facilitated conservation work on a selection of items requiring repair and projects commemorating victims.

2008 saw the founding of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation. The objective of the Foundation is to guarantee resources for the conservation of the Museum and Memorial so as to permit future generations visiting the remains of Auschwitz to witness with their own eyes this place of crimes perpetrated by the Nazis during World War II.

It will be possible to carry out the above objective thanks to the special establishment of the Perpetual Fund which should amount to 120 million euros. By gathering this amount at one time it will be possible to maintain the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial for future generations. These resources will constitute an inviolable and secure deposit of capital, whilst profits will permit necessary conservation work to be carried out each year. It will be possible to embark on a comprehensive

Contemporary aerial photograph of the former Auschwitz I camp.



Photo: Wojciech Gorgolewski

conservation programme on the following post-camp remains: 155 structures (including barracks and watch towers)

spread over an area of 200 hectares, 300 ruins (including the ruins of gas chambers), kilometres of road and fence-

ing as well as other post-camp elements of infrastructure, archive documents and objects comprising the collections.

## INTERNATIONAL AUSCHWITZ COUNCIL

In 1990, the Polish Minister of Culture and Art called into being the International Council of the Museum. The Council comprises former KL Auschwitz prisoners, historians, and experts from various countries. The Council acts as an advisory and opinion-making body. The Museum consults the Council on important decisions concerning the functioning of the Memorial and on controversial matters not directly relating to the

Museum itself, but widely commented on in Poland and abroad (for example the proposed construction of the supermarket, the Carmelite Convent and the crosses on the Gravel Pit).

In 2000, the Prime Minister of Poland announced the creation of the International Auschwitz Council whose term lasts 6 years, and which took over from the previous Council. The role of this Council was different in that it became the opinion-making

and advisory body of the Council of Ministers in matters concerning the conservation and management of not only the former concentration camp at Auschwitz, but also of other Monuments of Extermination throughout Poland.

In 2006 a new Council was appointed, comprising members from France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel, Poland, Ukraine and the USA.

## PROGRAMME COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION ABOUT AUSCHWITZ AND THE HOLOCAUST

In 2005 the Polish Minister of Culture called into being the Programme Council of the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the

Holocaust which was established in the same year as part of the Museum. The Council supports the Centre which mainly concentrates on informing the

younger generation about Auschwitz and the Holocaust and maintaining the memory of those who died.

Contemporary aerial photograph of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp.



# MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

THE STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE MUSEUM ARE TO GATHER, STORE AND PRESERVE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND STRUCTURES, TO PREPARE THEM AND TO MAKE THEM AVAILABLE.



Franciszek Jaźwiecki, Self-portrait.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Collection.

Following liberation, thousands of objects belonging to Jews deported for extermination were found in the camp and its environs, including suitcases (some bearing names and addresses of those murdered), Jewish prayer shawls, artificial limbs, glasses, shoes etc. Currently, these objects constitute a fundamental part of the Museum's collections. Many of these objects can be seen in camp blocks at Auschwitz I, where there is also a general exhibition depicting the history of events at the camp.

Museum exhibits include documents, photographs, and works of art – some prepared illegally by prisoners during the camp's existence, and some after liberation. Of considerable importance is the rich collection of paint-

ings and graphics produced by former prisoners in the immediate years after liberation. These works show scenes of camp life and are like a report drawn up by those who survived. The majority of works were painted by artists who were engaged in establishing the Museum and who were its first designers.

In addition, the Museum gathers Nazi documents and materials generated during the existence of the camp (including those produced by the resistance movement in the camp and in its vicinity), as well as post-war materials. These include accounts and testimonies of former prisoners, as well as statements made during the trials of Nazis in a variety of countries. There is also a rich collection of world literature on KL Auschwitz and the Nazis.

Suitcases, the property of Jews deported to Auschwitz.



Photo: Magda Emiliewicz-Pińo



Photo: Ryszard Domasik

The Collections Section contains almost 4,500 works of art, of which 2,000 were made prisoners.

## COLLECTIONS

The Collections Section mainly gathers and stores camp-related items as well as objects stolen from deportees and the murdered, found in the camp or near it after liberation. In addition, the Museum receives exhibits in the form of gifts and donations.

The Museum collections include:

- around 110,000 shoes;
- around 3,800 suitcases, of which 2,100 are labelled;
- more than 12,000 pots;
- around 40 kg of spectacles;
- almost 470 prostheses and orthopedic braces;

- 375 items of camp clothing, the so-called "striped" clothing of concentration camp prisoners;
- 246 prayer shawls (talliths);
- 40 m<sup>3</sup> of melted metal objects from the "Canada" warehouses in Birkenau (where items stolen from the victims of mass extermination were kept);
- around 4,500 pieces of art (including approx. 2,000 items made by prisoners).

The Museum also houses almost two tons of human hair shaven from women deported to the camp.

## ARCHIVES

THE ARCHIVES INCLUDE SURVIVING CAMP DOCUMENTS, AROUND 39,000 NEGATIVES OF PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEWLY ARRIVED PRISONERS, AND ALMOST 2,500 FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS BROUGHT TO AUSCHWITZ BY JEWS, MAINLY FROM THE BĘDZIN AND SOSNOWIEC GHETTOS.

The Archives contain original camp documents of German origin, copies of documents obtained from Polish and foreign institutes, case documents concerning Nazi perpetrators, wartime documents generated by the resistance movement in the camp and in its vicinity, post-war source materials (memoirs and accounts of former prisoners and other persons), photographs, microfilms, negatives, documentaries and archival films, studies, reviews, papers, exhibition and film scenarios, and inquiries.

The present collection includes the following items

- **about 39,000 negatives** of photographs of newly arrived prisoners, taken by the camp authorities prior to the introduction of tattooing as a means of identifying prisoners;
- **about 200 photographs taken by the SS in Birkenau** during the depor-

tation of Jews from Hungary in 1944, **a number of photographs** taken illegally by members of the Sonderkommando near the gas chambers of Birkenau, **around 500 photographs** of different structures and KL Auschwitz taken by the SS when the camp was still operating, **almost 2,500 family photographs** brought by persons deported to Auschwitz (mainly by Jews from the Będzin and Sosnowiec Ghettos), **several dozen aerial view photographs** of the camp area taken by American pilots in 1944, as well as photographs taken after liberation by Museum employees and other persons;

- **camp documents and documents related to the camp**, including:
  - 48 camp volumes of "Death Books", containing almost 70,000 death certificates of those who died or were murdered in Auschwitz;



Burning camp stores, set on fire in January 1945 by the Germans retreating under attack from the Soviet army. Despite their efforts the Nazis were not able to destroy all the evidence of crimes committed in Auschwitz.

Auschwitz-Beleg

Konzentrationslager Auschwitz  
Abteilung II.

Z u s a m m e n f a s s u n g  
26. September 1941

Nr.	Matr.-Nr.	Nachname	Vorname	Geb.-Dat.	Geb.-Ort	Beruf
<b>Wirtschaftsstelle Kettenteile</b>						
12104	12104	Bartel	Johann	13. 7.00	Lehrkeute	Grubenarbeite
12105	12105	Bauer	Wladimir	11. 2.01	Belostok	Arbeiter
12106	12106	Bialik	Andreas	25.10.92	Bayreuth	Schlichter
12107	12107	Brykman	Isidor	10.10.91	Belin	Glasermeister
12108	12108	Chasman	Robert	27. 5.01	Krasno	Grubenarbeite
12109	12109	Chasman	Isidor	29.11.96	Wladimir	Grubenarbeit
12110	12110	Chasman	Isidor	10.12.11	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12111	12111	Chasman	Isidor	4. 5.03	Alt Ujezd	Grubenarbeite
12112	12112	Chasman	Isidor	18. 2.08	Alt Ujezd	Grubenarbeite
<b>Wirtschaftsstelle Arbeiter</b>						
12113	12113	Chasman	Isidor	7.12.07	Debenke	Zimmermann
<b>Wirtschaftsstelle Kettenteile</b>						
12114	12114	Chasman	Isidor	15.11.05	Belostok	Arbeiter
12115	12115	Chasman	Isidor	30.10.05	Bundesdorf	Grubenarbeite
12116	12116	Chasman	Isidor	1. 9.07	Brzesk	Glasermeister
<b>Wirtschaftsstelle Kettenteile</b>						
12117	12117	Chasman	Isidor	27. 2.05	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12118	12118	Chasman	Isidor	20. 6.11	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12119	12119	Chasman	Isidor	2. 8.01	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12120	12120	Chasman	Isidor	21. 1.04	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12121	12121	Chasman	Isidor	24. 8.10	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12122	12122	Chasman	Isidor	22.11.19	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12123	12123	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12124	12124	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12125	12125	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12126	12126	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12127	12127	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12128	12128	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12129	12129	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12130	12130	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12131	12131	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12132	12132	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12133	12133	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12134	12134	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12135	12135	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12136	12136	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12137	12137	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12138	12138	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12139	12139	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12140	12140	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12141	12141	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12142	12142	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12143	12143	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12144	12144	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12145	12145	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
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12151	12151	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12152	12152	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12153	12153	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
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12160	12160	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12161	12161	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12162	12162	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12163	12163	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12164	12164	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12165	12165	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12166	12166	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12167	12167	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12168	12168	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12169	12169	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12170	12170	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12171	12171	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12172	12172	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
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12176	12176	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12177	12177	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12178	12178	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12179	12179	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12180	12180	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12181	12181	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12182	12182	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12183	12183	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12184	12184	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12185	12185	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12186	12186	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12187	12187	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12188	12188	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12189	12189	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12190	12190	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12191	12191	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12192	12192	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12193	12193	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12194	12194	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12195	12195	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12196	12196	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12197	12197	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12198	12198	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12199	12199	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter
12200	12200	Chasman	Isidor	28. 2.02	Belostok	Handarbeiter

List of prisoners who arrived at the camp in Auschwitz on 26 September 1941.

- 248 volumes of documents of the Central Construction Board of the Waffen SS and Police in Auschwitz (Zentralbauleitung der Waffen SS und Polizei Auschwitz), containing technical and design documents referring to the building and expansion of the camp, its infrastructure and reconstruction plans concerning the town of Oświęcim;

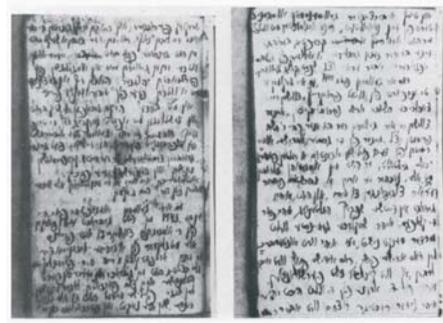


# INFORMATION ABOUT FORMER PRISONERS

It is possible to obtain information about former KL Auschwitz prisoners. Information can be obtained personally or by letter by contacting the Former Prisoners Information Office. Office employees answer with the support of surviving camp documents. Unfortunately, there are virtually no traces left in written form con-

cerning a vast number of Auschwitz victims – most of the documentation was destroyed by the Germans before the liberation of the camp and the majority of those deported were never registered. This mainly concerns Jews directed by the SS during selection to the gas chambers immediately on arrival at the camp.

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives



After the war wartime notes were found at the camp by Sonderkommando Jewish prisoners, forced to incinerate in the crematoria the corpses of those murdered. Apart from prisoner statements these documents constitute important proof of Nazi crimes. The photograph depicts a handwritten fragment by an unknown author. Written in Yiddish the manuscript was dug up near the ruins of Gas Chamber No. III in 1952. It includes a description of the extermination process of Jews in the gas chambers.

## DIGITAL REPOSITORY

The setting up of a KL Auschwitz prisoner database is of fundamental importance in commemorating those who were imprisoned and murdered at the camp. Currently, the constantly developed digital databases contain

more than half a million entries with information from 56 camp document collections. Electronic storage offers quick access to information and permits the analysis of source material on the computer screen.

## LIBRARY

The library collection reflects the overall character of the Museum. The Library mainly contains publications on World War II, the Holocaust, prisons and concentration camps with particular emphasis on KL Auschwitz, anti-Semitism and racism. A considerable part of the collection, comprising more than 30 thousand volumes, includes publications on the World War II resistance movement, the history of the Third Reich, and neo-Nazism. There is also an abundant collection of books on the history and traditions of the Jewish nation.

Apart from documentary literature and research works the library collection also contains belles-lettres (memoirs, novels, short stories, poetry, and drama), maps, atlases, encyclopaedias, dictionaries and periodi-

icals. The Special Collection comprises books and periodicals published in the Third Reich.

The Digital Repository Team generates digital databases about KL Auschwitz prisoners and deportees.

The screenshot shows a web-based digital repository interface. On the left, there is a search and filter panel with fields for 'Wzrost zgonu', 'Narodowosc', 'Kategoria', 'Uwagi', 'Stube', 'Funkcja', 'Ucieczka', 'Ucieczka data', 'Przyczyna zgonu', 'Ostatni dlad', 'Ostatni dlad data', and 'Komentarz ogolny'. Below these fields are buttons for 'Materiał ikonograficzny' and 'Sygnatury'. The main area displays a table of prisoner records with columns for 'Nr', 'Przyczyna', 'Ucieczka', 'Ucieczka', 'Ni więźni', 'Narodowosc', 'Nazwisko | Imiona', and 'Data urod | Miejsce'. The table contains several entries, including:
 

Nr	Przyczyna	Ucieczka	Ucieczka	Ni więźni	Narodowosc	Nazwisko   Imiona	Data urod   Miejsce
1	Bronchop	0000-00-00	---	22118	D	Achtelek   Paul	1904-08   Hind
2	---	0000-00-00	---	15541	---	Achter   Franz	1909-10   Mur
3	Lungenök	0000-00-00	---	15074	R.D.	Adler   Paul	1921-10   Kiel
4	---	0000-00-00	---	15095	R.D.	Ait   Martin	1905-09   Obe

 On the right side of the screenshot, a 'Przegląd...' window displays a scanned image of a handwritten document, likely a list of names and dates, with some entries highlighted in red.

# PRESERVING THE COLLECTIONS AND MUSEUM STRUCTURES

THE CONSERVATION SECTION IS IN CHARGE OF MORE THAN 150 STRUCTURES, AROUND 300 RUINS, INCLUDING THE REMAINS OF THE FOUR GAS CHAMBERS AND CREMATORIA IN BIRKENAU, MORE THAN 13 KM OF FENCING WITH 3,600 CONCRETE POSTS, AND A WIDE VARIETY OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT.

The Conservation Section is in charge of more than 150 structures (e.g. blocks, barracks, camp buildings), around 300 ruins and camp traces, including of particular historical significance for the history of Auschwitz – the ruins of four gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau, more than 13 km of fencing with 3,600 concrete posts, and a wide variety of additional items of equipment. In an area covering almost 200 hectares, there are many kilometres of hard-surface

roads, drainage ditches, railway tracks with sidings and unloading ramps, two camp sewage-treatment plants, and fire service and water tanks etc. Furthermore, low-lying vegetation, historical and post-war wooded areas (including about 20 hectares of forest) are protected and managed on a permanent basis.

Conservation work is also carried out on archived documents, objects of everyday use, photographs and works of art. The Museum contains about

4.500 works of art which are successively restored.

Cooperation with higher institutes of education (The Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, The Academies of Fine Art in Cracow and Warsaw, Fachhochschule in Cologne, Germany, The Silesian University of Technology, The Kielce University of Technology, Warsaw Agricultural University) permits the elaboration of innovative restoration projects and the organization of student practical training.

## CONSERVATION STUDIO

The Conservation Studio, opened in 2002, is one of the most modern and best equipped preservation studios in the country. The Studio has already carried out a number of important tasks. These include the cleaning and safeguarding of more than 100,000 shoes, confiscated by the SS from Auschwitz deportees; conservation of the remaining metal

parts of the crematoria in Birkenau; conservation of the gynaecological chair from the research laboratory of the German doctor Clauberg, dozens of suitcases, drawings, graphics and pictures, some of which can now be viewed at exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Some original documents housed in the Museum Archives were also preserved.

## RESEARCH AND WORK ON THE HISTORY OF AUSCHWITZ

Historians at the Museum carry out research on the history of the camp in Auschwitz. Currently they are working on three topics:

- identifying victims;
- exploring the hitherto relatively

unknown areas concerning specific parts of the camp and SS structures related to Auschwitz;

- a source publication on the history of Auschwitz.

Conservation Laboratory.



Photo: Ryszard Domasik

One of the camp watch towers. The Preservation Studio protects and preserves the site, as well as post-camp structures.

Conservation work carried out at one of the barracks at Birkenau.



Photo: Mirosław Stec  
Photo: Nel Jastrzębowska



Research was begun in the mid-1950s. At first, publications concentrated on basic historical sources about the camp, prisoner recollections and topics relating to Auschwitz. One of the first important works, written by Danuta Czech, was *Kalendarz wydarzeń w obozie koncentracyjnym Oświęcim-Brzezinka* (Auschwitz Chronicle). This work, revised and supplemented, was published independently in Germany in 1989 and later in Poland (1992) and the United States (1997).

In the latter half of the 1960s and in the 1970s, research focused on KL Auschwitz sub-camps, the resistance movement at the camp and the camp at Birkenau. At the same time research concentrated on other fields, such as the employment of KL Auschwitz prisoners (Franciszek Piper), and the evacuation, liquidation and liberation of the camp (Andrzej Strzelecki).

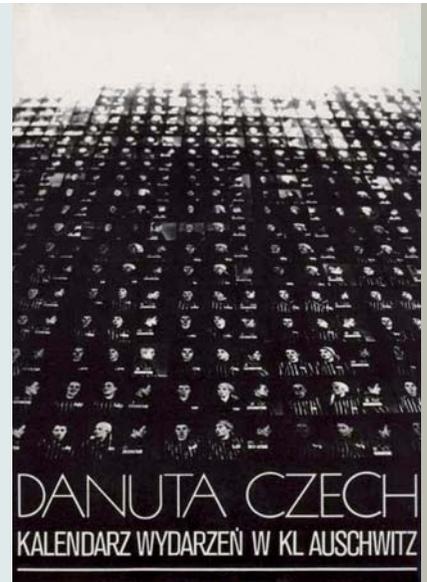
In later years, research shifted to newer fields such as the general history of the camp, but also to more specific topics. This research resulted in an abundance of publications: *Księgi zgonów z Auschwitz* (Auschwitz Death Books), *Księga Pamięci. Cyganie w obozie koncentracyjnym Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Memorial Book: Gypsies at Auschwitz-Birkenau) and three independent Memorial Books, dedicated to Poles: *Księga Pamięci. Transporty Polaków z Warszawy do KL Auschwitz 1940-1944* (Memorial Book: the Transports of Poles from Warsaw to KL Auschwitz 1940-1944), *Księga Pamięci. Transporty Polaków do KL Auschwitz z Krakowa i innych miejscowości Polski południowej 1940-1944* (Memorial Book: the Transports of Poles to KL Auschwitz from Cracow and Other Parts of Southern Poland 1940-1944) and *Księga Pamięci. Transporty Polaków do KL Auschwitz z Radomia i innych miejscowości Kielecczyny 1940-1944* (Memorial Book: the Transports of Poles to KL Auschwitz from Radom and other Parts of the Kielce Region 1940-1944).

In the Memorial Books analysis was carried out not only on the number of

transports and camp fatalities but also – wherever possible – attempts were made to establish the identities of victims. a similar approach was adopted in the case of a collective work entitled *Ludzie dobrej woli. Księga Pamięci mieszkańców Ziemi Oświęcimskiej niosących pomoc więźniom KL Auschwitz* [People of Good Will: Memorial Book of Oświęcim Land Residents Who Aided Auschwitz Concentration Camp Prisoners] (ed. Henryk Świebicki), and two albums: a compilation entitled *Zanim odeszli* (Before They Perished) dedicated to Jews from Będzin, and a work by Helena Kubica dedicated to children entitled *Nie wolno o nich zapomnieć. Najmłodsze ofiary KL Auschwitz* (We Should Never Forget Them: the Youngest Victims of Auschwitz).

Other important topics researched by Museum historians include: the death toll at KL Auschwitz (Franciszek Piper), KL Auschwitz escapee reports (Henryk Świebicki), the resistance movement in the camp and its vicinity (Henryk Świebicki), plundering the property of victims (Andrzej Strzelecki), Buna sub-camp and the history of IG Farbenindustrie (Piotr Setkiewicz), criminal medical experiments (Irena Strzelecka), the history of specific sections of the camp (Irena Strzelecka), the fate of Jews deported from Łódź Ghetto to KL Auschwitz (Andrzej Strzelecki), the extermination in Auschwitz of Poles expelled from the Zamość Region in 1942-1943 (Helena Kubica), the fate of Gypsies (Romanies) in Nazi occupied Europe and their extermination in Auschwitz (Wacław Długoborski), Jehovah's Witnesses at KL Auschwitz (Teresa Wontor-Cichy), and the biographies of resistance movement members, including the figure of Cavalry Captain Witold Pilecki and Second Lieutenant Stefan Jasiński (Adam Cyra).

The fruit of many years of research at the Museum was the comprehensive five-volume publication, available in a number of languages, entitled *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*.



One of the most important works on the history of KL Auschwitz is *Kalendarz wydarzeń w KL Auschwitz* (Auschwitz Chronicle) by Danuta Czech, Museum historian.



After many years of research the historian Helena Kubica publishes her album, entitled: *Nie wolno o nich zapomnieć* (We Should Never Forget Them), dedicated to the memory of children deported to KL Auschwitz. The majority of them were murdered by the Nazis upon arrival at the camp.

# EXHIBITIONS AND MEMORY

## SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF THE MUSEUM

THE ORIGINAL AREA INCLUDING THE BUILDINGS, RUINS AND TRACES OF THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE POINT AT THE UNIQUENESS OF THE PLACE. IT CONTAINS AREAS WITH HUMAN ASH, THE RUINS OF GAS CHAMBERS AND CREMATORIA, PLACES WHERE SS DOCTORS CARRIED OUT SELECTIONS, THE ROUTES ALONG WHICH PEOPLE WERE LED TO THE GAS CHAMBERS, PLACES WHERE ENTIRE FAMILIES AWAITED DEATH, PLACES OF PRISONER MUTINY AND PLACES OF EXECUTIONS.



Photo: Lidia Foryciarz

Photographs of Jews deported to Auschwitz, found at the camp after liberation. Fragment of the exhibition in the building containing the former baths at Birkenau.

## THE MAIN EXHIBITION AT FORMER KL AUSCHWITZ I

In 1947, the first permanent exhibition was opened in the former prison blocks of Auschwitz I. In 1955 it was replaced by a new exhibition which continues to exist with only minor changes.

The exhibition depicts the two basic functions of KL Auschwitz: **the concentration camp** for prisoners of various nationalities and the **largest centre for the mass extermination** of European Jews.

## THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

– the exhibition shows the living conditions offered to Auschwitz prisoners, who died in the camp as a result of torturous hard labour, hunger, disease, experiments, executions and a range of punishments and torture. It is here that the photographs of prisoners who died in the camp, documents, and works of art depicting life at the camp can also be seen. The Block which has been opened to the public and which served as a camp arrest area depicts the original rooms and cells, where prisoners were held as well as others from outside the camp, arrested for attempting to help the imprisoned. Some of the walls, doors and window sills contain drawings and inscriptions dating back to the time of

the camp. This Block also contains exhibitions dedicated to the resistance movement at the camp, punishments and executions as well as the fate of the police prisoners. In the punishment cells located in the cellar, the SS put prisoners who were found guilty of violating the camp regulations. In 1941, those sentenced to death by starvation were put there. In the cellar of this Block the Polish monk Maksymilian Maria Kolbe died. It was he who exchanged places to save a prisoner, putting himself in the group of those sentenced to death by starvation. In the basement of this building in the autumn of 1941 the SS carried out the first attempt of mass killing of people by means of Cyclone B gas.



Photo: Ryszard Dornacki

The Museum exhibits one of the most shocking images of crime – almost 2 tons of hair shaven from victims.



Photo: Stanisław Wójcicki

Gas Chamber No. I at Auschwitz I. Its present appearance.

## CENTRE FOR THE MASS EXTERMINATION OF EUROPEAN JEWS

– the exhibition illustrates the extermination process, starting with the arrival of Jews on the unloading ramp, through selection by SS doctors and death in the gas chambers. One of the most shocking examples of these crimes is almost 2 tons of hair cut from the heads of victims. Equally moving are the original belongings of deportees. These were found

after liberation and include talliths, spectacles, suitcases with names and addresses of victims, shoes, artificial limbs, children's clothes, bowls and other items. These objects are just a small part of the belongings which the German camp authorities did not manage to send deep into the Third Reich or destroy before the evacuation of Auschwitz.

## COMMEMORATING BIRKENAU

IN CONSIDERATION OF THE FACT THAT THE MAJORITY OF AUSCHWITZ VICTIMS WERE MURDERED IN BIRKENAU, IT WAS DECIDED NOT TO CREATE A MUSEUM EXHIBITION THERE AND TO LEAVE THE AREA UNTOUCHED.

The only existing exhibition at Birkenau was opened in 2001 in the so-called Sauna building. It was here that new camp arrivals were registered and disinfected. One can learn about the function and history of these premises by walking from one room to the next in exactly the same order as once the victims were forced to do. The final room contains about 2,000 photographs, found after the liberation of the camp. These were brought by Jews deported to Auschwitz.

Birkenau contains a monument commemorating camp victims.

In 2005 two tragic locations, con-

nected with the history of deportation and extermination, were commemorated:

- the location of the first gas chamber, started up by the Germans in the spring of 1942, in the vicinity of the camp at Birkenau, known as the Little Red House;
- the siding located between Auschwitz and Birkenau (the so-called Judenrampe), where between the spring of 1942 and May 1944 transports with deported Jews, Poles and Romanians arrived. At the Judenrampe the newly-arrived Jews were subjected to selections by SS doctors.

## NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

The former Auschwitz I camp also contains other permanent exhibitions, the so-called national exhibitions, set up initially by former prisoners from a number of countries and associated under the International Auschwitz Committee. The purpose of these exhibitions is to spread knowledge about Nazi occupation of the countries from which people were deported to Auschwitz and to present the fate of the citizens.

The first such exhibition was organized in 1960. Over the decades, some of the exhibitions were closed down, some were partly or entirely modified, and new ones were mounted. These exhibitions are the work of teams of specialists, appointed by various countries whose citizens fell victim at Auschwitz. They are prepared in cooperation with the Museum and approved by the International Auschwitz Council.



Birkenau. The ruins of Gas Chamber and Crematorium No. III.



Birkenau. A memorial plaque at the ramp, where trains stopped with camp deportees. In the foreground German wartime photographs.



The Wall of Death where the Nazis executed thousands of people by shooting.

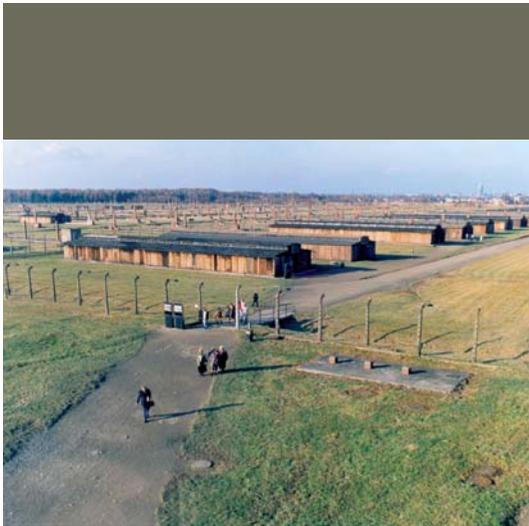


Photo: Wiesław Zieliński

Fragment of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp. Barracks in the quarantine section and the remnants of other prisoner barracks can be seen.



Photo: Jarosław Winiarski

Fragment of the exhibition entitled: "The Citizen Betrayed. To the Memory of Holocaust Victims from Hungary".



Photo: Tomasz Pielieżyński

The main objective of the Publishers is to pay homage to those who died at the camp, to document the Holocaust, the atrocities committed by the Nazis and to disseminate information about Auschwitz.

At present, the following exhibitions are open to the public:

- "Shoah" (exhibition prepared by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem);
- "Tragedy. Valour. Liberation" (exhibition prepared by Russian Federation);
- "The Struggle and Martyrdom of the Polish Nation, 1939-1945";
- "Extermination of European Roma";
- "The Tragedy of Slovak Jews";
- "Prisoners from Bohemia at KL Auschwitz";
- "The Citizen Betrayed. To the Memory of Holocaust Victims from Hungary";
- "People Deported from France to KL Auschwitz";
- "Belgium 1940-1944. Occupation and Deportation to KL Auschwitz";
- "Persecution and Deportation of Jews from Holland in 1940-1945"

## TEMPORARY AND TOURING EXHIBITIONS

In its almost 70 year history the Museum has organized almost 400 temporary and touring exhibitions. Apart from Poland the exhibitions have also been presented in e.g. Aus-

tria, (former) Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, (former) Soviet Union, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA.

## PUBLISHING

THE PUBLISHING HOUSE HAS PRINTED HUNDREDS OF ITEMS WITH A TOTAL PRINT RUN OF AROUND 8 MILLION.

The main aim of the Publishers is to commemorate camp victims, to document the Holocaust and the crimes perpetrated in the camp by the Nazis and to widely circulate topics relating to Auschwitz.

Publications are in a number of languages and they include academic and popular research, belles-lettres, memoirs, albums, catalogues, guidebooks, poetry, posters and documentaries on the history of the camp.

The most important publications include the *Kalendarz wydarzeń w KL Auschwitz* (Auschwitz Chronicle) by Danuta Czech and a five-volume joint history of the camp entitled *Auschwitz 1940-1945. Węzłowe zagadnienia z dziejów KL Auschwitz* (Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp). This key work on the history of KL Auschwitz is published in a number of languages.

The research periodical *Zeszyty Oświęcimskie* (published in Polish and German) has been published since 1957. The publication contains findings of Museum research staff and other researchers on aspects of camp history.

The information bulletin *PRO MEMORIA* has been published since 1994. The purpose of the periodical is to offer comprehensive information on Museum activities from a research, political, and social point of view. As opposed to the academic character of *Zeszyty Oświęcimskie*, the bulletin targets as wide a readership as possible: from researchers to high school students.

All of the above publications can be bought on site in the sales points, located on Museum premises. They can also be purchased online ([www.auschwitz.org](http://www.auschwitz.org)).

## INTERNET

The Museum's website ([www.auschwitz.org](http://www.auschwitz.org)) allows visitors to acquaint themselves with the history of KL Auschwitz and gives access to archive materials containing the names of almost 100,000 prisoners murdered at KL Auschwitz. The Museum can also be contacted via e-mail ([muzeum@auschwitz.org](mailto:muzeum@auschwitz.org)). The website may also be used to prepare visits – it contains useful information on how to get to the Museum, prices, booking a guide and accommodation in Oświęcim.

The website also contains information on the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust and the things that the Centre offers. Additionally, there is access to information on the most important events at the Memorial, the structure of the Museum and the way its various sections function. There is also a gallery of old and modern photographs.

## VISITOR NUMBERS IN 2018 ACCORDING TO CONTINENT



## EDUCATION

### INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION ABOUT AUSCHWITZ AND THE HOLOCAUST (ICEAH)

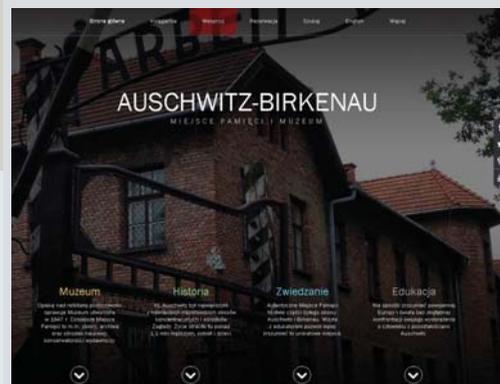
THE INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION ABOUT AUSCHWITZ AND THE HOLOCAUST (ICEAH) ORGANIZES POST-GRADUATE STUDIES, SEMINARS, SPECIAL TOPIC CONFERENCES, STUDY TOURS AND TRAVEL, WORKSHOPS AND SYMPOSIA FOR TEACHERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM POLAND AND ABROAD. LECTURES AND CLASSES ARE GIVEN BY MUSEUM RESEARCH STAFF AND TUTORS AT HIGHER INSTITUTES OF EDUCATION. THE CENTRE ALSO HELPS IN THE ORGANIZATION OF VISITS.

On 27 January 2005 during the 60th Anniversary of the liberation of KL Auschwitz several hundred former prisoners signed the founding act of the International Centre of Education for Auschwitz and the Holocaust, officially called into being by the Polish Minister of Culture in May 2005.

One of the basic activities of the Centre involves cooperation with young

people and teachers from Poland and abroad, as well as with Polish and foreign research institutes.

As part of its educational activities the Centre organizes lectures, talks, lessons at the Museum, workshops, conferences for teachers, symposia, the screening of films, drawing competitions, and essay competitions for the best piece of writing about the camp.



The website is visited by hundreds of thousands from all over the world, interested in learning more about the history of Auschwitz.

The Centre of Education is actively interested in the younger generation. Pupils from Moscow at an exhibition dedicated to the Romanies.

Photo: School No. 653 in Moscow



## THE ICEAH ORGANIZES:

### – POST-DIPLOMA STUDIES

Tri-semester post-graduate studies for teachers, recognized by the educational authorities, are organized jointly with the Academy of Pedagogics. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted towards camp and prisoner topics in the broad context of Nazi terror and genocide, particularly concerning Jews, but also Poles, Romanies (Gypsies) and other victims. This course of study relates to the origins and development of totalitarian systems and considers

concepts of racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance. It considers crucial aspects of World War II and its impact; it considers the culture of the Jewish nation and its role in literature, art and philosophy.

Well-known historians, sociologists, specialists in literature as well as other scholars and Museum research staff give classes.

### – SEMINARS

Meetings lasting a number of days with secondary and high school teachers specializing in the humanities, arts, and religion are organized in order to better prepare young people for their visit at the Museum. These meetings contain lectures on specific national and religious groups at KL Auschwitz-Birkenau. Documentaries are shown about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, talks are given in the Archives and Collections Section, and there are in-depth visits to the former concentration camp itself.

### – SPECIAL TOPIC CONFERENCES

One-day special topic conferences are dedicated to the most important events in the history of KL Auschwitz. These are designed for teachers who are graduates of ICEAH, interested in increasing their knowledge on Auschwitz, the Holocaust and World War II. These conferences offer extra detail on topics already referred to in seminars and post-graduate study courses. They are also a good opportunity to exchange views on how to educate the younger generation.

### – SEMINARS AND STUDY TOURS

#### FOR POLISH AND FOREIGN TEACHERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Seminars and study tours allow participants to learn about the history of Auschwitz in the context of the German occupation of Poland and Europe. Depending on age, interests and expectations each group of participants is offered an individual set of topics.



Photo: Bartosz Bartyzel

International seminar for European teachers.

## VISITING THE FORMER EXTERMINATION CAMP AUSCHWITZ – AN IMPORTANT PLACE FOR THE MODERN WORLD

SO FAR MORE THAN 30 MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE HAVE VISITED THE MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL.

Not long after liberation Auschwitz became a particularly important Memorial for the modern world. This is borne out by the constantly growing number of visitors. Hitherto the Museum and Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial have been visited by more than 30 million people from all over the world.

Ever since the 1990s the number of visitors has been constantly growing. Currently, over one million people visit the Museum each year from more than 100 countries. Visitors are mainly Poles, but there are also Americans, British, Italians, Germans, Italians, French and Israelis.

Homage is paid by numerous politicians and heads of state, who regard it their moral duty to visit the former camp. This place is seen as one of the strongest warnings for humanity. Władysław Bartoszewski, a former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs and camp survivor, had this to say: "Auschwitz is the world's largest ever cemetery without graves, where it is impossible to place a stone or flower to commemorate an individual. It is a cemetery without graves because the corpses have been scattered by the smoke in the sky. And this is binding..."



Photo: International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim

Each year the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial is visited by more than one million people from all over the world. In order to visit the two camps one may seek the assistance of a qualified Museum guide.

## OPENING HOURS

The Museum is open seven days a week:

- 7:30 am – 2 pm December
- 7:30 am – 3 pm January, November
- 7:30 am – 4 pm February
- 7:30 am – 5 pm March, October
- 7:30 am – 6 pm April, May, September
- 7:30 am – 7 pm June – August

The above opening hours are for visiting the former concentration camp. The Former Prisoner Information Office, the Archives, the Collections Section, the Library, the Administrative Offices, and other sections are open (national holidays excepted) from Monday to Friday between 7 am and 3 pm. The Museum is closed on 1st January, 25th December and Easter Sunday.

## VISITORS – GENERAL COMMENTS

EACH VISITOR DECIDES HOW MUCH TIME HE WANTS TO SPEND AT THE CAMP, BUT IT IS ESTIMATED THAT APPROXIMATELY THREE AND A HALF HOURS ARE REQUIRED TO VISIT THE AREA AND THE TWO FORMER CAMPS. GUIDED TOURS CAN BE GENERAL (APPROX. THREE AND A HALF HOURS), SPECIALIST (APPROXIMATELY 6 HOURS) OR CAN EVEN TAKE TWO DAYS.

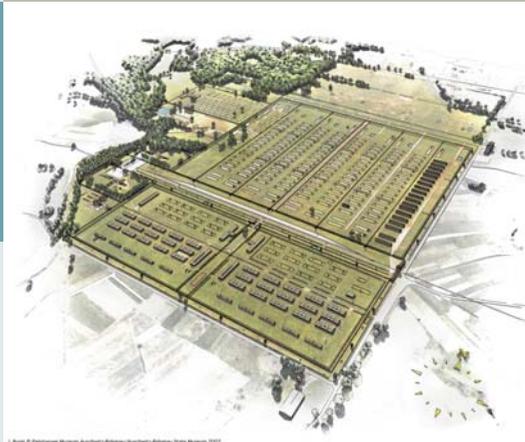
Entrance to the Memorial is free of charge. It is possible to visit the exhibitions and some original structures of both former camps, Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau. In Auschwitz I, there is no access to some of the Blocks (for example, the administrative areas), whilst most of the barracks at Auschwitz II-Birkenau are open to visitors.

One should remember the four important places of commemoration which are located at some distance from the camp:

- the location of the first gas chamber in Birkenau, the so-called Little Red House (a few hundred metres to the north of Birkenau);
- the location of the second gas chamber in Birkenau, the so-called Little White House (a few hundred metres to the west of Birkenau);
- the siding, the so-called Judenrampe, where between the spring of 1942 and May 1944 Jews, Poles and Romanies were deported to the camp (between Auschwitz and Birkenau,



Former Auschwitz I camp.



Former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp.

- approx. 1.5 km from the camps);
- mass grave of prisoners who died just before and just after the liberation of Auschwitz.

Sites managed by the Museum, located at some distance from Auschwitz I (A) and Auschwitz II-Birkenau (B):

- place where the first two gas chambers of Birkenau were located (1, 3);
- the siding where deportees arrived (4);
- a memorial obelisk commemorating murdered Soviet POWs (2);
- mass grave of prisoners who died just before and just after the liberation of Auschwitz (5).

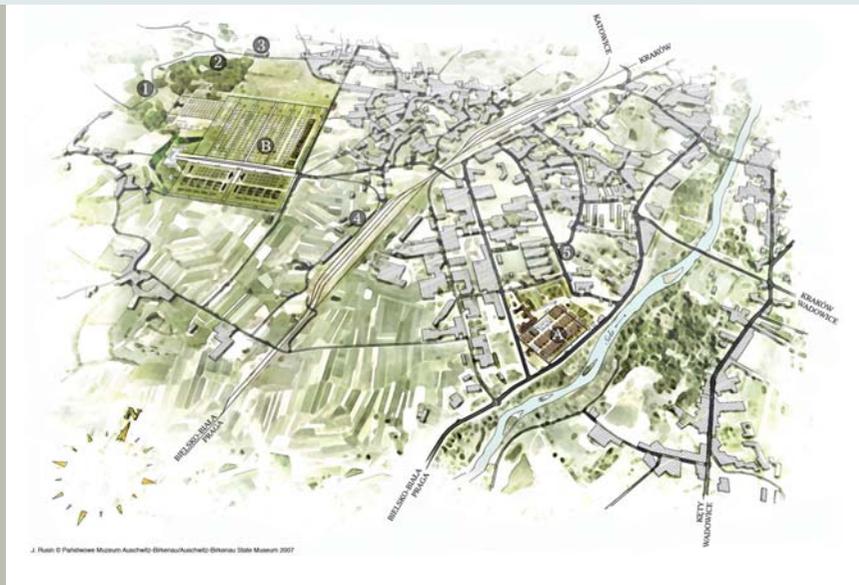




Photo: Jarko Mensfeldt

Jewish prayer shawls. Fragment of the exhibition at the former Auschwitz I camp.

## FORMER CAMP AT AUSCHWITZ I

On the site of Auschwitz I, the SS set up the first camp for men (1940) and women (1942). It was here that the first experiments on killing human beings with Cyclone B took place, that the first groups of deported Jews were murdered, that the first criminal medical experiments on prisoners were carried out, that

the majority of people were executed by being shot, that the central camp detention area for prisoners from the entire camp complex was located, and that the headquarters and the majority of SS offices were placed. From here, the camp authorities managed the further expansion of the site.

## FORMER CAMP AT AUSCHWITZ II-BIRKENAU

At Birkenau the Nazis built most of their equipment for mass extermination. About a million European Jews were murdered. Birkenau was also the largest concentration camp, (with more than 300 primitive, mainly wooden, barracks), in which in 1944 more than 90,000 Jews, Poles, Romanies, Soviet citizens and others were kept. There are certain areas of the former camp that contain human

ash and many post-camp remains.

The vast open space, dozens of primitive prisoner barracks and hundreds of remnants, more than 13 kilometres of camp fencing, 10 kilometres of camp roads and more than 2 kilometres of rail track all fully encapsulate the specific camp architecture of Auschwitz designed for one sole purpose: the extermination of humans.



Photo: Wiesław Zieliński

The interior of a brick residential barracks in Birkenau.

## EDUCATORS

Engaging the services of a Museum educator while touring the grounds of the two former camps is highly recommended (and is obligatory for organized groups). The educators have a full command of the historical facts and know

the best route through the exhibitions. There are educators to guide visitors in English as well as Dutch, Croatian, Czech, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovakian, Spanish, and Swedish.

Birkenau. International Monument of the Camp Victims.



Photo: Ryszard Domańsk

Educator services may be reserved  
- online ([visit.auschwitz.org](http://visit.auschwitz.org));  
- at the Visitor Reception Point at the Museum, where all the requisite formalities can be arranged on the spot.  
Because of the great interest and high number of visitors, we recommend making reservations in advance. There is a charge for the services of an educator.  
During the period of the peak number of visitors, from April 1 to October 31, admission to the Museum grounds between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM is possible only when accompanied by an educator. Individual visitors may join guided tours in English, French, German, Italian, Polish, and Spanish during this period.

## GUIDEBOOKS

Before starting the visit, you may purchase the Museum guidebook written in several languages, containing a

brief description of the camp objects, exhibitions, and maps of Auschwitz and Birkenau with a marked visit route.

## DOCUMENTARY FILM

Before or after visiting the site of the former camp it is possible to watch a 15-minute documentary film (subject to the purchase of a ticket), which contains a fragment of the ma-

terials filmed by Red Army cameramen and which depicts the liberation of the camp by Soviet soldiers, survivors and the uncovering of evidence of crime.

## MOVING BETWEEN THE FORMER CAMPS

The distance of three kilometres between Auschwitz and Birkenau can be covered on foot by walking across the camp premises which during the war were occupied by German industrial plants, workshops, store rooms, offices and the camp's technical support – the place where prisoners worked and died. The remains of a number of sidings and

ramps can be seen here. This is where the trains arrived with camp deportees. It was here also that SS doctors embarked on the selection process. There is a car park not far from the two former camps. This permits those with their own means of transport to move about. Those who do not arrive by car may use the Auschwitz-Birkenau shuttle bus.

“MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD KNOW WHAT AUSCHWITZ WAS BUT IT IS BASIC THAT WE RETAIN IN OUR MINDS AND MEMORIES AWARENESS THAT IT IS HUMANS WHO DECIDE WHETHER SUCH A TRAGEDY WILL EVER TAKE PLACE AGAIN.

THIS IS THE WORK OF HUMANS AND IT IS HUMANS ALONE WHO CAN PREVENT ANY SUCH RETURN.”

(PROFESSOR WŁADYSŁAW BARTOSZEWSKI,  
A FORMER AUSCHWITZ PRISONER).



Photo: Jarko Mensfelt

Interest in the tragic history of Auschwitz continues irrespective of the passage of time.



Photo: Lidia Foryciarz

MUSEUM  
ADDRESS:

Memorial  
**Auschwitz**  
**Birkenau**  
State Museum

**PAŃSTWOWE MUZEUM  
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU**

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**Graphics used in the folder:** *Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Past and the Present*

comes from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum; some materials were made available thanks to the kindness of Bartosz Bartyzel, Ryszard Domasiak, Lidia Foryciarz, Wojciech Gorgolewski, Nel Jastrzębiowska, Henryk Makarewicz, Jarko Mensfelt, Stanisław Momot, Rafał Pióro, Mieczysław Stec, Wiesław Zieliński and the International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim and School No. 653 in Moscow

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# HISTORY OF AUSCHWITZ – CALENDAR

## 1939

- **1 September** – Nazi Germany attacks Poland. The outbreak of World War II.
- **End 1939** – Resulting from the mass arrests of Poles and prisons becoming overcrowded in Upper Silesia and Zagłębie Dąbrowskie the Higher Office of the SS and Police Commander in Wrocław decides to draw up a project of a concentration camp for Poles.

## 1940

- **27 April** – Following a number of inspections at various sites, Heinrich Himmler, Commander of the SS, gives out the order to establish a concentration camp in the former artillery barracks in Oświęcim, known at the time as Auschwitz.
- **14 June** – German authorities direct the first transport of political prisoners to Auschwitz – 728 Poles, including a small group of Polish Jews. This day is recognized as the day the camp started functioning. In the period 1940-1945 about 405,000 prisoners are registered at the camp, of which 270,000 were men.
- **19 June** – First relocation of local people in order to prevent them from witnessing the crimes, contacting prisoners and helping them escape. The next waves of relocation were connected with plans to develop Auschwitz. In total, the Germans moved at least 8,000 Poles from Oświęcim and its nearby villages. In addition, they deported to nearby ghettos the entire Jewish population of Oświęcim (approx. 7,000). Eight villages are destroyed and more than a hundred buildings demolished, located in Oświęcim and the direct vicinity of the camp.

- **6 July** – First prisoner, Tadeusz Wiejowski, escapes. Throughout the history of the camp, out of a total of more than one million deportees, a few hundred prisoners attempt to escape. These were mainly Poles, Soviets and Jews. More than 190 prisoners managed to escape.
- **Autumn** – Polish resistance informs the Polish Government in exile in London about the camp.
- **22 November** – The first execution through firing squad. 40 Poles were executed.

## 1941

- **1 March** – Commander of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, pays his first inspection visit to Auschwitz. He gives out orders to expand the camp and to supply IG Farbenindustrie with 10,000 prisoners to build industrial plants.
- **23 April** – In reprisal for an escaped prisoner the camp Commandant, Rudolf Höss, for the first time sentences 10 prisoners to death by starvation.
- **6 June** – First transport of Czech political prisoners. The start of deportation to Auschwitz of non-Polish prisoners.
- **3 September** – First mass murder of people with the use of Cyclone B. About 600 Soviet and 250 Polish prisoners die.
- **Autumn** – Camp authorities start operating the first gas chamber in Auschwitz I.
- **October** – Establishment of a Soviet POWs camp in Auschwitz I.
- Work starts on building the second part of the camp, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, in place of the demolished village of Brzezinka.
- **11 November** – In the first execution at the Wall of Death the Nazis shoot 151 Polish prisoners.

## 1942

- **Beginning of the year** – Start of mass extermination of Jews in the gas chambers.
- **March** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 27,000 Jews from Slovakia and 69,000 Jews from France.
- **March** – Auschwitz II-Birkenau starts functioning.
- **26 March** – First 2,000 women arrive in Auschwitz (out of about 130,000 registered in the camp to the end of its existence).
- **March-July** – Start-up of temporary gas chambers alongside Auschwitz II-Birkenau.
- **Spring** – So-called Judenrampe, located between Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau starts functioning. It was here that transports to Auschwitz arrived with Jews, as well as Poles, Romanies (Gypsies) and prisoners of other nationalities.
- **May** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 300,000 Jews from Poland and 23,000 Jews from Germany and Austria.
- **4 May** – SS carry out the first selection at the camp in Birkenau. Selected prisoners are murdered in the gas chamber.
- **10 June** – Mutiny and an attempt at mass escape of about 50 Polish prisoners from the penal company in Birkenau. 7 managed to escape.
- **July** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 60,000 Jews from Holland.
- **July** – Start-up of Góleschau sub-camp near the cement works of Góleszów near Cieszyn – the first of almost 50 Auschwitz sub-camps.
- **29 July** – Edward Schulte, German industrialist and anti-Nazi, informs the Allies that Himmler was present in Auschwitz in July

at the murder of 499 Jews with Cyclone B in so-called Bunker No. 2. This was the first item of information from a German source which was so specific about the extermination of Jews in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. From the autumn of 1940 the Allies were regularly informed about what was happening in Auschwitz. They were mainly informed by the Polish Government in exile in London, which was in constant contact with the Polish resistance, active both inside the camp and in its vicinity.

- **August** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 25,000 Jews from Belgium and 10,000 Jews from Yugoslavia.
- **30 October** – Synthetic rubber factory built by IG Farbenindustrie gave rise to Buna sub-camp, later renamed as Auschwitz III-Monowitz. In 1942-1944 a total of close to 50 KL Auschwitz sub-camps and external work squads came into being. The prisoners who occupied these mainly worked at German industrial enterprises.
- **October** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 46,000 Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.
- **December** – First transport of Jews from Norway. In total, almost 700 people arrive in two transports.
- **13 December** – First transport of Poles evicted from the Zamość region as part of Hitler's "Generalplan Ost" (General Plan East) – the eviction and extermination of about 50 million Slavs (Poles, Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians and others) and the colonization by German settlers of Central and Eastern Europe, with Poland being the first territories to be occupied.
- **End of the year** – SS doctors start sterilization experiments on

male and female prisoners.

## 1943

- **26 February** – Setting up in Birkenau of the so-called family Gypsy camp for Romanies.
- **March** – Start of deportation of 55,000 Jews from Greece.
- **22 March – 25 June** – Camp authorities start up four crematoria with gas chambers at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.
- **7 June** – Civilian workers of Krupps Establishments start assembling machinery on the shop floor leased out by the camp authorities. Hundreds of German companies were involved in the building of the camp in Auschwitz. Many of these, as e.g. IG Farbenindustrie or Siemens drew extra benefits by availing themselves of camp slave labour.
- **19 July** – Largest public execution in Auschwitz I. As a reprisal for the escape of a handful of prisoners and for contacting the civilian population the SS hang 12 Polish prisoners on the gallows.
- **9 September** – Establishment at Birkenau of the so-called Theresienstadt camp for Jews arriving from the ghetto in Terezín.
- **October** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 7,500 Jews from Italy.

## 1944

- **May** – First Ally planes flying over Auschwitz take aerial photographs, which show the gas chambers and smoke from the burning pits. Three months later American and British planes start bombing the synthetic rubber and liquid fuel plant of the German concern IG Farbenindustrie, located just a few kilometres from Birkenau.
- **16 May** – Siding which is located inside the camp is released for use. It permits deportees

to be transported directly to Gas Chambers Nos. II and III at Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The start of deportation to Auschwitz of almost 430,000 Jews from Hungary.

- **10–12 July** – Liquidation of the so-called Theresienstadt family camp. The Nazis murder about 7,000 Jews in the gas chambers.
- **August** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 67,000 Jews from the ghetto in Litzmannstadt (Łódź).
- **2 August** – Liquidation of the "family Gypsy camp" – the SS murder more than 3,000 Romanies (Gypsies) in the gas chambers.
- **12 August** – Start of deportation to Auschwitz of 13,000 Poles, arrested en masse after the start of the Warsaw Uprising.
- **7 October** – Sonderkommando Mutiny. During the mutiny 3 members of the SS die as well as 450 Sonderkommando prisoners, Jewish prisoners forced to incinerate in the crematoria corpses of the murdered.
- **November** – Mass murder of Jews in the gas chambers is stopped.

## 1945

- **6 January** – Last execution of about 70 Poles sentenced to death by a German summary court. Four Jewish women, sentenced for helping to prepare the Sonderkommando Mutiny, are hanged on the gallows at the last public execution.
- **17 January** – Start of the Death Marches – the SS evacuate almost 60,000 KL Auschwitz prisoners.
- **20-26 January** – Germans blow up the gas chambers and crematoria in Birkenau.
- **27 January** – 7,500 prisoners live to see the liberation of Auschwitz by units of the Soviet army.



# PLEASE HELP MAINTAIN THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MUSEUM AND MEMORIAL



Auschwitz is forever a painful expression of the world's bad conscience. The remains of the Nazi death camp reminds us of the darkest moments of human history.

It was here between 1940 and 1945 that the Nazis murdered more than a million Jews, as well as tens of thousands of Poles, Romanies and Sinti, Soviet POWs and other innocent people.

We count on your help to support the site of Auschwitz, its buildings and many remains and, by this virtue, the memory of those that died.

Donations might be made via the website [www.auschwitz.org](http://www.auschwitz.org)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

