



# AUSCHWITZ- -BIRKENAU

MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

*A BRIEF HISTORY  
AND BASIC FACTS*



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## KL AUSCHWITZ – A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CAMP (1940-1945)

### ESTABLISHMENT

The world has come to associate Auschwitz as the symbol of the Holocaust, of genocide and terror. It was set up by the Germans 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 en masse 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 gradually became the largest centre of the mass murder of the Jews.

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### Eviction of the Local Population

In 1940-1941, the Germans evicted the inhabitants of the district in which the camp was located as well as those of eight villages in its vicinity. Jews, who constituted about 60% of pre-war Oświęcim, were also evicted, whilst many of the Poles who remained were deported to Germany and submitted to forced labour.

About one thousand houses were demolished in the town and the surrounding area. Some of the buildings were occupied by SS officers 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 local industrial plants, some of which they expanded, whilst others they demolished in order to build new factories connected with Third Reich war production. The area immediately around the camp was developed as the camp's technical support sector with workshops, warehouses, offices, and barracks for the SS.



The camp personnel comprised more than 8,000 members of the SS



Eviction of the Polish population from the area in the vicinity of the camp



April 1941, Germans evicting the Jews of Oświęcim. Before the war, 7,000 Jews lived in this town of 12,000





SS photograph

Work on extending the camp



SS photograph

Building the camp baths. In the background are Gas Chambers and Crematoria IV and V



National archives in Washington, DC

Aerial photograph taken by the Allies in 1944. The photograph shows Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Auschwitz III-Monowitz, and the IG Farben Chemical Plant

### EXPANSION

The location of the camp – almost in the centre of German-occupied Europe – and its good communication routes led to the Nazis 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 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 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 and exterminated the majority of Jews deported to the camp;
- the third was **Auschwitz III-Monowitz** (also called Buna. In 1944, it held about 10,000 prisoners). Initially it was one of the Auschwitz sub-camps. 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 Auschwitz III. Some of the other sub-camps were controlled by it.

Altogether, in 1942-1944 more than 40 Auschwitz sub-camps were established, using the slave labour of the prisoners. They were established mainly in the vicinity of German industrial plants and stock and crop raising farms.



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

The camps were isolated from the outside world by high voltage electric wire

### Other Sub-camps

Between 1942 and 1944, more than 40 sub-camps were also created, mainly next to a variety of German industrial plants and stock and crop raising farms. The prisoners were exploited as slave labour.

In 1943, the Auschwitz camp complex comprised three large camps: **Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II-Birkenau, and Auschwitz III-Monowitz**, as well as dozens of smaller sub-camps

### Cut off from the Outside World

The Germans isolated all 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 barbed wire perimeter. 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.



SS photograph

Photographs of prisoners registered in the camp: A Jewish boy, a young gypsy, and a Polish girl

### VICTIMS AT KL AUSCHWITZ – NUMBERS AND NATIONALITIES

#### Auschwitz as a Concentration Camp

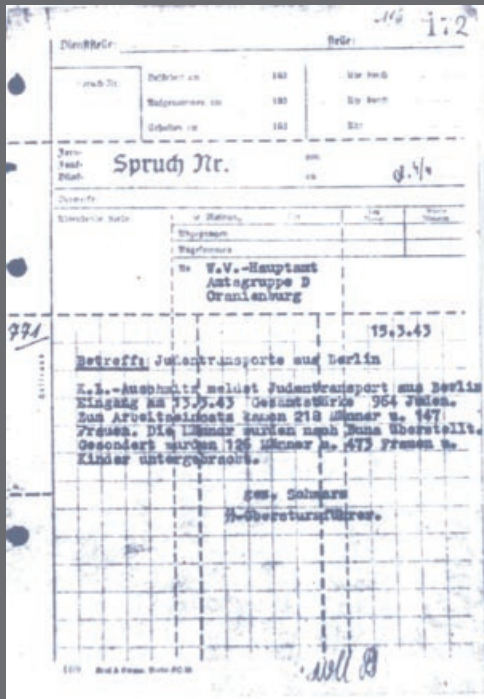
Throughout its existence, Auschwitz always functioned as a concentration camp. With time, it became the Nazis' largest Konzentrationslager. Initially, mainly Poles were sent there by the German occupiers. The Nazis chose those whom they regarded as being particularly dangerous: members of the Polish elite, political, social and spiritual leaders, the intelligentsia, representatives of culture and science, people in the resistance and officers. Others were rounded up and taken to the camp during street raids or during operations to remove people from their homes. With time, the Nazis also started deporting groups of prisoners from other occupied countries. Each prisoner was registered and given a number. From 1942, Jews were transported en masse ready to be executed in Auschwitz. After selection by SS doctors, those classified as fit to work or selected to undergo criminal medical experiments, were registered in the camp.



Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives

Personal card of a Polish prisoner arrested for helping Jews





Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives

Telegram of March 15, 1943 about the arrival at Auschwitz of 964 Jews of Berlin. The last sentence reads: "126 men and 473 women and children were separately accommodated" which was a euphemism for murdering them in the gas chambers



SS photograph

Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Jews of Hungary on the unloading platform. In the background gas chambers with crematoria are visible

From all the people deported to Auschwitz, around 400,000 people were registered at the camp. Of these more than 50% died in Auschwitz of hunger, excessive forced labour practices, terror, executions, appalling living conditions, illness and epidemics, punishment, torture and criminal medical experiments. At the time of the liberation, there were 7,000 people still in the camp. Some 200,000 prisoners were transferred by the Germans to other concentration camps, where a significant number of them died.

#### Categories of Prisoners in Auschwitz

- **Political Prisoners** (red triangles) – Most of these were Poles arrested during various repressive actions, or for their activities in the resistance movement. Altogether there were 160,000 of them.
- **Jews** (two triangles forming a six-pointed star) – From 1943 onwards they were the most numerous group of prisoners in the camp. Around 200,000 were registered.
- **Asocial Prisoners** (black triangles) – This category included more than 20,000 registered Gypsies, as well as the few prostitutes imprisoned in the camp.
- **Prisoners of War** (marked "SU" – "Sowjet Union") – Only Soviet POWs, numbering some 12,000 were marked in this category in Auschwitz.
- **Correctional Prisoners** (marked with "EH" – "Erziehungshäftling") – They were imprisoned for real or alleged violation of discipline at work. They are estimated to number 11,000.
- **Criminal Prisoners** (green triangle) – This category was not numerous (several hundred prisoners). Initially, the camp authorities chose functionary prisoners from among them to help the SS.
- **Jehovah's Witnesses** (violet triangle) – Imprisoned in the camp for their behaviour and attitudes resulting from their religious convictions. There were at least 138 Jehovah's Witnesses registered in this category.
- **Homosexuals** (pink triangle) – at least several dozen prisoners were put in the camp and marked with this category.

#### Auschwitz and the Extermination of Jews

In 1942, Auschwitz was given a second role – it became the centre of extermination for European Jews. The Nazis marked all Jews living in Europe for complete extermination, irrespective of their age, sex, profession, citizenship, or political convictions. The only reason that they died was because they were Jews. After selection at the unloading platforms, 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. According to the camp commandant Rudolph Höss, usually 70-75% of those deported were sent immediately to their deaths. These were never recorded in the camp as they were never registered and given numbers.



SS photograph

Birkenau – Jews after selection awaiting death in the gas chambers



Photograph: Ryszard Domszok

Zyklon B canister, and pellets from which the gas emanated



SS photograph

Furnace room in the Gas Chamber and Crematorium II building at Birkenau

#### Transports of Jews by the countries<sup>a</sup> from which they were deported:

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Hungary                                 | 438,000 <sup>b</sup> |
| Poland                                  | 300,000              |
| France                                  | 69,000               |
| The Netherlands                         | 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                |
| Latvia                                  | 1,000                |
| Norway                                  | 690                  |
| Concentration camps and unknown origins | 34,000               |
| Total                                   | 1,100,000            |

Prepared by Franciszek Piper

<sup>a</sup> According to pre-war borders  
<sup>b</sup> According to wartime borders

#### The Death Toll

Auschwitz victims can be divided into two basic groups:

- At least 900,000 Jews who were not registered, most of whom were murdered in the gas chambers immediately after arrival. Formally, they never became Auschwitz prisoners.
- Prisoners registered in the camp, amounting to 400,000 who were marked with numbers, triangles, stars (Jews), or other markings, showing the reason for their imprisonment.

Historians estimate that at least 1.1 million Jews were directed to Auschwitz during wartime Europe. Others included almost 150,000 Poles (mainly political prisoners), about 23,000 Roma from a number of European countries, more than 15,000 Soviet POWs, and 25,000 prisoners of various nationalities.

The majority of deported Jews were immediately sent to the gas chambers. It is estimated that in the period 1940-1945 between 1.1 and 1.5 million people died at KL Auschwitz.





Photograph taken by the camp resistance movement in summer 1944

Birkenau. Sonderkommando prisoners burning the corpses of the gassed Jews



Liberated prisoners leaving the camp at Birkenau. Taken from a film shot by Soviet cameramen after liberation



When the camp was liberated on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1945, there were more than 300 children amongst the 7,000 prisoners. Taken from a film shot by Soviet cameramen after liberation

| The Victims of Auschwitz (Minimum Estimations) |                     |                          |
|--|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Ethnicity                                      | Number of Deportees | Number of those Murdered |
| Jews   | 1,100,000           | 1,000,000                |
| Poles  | 140-150,000         | 70-75,000                |
| Gypsies  | 23,000              | 20,000                   |
| Soviet POWs                                    | 15,000              | 14,000                   |
| Others   | 25,000              | 12,000                   |

Prepared by Franciszek Piper

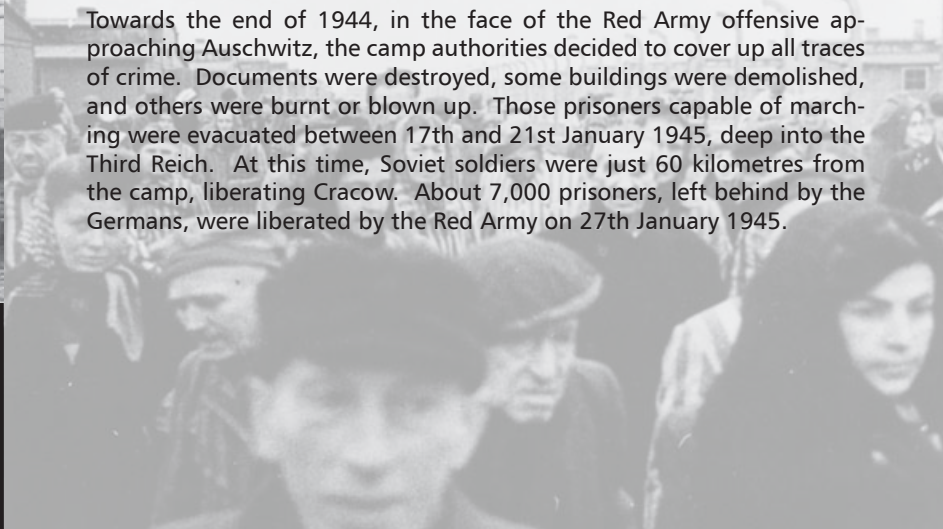
In 1940-1945, the Nazis deported more than a million Jews to Auschwitz. Others included almost 150,000 Poles, 23,000 Roma, 15,000 Soviet POWs, and 25,000 prisoners of various nationalities.

| Deportees to Auschwitz registered as prisoners |         |
|--|---------|
| Ethnicity                                      | Numbers |
| Jews   | 200,000 |
| Poles  | 140,000 |
| Gypsies  | 21,000  |
| Soviet POWs                                    | 12,000  |
| Others   | 25,000  |

Prepared by Franciszek Piper

## LIBERATION

Towards the end of 1944, in the face of the Red Army offensive approaching Auschwitz, the camp authorities decided to cover up all traces of crime. Documents were destroyed, some buildings were demolished, and others were burnt or blown up. Those prisoners capable of marching were evacuated between 17th and 21st January 1945, deep into the Third Reich. At this time, Soviet soldiers were just 60 kilometres from the camp, liberating Cracow. About 7,000 prisoners, left behind by the Germans, were liberated by the Red Army on 27th January 1945.



Mass grave of Nazi victims discovered after the liberation of the camp. Taken from a film shot by Soviet cameramen after liberation



The burial of victims from the final days of the camp. Taken from a film shot by Soviet cameramen after liberation



Items belonging to victims of Auschwitz discovered after liberation

## HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM

### THE 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 organised 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 opening of the Museum, former prisoners prepared an exhibition on the premises. The exhibition opened on 14 June 1947. About 50,000 people participated in the opening ceremony, including former prisoners, relatives of the murdered, visitors from almost every corner of Poland, Polish authority delegates, as well as representatives of the Main Commission for Investigation of the Nazi Crimes, the Central Jewish Historical Committee, and delegates from the British, Czechoslovakian, and French Embassies.

### CALLED INTO BEING

On 2 July 1947, the Polish Parliament passed an Act on the preservation "for All Time of the Land and Premises of the Former Camp" and called into being the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

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 or 477 acres. 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 is to safeguard the former camp, its buildings and environs, to gather evidence and materials concerning Nazi atrocities, to subject them to scientific scrutiny, and to make them available to the public.

Despite this, there is still much debate amongst former prisoners, museum experts, conservationists, historians, teachers, and the mass media on how to organise, run, and develop the Museum.

Even before the Museum was opened, people wondered whether it should limit itself to reconstructing history, or rather explaining and translating the principal mechanisms underlying the criminal system. Views on the matter were radically different: some regarded that the area ought to be ploughed over, thus erasing all traces of genocide, others demanded that every single object be retained and protected.

The very word "museum" was also discussed. 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 to research the fate of those murdered. The Museum believes that its duty is to fulfil all of these functions as none cancels the others out, but rather acts as a common denominator.

Photograph: Wiesław Zieliński





Photograph: Wojciech Gorgolewski

Aerial photograph of the former Auschwitz I camp

## AREA OF THE MUSEUM

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

However, many locations and buildings connected with the functioning of KL Auschwitz were beyond the confines of the Museum. The actual area of the Museum and how much it should cover he caused heated discussion in Poland. Many things connected with the history of the camp were located at a considerable distance from Auschwitz. Taking into consideration the financial expense relating to the founding of the Museum, it was decided to place around 200 hectares or 500 acres of land under special protection.

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, in-camp roads, and the unloading platform 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, however, were destroyed before the liberation of the camp. Some structures were dismantled or demolished in late 1944 and early 1945 in January, when the camp was being liquidated and the SS were concealing their crimes. Some of the wooden barracks were dismantled after liberation.

In 2002, the Museum extended its area to include the location of the first gas chamber in Birkenau, the so-called Little Red House, and in 2004 the so-called Old Theatre building, where some of the camp warehouses were located during the war.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Museum is run under the authority of the Polish Ministry of Culture and is supported by Poland. Only since the 1990s has international financial support been offered for the preservation of certain structures.

After visiting the former camp, Ronald F. Lauder (USA) created the International Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum Conservation Project in 1989, as part of the already existing foundation named after him. Foundation experts calculated that 42 million dollars would be needed to carry out conservation work. The authors of the report assumed that mainly the governments of those countries whose citizens died in Auschwitz would provide funds for conservation purposes.

Activities on the part of the Lauder Foundation, support from Germany and the German states, as well as that of other states, various associations, foundations – including the French “Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah” – private individuals, and campaigns have permitted the Museum to carry out repair work on dozens of structures and to embark on projects aimed at commemorating the victims and explaining different sections of the former camp. Projects included conservation work on the central camp baths in Birkenau, the so-called Sauna. Work was also done on the location of the first gas chamber in Birkenau, the so-called Little Red House, and the unloading ramp (the Judenrampe), located between Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, to where in the period 1942-1944 Jews, Poles and Roma were brought.

## INTERNATIONAL AUSCHWITZ COUNCIL

In 1990, the Polish Minister of Culture and Art called into being the International Council of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. The Council comprised former KL Auschwitz prisoners, historians, and experts from France, Israel, Canada, Germany, Poland, the USA, and Great Britain. The Council acted as an advisory and opinion-making body. The Museum consulted the Council on important decisions concerning the functioning of the Memorial and on controversial matters directly relating to the Museum, but widely commented on in Poland and abroad, for example the proposed construction of the so-called supermarket, the Carmelite Monastery and the crosses on the so-called gravel pit.

In January 2000, the Prime Minister of Poland announced the creation of the International Auschwitz Council, which took over from the previous Council. The role of this Council differs in that it became the opinion-making and advisory body of the Prime Minister 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.

Aerial photograph of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp



Photograph: Wojciech Gorgolewski



## MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

The statutory duties of the Museum are to gather, store and conserve Museum collections and structures, to prepare them, and make them available to visitors and the public both in Poland and abroad.

The statutory duties of the Museum include the gathering, storing, and conservation of Museum collections and structures. These must be prepared and made available to visitors and the public both in Poland and abroad. Selected parts of the Museum are open to the public (holidays excluded) Monday-Friday from 7 am to 3 pm.

After 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, and shoes. Currently, these objects constitute a fundamental part of the Museum's collection. Many of them can be seen in post-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 paintings 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 to 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), the Museum also gathers 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.

These items are gathered in the Collections Section, the Archives, and the Library.

### Collections Section

The Collections Section mainly gathers and stores camp-related objects as well as objects stolen from the deported and murdered, found in the camp and close to it after liberation. In addition, the Museum receives exhibits in the form of gifts and donations, whilst some are purchased.



Franciszek Jaźwiecki – self-portrait



The Collections Section contains almost 6,000 works of art, some of which were made by Auschwitz prisoners during the war



Suitcases belonging to Jews deported to the camp

The Museum houses the following collections:

- more than 80,000 shoes;
- approx. 1850 kg of human hair;
- approx. 3,800 suitcases, of which 2,100 are labelled;
- approx. 12,000 pots;
- approx. 40 kg of spectacles;
- 460 artificial limbs;
- 570 items of camp clothing, the so-called "striped" clothing of concentration camp prisoners;
- 260 items of civilian clothes;
- 260 prayer shawls (talliths);
- 40 m<sup>3</sup> of melted metal objects from the "Canada" warehouse in Birkenau;
- 6,000 items of art (including approx. 2,000 items made by concentration camp prisoners).

A computerised database is being set up using the catalogue, which is constantly being developed. In the future, this database will facilitate the work of those who need to access the Museum's abundant collection.

### The Archives

The Archives include 254 metres of original camp documents, around 40,000 negatives of photographs of newly arriving prisoners, and more than 2,000 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:

- tens of thousands of negatives of photographs of newly arriving prisoners, taken by the camp authorities prior to the introduction of tattooing as a means of identifying prisoners;
- about 200 photographs of Birkenau depicting the selection of Jews deported from Hungary in 1944, a number of photographs taken illegally by members of the Sonderkommando near the gas chambers of Birkenau, several dozen aerial view photographs of the camp area taken by American pilots in 1944, around 500 photographs of different structures and KL Auschwitz taken by the SS when the camp was still operating, as well as photographs taken after liberation by Museum employees and other persons; more than 2,000 family photographs brought by persons deported to Auschwitz (mainly Jews from the Będzin and Sosnowiec ghettos);

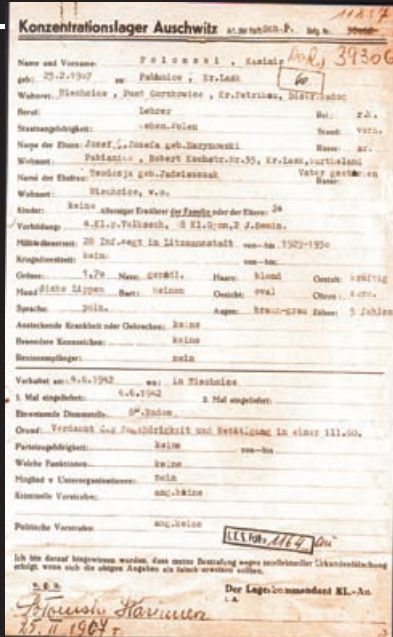


Burning camp warehouses, set on fire by the retreating Germans. Despite their efforts, the Nazis did not manage to destroy all the evidence of their crimes committed in Auschwitz

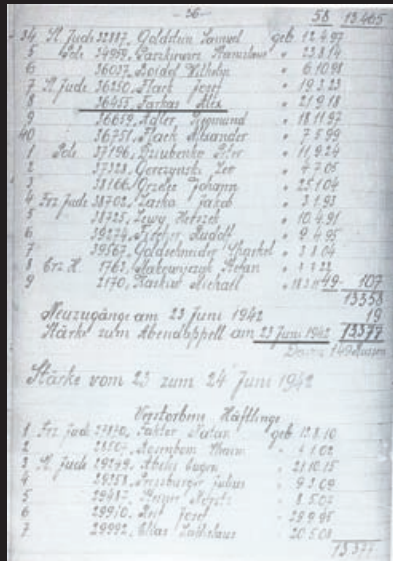
| Start Nr.                                   | SHrly'g a n s | Vername   | Geb.Dat.  | Geb.Ort  | Beruf                          |
|---|---------------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------------|
| Konzentrationslager Auschwitz Abteilung II. |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Zugangs am 26. September 1941               |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Stationsinspektorstelle Katowitz:           |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Arbsh.F.                                    | 21095         | Bartuski  | Johann    | 13. 7.08 | Laurahütte Grubenarbeite       |
| "   | 21097         | Bednarski | Valentin  | 11. 2.01 | Matschakowitz, Arbeiter        |
| "   | 21098         | Bialoch   | Andreas   | 25.10.92 | Saybusch Schlichter            |
| "   | 21099         | Boycein   | Karl      | 10.10.91 | Falkenberg Grubenarbeite       |
| "   | 21100         | Comay     | Robert    | 27. 5.01 | Krasow Grubenarbeite           |
| "   | 21101         | Labacki   | Konrad    | 29.11.96 | Wieslawa Hingangestell         |
| "   | 21102         | Glasocka  | Paul      | 10.12.87 | Schlesischlowitz, Maschinist   |
| "   | 21103         | Blagel    | Viktor    | 4. 9.03  | Alt Usad Hingangestell         |
| "   | 21104         | Walus     | Josef     | 18. 2.98 | Alt Glatz Lagerverwalte        |
| Kriminalinspektorstelle Bromberg:           |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Ass.F.                                      | 21095         | Bresinski | Adam      | 7.12.07  | Dobenke Zimmermann             |
| Stationsinspektorstelle Katowitz:           |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Arbsh.F.                                    | 21066         | Protzek   | Stanislav | 15.11.05 | Hohenlunde Arbeiter            |
| "   | 21067         | Hawerek   | Leopold   | 30.10.02 | Krusaderf Grubenarbeite        |
| "   | 21068         | Bylinski  | Josef     | 1. 9.97  | Krasow Maschabearb             |
| Stationsinspektorstelle S F U M B:          |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21069         | Pohorny   | Alain     | 27. 2.05 | Bozkowitz Masch.Schle.         |
| "   | 21070         | Behne     | Adolf     | 20. 6.18 | Mar-Hory Installateur          |
| "   | 21071         | Slonarski | Curter    | 2. 8.01  | Turm 9, Wpplie, Handelsk.Kaufm |
| "   | 21072         | Jirka     | Josef     | 24. 1.94 | Brum Pflanzschleier            |
| "   | 21073         | Lindmajer | Venzel    | 24. 8.18 | Semotice Koch                  |
| "   | 21074         | Jurek     | Heil      | 22.11.19 | Strehowitz Arbeiter            |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21075         | Konrad    | Josef     | 25. 2.02 | Smolice Kaufmann               |
| "   | 21076         | Herth     | Hugo      | 8. 4.00  | Gutz Kaufmann                  |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21077         | Frisch    | Gottlieb  | 25. 9.12 | Pilsen Student                 |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21078         | Schnefeld | Bernhard  | 7.10.04  | Prosnitz Kaufmann              |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21079         | Gozal     | Przemysl  | 9. 2.01  | Glatz Besichtigungs            |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21080         | Lang      | Karl      | 22.11.90 | Iglau, Textilfabrikarbeiter    |
| "   | 21081         | Frederic  | Ludwig    | 7.10.04  | Prosnitz Fleischergeh          |
| "   | 21082         | Fluss     | Ludwig    | 7. 9.77  | Cernowitz Kaufmann             |
| "   | 21083         | Bergler   | Hugo      | 20.10.95 | Amerseu Kaufmann               |
| "   | 21084         | Hesse     | Heinz     | 19. 2.06 | Prosnitz Student               |
| "   | 21085         | Heumann   | Hilf      | 16.10.95 | Iglau Kaufmann                 |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21086         | Heller    | Franz     | 24. 1.99 | Chvalkowitz Schlichter         |
| "   | 21087         | Doehal    | Franz     | 20. 2.02 | Enzelsitz Fleischer            |
| "   | 21088         | Sutarnas  | Albin     | 5. 1.22  | Hrubovka Arbeiter              |
| Stationsinspektorstelle W i a B:            |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Arbsh.F.                                    | 21089         | Krause    | Peter     | 1. 9.11  | Ostka Landarbeiter             |
| "   | 21090         | Wlarski   | Ludwiga   | 8. 0.09  | Schlesischl. Landwirt          |
| "   | 21091         | Waldner   | Johann    | 18. 2.18 | Boleska Arbeiter               |
| Stationsinspektorstelle S F U M B:          |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21092         | Glusowski | Wassil    | 30. 3.90 | Kolyweza Schriftsteltl.        |
| Stationsinspektorstelle S F U M B:          |               |           |           |          |                                |
| Arbsh.Fret.                                 | 21093         | Prentl    | Karl      | 25. 2.95 | Wien Deutscher                 |
| "   | 21094         | Hesse     | Heinrich  | 21. 8.21 | Brum Schneider                 |

A list of prisoners who arrived in Auschwitz on September 26, 1941





Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives



Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives

The Memorial's archives include first of all the original camp documents: (from top) a registration card of a Polish prisoner arrested for his activity in the resistance movement; a page from the so-called Daily Headcount Book of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp

- 254 metres of documents, including:
  - 48 camp volumes of "Death Books", containing almost 70,000 death certificates of those who were murdered in Auschwitz;
  - 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;
  - 64 volumes of SS Hygiene Institute documents (SS Hygiene Institut);
  - 16 volumes of personal data documents on prisoners;
  - 8,000 letters and postcards sent out from the camp by prisoners;

- around 800,000 microfilm stills (mainly copies of camp documents or documents obtained from other sources);
- more than 2,000 sound recordings containing accounts and testimonies of former prisoners;
- around 400 video cassettes about the camp and the war;
- around 130 short and feature films (film reels) about the camp and the war;
- 60 volumes of "Oświadczenia" (Statements), containing more than 3,500 statements of former concentration camp prisoners, workers subjected to forced labour and inhabitants of the Oświęcim region etc;
- 237 volumes of "Wspomnienia" (Recollections), containing more than 1,300 recollections of former concentration camp prisoners, workers subjected to forced labour and inhabitants of the Oświęcim region etc;
- 78 volumes of trial documents concerning the camp Commandant Rudolf Höss, and SS personnel at KL Auschwitz.

### Former Prisoners Section

The Former Prisoners Section participates in the gathering of documents for the Archives. The Section is responsible for contacts with former prisoners. Section employees prepare card indexes with the names of deported prisoners taken from post-war archive materials (accounts, testimonies, statements, etc). They also record the accounts of former prisoners, carry out archive-related inquiries, and engage in research and educational activities.

### Computer Section

The Museum Computer Section has two basic functions: it is responsible for generating digital databases on KL Auschwitz prisoners and deportees as well as being engaged in computerizing the Museum.

The current databases, which contain more than half a million entries, hold information from 56 post-camp document teams. Computer archiving allows original documents to be secured and facilitates rapid access to source materials.

Secret message written on September 4, 1944 by the Polish political prisoners Józef Cyrankiewicz and Stanisław Kłodziński and sent to the Polish resistance movement in Cracow. They inform about sending photographs of the "gassing action" and a possibility of taking additional pictures



Cards from a manuscript found after the war in the vicinity of the ruins of Gas Chamber III, by an unknown author, a Jewish prisoner of the Sonderkommando. He describes, among other things, the process of murdering the Jews in the gas chambers

The Computer Section is responsible for the setting up of digital databases on camp prisoners and those deported to KL Auschwitz

| Nr | Przyczyna | Ucieczka  | Ucieczka | Nr więźni | Narodow | Nazwisko | Imiona | Data urod | Miej |
|----|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------|----------|--------|-----------|------|
| 1. | Bronchop  | 0000-00-0 | ---      | 23118     | D.      | Achtelek | Paul   | 1904-08-0 | Hind |
| 2. | ---       | 0000-00-0 | ---      | 15541     | ---     | Achter   | Franz  | 1909-10-3 | Mür  |
| 3. | Lungeni   | 0000-00-0 | ---      | 15074     | R.D.    | Adler    | Paul   | 1921-10-2 | Kiel |
| 4. | ---       | 0000-00-0 | ---      | 15095     | R.D.    | Aitl     | Martin | 1905-09-0 | Obe  |

### Former Prisoners Information Office

It is possible to obtain information on former KL Auschwitz prisoners. Information can be obtained personally or by letter (when writing to the Museum please write the word "Archive" on the envelope). It must be remembered, however, that the majority of camp documents were destroyed by the Germans prior to the liberation of the camp. For this reason, it is often the case that no documentary evidence has survived on deportees. This mainly concerns Jews directed by the Germans to the gas chambers immediately on arrival at the camp. These victims constituted the overwhelming majority of persons deported to KL Auschwitz.

### Library

The collection reflects the overall character of the Museum. The Library mainly contains publications on World War II, the Holocaust, and prison and concentration camp martyrdom with particular emphasis on KL Auschwitz. 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 Jewish history and traditions.

The Library is diverse in its range of publications. Above all, it contains documentary and research works, but also belles-lettres (testimonies, novels, short stories, poetry, and drama), maps, atlases, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, and periodicals, including more than 250 foreign language periodicals published after 1945. The Special Collection comprises books and periodicals published in the Third Reich.

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum Archives



## CONSERVING THE COLLECTION AND CAMP REMAINS

The Conservation Section is in charge of 155 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 protects and conserves all remaining post-camp items: buildings, camp ruins, objects of everyday use belonging to victims, camp paintings and graphics from during the war as well as contemporary works, and a vast number of archived materials.

In all there are more than 155 structures made of brick and wood, around 300 camp ruins and remains including – of particular historical significance – 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. In an area covering 191 hectares, there are many kilometres of hard-surface roads, drainage ditches, railway tracks with sidings and unloading ramps, two post-camp sewage-treatment plants, and fire service and water tanks. Furthermore, low-lying vegetation, historical and post-war wooded areas, and about 20 hectares of forest are protected and conserved on a permanent basis.

### Conservation Studio

In 2002, a modern equipped conservation workshop was opened. The workshop carried out a number of important tasks. These included the cleaning and safeguarding of approximately 70,000 shoes, once the property of camp victims; conservation of the remaining metal parts of the crematoria in Birkenau; conservation of the gynaecological arm-chair from the research laboratory of the German doctor Clauberg, as well as work on dozens of suitcases, drawings, graphics and pictures, some of which can now be viewed in exhibitions in Poland and abroad. Some original documents housed in the Museum archives were also conserved.

### RESEARCH

One of the basic tasks of the Museum is to gather historical source materials, to analyse them, to engage in research and to elaborate a variety of topics on the history of the Auschwitz camp.

The majority of research on the history of Auschwitz carried out in Poland was done by researchers employed at the Research Section and Archives, as well as other Museum sections.



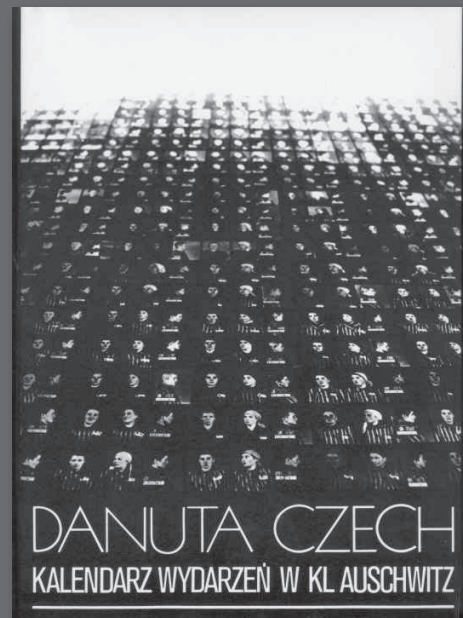
Photograph: Ryszard Domański

One of the watchtowers. The Conservation Section protects and conserves the grounds and structures of the former camp



Photograph: Rafał Pióro

The conservation workshop has, amongst other things, cleaned and safeguarded about 70,000 shoes that once belonged to camp victims



One of the more important publications on the history of Auschwitz is the Auschwitz Chronicle, by Danuta Czech, of the History and Research Section of the Auschwitz Museum

Research was begun in the mid-1950s. Findings were published in *Zeszyty Oświęcimskie* (the publication has been in print since 1957). One of the first works, written by Danuta Czech was the *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 mid-1960s and 1970s, research focused on KL Auschwitz sub-camps, the resistance movement at the camp and the expansion of 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 continued on the general history of the camp, but also shifted to more specific topics. This research resulted in an abundance of publications including: *Death Books from Auschwitz*, *A Memorial Book: The Gypsies at Auschwitz-Birkenau* and two independent Books of Remembrance, dedicated to Poles deported to the camp from Warsaw and Cracow.

Research was carried out not only on deportee arrival statistics and camp mortality, but also on the fate of individuals. The Books of Remembrance were used to establish – wherever possible – the identities of the dead. A similar approach was adopted in the case of two albums dedicated to Jews from Będzin: a compilation entitled *Before They Perished* and a work by Helena Kubica dedicated to children, entitled *Nie można o nich zapomnieć. Najmłodsze ofiary KL Auschwitz* (They Cannot be Forgotten: The Youngest Victims of KL Auschwitz).



This album dedicated to the memory of children deported to KL Auschwitz is the result of many years of work by Helena Kubica, of the History and Research Section of the Auschwitz Museum. Most of these children did not survive

Other important Museum publications of a historical research nature include the death toll at KL Auschwitz (Franciszek Piper), KL Auschwitz escapee reports (Henryk Świebocki), the resistance movement in the vicinity of the camp (Henryk Świebocki), 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), Jehovah's Witnesses at KL Auschwitz (Teresa Wontor-Cichy).

The fruit of many years of research at the Museum was the comprehensive five-volume publication entitled *Auschwitz 1940-1945: Central Issues in the History of the Camp*. Most of the authors of this publication are researchers at the Museum, with additional authors from different research centres.

The research, and history section is still working on further elaborating subjects related to the extermination in Auschwitz of Polish Jews, Poles, Gypsies, and other national and ethnic groups. It also elaborates source material relating to the history of the camp.





Photograph: Ryszard Domański

The Exhibition Section prepares museum exhibitions. A part of the exhibition dedicated to children in Block 6, former Auschwitz I camp



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

In Block 4 one of the most striking proofs of crime is exhibited – two tonnes of women's hair, cut from the victims and found after the liberation on the grounds of the former camp



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

A model of Gas Chamber and Crematorium no. II is located in Block 4

## ACCESSING THE MUSEUM COLLECTION AND INFORMATION ON KL AUSCHWITZ

### Exhibitions and Memory

One of the most important tasks of the Museum is initiating, preparing, implementing, organising, and managing permanent and temporary exhibitions, presented at the Museum and beyond, both in Poland and abroad.

On 14 June 1947, the first permanent exhibition was opened in the former camp, Auschwitz I. In 1955, it was replaced by another one, which still – with some modifications – exists today.

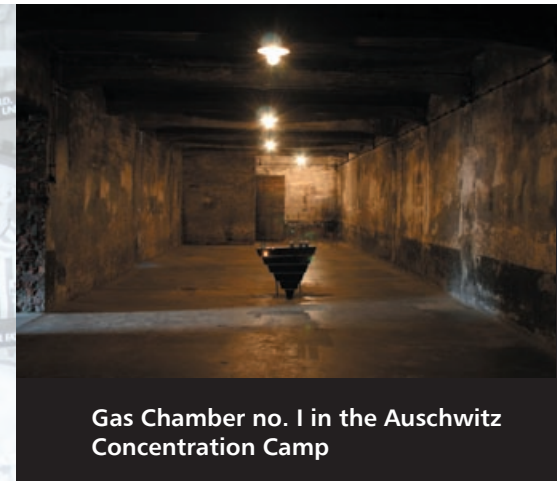
### THE MAIN EXHIBITION

The block 4 exhibition presents the two basic functions of KL Auschwitz: a multi-national concentration camp for prisoners and the largest centre for the mass murder of European Jews. The majority of exhibition areas in the Block illustrate the extermination process, starting with the arrival of Jews on the so-called Judenrampe, through their selection by SS doctors to death in the gas chambers. A model gas chamber and crematorium are exhibited here, as well as the most startling proof of criminal activity – almost 2 tonnes of hair cut from the heads of victims and discovered after the liberation of the camp.

Block 5 contains some of the original items belonging to camp victims. These were found after liberation and include talliths, spectacles, suitcases with names and addresses of victims, shoes, artificial limbs, children's clothes, and bowls. These are objects that once belonged to the murdered Jews. The camp authorities failed to send everything deep into the Third Reich or destroy it before evacuating the camp.

Blocks 6 and 7 show the living conditions suffered by Auschwitz prisoners, who died in the camp as a result of excessive 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.

Block 11, known as the Death Block, has retained its original rooms and cells, in which prisoners were detained as well as people from outside the camp, arrested for attempting to help prisoners. Some of the cells contain drawings and inscriptions dating back to the time of the camp. Block 11 also contains exhibitions dedicated to the resistance movement at the camp, and to punishments and executions. In the punishments 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 in cell 18, Polish monk Maximilian Kolbe died, who exchanged places to save a prisoner, putting himself in the group of those sentenced to death by starvation.



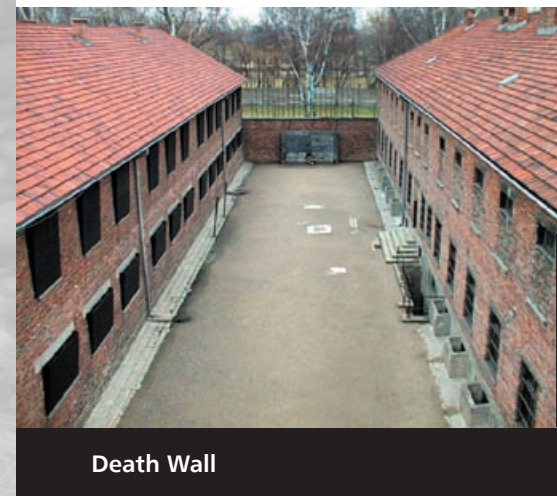
Photograph: Stanisław Mornot

Gas Chamber no. I in the Auschwitz Concentration Camp



Photograph: Stanisław Mornot

Birkenau. Ruins of Gas Chamber and Crematorium II



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

Death Wall

### Plans

The Museum has prepared a concept for a new permanent exhibition, which will include an introduction to the development of Nazism, the establishment and development of the camp, its evacuation and liberation, as well as a gallery of camp and contemporary works on Auschwitz.

One of the planned elements of the exhibition will be to show the pre-war lives of the camp victims and the presentation of the major perpetrators of Auschwitz crimes.

### NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

The former Auschwitz I camp also contains other permanent exhibitions, the so-called national exhibitions, initially set up through the efforts of former prisoners from a number of countries and associated under the International Auschwitz Committee. The purpose of these is to spread knowledge about Nazi occupation in those countries from which people were deported to Auschwitz and to present the fate of the citizens. The first such exhibition was organised in 1960.

Over the years, some of the exhibitions were closed down, and others were partly or entirely modified.

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

- "Martyrology of Jews: 1933-1945";
- "The Struggle and Martyrology of the Polish Nation, 1939-1945";
- "Extermination of European Roma";
- "The Tragedy of Slovak Jews";
- "Prisoners from the Czech Lands at Auschwitz";
- "The Citizen Betrayed – To the Memory of the Hungarian Holocaust";
- "People Deported from France to Auschwitz";
- And exhibitions prepared by following countries: Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, the former Yugoslavia, Italy, and Russia.

### COMMEMORATING BIRKENAU

In consideration of the exceptional character of Birkenau – which is primarily a cemetery – from the beginning no exhibitions were organised there. An effort was made to retain everything that is unique, in other words as close as possible to the original. The only large and new element introduced in this part of the camp was the international camp victim memorial, officially opened in 1967.

In April 2001, visitors were given access to the so-called Sauna building in Birkenau. It was here, from late 1943, that new arrivals were registered and disinfected.

The first gas chamber, located beyond the borders of the Museum and started by the Germans in spring 1942, is also commemorated. It is located not far from Birkenau and is known as the Little Red House.

From January 2005, the so-called Judenrampe has also been commemorated. This is the siding located between Auschwitz and Birkenau and it was here that in 1942-1944 deported Jews, Poles, and Roma arrived. Up until May 1944 newly arrived Jews were selected by SS doctors there.





Photograph: Lidia Fojcziarz

Pictures of the Jews deported to Auschwitz, found after the liberation on the grounds of the camp. A part of the exhibition in the building of the former camp baths in Birkenau



Photograph: Wiesław Zieliński

Part of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau Concentration Camp. Barracks of the quarantine sector and remaining parts of other barracks are visible



Temporary exhibition entitled "Auschwitz: A crime against humanity", aroused vivid interest. UN Headquarters in the 1980s

## TEMPORARY AND TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS

In its more than 50-year history, the Museum has organised over 300 temporary and travelling exhibitions. These were visited by more than 15 million people. Exhibitions were shown in Poland and many other countries, including Austria, the former Czechoslovakia, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, the former Soviet Union, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA.

## SPECIFIC CHARACTER OF THE MUSEUM

The Museum strives to retain those elements that are most important and that distinguish it from similar institutions worldwide. The main distinctive features are the original setting, where the greatest crimes of the Holocaust were perpetrated, as well as the structures, ruins, and the traces left behind them.

Retaining the location is only part of the Museum's work. The location must also be appropriately commemorated and explained. Many of the structures in the area were either completely or partly destroyed. Rather than reconstruct them and interfere with their appearance and structure it was decided, where necessary, to introduce photographs and texts with the aim of describing particular places and events, in order to make it easier to understand what happened there.

In this manner, specific locations were explained and commemorated. These included areas containing human ashes, the ruins of gas chambers, selection points, prisoner mutiny areas, executions, and other locations.

## 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. Publications include academic and popular research, belles-lettres, testimonies, albums, catalogues, guides, poetry, post-cards, posters, and documentaries on the history of the camp.

The most important publications include the *Kalendarz wydarzeń w obozie koncentracyjnym Oświęcim-Brzezinka* (Auschwitz Chronicle) by Danuta Czech and a five-volume history of the camp entitled *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.



Photograph: Stanisław Momen

**Birkenau – plaques commemorating those murdered in the camp. In the background is a pond where the Nazis threw human ashes**



Photograph: Stanisław Momen

**Birkenau – commemoration plaque, next to the unloading platform where the trains with deportees to the camp halted. In the foreground are German photographs from the wartime**



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

**The basic aim of the publication department is to preserve the memory of the camp victims, to document the Holocaust, and the crimes committed in the camp by the Nazis, as well as to widely disseminate Auschwitz themes**

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 in the sales points located on Museum premises. They can also be purchased via mail order. Addresses appear on the Museum's web site ([www.auschwitz.org.pl](http://www.auschwitz.org.pl)).

## The Internet

The Museum's website – set up in 1999 ([www.auschwitz.org.pl](http://www.auschwitz.org.pl)) – allows visitors to acquaint themselves with the history of KL Auschwitz and gives access to the Death Books containing the names of almost 70,000 prisoners murdered at KL Auschwitz. The Museum can also be contacted via e-mail ([muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl](mailto:muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl)).

By reading the website visitors will be first able to prepare themselves before arrival – the site includes information on how to reach the Museum, ticket prices, the booking of tour guides, and accommodation in Oświęcim. There is also information on the Education Centre and it is possible to look through the list of Museum publications and place an order.

Additionally, there is access to information on the latest 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.

## EDUCATION

**The Museum Education Centre organises post-graduate studies, seminars, special topic conferences, and study tours for teachers and young people from Poland and abroad.**

The task of the Museum Education Centre is to spread knowledge about the history of KL Auschwitz. It is also responsible for the recruitment, training, and examining of guides.

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 organises 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 Education Centre also organises – in conjunction with the Polish Pedagogical Academy of Krakow – post-graduate study courses for teachers.





The web site attracts hundreds of thousands of browsers worldwide, who are interested in the history of Auschwitz



Photograph: International Youth Meeting Centre in Oświęcim

Each year the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial is visited by more than 500,000 people from all over the world. Qualified Museum guides can be booked for visiting the two former camps, and it is obligatory in the case of large organised groups

The Centre organises, among others:

- Post-graduate Study course on “Totalitarianism, Nazism and the Holocaust”

This study course concentrates on the history of World War II, with particular focus on the Holocaust, and the reasons underlying the origins of totalitarianism, Nazism, racism, and antisemitism. The course also concentrates on chosen topics concerning the life and culture of pre-war Jews. An integral part of this programme of studies is the presence of the Holocaust and World War II in art and literature.

- “Auschwitz – History and Symbolism” Seminars

Meetings lasting a number of days with form teachers and high school teachers specialising in the humanities, arts, and religion are organised in order to better prepare young people for their visit to the Museum. These meetings include 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 Collection Section, and there are in-depth visits to the former concentration camp itself.

- Special Subject Conferences

One-day special subject conferences are dedicated to the most important events in the history of KL Auschwitz. These are aimed at teachers who are graduates of Education Centre training, 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 educating youth.

- Seminars and study tours for Polish and foreign teachers and young people

Seminars and study tours offer participants the opportunity to gain knowledge of the history of Auschwitz in the context of the German occupation of Poland and Europe. Depending on age, interest and requirement each group of participants is offered an individual set of topics.

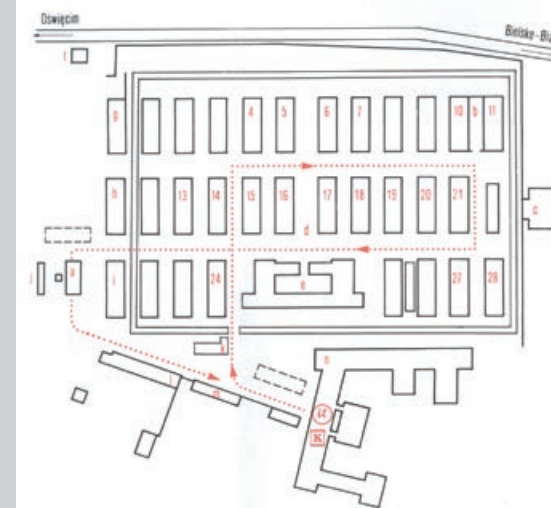
Education (Other Sections)

Other sections of the Museum are also engaged in educational activities. These invite Polish and foreign study and seminar groups and organise talks and lectures.

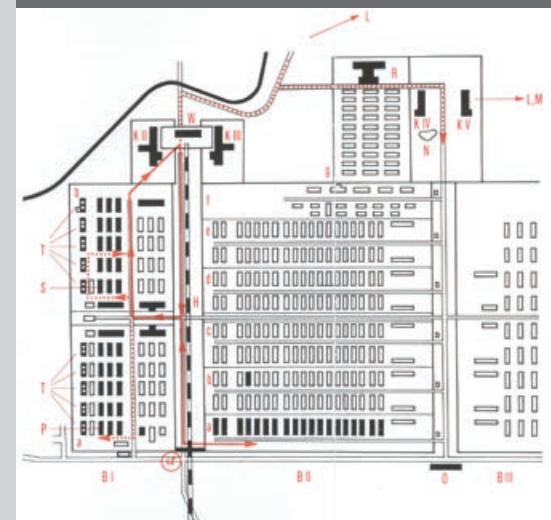
## VISITING THE FORMER CAMP

### NUMBER OF VISITORS

**Almost 30 million people worldwide have visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.**



Plan of the former Auschwitz I camp



Plan of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp

So far, almost 30 million people from all over the world have visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. Since the 1990s, about 500,000 people visit the Museum each year. Those who are mostly represented are Poles, as well as Americans, British, French, Germans, Israelis, and Italians.

## OPENING HOURS

The Museum is open seven days a week as follows:

|             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 8 am – 3 pm | December – February |
| 8 am – 4 pm | March, November     |
| 8 am – 5 pm | April, October      |
| 8 am – 6 pm | May, September      |
| 8 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. Though the Museum remains open it is not possible to book a guide on mass manifestation days as announced by the press, radio, and television. The Museum is closed on 1st January, 25 December, and Easter Monday.

## VISITORS

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, some of the Blocks cannot be accessed (for example, the administrative areas), whilst at Auschwitz II-Birkenau virtually all of the barracks are open to visitors.

The amount of time spent at the camp depends on individual interest and need, but it is estimated that a minimum of one and a half hours is required for Auschwitz I and its exhibitions, whilst at least the same again is required for Birkenau.

In order to become appropriately acquainted with the place that came to symbolise the Holocaust, it is necessary to visit both Birkenau and Auschwitz.

### The former camp at Auschwitz I

At the site of Auschwitz I, the Nazis set up the first camp for men and women. It was here that the first experiments on killing human beings with Zyklone B took place, that the first groups of deported Jews were murdered en masse, that the first criminal experiments on prisoners were carried out, that the majority of people were executed by being shot, that the central camp detention area – Block 11 – 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 expansion of the entire camp.

### The former camp at Auschwitz II-Birkenau

At Birkenau, everything took place on a multiple scale. Here the Nazis built most of their equipment for mass extermination of human beings. About a million European Jews were murdered. Birkenau was also the largest concentration camp, with about 300 primitive, mainly wooden,





Photograph: Ryszard Domański

Jewish prayer shawls, now part of the exhibition in Block 5, former Auschwitz I camp



Photograph: Wiesław Zieliński

The interior of a brick barrack (living quarters) in Birkenau



Photograph: Lidia Foyciarz

Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Most of the visitors are schoolchildren and students. In the foreground, a part of the siding track is visible, where the trains with the deportees entered

barracks. In 1944, Birkenau had a capacity of 90,000 at any one time: Jews, Poles, Roma, and others. There are certain areas of the former camp that contain human ashes and many post-camp remains.

The vast open space, dozens of primitive prisoner barracks, the ruins and remnants of various structures, and the kilometres of camp fencing and roads produce a strong, and never to be repeated, impression. All this is an expression that cannot be encapsulated in words – inhumane cruelty and crime – with the specific camp architecture designed for one sole purpose: the extermination of human beings.

### Guide Books

Before starting to visit a brief Museum guidebook published in many foreign languages can be purchased. It contains a brief description of the structures and exhibition areas as well as maps of Auschwitz and Birkenau with a suggested visiting route.

### Documentaries

A fifteen-minute documentary can also be viewed (entrance tickets required), showing part of the Red Army film depicting the liberation of the camp by Soviet soldiers, surviving prisoners, and the discovery of evidence of the crimes.

### Guides

Qualified Museum guides can be booked for visiting the two former camps; booking is obligatory in the case of large organised groups. This will ensure efficient visiting and appropriate explanation of the camp's historical context. Guides speak the following languages: Croatian, Czech, English, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Spanish, and Swedish.

Guides can be booked as follows:

- via the Internet ([dyspozytornia@pro.onet.pl](mailto:dyspozytornia@pro.onet.pl));
- by phone: Monday-Friday at the following times:  
7 am – 3 pm: + 48 (0)33 843 21 33/844 81 33/844 80 99 – or:  
+ 48 (0)33 844 81 02 after 3 pm.
- by fax: + 48 (0)33 843 22 27;
- in the Museum at the visitor reception. It is also possible to handle all formalities at the visitor reception. As interest and number of visitors is high, early booking is recommended. Guide services are charged.

### Different Types of Visits

Depending on need, visitors can choose the standard service (up to three and a half hours), the special service (up to six hours), or a two-day visit.

### Moving Between the Former Camps

It is possible to walk the three kilometres between Auschwitz and Birkenau. This can be done by passing through the area surrounding the camp. During the war, this area contained German industrial plants and workshops, warehouses, offices, and the camp technical support sector, where prisoners worked and died. The remains of a number of sidings and unloading ramps can be seen here. It was here that trains with deportees arrived and where the SS carried out the selection process.

Car parks located close to the two camps allow movement around by car. There is also a shuttle bus that offers services between Auschwitz and Birkenau.

### Museum Publications

There is an information point at the entrance to the two former camps. Visitors can ask for information here and give their nationality, which helps the Museum in its work on visitor statistics. Guidebooks, albums, research works, testimonies, video cassettes, and DVDs referring to Auschwitz can be purchased at Museum sales points. Publications on the history of KL Auschwitz can also be ordered by writing to the Museum.

### Museum Address:

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32-603 Oświęcim  
tel.: +48 (0)33 843 20 22  
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e-mail: [muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl](mailto:muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl)

## COMMEMORATING THE VICTIMS

**“Auschwitz is the world’s largest ever cemetery without graves, where it is impossible to place a stone or flower to commemorate any individual. A cemetery without graves because the corpses were scattered by the smoke in the sky. And this obligates us...”** (*Władysław Bartoszewski, Auschwitz survivor*)

The camp stood empty from January 1945 until shortly afterwards, when it became a memorial, a place of vital significance for the modern world. Statistics – from the increasing numbers of visitors and thousands of letters sent each year to the Museum – are a clear indication of this.

The concept of commemorating the victims of Auschwitz and its surroundings had already originated during the war years. Former prisoners recall their stay behind the barbed wire fencing: they dreamed not only of survival and freedom, but also of commemorating this place of crime. They believed it was their moral obligation and the fulfilment of the wish of those who died.

As soon as the Museum was founded, the main objective was to secure the area together with everything that remained in the camp. But this is only part of the work. The Museum places special emphasis of maintaining the memory of those who died in the camp. In order to depart from anonymity and to return – as far as possible – the identity to those deported to Auschwitz, much is being done to restore the names and biographies of the dead. Each figure dug out of the void and recalled denies extermination the final word.



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

Birkenau – international camp victims memorial



Photograph: Ryszard Domański

On All Saints’ Day, entire families from Oświęcim visit the former camp, light candles, and leave flowers



The Museum would like each visitor, on leaving the former camp, to feel more than empathy, but rather an understanding of how much humanity and each individual has lost through the existence of places like Auschwitz.

This objective is met in a variety of ways, such as publishing activities. Above all, source materials are published. This includes testimonies, witness accounts, memorial books containing the names of those deported to the camp and a description of their fate, a wide range of research materials, albums, films etc. New exhibitions play a similar role (such as the Wall of Remembrance in the former Sauna building in Birkenau) as do educational events and activities.

At first, camp victims were commemorated through a variety of plaques and monuments. One of the first of these was a plaque placed near the ruins of the crematoria in Birkenau. The plaque contained an inscription in Polish and Hebrew: "To the Memory of Millions of Jews, Martyrs, and Fighters Exterminated in the Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau".

In 1955, a small monument in the shape of an urn was erected in Birkenau. Ashes of those murdered and of soil from various places of death in Europe were deposited in it.

Two years later, the International Auschwitz Committee, associating former prisoners from over a dozen countries, announced an international competition for a monument, commemorating all those murdered in Auschwitz.

Press debates and exchanges of views amongst former prisoners and artists emphasised the complexity of the land and remains of the former camp. Seweryna Szmaglewska, a former prisoner and writer, appealed for restraint, claiming that "the camp itself is a monument...which cannot be disturbed". Henry Moore, the famous English sculptor, the Chairman of the Jury, asked the question: "is it really possible to create a work of art capable of expressing the emotions evoked by Auschwitz?"

In February 1962, a joint Polish-Italian project was approved. This project was later turned into reality. The monument was officially opened on 16th April 1967. A total of 200,000 people participated in the ceremony. The monument presently has the following inscription in 21 languages:

For ever let this place be a cry of despair  
and a warning to humanity, where the Nazis  
murdered about one and a half million men,  
women, and children, mainly Jews,  
from various countries of Europe.  
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU 1940-1945.

In addition to the main monument in Birkenau, the former camp also received other small commemorative plaques and monuments. In 1947, an obelisk was placed in the women's camp in Birkenau in commemoration of French prisoners murdered in Auschwitz. In 1971, a commemorative obelisk was unveiled at the cemetery of Soviet prisoners murdered in Birkenau. In 1973, the Association of Gypsies in Germany funded a monument at the former Gypsy camp, dedicated to Gypsy victims of Auschwitz.

The main camp also contains a variety of plaques. These commemorate different groups of victims, such as teachers, health service employees, and Austrians. They also commemorate specific events, such as the first mass murder experiment on prisoners with the use of Zyklone B, the



Photograph: Wiesław Zieliński

Since 1998, the annual March of the Living is organised on the grounds of the former Auschwitz camp, in which Jews from the whole world participate. It takes place on the day solemnly commemorated in Israel as Holocaust Day

death of Maximilian Kolbe, and the execution of four Jewish women, who had helped Sonderkommando prisoners.

Other plaques and monuments were placed in 22 Auschwitz sub-camps. Two of these commemorate KL Auschwitz III-Monowitz.

**More than 100 different types of monuments and commemorative plaques, distributed beyond the boundaries of the Museum, permanently commemorate Auschwitz – the world's largest death camp and concentration camp. The majority of these appeared due to the efforts of former prisoners, the local community, and the local authorities.**



Photograph: Wiesław Zieliński

27 January 2005, the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp. The ceremony at the monument to the camp victims in Birkenau

Though with each year the number of witnesses of the "time of contempt" is dwindling, interest in the topic continues to grow. The topic has become part of the school curriculum. Conferences and academic symposia are dedicated to it.

Each year hundreds of thousands visit the camp, wishing to learn about the history of KL Auschwitz and to pay homage to its victims. During the annual March of the Living, young Jews visiting the camp leave hundreds of wooden markers with the names of Holocaust victims. On All Saints' Day, November 1, entire families from Oświęcim visit the former camp, light candles, and leave flowers. Catholic pilgrims also come here as a place of martyrdom and death of saints and the blessed, whom the Church exalted after the war.

Hundreds of politicians and world leaders – who regard it as their moral obligation to visit the former camp – also pay homage to the victims. This place is regarded as one of the greatest warnings for humanity. The former Polish Foreign Minister, Władysław Bartoszewski, also a former prisoner at the camp, said the following: "Millions around the world know what Auschwitz was, and yet it is basic that we retain in our minds and memories the awareness that it is humans who decide whether such a tragedy will ever happen again. This is the work of humans and it is humans alone who can prevent any such return".

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