

Death Camp Revisited



For some, it is a place of memories, and for others a thrill. Nevertheless, it was not a pretty sight to behold. As the crowd gathered for a two-hour tour of the Auschwitz death camp, where thousands of people were murdered by the day. They didn't know the horror which awaited them. They weren't prepared for the tragic story that took place half a century ago.

The place was lined with ashes from the multitude of Jewish men and women who were burned inside crematoriums. The German officials simply dumped tons of ash in rivers and empty fields. Once the crematoriums did not suffice, they would simply burn the corpses over bonfires.

As more and more people get curious of the past, they board a bus to start the tour. They get bombarded with stories, figures, and history. This tour requires a strong stomach, as the bus heads 70 kilometers west of Krakow hotels, the route passes through the villa of the General Governor, who was executed via hanging for the sins he committed.

During World War II, the Auschwitz camp received a total of 1.6 million prisoners. Most of who never knew what they were getting into. They were promised a new life in Poland, yet the horrible truth of it all was that they were being sentenced to their death.



Gas chambers were the trend during that day. Mass murders were as common as working a regular day job. The industry of genocide was the reason that the place was famous in the first place. More than 1 million people died as the war continued. The Germans killed an average of 2000 Jewish men and women a day.

A few weeks before the camp was liberated by the Soviet Red Army, the Germans destroyed about 80% of the concentration camp records. They also blew up the major structures comprising the Auschwitz I, while simultaneously destroying part of the 200-hectare death camp, Auschwitz II-Birkenou.

Just before their impending doom, prisoners were brought by cattle cars. After which the selection process begins. Those who are too weak to work were executed immediately.

Women and children included. Men and strong women were separated and forced to labor non-stop, should they be deemed too weak from exhaustion or hunger, they were killed. Working was the very means of preserving their life. The concentration camp was situated at the most accessible point in the country. The trains brought more prisoners with ease. Forcing Jews to pay for their fare, the trip took at most 10 days. Since the land was advantageous and flat, sealing off the camp from other areas was not a problem. The mass killing of the people held captive was always kept secret, even though the air constantly smelled of burned flesh.



Gassing and shooting prisoners were not the only form of horror held within the walls of Auschwitz. The large brick buildings housed the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele and Dr. Carl Clauberg, two doctors who performed cruel acts and experiments on women and children. They would mutilate the genitals of women and prevent them from giving birth. Further along the tour housed barracks which is the main part of the museum. Behind glass windows, the crowd would get to see various memorabilia from that time. Shoes, prosthetics, glasses and other materials confiscated are all piled up behind glass windows. A tragic story held behind each piece.

Just about everywhere, the camp holds a history which is only relived in imagination. From blocks 10 to 11 holds the sterilization ward, the torture chamber, and the execution area; by which prisoners were lined up and shot without mercy. It was estimated that 20,000 people were executed this way.

In all the history that the Holocaust keeps, memorials are still being held. The memory of the departed are still kept alive by the survivors as well as loved ones. The end of the two-hour tour has come, and it helps to know that the world was a sad place half a century ago.

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