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Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Abstract:

Auschwitz concentration camp was one of the largest concentration camps built by the Nazi's during the Holocaust. This camp was one of the cruelest camps for many reasons. There were 3 different camps: Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II, and Auschwitz III. If people were fit to work, they would be sent to Auschwitz II and if not, they were sent to their death in Auschwitz II. The conditions in these camps were horrible and they did many cruel things to the prisoners including things like medical experiments. They had many methods of killing in these camps including gas chambers, carbon monoxide, hell vans, and others.

I. Introduction

Auschwitz main camps, the treatment of prisoners in these camps, and the methods of killing these prisoners were some of the worst in history.

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The different types of camps, the way the prisoners were treated in these camps, and the many cruel methods of killing the prisoners are the qualities of Auschwitz which make it one of the worst concentration camps in history.

"Those who deny Auschwitz would be ready to remake it" – Primo Levi

Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Introduction

Around 1.6 million of the prisoners at the Auschwitz concentration camp did not survive. These prisoners underwent inhumane conditions at these camps that would forever scar the ones that did survive. Auschwitz was a concentration camp, one of the five, during the Holocaust that was located near the Polish city Oswiecim. Auschwitz was the largest camp established by the Germans. Daily, mass murder took place here. 90% of the prisoners were Jews but the remaining included Gypsies, Soviet POWS, and other prisoners of all nationalities. **Auschwitz main camps, the treatment of prisoners in these camps, and the methods of killing these prisoners were some of the worst in history.**

Main Camps

Auschwitz I was the "main camp", where the prisoners were held. It held about 16 thousand prisoners. *This camp was located on the ground of a former Austrian military that was last used by the Polish army. It had barracks that dated back to nineteenth century.* ("Auschwitz I (Main Camp) ") Auschwitz I was constructed for 3 purposes: To imprison enemies of the Nazi regime and the German authorities in Poland, to have a large supply of people to force labor upon, and to exterminate groups of the population whose death was pre-determined.

Auschwitz II (also known as Auschwitz-Birkenau) had the largest population of prisoners and was the largest out of all the camps in Auschwitz. This camp was divided into sections that were separated by barbed wire fences. The different sections were for men, women, and Gypsies. Auschwitz II was the

largest out of all the camps in Auschwitz. This camp was where most of the killing took place. *The majority of people, around 90%, of the victims died in Birkenau.* (Piper)

Auschwitz III (Monowitz) was built last and was made for the forced laborers to live in. It held approximately 12,000 prisoners. The workers at this camp had a short life expectancy of about 3 months and those that were considered "unfit" to work were sent to Birkenau to their death. There were over 40 sub-camps where prisoners were also forced into labor.

Treatment of prisoners in camp

"Jews, Gypsies (Roma), homosexuals, asocials, criminals, and prisoners of war were gathered, stuffed into cattle cars on trains, and sent to Auschwitz." (Rosenburg) The families were split up. Most women, children, and older people were sent straight to the gas chambers and the strong, young men were sent to be a prisoner of the camp. Children were often killed on arrival and children born in the camp were usually killed on spot. Lucie Adelberg describes the children:

"Like the adults, the kids were only a mere bag of bones, without muscles or fat, and the thin skin like parchment scrubbed through and through beyond the hard bones of the skeleton and ignited itself to ulcerated wounds. Abscesses covered the underfed body from the top to the bottom and thus deprived it from the last rest of energy. The mouth was deeply gnawed by noma-abscesses, hollowed out the jaw and perforated the cheeks like cancer". Many decaying bodies were full of water because of the burning hunger, they swelled to shapeless bulks which could not move anymore. Diarrhea, lasting for weeks, dissolved their irresistible bodies until nothing remained" ("Auschwitz")

The prisoners lived in inhumane conditions with hardly any food and many starved to death. In

Auschwitz I, the prisoners had no beds in their room and slept on straw stuffed mattresses on the floor.

In Birkenau, the prisoners lived in unheated barracks with sleeping places that fit 4 people on one. The

prisoners were unable to wash themselves and they had to perform bodily functions out in the open.

The buildings had lice and rats so diseases developed frequently. Primo Levi describes the conditions in his book

“Even in this place one can survive, and there one must want to survive, to tell the story, to bear witness: and that to survive we must force ourselves to save at least the skeleton, the scaffolding, the form of civilization. We are slaves, deprived of every right, exposed to every insult, condemned to certain death, but we still possess one power, and we must defend it with all our strength for it is the last—the power to refuse our consent.” (Primo Levi)

Nazi doctors would perform criminal medical experiments on the prisoners in the camps. The two most well-known doctors were Dr. Carl Clauberg and Dr. Joseph Mengele. Clauberg often did experiments on women and tried to sterilize them while Mengele performed experiments on twins and other people such as dwarves. A twin recalls the death of his brother:

“Dr. Mengele had always been more interested in Tibi. I am not sure why - perhaps because he was the older twin. Mengele made several operations on Tibi. One surgery on his spine left my brother paralyzed. He could not walk anymore. Then they took out his sexual organs. After the fourth operation, I did not see Tibi anymore. I cannot tell you how I felt. It is impossible to put into words how I felt. They had taken away my father, my mother, my two older brothers - and now, my twin ...” ("Auschwitz")

Killing Methods:

Prisoners would be shot if they misbehaved such as asking for more food, not working enough, doing things to relieve oneself such as smoking, wearing non-regulation clothing, or attempting to commit suicide. (Lachendro)

The prisoners were lead to showers where they thought they would be able to bath but instead of water coming out of the showerheads, carbon monoxide came out which would kill them.

The prisoners were lead through a hallway into what they thought was a room but turned out to be the cargo of a very large van. The doors of the van were closed shut and exhaust fumes entered into the back which asphyxiated the trapped prisoners while the van drove to a forest nearby.

There were 4 crematoria in Auschwitz. They had eight gas chambers and 46 ovens to dispose of the bodies. Prisoners that were sent to the gas chambers were ones that were deemed too weak to work and they thought that they were taking a shower. Instead, the showerheads gassed the prisoners to death using Zyklon B (pesticide originally made for pest control). The dead bodies were then burned in the crematoria. The cover up what was happening in the crematoria; the Nazis would kill the Jewish prisoners that were forced to work at the crematoria every couple of months. *Eliezer, an Auschwitz survivor, recalls that the "smell of burning bodies from the crematoria was constantly in the air"* (Katz)

Conclusion

The different types of camps, the way the prisoners were treated in these camps, and the many cruel methods of killing the prisoners are the qualities of Auschwitz which make it one of the worst concentration camps in history. This camp is one of the most well-known concentration camps and that's definitely for a reason because this camp was the biggest one out of the five and had the highest amount of people killed. This camp ended or forever changed the lives of many people and will never be forgotten.

Citations

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