



Ryszard Kotarba

A HISTORICAL GUIDE TO THE GERMAN CAMP IN PŁASZÓW 1942–1945

A map with
a visiting route
inside





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TO THE GERMAN CAMP
IN PŁASZÓW 1942–1945**

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Foreword

In 1939, the Republic of Poland was attacked by Germany (supported by Slovakia) and the Soviet Union. Although France and the UK declared war on Germany, they did not pursue any activities to provide their Polish ally with any real assistance. Despite its total defeat and its entire territory being occupied, Poland did not surrender. Escaping to France and then to the UK, the authorities of the Republic of Poland demonstrated legalism and maintained the continuity of the Polish state. Poland as a state continued to be an actor of international law, and within the Allied bloc, it was the legal representative of all the citizens of the Republic of Poland – regardless of their nationality, religion or political views.

As opposed to other countries attacked by Germany, the Republic of Poland did not undertake any form of collaboration. It fought against the German National Socialist power of the Third Reich since the first, till the final moments of the war. Reconstructed in occupied territories under extremely abnormal conditions, state structures acting on behalf of the legal authorities of the Republic of Poland unwaveringly resisted the totalitarian ideologies and their criminal practices, as far as possible. Any form of collaboration with the Germans in the execution of their criminal plans or voluntary participation in crimes committed or inspired by them against the citizens of the Republic of Poland, of any nationality, was at the same time an act hostile towards those fighting on the other side of the barricade, for the Polish state. As in all occupied territories, some individual Polish citizens did participate in German extermination activities against civilians, Jewish and Polish citizens, or activities against the underground and guerrilla movements. Each act of informing, each act of individual participation of a citizen of the Republic of Poland in a crime, or assistance in committing a crime, was at the same time an act of betrayal against the Polish state.

The situation in this respect was different from that in France, for instance, where many forms of state officials' participation in the criminal practices of the Holocaust, were sanctioned by lawful state authorities collaborating with the Germans.

The greatest tragedy of the Polish state, was the impossibility of providing its own citizens with protection against the occupiers' terror. Poland was helpless against the construction of a network of concentration camps within the territory occupied by the Germans. It was not capable of preventing the citizens of the Republic of Poland – Jews and Poles alike – from a slave-like ordeal in the German death factories and Soviet labor camps.

Poland could protest on the international scene and announce that these crimes would be accounted for, and that the perpetrators would be punished after the war, yet it had no forces of its own to prevent the Germans and Soviets from pursuing their criminal plans. The underground state executed death sentences on traitors and collaborators. Messengers of the Polish Underground State – including Jan Karski – were the first to provide the free world with shocking information on the scale of the crimes committed against the Jewish nation, and the repression and terror that affected millions of citizens of our state in the West – yet they often faced indifference and doubt about the possibility that the German state could create such a criminal system for the extermination of whole nations.

A silent protest against the passivity of the world with regard to the German crimes against the Jewish citizens of Poland, was the suicide of Szymul Zygielbojm, a member of the National Council established under the authorities of the Republic Poland in exile, in May 1943.

Remembrance of the acts of genocide committed by Germany in the years 1939-1945 is a duty for today's Poland. The history of the Płaszów Camp revealed in this guide, is only one of the pages of the memory of the inhuman face of totalitarianism.

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The German Camp in Płaszów 1942–1945

This text seeks to introduce popular knowledge about the former German forced labor camp turned into a concentration camp in Płaszów, to all the inhabitants of Kraków and all other visitors. Although the camp was established on the soil of the former Wola Duchacka commune, it went down in history with the name given by its German occupiers: *Konzentrationslager Plaszow bei Krakau*. Located so close to the center of Kraków, this camp where thousands of Jews and Poles, many of them living in Kraków, were killed was, unfortunately, forgotten soon after the war. Since, in the past, the communist authorities did not take into account the special significance of this place, much of the site has been used for residential and other municipal developments. Significantly reduced, this area is today still abandoned, scarcely marked and quite neglected despite those maintenance works in progress.

The site of the camp is a huge cemetery with the ashes of thousands of victims scattered all around it. It was here that the fate of thousands of Kraków Jews came to an end; it was here that they were transported after the ghetto was closed down; and it was here that they died in executions, due to diseases and forced labor. It is also a cemetery to over two thousand Poles, both prisoners of the camp and persons sentenced to death, brought here by the Gestapo.

The Płaszów Camp was a peculiar camp as it was developed on the basis of a single Jewish ghetto. Prisoners came mainly from Kraków and its environs, and the site was originally considered as “an extension” of the Kraków ghetto.

It was not only people who were transferred from the ghetto, but also the workshops, machines, inventories of raw materials, and equipment used by the public facilities. The camp featured ghetto systems and structures, and a Jewish management and police, which kept their significance and hierarchy. This difference was pointed out by a well-known prisoner, Mieczysław Pemper, who wrote in his memoirs that he had not known another case like this. These circumstances entailed certain consequences and made for the fact that the Płaszów Camp was different from typical concentration camps. Unfortunately, the scarcity of historical sources of information and the lack of original documentation dated 1942-1945 do not afford a complete reconstruction of the history of this camp. Only fragments of original files have been preserved, as in late 1944 they were either taken away or destroyed, were scattered or simply became worn out over time.

The camp was built and further developed between late 1942 and mid 1944. Gradually, the enormous area west of Wielicka Street, including two previously devastated Jewish cemeteries, became the site of dozens of barracks and workshops. The first period, from the camp's construction until the Summer of 1943, was marked by inconsistent development; however, basic works related to the camp's infrastructure were completed, some facilities were adapted for camp purposes, while others were built or designed (the Kommandantur, garrison barracks, a large share of workshops, residential barracks for prisoners along with the necessary facilities). In the second period, between the Summer-Autumn of 1943 and mid-1944, the camp saw an intense expansion, significant construction projects were under way: the construction of a modern bath house and a delousing facility, barracks for interim prisoners and a quarantine, a railway siding and a new Kommandantur. Around Pańska Street, subsequent villas were adapted for SS officers, and an SS field hospital and a new assembly grounds were completed. The former sites of mass executions within the old cemetery and the so-called "Górka", were leveled and partially developed.

One and a half years after the first works had started, the camp featured extensive an infrastructure providing for the basic existence of over 20,000 people. For a short period of time, thanks to the prisoners' enormous efforts

under inconceivable conditions, the camp saw huge changes. Those coming from outside, especially from small ghettos and labor camps, were impressed with the spectacular appearance of the Płaszów Camp; the camp appeared as a camp-city, a large site with roads, buildings and heavy traffic. At the final stage, the concentration camp had all the facilities and venues necessary for “normal” living, the exploitation of the labor force and the immediate extermination of prisoners.

When the camp was at the peak of its development, the course of the war changed, and since mid-1944 prisoners were being evacuated, the camp and sub-camps were being liquidated, and traces of the crimes committed, were being covered up. Thanks to the fortunes of war, many prisoners of the Płaszów Camp survived and the memory of the camp was not erased. A handful of witnesses are still among us, there are testimonies, memoirs, and records – not only about the camp but also about the Jewish district of Kraków and its inhabitants, who contributed to the city’s life and its culture for generations.

The Ghetto

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On the eve of the war, Kraków had a population of almost 60,000 Jews, accounting for more than 1/4 of the city’s total populace. Over 90% of them were killed in a premeditated mass murder. From the very first days of the German occupation, Jews suffered from hatred, persecution and plundering, and were placed outside the boundaries of normal life. Nazi legislation gradually deprived them of their possessions, freedom of movement, isolated them from the rest of the society and forced them to perform slave labor. The first symbolic directive of 1939 on the Jews’ obligation to wear armbands with the Zionist star (Star of David) on them, was followed by other orders constraining the Jews’ freedoms and their standard of living that covered many fields of the ghetto’s social and economic life. This interim period already saw some cases of

arrests, evictions, robberies, devastation of synagogues, some executions and other direct acts of repression. The most famous was the huge police campaign in Kraków's Kazimierz district and then in the Podgórze district: streets and houses were cordoned off and the property belonging to both individuals and the Jewish community was stolen over the course of mass searches.

As early as September 1939, the Gestapo appointed a new Management (*Judenrat*) for the Jewish Commune headed by Marek Bieberstein (killed at the Płaszów Camp in 1944). For such a large commune as Kraków, the council had to be composed of 24 members, and its principal duty was to fulfill the German authorities' orders "to the full extent." Although regulations provided that the civil administration was the only entity designated to make orders to the Judenrats, the security police pursued its own policy here. A Gestapo department of the bureau of the Chief of the Security Police and the SD for the Kraków District (*Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*) at Pomorska Street (ul. Pomorska 2) included an Office for Jewish Affairs, headed by, consecutively, Paul Siebert, Oskar Brand, Wilhelm Kunde and Hermann Heinrich.



Photo 1
Wilhelm Kunde

The beginning of the war saw a huge influx of refugees coming to the city and the number of Jewish inhabitants exceeded 70,000. Occupation authorities did not tolerate this situation in the "capital" of the General Government

(*Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete*; GG) (that part of Poland not incorporated into the III Reich) and so they issued a directive to relocate the Jews from the city. Between May 1940 and early 1941, over 50,000 Jews left Kraków, either voluntarily or by force. The head of the District issued a directive envisaging that the incomers were allowed to stay in the city, along with their families, only if they could secure a permit based on their occupational usefulness. Everybody else voluntarily relocated to other towns or were resettled by force. The latter went through interim camps at the former Austrian Fort Mogiła, and then at Szlak Street (ul. Szlak 26). From there, transports of Kraków's Jews were sent to the Lublin and Warsaw Districts, where they later shared the fate of their brothers.



Photo 2
Kraków 1940/1941.
A column of resettled
Jews in front of the
main railway station

Upon a directive issued by the Governor of the Kraków District Otto Wächter on the establishment of the Jewish district in Kraków ("for health and policing reasons"), by 20 March 1941, the Jews had to move over to a designated part of Podgórze. A nervous and hasty move ensued, a drama for thousands of people abandoning their flats. The Jewish Council estimated the ghetto populace at 10,873, yet this number was in fact much higher and kept growing. In October 1941, after various communes around Kraków were incorporated into the city, additional thousands of people came into the ghetto. In the Spring of 1942, before extensive resettlement campaigns, the

ghetto had been inhabited by at least 17,000 Jews, and on the eve of the ghetto's liquidation, according to official German statistics, the number was 8,753 people.

The Kraków ghetto was relatively small and had an unbelievably high population density; following various liquidation campaigns, its area was reduced and it continued to be permanently overpopulated. Nevertheless, the ghetto was well organized and, thanks to the efforts of the Judenrat and



Photo 3
Map of the ghetto

the inhabitants' resourcefulness, it provided some basic living conditions. Life in the ghetto during the first year of its existence was relatively uneventful; ghetto inhabitants also worked at various facilities and companies in other parts of the city. Additionally, ghetto life involved the organization of spiritual life, cultural events, shows for children and charity campaigns. Institutions operating in the ghetto included health-care services, hospitals, care centers for the elderly and orphanages, bath houses, and welfare kitchens for the poor. There were no epidemics, mass hunger or dying in the streets; and despite the hard conditions, the mortality rate in the ghetto was relatively low.

The Jewish police OD (*Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst*) was established pursuant to the Municipal Governor's directive of 5 July 1940 to act as the police in the Jewish part of the city and then in the ghetto. Initially, it was a typical law enforcement service, service in it was understood to be a social and civic duty. In March 1941, the Jewish police moved into the ghetto (ul. Józefińska 37). The OD also operated its own prison. Prisoners at this facility included both Jews arrested in the ghetto and Jews caught in the city with so-called "Aryan papers", i.e. forged documents, thanks to which they were able to protect themselves while pretending to be Poles. Abundant evidence shows that the behavior of OD officers changed over time. During resettlement campaigns, they had to forcibly bring people to transports and although they were in danger themselves, they felt a taste for authority and its related benefits. Over time, their voice became decisive in ghetto matters, and communal authorities submitted to this system. The OD under the command of Symche Spira emerged as a group completely independent of the Judenrat, responsible solely to the German police authorities, with its ranks composed of cynical and corrupt people, overzealously executing German orders. Additionally, the ghetto was home to a group of dangerous informers. Some of them were entitled to go outside the Jewish district, regularly contacted the Sicherheitspolizei, and took part in arrests, both of Jews and Poles.

In May 1942, the whole authority related to Jewish matters in the General Government was transferred from the civic administration to the Higher SS and Police Leader for the General Government, which anticipated "the solution

of the Jewish question" (*Endlösung der Judenfrage*) in occupied Poland. In Kraków, both the Governor of the Kraków District Richard Wendler and the SS and Police Leader SS-Oberführer The Ghetto Julian Scherner pushed for the annihilation of the Jews. Resettlements in June 1942 marked the beginning of the mass murder of Kraków's Jews, the final point on this route being the Bełżec station near Tomaszów Lubelski. As early as October 1941, Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler entrusted the SS and Police Leader in the Lublin District SS-Brigadeführer Odilo Globocnik with the task of developing the first mass extermination centre. The works began in Bełżec, where permanent extermination facilities were designed; the victims were killed in gas chambers with the exhaust fumes from engines, which contained carbon monoxide.

The June campaign in the Kraków ghetto lasted 10 days. Paralyzed with fear, the inhabitants of the surrounded district awaited "resettlement." The only ones who could stay were those working or who were fit for work, granted special stamps in their kennkarten (identity cards) and then the related "blue papers." People without stamps or blue papers were rounded up in the streets and driven from their houses to Zgody Square. From there, groups of people were hurried in three rounds to the railroad box cars waiting at the railroad station in Płaszów. As, according to the Gestapo, the President of the Judenrat, Dr Artur Rosenzweig, failed to make adequate efforts to drive more Jews to



Photo 4
Zgody Square during
the resettlement
campaign in June
1942

the square, he and his family were forced to join the transports. Komissar Dawid Gutter, an overt collaborator (a year later shot along with his family in Płaszów) took over from him. During that time, a total of 5,000-7,000 people were transported to Bełżec for extermination and over 100 people were shot on the spot. Those killed in the streets included a painter Abraham Neumann and the well-known Mordechaj Gebirtig, a carpenter, poet and singer, linked with Kazimierz for his whole life. In the weeks that followed, the Germans conducted a campaign consisting of eliminating all Jewish communities living in the vicinity of Kraków. Thousands of people living in the ghettos of Wieliczka, Skawina, Dobczyce, Niepołomice, Proszkowice, Słomniki and other towns, were deported and murdered.

Another one-day campaign on 28 October 1942 was just as brutal. The campaign started at night with a segregation of those arrested was conducted at Józefińska Street. People were shot, both in the streets and in their homes. Patients of the hospital for sick with incurable diseases (“an old people’s home”) were murdered, as were some patients of the general hospital; the children of the orphanage were sent to death, too. People selected for transportation to concentration camps were mustered at Zgody Square, from where they went to the Płaszów train station. That day, probably about 7,000 people were transported to the Bełżec camp. Right afterwards, some streets north of Lwowska Street (the so-called “Ukraine”) were excluded from the ghetto, and, on 6 December 1942, the ghetto itself was divided into section “A” for those working and section “B” for others. This anticipated the imminent liquidation of the entire district. According to witnesses, the great resettlements in June and October 1942, resulted in a death toll of between 12,000 and 15,000.

In July 1942, when the gigantic deportation of hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews was in full swing, during his visit to the General Government, Heinrich Himmler ordered the Higher SS and Police Leaders to complete full “deportations” by the end of the year. The above-mentioned SS-Obergruppenführer Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger, issued a police directive on 10 November 1942 regarding the operation of ghettos within the General

Government. At that time, the remaining ghettos in the Kraków district were: Kraków, Bochnia, Tarnów, Rzeszów and Przemyśl; outside of these, Jews could only live in camps. By the end of 1942, 1.3 million people were killed in 4 German extermination centres operating in the territory of Poland, one fourth of them in Bełżec.

Origins of the Camp and Liquidation of the Ghetto

Following the huge deportation campaigns undertaken in the Kraków District in the summer and autumn of 1942, anybody who remained alive was living either in reduced ghettos or camps. Himmler's secret order dated 9 October 1942 demanded that the Jews working for the needs of the army be placed in forced labour camps under the authority of the SS. Companies and military facilities could hire them only on the basis of a special permit. Orders had to be forwarded to the SS camp management headquarters in Berlin (Oranienburg) and payments for work performed were transferred to accounts of local SS and police leaders.

It was probably also in October 1942, that the decision to build the camp in Płaszów was made. A relevant order was issued by the SS and Police Leader SS-Oberführer Julian Scherner. The official German name of the camp was: *Zwangsarbeitslager Plaszow des SS- und Polizeiführers im Distrikt Krakau (ZAL Plaszow)*. On 27 November 1942 Scherner ordered Jews employed in armaments plants, military facilities and companies working with the army, to be concentrated in the Płaszów Camp. For the duration of the camp's construction, they lived in part "A" of the ghetto (*Arbeitsghetto*), hence the aforementioned division of the ghetto. The workers were marked in accordance with the nature of their work with identification letters: "R" (*Rüstung* – work in the armaments industry), "W" (*Wehrmacht* – work for the army) and "Z" (*Zivil* – civil work).

Camp- town planning works were contracted to Deutsche Wohn- und Siedlungsgenossenschaft G.m.b.H. headed by Rudolf Lukas. Their design envisaged the development of a mere 15 ha of the site, dozens of barracks, a kitchen, a washing room, a latrine, a laundry and a group of industrial barracks opposite the residential area. The camp was designed to accommodate 4-5,000 inmates, and these assumptions soon proved insufficient. Further works were taken over by a group of 5 engineers from the ghetto headed by Zygmunt Grünberg. This group later acted as the Management (*Bauleitung*) of the camp construction process involving the employment of over 40 architects, engineers and technical staff. The expansion of the camp involved the participation of private companies, both Polish and German ones, yet the camp was erected largely by Jewish workers. The construction project commenced with the first ten barracks within the extension of Jerozolimska Street. In December 1942, the first groups of workers were housed in these unfinished barracks. Initial impressions were dreadful; a cemetery, gravestones, a funeral parlor, a few barracks, and rough living conditions. The inmates were extremely depressed and kept saying "you don't return from the cemetery." The first working unit was the Barackenbau group, which was set up in the ghetto and was used for the hardest outdoor work in harsh winter conditions. They erected camp barracks, levelled the ground, dug trenches for the water supply and the sewage systems, and demolished the Jewish gravestones of the one-time cemeteries.

The SS and Police Leader appointed Horst Pilarzik (Pilařik) as the commander of the camp being developed. Pilařik was known for having committed various crimes within the ghetto. In January 1943, command was taken over by Franz Josef Müller, who simultaneously managed 3 Julags (*Judenlager*s). On 11 February 1943, command was taken over by SS-Untersturmführer Amon Leopold Göth, who came from Globocnik's staff in Lublin. He was ordered to step up efforts to put all the Jews from the ghetto in the camp as quickly as possible. It was then that his career began, he was said to "be rising fast upon Jewish flesh."



Photo 5
The camp
Commandant Amon
Göth on a horse

The camp stretched within the natural depression located between two enormous hills of the Krzemionki district. It was located there due to the secluded location of the site, proximity to the ghetto, the presence of a nearby railway station and industrial plants, as well as the possibility to run quarries. The site of the camp covered the plots of the former Wola Duchacka Commune, the Jewish synagogue, plots owned by the central state government, as well as municipal and private land. The centre was located on two Jewish cemeteries: the New Cemetery of the Kraków commune at Abrahamia Street (ul. Abrahamia 3) and the Old Cemetery, a part of the Podgórze Commune, at Jerozolimska Street (ul. Jerozolimska 25). The barracks were built right over the graves. As they said, "living people were made to live in a cemetery." The camp was constantly expanded and, in the end, it covered 80 ha (approx. 198 acres). In the north, the camp bordered on the Municipal Limestone Quarry, in the south – Pańska Street along with the buildings; in the west – Swoszowicka Street; and in the east – Wielicka Street. In the summer of 1944, the camp consisted of more than 200 buildings. The whole site was divided by internal fences into individual fields and three sections; a residential and administrative/military section for Germans; a section for production- workshops, utility rooms and storehouses, and a housing camp for the prisoners. The camp had a convenient "defensive location", inmates lived in the upper section, and the lower section included SS facilities,

administration offices, garages and storehouses. For security reasons, the approaches were cleared out, and residents of the nearest private buildings were evicted by force, and some of the buildings were demolished.

fot. 6
KL Plaszow 1944.
A panorama of the camp as seen from a watchtower. Barracks of the carpenter's shop, paper workshops and the blacksmith's and sheet-metal workshops. Above: residential barracks of the prisoners around the roll-call square



Unique in many ways, the Płaszów Camp was supposed to replace the Kraków ghetto which was being liquidated and, in a sense, was its continuation. Prisoners did not make up a national mosaic, nor did they come from various parts of Poland; those incarcerated here included mostly inhabitants of Kraków. It was largely an elite group, composed of educated people and specialists in various fields, who, thanks to their organisational skills and hard work, ensured the expansion and relatively efficient operation of the camp. Jakub Stendig, a well-known prisoner, architect and at the same time one of camp constructors, wrote down these prophetic words right after the war: *Jewish pioneering was put here [in Płaszów] to a hard test, yet it passed the exam with flying colours. The Jewish laborers' versatility consists in their latent capacity to adapt to any situation, both with their hands in production and with their minds. If we transformed this fear for the stupid piece of life into reconstructive energy for our large settlement called EREC [Hebrew: Erec Israel – the Land of Israel], which stems from idealistic motivations, from the burning necessity of the moment, we would achieve a miracle unprecedented in the history of colonisation.*



Photo 7
Engineer Jakub Stendig

The liquidation of the ghetto commenced on Saturday, 13 March 1943, when the district was surrounded by forces of the SS, police, *Sonderdienst* and Polish police (the so-called "navy-blue police"). Jews from the "A" ghetto would move to Płaszów, and those from the "B" ghetto were sent to death, although they were promised a transfer to *Julag I*. Scenes similar to those which occurred during the previous year's resettlements occurred. During the two-day campaign, the SS killed hundreds of people in the streets, in apartments and hideouts, in hospitals and orphanages. Their bodies were being transported to Płaszów, while people considered "useless" were still being shot. The usually quoted number of 2,000 victims killed at that time in the ghetto and the Płaszów Camp, does not seem to be an exaggeration; 8,000 people arrived in the camp, and so its population increased to over 10,000 prisoners. Since bringing children aged less than 14 to the camp was prohibited (these children were thus doomed to death), their parents came up with various ways to smuggle them in. Those who were lucky enough to gain entrance to the camp, were hidden until the camp authorities got used to their presence. After the liquidation of the "B" ghetto the next day, most of the people were transported to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Out of 2,000 Jews in this transport, about 500 were placed in the camp, and all others were immediately killed in the gas chamber. Only a few successfully ran away from the ghetto. A bold escape was made through the sewers by Dr Julian Aleksandrowicz and his wife. Aleksandrowicz, who was hidden by Polish friends, after his escape, served as an officer in the Home Army (the Polish underground army, AK) and then, after the war, was a well-known haematologist.

The ghetto developments were witnessed by Tadeusz Pankiewicz (1908-1993), the Polish owner of a pharmacy called the "Apteka pod Orłem" (the "Under the Eagle Pharmacy") located at Zgody Square (Plac Zgody 18). The Germans had consented to Pankiewicz's running his pharmacy within the ghetto. From that moment on, it played the role of a contact point for the underground movement, an aid centre for Jews, and a Polish-Jewish meeting place. From his shop, Pankiewicz observed the dramatic events at Zgody Square, and his recollections are to this day valued as a credible and noble testimony of the events which occurred there. He also provided help in the form of medicine for the prisoners in the Płaszów Camp. In 1948, Dr Aleksander Bieberstein hailed him as "our constant benefactor".



Photo 8
Tadeusz Pankiewicz

In the deserted ghetto, OD officers searched houses, basements, inaccessible places, and located bunkers and hideouts. Anybody caught was brought to the camp and shot. In the ghetto, prisoners picked up the dead bodies and brought them to the yard of the house at Józefińska Street (ul. Józefińska 28). From there, the corpses were transported by means of trucks covered with tarpaulins to the camp and placed in a mass grave. Another group, which later became the so-called *Säuberungskolonne*, i.e. a cleaning column, was supposed to tidy up the area and restore it to its residential use. These works were being carried out there for a few months, and valuable Jewish property was filling up the storehouses under the authority of the SS and the Police Leader.

Those allowed to stay in the ghetto for an interim period included: the President of the Jewish Mutual Aid Society Michał Weichert and his family, members of the Jewish Council, some OD members, trusted informers and a group of Jews with foreign papers (foreign citizenship). Some OD men were brought to the camp and continued to work as a uniformed law-enforcement unit, whereas others prowled the city, thus posing a threat mostly to those Jews in hiding. Despite their zealousness, most of them were sent to death; on 14 December 1943, they were unexpectedly transported along with their families to the Płaszów Camp and shot. Their bodies were burned that same evening. Some of the victims killed then included Symche Spira, and his deputy Michał Pacanower.

Following the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto and other ghettos in the environs of Kraków, many Jews continued to live illegally and hide in various places, under the constant threat of being arrested by the Gestapo, military police, the “navy-blue police” and informers. Some Poles were afraid of hiding them for fear of incurring a death sentence, though hundreds of people did put their lives at risk, and actively supported the Jews, thus saving many human beings.

Unfortunately, many accounts and testimonies show indifference towards the suffering of the Jews, unfriendly attitudes towards them, as well as some Poles’ participation in denunciations and other crimes. Some of Poles were prone to accept the anti-Semitic slogans and anti-Jewish propaganda disseminated by the Germans and their incentives, to denounce the Jews. What also played a significant role was the desire to get rich and confiscate the victims’ property. Today, this continues to be a painful subject for research and discussions about Polish and Jewish relationships during the German occupation.

Prisoners

Initially, 10,000 people were interned at the camp, but this number was constantly changing. The average number of prisoners was over 10,000, the highest number being observed in June 1944 – up to 24,000 people, including temporary prisoners and prisoners in the sub-camps. Based on post-war estimates, it is calculated that tens of thousands of people went through the camp; however, 30,000-40,000 thousand, including the 25,000 numbered prisoners, seems to be a much more likely figure. Common numbering for Poles and Jews was introduced after the camp was converted into a concentration camp; the count began with 101, the number of “the Camp Elder” Wilhelm Chilowicz. Prisoners were marked in a way commonly adopted in German concentration camps but they were not photographed nor were their numbers tattooed (they were sewn on their clothing). Interim prisoners or Polish hostages captured during the campaign of 6 August 1944, were not numbered.

At the Płaszów Camp, there were Jews originating from a number of liquidated ghettos, including, besides the Kraków one, the ghettos of Bochnia, Tarnów, Przemyśl and many smaller ones (Działoszyce, Słomniki, Skała, Wolbrom and Wieliczka), from liquidated or evacuated labour camps (Kłaj, Rabka, Czarny Dunajec, Nowy Targ, Zakopane, Szebnie, Mielec, Iwonicz, Pustków, Rzeszów, Stalowa Wola, Drohobycz, Borysław, Budzyń and Majdanek). Since the Spring of 1944, the Płaszów Camp periodically played the role of an interim camp for the transports of Jews from Hungary, and camps located in the east. To facilitate this manoeuvre, the Berlin headquarters permitted Göth to “dilute the camp”. As a result, transports were consigned to the Skarżysko and KL Gross-Rosen camps and a huge selection was carried out. The latter resulted in 1,500 prisoners being sent to death in Auschwitz on 14 May 1944, including small children.

The camp was originally intended for Jewish prisoners only, but this changed in July 1943 as the SS and Police Leader for the Kraków District set up a “labor re-education camp” (*Arbeitserziehungslager*) for Poles in Płaszów.

Prisoners of this camp included people sentenced for administrative crimes, common crimes and those suspected of being members of the resistance movement. They were supposed to serve pre-determined sentences, mostly between 3 and 6 months, but at times the sentences were extended. The first group of Poles was most likely sent to the camp on 9 July 1943. July also saw a transport of people from villages and small towns burnt down by the Germans, in the region surrounding Kraków, including Rybna, Piekary, Wola Justowska, Sułkowice. The inhabitants of these villages were suspected of belonging to the underground movement and/or aiding the insurgents. Several dozen people were transported from Waksmund in Podhale, a village which was largely destroyed and where many inhabitants were executed. In September 1943, the camp for Poles was enlarged, and the prisoners were moved to five men's and three women's barracks. Prisoners built next to the new assembly square. The barracks were guarded and fenced-off with double barbed wire that was 2.5 metres high. The barracks were primitive, without a water supply system or a sewage system, their hygienic conditions were dreadful, there was a shortage of clothes, soap, cooking and eating utensils, and the prisoners slept on bare pallets. The Poles were said to have been treated worse than Jews at that time. According to Dr. Bieberstein's reports, Poles carried out the heaviest works, and because of their isolation, they could not hope to come by some extra food. Living conditions were "more than dreadful"; without external help, they failed in health or died. They did not occupy any positions in the camp hierarchy, and had no influence on the course of camp events; they made up a group of prisoners who were slowly building their position in the camp dominated by old prisoners.

There are few accounts on the relationships between Jews and Poles at the Płaszów Camp. Most certainly, they were complicated as in other parts of the occupation reality, but the milk of human kindness was present on both sides. Despite a prohibition, some Jews helped Polish prisoners, who felt initially lost and isolated; the attitude to the Poles was friendly, they were thought of as fellow prisoners. When Poles began working at facilities outside of the camp, the cooperation started thriving, food and correspondence were exchanged, and trade became something quite common. The case of prisoners' contacts

with the city via the Polish construction company of P. Śliwa ended tragically. The smuggling of food, money and kites ended with a leak and repression. During the investigation, the name of Dr. Władysław Sztencel was revealed. A great patriot, Sztencel was a Jewish doctor working in the Polish area and was actively participating in smuggling activities. Despite torture, Sztencel acted heroically; sentenced to death, he was executed by a firing squad as part of a mass execution on 2 November 1943.



Photo 9
Dr Władysław Sztencel

The number of Polish prisoners remained at a level of between several hundred in July 1943 and about 3,000 in the Spring of 1944 (out of approximately 20,000 Jewish prisoners). The population of Polish prisoners rose significantly as a consequence of "Black Sunday" (6 August 1944), when over 6,000 young men were arrested during Kraków manhunts, as part of a preventive campaign mounted in the wake of the Warsaw Uprising. As hostages, they were not accounted for and were not hired, and after their employers' interventions and short investigations, they were set free over the course of the coming weeks.

Prisoners of that part of the camp also included several dozen Gypsy families, with children, staying at the camp on a temporary basis. Their fate is not quite known. They received no external aid, isolated themselves both from Poles and Jews, and were marked by a high mortality rate.

The head of the camp for Poles was SS-Hauptscharführer Lorenz Landstorfer, previously serving at KL Sachsenhausen and at camps in Szebnie and Mielec. He was a sadist and the terror of the camp, who liked surprising his victims by showing up unexpectedly. Therefore, the Poles called him “the Hawk”, and the Jews named him “*Meszulach*” (a spectre, a harbinger of death). His deputy was Georg Michalski (“the Boss”), a germanised Silesian, a member of the NSDAP and the SS, a drunkard and a sadist. Upon his dismissal from this position in November 1943, the Poles heaved a sigh of relief.

In Płaszów, as at other German camps, an extensive system of posts was developed for authority to be effectively exercised. These posts were controlled by prominent Jewish prisoners, mostly members of the former ghetto OD. The power of OD members at the camp was evident, as they supervised each of the barracks and working groups, they held key positions (major officials at camp offices, the Chief Medical Officer, directors of the Bauleitung, labor offices, the Abladekolonne, storehouses, the kitchen, the baths and the stable, etc.). Göth appointed Wilhelm Chilowicz the Head of the Ordnungsdienst, a position with authority over directors referred to at the camp as “officers.” They included both eager and ruthless assistants to the SS, and decent people who would never disgrace themselves by acting to their brothers’ detriment. Upon the establishment of the concentration camp, the OD was officially abolished, but the same people now made up the camp fire-fighting and policing service and not much had changed in this respect. Chief Chilowicz became “the Camp Elder” of the men’s camp (*Lagerälteste*), and his deputy Finkelstein directly commanded the police. Former OD members continued to play management roles as barrack wardens and Kapos at workshops. Although discipline, better organisation of camp life and the handling of prisoners’ matters on an independent basis helped avoid interventions and repressions from Germans, the power of the camp higher-ups was closely linked with malfeasance and corruption. Weaker prisoners, without influence or money, had poorer living opportunities and chances for survival, whereas the privileges of the camp foremen also extended to their families, automatically protected and living under better conditions. Regular prisoners were not quite fond of the OD officers. Quite the opposite, OD members were generally

hated and accused of immorality and the use of their positions for personal benefits. Prisoners perceived their servility and ruthlessness, corruption, living beyond their means, getting rich at the cost of the weaker and many other base acts. There are many testimonies of witnesses concerning the boss of the "Chilowicz gang", and its disgraceful role at the camp. According to Stendig, Chilowicz was "a wretched human louse with an inaccessible Reitpeitsche," and he harmed his brothers to the point that nobody pitied him when he was shot along with his family upon the Commandant's order. human louse with an inaccessible Reitpeitsche," and he harmed his brothers to the point that nobody pitied him when he was shot along with his family upon the Commandant's order.



Photo 10
A Jewish ghetto policeman
on guard at the internal
gate separating the
workshops from the
residential section

One of leading camp dignitaries was Dr Leon Gross, the Chief Medical Officer managing the hospital and the entire health care system. Although the way the health care system operated was considered a success under camp conditions, Gross himself was tried after the war. Numerous Jewish witnesses reproached him for his brutal treatment of prisoners, participation in selections of the sick and the administration of petrol injections. The burden of the accusations was sufficient enough for him to be handed a death sentence. Major Kerner, the Deputy Chief of the OD at Płaszów, who committed many offences himself, ended up in a similar way. He deliberately beat in the head and eyes, both men and women. As an OD member in the ghetto, he took part in arrests, including those of Jewish underground activists in January 1943.

However, Marcel Goldberg, the Head of the Labor Office, successfully ran away and escaped responsibility towards his fellow prisoners and the judiciary. He was widely hated, lived a lavish lifestyle, ignored and ill-treated people, was notorious for extorting money and valuables for the assignment to a "better" job or transport, including to the famous Schindler factory in Brännlitz. As it was believed then, through his machinations, he was in fact a co-author of the so-called "Schindler's list".

Many camp authorities were negatively perceived by their fellow prisoners, but there was one well-known prisoner enjoying a special position at the camp: Mieczysław Pemper, the personal secretary, shorthand typist and translator of the Camp Commander. Due to his role, he used a lot of secret information for the common good, some of this information also going beyond the camp and reaching underground activists.

In 1944, about 50 German prisoners were transferred from Auschwitz and Dachau to the Płaszów Camp. They assumed various roles in blocks and facilities and moved in to separate barracks. The group was composed, among others, of professional criminals but also of political prisoners, who acted decently. The newcomers led, amongst others, a penal company that claimed many lives as a result of beatings, undernourishment and the emaciating work at the quarry. A very dangerous person in the penal company was Prisoner Anton Fehringer ("Toni"), an Austrian criminal who tortured prisoners and ran the so-called "sport". Steinbruch was commanded by another criminal, the Kapo Simleiner popularly referred to as "Ivan."

Life at the Camp

One of basic concerns was to maintain good hygienic standards and operation of the health care system. Prisoners were provided with medical care by Jewish doctors, mainly highly-experienced specialists from Kraków. The general hospital was transferred from the ghetto along with the following departments: an internal ward, an epidemiological ward, a surgery ward and an outpatient ward. The hospital was now headed by Dr. Leon Gross, who was managing a group of about twenty doctors. Before the war, Gross lived in Katowice, later, after he escaped to Kraków in February 1940, he was employed at the hospital of the Jewish Commune at Skawińska Street. Early on he was transferred from the ghetto to the Płaszów Camp, and for this reason, Göth appointed him to the post of Chief Medical Officer. General supervision over the hospital was provided by an SS physician (*Lagerarzt*) SS-Obersturmführer Dr Wilhelm Jäger, a dentist. He was succeeded by SS-Hauptsturmführer Dr Max Blancke, who had earlier come from Majdanek. The latter achieved notoriety for having run “a health roll call” at the camp on 7 May 1944 and introducing the practice of administering lethal injections to the patients.

By German camp standards, the state of sanitary matters and health care was not too poor, though conditions did not allow a true battle for human lives and health. Some of those working here were good specialists. Aid was provided, and many prisoners were successfully treated, and the camp was saved from epidemics. In the Summer of 1943 only, at Julag I (*Judenlager I*), an epidemic of typhus fever was raging, and hundreds of prisoners were not provided with medicine or proper health care. Before the epidemic was brought under control, it had spread over the entire camp and more than 400 prisoners had died. Physicians submitted a false report to the authorities, thus saving the sick and the rest of the prisoners from being shot, and then bribed the camp Commandant Müller, who kept the fact a secret from the SS authorities for fear of losing his cushy job.

The Poles at the camp did not have a hospital or an outpatient clinic at their disposal; they were visited by doctors coming from the Jewish camp. The organization of a hospital began only in late 1943, and in February 1944, a Polish medical unit came from KL Neuengamme. The 10-member staff was headed by Dr Stanisław Jagielski. He saw patients in a common admission ward of the Jewish hospital, where three rooms for Poles were later organised. Rooms for those ill with contagious diseases were designated and separate rooms were established for men and women as well. What contributed to the general improvement was aid in the form of medicine from the Central Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*, RGO), an Polish official welfare organisation working in the General Government.

Food rations came from SS food storehouses. The rations were inadequate, e.g. a single prisoner obtained only one, 1.4 kg loaf of bread per week. Additionally, the prison kitchen was suffering further losses and had to give out goods needed by the SS officers and Göth himself, including meat for his dogs. The food situation deteriorated as, since September 1943, Jewish work squads were not going out to work in the city and thus the source of an extra supply of food was cut off; additionally, separate kitchens run by various companies (Madritsch and Optima) were closed down. This resulted in an increase in camp food prices and visible symptoms of hunger. After the Płaszów Camp was converted into a concentration camp, the smuggling of food became more popular and improved, as the practice of food smuggling was no longer punishable by death but, at worst, confiscation of the smuggled goods and some more lenient types of punishment.

The conversion of the camp into a KL (concentration camp) marked a breakthrough in the history of Płaszów. The fate of Płaszów was to some extent dependent on the result of the dispute between the Armaments Ministry of the Reich and the SS over the utilisation of Jewish laborers in the armaments industry. In the Spring of 1943, when "total war" and economic mobilization had been announced, in the General Government an industrial group, the Ost-Industrie G.m.b.H. (*Osti*) was set up under the aegis of the SS. Its aim was to deploy new armaments factories and exploit

the Jewish work force. In the second half of the year, all Jewish camps were brought under the authority of the SS Main Economic and Administrative Department (*SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt, SS-WVHA*), headed by SS-Obergruppenführer Oswald Pohl. This implied their conversion into concentration camps or KL subsidiaries. In the Autumn of 1943, Pohl ordered concentration camps (*Amtsgruppe D-Konzentrationslager*), and several camps in the General Government, including the Płaszów Camp, to be legally converted into concentration camps by 10 January 1944 *Konzentrationslager Plaszow bei Krakau (KL Plaszow)*, and to be transferred to his department. Regulations and camp rules were established, which applied to all concentration camps. Sentences and disciplinary penalties were under Berlin's authority, the number of executions diminished, as the Commandant was obliged to apply for permission to perform any execution. The period of lawlessness was drawing to an end and, in the opinion of prisoners, living conditions improved and gave hope for survival.

New regulations changed the camp order: the separate status of the camp for Poles was revoked; numbers of blocks were changed; a common numbering of prisoners was introduced and prisoners were given identical striped uniforms; they were ordered to shave their heads; and food rations were increased. All of those changes, important and partly beneficial to prisoners, did not change the camp reality completely. The fate of prisoners, especially Jews, was still uncertain, terror continued and tough disciplinary penalties were being imposed.

Rescue and consolation came in the form of external aid. As early as 1942, prisoners of the Julag I and then of the Płaszów Camp could enjoy this kind of support. Until the Summer of 1944, they received medicine, supplements, soups and rations of many food products. They were distributed by the Jewish Support Centre (*Jüdische Unterstützungstelle, JUS*). The JUS was established in May 1940, originally as the Jewish Social Self-Help Society (*Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe, JSS*), and was headed by Dr Michał Weichert within the territory of the General Government. The JUS was mostly concerned with camps for Jews and supplied them with medicine, medical dressing products, disinfectants, as

well as supplements and food; it also maintained kitchens which provided well balanced meals, distributed nourishing types of soup ("jus soups"), clothing and footwear. It acted as an intermediary in contacts with the external world and facilitated an exchange of correspondence. While distributing foreign gifts in ghettos and camps, Weichert met many German dignitaries and camp commandants and had numerous opportunities for witnessing the fate of the Jews in the General Government. As a witness to German crimes, he was concerned about his life and on 28 July 1944 fled from the former ghetto in Kraków and hid together with his family. Their living expenses were covered by the Polish underground organisation Council to Aid Jews (*Rada Pomocy Żydom*). Despite criticism and condemnation from Jewish and Polish underground activists, the aid from Weichert's organization brought many benefits and extended the lives of many prisoners, as evidenced by the preserved accounts and words of gratitude. After the war, Weichert was tried and found not guilty, yet disputes over this controversial figure and judgment over his activities have not ceased as of yet.

Płaszów also received aid from the Council to Aid Jews, though its scale was insignificant. The Council to Aid Jews was an underground organisation operating under a cryptonym "Żegota", established in late 1942 under the auspices of the Government Delegation for Poland (*Delegatura Rządu Rzeczypospolitej na Kraj*; an agency of the Polish Government in London during World War II), whose mission consisted of organizing aid for Polish Jews. Various communication channels were used in this case, including the involvement of Weichert, the Madritsch company, and prisoners working in the city. Regular aid was provided to Poles from December 1943, by the Central Welfare Council (RGO). It supplied significant quantities of food, soup ingredients and special supplements for the sick, as well as medicine and medical dressings, footwear, clothing, blankets, and quilts and straw mattresses. Impatiently looked forward to by the prisoners, the team was headed by Maria Zazulowa, a highly committed leader of the "Patronat" (Prisoners' Aid Department of the Social Welfare Center), dubbed the "ciotka z RGO" ("RGO auntie"), which visited the camp weekly and brought gifts and news.

Jewish prisoners matured to the point of considering self-organization, as some brave people did not break down and did contemplate resistance. The first underground meeting in Płaszów was held in November 1943 after the Julags had been closed down and some were concerned about the further fate of the camp and its prisoners. Underground activists were contemplating procedures to be followed in case of the camp's liquidation and a self-defense plan; it was decided that groups of trusted people capable of active commitment would be set up in some workshops. Some plans were being implemented: extra keys for some facilities were made to possibly cut off power and telephones; fence cutting equipment was procured; and camp officers and related threats were worked out. Most importantly, a few weapons were accumulated, explosives stolen from the quarry were stored, and attempts were made to produce hand grenades. A secret bunker was developed under the sheet-metal shop, where, in the case of a threat, one could hide in, and conceal the weapons and materials which had been gathered. Discussions even covered plans of a possible uprising within the camp, of blowing some camp buildings up and developing a common action plan for various political groups.

Those people making up the underground management of the camp were mainly connected with the Jewish Combat Organisation (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB) and the Polish Workers' Party (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*, PPR). The resistance group was being headed by Wiktor Traubmann, a worker in the sheet-metal workshop. Circumstances permitting, activists took some initial steps; however, they could not expect support from outside the camp



Photo 11
Wiktor Traubmann

and saw no chance for an uprising to start. Surprised with the sudden evacuation in the Summer of 1944, they made no use of the means and arms gathered. A well-informed prisoner, Mieczysław Pemper, considered that conditions enabling underground activities were nonexistent, since the camp population included whole families and the threat of mass repressions prevented the prisoners from organizing more extensive activities.

There are no sources confirming that a Polish organisation existed at the camp. Probably some prisoners had some underground connections that allowed them to endure their stay at the camp in a better way or to plan an escape. The underground press reached the camp and sometimes covered its life. On 1 December 1943, the Home Army (AK) issued a fake edition of the *Goniec Krakowski* newspaper, printed by the Germans in Polish, which featured, among others, a famous announcement by Amon Göth: *For sale: Jewish jewellery cleaned of blood – Goeth, the Commandant of the Jewish Camp in Wola Duchacka.*

Forced Labour

.....

Prisoners worked within the camp, as part of work squads in Kraków and in several sub-camps. They tried to get some less strenuous jobs, indoors and giving them the chance to come by some extra food, e.g. at the kitchen, the bakery, the potato storage house, jobs related to animal husbandry, at offices or jobs concerning services provided to SS officers, with companies transferred to the camp and with external enterprises. The worst were the works which were outdoors: the demolition of cemeteries, construction of barracks, garrison barracks, workshops, work in the stone quarry, and construction of roads, sewage systems and fire protection ponds. To be assigned the right kind of work sometimes could be a matter of life and death. Assignments depended first of all on the Ordnungsdienst and then on the job distribution

centre (*Arbeitseinsatz*) headed by SS-Hauptscharführer Franz Josef Müller, who had come from the ghetto in Bochnia. His right hand man was the famous Marcel Goldberg, who managed the office. It was here that decisions were made about assigning prisoners to specific squads and workshops, and it was up to Goldberg to decide if a prisoner was given a light job indoors or an exhausting job ruining his health, a so-called "black job". The work day started with reveille at 4 am. After roll-call at 6 am, the prisoners marched out for a whole day of work with an hour break for dinner. In the Summer of 1944, due to the front-line situation and blackouts, the organisation changed and Sunday afternoons were free, prisoners spent them on their own activities, meetings and rest.

Extensive work had been done for the redevelopment and operation of the camp, the vast and hilly area of the camp had to be transformed, and the camp itself was therefore a huge construction site. These works were implemented by the construction management, its *Barackenbau* group originally including hundreds of people, and as many as 7,000 in 1944. Apart from experts such as carpenters, painters, locksmiths, electricians and plumbers, there were also untrained workers, and other craft laborers who toiled at workshops performing tasks commissioned by construction site managers. First of all, two Jewish cemeteries were razed to the ground, the walls were demolished, and statues and gravestones were utilised for various purposes. Hills were levelled, some facilities such as roads, the sewage system, wells and water supply systems and numerous concrete, wooden or excavated facilities were constructed. There were two quarries exploited to supply rocks and gravel for the construction of roads. A characteristic image was the narrow-gauge railway for the transportation of stone and soil (*Manschaftszug*). The wagons were pulled with ropes by several dozen female prisoners. It was a backbreaking chore. The works at the fire protection ponds launched in 1943 were similar. Here, the labor was performed by both men and women, after regular working hours. Hundreds of prisoners worked on the camp's upkeep, maintaining and repairing various devices. The *Abladekolonne* group was engaged in unloading and transporting food and other products from the Płaszów railway station and various companies in the city.



Photo 12
Female prisoners
pulling wagons filled
with stone
at Industrie Strasse

At the same time, various workshops were organised: sheet-metal workshops, blacksmith's workshops, electrical workshops, tailor's workshops, furrier's shops, knitting shops, shoemaker's shops, leather craft shops, upholsterer's shops, basket-making shops, brush shops, watchmaker's shops, radio equipment repair shops, mattress production shops, paper shops, a printing shop and others. The printing shop produced envelopes, blocks, letters, files, forms and blanks for the camp's internal needs and the police and official agencies, and in barracks No. 92, the notorious announcements on death penalties for Poles were printed for the Gestapo (*Bekanntmachung*). As early as spring 1943, craftsmen's workshops were opened to serve the SS. Workshops producing clothing, footwear, fur, furniture and other products manufactured their products for the camp commandant, SS members, their families and SS dignitaries from the town. Machines and materials were brought from the Kraków ghetto and other towns, from companies and workshops. This is how the Zentrale für Handwerkslieferungen (ZfH) workshops were transferred to Płaszów, and in the Summer of 1943, smaller tailoring companies from the Tarnów ghetto and the well-known clothing company Julius Madritsch were placed in the camp. The prisoners sewed new uniforms and working clothes, and repaired old ones, which came from the front-line. A company providing extra food rations to almost one thousand workers, Madritsch was liked by the Jewish workers and its workshops

were thought of as an oasis of peace. After conversion of the camp into a Konzentrationslager, companies and workshops operating here, apart from the camp development group and Madritsch, came under the authority of the *Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke der SS* (D.A.W.) armaments corporation.

As part of a campaign aimed at utilising Jewish scientists that had been deported to concentration camps, Płaszów was meant to undertake research projects important for scientific research and the armaments industry. In the Spring of 1944, the Chemikerkommando was established and a chemical laboratory was designed. A team of chemists and pharmacists was supposed to work for the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit; however, its role and tasks in the camp are not known. Those working for the institute also included prisoners-librarians, who organised and translated books coming from destroyed Jewish libraries.

Płaszów prisoners also worked in the city, in dozens of companies and facilities such as: Progress, Leinfabrik, the Bauminger nail factory, a former cement manufacturer Bonarka, a mill in Podgórze at Kalwaryjska Street, storehouses of car parts at Okopy Street (the so-called "Pancerka"), and a factory of E. Wachs. They worked at the railway viaduct at Wielicka Street and the railway tracks heading in the direction of Skawina. They also worked for the police and storehouses: Grzegórzki (TWL), Bonarka, the SS driving school (Gramatyka Street), the hospital at Świętego Stanisława Street, clothing mills and medical equipment plants as well as garages. The bureau of the SS and Police Leader for the Kraków District engaged prisoners at its office at Oleandry Street, and its subunit based at Limanowskiego Street (ul. Limanowskiego 6o) (later at Oleandry Street) stored, sorted and cataloged the gold, jewelry and money stolen from Jews throughout the General Government. Only the most trusted officers knew about this unit, which operated until September 1944. In 1943, following some Jewish rebellions in various ghettos and camps, the German authorities wanted the clusters of Jews to become more isolated. SS-Oberführer Julian Scherner's circular letter to enterprises using Jewish prisoners from Płaszów, ordered the employment of Jews only within the camp and sub-

camps. Since 2 September 1943, Jews were forbidden to work outside the camp, thus their possibility to visit the city and gain external aid was cut off. From then on, only Polish prisoners could work at external entities.



Photo 13
Prisoners doing
forced labour; a stone
storehouse on the right;
above: a visible part of
the execution site on the
"Górka"

As early as 1942, the first forced labour camps for Jews were set up in Kraków (*Judenlager*), the Julags I, II, III in Płaszów, Prokocim and Biezanów. They were responsible to the SS and Police Leader for the Kraków district, and in 1943 they were incorporated into the Płaszów Camp as subsidiaries. They were set up in connection with extensive railway and road developments meant to enhance transport routes for military purposes. The works were performed by German companies under the supervision of the railway management. Prisoners who worked here included Jewish workers selected by the Arbeitsamt, who came from Kraków, the Kraków district and the Miechów district and worked on the expansion of the Kraków railway junction. They were building the north-eastern ring line (Łobzów-Olsza-Płaszów), a hump yard in Prokocim, a railroad bridge over the Vistula River, as well as viaducts, embankments and roads. Since March 1943, they received regular assistance from the Kraków ghetto in the form of food, money and clothing. Command over them on behalf of the SS was exercised by the Lagerführer at Julag I, SS-Oberscharführer Franz Josef Müller.

Julag I was established in the Spring of 1942 in the railway barracks in Płaszów, opposite the municipal limestone quarries and later at the Płaszów Camp. Over one thousand prisoners were engaged in construction and railway companies. Nearby, at Cmentarna Street in Prokocim, *Julag* II, where 2,500 Jews were imprisoned, was established in the Summer of 1942. The latest *Julag* was *Julag* III, established in the Autumn of 1942 in Bieżanów, where over 600 people transferred from Prokocim were placed in several barracks. In 1943, this facility was ruled by the famed *SS-Rottenführer* Wiktor Ritschek. Relations in the *Julags* were exacerbated after they had been brought under the command of Płaszów in September 1943. In late 1943, when Jewish labour camps in the General Government were being gradually liquidated, prisoners of *Julags* were transferred to Płaszów, where, following a screening, many were shot. Others were kept in uncertainty. Eventually, after a brief stint, over 4,000 people were sent to the Radom District (Skarżysko-Kamienna, Starachowice, Ostrowiec, Pionki, Kielce, Częstochowa) to work in the armaments industry.

Besides *Julags*, there were other forced labor departments at the German companies and military facilities, which in 1943 were converted into subcamps of Płaszów. They included the following labor camps: the facility at Rakowice Airport (*Fliegerhorstkommandantur*), the facility at the aviation equipment storehouse in Zabłocie (*Nachrichtengerätelager der Luftwaffe*), the facility at the cable factory (*Kabelwerk-Betriebs G.m.b.H.*), Prokocimska Street (ul. Prokocimska 75), and, finally, the well-known camp at the Rekord factory, taken over by Oskar Schindler, at Lipowa Street (ul. Lipowa 4). Workers at the famous Emalia factory (*Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik*, DEF) worked hard, too, but there was no daily terror, selections or extra hard work, as opposed to Płaszów. In mid-1944, Schindler commenced negotiations with the SS authorities to transfer his company to Germany and he was able to set up a camp in Brünnlitz (Sudeten), where he brought in a thousand prisoners, almost all of whom survived thanks to his efforts.

In April 1944, a sub-camp was established in Wieliczka. Aviation production activities were to be launched in the basement of the salt mine (*Abraumbetrieb Wilhelmsburg – Arbeitslager Wieliczka*). Altogether, the above-mentioned camps

included 10,000 working prisoners; additionally, the camps for Jews in Mielec, Rzeszów and Zakopane also operated under the umbrella of the Płaszów Camp. All of them had been liquidated by the summer of 1944 and these inmates were some of the first prisoners to have been transported en masse to the Reich.

Staff

As mentioned earlier, the Płaszów Camp was under the authority of the SS and the police commissioner. At that time, between August 1941 and February 1944, SS-Oberführer Julian Scherner, the former commander of the SS-Totenkopf-Standarte 8 regiment, was the SS and police commandant. Scherner was responsible for appointing the Camp Commandant and camp officers, and its offices at Oleandry Street processed the most important camp matters, including finance. He was provided with reports, personally looked into camp matters and visited the camp. It is worth mentioning that the camp was also visited by other high SS officials, including SS-Obergruppenführer Krüger, representatives of the General Government, the Governor of the Kraków District Wendler and Kraków's Stadthauptmann Krämer.

The first commandants of the camp were the aforementioned SS-Unterscharführer Horst Pilarzik and SS-Oberscharführer Franz Josef Müller, but Płaszów was associated most of all with the person of Amon Göth (1908-1946), in command of the camp between 11 February 1943 and 13 September 1944. Göth was born in Vienna, where he studied agriculture, joined the Austrian Nazis and, in 1932, became an SS member. He enlisted in the Waffen-SS in 1940 and served in occupied Poland at the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle in Cieszyn and Katowice, an institution committed to helping and transporting those Volksdeutsche (ethnic Germans) living in foreign or occupied areas to the III Reich. In the Summer of 1942, he was put at the disposal of the SS and Police Leader in the Lublin District Odilo Globocnik. As an officer of special

tasks, he worked on the expansion of local extermination facilities and thus arrived in Kraków as an expert on camps for Jews. Following his successes in organizing the camp, in the Summer of 1943 he was promoted to the rank of SS-Hauptsturmführer. When in power, Göth said to the prisoners gathered: *My name is Göth, for you I'm God, your life and death being in my hands. To kill 500 is a trifle to me. Remember that!*

As a Commandant, he lived a lavish lifestyle. He lived with his mistress in an elegant, renovated villa, where he threw loud bashes and drunken parties with a huge entourage and to the accompaniment of an orchestra. He had horses and dogs and two cars of his own. Many prisoners worked at his household: cooks, a pastry cook, a servant, a masseur and stablemen. At the camp, he was universally feared, was constantly on the look-out for new victims; to kill a prisoner, to torture them, to set dogs on them, was, indeed, a trifle to him. This lawlessness and psychopathic tendencies terrified the prisoners; nobody could be sure of their fate and the consequences of the Commandant's unpredictability. Göth's lifestyle, his parties, bribes, "gifts" and illegal businesses caused hatred among other officials. Accused of an abuse of power and embezzlement, he was arrested on 13 September 1944 and removed, though the trial against him had not been concluded by the end of the war.

SS-Hauptsturmführer Arnold Büscher took over from Göth as the new Commandant. Büscher previously served at the camps in: Flossenbürg, Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald and Neuengamme. In Płaszów, from April 1944, he was the leader of the watch battalion and a Deputy Commandant. In the prisoners' opinion, living conditions in the camp improved greatly during that time. The last Commandant, SS-Hauptscharführer Kurt Schupke was formerly the Commandant of camps in Sanok, Rzeszów and Zasław. It was he who liquidated the camp, and led the last group of a few hundred prisoners into the concentration camp Auschwitz (*Konzentrationslager Auschwitz, KL Auschwitz*).

At first, those on guard were from auxiliary security units of the SS (*SS-Wachmannschaften*), specially trained at a center in Trawniki near Lublin. These were usually Soviet POWs of various nationalities who were sent to work as

guards in labor camps for Jews and extermination centers, where they played the most wretched roles. In March 1943, over 200 guards from Trawniki were directed to the SS and Police Leader in Kraków, to work at the Płaszów Camp. Here, they were popularly referred to as: “the Ukrainians” or “Blacks”, due to the color of their re-dyed uniforms. As part of their duties, they worked in towers and at guard posts, received transports, escorted prisoners and provided assistance during executions. It was external service and guards were not entitled to enter the prisoners’ section of the camp.



Photo 14
Guards against
the backdrop of
the funeral parlor

It was not until the concentration camp had been established, that the number of German guards was increased and female German and Dutch overseers from the SS, arrived to eagerly oversee camp discipline among women. In 1944, at the peak of the camp’s operation, Płaszów’s staff amounted to almost 700 SS men and guards of foreign descent. Experienced SS members replaced OD members and assumed management over all branches and facilities, blocks, kitchens, bakeries, baths, storehouses, DAW workshops as well as other roles. A political department was established whose capacity

was to control the security status of the camp and run prisoner files and records. A death register was launched and cases of deaths were accounted for in the files.

In 1944, the structure of the camp became similar to that of other concentration camps: it was headed by the commandant, managing two divisions: the Kommandantur (*Kommandantur des Konzentrationslager*) and the guard battalion (*SS-Totenkopfsturmbann*). The Kommandantur was composed of several divisions (*Abteilung*): Abt. I – Administration, Abt. II – Political division (Security and Files), Abt. III – Prisoners (*Häftlingslager*), Abt. IV – Camp Management (*Verwaltung*) and Abt. V – Medical service.

This big group of SS officers and non-commissioned officers, had their attitudes and deeds well remembered by the prisoners. The leading criminal was SS-Untersturmführer Leonhard John, an Alsatian who was a long-time member of the SA and the SS. Since April 1943, he had served as an inspector for forced labor camps in the Kraków District. When he had come to the Płaszów Camp in August, he proved to be the initiator of and a participant in, numerous shootings. SS-Hauptscharführer Edmund Zdrojewski, a guard at concentration camps since 1936, had already left quite a bloody mark on the liquidation of the Kraków ghetto. In Płaszów, he served since October 1944 and was one of the main executioners, with a toll of hundreds of victims killed.

Similar personalities were SS-Oberscharführer Albert Hujer, a mass killer after whom the execution spot on a "Hill" was called "Hujowa Górka" (vulgar), and Ferdynand Glaser, police Oberwachmeister, a former member of Governor Frank's security staff and the first German commander of the camp guard, was frequently seen at the sites of executions.

The group of the biggest criminals also includes two Latvians trained in Trawniki: Arwid Janetz and Andreas Kanepajs; SS-Oberscharführer Franz Grün, not accidentally referred to as "the Shooter"; the Commandant of the camp for Poles SS-Hauptscharführer Lorenz Landstorfer; the Commander of

the guard company SS-Hauptscharführer Josef Grzimek; Rapportführer Willi Eckert; and SS-Rottenführer Wilhelm Staib, called "Willy the Eye", known for whipping prisoners in their eyes.

Some of notorious doctors included SS doctors Willi Jäger and Max Blancke, the head of the workshops Karl Heinz Bigell, who shot the former ghetto Commissioner Gutter along with his entire family, SS-Untersturmführer Anton Scheidt, the former Commandant of the forced labor camp in Szebnie, who held authority over the works at quarries, and the Commander of the guard SS-Hauptsturmführer Paul Röbel, the former Commandant of forced labour camps for Jews in the District of Galicia. At the camp, there were three guards who were Goralenvolk "highlanders". One of them was Józef Sowiński, a guard from the first company of the Wachbatalion.

Zealous killers like him were given preference by the camp Commandant, but there were also different SS men, those who objected to Göth's directives and, as a consequence, were transferred, persecuted or just not promoted. For instance, a Sudeten German SS-Rottenführer Bruno Dworschak refused to carry out an order to shoot a prisoner and objected to maltreatment. An exceptional SS man at Płaszów, Heinz Sold, originating from the Franco-German borderland, proved to be a compassionate guard to the prisoners, disinterested, and always eager to help. While overseeing the furrier's shop, he literally made friends with a group of Jews working there.

Crimes

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Prisoners were treated at the camp in a most ruthless way: beatings on any occasion, whipping, interrogations combined with torture, shooting at people during work, assemblies or rest, as well as mass executions. Besides the general reason, that is the relationship of the SS members to the prisoners,

especially Jews, nurtured by German indoctrination, there were also direct reasons, or, to put it more precisely, pretexts for crimes. Such reasons included planned or failed escapes, carelessness at one's duties or work, prisoners being suspected of subversion, possession of valuables, forged "Aryan papers" or foreign papers, the smuggling of food or kites, as well as the practicing of religion. Prisoners were murdered in order to conceal connections, financial machinations and because of secret matters having been witnessed by a prisoner. Executions were not even denied the servile members of the OD, the Judenrat or Gestapo informers. The reasons could be trivial so as to cause dread and completely terrorize the prisoners, who could not be certain of their lives, irrespective of their positions at the camp. When the camp was under the authority of the SS and Police Leader, the fate of the prisoners actually depended on Göth and his SS guards. A number of prisoners was not accounted for, and their deaths were not associated with any procedures or official explanations.

These criminal practices were eliminated when the camp was converted into a concentration camp, as valid regulations did not permit prisoners' fates to be freely determined. Punishments based on camp rules were applied, including depriving prisoners of food rations or reducing them, whipping, detention at the bunker or assigning a prisoner to a penal company. Prisoners were no longer shot at will, Division D of the SS-WVHA being the sole body competent for looking into the Kommandantur's applications.

Still, however, selections were carried out with respect to Jewish prisoners brought from the prison at Montelupich Street, or, for example, arrested in Slovakia, and an accident or the good mood of an SS officer decided the victim's life or death. Crimes against prisoners made up a picture of the camp's daily life: first isolated cases of crimes, then crimes methodically planned and perpetrated. The major criminal at the camp was the Commandant himself, who was followed by those who most frequently took part in the executions: Zdrojewski, Hujer, Glaser, Janetz, John, Scheidt, Gross, Grimm, Grzimek, Grün, Neuschel and Eckert.

The first site of mass killings at Płaszów were two huge graves at the Old Jewish Cemetery, dug in March 1943. A steam shovel was operated there, hence the term "iść pod bagier" in camp jargon meant "go to death". During the liquidation of the ghetto, and in the following weeks, bodies were transported to this cemetery and prisoners deemed unfit for work and useless at the camp were also killed there. Every day, even dozens of people were shot; they were forced to undress and position themselves so as to face the grave. Thousands of men, women and children shot in the ghetto and the camp were buried in newly dug mass graves. As Jakub Stendig dramatically put it, "after the ghetto had been liquidated, both cemeteries admitted 8,000 people alive and 3,000 dead."

In the Summer of 1943, executions and burials were moved to the so-called "Górka" ("the Hill"), once an artillery position, in prisoner jargon talk referred to as "Hujowa Górka" (vulgar). Those killed here included camp prisoners and prisoners kept at Montelupich Street, and Jews brought in from the still-existing OD prison in the ghetto. The first execution probably took place here on 3 September 1943, when 20 Jews from Bochnia were executed by firing squad for plotting an escape to Hungary. All executions were similar to each other: the victims were forced to undress and get into trenches, then gravediggers positioned the bodies and buried them with a thin layer of soil and rocks. In December 1943, on the "Górka", the first burning of bodies on bonfires, fueled by huge piles of wood, something that later became common practice. It was then that the remaining OD members from the ghetto, including Simche Spira, and their family members, were shot.

When the "Górka" had filled up, the site was leveled and the barracks of the interim camp were built on it. The site of executions was moved on 15 February 1944 to another similar rampart, so-called "Dołek" ("the Hole"), in camp jargon called the "Cipowy Dołek" (vulgar). Executions of one or more victims were held at least once a week. Bodies were burnt right away, on the spot. The bodies were examined by the camp dentists, who removed gold teeth, and then the piles of wood were set ablaze.

Photo 15
A panorama seen from
the watchtower. In the
foreground: fragments
of the former rampart
("Dofek") and barracks
of the industrial
compound (two
large barracks of the
carpenter's shop).
Above: a part of the
assembly square



At the camp, selections were carried out for everybody arriving at the camp; selections were also carried out on a constant basis to exclude the sick, elderly and generally "useless" prisoners. Selected prisoners were shot at the former cemetery and on the "Górka". Executions were also conducted on the days of Jewish holidays, e.g. on the Day of Atonement, 9 October 1943, 50 people were brought from prison cells and shot. On the same day, dozens of people from the *Ostbahn* facility located near the Kraków-Grzegórzki station were also killed.

The principle of joint responsibility was used for negligence at work or failure to meet deadlines for works specified by the Commandant, who would freely set any number of people to be shot as a penalty. Göth was always dissatisfied with the progress of works and was tormenting people responsible for the technical supervision, most of all the Head of the *Bauleitung*, engineer Zygmunt Grünberg, who was constantly persecuted and tortured. We know of cases of shooting of Kapos (prisoners-guard) responsible for the works of the N.K.F. group, Bonarka and Oleandry, from the tailor's workshop and the brush workshop. When a wall of the garrison's barracks was under construction, a high-priority building at that time, collapsed, an architect, Diana Reiter was shot upon Göth's order. In March 1943, Göth ordered an entire work squad responsible for the maintenance of the camp to be shot for alleged negligence.



Photo 16
Engineer Zygmunt Grünberg

Escape attempts were some of the worst offences and there were few prisoners who succeeded in escaping from the camp or a sub-camp. Since the Spring of 1943, escape attempts were punished with tough repressions, shooting the fugitive's family members or prisoners of the same work squad. Göth issued an order to shoot 10 people for each escapee. Nevertheless, escapes occurred and innocent people were decimated until the concentration camp was established. A spectacular event at the camp was the shooting of Wilhelm Chilowicz along with his family upon an attempted escape on 13 August 1944. Göth wanted to get rid of witnesses of his machinations and organized a provocation. Chilowicz was suggested to escape and buy a gun. When "the plot had been disclosed", the inconvenient prisoners were immediately eliminated, and their bodies were put on public display with an annotation that the people shot, were caught while trying to escape and for the possession of arms and valuables. 10 people were shot that day: Mr and Mrs Chilowicz, their relatives and trusted OD members, including the famous Finkelstein.

In connection with the planned admission of Hungarian Jews into the camp, on 7 May 1944, upon consent from the Berlin authorities, the so-called "health roll call" was carried out. All prisoners marched naked in front of an SS commission while the Chief Medical Officer Dr Blancke assessed each person's working capacity and their right to live. A week later, 1,500 people

were transported to KL Auschwitz and immediately killed. Nearly all small children were sent to death. At first, their presence was tolerated; they lived with their parents, and since 1944, at separate barracks (*Kinderheim*); older children worked just like adults, in assigned workshops. Göth permitted children of a handful of more notable prisoners to stay, and a few older children managed to escape and hide in latrines; however, nearly 300 children were sent to the gas chambers. On the morning of 14 May, SS brought children from their quarters and loaded them onto trucks. Scared and crying, the children desperately called their mothers for help, but nobody was allowed to approach them, and, being beaten with truncheons, the parents had to stay at the assembly square. The children waved their hands in farewell to their loved ones and the German played out of the loudspeakers the song: "*Mutti kauf mir ein Pferdchen*" (Mommy, buy me a pony). That day, the despair of those sentenced to death and the scenes of the children being taken from their parents, would be remembered as the most tragic moment in the camp's life.

Łąszów was also the site of regular executions of Jews and Poles, brought usually from the police prison at Montelupich Street. This was what happened to Jews caught in town who had previously lived under "Aryan papers" or, thanks to Poles, in hiding. They went through brutal interrogations, were not put on file upon arriving in Łąszów and were usually immediately killed. Since the end of the Summer of 1944, groups of Slovakian Jews, most likely caught during, and in the wake of the Slovakian uprising, were transported to Łąszów for execution. Some of them stayed at the camp, most of them were killed. Poles sentenced to death by summary courts were also transported to, and shot in, Łąszów. The number of executions increased from the Autumn of 1943 through mid-1944 and was the result of Governor Frank's directive "on combating attacks on the German reconstruction efforts in the General Government" from 2 October 1943. The offences listed by the directive were under the competence of summary courts (*Standgericht*), operating as part of the bureau of the Chief of the Security Police and SD for the Kraków District. The death penalty was the only kind of sentence issued, as announced by "death posters" on the walls of Kraków.

BEKANNTMACHUNG!

Für den Mordanschlag am 31. 3. 1944 auf die polnische Familie MADRALA in Krakau wurden 10 der mit meiner Bekanntmachung vom 29. 1. 1944 zum Tode verurteilten Personen der Androhung zufolge standrechtlich erschossen.

In der Nacht zum 4. 4. 1944 wurde bei Myslenice ein Polizeikommando überfallen und hierbei der Hauptmann der Gendarmerie DREIER, der Oberwachmeister der Gendarmerie SCHAAR und der 44-Unterscharführer der Sicherheitspolizei HAUTA erschossen. Dafür wurden nachstehend näher bezeichnete 30 vom Standgericht zum Tode verurteilte Personen exekutiert.

Wegen Verbrechen nach §§ 1 und 2 der Verordnung zur Bekämpfung von Angriffen gegen das deutsche Aufbauwerk im Generalgouvernement vom 2. 10. 1943 (Verordnungsblatt für das Generalgouvernement Nr. 82/43) wurden vom Standgericht beim Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD für den Distrikt Krakau zum Tode verurteilt:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Stanislaw Wiktor Waligorski | 26. Hermann Antoni Gwral | 54. Leszek Jan Herod | 83. Leszek Jozef Bernat |
| 2. Stanislaw Jozef Gorkiewicz | 27. Wacławski Teofil Namiec | 55. Antoni Jan Kozłowski | 84. Leszek August Lason |
| 3. Stanislaw Stanislaw Niemiec | 28. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 56. Antoni Jan Kozłowski | 85. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Blok |
| 4. Stanislaw Jozef Lachmann | 29. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 57. Leszek Wincenty Niciul | 86. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Florek |
| 5. Stanislaw Janusz Wozniakowski | 30. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 58. Stanislaw Daniel Czubiak | 87. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 6. Stanislaw Jan Myslak | 31. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 59. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 88. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 7. Stanislaw Wladyslaw Koryzian | 32. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 60. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 89. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 8. Stanislaw Jan Miaz | 33. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 61. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 90. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 9. Stanislaw Stefan Pastelink | 34. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 62. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 91. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 10. Stanislaw Zbigniew Bryk | 35. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 63. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 92. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 11. Stanislaw Tomasz Rogozkiewicz | 36. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 64. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 93. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 12. Stanislaw Wladyslaw Harnas | 37. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 65. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 94. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 13. Stanislaw Tadeusz Kieleski | 38. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 66. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 95. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 14. Stanislaw Tadeusz Duran | 39. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 67. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 96. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 15. Stanislaw Jozef Michalik | 40. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 68. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 97. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 16. Stanislaw Zdzislaw Gorzan | 41. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 69. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 98. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 17. Stanislaw Jerry Szyrak | 42. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 70. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 99. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 18. Stanislaw Jan Szumiec | 43. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 71. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 100. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 19. Stanislaw Wlodzislaw Moulowski | 44. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 72. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 101. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 20. Stanislaw Stanislaw Prusak | 45. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 73. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 102. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 21. Stanislaw Jozef Switlik | 46. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 74. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 103. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 22. Stanislaw Stefan Dabalski | 47. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 75. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 104. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 23. Stanislaw Stanislaw Kozmarczyk | 48. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 76. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 105. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 24. Stanislaw Wladyslaw Glowicki | 49. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 77. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 106. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| 25. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Danczyk | 50. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 78. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 107. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| | 51. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 79. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 108. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| | 52. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 80. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 109. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| | 53. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 81. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 110. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| | 54. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 82. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 111. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |
| | 55. Stanislaw Mieczyslaw Kuczyk | 83. Stanislaw Jozef Tadeusz Skowronski | 112. Stanislaw Edward Wlodek |

Das Urteil ist an den zu Ziffer 1-33 Genannten bereits vollstreckt worden.

Die unter Ziffer 34-63 Genannten waren für einen Gnadenerweis in Aussicht genommen. Dieser wurde durch den obenbezeichneten Überfall unwirksam und die Genannten als Vergeltung standrechtlich erschossen. Die übrigen Verurteilten sind für einen Gnadenerweis vorgesehn.

Selbst jedoch in den nächsten 3 Monaten Überfälle auf Deutsche, Angehörige der dem Grossdeutschen Reich verbundenen Staaten oder im Interesse des Aufbauwerkes im GG arbeitende Nichtdeutsche erfolgen, oder solche solche Personen verschleppt werden, so werden in jedem Falle für eine Person mindestens 10 der Obgenannten standrechtlich erschossen, und zwar für Sträflinge kommunistischer Elemente Angehörige kommunistischer Organisationen und für Sträflinge anderer Widerstandsgruppen Personen, die zu diesen Kreisen gehören. Bei Anschlägen bzw. Gewalttaten gegen Einrichtungen, die dem deutschen Aufbauwerk im GG nutzbar sind, werden ggf. sechs der Obgenannten erschossen, wie es der Schwere des Falles entspricht.

Es liegt daher in der Hand der nichtdeutschen Bevölkerung, durch entsprechende Mitarbeit bei der Verhinderung von Gewalttaten und Verfolgung der Täter den in Aussicht gestellten Gnadenerweis zur Wirksamkeit zu bringen.

Krakau, den 6. 4. 1944.

Der 44- und Polizeiführer
im Distrikt Krakau.

Photo 17
A German announcement, so-called "death poster". Kraków, 6 April 1944

Until mid-1944, Polish prisoners sentenced to death at the Montelupich prison, and the bodies of those publically executed in town, were constantly brought to the camp, respectively, for execution and cremation. It is estimated that over 2,000 Poles were brought and shot here, without any accounting being made for them. For example, on 2 February 1944, about 200 prisoners from the Montelupich prison were shot, which was most likely connected with the Home Army's (AK) recent bomb attack on Governor Frank's train. Płaszów prisoners will also remember the execution of a group of over 100 prisoners from the Montelupich prison on 7 April 1944 (Good Friday). Handcuffed convicts were walked to the execution spot or transported on trucks with canvas tops. SS men shot the victims within the ditches of the "Dołek" with bursts from machineguns. On many occasions, witnesses heard people cry: "Long live Poland", or the words of the Polish national anthem.

At that time, executions of Jewish prisoners were quite rare, the last ones having been recorded in the Autumn of 1944 (in October and November, when groups of arrested Jews brought from Montelupich prison were shot there). In 1944, some isolated cases of executions of German soldiers wearing uniforms without any insignia, most likely deserters, were witnessed as well.

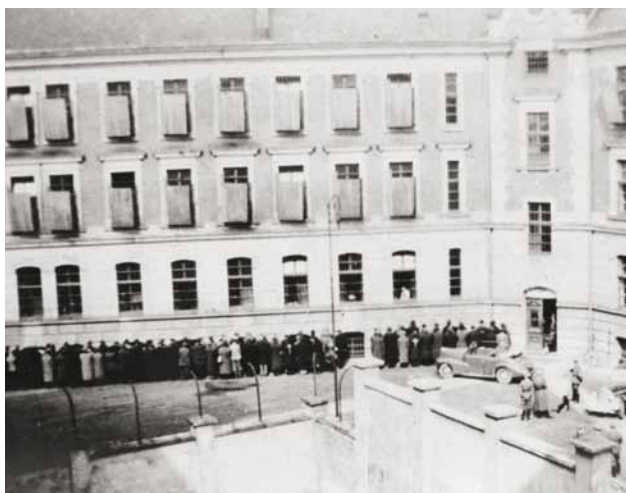


Photo 18
A courtyard of
the police prison
at Montelupich
Street

In the Summer of 1944, the upper-echelon SS and Police Leader Wilhelm Koppe, ordered the exhumation and incineration of bodies for the purpose of covering up the crimes committed. Within six weeks, 150 prisoners under the command of German *Kapos* unearthed thousands of bodies in the former cemetery and the "Górka". Night after night, stacks of wood were piled up, bodies were placed layer upon layer, poured over with petrol, and set ablaze early in the morning. According to witnesses, 17 trucks were filled with human ashes, subsequently scattered over the site of the once mass graves and "planted in holes." Earlier, Jewish cemeteries had been desecrated, now the site of the camp was covered with the remains of murdered victims; to this day, the site remains a huge cemetery.

According to post-war findings, trial files and numerous testimonies of witnesses, it is estimated that several thousand people died at the Płaszów Camp. During the course of Amon Göth's trial, on the basis of various estimations, the court assumed that the defendant was guilty of killing 8,000 people at the camp. The number assumed by the court represents the maximum limit of those estimations. One of the well-informed people at the camp, the former Secretary to the Commandant, Mieczysław Pemper in his post-war statements, estimated the toll of Jews and Poles murdered in Płaszów at over 5,000. Based on an analysis of all documents and statements available, the latter being very divergent in this respect, we may assume that the remains of as many as 8,000-10,000 victims were left at the site of the camp, people killed in the camp itself accounting for half of this figure.

Liquidation

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In the first half of 1944, the camp was still being expanded, and some new construction was well under way. The peak of the camp construction coincided with the decision to close it down. The front line situation in mid-1944 forced

the Germans to gradually evacuate the prisoners and prepare for the camp's liquidation. The evacuation of the families of German employees and officers was under way in Kraków, municipal offices and companies were being closed, and on 5 August 1944, a state of emergency, under the rule of the War Commandant, was announced. Prisoners of Płaszów could see manifestations of this panic and they also observed changes in the way the camp officers behaved – they were losing their former arrogance and confidence.

What followed was a gradual evacuation of the camp, spread over many weeks. Several thousand prisoners of Płaszów were sent to various concentration camps in the Reich. As early as 6 August 1944, 7,500 Hungarian and Polish Jewish women were sent to Auschwitz. There, selections had been carried out and more than half of the female prisoners were left alive and the rest were sent to gas chambers. The following day, a transport of 6,000 men left for KL Mauthausen. On 15 October 1944, a well-known transport of 1,600 men left the camp for KL Gross, including a group of 700 people allocated to the sub-camp in Brännlitz, where Oskar Schindler's factory had already started production. These transports were followed by other ones to Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen and Buchenwald on 21 October 1944. At Birkenau, the selection of Jews from Płaszów was carried out by the notorious Dr. Mengele and most of the prisoners were murdered in gas chambers. The survivors included 300 Jewish women from Schindler's factory, who in November had been relocated to Brännlitz after just a three week stay. After the morning assembly on 27 July 1944, the Polish prisoners were taken to the freight station at Kamienna Street in Kraków. There, they joined the evacuated prisoners from the Montelupich prison and this combined transport left for Gross-Rosen. About 200 Polish women were sent to Ravensbrück. Throughout September, the remaining Poles were sent to the Reich to build fortifications and perform labor. Few were released home.

Since September 1944, prisoners under the supervision of German *Kapos* (foremen) were demolishing the residential and workshop barracks, disassembling devices and machines from the *gemeinschafts*, and packing away raw materials. All valuable items were sent to the Reich from the camp

railway siding. When the last transports had left, a liquidation group of several hundred people, composed mainly of Jewish prisoners and meant to tidy up the site, stayed at the camp. The rest of the prisoners were moved over to the staff's barracks; some buildings were occupied for military purposes; the camp hospital was closed down. The Germans eventually left the camp on 14 January 1945. Under the command of SS-Hauptscharführer Kurt Schupke, a group of over 600 prisoners, including over 150 women, were led in the direction of Auschwitz (Oświęcim). The walking evacuation took three days to reach their destination, and several persons managed to escape without any consequences for the other prisoners, by taking advantage of the overall chaos.

The Płaszów Camp was by no means liberated by the Red Army, which just occupied the abandoned site and what little remained of the camp's property. Soviet military authorities occupied the site for many months, treating camp facilities as the spoils of war. A unit stationed there guarded the armament warehouses located on the camp premises. The Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland (*Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce*) wrote in its documentation of October 1945, that in light of the Soviet units' presence at the camp, an inspection of the site was not possible but it had been found out that "there was a grey house, and the garrison barracks were fenced with barbed wire and several other barracks." In its report, the Kraków City Authorities announced that the



Photo 19
The site of the former camp, 4 October 1945. The first visit to the crime scene paid by members of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes and the Regional Jewish Historical Commission in Kraków (against the backdrop of the ruins of the funeral parlor)

camp “was under guard by Soviet soldiers,” who were demolishing guard facilities and removing barbed wire entanglements by using captured German POWs. Unfortunately, there are no documents or reports on the condition and transformation of the former camp in early 1945, when it was completely inaccessible to third parties. It should be assumed that apart from buildings demolished in the German period, most of the facilities were devastated by the Soviet army and torn down by local civilians.

The first site inspection carried out by members of the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Kraków (*Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Krakowie*) and the Regional Jewish Historical Commission in Kraków (*Wojewódzka Żydowska Komisja Historyczna w Krakowie*) took place as late as 4 October 1945, when the Soviet city authorities granted their approval. In early 1946, the first official inspections of the site were carried out and photographs were taken, which show individual fragments of the former camp and sub-camps, roads, preserved facilities and ruins. The former sub-camps still included numerous prisoner barracks and the remnants of buildings, foundations, fences, air-raid shelters, etc. Preserved facilities of the former camp included, most importantly, two well-known buildings, namely the so-called “Grey House” and Göth’s villa, whose appearance has not changed till this day; others were converted and blended with single-family houses. What attracted attention were the Austrian ramparts and preserved fragments and ruins of the funeral parlor, an unfinished building of the new Kommandantur, and a large “stone storehouse.” There were numerous underpinnings of barracks and steel-reinforced foundations of industrial facilities, the remains of the fire protection ponds, drainage ditches, and equipment for the sewage and water supply systems. The huge pit left over from the uncompleted water reservoir near Göth’s villa, a former quarry and air-raid shelters carved out of the rock were also preserved. The Jewish cemeteries were vandalized and razed to the ground; in the vicinity of the upper quarry, there was a fragment of the road laid with matzevas. Matzevas were destroyed both in the camp and in the post-war period, when the high-quality stone was stolen and sold. The Germans sold the stone to Polish companies even during the occupation. At that time, nobody guarded the former Jewish cemeteries and, unfortunately, they were desecrated.



Photo 20
A road paved
with matzevas,
as in 1946

Nevertheless, the period right after the war saw spontaneous attempts at commemorating those killed. The words of Jakub Stendig, from his 1946 account came partially true: *Conditions permitting, these sites of mass murder will become sites of pilgrimage by those who should be here and the relatives of the families, who will commemorate, in their silent reflection, the best and dearest ones murdered by the Nazi savages. It would behoove the Jews and Poles, to jointly clean those places, cover them with grass, fence them off, and give them the status of a gravesite by putting up a plaque or a memorial there.*

Epilogue

.....

Established right after the war, the District Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Kraków, opened investigations into the German crimes committed in the city. The main issue under investigation was the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp (*KL Auschwitz-Birkenau*), as well as other camps, ghettos,

venues of the security police and military police, prisons and individual war criminals. In August 1945, an investigation was opened against the Commandant and the staff of KL Płaszów. The process of collecting evidence of the crimes committed here, interrogating witnesses and compiling material for the court was initiated. It was already known that Amon Göth had been captured by the Americans and was awaiting extradition to Poland. Indeed, Göth had been identified at a camp for POWs and an American prosecutor opened an investigation, after which, the Płaszów butcher was extradited to Poland in May 1946.

He was taken to Kraków, where he appeared before the Supreme National Tribunal (*Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy*) – a court specifically set up for the purpose of hearing cases related to the most cruel Nazi crimes. The trial, which commenced on 27 August 1946, was a well-known event observed by former prisoners, journalists, lawyers, members of the authorities, and hundreds of people who listened to it, thanks to megaphones. A death sentence for the defendant came as no surprise, and was carried out by hanging at the Montelupich prison on 13 September 1946.



Photo 21
Tickets for Amon
Göth's trial

Extensive documentation of Göth's case broadened knowledge and paved the way for the trials of other Płaszów criminals. The most important was the trial of 18 staff members before the District Court in Kraków. A verdict

was reached on 23 January 1948, those sentenced to death being: Lorenz Landstorfer, Ferdinand Glaser, Edmund Zdrojewski and Arnold Büscher (originally sentenced to life imprisonment, Büscher was later sentenced to death in 1949 after a review of his case). Twelve former members of the SS were sentenced to many years of imprisonment. The Kraków court also heard several other cases, some of those sentenced to death including: Józef Sowiński (1947) Kurt Schupke (1948) and Wilhelm Staib (1948). The same sentences were given to Josef Leipold in Lublin (1947) and to Josef Grzimek in Warsaw (1949).



Photo 22
Kraków, January
1948. In the dock,
from the left side:
A. Büscher,
E. Zdrojewski,
L. Landstorfer,
F. Glaser,
F. Korthals,
A. Dreer



Photo 23
Arnold Büscher



Photo 24
Ferdinand Glaser



Photo 25
Edmund Zdrojewski



Photo 26
Lorenz Landstorfer

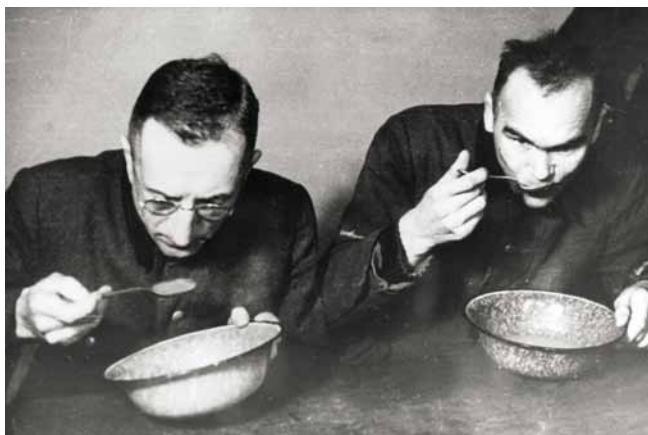


Photo 27
A prison dinner.
A. Büscher and
E. Zdrojewski

Those tried also included other senior SS officials whose criminal actions concerned the Kraków ghetto or the Płaszów Camp. Extradited to Poland in 1950, Willi Haase appeared before the Regional Court in Kraków. For his leadership part in the liquidation of the ghettos in Kraków, Bochnia, Tarnów and the camp in Szegonia, as well as other crimes, including those at the Płaszów Camp, he was sentenced to death and hung at the Montelupich prison in 1952. Similar was the fate of Standartenführer Gerhard Maurer, the Deputy Head of Amtsgruppe D (1951). Maurer's superior, the Head of the SS-WVHA, SSObergruppenführer Oswald Pohl was sentenced to death by the American War Tribunal in Nuremberg (1947).

Franz Grün was sentenced in Austria to 9 years of hard labor (1966), Philipp Grimm was sentenced to death by an American military court for his crimes at KL Buchenwald (1947); however, his sentence was then commuted to a life sentence, and soon afterwards he was released. Franz Josef Müller, the Head of the Kraków Julags, was sentenced by a Court in Mosbach to a hard labor-life sentence (1961), just as were Karl Heinz Bigell (Berlin, 1973) and Herman Blache (Bochum, 1969). Another member of the SS, Franz J. Müller, was sentenced by a court in Kiel to 12 years of imprisonment (1970) for his crimes in Bochnia and Płaszów. Most SS members from Płaszów were never tried. Some of those who avoided punishment included: Eckert, Janetz, Hujer and Ritschek.

Those tried before Polish courts also included people accused of collaboration, members of the Ordnungsdienst, Kapos, barrack wardens and other camp officials. A few of them were sentenced to death, including the physician Dr Leon Gross and an OD member, Major Kerner, whereas others, Poles and Jews, were handed prison sentences, and many were acquitted.

Soon after the war, when numerous trials of criminals were under way, Poland was still home to thousands of Jews who survived the turmoil of war. Those who survived the country's occupation were testifying and appearing as witnesses at prosecutors' offices and courts. Kraków Jews were focused around the Regional Jewish Committee and the Jewish Historical Commission at Długa Street (ul. Długa 38). Cooperation with the Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes was of great importance for the process of prosecuting and punishing war criminals. Those activities and trials left immense documentation, which has been kept largely at the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance and the Jewish Historical Institute.

Proposed Visiting Route

A good point of departure for your visit to the site of the former camp is the so-called Grey House at Abrahamia Street (ul. Abrahamia 3). From the city center of Kraków, you can arrive at the Grey House by means of the convenient public transportation, i.e. one of the streetcars or buses running in the direction of Bieżanów, Kurdwanów, Wieliczka or one of numerous buses running along Wielicka Street in the direction of Wieliczka and Bochnia. You should get off at the stop at the junction of Wielicka Street and Dworcowa Street, near the Płaszów railway station. From there, go right along the housing estate road; while going slightly up, you will pass a supermarket and a housing estate; you will see a small car park and the „Grey House” behind it (located at the junction of Abrahamia Street and Jerzolimiska Street).



It is hard to believe that the place we are in now was the central point of a concentration camp 70 years ago, and its immediate vicinity once included major administrative facilities and the staff's barracks for the SS and the first barracks for prisoners. It was also here, that major camp routes converged. The routes followed pre-war streets and access roads, largely improved, broadened and given German names. Former Jerozolimaska Street was renamed as Hauptstrasse in the camp. The former Abrahama Street (today's Heltmana Street), starting at the new Jewish cemetery and running southwards up to Pańska Street (Herrengasse), was renamed as SS-Strasse. The extension to Wodna Street, running west of "the Grey House" towards Swoszowicka Street, was called Bergstrasse, and amid the industrial buildings, there was the Industriestrasse, once an access road for military buildings.

The camp was divided into three parts. North of Bergstrasse within the camp was the residential part for prisoners, including an assembly square and auxiliary facilities (a hospital, kitchens, baths, etc.). Today, it is a vacant lot, with uncovered fragments of the cemetery. In the south, almost up to Pańska Street, was where the workshops and storehouses were situated; the one-time artillery ramparts – sites of mass executions – are still there. The third part, for the officers, camp's Kommandantur and the staff, as well as all other auxiliary buildings and storehouses, was located west of Abrahama Street and reached by Wielicka Street. Following the war, this area was almost entirely used for new developments. Each of the compounds was separated from each other with barbed wire and internal gates, and the whole camp was surrounded with 4 kilometres of a double-barbed-wire fence line (an internal high voltage fence) and 12 watchtowers differing in height.

'The Grey House'

1

This was an administrative and residential building belonging to the cemetery of the Jewish Community in Kraków, built in the 1920s. The building was designed by Adolf Siódmak (1879-1944), an architect known for many designs carried out before the war. In 1940, he was deported from Kraków and died at the end of the war in KL Gross-Rosen.

"The Grey House", situated at the heart of the camp's administrative and military area, at the Hauptstrasse, Bergstrasse and SS-Strasse junction, was an administrative building of the SS. The building housed Amon Göth's office, and it was from here that he would shoot at prisoners working nearby. Since August 1943, 5 holding cells, solitary confinement cells and special tiny cells referred to as "standing bunkers" because prisoners could only stand there (*Stehbunker*) were developed in the basement of the building. The bunkers were built for prisoners who violated camp regulations, while the cells were for prisoners of the security police and of the camp's political department, mostly on death row.

This building has been preserved intact since pre-war times.



Photo 28
"The Grey House"
today

Some major camp facilities used to be located in the vicinity of the "Grey House". Nearly opposite the "Grey House", extensive garrison barracks were built; further away, there were a telephone exchange, the Kommandantur and an SS hospital

is to the north of it, among other things. At a point nearly 200 meters away from the “Grey House”, Jerozolimska Street was divided by the camp’s main gate fitted with a guard station. In March 1943, columns of people driven from the ghetto and all subsequent transports of new prisoners entered the camp through this gate. Closer, right behind the ruins of the funeral parlor, on the left-hand side, you can see a newly marked-out road: it is the route of Jerozolimska Street as before the war. Today, you can follow this road to walk around the camp on the northern side. Quite nearby – if you want to approach there – you can see one of the old facilities preserved to this day.

2

Telephone Exchange

Near the former camp gate, at today’s Jerozolimska Street (ul. Jerozolimska 8, 10), there are merged buildings, which, as the result of a recent renovation project, lost their original look as one-storey and two-storey red-brick houses. These pre-war buildings, whose original residents had been evicted, served as the camp’s main guard post, the telephone exchange, the radio broadcasting system and the duty officer’s post. Temporarily, they also served as Amon Göth’s home, and then were converted into an officers’ club.



Photo 29
The building of the
former telephone
exchange and officers'
club as they were
in 1944



Photo 30
The building of the
former telephone
exchange officers'
club today

Other major camp facilities in the area have unfortunately not survived. You can picture them in your mind and through old photographs.

The Kommandantur (SS Headquarters)

3

The telephone exchange and staff's barracks used to be situated in front of the extensive barracks of the camp Kommandantur, a horseshoe-shaped building with a courtyard in the middle of it, where the staff's briefings and assemblies were held. While an extension to the siding along the Kommandantur was under development, both wings of the building were partially demolished. The buildings of the camp garrison hospital were located North of the Kommandantur, on a high rock escarpment.

In 1944, near Wielicka Street, the construction of a new Kommandantur, a monumental 60x50 m C-shaped building designed by engineer Weinberger, was launched. This project, however, was not completed.



Photo 31 and 32
A roll-call of
a squad in front of
the Kommandantur
building

4

SS Barracks

.....

In the Summer of 1943, the garrison's barracks for guards (*Wachkaserne*) were built opposite "The Grey House", where a long block of flats is situated today. At that time, it was a one-storey edifice in the shape of a 105 x 55 m rectangle, with a watchtower in its northern corner, a view tower overlooking the main gate and a courtyard in the middle of the building. It was the largest of the camp's buildings, constructed by hundreds of

Photo 33
A horse carriage
before a building of
the staff's barracks,
railway tracks at
Hauptstrasse



labourers working day and night for weeks on end, and at the cost of the lives of many human beings. In August 1943, when a construction accident occurred here, a young architect, Diana Reiter (1902-1943), supervising the construction site, was shot upon Göth's order. A promising architect before the war, Reiter had been known in Kraków for her successful designs.

Balb's Storehouses

5

The complex of fenced barracks on the eastern side near Wielicka Street, are the storehouses of so-called "Balb's group". The property stolen from Jews during resettlement campaigns was stored right here: furniture, carpets, precious glassware and china, dishes, mattresses, bed linen, clothing, footwear, as well as gold, jewelry, and other valuables. The items were segregated, cleaned, repaired and then dispatched to the Reich. The Head of the storehouses SS-Untersturmführer Heinrich Balb, was not responsible to the camp Commandant, but directly to the SS and Police Leader for the Kraków District.



Photo 34
The eastern borders of the camp. A wing of the barracks and staff's barracks on the left. Workshops operating solely for the staff's needs and the non-commissioned officers' barracks across the street; the buildings of the Balb group behind them on the right

More barracks for the guards, residential barracks for non-commissioned SS officers, and the barracks for the craftsmen's workshops working solely for SS needs, were located at the back of and nearby the Wachkaserne. These prisoners executed commissions for both the Commandant of the camp, SS members, their families and town dignitaries.

We are going to leave this area now. Behind the "Grey House" stretches a vast area of the camp, where maintenance works are under way now. The whole area is currently being cleaned of unnecessary bushes and trees. Scattered and rolled rockfill marks the former routes and the outline of the assembly square. Now head to the right and follow the paved sidewalk until you see the modern gravestone of Sarah Schenirer (1883-1935), reproduced in 2000. Sarah Schenirer, known as "the Mother of Israel" (the inscription in Hebrew), was the originator of the "Beis Yaakov" network of schools for Jewish girls from orthodox families. Now continue the walk by following the regular path in the same direction. Several dozen meters away, you will see extensive ruins with fragments of the decoration still visible.

6

Funeral Parlor

.....

These ruins are the remains of funeral parlor (a pre-funeral hall) of the new cemetery of the Kraków Commune. Funeral halls like this, built within Jewish cemeteries,

featured mortuaries, rooms to clean the bodies, as well as prayer rooms, and were used for preparations and even funeral ceremonies. This monumental edifice reminiscent of the Byzantine style, had been erected according to the design of Adolf Siódmak, the winner of the Jewish Commune's contest. Built with flair at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, the building was opened in 1932; however, the design had not been implemented as originally planned, by the outbreak of the war. The main dome was 25 meters high, the side ones-half that height.

At first, the Germans organized a carriage house and a stable here, and brought horses, cattle, pigs, etc. into the devastated building. In the Spring of 1944, the Germans started construction of a railway siding that led to the camp's center, roughly to the funeral parlor, which, as a result, had been planned for demolition. The demolition of the funeral parlor was divided into two stages: first, the east section was blown up and sometime later, the main hall followed suit. The demolition obviously added to the despair of the Jewish prisoners, and yet Göth staged it as a kind of show attended by SS officials and town dignitaries. A series of photographs presenting the consecutive demolition stages has been preserved till today.



Photo 35 and 36
Blowing up of the
funeral parlor



Photo 37
Blowing up of the
funeral parlor

The west wing of the building and its dome were excluded (they were still there right after the war) since the Germans wanted to use this part of the building to house a pressure boosting plant to pump water from the municipal water supply system into upper sections of the camp. Huge clothing and cargo storehouses were constructed along the aforementioned railway siding; it was also there, that a laundry and a gas chamber for the disinfection of clothes and underwear were planned to be built. However, there was not enough time to construct those facilities.



Photo 38
Ruins of the funeral
parlor

From here, it is best to return to the previous point, then turn right into a broader path and head north-westwards. Slightly above, you will cross a new stony road – the above-mentioned pre-war Jerozolimska Street, which at this point used to separate the two Jewish cemeteries. You should bear in mind that you are walking around

former cemeteries, devastated upon the establishment of the Płaszów camp. On the left-hand side, you can see the vast site of the former assembly square, while 100 meters away, you will see more and more concrete grave bases uncovered.

Jewish Cemeteries

7

Before the war, there were two Jewish cemeteries here: the Old Cemetery of the Jewish Commune in Podgórze, established in 1887 (until WWI, Podgórze was a separate town), and the New Cemetery of the Jewish Commune opened in 1932, as the cemetery at Miodowa Street was running out of space. What stands out among the broken and knocked-down gravestones uncovered in the western section of the old Podgórze cemetery, is the quite well-preserved gravestone of Chaim Jakub Abrahamer, who died in 1932. Although maintenance works are under way in this area, no other gravestones have been entirely uncovered as of yet.



Photo 39
The former
Jewish cemetery
of the Podgórze
Commune,
as seen today

On the day of the Kraków ghetto's liquidation in March 1943, two huge mass graves were dug out in the vicinity of the north fence of the Old Jewish Cemetery in order to bury the Jews shot in the streets of the Jewish district. Additionally, other people taken from the ghetto were later shot at those mass graves; executions were carried out until the Summer 1943. According to various testimonies, some two thousand victims were most likely buried here, though the actual toll might be higher. The site was subsequently levelled and the first assembly square and a latrine were constructed on it. These graves had existed until the Summer of 1944, when an order was given to exhume and burn the bodies. It is possible that the site of the former camp contains other mass graves that are yet to be identified.

The visitor may also follow the path from the cemetery towards the top of the hill. You will go past the area of the first mass executions in Płaszów and, by following a steep path, you will reach the top of the hill, which was once a fragment of the northern border of the camp. A high watchtower used to be there. From that point, you can see the central and southern areas of the former camp (cemeteries, the assembly square, the quarry, and the opposite area with the sites of mass executions as well as the monument to the victims on the right-hand side); if you look to the north, you will see a panorama of a part of the city, and on the left-hand side – a part of Krzemionki and the top of Krak Hill. You should be extremely cautious as



Photo 40
A view of the former
camp from the hill,
southwards

the northern slopes are exceptionally steep. Now go back, by either going down the same path or, more to the right, through the vast site of the former assembly square; return to the stony road, the former Bergstrasse, and then head westwards. At the very beginning, near the road and at the old path, you will see the monument commemorating the victims of the German atrocity of 1939.

The Monument to the Victims of the Crime of 10 September 1939

8

On that day, the Germans shot 13 Polish locals by the wall of the then New Cemetery. This first mass execution in Kraków, carried out by officers of operational groups of the security police, was an act of deterrent repression for incidents at the railway station in Płaszów, where unknown perpetrators stole sugar from a wagon. Random local inhabitants were arrested and, following the execution, buried in such a way that their families accidentally discovered the bodies, buried in a shallow grave, only in the Spring of 1940. An obelisk with a plaque commemorating the victims of that crime was unveiled in 1984.



Photo 41
A monument to the victims of the crime of 10 September 1939

Quite close to this place, near the quarry, at Bergstrasse, in 1943, a fenced barracks was turned into a brothel for guards and SS members, the so-called "Happy House", with a few Polish women and prostitutes arrested in town being forced to work there. In 1944, use of the barracks was changed completely, as it was occupied by the political division, "the camp Gestapo." There was an internal gate, by the adjacent barracks of the camp management, where anybody entering the prisoner section (*Blockführerstube*) was checked, by the staff of the gate including the Rapportführer and OD members on duty.

Thus, you are now going through a point once crossed by an internal fence, which separated the administrative and military section, on one side, and the residential section, on the other. Right behind the fence and yet before the roll-call square, on the right-hand side, on the level ground, stretched the camp for Polish prisoners.

9

The Camp for Poles

.....

In July 1943, a "labor re-education camp" for Poles was established in Płaszów. Poles were placed here as a means of punishment for administrative offences, common offences and also for alleged affiliation with the resistance movement.



Photo 42

A view from the anti-aircraft tower over the assembly site and residential barracks for Poles; above them: the *Entlausung* and *Auffangslager* barracks. Above, on the left-hand side: quarry No. 2; on the right, an internal enclosure line

The first Poles placed in the camp were inhabitants of Podkarpacie (southeastern Poland) villages, suspected of involvement with the resistance movement and the partisans. In September 1943, Poles were transferred to specially built, five men's barracks and three women's barracks situated on the right-hand side of the new assembly square. Additionally, Poles arrested as part of the preventive campaign on 6 August 1944 (the Kraków "Black Sunday") were temporarily placed there. Polish female prisoners lived in the barracks located to the north of the square. The separate nature of this "camp within a camp" was imposed upon the establishment of KL Plaszow.

The barracks for Poles were situated at the former cemetery, while barracks for temporary groups undergoing quarantine were built further to the north (*Auffangslager*). Some of the buildings located beside the barracks included a new facility for disinfection and cleaning, including 160 showers and the *Effektenkammer* building, where precious items, valuables and documents were deposited by Polish, German and Jewish prisoners, both those who remained alive and also those who were executed. It was also here that gold teeth, belonging to those victims who were executed, were gathered.

Go on by following the same road; on the right-hand side stretches a vast leveled field, the former assembly square. In front of the square, you can see the remains of two fire protection ponds covered with bulrush.

Assembly Square

.....

10

Originally, the assembly square had been organised on the mass grave behind the Old Cemetery. The new, much expanded, assembly square, was a square-shaped field over 100 metres long and centrally located between the barracks for the Jews and those for the Poles. Working squads' briefings, executions, punishments and selections of prisoners unfit for work, all took place on the assembly square. It was also here that the famous "health assembly" was held

on 7 May 1944, resulting in 1,500 prisoners, adults and children alike, being sent to their death at Auschwitz. A number of people were shot on the square by the SS or the camp Commandant himself.

At one time there were two fire protection ponds in the space between the assembly square and the Bergstrasse, though a total of 14 fire protection ponds were created in various parts of the camp: by the prisoners' barracks, by the bakery, between workshops on both sides of the Industriestrasse, and also by the SS buildings, in the vicinity of Wielicka Street. The ponds were developed in the late Spring and Winter of 1943, after a few fires had broken out in the camp and the insurance company demanded higher fire protection measures. The work on the construction of the ponds, considered to be the worst kind of work at the camp, was carried out under extremely severe conditions, in the night, after regular working hours.



Photo 43

A view of the assembly site. The shoemakers' barracks and the watchmakers' workshops and a fire protection pond. Above, among others, the bathhouse and delousing facility



Photo 44

The new assembly square, as seen today

From the area of the ponds, a new road leading towards the hill was constructed. You can take it to reach the execution site, the so-called "Górka". While continuing to walk along this road westwards, one needs to rely on his imagination again, as none of the former camp facilities in this area have been preserved. Vast areas on both sides of the road – today home to lush and wild vegetation – had numerous barracks of the residential section (on the right) and the workshop section (on the left).

Barracks of Jewish Prisoners

11

Numerous residential barracks of the Jewish part of the camp made up the residential heart of the camp. Some twenty men's and women's barracks were home to thousands of people. The barracks were made of wood, differed in



Photo 45
A view from the anti-aircraft tower over a part of the assembly square and the barracks of the Jewish prisoners. Across the street, you can clearly see two fire protection ponds

size, were easy to build and disassemble, and each of them could accommodate hundreds of prisoners sleeping on bunk beds. What was peculiar about the Płaszów camp, was that it was home to whole families, sometimes with children. Men and women lived in separate barracks, but they could meet. Within the women's section, at the northern border of the camp, a sectioned-off barracks, No. 5, played the role of the aforementioned children's house (*Kinderheim*).

Barracks No. 13 and 14, located in this area, were originally allocated for the needs of the Jewish *Ordnungsdienst* and included the office of the "Camp Elder" Chilowicz. The individually fenced-off barrack No. 14, served as an internal prison of the OD and included about 20 cells. It was commonly referred to as the "Kranzówka", after the name of the custody sergeant, OD member Wilhelm Kranz, who helped the prisoners. In August 1943, the prison was moved to the basement of the "Grey House".

The Jewish men's barracks were located adjacent to the utility buildings and storehouses being a part of the camp's infrastructure used by all prisoners.

12

Utility Buildings

Within the area stretching between the hospital and residential barracks, there was a group of utility and service barracks, a kitchen and adjacent buildings: a bakery, a meat-processing plant, a food storehouse, an icehouse and a laundry. Within this partially fenced-off site, there were also residential barracks for the doctors and gravediggers, latrines, a transformer station and a fire protection pond situated by the bakery.

At first, the only stone building suitable for living was the pre-war center of the Jewish Health Organisation for children threatened with tuberculosis. Upon arrival in Płaszów, Amon Göth took over occupancy of the building and ordered the sidewalk and entrance to be paved with Jewish gravestones. The property was fenced and was guarded by Ukrainian watchmen. This specific building was hailed by prisoners as the "Red House" (*Roteshaus*). After Göth had moved out, the house was converted into a bakery. Over time, as the result of a renovation and supplying the bakery with new machines, the output of bread baked increased to 9,000 loaves a day, which helped reduce the price of bread on the camp's free market.

Photo 46

A fragment of the camp in the area of the hospital and utility buildings.

In the foreground: a brush manufacturer, a storehouse and a potato peeling house. Above: a coal storehouse and hospital barracks; on the right: a kitchen, an icehouse, warehouses for meat products and storehouses



Continue along this road, now covered with asphalt, until you see another new road on the right-hand side. By walking along this road northwards, you will arrive at a route reconstructing the pre-war Jerozolimska Street. Now, you will arrive at a junction, where the road is crossed by a barrier, which once marked the end of the camp's Bergstrasse and the beginning of a fenced site of the camp hospital. The road to the right is a contemporary road leading to the Kraków Waterworks.

Hospital

13

The camp hospital (*Krankenrevier*) was composed of three wards: isolation, internal diseases and surgery. Hospital equipment had been taken from hospitals in the ghetto, and prisoners could access the hospital only upon receiving a pass from the Chief Medical Officer. Those requiring medical assistance consulted a general practitioner and, if deemed justified, were placed in the hospital. Despite heavy camp conditions, sanitary and health care matters were quite well organised, although it should be stressed that selections of the seriously ill, were carried out here, too: prisoners were sent to death or administered petrol injections.

Behind the hospital was a square intended for coal storage, and further away, for security reasons, an empty field reaching the external fence on the western side was left out. There was a side gate here for work squads leaving for work in the direction of Bonarka and a guardhouse. A small crematorium was planned to be built nearby, though construction had never commenced.



Photo 47
The area of the former hospital, as seen today

From the aforementioned junction, follow the broad asphalt road to the left towards the hill until you reach the former military rampart, the site of the shootings. After the war, two monuments commemorating the victims were erected here.

14

Site of Mass Executions

The field rampart (*Feldschanze* FS-22) had been a part of “Fortress Kraków” (*Festung Krakau*), i.e. former fortifications constructed by the Austrian occupiers around Kraków in the second half of the 19th century. They functioned as military facilities until the 1930s, when the artillery bastions were withdrawn. The abandoned rampart was the third site of mass executions within the

camp. Executions were carried out here between 15 February 1944 and the Autumn of 1944. By mid-1944, these executions were carried out at least once a week. Camp prisoners did die here, though those executed included mostly prisoners brought here from the Gestapo or the Montelupich prison. Here, Poles sentenced to death by summary courts were shot en masse. The corpses of those shot, were incinerated right on the spot by Jewish prisoners, with the wood necessary for the fire brought from the adjacent carpenter's shop. The bodies of those people murdered in street executions in Kraków were also incinerated here.

The top of the rampart had a two-level watch tower; from this point a number of photographs showing the camp panorama were taken. Near the rampart, there were workshop barracks and a huge potato storehouse (*Kartoffelkeller*). This was a partially excavated earthwork structure with a size of 60x20 metres, built according to a design by an architect, Radkowski, from

Photo 48
A view from the tower. The industrial workshops; above them on the left, among others: the kitchen, the bakery, the prison barracks of the Jewish compound and the assembly square



Photo 49
A contemporary view from the "Dołek" to the north-east



the Bauleitung. Those forced to work on the construction of the storehouse included mostly Polish prisoners, who had just then arrived at the camp.

After the war, the Jewish community in Kraków erected a monument featuring a Polish and Hebrew plaque to commemorate the Jewish victims of the camp. In 1964, a huge monument designed by an architect, Professor Witold Cęckiewicz, was constructed. This monument, in the form of an expressive sculpture representing "people with their hearts torn away" and featuring an inscription: "In honor of the martyrs murdered by the Nazi perpetrators of the genocide in the years 1943-1945" is devoted to all the victims of Płaszów. These monuments are accompanied by a plaque portraying Hungarian Jewish women temporarily placed in Płaszów in mid-1944. Additionally, a small obelisk commemorating the "navy-blue police", members of the Home Army (AK), who were killed at the camp, was erected in 2012.



Photo 50
A monument to the victims murdered at the KL Płaszów, designed by Witold Cęckiewicz (1964)



Photo 51
A post-war monument commemorating the victims, erected by the Jewish Commune in Kraków

From the infamous site of mass executions, now go eastwards along the broad road that once ran through the middle of the camp's industrial area. The barracks of the metal and paper workshops were on the left-hand side; on the right-hand side, was the marked-off working compound, the Bauhof der Bauleitung, containing storehouses and workshops operating for the camp's own needs. If you stray from your itinerary for a while, you will see reinforced concrete foundation blocks for the workshops and storehouses.

Industrial Section

15

The first workshop buildings completed in the area south of the Bergstrasse were: a carpenter's shop, a shoemaker's shop, an electrical workshop, a watchmaker's shop, a radio equipment repair shop, a locksmith's shop, and sheet-metal workshop, a brush shop, metal workshops, paper workshops, a printing house, and a central storehouse. An expansion was underway, within the so-called "new industrial site" (*Neue Gelände*) since May 1943. Barracks for companies and workshops gradually transferred from the liquidated ghetto and camps were under construction. Some of them included: an upholsterer's shop, furrier's and knitting shops, shops of tailoring companies, including the well-known Madritsch company. All companies and workshops, apart from the camp expansion group and Madritsch, were subject to the DAW armaments concern.

Photo 52
The industrial area at the camp's Industrie Strasse. From the left: the barracks of the Madritsch company, and the upholsterers and furriers



200 metres away, you will arrive at a junction with a new road (previously mentioned, running down to Bergstrasse, to the area of the ponds), and on the right-hand side, you can see another site of mass executions.

16

“Górka”– The Execution Site

This is, similarly, a former artillery rampart (FS-21) of the Kraków Fortress, similar to the previous one, in prisoner jargon nicknamed the “Hujowa Górka” (define vulgar). It was a huge hexagonal pit with a perimeter of 50 meters, 5-6 m deep and wide. Victims were shot in these ditches between 1943 and early 1944. Individual or mass executions were carried out almost every day here, the victims including both prisoners of the camp and people taken from the town. Mass executions were carried out on people from the Bonarka and Ostbahn labor facilities from Grzegórzki, OD members along with their families previously living in the ghetto, Jews taken from the OD’s ghetto prison and those hiding “on Aryan papers”, as well as numerous groups of prisoners accused of having escaped, or smuggling food and the sick from the camp hospital. Corpses were covered with lime and a thin layer of rocks. When the ditches were full, they were filled in, the site was converted into a green space and hence the rampart lost its original form.



Photo 53
A site of mass executions.
A monument in the form
of a cross put up after the
war to commemorate
camp victims

In the Spring of 1944, the barracks of the "interim camp", for prisoners evacuated from those camps located in the East (*Bekleidungslager*), were under construction here. Starting in August 1944, corpses were exhumed and burnt on piles of wood and the ashes were scattered around the camp. Right after the war, a commemorative plaque for Poles murdered at the camp was placed here.

Continue your walk along the same road. Where the road swerves right and down, you should go in the opposite direction, turn left into a grassy path and then climb the plateau above the quarry and A. Göth's villa. Here, you can see an enormous rectangular pit, preserved until today.

Water Reservoir

17

This is a huge pool (60x10 m) dug out by prisoners in 1944, designed as a water reservoir for the camp's needs and at the same time a swimming pool for the Commandant. The water was to be pumped from the lower well, drilled to a depth of almost 40 metres so as to provide a reserve and improve pressure within the water supply system. The water however, turned out to be contaminated with sulphur and completely unfit for use, and so the works were not finished and the prisoners' enormous efforts proved fruitless.



Photo 54
The water reservoir
(pool) above the
Commandant's villa,
as seen today

Near the water reservoir, a special space with a run for the Commandant's dogs was constructed. In 1944, a huge anti-aircraft tower with a heavy machine gun post was put up on this hill. It was also from this tower that numerous photographs, showing the condition of the camp at that time, were taken.



Photo 55
The central section of the camp, a view of the area of the Grey House from the anti-aircraft tower. Barracks 172 at the bottom, further: the ruins of the funeral parlor and the SS-*Lazaret*. On the right: the *Kommandantur* and staff's barracks behind the Grey House

Continue towards the slope until you are above the quarry itself. From here, you will have a broad view of the northern part of the camp, and thanks to maintenance works under way, you will easily discern extensive fragments of the camp: the leveled assembly square and the remains of the fire protection ponds, the fields with the former barracks of the Polish and Jewish compounds on both sides, an uncovered part of the cemetery, "The Grey House" on the right-hand side and ruins of the funeral parlor. Now, we'll walk down the path to the famous quarry.

18

Quarry

Located at the junction of the *SS-Strasse* and the *Bergstrasse* and separated from "The Grey House" by a big square, the quarry started to operate in 1943 for the rock and gravel which were needed for the construction of camp roads and facilities. The other quarry was located more to the north, near the barracks

for Jewish women. In 1944, a penal company worked under truly emaciating conditions in this quarry. The prisoners fell victim to the *Kapos* who were German criminals.

Today, the rock excavations are partially covered with vegetation, and the visible holes in the rock were air-raid shelters excavated by the prisoners.

The quarry is also associated with the *Manschaftszug*, a narrow-gauge railway used to transport stone and gravel. The train consisted of three little wagons propelled by several dozen female prisoners, who pulled a rope.



Photo 56
The main quarry within the
camp, an anti-aircraft
tower above it

This way, after walking through a part of the camp, you end up back at “The Grey House”. From there, go some 200 meters up Heltmana Street, until you see the preserved villa of the camp Commandant, on the right-hand side.

Commandant’s Villa

19

At Heltmana Street (ul. Heltmana 22) (camp’s SS-Strasse), there is a preserved and almost unchanged villa, the last house of the camp Commandant, occupied by him since September 1943. Upon Göth’s order, the owners of the house were evicted and the house was thoroughly renovated. The interior decor was

designed by a prisoner, an engineer named Reif, who took into consideration Göth's request to remake the villa in "Viennese style." The villa had a luxurious decor, a large kitchen, a living room, an office, a hunting room, a sports room, bedrooms, a vast terrace and a bunker. The interior, iron fences and two gates featured artistic elements (unfortunately these have not been preserved).



Photo 57
Villa of the camp Commandant
as in 1944



Photo 58
Villa of the camp
Commandant, as seen today

The immediate vicinity of the villa included a number of houses for SS officers and technical supervision officers, and above the villa, on the limestone hill, the previously mentioned water reservoir (a pool) and dog kennels were constructed. Thus, the surroundings of Göth's villa were organized with his pleasure in mind, as a kind of private preserve.

To complement your walk around the former camp, you might also want to visit nearby museum venues related to the history and martyrdom of the Kraków Jews. These are venues with rich collections and modern exhibitions. At Lipowa Street (ul. Lipowa 4), a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, the “Oskar Schindler Factory” was opened in 2010. In the building of the pre-war Rekord factory, once taken over by Oskar Schindler during the German occupation and operating under the name of Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik (DEF), a permanent exhibition entitled “Kraków Under Nazi Occupation 1939-1945” has been organised. The exhibition shows this place in the broad context of the war and occupation years, discloses the politics of the German authorities, the daily life of the inhabitants of the occupied city, the resistance movement and underground fight, but mostly the wartime history of the Jewish community, with particular emphasis on the factory, those Jews employed there, and their later lives. A part of the building also houses the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Nearby, at Zgody Square (Plac Zgody 18), a new exhibition at the “Apteka pod Orłem” was opened in March 2013. The exhibition shows the uniqueness of this place on the ghetto map and its owner, Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the only Pole living among the Jews, helping and at times even saving them.



Photo 59

Plaszów. A machine gun at an anti-aircraft tower (a hill over quarry No. 1). The assembly grounds on the left; opposite: a clear line of the internal fence that separated the prisoners' compound from the German compound

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List of terms and abbreviations

- Abt. – (*Abteilung*), division
- AK – (*Armia Krajowa*) the Home Army (the Polish underground army)
- Bauleitung – The management of the camp's construction
- D.A.W. – (*Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke der SS*) German SS equipment plant (armaments)
- Gestapo – (*Geheime Staatspolizei*) Secret State Police
- GG – (*Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete*) General Government for the occupied Polish territories
- Judenrat – Jewish Council
- Julag – (*Jüdische Arbeitslager*) labor camp for Jews
- JUS – (*Jüdische Unterstützungstelle*) Jewish Support Center
- KL – (*Konzentrationslager*) concentration camp
- “navy-blue police” – (*Granatowa Policja*) a popular name of the Polish police in the German occupied area of Poland (→GG)
- N.K.F. – (*Neue Kühler -und Flugzeugteilefabrik*) a factory producing radiators and airplane components
- NSDAP – (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) National Socialist German Workers' Party
- OD – (*Ordnungsdienst*) Jewish Police in ghetto
- Osti – (*Ostindustrie G.m.b.H.*) German East Industries Company
- Ostinstitut – (*Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit*) Institute for German Work in the East, Kraków
- 'Patronat' – (*Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami "Patronat"*) Prisoners Care Society; (*Dział Opieki nad Więźniami Rady Głównej Opiekuńczej*) Prisoners Aid Department of Social Welfare Center (→RGO)
- PPR – (*Polska Partia Robotnicza*) Polish Workers' Party, a communist party
- RGO – (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*) Social Welfare Center
- SA – (*Sturmabteilung*) Storm Trooper Detachment
- SD – (*Sicherheitsdienst*) Security Police
- SS – (*Schutzstaffel der NSDAP*) Protection Squadron of the NSDAP
- SS-WVHA – (*SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt*) Main Economic and Administrative Department of the SS
- Stadthauptmann – City Governor
- TWL – (*SS-Truppenwirtschaftslager der Waffen SS*) SS supply storehouses
- ZAL – (*Zwangsarbeitslager*) forced labor camp
-

This text seeks to introduce popular knowledge about the former German forced labor camp turned into a concentration camp in Płaszów, to all the inhabitants of Kraków and all other visitors. Although the camp was established on the soil of the former Wola Duchacka commune, it went down in history with the name given by its German occupiers: *Konzentrationslager Plaszow bei Krakau*. Located so close to the center of Kraków, this camp where thousands of Jews and Poles, many of them living in Kraków, were killed was, unfortunately, forgotten soon after the war. Since, in the past, the communist authorities did not take into account the special significance of this place, much of the site has been used for residential and other municipal developments. Significantly reduced, this area is today still abandoned, scarcely marked and quite neglected despite those maintenance works in progress.

The site of the camp is a huge cemetery with the ashes of thousands of victims scattered all around it. It was here that the fate of thousands of Kraków Jews came to an end; it was here that they were transported after the ghetto was closed down; and it was here that they died in executions, due to diseases and forced labor. It is also a cemetery to over two thousand Poles, both prisoners of the camp and persons sentenced to death, brought here by the Gestapo.



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The German Camp in Płaszów

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