The Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp
Coordinates: 48°15′32″N 14°30′04″E

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Mauthausen Concentration Camp (known from the summer of 1940 as Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp) grew to become a large group of Nazi concentration camps that was built around the villages of Mauthausen and Gusen in Upper Austria, roughly 20 kilometres (12 mi) east of the city of Linz.

Initially a single camp at Mauthausen, it expanded over time to become one of the largest labour camp complexes in German-controlled Europe.\[1\][2] Apart from the four main sub-camps at Mauthausen and nearby Gusen, more than 50 sub-camps, located throughout Austria and southern Germany, used the inmates as slave labour. Several subordinate camps of the KZ Mauthausen complex included quarries, munitions factories, mines, arms factories and Me 262 fighter-plane assembly plants.\[3\]

In January 1945, the camps, directed from the central office in Mauthausen, contained roughly 85,000 inmates.\[4\] The death toll remains unknown, although most sources place it between 122,766 and 320,000 for the entire complex. The camps formed one of the first massive concentration camp complexes in Nazi Germany, and were the last ones to be liberated by the Western Allies or the Soviet Union. The two main camps, Mauthausen and Gusen I, were also the only two camps in the whole of Europe to be labelled as "Grade III" camps, which meant that they were intended to be the toughest camps for the "Incorrigible Political Enemies of the Reich".\[1\] Unlike many other concentration camps, intended for all categories of prisoners, Mauthausen was mostly used for extermination through labour of the *intelligentsia*, who were educated people and members of the higher social classes in countries subjugated by the Nazi regime during World War II.\[5\]

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History

KZ Mauthausen

On 7 August 1938 prisoners from Dachau concentration camp were sent to the town of Mauthausen near Linz, Austria, to begin the construction of a new camp. The location was chosen due to its proximity to the transport hub of Linz, but also because the area was sparsely populated.[4] Although the camp was, from the beginning of its existence, controlled by the German state, it was founded by a private company as an economic enterprise. The owner of the Wiener-Graben quarry (the Marbacher-Bruch, and Bettelberg quarries) or which was known by prisoners the stairway to death, which was located in and around Mauthausen, was a DEST Company: an acronym for Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH. The company, led by Oswald Pohl, who was also a high-ranking official of the SS, rented the quarries from the City of Vienna and started the construction of the Mauthausen camp. While DEST rented the quarries at Mauthausen from the city of Vienna in 1938, the company bought its first lots of land at nearby Gusen already on 25 May 1938.[3] A year later, the company ordered the construction of the first camp at Gusen. The granite mined in the quarries had previously been used to pave the streets of Vienna, but the Nazi authorities envisioned a complete reconstruction of major German towns in accordance with plans of Albert Speer and other architects of Nazi architecture,[6] for which large quantities of granite were needed.

The money needed for the construction of the Mauthausen camp was gathered from a variety of sources, including commercial loans from Dresdner Bank and Prague-based Escompte Bank, the so-called Reinhardt's fund (meaning money stolen from the inmates of the concentration camps themselves); and from the German Red Cross.[4][7] Mauthausen initially served as a strictly-run prison camp for common criminals, prostitutes[8] and other categories of "Incorrigible Law Offenders".[9] On 8 May 1939 it was converted to a labour camp which was mainly used for the incarceration of political prisoners.[10]

KL Gusen

DEST started to purchase a lot of land at Gusen in May 1938 in order to establish a twin concentration camp at Mauthausen and Gusen from the beginning, although construction of Concentration Camp Gusen was not started until autumn 1939. In the years 1938 and 1939, inmates of the nearby Mauthausen makeshift camp marched daily to the stone-quarries at Gusen which were more productive and more important for DEST than the Wienergraben Quarry.[3] In late 1939, the not yet finished Mauthausen camp, with its Wiener-Graben granite quarry, was already overcrowded with prisoners since Germany started the war against Poland in September 1939. Their numbers rose from 1,080 in late 1938 to over 3,000 a year later. About that time the construction of a new camp "for the Poles" began in
Aerial view of the Gusen I & II camps

Gusen, about 4.5 kilometres (2.8 mi) away. The new camp (later named **Gusen I**) became operational in May of 1940 while the Kastenof- and Gusen-Quarries in the vicinity of that new concentration camp were operated with concentration camp inmates from Mauthausen before. The first inmates were put in the first two huts (No. 7 and 8) on 17 April 1940, while the first transport of prisoners - mostly from the camps in Dachau and Sachsenhausen - arrived on 25 May of the same year.[4] The new camp at Gusen saved the inmates of Mauthausen the daily march between both locations.

Like nearby Mauthausen, the Gusen camp also used its inmates as slave labour in the granite quarries, but they also rented them out to various local businesses. In October 1941, several huts were separated from the Gusen sub-camp by barbed wire and turned into a separate **Prisoner of War Labour Camp** (German: *Kriegsgefangenenarbeitslager*). This camp had a large number of prisoners of war incarcerated, mostly Soviet officers. By 1942, the production capacity of both Mauthausen and Gusen had reached its peak. Gusen was expanded to include the central depot of the SS, where various goods, which had been seized from occupied territories, were sorted and then dispatched to Germany.[11] Local quarries and businesses were in constant need of a new source of labour as more and more Germans were drafted into the Wehrmacht.

In March 1944, the former SS depot was converted to a new sub-camp, and was named **Gusen II**. Until the end of the war the depot served as an improvised concentration camp. The camp contained about 12,000 to 17,000 inmates, who were deprived of even the most basic facilities.[1] In December 1944, another part of Gusen was opened in nearby Lungitz. Here, parts of a factory infrastructure were converted into the third sub-camp of Gusen — **Gusen III**.[1] The rise in the number of sub-camps could not catch up with the rising number of inmates, which led to overcrowding of the huts in all of the sub-camps of Mauthausen-Gusen. From late 1940 to 1944, the number of inmates per bed rose from 2 to 4.[1]

### Mauthausen-Gusen camp system

*See also: List of subcamps of Mauthausen*

As the production in all of the sub-camps of Mauthausen-Gusen complex was constantly rising, so was the number of detainees and the number of the sub-camps themselves. Although initially the camps of Gusen and Mauthausen mostly served the local quarries, from 1942, and onwards, they began to be included in the German war machine. To accommodate the ever-increasing number of slave workers, additional sub-camps (German: *Außenlager*) of Mauthausen began construction in all parts of Austria. At the end of the war the list included 101 camps (including 49 major sub-camps[12]) which covered most of modern Austria, from Mittersill south of Salzburg to Schwechat east of Vienna and from Passau on the pre-war Austro-German border to the Loibl Pass on the border with Yugoslavia. The sub-camps were divided into several categories, depending on their main function: **Produktionslager** for factory workers, **Baulager** for construction, **Aufräumlager** for cleaning the rubble in Allied-bombed towns, and **Kleinalager** (small camps) where the inmates were working specifically for the SS.

### Mauthausen-Gusen as a business enterprise
The production output of Mauthausen-Gusen exceeded that of each of the five other large slave labour centres, including: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Flossenbürg, Gross-Rosen, Marburg and Natzweiler-Struthof, in terms of both production quota and profits. The list of companies using slave labour from the Mauthausen-Gusen camp system was long, and included both national corporations and small, local firms and communities. Some parts of the quarries were converted into a Mauser machine pistol assembly plant. In 1943, an underground factory for the Steyr-Daimler-Puch company was built in Gusen. Altogether, 45 larger companies took part in making KZ Mauthausen-Gusen one of the most profitable concentration camps of Nazi Germany, with more than 11,000,000 Reichsmark of the profits in 1944 alone. Among them were:

- DEST cartel
- Accumulatoren-Fabrik AFA (the main producer of batteries for German U-Boats)
- Bayer (main German producer of medicines and medications)
- Deutsche Bergwerks- und Hüttenbau
- Linz-based Eisenwerke Oberdonau (a major World War II steel supplier for the German Panzer tanks)
- Flugmotorenbetriebe Ostmark (aeroplane engine manufacturer)
- Otto Eberhard Patronenfabrik (munitions works)
- Heinkel and Messerschmitt (aeroplane factories, also a V-2 rocket fuselage factory)
- Hofherr und Schrenz
- Lederkopfwerke Bollomark
- Teufel UJJ
- Österreichische Sauerwerks (arms producer)
- PUCH (vehicles)
- Rax-Werke (machinery and V-2 rockets)
- Steyr (small arms factory)
- Steyr-Daimler-Puch cartel (arms and vehicles)
- Universale Hoch und Tiefbau (construction of tunnels in the Loibl Pass)

Prisoners were also 'rented out' as slave labour, and were exploited in various ways, such as working for local farms, for road construction, reinforcing and repairing the banks of the Danube, and the construction of large residential areas in Sankt Georgen as well as being forced to excavate archaeological sites in Spielberg.

When the Allied strategic bombing campaign started to target the German war industry, German planners decided to move production to underground facilities that were impenetrable to enemy aerial bombardment. In Gusen I, the prisoners were ordered to build several large tunnels beneath the hills surrounding the camp (code-named Kellerbau). By the end of World War II the prisoners had dug 29,400 square metres (316,000 sq ft) to house a small arms factory. In January 1944, similar tunnels were also built beneath the village of Sankt Georgen by the inmates of Gusen II sub-camp (code-named Bergkristall). They dug roughly 50,000 square metres (540,000 sq ft) so the Messerschmitt company could build an assembly plant to produce the Messerschmitt Me 262 and V-2 rockets. In addition to planes, some 7,000 square metres (75,000 sq ft) of Gusen II tunnels served as factories for various war materials. In late 1944, roughly 11,000 of the Gusen I and II inmates were working in underground facilities. An additional 6,500 worked on expanding the underground network of tunnels and halls. In 1945, the Me 262 works was already finished and the Germans were...
able to assemble 1,250 planes a month.\[^{22}\] This was the second largest plane factory in Germany after the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, which was also underground.\[^{21}\]

### Extermination through labour

The political function of the camp continued in parallel with its economic role. Until at least 1942, it was used for the imprisonment and murder of Germany's political and ideological enemies, both real and imagined.\[^{22}\]\[^{23}\] The camp served the needs of the German war machine and also carried out exterminations through labour. When the inmates were totally exhausted after having worked in the quarries for 12 hours a day, or if they were too ill or too weak to work, they were then transferred to the Revier ("Krankenrevier", sick barrack) or other places for extermination. Initially, the camp did not have a gas chamber of its own and the so-called Muselmänner, or prisoners who were too sick to work, after being maltreated, under-nourished or totally exhausted, were then transferred to other concentration camps for extermination (mostly to the infamous Hartheim Castle,\[^{24}\] which was 40.7 kilometres/25.3 miles away), or killed by lethal injection and cremated in the local crematorium. The growing number of prisoners made the system too expensive and from 1940, Mauthausen was one of the few camps in the West to use a gas chamber on a regular basis. In the beginning, an improvised mobile gas chamber – a van with the exhaust pipe connected to the inside – shuttled between Mauthausen and Gusen. By December 1941, a permanent gas chamber that could kill about 120 prisoners at a time was completed.\[^{25}\]\[^{26}\]

### Inmates

*See also: List of notable Mauthausen-Gusen inmates*

Until early 1940, the largest group of inmates consisted of German, Austrian and Czechoslovak socialists, communists, anarchists, homosexuals, and people of Roma origin. Other groups of people to be persecuted solely on religious grounds were the Sectarians, as they were dubbed by the Nazi regime, meaning Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses. The reason for their imprisonment was their total rejection of giving the loyalty oath to Hitler and their absolute refusal to participate in any kind of military service.\[^{10}\]

In early 1940, a large number of Poles were transferred to the Mauthausen-Gusen complex. The first groups were mostly composed of artists, scientists, Boy Scouts, teachers, and university professors,\[^{4}\]\[^{27}\] who were arrested during the course of the AB Action.

Later in the war, all new arrivals were from every category of the "unwanted", but educated people, and so-called political prisoners constituted the largest part of all inmates until the end of the war. During World War II, large groups of Spanish Republicans were also transferred to Mauthausen and its sub-camps. Most of
them were former Republican soldiers or activists who had fled to France after Franco's victory and then were captured by German forces after the French defeat in 1940 or handed over to the Germans by the Vichy authorities. The largest of these groups arrived at Gusen in January 1941.[28] In early 1941, almost all the Poles and Spaniards, except for a small group of specialists working in the quarry's stone mill, were transferred from Mauthausen to Gusen.[29] Following the outbreak of the Soviet-German War in 1941 the camps started to receive a large number of Soviet POWs. Most of them were kept in huts separated from the rest of the camp. The Soviet prisoners of war were a major part of the first groups to be gassed in the newly-built gas chamber in early 1942. In 1944, a large group of Hungarian and Dutch Jews was also transferred to the camp.[30] Much like all the other large groups of prisoners that were transferred to Mauthausen-Gusen, most of them either died as a result of the hard labour and poor conditions, or were deliberately killed by throwing them down the sides of the Mauthausen quarry, nicknamed the Parachutists' Wall by the SS guards and Kapo. The nickname was a cruel joke which mocked the doomed prisoners by calling them "Parachutists without a parachute".

Throughout the years of World War II, the camps of Mauthausen-Gusen received new prisoners in smaller transports on a daily basis; mostly from other concentration camps in German-occupied Europe. Most of the prisoners in the sub-camps of Mauthausen were kept in various detention sites prior to transportation to their final destination. The most notable of such centres for Mauthausen-Gusen were the infamous camps at Dachau and Auschwitz. The first transports from Auschwitz arrived in February 1942. The second transport in June of that year was much larger and numbered some 1,200 prisoners. Similar groups were sent from Auschwitz to Gusen and Mauthausen in April and November 1943, and then in January and February 1944. Finally, after Adolf Eichmann visited Mauthausen in May of that year, KZ Mauthausen-Gusen received the first group of roughly 8,000 Hungarian Jews from Auschwitz; the first group to be evacuated from that camp before the Soviet advance. Initially, the groups evacuated from Auschwitz consisted of qualified workers for the ever-growing industry of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp complex, but as the evacuation proceeded other categories of people were also transported to Mauthausen, Gusen, Vienna or Melk.

Over time, Auschwitz had to almost stop accepting new prisoners and most were directed to Mauthausen instead. The last group— roughly 10,000 prisoners—was evacuated in the last wave in January 1945, only a few weeks before the Soviet liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex.[31] Among them was a large group of civilians arrested by the Germans after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising,[32] but by the liberation not more than 500 of them were still alive.[33] Altogether, during the final months of the war, 23,364 prisoners from other concentration camps arrived at the camp complex.[33] Many more perished during death marches, where they dropped dead because of pure exhaustion, or in railway wagons, where the prisoners were confined at sub-zero temperatures—without adequate food or water—for several days prior to their arrival. Prisoner transports were considered to be less important than other important services.

Many of those who survived the journey died before they could be registered, whilst others
were given the camp numbers of prisoners who had already been killed.\[^{33}\] Most were then accommodated in the camps or in the newly-established tent camp (German: Zeltlager) just outside the Mauthausen sub-camp, where roughly 2,000 people were forced into tents intended for not more than 800 inmates, and then starved to death.\[^{34}\]

As in all other German concentration camps, not all the prisoners were equal. Their treatment depended largely on the category assigned to each inmate, as well as their nationality and rank within the system. The so-called kapos, or prisoners who had been recruited by their captors to police their fellow prisoners, were given more food and higher pay in the form of concentration camp coupons which could be exchanged for cigarettes in the canteen, as well as a separate room inside most barracks. In addition, following Himmler's order in June, 1941, a brothel was opened for them in 1942, in the Mauthausen and Gusen I camps.\[^{35}\] The Kapos formed the main part of the so-called Prominents (German: Prominenz), or prisoners who were given a much better treatment than the average inmate.

**Women and children in Mauthausen-Gusen**

Although the Mauthausen-Gusen camp complex was mostly a labour camp for men, a women's camp was opened in Mauthausen, in September 1944, with the first transport of female prisoners from Auschwitz. Eventually, more women and children came to Mauthausen from Ravensbrück, Bergen Belsen, Gross Rosen, and Buchenwald. With them came some female guards. Twenty are known to have served in the Mauthausen camp, and sixty in the whole camp complex. Female guards also staffed the Mauthausen sub-camps at Hirtenberg, Lenzing (the main women's sub-camp in Austria), and St. Lambrech. The Chief Overseers at Mauthausen were firstly Margarete Freinberger, and then Jane Bernigau. Of all the female Overseers who served in Mauthausen, almost all of them were recruited between September 1944, and November 1944, from Austrian cities and towns. In early April 1945, at least 2,500 more female prisoners came from the female sub-camps at Amstetten, St. Lambrecht, Hirtenberg, and the Flossenbürg sub-camp at Freiberg. It is rumoured that Hildegard Lächert also served at Mauthausen.\[^{36}\]

The available Mauthausen inmate statistics\[^{37}\] from the spring of 1943, shows that there were 2,400 prisoners below the age of 20, which was 12.8% of the 18,655 population. By late March 1945, the number of juvenile prisoners in Mauthausen increased to 15,048, which was 19.1% of the 78,547 Mauthausen inmates. The number of imprisoned children increased 6.2 times, whereas the total number of adult prisoners during the same period multiplied by a factor of only four. These numbers reflected the increasing use of Polish, Czech, Russian, and Balkan teenagers as slave labour as the war continued.\[^{38}\] Statistics showing the composition of juvenile inmates shortly before their liberation\[^{37}\] reveal the following major child/prisoner sub-groups: 5,809 foreign civilian labourers, 5,055 political prisoners, 3,654 Jews, and 330 Russian POWs. There were also 23 Roma children, 20 so-called "anti-social elements", 6 Spaniards, and 3 Jehovah's Witnesses.
The treatment of inmates and methodology of crime

Although not the only concentration camp where the German authorities implemented their extermination through labour (Vernichtung durch Arbeit), Mauthausen-Gusen was one of the most brutal and severe. The conditions within the camp were considered exceptionally hard to bear, even by concentration camp standards.[39][40][41] The inmates suffered not only from malnutrition, overcrowded huts and constant abuse and beatings by the guards and kapos,[29] but also from exceptionally hard labour.[25] As there were too many prisoners in Mauthausen to have all of them work in its quarry at the same time, many were put to work in workshops, or had to do other manual work, whilst the unfortunate ones who were selected to work in the quarry were only there because of their so-called "crimes" in the camp. The reasons for sending them to work in the "Punishment-Detail" were trivial, and included such "crimes" as not saluting a German passing by.

The work in the quarries — often in unbearable heat or in temperatures as low as −30 °C (−22.0 °F)[29] — led to exceptionally high mortality rates.[41][42] The food rations were limited, and during the 1940–1942 period, an average inmate weighed 40 kilograms,[43] roughly 88 pounds. It is estimated that the average energy content of food rations dropped from about 1,750 calories a day during the 1940–1942 period, to between 1,150 and 1,460 during the next period. In 1945, the energy content was even lower and did not exceed 600 to 1,000 calories a day; that is less than a third of the energy needed by an average worker in heavy industry.[1] This led to the starvation of thousands of inmates.

The inmates of Mauthausen, Gusen I, and Gusen II had access to a separate sub-camp for the sick — the so-called Krankenlager. Despite the fact that (roughly) 100 medics from among the inmates were working there,[44] they were not given any medication and could offer only basic first aid.[4] Thus the hospital camp — as it was called by the German authorities — was, in fact, the last stop before death for thousands of inmates, and very few had a chance to recover.

The rock-quarry in Mauthausen was at the base of the infamous "Stairs of Death". Prisoners were forced to carry roughly-hewn blocks of stone — often weighing as much as 50 kilograms (110 lb) — up the 186 stairs - one behind the other. As a result, many exhausted prisoners collapsed in front of the other prisoners in the line, and then fell on top of the other prisoners, creating a horrific domino effect; the first prisoner falling onto the next, and so on, all the way down the stairs.[45]

Such brutality was not accidental. The SS guards would often force prisoners — exhausted from hours of hard labour without sufficient food and water — to race up the stairs carrying blocks of stone. Those who survived the ordeal would often be placed in a line-up at the edge of a cliff known as "The Parachute Wall" (German:
Death Toll of Gusen I, II and III\(^\text{[56]}\), Józef Żmij, Stanisław Nogaj, KZ Gusen, Hans Maršálek \([10]\), Stanisław Dobosiewicz \([56]\).

- Being beaten to death (by the SS and Kapos)
- Icy showers - some 3,000 inmates died of hypothermia - after having being forced to take an icy cold shower - and who were then left outside in cold weather\(^\text{[47]}\)
- Mass-shootings
- Medical experiments
  - Aribert Heim, dubbed Doctor Death by the inmates, was there for seven weeks, which was enough to carry out his experiments\(^\text{[48]}\)
  - Another of the Nazi scientists to perform experiments on the inmates was Karl Gross, who purposely infected hundreds of prisoners with cholera and typhus in order to test his experimental vaccines on them. Between February 5, 1942, and mid-April 1944, more than 1,500 prisoners were killed as a result of his experiments\(^\text{[49]}\)
- Hanging
- Starvation
- Injections of phenol. (A group of 2,000 prisoners who applied to be transferred to the sanatorium were declared mentally sick and were killed by Dr. Ramsauer in the course of the H-13 action)\(^\text{[47]}\)
- Drowning in large barrels of water (Gusen II)\(^\text{[50],[51]}\)
- Beating to death or starving to death in bunkers\(^\text{[52]}\)
- Throwing the prisoners on the 380 volt electric barbed wire fence\(^\text{[52]}\)
- Forcing prisoners outside the boundaries of the camp and then shooting them on the pretense (pretence) that they were attempting to escape\(^\text{[53]}\)

After the war one of the survivors, Dr. Antoni Gościński reported 62 ways of murdering people in the camps of Gusen I and Mauthausen\(^\text{[47]}\) Hans Maršálek estimated that an average life expectancy of newly-arrived prisoners in Gusen varied from 6 months between 1940 and 1942, to less than 3 months in early 1945\(^\text{[54]}\).

Paradoxically, with the growth of forced labour industry in various sub-camps of Mauthausen-Gusen, the situation of some of the prisoners improved significantly. While the food rations were increasingly limited every month, the heavy industry necessitated skilled specialists rather than unqualified workers and the brutality of the camp's SS and Kapos was limited. While the prisoners were still beaten on the daily basis and the Muselmänner were still exterminated, from early 1943 on some of the factory workers were allowed to receive food parcels from their families (mostly Poles and Frenchmen). This allowed many of them not only to evade the risk of starvation, but also to help other prisoners who had no relatives outside the camps — or were not allowed to receive parcels\(^\text{[55]}\).

**Death toll**

Because the Germans destroyed much of the camp's files and evidence and often gave newly-arrived prisoners the camp numbers of those who had already been
The exact death toll of the Mauthausen-Gusen complex is impossible to calculate. The matter is further complicated due to some of the inmates of Gusen being murdered in Mauthausen, and at least 3,423 sent to Hartheim Castle, 40.7 km (25.3 miles) away. Also, several thousands were killed in mobile gas chambers, without any mention of the exact number of victims in the surviving files. The SS, before their escape from the camps on 4 May 1945, tried to destroy the evidence, allowing approximately only 40,000 victims to be identified. During the first days after the liberation, the camp's main chancellery was seized by the members of a Polish inmate resistance organization; secured against the wishes of other inmates, who wanted to burn it. After the war, the main chancellery was brought by one of the survivors to Poland, then passed to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. Parts of the death register of Gusen I camp were secured by the Polish inmates, who took it to Australia after the war. In 1969 the files were given to the International Red Cross Tracing Bureau.

The surviving camp archives include personal files of 37,411 murdered prisoners, including 22,092 Poles, 5,024 Spaniards, 2,843 Soviet prisoners of war and 24 other nationalities. The surviving parts of the death register of KZ Gusen list an additional 30,536 names.

Apart from the surviving camp files of the sub-camps of Mauthausen, the main documents used for an estimation of the death toll of the camp complexes are:

1. A report by Józef Żmij, a survivor who had been working in the Gusen I camp's chancellery. His report is based on personally-made copies of yearly reports from the period between 1940 and 1944, and the camps commander's daily reports for the period between 1 January 1945 and the day of the liberation.
2. Original death register for the sub-camp of Gusen held by the International Red Cross
3. Personal notes of Stanisław Nogaj, another inmate who had been working in the chancellery of Gusen
4. Death register prepared by the SS chief medic of the Mauthausen main chancellery for the sub-camps of Gusen (similar records for the Mauthausen sub-camp itself were destroyed)

Because of that the exact death toll of the entire Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp system varies considerably from source to source. Various scholars place it at between 122,766 and 320,000, with other numbers also frequently quoted being 200,000 and "over 150,000".

Various historians place the total death toll in the four main camps of Mauthausen, Gusen I, Gusen II and Gusen III at between 55,000 and 60,000. In addition, during the first month after the liberation additional 1042 prisoners died in American field hospitals.

Out of approximately 320,000 prisoners who were incarcerated in various sub-camps of KZ Mauthausen-Gusen throughout the war, only approximately 80,000 survived, including between 20,487 and 21,386 in Gusen I, II and III.
Liberation and post-war heritage

Some of the bodies being removed by German civilians for decent burial at Gusen concentration camp after its liberation

During the final months before liberation, the camp's commander Franz Ziereis prepared for its defence against a possible Soviet offensive. Most of the inmates of German and Austrian nationality "volunteered" for the SS-Freiwillige Häftlingsdivision, an SS unit composed mostly of former concentration camp inmates and headed by Oskar Dirlewanger. The remaining prisoners were rushed to build a line of granite anti-tank obstacles to the east of Mauthausen. The inmates unable to cope with the hard labour and malnutrition were exterminated in large numbers to free space for newly-arrived evacuation transports from other camps, including most of the sub-camps of Mauthausen-Gusen located in eastern Austria. In the final months of the war, the main source of calories, that is the parcels of food sent through the International Red Cross, stopped and food rations became catastrophically low. The prisoners transferred to the "Hospital Sub-camp" received one piece of bread per 20 inmates and roughly half a litre of weed soup a day.[69] This made some of the prisoners, previously engaged in various types of resistance activity, begin to prepare plans to defend the camp in case of an SS attempt to exterminate all the remaining inmates. It is not known why the prisoners of Gusen I and II were not exterminated en-masse, despite direct orders from Heinrich Himmler; Ziereis' plan assumed rushing all the prisoners into the tunnels of the underground factories of Kellerbau and blowing up the entrances. The plan was known to one of the Polish resistance organizations which started an ambitious plan of gathering tools necessary to dig air vents in the entrances.

On 28 April, under cover of a fictional air-raid alarm, some 22,000 prisoners of Gusen were rushed into the tunnels. However, after several hours in the tunnels all of the prisoners were allowed to return to the camp. Stanisław Dobosiewicz, the author of a monumental monograph of the Mauthausen-Gusen complex explains that one of the possible causes of the failure of the German plan was that the Polish prisoners managed to cut the fuse wires. Ziereis himself stated in his testimony written on May 25 that it was his wife who convinced him not to follow the order from above.[70] Although the plan was abandoned, the prisoners feared that the SS might want to massacre the prisoners by other means. Because of that the Polish, Soviet and French prisoners prepared a plan for an assault on the barracks of the SS guards in order to seize the arms necessary to put up a fight. A similar plan was also devised by the Spanish inmates.[70]

On 3 May the SS and other guards started to prepare for evacuation of the camp. The following day, the guards of Mauthausen were replaced with unarmed Volkssturm soldiers and an improvised unit formed of elderly police officers and fire fighters evacuated from Vienna. The police officer in charge of the unit accepted the "inmate self-government" as the camp's highest

Tanks of U.S. 11th Armored Division entering the Mauthausen concentration camp; banner in Spanish reads "Antifascist Spaniards greet the forces of liberation". The photo was taken on 6 May 1945
The survivors of Ebensee sub-camp shortly after their liberation

The camps of Mauthausen-Gusen were the last to be liberated during the World War II. On 5 May 1945 the camp at Mauthausen was approached by soldiers of the 41st Recon Squad of the US 11th Armored Division, 3rd US Army. The reconnaissance squad was led by S/SGT Albert J. Kosiek. His troop disarmed the policemen and left the camp. By the time of its liberation, most of the SS-men of Mauthausen had already fled; however, some 30 who were left were killed by the prisoners; a similar number were killed in Gusen II. By 6 May all the remaining sub-camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp complex, with the exception of the two camps in the Loibl Pass, were also liberated by American forces.

Among the inmates liberated from the camp was Lieutenant Jack Taylor, an officer of the Office of Strategic Services. He had managed to survive with the help of several prisoners and was later a key witness at the Mauthausen-Gusen camp trials carried out by the Dachau International Military Tribunal. Another of the camp's survivors was Simon Wiesenthal, an engineer who spent the rest of his life hunting Nazi war criminals. Future Congressional Medal of Honor winner Tibor "Ted" Rubin was imprisoned there as a young teenager; a Hungarian Jew, he vowed to join the U.S. Army upon his liberation and later did just that, distinguishing himself in the Korean War as a corporal in the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.

Following the capitulation of Germany, the Mauthausen-Gusen complex fell within the Soviet sector of occupation of Austria. Initially, the Soviet authorities used parts of the Mauthausen and Gusen I camps as barracks for the Red Army. At the same time, the underground factories were being dismantled and sent to the USSR as a war booty. After that, between 1946 and 1947, the camps were unguarded and many furnishings and facilities of the camp were dismantled, both by the Red Army and by the local population. In the early summer of 1947, the Soviet forces had blown the tunnels up and were then withdrawn from the area, while the camp was turned over to Austrian civilian authorities. However, it was not until 1949 that it was declared a national memorial site. Finally, 30 years after camp's liberation, on 3 May 1975, Chancellor Bruno Kreisky officially opened the Mauthausen Museum. Unlike Mauthausen, much of what constituted the sub-camps of Gusen I, II and III is now covered by residential areas built there after the war.
In February 2009 the memorial was vandalized by persons unknown, who defaced a section of the wall with anti-Islamic graffiti.

See also

- The community of former Russian prisoners of Mauthausen concentration camp (http://www.mauthausen.ru/en/)
- List of subcamps of Mauthausen
- List of Nazi-German concentration camps
- Dachau International Military Tribunal
- Mauthausen-Gusen camp trials
- Steyr-Münichholz subcamp

Notes and references


7. ^ Oswald Pohl, apart from being a high-ranking SS member, owner of DEST and several other companies, chief of administration and treasurer of various Nazi organizations, was also the managing director of the German Red Cross. In 1938, he transferred 8,000,000 RM from member fees to one of the accounts of the SS (SS-Spargemeinschaft e. V.), which in turn donated all the money to DEST in 1939.


9. ^ As stated in Reinhard Heydrich's memo of January 1, 1941; in: Dobosiewicz, Stanisław, op.cit., p.12


11. ^ Dobosiewicz, op.cit., p.26


14. ^ 11,000,000 Reichsmark was equivalent to roughly 4,403,000 US dollars or almost 1 million UK pounds by 1939 exchange rates;

16. ^ In turn, 4,403,000 1939 dollars are roughly equivalent to 560,370,000 modern US dollars using the relative share of GDP as the main factor of comparison;


18. ^ The sub-camp inmate counts refer to the situation as of late 1944 and early 1945, before the major reorganization of the camp's system and before the arrival of a large number of evacuation trains and death marches.


21. a b Stanisław Dobosiewicz, W obronie życia..., op.cit., p.194

22. ^ Though in reality the actual production never reached such levels


30. ^ Roughly 8,000 people altogether.


33. a b Stanisław Dobosiewicz, op.cit., pp. 365–367


&vlsbn=0199259046&cd=ab4ZL8h5dFMCP&pg=PA210&lpg=PA210&dq=extermination+through+labour+&vq=Mauthausen+&sig=horhGvqFxF7IFvA02FzGzzi4x0.

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&vlsbn=0801442532&cd=kX09wXvYuQCD&pg=Mauthausen+&lpg=PA1+&pg=PA3+&sig=Mnr8_dv GaIJJqrcQJ6j2DFcye0.


10. ^ Stanisław Grzesiuk recalls that in 1941, and 1942, all Kapos in charge of every Block in Gusen had to drown two prisoners a day.


14. ^ Stanisław Grzesiuk, op.cit., pp. 252–255 and following

15. ^ Compiled from a larger table published in: Stanisław Dobosiewicz, op.cit., p.421; the numbers are fragmentary and only include the numbers for Gusen I, II and III, without the numbers for other sub-camps or the main camp in Mauthausen. Summary by Stanisław Dobosiewicz includes categories omitted by some of the sources, including roughly 2,744 former inmates who died immediately after liberation, both in the camp and in American field hospitals, as well as an approximate number of Jewish children (420) and prisoners in the Sick Camp (1900) who were not registered in the official camp statistics.


Further reading

- (German) Simon Wiesenthal (1946). *KZ Mauthausen; Bild und Wort (Concentration Camp Mauthausen: Pictures and Words)*. Linz-Vienna: IBIS Verlag.
External links

- Mauthausen-Gusen Memorial (http://www.mauthausen-memorial.at)
- Mauthausen-Synopsis Shoaheducation.com
  (http://www.shoaheducation.com/camps/mauthausen.html)
- KZ Gusen Memorial Committee (http://www.gusen.org)
- Audiowalk Gusen (http://audiowalk.gusen.org)
- Photos of the Mauthausen-Gusen camps (http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/mauthpictoc.html)
- USHMM (http://www.ushmm.org/) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum contains more than 500 pictures of Mauthausen-Gusen
- http://www.remember.org/camps/mauthausen/
- Literary research project on texts by survivors
  (http://www.sbg.ac.at/rom/ag/moderne/homepage/holocaust_praesentation_englisch.htm)

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