

# THE BELZEC DEATH CAMP

HISTORY, BIOGRAPHIES, REMEMBRANCE

Chris Webb

with a foreword by Jerry Steinberg



*ibidem*

Chris Webb

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History, Biographies, Remembrance

Revised and Updated



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Cover picture: The cover shows the site of the former death camp of Belzec in 2004.

Chris Webb Private Archive

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Dedicated to Robert Kuwalek and Michael Tregenza  
For Freya and Cora



# Introduction

Jerry Steinberg grew up on a tiny-tree lined avenue in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA, where oddly enough three tattooed Auschwitz survivors also made their residence. As their newspaper boy, starting at age 12, he would make weekly collections to these survivors homes and in one case, he would be invited into the house to sit and listen for up to 90 minutes at a time as Mr Moses Borenstein, recounted the horrors he was forced to endure in Auschwitz (witnessing the huge impact of ventilation / emotional catharsis helped shape his career choice as a psychologist. Steinberg's own family was touched by the Holocaust, as his father's sister was murdered by the Nazis, while her son, Chaim Kuritsky miraculously survived and wrote an incredible book entitled 'To Survive and to Tell the Story.'

Steinberg graduated with a B.A. in psychology from Temple University and received his graduate degree in psychology with a minor in history from Columbia University.

During the early advent of social media, Steinberg began to encounter websites that were rife with anti-Semitism and began to hone his debating skills as he challenged and refuted the libels, tropes and fallacies. That endeavour began to spill into fighting against the demonization and de-legitimization of Israel and those websites also became his battleground. As more social media sites cropped up—especially inter-active sites such as You Tube, Steinberg began to see the third component of the triad of anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial/ revisionism, dominate comments sections and these hateful comments and lies garnered a much higher percentage of thumbs up / likes than factual comments.

With a background of 30 years of Holocaust research (which he terms 'proactive study') he then laboriously researched the challenges of his opponents (what he calls 'reactive study') he was able to refute all of them and match them up to one or more of the over 400 fallacies known to exist. This endeavour has led to his authoring



a book on the psychological underpinnings of Holocaust denial which is still in draft form.

This work also prompted Steinberg to establish two Facebook groups of which he is the administrator. The first is 'Treblinka Extermination Camp' which boasts 2,100 members, at the time of writing this, and 'Combat Holocaust Denial,' which has over 1,200 members. Steinberg now spends his time on a speaking circuit at universities, museums, and other venues.

Steinberg had a long clinical and administrative career in the field of mental health and served as CEO of a large mental health center that served the entire County of Gloucester in Southern New Jersey. He wrote several successful grants bringing in new facilities and innovative mental health programs to meet the previously underserved population of people with chronic and persistent mental illnesses.

Steinberg lives in Southern New Jersey with his wife Joyce. His four grown-up children and soon to be 10 grandchildren all live very close by.

# Foreword

Sometimes we have to step back before we open a history book and ask why this book should even be written; consider what should be included; and think about how we can trust that it represents the truth, which is a moral and ethical imperative.

Can readers trust in the historiography of works such as the one you are about to read? In an age where lack of objectivity and unreliable research methods characterize the reporting of so many events, past and present, it is incumbent upon those we rely upon to be trustworthy, honest and not present opinions (as we so often see in the news or political commentary) or bias based on one's self interests, preconceived notions, political / religious affiliations or confirmation bias.

People tend to read a history book without really stopping to consider all of the methods of historical research/ inquiry and the reliability and validity of each. Such methods are a crucial in understanding how true historians are able to investigate, recreate, and fact check a bygone era. The more the historian can see a convergence in various methodologies the more trustworthy they become—individually and as a whole.

The task becomes even more daunting when it comes to telling the story of an extermination camp because it is not just a historical event, but also a major crime scene based on its very purpose, structure, staffing, and mission. Also, it is set apart from traditional crime scenes by the massive scale of unfathomably heinous crimes against humanity—industrialized massacre of innocent people of all ages on an unprecedented level.

As is the case with most murder scenes, the perpetrators strives to obliterate all traces of crimes so as to avoid capture, indictment, prosecution and sentencing in addition to public shame and retribution / revenge. The erasure of small crime scenes may seem easy but is often carried out in haste, by one or two perpetrators, and

they usually know better than to risk returning to the scene of the crime. Contrast that with the methodical fastidiousness of the Nazis, their having several months (in some cases) to accomplish their tasks, and a slave labor force of several hundred to go to extraordinary lengths to eradicate as much evidence as they possibly could—as outlined herein.

All that said, writing about Bełżec demands wide ranging research to reconstruct its history. This research must rely upon ALL available aspects of historical methodology and then some. If one method is a bit difficult to employ, or lacking in some way, then other methods must be relied upon even more to make up for this.

With Bełżec, for example Rudolf Reder was one of only two survivors and the only one who was able to give a full account of his experiences in that extermination camp. Therefore this book offers a wealth of other testimonies from Nazis themselves, among many others. All of this adds considerable weight to layers of evidence.

This book exemplifies the proper applications of research methodologies in a way that relies upon the convergence of testimonies (inmates, escapees, local villagers, and craftsmen, camp staff, Nazi leaders etc) with physical / forensic / archaeological evidence, photographic evidence, documentary / archival proofs, and any other forms of research that can be brought to bear on uncovering the mysteries of camps such as Bełżec.

But how does one go about assembling the vast number of assorted pieces of the micro-mosaic?

To be done to the highest level of perfection that one can hope to achieve it, takes researchers/ historians that approach their work with dogged determination, a healthy form of obsessive compulsiveness, and among other things, an uncanny ability to pull together an amalgam of loose ends and tie them all together.

Enter Chris Webb, a historian who has dedicated his professional life to endeavours such as this—building on only solid foundations of his predecessors his discoveries, and those of his contemporaries, but adding so many components that his works have become a

sophisticated algorithm—defined as being a process or set of rules to be followed in approaching problem-solving operations.

I can personally attest to the thoroughness of the author. As one of several Holocaust scholars / researchers, I can recount of a number of e-mail ‘calls to action’ wherein we were asked by the author to research such mundane things as the first name of a survivors teacher, the spelling of inmates names, the service number of an SS-Officer who was part of the camp’s garrison—all in the interests of thoroughness. These unrelenting searches usually bore fruit.

In reading this definitive account of all that was Bełżec one would be hard-pressed to find any further stones that could be unturned to add to the comprehensiveness of this volume of work. After piecing together these stories a micro-mosaic adds up to a gestalt that gives us evidence of the structure and function of the camp in addition to a glimpse at the lives and personalities proclivities of many who served there and who perished there.

Still, one may ask what the point is to investigating extermination camps, recreating all aspects of them, retelling their story, and memorializing the innocent victims. After all, isn’t the disappearance of millions of people enough? Aren’t all the forms of proof enough? Why must this story be told?

The answer is multi-faceted and quite compelling. We know from reports of the Jewish *Sonderkommando* at Auschwitz, who were in close proximity to people, as they were being ushered towards the gas chambers, that these ill-fated victims, asked for, and prayed for, two primary things: That people remember them and that people know what happened to them.

We therefore honor them by keeping their memory alive, by acknowledging and exposing all the horrors that befell them. We must never allow the Nazis to get away with their goal of taking everything away from them. They took their homes, families, assets, businesses, clothing, hair, gold, fillings, shoes, jewellery etc. They took their identities and reduced them to ashes, but we know what happened to them and we will remember them—All of them, if we can!

We bring the painful truths to the fore, lest in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the generations that follow it, there is a tendency or attempt to try and opportunistically deny it, whitewash it, revise it, invert victim and perpetrator, and even try and justify it. Such efforts are tantamount to re-victimization.

While it has become cliché to point out that history often repeats itself, we must, for the sake of humanity, use the lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides to help prevent a gradual progression into the definable stages that culminate in such genocides.

As all Holocaust survivors will soon be extinct what are we doing to keep their experiences alive in the face and consciousness of the world; to keep them relevant; to warn; to educate; and to be their voices?

What are we, as concerned citizens of conscience, doing to make a difference in stopping the progression into succeeding stages? Are we pushing back or simply sitting back waiting to see the next stages unfold. This is not a scare tactic as all of the indicators are there and society as a whole will suffer—not just minorities.

This book serves as a stark reminder of just how horrifically man's inhumanity to man can reach its ultimate expression. As hard as it is to read and imagine the sheer barbarity and unparalleled cruelty it is a story that must be told.

Jerry Steinberg  
New Jersey, USA  
December 2021

# Author's Introduction



Bełżec—July 2002—Chris Webb by the Belzec Station Sign

Bełżec Death Camp—History, Biographies, Remembrance is an updated and second edition of my book published in 2016, by ibidem-verlag. I am extremely grateful to ibidem-verlag to allow this second edition, to see the light of day. I must place on record my sincere thanks to Jana Dävers, Jessica Haunschild and Valerie Lange for all their support and expertise.

What is new to this second edition?

Without doubt the biggest change has been the provision of sources for the Jewish Roll of Remembrance, as well as adding more short biographies. I have been supported in this endeavour mainly due to the efforts of the Belżec Museum online resource The Director Tomasz Hanejko. He has also supported me in my research about many topics, including the victims and structures in the camp on numerous occasions, and for that I am very grateful. One of the key

finds I have made is that the real name of Rudolf Reder, from a pre-war Polish Telephone Directory an entry was found for Rubin Reder, with his known address.

It has also been possible to include new details of the perpetrators thanks to the excellent work of Sara Berger, in her book *‘Experten der Vernichtung: das T4 Reinhardt-Netzwerk in den Lagern Belzec, Sobibor und Treblinka.’* This work was published in Hamburg during 2013.

The most enormous thank you is reserved for the late Robert Kuwalek, who I am honoured to say was a friend of mine. His book *‘Death Camp in Belzec’* published in Lublin during 2016, has provided much new research material, which has greatly enhanced our knowledge of the death camp. I first met Robert in Lublin, whilst he was working in Majdanek, in the camp’s museum, in 2000, in the company of Michael Tregenza. Mike, an English historian, who was taking me round Lublin and a few days later took me to Belzec for the first time.

A few years later, Robert Kuwalek acted as our tour guide on the ARC trip to Poland in 2004, and his knowledge of Lublin, Belzec and the Holocaust in general was second to none. His tragic, early passing in Lvov, during the year 2014, has left a huge void to fill.

Indeed I must also pay tribute to the sterling work undertaken by Michael Tregenza, who was an undoubted expert on Belzec in particular, and *Aktion Reinhardt* in general. This work owes him an enormous debt, and I cannot thank him enough. Another English historian Dr. Robin O’Neil, also did much pioneering research into the Belzec death camp, particularly in respect of deportations from Galicia, and he fully deserves a mention in dispatches.

I have also included the accounts of my own personal visits to the site of the former death camp made between 2000, and 2004, and have included a number of photographs, which capture the transformation of the site, from my first visit in 2000, and my last one four years later, after the museum had recently been opened.

I am delighted that Jerry Steinberg, my friend and esteemed colleague from the United States of America, and who is the leading

light of the Treblinka Extermination Camp online group was able to write the foreword for this second edition. Thanks to Jerry I was introduced to Peggy Scolaro, who is a Professor in English, at the George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, and Peggy who has undertaken the editing of this book, with consummate skill and dedication. I cannot thank them both enough, for what they have done.

I am also grateful to two very dear friends who have supported me, firstly Professor Matthew Feldman, the Director of CARR, who kindly wrote a review of this book, and my friend Georg Biemann, from Germany, who has undertaken some amazing research, and supported me, in a number of aspects. He is truly a friend for all seasons.

New documentation regarding Belzec remains stubbornly hard to find and only a few new items have been found. Here I must thank Lutz Moeser from the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin, for all his help and support. Some interesting photographs from my private archive have been included, in this edition, both from an historical and more modern perspective.

Belzec remains to this day the forgotten death camp, and its grisly and horrible past should never be forgotten, and I hope this second edition, is a worthy addition, to remembering the Holocaust and those Jews who tragically lost their lives in this charnel house of horror.

Lastly I must thank my wife Shirley, for all her support and my daughter Heather and her husband Mark and their lovely daughters Freya and Cora, my cherished granddaughters.

Chris Webb  
Whitehill, UK.  
November 16, 2021





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# Abbreviations for Sources used in the book

ARC	Aktion Reinhard Camps Group
BA	Bundesarchiv, Berlin, Germany
H.E.A.R.T.	Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team
HHS	Holocaust Historical Society UK
IPN	Institute of National Memory, Poland
NA	National Archives Kew, UK
NARA	National Archives Washington DC, USA
NIOD	Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, USA
YVA	Yad Vashem Archive, Israel
ZStL	Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen Ludwigsburg



# **Part I**

## **The Hell Called Bełzec**



# Chapter I

## ‘*Aktion Reinhardt*’

### An Overview

*Aktion Reinhardt*—also known as *Einsatz Reinhardt*—was the code name for the extermination of primarily Polish Jewry from the former *General Gouvernement* and the Białystok area. The term was used in remembrance of *SS-Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich, the co-ordinator of the ‘Final Solution of the Jewish Question’ (*Endlösung der Judenfrage*)—the extermination of the Jews living in the European countries occupied by German forces during the Second World War.

On May 27, 1942, in a suburb of Prague, Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš, members of the Czech resistance, ambushed Heydrich in his car while he was en-route to his office in Prague, from his home at Panenské Břežany. Heydrich died from his wounds at Bulovka Hospital on 4 June 1942.<sup>1</sup>

Four days after his death approximately 1,000 Jews left Prague in a single train which was designated AaH (*Attentat aus Heydrich*). This transport was officially destined for Ujazdów, in the Lublin district of Poland, but the deportees were gassed at the Belżec death camp in the far south-eastern corner of the Lublin District. The members of Odilo Globocnik’s resettlement staff henceforward dedicated the murder programme to Heydrich’s memory, under the code name *Einsatz Reinhardt*.<sup>2</sup>

The head of *Aktion Reinhardt* was *SS-Brigadeführer* Odilo Globocnik, the *SS* and Police Leader of the Lublin District, appointed to this task by *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. At the *Führer’s* Headquarters in Rastenburg (a town in present day Poland known as Kętrzyn), Heinrich Himmler, Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger, *Höhere*

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<sup>1</sup> R. Cowdery, & P. Vodenka, *Reinhard Heydrich Assassination*. USM, Inc., Lakeville 1994, pp. 49 & 63.

<sup>2</sup> G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*. Vallentine, Mitchell, London 1953, pp. 105-106.



*SS- und Polizeiführer Ost*, and Odilo Globocnik met at a conference on October 13, 1941, during which Globocnik was authorized to build a death camp at Bełżec. This was the first death camp built using static gas chambers, the first mass extermination camp in the East, which was *Kulmhof* (a town in present day Poland known as Chełmno) used gas vans from early December 1941.<sup>3</sup>

On January 20, 1942, at a villa in Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin, Heydrich organized a conference on the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question in Europe.” The conference had been postponed from December 8, 1941, as Heydrich wrote to one of the participants, Otto Hoffman, that it had been necessary to postpone the conference “on account of events in which some of the invited gentlemen were concerned.”<sup>4</sup> This was an allusion to the massacres that had taken place in the East. Dr. Fritz Lange, for example, had overseen the murder of Jews at Riga; these executions were notable as this was the first time German Jews from the Reich had been executed en-masse. These Jews came from Berlin. Those who attended the Wannsee Conference included the leading officials of the relevant ministries, senior representatives of the German authorities in the occupied countries, and senior members of the *SS*, including Heinrich Müller, head of the *Gestapo*, and Adolf Eichmann, head of Department IV B4, the sub-section of the *Gestapo* dealing with Jewish affairs. Dr. Josef Bühler, *Staatssekretär* who was representing Dr. Hans Frank, from the *Generalgouvernement*, demanded that the ‘Final Solution’ should be first applied to the Jews of the *Generalgouvernement*. This request was granted, thus setting in train the mass murder program, which was later to be named as ‘*Aktion Reinhardt*.’

\*

Odilo Lothario Globocnik was born on April 21, 1904, in Trieste, the son of an Austro-Slovene family, and a construction engineer by

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<sup>3</sup> P. Longerich, *The Unwritten Order—Hitler’s Role in the Final Solution*. Tempus, Stroud 2001, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution...*, op. cit., p. 101.

trade. In 1930, he joined the Nazi party in Carinthia, Austria, and after the banning of the Nazi Party in Austria in 1934, earned a reputation as one of the most radical leaders of its underground cells. In 1933 Globocnik joined the SS, which also became a prohibited organization in Austria in 1934, and was appointed deputy Party District Leader (*Stellvertretender Gauleiter*).<sup>5</sup>

After serving several short terms of imprisonment for illegal activities on behalf of the Nazis, he emerged as a key figure in the pre-*Anschluss* plans for Austria, serving as a key liaison figure between Adolf Hitler and the leading pro-Nazi Austrians.<sup>6</sup>

After the *Anschluss* of March 1938, Globocnik's star continued to rise, and on May 24 he was appointed to the coveted key position of Party District Leader (*Gauleiter*) of Vienna.

His tenure was short-lived, however, and on January 30, 1939, he was dismissed from this lofty position for corruption, illegal speculation in foreign exchange and tax evasion—all on a grand scale.<sup>7</sup>

After demotion to a lowly SS rank and undergoing basic military training with an *SS-Standarte*, he took part with his unit in the invasion of Poland. Eventually pardoned by Himmler, who needed such unscrupulous characters for future 'unsavoury plans', Globocnik was appointed to the post of *SS- und Polizeiführer* Lublin on November 9, 1939. Globocnik had been chosen by the *Reichsführer-SS* as the central figure in *Aktion Reinhardt*, not only because of his ruthlessness, but also because of his virulent anti-Semitism.

In Lublin, Globocnik surrounded himself with a number of his fellow Austrians, SS-Officers like Herman Julius Höfle, born in Salzburg on June 19, 1911. Höfle became Gobocnik's deputy in *Aktion Reinhardt*, responsible for personnel and the organization of Jewish deportations, the extermination camps and the re-utilisation of the victims' possessions and valuables. Höfle was later to play a significant role in mass deportation *Aktionen* in Warsaw and Białystok.

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<sup>5</sup> J. Poprzeczny, *Hitler's Man in the East—Odilo Globocnik*. McFarland, Jefferson, 2004, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution...*, op. cit., p. 262.

<sup>7</sup> J. Poprzeczny, *Hitler's Man ...*, op. cit., p. 76.

Ernst Lerch from Klagenfurt became Globocnik's closest confidante and adjutant. Georg Michalsen, a Silesian from Oppeln, was another adjutant and he, too, participated with Höfle in the deportation of Jews from the ghettos in Warsaw and Białystok. Another early member of this group was Amon Göth, who cleared the Tarnów, Kraków and Zamość ghettos, and later became the notorious commander of Płaszów *Arbeitslager* in Krakau.<sup>8</sup>

The headquarters of *Aktion Reinhardt* was located in the *Julius Schreck Kaserne* at *Litauer Strasse 11*, in a former Polish school close to the city centre in Lublin, where Höfle not only worked but lived in a small apartment. Also located in Lublin were the buildings in which the belongings and valuables seized from the Jews were stored: the former Catholic Action (*Katolische Aktion*) building on *Chopin Strasse*, and in pre-war aircraft hangers on the Old Airfield (*Alter Flugplatz*) on the south-eastern outskirts of Lublin.<sup>9</sup>

The most notorious and fearsome member of *Aktion Reinhardt* was *SS-Obersturmführer/Kriminalinspektor* Christian Wirth, the first commandant of Bełżec death camp and later Inspector of the *SS-Sonderkommandos* of *Aktion Reinhardt*. Before his transfer to Poland, Wirth had been a leading figure in 'Aktion T4,' the extermination of the mentally and physically disabled in six so-called 'euthanasia' killing centres in the Third Reich.

The role of the 'T4' euthanasia programme was fundamental to the execution of *Aktion Reinhardt*; the great majority of the staff in the death camps served their 'apprenticeships' in mass murder at the euthanasia institutes of Bernburg, Brandenburg, Grafeneck, Hadamar, Hartheim, Pirna—Sonnenstein where the victims had been murdered in gas chambers using CO gas from steel cylinders. The senior officers in both *Aktion T4* and *Aktion Reinhardt* were all police officers with equivalent *SS* ranks, and with Himmler's approval *SS-NCO*'s had emptied the gas chambers and cremated the bodies of the victims in portable furnaces. The *SS* -men performed

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<sup>8</sup> J. Poprzeczny, *Hitler's Man ...*, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> G. Reitlinger, *The Final Solution...*, op. cit., p. 314.

this work wearing civilian clothes because Himmler did not want the possibility to arise of the public becoming aware of the participation of the SS in the killing. During *Aktion Reinhardt* the SS authorities also supplemented the forces guarding the death camps, by employing former Red Army troops who had been captured or had surrendered to the Germans, mostly ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) from the Ukraine, the Baltic States and the Volga region of Russia who were trained in an SS camp in the village of Trawniki, 25 km south-east of Lublin. The majority were already anti-Semitic—equating Bolsheviks with Jews and were ideally suited to the persecution and extermination of Jews.

On November 1, 1941, construction of the first *Aktion Reinhardt* death camp began near the village of Bełżec, 125 kilometres south-east of Lublin, and Bełżec death camp became operational in mid-March 1942. Construction of the second camp, at Sobibór, between the town of Włodawa and the city of Chełm on the River Bug, north-east of Lublin, came into operation at the end of April 1942. The third and last of these camps was located near the village train station of Treblinka<sup>10</sup>, about 100 kilometres north-east of Warsaw. All three camps shared some common vital facts: they were all situated on or close to main railway lines for the speedy delivery of the victims to their deaths and they were located in sparsely—populated regions. The true fate of the Jews was initially hidden from them by announcing that they were being ‘transported to the east for resettlement and work’. The *Aktion Reinhardt* death camps were very similar in layout, each camp being an improvement on its predecessor, and the ‘conveyor-belt’ extermination process developed at Bełżec by Christian Wirth was implemented, improved, and refined at the other two camps.

The personnel assigned to *Aktion Reinhardt* came from a number of sources, SS and policemen who served under Globocnik’s command in the Lublin district, other SS men and civilians drafted into

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<sup>10</sup> The village of Treblinka was in fact situated further from the camp than village of Poniatowo which was the closest village to the extermination camp.

the *Aktion* and members of the T4 Euthanasia programme.<sup>11</sup> Yitzhak Arad quotes in his book *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka* that a total of 450 men were assigned to *Aktion Reinhardt* included 92 men from the T4 Euthanasia program;<sup>12</sup> more recent research by the authors has identified a slightly higher total of 98 men, of whom 39 are known to have served at Belzec at one time or another.

The Old Lublin Airfield was also used throughout *Aktion Reinhardt* as a mustering center for personnel transferred from the T4 'euthanasia' institutions in the *Reich*, to the extermination of the Jews in the *Generalgouvernement*. The SS-men, police and civilians thus transferred were usually met at the airfield by Wirth personally, on occasions accompanied by the death camp commandants Reichleitner from Sobibor and Stangl from Treblinka. According to witnesses, at these selections of personnel, all three wore *Schutzpolizei* uniforms and none of them mentioned anything about their future employment or where they would be based. At the airfield depot the newcomers received *Waffen-SS* uniforms, provided by the SS-Garrison Administration (*SS-Standortverwaltung*) in Lublin, but without the SS runes on the right-hand collar patches. The civilian employees from T4, especially the male psychiatric nurses among them, were sent first to the SS training camp at Trawniki for a two week basic military training course.<sup>13</sup>

The men selected in Lublin and distributed to the three *Aktion Reinhardt* death camps were augmented by a company-sized unit of about 120 black-uniformed auxiliary guards who had also been trained at the SS training camp in Trawniki—the so-called Trawniki-men (*Trawnikimänner*), usually referred to as 'Ukrainians' because they were the majority.

Those who spoke fluent German were appointed platoon or senior platoon leaders—*Zugführers* or *Oberzugführers*. The rest were known as *Wachmänner*. A select few of the *Trawnikimänner* were

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<sup>11</sup> Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka—The Aktion Reinhard Death Camps*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p. 17

<sup>13</sup> M. Tregenza, Private Report Altoting 1972-Michael Tregenza Lublin Collection

given other special duties, including the maintenance and operation of the engines that pumped their poisonous exhaust fumes into the gas chambers. Among them were the infamous Ivan Marchenko (Ivan the Terrible) and Nikolay Shalayev at the Treblinka death camp.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of *Aktion Reinhardt* approximately 1.6 million Jews were murdered in the death camps at Bełżec, Sobibor and Treblinka. Jewish property to the value of 178, 045, 960 *Reichsmark (RM)* was seized by the SS, which represents the minimum known amount. Through the theft of large amounts of cash and valuables by Globocnik, SS-men, policemen and guards, the true total will never be known.

The *Aktion Reinhardt* extermination operation ended officially in November 1943, and Himmler ordered Globocnik, who was by then the Higher SS and Police Leader for the Adriatic Coastal Region based in Trieste, to produce a detailed 'Balance Sheet' for the murder program. Globocnik produced the requested financial accounts and suggested that certain SS –officers should be suitably rewarded for their 'invaluable contribution' to *Aktion Reinhardt*. Globocnik received Himmler's thanks 'for his 'services to the German people', but made no mention of medals for any of Globocnik's subordinates.<sup>15</sup>

After completion of the extermination work in the *Generalgouvernement*, most of the men who had served in *Aktion Reinhardt* were transferred to northern Italy where their headquarters were in a disused rice mill in the San Sabba suburb of the Adriatic port of Trieste (*Risiera di San Sabba*). Divided into three SS-Lunits: R-I, R-II and R-III, they operated under the code designation 'Operation R' (*Einsatz R*) still under the command of Christian Wirth. Their primary task was the round-up and deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau of the surviving Italian Jews, and confiscation of their property and valuables. *Einsatz R* was simply a smaller version of *Aktion*

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<sup>14</sup> Y. Arad, *Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka—The Aktion Reinhard Death Camps*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1987, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 375.

*Reinhardt*. Additionally, Italian-Jewish mental patients were removed from their hospitals and sent to the T4 'euthanasia' institution at *Schloss Hartheim* in Austria for gassing. The units not engaged in these operations were assigned to security and anti-partisan patrols on the Istrian peninsula.

Wirth turned San Sabba into an interrogation and execution center where not only Jews but also Italian and Yugoslav partisans were tortured, beaten to death, or simply shot and their bodies cremated in a specially installed furnace in the courtyard.<sup>16</sup> The human ashes were dumped in the Adriatic Sea. There is also evidence that a gas-van was used in San Sabba.

The key members of *Aktion Reinhardt*, mostly escaped justice, Globocnik and Höfle both committed suicide, whilst Wirth and Reichleitner (the second commandant of Sobibór death camp) were killed by partisans in northern Italy in 1944. Both Christian Wirth and Franz Reichleitner's graves can be found at the German Military Cemetery in Costermano, near Lake Garda, in Italy.

Amon Göth was tried and sentenced to death for crimes committed in the Płaszów concentration camp (today a suburb of Kraków). He was executed in the former Plaszow Camp during September, 1946. Dr. Irmfried Eberl, the first Commandant of Treblinka death camp committed suicide in a West German prison in 1948, while awaiting trial. Only Franz Stangl<sup>17</sup> (the first Commandant of Sobibór and second Commandant of Treblinka) and Kurt Franz (the last Commandant of Treblinka) were brought to trial. Both were found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment. Gottlieb Hering the second Commandant of Bełżec death camp and Commandant of Poniatowa Jewish Labor camp died on October 9, 1945, in unknown circumstances in the waiting room at the *Katherinen* Hospital in Stetten im Remstal, Württemberg, Germany.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., op. cit., p. 399.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that many of the key members in the death camps' staffing in the three death camps were of Austrian nationality! Eberl was Austrian as well as Reichleitner, Stangl, Wagner, Vallaster etc.

As for members of the SS-Garrisons at the three death camps, a number of major figures like Karl Frenzel, from Sobibor and Heinrich Arthur Matthes, August Miete and Willy Mentz, Kurt Franz from Treblinka, received life sentences, while many others received prison terms of less than ten years, but the vast majority of the SS men and Ukrainians who served within the framework of *Aktion Reinhardt* were never brought to justice.

Only Josef Oberhauser was found guilty of war crimes at the Bełżec trial in Munich during the 1960s. All the other seven former SS men who served at Bełżec were examined by magistrates, but were not sent for trial and were released. Those that had served in the Sobibor death camp were re-arrested and put on trial in Hagen in 1965. These included Werner Dubois, Erich Fuchs, Robert Juhrs, Heinrich Unverhau, and Ernst Zierke.





## Chapter II

# The Labor Camps in the Belzec Area

The village of Belżec, in South Eastern Poland, first appeared in records during the Middle Ages and show the village as a settlement of animal breeders. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the Lipski family, proprietors of Belżec, endeavoured to acquire a municipal charter, but this attempt failed because of the proximity of major towns such as Tomaszow Lubelski and Florianow, now re-named Narol.<sup>18</sup>

Two hundred years later in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Belżec lay on the border between Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland, with a railway border crossing to that part of Poland under the Tsarist Russian occupation. The location ensured business flourished, and this attracted an influx of Jewish settlers; just prior to the First World War over one hundred Jewish families made a living here on cross-border trade. Most of the Jewish settlers came from Rawa Ruska and Jaroslaw. Jewish culture flourished in Belżec; it had its own house of prayer and a traditional elementary school—a cheder.<sup>19</sup>

During the First World War Belżec was occupied by Austrian troops and a part of the village was burnt down by Russian soldiers as a reprisal for the murder of a Russian officer by locals. During 1915, Belżec was liberated from Austrian occupation and six years later the village was incorporated into the new Republic of Poland.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the inter-war period the Belżec community consisted of three distinct groups: Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. In the late 1930's, the Poles made up 75% of the population, the Ukrainians 17%, and the Jews circa 8%.

Jews formed a small and hermetically-sealed group. They lived throughout the whole village, although the main cluster was located

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<sup>18</sup> R. Kuwalek, *From Lublin to Belzec*, Ad Rem 2006 P.29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.,op cit, p. 29.

<sup>20</sup> M. Tregenza, *Belzec—The Unknown Death Camp of the Holocaust* (rev.2006) Originally published Fritz Bauer Institut Jahrbuch 2000. P.3.

in the center of Bełżec. Here was a wooden Jewish Synagogue, a red brick bath-house, and a religious school (cheder) for Jewish children. They belonged to the religious commune in Lubycz Royal and Narol.

Their lives were consumed with the struggles of trade and transporting goods and people. The more well-known members of the Jewish community were Hejna, Helman, Strula, Fenkl, and the Dykier brothers, one of whom owned a store in the west side of the village, and the other called Lejb Dykier who also owned a store near the church. Nechem Muller owned the grocery store and Nashko Plewer was another shopkeeper in the west side of Bełżec village. There was also Kessler the miller and Isaac Klahr the egg dealer. The Jew Essig ran a small plant near the railway station. Also near the station there was a shop and commercial brokerage run by Berk. A second tavern was located on the left side of the main road to Tomaszow, behind the river. This was also managed by another of the Dykier's brothers, Judko. Other shopkeepers in the village were M. and R. Muller, Gabel, M. Schiffenbauer, and Racymor.

After drawing a border near the village in early 1940, most of the Jewish population went to the Soviet Union. The remaining few including Moshe Helman, was one of the Jews who did not cross the border.<sup>21</sup>

The Jewish population declined during the inter-war years. On September 13, 1939, the German Army occupied the village, and a number of the Poles and Ukrainians registered as *Volksdeutsche*—ethnic Germans, and some volunteered for war work in the Reich. History repeated itself when Bełżec once again became a border post, this time between the *General Gouvernement* and the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup>

From the end of May, 1940, until August, 1940, the Germans established a number of labor camps in and around the village of

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<sup>21</sup> Andrzej Urbanski, *Belzec Through the Happening*, Shalom Foundation in Warsaw.

<sup>22</sup> M. Tregenza, *Belzec—The Unknown Death Camp of the Holocaust* (rev.2006) Originally published Fritz Bauer Institut Jahrbuch 2000.

Bełżec. These housed workers building, the so-called ‘Otto Line,’ a series of fortifications along the border with the Soviet Union. The Germans forced Jews from Lublin, Radom, and Warsaw districts to slave on this project, and Gypsies from the Reich and other parts of Poland were also used. The Jews were housed at three sites within Bełżec: The Manor which housed 1,000 people; Kessler’s Mill which housed 500 people (The Kessler Mill was owned by a Jewish family, which left Bełżec with the Red Army in the autumn of 1939); and the Locomotive Sheds, which housed 1,500 people. The Locomotive shed and adjacent water tower were built by the Austrians during 1915-1916.

Outside Bełżec village, other workers were housed in Cieszanow in two barracks and Plaszow—not to be confused with the notorious Plaszow *Arbeitslager* in Krakow—in two houses and in Lipsko near Narol.<sup>23</sup>

The labor camps were established in abandoned synagogues, warehouses, or barns; a total of some thirty-five camps were created with over 10,000 workers employed on building fortifications, roads, and regulating rivers.

The commander of the labor camps complex was *SS-Sturm-bannführer* Hermann Dolp, who had also been the commandant of the Lipowa Street Camp in Lublin, and during 1941, after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, had served in the *SS Strongpoints* in the East construction programme based in Minsk.<sup>24</sup>

Hermann Dolp was born on September 12, 1889, in Turkheim, Bavaria. After service in the First World War, he joined one of the many right-wing para-military *Freikorps* units active in Bavaria, and he became one of the initial *SA* street fighters loyal to the cause of Adolf Hitler and National Socialists ideals. He served time in prison for beating up political opponents. In November, 1923, he took part in the abortive Beer Hall Putsch, in Munich.

Dolp joined the National Socialist Party during 1928, and a year later, in October 1929, joined the *SS* as an unpaid *Untersturmführer*.

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<sup>23</sup> Report *Judenlager an der Grenze*—dated 24 September 1940—YVA Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup> National Archives (NA) Kew, HW16/32.

His SS number was 1293. In September, 1930, he was promoted to the rank of *SS-Standartenführer*, commanding Adolf Hitler's protection squad in Munich. In late 1933, he was sent to assist with the construction and development of Dachau Concentration Camp, where he remained through the summer of 1934. From January 1935 onward, he served in the SS Headquarters in Berlin, and in August, 1939, he was sent to Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp near Berlin as its garrison commander.

Hermann Dolp was married and the father of four children. He was a good organizer, although not known for his intellect. He developed a weakness for alcohol, which he consumed in great quantities.

After the German occupation of Poland in September 1939, Dolp was given command of local ethnic German para-military units and then headed the *Gestapo* in Kalisz, in the *Warthegau*. It was here that his drinking got him into serious trouble. On November 1, 1939, he was caught trying to rape a young Polish woman while drunk. The woman happened to be the girlfriend of another German official. The case was investigated on the order of the Inspector of Concentration Camps, Theodor Eicke, and Hermann Dolp was arrested on January 9, 1940.

He was tried before an SS court on February 4, 1940, where he was found guilty and demoted in rank. He was demoted to the rank of *SS-Sturmabführer* and forbidden from drinking alcohol for two years. On February 8, 1940, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler wrote to Dolp, warning him that any breach of this alcohol ban, would result in him being drummed out of the SS.

By mid-February 1940, Hermann Dolp was transferred to the command of Odilo Globocnik, the *SS- und Polizeiführer* Lublin, and one of Dolp's first tasks was to accompany a march of Jewish forced laborers to work in the city of Biala Podlaska. During this march hundreds of Jews died. Globocnik then placed Dolp in charge of establishing a labor camp on Lipowa Street in Lublin.

In the late spring of 1940, Globocnik posted Dolp to supervise the construction of fortifications, the so-called 'Otto Line' along the

frontier border with the Soviet-occupied part of Poland. Dolp set up a number of labor camps in the village of Bełżec and its surrounding area. Hermann Dolp was keen to redeem his reputation, and he threw himself into this task with zeal; he saw that his orders were carried out ruthlessly. At Bełżec he was assisted by his deputy, *SS-Hauptscharführer* Franz Bartetzko, who later went on to manage the Jewish Forced Labor camp at Trawniki from the spring of 1942, and later on he served as a member of the SS administration at the Jewish Labor Camp at Budzyn.<sup>25</sup>

Dolp was infamous for his cruelty and sadism towards the prisoners. He was also well-known for his corrupt conduct. Prisoners who were assigned to produce clothing and shoes in the workshops found their wares sold by Dolp on the black market.

Following the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, Odilo Globocnik sent Hermann Dolp to act as his representative to Minsk and Mogilew, working on the construction of SS and Police bases. Globocnik had been appointed by Heinrich Himmler on July 17, 1941, as his Plenipotentiary for the Construction of SS and Police bases in the newly occupied Eastern areas of the Soviet Union. Dolp remained in the Soviet Union until May 1942, when he was posted to Norway. Dolp became the commandant of a Prisoner of War Camp at Osen-Elsfjrd, and he was also in charge of various forced labor camps.

From August, 1943, until February, 1944, he was again posted to the SS Headquarters in Berlin, when he was subsequently appointed to become a battalion commander of the Latvian 19<sup>th</sup> *Waffen-SS Grenadier* Division. On June 21, 1944, he was promoted to the rank of *SS-Obersturmbannführer*. Hermann Dolp was reported missing in action in Rumania during late 1944; his body was never recovered.

Another more famous SS officer, Oskar Dirlewanger, was the commander of the notorious '*SS-Sonderkommando Dirlewanger*,' which was made up of petty criminals and cut-throats. They were responsible for the orgy of killing the population during the Warsaw uprising in 1944. Prior to this, Dirlewanger was the commander

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<sup>25</sup> Helge Grabitz & Wolfgang Scheffler, *Letzte Spuren*, Hentrich Edition 1993, p.211.

of a Jewish Labor camp at Dzikow, one of the camps in the Bełżec area.<sup>26</sup>

Oskar Dirlwanger was born on September 26, 1895, in Würzburg. During the First World War, he reached the rank of lieutenant and won the Iron Cross. Between 1919 and 1921, he was involved in the suppression of communist uprisings in the Ruhr and Saxony. He also served in the *Freikorps* units in Upper Silesia. In 1922, he obtained a degree in political science, and a year later he joined the Nazi Party. He ran a knit-wear factory in Erfurt for a few years before becoming an SA Leader in Esslingen in 1932. After serving a two year sentence in 1934 for molesting a minor, Dirlwanger joined the Condor Legion in 1937, fighting for Franco in the Spanish Civil War.

By 1939, he had risen to the rank of *SS-Obersturmführer* in the *Waffen-SS*, and a year later, in September, 1940, he initiated with Gottlieb Berger, the head of the *SS-Recruitment Department*—the creation of a special *SS* detachment of convicted criminals, murderers, and convicted poachers. This detachment known as *SS-Sonderkommando Dirlwanger* provoked revulsion in some *SS* circles by its cruel and barbarous behavior during its role in combating partisans and Jews in Poland and White Russia.

Oskar Dirlwanger served for a time in the Lublin district supervising the building of defence fortifications along the River Bug at Bełżec. Dirlwanger was the commandant of a Jewish Labor Camp located in Dzikow Stary.

Odilo Globocnik, the *SS- und Polizeiführer Lublin*, recommended Dirlwanger for promotion on August 5, 1941, for his activities in this field of work. However, an investigation into Dirlwanger's activities was launched in August 1942, and its findings submitted to an *SS* court, but on Heinrich Himmler's orders, no action was taken against Dirlwanger.

During 1943, Oskar Dirlwanger was decorated with the German Cross of Gold and a year later was promoted to the rank of *SS-Standartenführer* in the *Waffen-SS*. His unit was active in the

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<sup>26</sup> Oskar Dirlwanger—Personal File—Letter from Globocnik dated 5 August 1941—Yad Vashem Archive, File YVA o.68 569.

suppression of the Polish Home Army uprising in Warsaw, which commenced in August, 1944.

By August 5, 1944, Oskar Dirlewanger had 16 officers and 865 troops in Warsaw, and while the fighting was in progress, his forces were expanded by another 2,500 troops, of which 1,900 came from the SS Prison Camp at Matzkau, near Danzig. On August 5, 1944, Dirlewanger's SS barbarians advanced about 1,000 yards, in the Wola district of Warsaw. In every single street in Wola recaptured by the Germans, far behind the frontline, the residents were ordered to leave their homes, induced by promises of evacuation. As soon as large groups of civilians assembled on the streets, they were not taken to evacuation points, but were herded together in cemeteries, gardens, back yards, factory forecourts, or squares. Soldiers then fired machine-gun bursts into the human mass, until there were no further signs of movement. On that day no one was spared—everyone perished, innocents, old men, women and children, as well as members of the Polish Home Army. The soldiers piled the corpses in large heaps, poured petrol over them and set them on fire.

Hospitals in the Wola and Ochota areas suffered the worst of all that day. The 'good fellows,' as Heinrich Himmler, *RFSS*, called them, with Oskar Dirlewanger at their head, stormed into the wards, shot the sick and wounded where they lay. Nurses, nuns, helpers, and doctors, suffered the same fate. At the end of the Warsaw uprising Dirlewanger's forces had only 648 men left.

After the Warsaw uprising had been crushed, the *Sonderkommando Dirlewanger* saw further action in the Slovak national uprising in October 1944, where they again acted with their customary brutality. In May 1945, Dirlewanger's unit was taken into Soviet captivity, but Dirlewanger fled to the west and was arrested in Altshausen by the French Occupation Forces. Dirlewanger died on June 7, 1945, after being recognized by Polish Prisoners of War and beaten so hard, he died of a fractured skull.

The working conditions in the labor camps were truly awful: the workers were beaten and tortured, and were forced to perform heavy labor on starvation rations. Adam Czerniakow, the Chairman



of the *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) in the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote about the Belżec labor camp conditions several times in his diary. His entry on 29, August 1940, noted as follows:

Word from the Belżec camp, poor food etc. I arranged for two conferences, one with participation of Neustadt. I authorised the *Obmann* (Chairman) from Zamość to engage doctors at our expense for Belżec. Tomorrow I will try to obtain a loan for the camp.<sup>27</sup>

On September 2, 1940, he wrote again:

I received a pass for Furstenburg and Faust who are going to Tomaszow and perhaps to Belzec with Zabłudowski. I am sending some blankets, shirts, bowls, cups, and spoons etc. The news from the camps is dismal.<sup>28</sup>

Another entry in his diary, recorded on September 3, 1940, stated that:

Zabłudowski, Faust, and Furstenburg left for Lublin with the gifts for the workers including 10,000 zlotys for the camp. Lambrecht made a demand for twenty doctors for the camp.<sup>29</sup>

Dr Janusz Peter who directed the hospital in nearby Tomaszow Lubelski recalled the conditions in one of the labor camps:

Less than two weeks after the founding of the camp, the workers were sleeping for the most part on boards because the straw had to be thrown out for the reason that the suffers from diarrhea befouled it to such an extent that it is only fit for burning. The befouling of the straw is understandable when taking into account the fact that Dolp forbade the Jews to go outside at night to relieve themselves.

The floor was dirty, the air insufferable, and the walls smeared with filth, because, although those in charge of keeping order decreed that one of the boards should be taken out to make it easier to relieve oneself outside the barracks, the overworked people were in no condition to get to the hole past their comrades, who lay stretched out

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<sup>27</sup> Adam Czerniakow: *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow*—Editors Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron and Josef Kermisz, Ivan R Dee, Chicago 1999, p.191.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p.193 The three individuals, Benjamin Zabłudowski, Boleslaw Faust, an official from ORT and Izydor Furstenburg, a member of the Jewish Order Service.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., op cit, p.193.

like shot animals, pressed together like herrings in a crate. After a month of forced labor the Jews were 'working spectres in rags.'<sup>30</sup>

Though the labor camps were controlled by the SS, the supply of food and clothes and the administration were managed by the Lublin *Judenrat*. In Bełżec the Germans established a so-called Jewish *Gremium* that was responsible for the camps organization. All costs connected with the existence of the prisoners were paid by the *Judenrat* of the towns from where the prisoners came. It was the *Gremium* who decided the allocation of food to the workers. After August 1940, the *Gremium* was re-named the 'Central Camps Council' and was led by Leon Zylberajch from Lublin.

The labor camps in Bełżec and those located in the area were closed down in October, 1940, and this 'Eastern Rampart' was only some 40 kilometres in length by 2.5 metres deep and 7.5 meters wide between Bełżec and Dzikow Stary village. Some of the Jewish workers were released prior to the final liquidation of the labor camps, because they were unfit for work; the last transport of workers released went to Hrubieszow in late October, 1940.

No account of these terrible working conditions in the Bełżec labor camps is complete without mentioning the fate of the Gypsies who were deported from the Reich and were incarcerated on a farm at Bełżec Manor. As with the Jews, the Gypsies were also employed in digging fortifications on starvation rations and many succumbed to illnesses such as typhus and dysentery.

One of these Gypsies, Martha W.—a Sinti woman born in Kiel, Germany in 1921—was deported to Bełżec together with her two children, her mother, and her brother. After the war she recounted her story in an interview with Karin Guth, which is incredibly moving and heart-rending:

In May, I think it was 16 May 1940, they came for us and brought us to the *Fruchtschuppen* (Fruit Warehouse) in the harbour of Hamburg. My memory is not that good anymore. I only know that a lot

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Kuwalek, *Death Camp in Belzec*, Panstwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, Lublin 2016, p.37.

of people were in the warehouse. It was like being in an ant-hill, so many people were running around.

We were registered and those above the age of fourteen received a number on the arm; this was not tattooed, as was later the case in Auschwitz, but stamped in ink. The number faded after a few days. I cannot remember how many days we were in the warehouse. Not many, perhaps three days. Quite nearby, only some steps away, we were ordered to enter goods wagons at the *Hannoverscher* Station.

There was an awful confusion, there being hundreds of people. We were told we were being transported to Poland, where we would receive a nice little house. And they told me that my father was already there, but we were deceived.

When we arrived at our destination, SS surrounded the train. They were there at our arrival and drove us out of the wagons. Policeman had accompanied us, two to a wagon (probably within the brakemen's cabin at the rear of some wagons).

We naturally did not travel without a guard. They knew we would have otherwise simply left the train and escaped. We would have done this had we had the chance. The policemen who had escorted us appeared thoroughly sheepish when they saw the SS and heard the SS commandant, a small man standing there with a whip in his hand, immediately shouting, 'If you don't obey the orders!' Oh dear, and the rest he said: He called us dogs, and we were treated as such. That was so awful. The policemen from Hamburg stood there speechless. I presume they hadn't known what we were to experience in Bełżec.

Then we had to walk to a large barn that was more a very large shed. There was only old straw on the floor. We had to enter this shed, and SS guards were posted outside. Today I no longer remember how long we were in that Bełżec camp. It was summer when we arrived. I think we were there for some weeks. It was awful there. One could not wash oneself, and there were no toilets. We were all crammed together.

We were immediately set to work in a work column. We had to dig tank ditches. There were many Jews in Bełżec, too. They were housed in the same shed as we were and also worked in the column. They usually only remained for some weeks and then they were transported from Bełżec to somewhere else.

The food was awful. A Roma was detailed to cook for us all. The SS shot crows and ravens and simply threw them into the large pot. The man didn't want to cook the birds without first plucking the feathers. They beat him so badly that the blood ran out the bottom of his trousers.

One day those of us with children had to line up because the children were to receive something special to eat. I had two children. My daughter was two and my son was one-year old. Each was given a bowl containing milk with bread crumbled in it. Or so it appeared.

This was especially for the children. Well, one child after the other died over the following days. There was such lamenting, lamenting and crying. Shortly after having eaten the children were unable to breathe anymore; they asphyxiated. My little boy died first. Someone woke me in the morning. I was woken because the child had kicked and the person wanted to cover him again. So I awoke and went to pick him up. He was already quite stiff.

I was devastated with grief, and I didn't know what to do. My cousin, the sister of Mrs B., lifted him and a big clot of pus came out of his throat. All the children experienced this. My two year old daughter died in the same way the next day. They had been poisoned.

One day we had to enter cattle wagons again, in Bełżec. There was just a bare floor. There were no windows, only air slits, high up. There were no toilet facilities. We had to enter that train, not knowing what to expect. Nobody told us anything.

We were taken to Krychow. We travelled through the night in this cattle wagon. When we arrived at the station, horse-drawn vehicles awaited us that took us to the camp. It was a former Polish prison, far away from the station. We were guarded by men wearing a black uniform. They were *Volksdeutsche*. These *Volksdeutsche* and SS were everywhere.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Martha W. Interview with Karin Guth interview 2005 [www.Deathcamps.org](http://www.Deathcamps.org).