

~~Selection~~
 would thin out their ranks to make room for new, stronger workers. Men and women laborers were stationed in separate quarters of the camps.

Those sent left were marched directly to the gas chambers, where men on duty stood ready and waiting.

At the other four death camps, the entire trainloads went straight to their deaths. If the human cargo numbered more than a death camp's equipment could handle at one time, the first victims were herded out to the gas chambers while the others were locked in either the cattle cars or crude sheds to await their turn.

Auschwitz was the largest camp of all. It was intended to handle not only Jews in the Polish ghettos but also those deported from all over Europe. The other five camps were mainly designed for Jews from the Polish ghettos.

NAZIS TRICK JEWS INTO GAS CHAMBERS

Most of the death camp victims walked willingly into the gas chambers simply because they had no idea they were about to die. Nazi trickery had deceived them from the time they boarded the cattle trains to the moment the gas chamber doors slammed behind them.

The Nazi killing operation had one priority: efficiency. The plan was to kill as many people in as short a time as possible with no resistance or delay. Consequently, the Nazis bent over backward to keep their victims calm and unaware of their true fate.

Their big game began with deportation to the death camps. Telling Jews they were to be "resettled in the East for labor," the SS passed out work permits, reminded all to bring along tools and work clothing, and suggested that money be exchanged for foreign currency before travel to save the time and trouble of doing it

later in their new homes.

Many Jews who willingly boarded Eichmann's trains remembered the postcards that they had received from relatives who had gone before them. Their cards had reassured, "We are well. Everything is fine here. We have food and work." Little did the new travelers know that the cards had been written at gunpoint.

The SS also used food as bait to board the trains. To the starving Jews in the Polish ghettos, they offered bread and jelly to eat along the way. To those whose hunger was unbearable, that alone was enough inspiration to go.

Upon arrival at the camp, those too ill or too weak to walk were told to board waiting Red Cross trucks that would take them to a rest camp. In reality, the trucks headed straightaway to the gas chambers. At Auschwitz, the sign at the main gate, WORK MEANS FREEDOM, was a big lie, too. And when families being separated during selection began to panic, the guards eased their fears by promising they would be reunited after the "baths and delousing."

Baths? Delousing? After days on end without soap and water in the trains and the never-ending torment of body lice from the infested railroad cars, nothing could have sounded better to the weary travelers.

To keep their victims' spirits up, SS chiefs in some of the camps ordered the camp orchestra, often made up of the finest Jewish musicians in Europe, to play cheerful music to accompany the crowds on their walk to the "baths."

Sure enough, the walkers soon stopped before a large modern-looking building on which a sign reading BATHS was posted. The building really housed both the gas chamber and the crematoria.

The game went on and on. Once inside, Jews were sometimes given towels and soap. They were told to tie their shoes together, to arrange their clothing neatly, and to remember the spot where their belongings were located in order to avoid confusion in finding them after bathing.

When the doors of the gas chambers swung open, a look upward usually calmed the nervous Jews' fears. Showerheads—really gas jets—completed the picture of the Nazi trickery.

It was not until the doors slammed shut and the lights blinked out that the big game was over. Mad scrambling and dreadful screaming always began when the trapped Jews detected the first traces of gas. But the tumult died down within ten minutes or so. Scanning the scene within from an outside peephole, the SS on duty then gave a signal for the giant exhaust fans to start up. The fans were part of the game, too. They pulled out the remaining telltale fumes to clear the air for the next incoming group.

Wearing gas masks, men on duty dragged the bodies to waiting elevators that carried the corpses to the crematoria on the lower level. But before the bodies were fed into the furnaces, other workers along the death assembly-line searched the victims' mouths and yanked out gold teeth and fillings. This gold would later be melted down and reshaped into bars to enrich the Reichsbank.

Called Sonderkommando, the camp prisoners forced to do all this dirty work in the crematoria and gas chambers were usually Poles or Jews. After three or four months of such duty, they too were put to death, for the Nazis wanted no living witnesses to their crimes.

Nazi lies, combined with modern death machinery, worked all too well. At Auschwitz, where four giant-sized chambers were designed to hold 2,000 people at once, the camp commander, Rudolf Hess, had also hit upon a new and deadly gas called Zyklon B. Normally used as a strong disinfectant, Zyklon B, a bluish crystalline substance, produced a highly toxic gas strong enough to snuff out 2,000 lives in five or six minutes. To keep up with the disposal of so many bodies, Hess ordered the four crematoria to operate round the clock.

Utilizing such efficiency, Auschwitz began to "process" 12,000 Jews every single day. This

meant that 12,000 human beings were killed, their bodies reduced to ashes, and their belongings (shoes, eyeglasses, tools, clothing, jewelry, money, toys, suitcases, baby carriages) all sorted and shipped to collection centers within twenty-four hours!

Discussion How does their trickery make the
Question: Nazis seem even more evil?

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