

TIMELINE

RUDOLF HÖSS

(25 Nov 1900 - 16 Apr 1947)

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(2010)

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Note: Rudolf Höss must not be confused with Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, and one of the first group of Nuremberg defendants.

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25 Nov 1900 - Rudolf Höss born in Baden-Baden, Germany. When he was six or seven years old, the Höss family moved to Mannheim, where Höss was educated.

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1922 - Höss Joins the Nazi Party.

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1934 - Höss joins the SS.

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01 May 1940 - Höss is the first Commandant of Auschwitz where it is estimated that more than a million people were murdered.

Jun 1941 - According to Höss' later trial testimony, he was summoned to Berlin for a meeting with Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler "to receive personal orders." Himmler told Höss that Hitler had given the order for the physical extermination of Europe's Jews. Himmler had selected Auschwitz for this purpose, he said, "on account of its easy access by rail and also because the extensive site offered space for measures ensuring isolation." Himmler told Höss that he would be receiving all operational orders from Adolf Eichmann. Himmler described the project as a "secret Reich matter", meaning that "no one was allowed to speak about these matters with any person and that everyone promised upon his life to keep the utmost secrecy."

1941 - After visiting Treblinka extermination camp to study its methods of human extermination, Höss tested and perfected the techniques of mass killing that made Auschwitz the most efficiently murderous instrument of the Final Solution.

Later, Höss explained how 10,000 people were exterminated in one 24-hour period:

"Technically [it] wasn't so hard – it would not have been hard to exterminate even greater numbers... The killing itself took the least time. You could dispose of 2,000 head in half an hour, but it was the burning that took all the time. The killing was easy; you didn't even need guards to drive them into the chambers; they just went in expecting to take showers and, instead of water, we turned on poison gas. The whole thing went very quickly."

1942 - Höss later testified that Himmler visited Auschwitz in 1942, and "watched in detail one processing from beginning to end." Höss also said that Eichmann frequently visited the camp and observed its operations.

Jul 1942 - According to Höss, Heinrich Himmler inspected the Gypsy camp on his visit in July 1942. Höss wrote in his autobiography, *"Death Dealer"*, *"Himmler inspected everything thoroughly. He saw the over-crowded barracks, the inadequate hygienic conditions, the overflowing infirmaries and the sick in the isolation war... Himmler saw everything in detail, as it really was. Then he ordered me to gas them."*

01 Dec 1943 - Arthur Liebehenschel becomes the new Commandant of Auschwitz One, the main camp, for five months. He replaced Höss, who was sent to Oranienburg to take over Liebehenschel's former job in the WVHA (the Economic office which controlled the administration of the concentration camps). Höss had been the Commandant of all three Auschwitz camps (Auschwitz One, Birkenau and Monowitz); however, Liebehenschel was only appointed as the Commandant of the Auschwitz I camp.

08 May 1944 - Höss returns to Auschwitz to supervise the operation, known as *Aktion Höss*, by which 430,000 Hungarian Jews were transported to the camp and killed during 56 days between May and July 1944. Even Höss' industrial killing factory could not handle the huge number of victims' corpses, and the camp staff had to dispose of thousands of bodies by incinerating them in open pits.

11 Mar 1946 - Höss is captured after a nine months' search. he is described as the man who was "the greatest individual killer in the history of the world."

25 May 1946 - Höss is handed over to the Polish authorities, and the Supreme National Tribunal in Poland tries and convicts him of murder. During his trial, when accused of murdering three and a half million people, Höss replied, *"No. Only two and one half million - the rest died from disease and starvation."*

16 Apr 1947 - Höss is hanged (pictures below). The sentence was carried out on gallows that were specifically constructed for that purpose, immediately adjacent to the crematorium of the former Auschwitz concentration camp, and at the former location of the camp Gestapo.

The Execution of Rudolf Höss Wednesday, 16 Apr 1947





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