An entrance gate to Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp.
USHMM WS #03393, COURTESY OF LPPC/MSW
KRAKAU-PLASZOW MAIN CAMP

The Krakau-Plaszow (Polish: Kraków-Plaszów) camp became the major detention place for Jewish forced laborers in the Kraków district of the General Government and only in early 1944 was transformed into a concentration camp, which then existed for 12 months. Planning for the camp started in June–July 1942, as a consequence of the mass deportation from the Krakau ghetto to the Biełżec extermination camp, which lasted until June 4.

The staff of the SS and Police Leader (SSPF) in the Kraków district, Julian Scherner, started to erect a camp in the Plaszów suburb of Kraków in October 1942. The Plaszów train station had already served as a transit point for the deportations to Biełżec, and there was a small camp there for Jewish railway workers, the “Julag I” (Judenlager or Jews’ camp). The new camp, which several hundred ghetto inmates built, was situated nearby, partly on the site of two Jewish cemeteries. Until the spring of 1943, the camp area was approximately 10 hectares (25 acres); it was expanded to 81 hectares (200 acres) by September 1943.

The camp itself was divided into several sections, one for German personnel, including the commandant’s villa; one for the work facilities; and a section for male and another for female prisoners, each divided into separate accommodations for Jews and non-Jews. Some existing buildings were used for the camp administration, especially for SS housing. In addition, more than 100 new barracks were built in 1943. The several hundred forced laborers of the barracks construction (Barackenbau) unit worked under extremely harsh conditions, since the camp was to be erected at record speed.

Until January 1944, the camp was officially called the Jewish Forced Labor Camp of the SS and Police Leader in the Kraków District, Krakau-Plaszow (Jüdisches Zwangsarbeitslager des SS und Polizeiführer im Distrikt Krakau, Krakau-Plaszow). Scherner’s staff was responsible for building and running the camp. All leading camp personnel belonged to the SSPF office, such as the first acting camp commandant Horst Pilarczyk (until November 1942), about whom relatively little is known, and his successor Franz Josef Müller.
On February 11, 1943, Amon Göth took over for Müller. Göth, who transferred from the staff of the SSPF Lublin, had been involved in Aktion Reinhardt, the mass murder of Polish Jews. He served as camp commandant until September 13, 1944, and was replaced for some months by Philipp Grimm and then by Kurt Schuppke. Important camp administrators were Lagerführer Edmund Zdrojewski, Josef Grzimek, and the chief of the guard unit, Paul Raebel. The camp for Poles (built later) was led by Oberscharführer Landdorfer. Most of the guards were non-Germans, such as Ukrainian members of the Schutzmannschafts-Bataillon 206 and about 110 men who had served in the SSPF Lublin training camp in Trawniki, so-called Trawniki men, some of whom had served as guards in extermination camps. From the German perspective, these men were not considered to be reliable. The so-called Judischer Ordnungsdienst, auxiliaries transferred from the Kraków ghetto, kept order inside the camp.

On October 28, 1942, during the “Ghettoaktion” in Kraków, the Germans sent approximately 2,000 ghetto inmates to Plaszow instead of exterminating them. The next major change in the prisoner population occurred during the liquidation of the Krakau ghetto on March 13–14, 1943. Between 8,000 and 10,000 Jews were marched from the so-called ghetto B (for workers and their families) in Kraków to the camp. (In December 1942, Scherner had ordered that all Jewish workers from Kraków be concentrated in Plaszow.) In the spring of 1943, Plaszow, with its 10,000 prisoners, was one of the biggest forced labor camps in occupied Poland. The prisoner population grew even further with transports from other camps such as Rymanów in July 1943 and Tarnów on September 2, 1943. In September 1943, the Jewish workers in the Kraków district were increasingly concentrated in Plaszow. In May 1944, almost 6,000 Jews from “Greater Hungary,” who had been deported through Auschwitz, arrived. They stayed only for a few months, some to be deported back to Auschwitz, others to be transferred to Austria.

Up until the summer of 1943, almost all the prisoners were Jewish, but non-Jewish Poles were also interned in Plaszow as punishment for small offenses. They were put into separate barracks first; then a camp section was built for them in the second half of 1943. Apparently, this camp section also served as a work reeducation camp (Arbeitserziehungslager) for people whom the Nazis considered unreliable workers. Those Poles were usually imprisoned for three months, but this period could be extended. The Arbeitserziehungslager expanded from a capacity of 1,000 to approximately 6,000 prisoners. Almost 10,000 Poles were imprisoned there during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, among them hostages taken in Kraków to avoid any similar revolt. Most of those prisoners were released after a while. Some Gypsies were also kept in the Polish part of the camp.

In comparison to other camps, Plaszow’s inmate population included a comparatively high proportion of Jewish women and children. Among the thousands of Jews who came to Plaszow in March 1943, approximately 65 percent were men. The transports from Hungary consisted to a high degree of women. While most of the Jewish children under 14 in Poland were killed by the end of 1942, there were still some in the so-called Julag III until 1943 and in Plaszow until the spring of 1944. Female Jews had a lower chance of survival in
comparison to men, since most of the working facilities were meant for male prisoners.

Conditions in the forced labor camps for Jews in the General Government were generally inhumane but could vary according to camp and time. The survivors give a rather diverse picture of camp life. The food was totally insufficient, and a typhus epidemic in June–July 1943 took hundreds of lives. The working conditions varied. In the textile works, they were not nearly as bad as in the stone quarries, where male laborers were driven to total exhaustion.

The worst features of Plaszow were the mass executions and the random violence of the camp officers and guards. Beatings by guards, either spontaneous or as official acts of punishment, were an almost daily feature. Göth was infamous for individual murders. He randomly beat prisoners to death, shot them, or sent his two trained dogs to attack them. Frequently Göth had members of working detachments shot after they were apprehended smuggling food into the camp. Inmates tried to avoid any contact with Göth if possible, and they especially feared his murderous roll calls or the barrack searches. He was certainly not the only functionary to kill prisoners; however; some survivors claim that SS-Untersturmführer John behaved even worse. The foreign guards, most of them Ukrainians, were also infamous for their excessive violence.

The Plaszow camp functioned not only as a detention and forced labor site but also as an area for mass murder for both camp inmates and prisoners brought from outside to the camp area. Immediately after the March 13–14, 1943, Ghettoaktion in Kraków, the corpses of approximately 2,000 Jews were brought to the camp and interred in a mass grave. Jews later apprehended while hiding in Kraków were shot near the camp, behind the so-called swimming pool (Badeanstalt). Further, during the Lageraktionen from May to July 1943, at least 250 Jews were shot. The main targets were old and sick inmates who had been transferred from the camp hospital. In April 1943, 50 members of the Jewish police met that fate. Polish inmates were also sometimes killed, for example, for keeping contacts with the outside world. From June–July 1943 on, the perpetrators moved their activities to a fortification from World War I, which the inmates called Hujowa Górka; from mid-1944 on, at a hill called Lipowy Dolek. The Security Police and camp personnel such as Oberscharführer Albert Hujer also murdered Poles there, including priests, who had been arrested.8 These mass executions apparently started in September 1943; one of the biggest massacres took place on February 2, 1944, when 200 inmates from Kraków prison were killed. It has been calculated that approximately 2,000 non-Jewish Poles were shot near Plaszow; 2 out of 3 had been transferred from the Montelupic Security Police prison. According to Polish estimates, 3,000 to 4,000 prisoners were shot in the area surrounding the camp. By the end of 1944, there were at least 10 mass graves situated around the camp.

Resistance was much more difficult in the camp than in the ghetto. After escapes, Commandant Göth usually had about 10 prisoners shot for each who escaped. Nevertheless, people did escape. Mutual aid was more common. There were even organized assistance groups, such as the Zehnerschaft (The Ten), women who organized support for other inmates. In October 1943, a small underground group was formed by several Jewish Kapos, calling themselves the Jewish Fighting Organization. They were able to collect some weapons, but after the murder of their leader, Adam Stab, the resisters chose not to try an uprising but to wait to be evacuated to the West.

To a certain extent, Plaszow prisoners could rely on help from outside. The Jüdische Unterstutzungsstelle, a welfare organization that the Germans tolerated, could supply the inmates with some food and medical care. Stanislaw Dobrowolski, the head of the Kraków branch of the Council for Aid to Jews (Rada Pomocy Zydom, or Zegota), supported inmates, as did the famous pharmacist Tadeusz Pankiewicz;9 the Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, the Polish welfare organization, sent extra food to Polish prisoners, some of whom shared it with Jewish inmates.

The camp inmates, as well as some average Polish workers who were not imprisoned and could go home every evening, worked for several German firms, most of them for the Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke (German Equipment Works, DAW) of the SS, which supplied the SS with uniforms and repaired goods that had been taken from murdered Jews. The Austrian enterprise Madritsch, whose owner secretly supported his workers, made uniforms for the Wehrmacht. Some of the inmates even worked for a Nazi academic institution, the Deutsche Ostinstutut in Kraków.

Despite the SSPF’s order not to locate Jewish workers outside Plaszow, it had several subcamps.10 Efforts to bring the forced labor camps of the SSPF under supervision of the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps (IKL) in Oranienburg had been under way since early 1943. Apparently, in early September 1943, decisive negotiations were undertaken between the Higher-SS and Police Leader (HSSPF), the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), and the armaments inspectorate.11 In late October, the WVHA
decided to take over Plaszow as a concentration camp. That is obviously one of the reasons why no major massacre of all Jews took place in the camp, unlike during the Aktion Ermittlung in Lublin district on November 2–3, or in Lemberg-Janowska on November 19. The branches Jul II and III were dissolved around November 15, 1943, and their prisoners transferred to the main camp. Some skilled workers were sent to other forced labor camps in the General Government.

From January 10, 1944, the camp was officially called Konzentrationslager Krakau-Plaszow, but the actual changes were few. All orders now came from Oranienburg or from the SS-Wirtschaftschaft at the Higher-SS and Police Leader in Kraków. To a certain extent, Göth, who did not represent a typical concentration camp commandant, was now restricted in his actions, since he had to obey the general rules for camp management and was obliged to report everything of importance to Oranienburg. (Göth was finally arrested in September 1944 for corruption and other offenses.) After a while, an SS-Totenkopfverband (Death’s Head Unit), the Wachsturmbann Krakau, numbering approximately 600 men and women, took over guard duties. An SS camp doctor arrived, first Dr. Jäger, later Dr. Blance. Even a small group of German concentration camp inmates, who were to take over some functions in the camp, arrived in June 1944. But in general, Plaszow was never fully integrated into the standardized system of concentration camps because of the late date at which it was incorporated. The majority of inmates were still Jews, and there were few official prisoner-functionaries (Funktionshäftlinge). The exchange of prisoners with other concentration camps remained, before mid-1944, of minor importance. Instead, prisoners were still sent to other forced labor camps, such as when 2,000 Jews were sent to the Skarzycko-Kamienna camp in March 1944.

In early May 1944, Göth received the announcement that approximately 10,000 Jews from Hungary were to be transported to Plaszow. In order to make room, he prepared deportations to the Auschwitz extermination camp. On May 14, he ordered all children in the camp to be transferred to the “kindergarten,” which had been installed in March. This turned out to be a pretext for their deportation to Auschwitz on May 15, where they were killed.

At the same time, evacuations to Plaszow from other camps located farther east intensified. In April and June 1944, transports from the eastern Galician cities of Drohobycz and Borysław arrived; in July, prisoners from other camps in the Kraków district arrived.

In August–September 1944, the camp leadership started to erase the traces of its crimes. It is not clear whether this was organized within the framework of “Sonderkommando 1005,” the Gestapo’s program to destroy mass graves in Eastern Europe. A group of 170 Jews, who were kept isolated from the other inmates, was recruited to unearth the mass graves and burn the corpses. This horrible task took until mid-October. Nevertheless, during this period executions of Poles continued.

During the course of the Red Army summer offensive in June–July 1944, preparations were started to evacuate the camp. The biggest evacuation transport left Plaszow on August 6, deporting 7,500 to 8,000 Jewish inmates to Auschwitz. Somewhat later a train left for the Mauthausen concentration camp, from which the prisoners were transferred to its branches. Probably on August 7, 4,000 to 5,000 Jewish women from “Greater Hungary” were deported through Auschwitz to the Stutthof camp in the north of Poland.

On January 1, 1945, there were still 453 male and 183 female prisoners left in Krakau-Plaszow, together with 87 male guards. Right after the beginning of the Soviet winter offensive, on January 14, HSSPF Koppe gave the order to evacuate the remnants of the camp—according to official data, 623 inmates—to Auschwitz. Only 180 prisoners arrived in Auschwitz on January 17. Units of the Red Army reached the camp area in Kraków that same day.

Due to the lack of documentary evidence, only estimates are possible on the general number of prisoners in Krakau-Plaszow. The card index of prisoners was destroyed. Apparently, in the autumn of 1943, there were around 12,000 inmates; in July 1944, 17,000; in September 1944, for a short time up to 25,000. All in all, probably between 30,000 and 50,000 prisoners went through the camp, some only for days. Approximately half of the prisoners were non-Jews. Between 5,000 and 8,000 prisoners were killed there, not including those who were transported to the camp area to be shot immediately. Probably the majority of those Jews who were evacuated from Plaszow in 1944–1945 died during the final period of the war inside the Reich.

The crimes in Krakau-Plaszow were the subject of relatively few postwar trials, the most important of which dealt with Göth. He was sentenced to death and executed. At least one other German camp staff member and two Jewish Kapos were brought to court in Poland. West German prosecutors started to systematically investigate the crimes in Krakau-Plaszow only at the end of the 1950s. Two camp functionaries were brought to trial: the former camp commandant Müller and Karl-Heinz Bigell, an employee of the Madritsch enterprise. Several of the foreign guardsmen, who were captured by the Soviet secret police, were tried in the Soviet Union.

SOURCES There is no scholarly monograph on Krakau-Plaszow; two unpublished Hebrew dissertations were not available to the author: Reshef Ben-Tzion, “Mahan Plashov” (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1990); and Shlomi Barmor, “Mahan Plashov al reka’ ha-mediniyut ha-Natsit ba-’avodah kefyia shel Yehudim be-General Guvernman” (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1995). Several useful articles and booklets also exist: Aleksander Bieberstein, “Przyczynki do dziejów obozu w Krakowie-Plaszowie,” PL 1 (1977); Roman Kielkowski, “Obóz pracy przymusowej i koncentracyjny w Plaszowie,” PL 1 (1971); Magdalena Kunicka-Wyrzykowska, “Kalendarium obozu plaszowskiego 1942–1945,” BGKZ/PLwP 31 (1982): 52–86; Angelina Oster, “Im Schatten von Auschwitz: Das KZ Krakau-Plaszow—Geschichte und Erinnerung,” DAHe 19 (2003): 170–179; and a brochure by Tadeusz Wroński, Obóz w Plaszowie, miejsce masowej eksterminacji ludności żydowskiej, polskiej i innych narodowości w latach


5. Transfer rosters of SS-Ausbildungslager Trawniki to Krakau-Plaszów, no date, CAFSSRF.


11. See the conferences on Lublin camps on September 3 and 7, 1943, a protocol of the latter in Faschimus, pp. 459–460.


16. See the preliminary list of 1,852 prisoners: “Indeks imienni więźniów obozu w Plaszowie” (MSS, IPN, 1980).

17. Lublin District Court against Paul K. in 1948, who served in several concentration camps; see Elżbieta Kobierska-Imienny, Więźniowie obozu w Plaszowie” (MSS, IPN, 1980).

18. A camp member was acquitted in 1947 by LG Berlin.

19. Verdict District Court Berlin 3 P (K) Ks 2/72 re: Bigell, June 4, 1973, IHZ, Gb 06.111; Paul Raebel was tried for his crimes in eastern Galicia.

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5. Transfer rosters of SS-Ausbildungslager Trawniki to Krakau-Plaszów, no date, CAFSSRF.


11. See the conferences on Lublin camps on September 3 and 7, 1943, a protocol of the latter in Faschimus, pp. 459–460.


16. See the preliminary list of 1,852 prisoners: “Indeks imienni więźniów obozu w Plaszowie” (MSS, IPN, 1980).


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KABELWERK KRAKAU

Polish Jewish men and women were forced to work between July 1942 and September 1944 manufacturing cables for Kabelwerk Krakau. Kabelwerk in Krakau-Plaszow had been compulsorily acquired from the German electronics concern Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft (AEG) by the German military authorities in 1941 after the occupation of Poland.

The factory site, almost 120,000 square meters (143,500 square yards), about 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) to the southeast of Kraków, not far from the Krakow railway station, was the site for the manufacture of electrical and telegraph cables. In 1941, around 1,400 male and female Polish blue- and white-collar workers were employed there. Following the compulsory acquisition by the Rüstungsinspektion (Army Armaments Inspectorate) Krakau in September 1939, the cable factory, which was owned by the Polish Fabryka Kabli S.A., was placed under the trusteeship of Verwertungsgesellschaft für Montanindustrie GmbH (Montan), which in turn was controlled by the Army High Command (OKH). The Montan contracted with Reichswerke Hermann Göring and the AEG for the management of the operation. In July 1941, the AEG leased the Kabelwerk. It acquired the stock and raw materials and undertook “to directly or indirectly give preferential treatment to Wehrmacht contracts.”

Administratively, the Kabelwerk was controlled by Kabelwerk Krakau GmbH (KWK), which was established by the AEG in September 1941. In 1941, the AEG placed the 43-year-old senior engineer Ewald Böhme as factory manager. Böhme had been working in the Kabelwerk Oberseep (KWO) in Berlin-Oberschöneweide since 1925. KWO, the largest of the AEG cable factories, relocated its production orders and materials such as lead and copper to Kraków.

Kabelwerk Krakau produced field cables for the Wehrmacht and telephone cables for the Deutsche Post Ost. The product mix included deliveries to the AEG sales office in Kraków, which sold, among other things, switches and lighting systems produced by the Berlin AEG factories to the Wehrmacht, the “Ostbahn,” and the SS. It is most likely that Jews from the forced labor camp at Pustków were used in installing electrical and lighting systems for the AEG at the Waffen-SS troop training ground at Dębica. The AEG had been installing these systems since 1941 as part of a large contract. On not so grand a scale, the AEG Krakau also took over contracts from armaments firms such as the Heinkel aircraft factory at Mielec.

In April 1944, the former owner of the cable factory, the Polish company Fabryka Kabli S.A., stepped into the lease with the AEG. The Mährische Bank from the Czech town of Brno (Brünn) then claimed possession on the basis that since 1939 it had been the sole shareholder of the Fabryka Kabli S.A. The Mährische Bank was controlled by the Creditanstalt Bankverein AG from Vienna. The Deutsche Bank had been the largest shareholder since 1941 in this, the largest, Austrian bank.

In the middle of 1942, Böhme representing KWK negotiated with the Arbeitsamt Krakau on the use of Jewish laborers from the Kraków ghetto. It was intended that mostly women would be used in the cable factory, as there were no available men. The inmates were to go back and forth daily in groups from the ghetto to the cable factory. Initial security for the prisoners was to be provided by the cable factory’s security. The Jewish forced laborers were to work in a cable factory and a plastics factory and in checking field cables. They were to be fed the same amount of the factory’s soup as the Polish labor force.

Böhme also successfully negotiated that in exceptional cases he could decide whether to give the Jews consumer goods. The management used such means as pressure to reduce the high absentee rate in the Polish workforce, which in turn was the result of the German occupation policy that had resulted in a catastrophic food shortage in the General Government. In April 1942, more than 20 percent of the Polish workforce was missing either daily or for part of each day. The management demanded that the Arbeitsamt Krakau transfer individual Poles to the labor camps as a deterrent measure. In 1942–1943, the absentee rate was reduced to 2 percent, due to the distribution of food.

Böhme announced, however, at the end of August 1942, that the Jewish forced laborers “were not to receive any more special rations until otherwise stated. This included all goods which had been distributed.”

Oskar Schindler, who had business dealings with the Kabelwerk’s management, told of seven laborers from the Kabelwerk who were transferred to Krakau-Plaszow where they were hanged by the SS. According to Schindler, “Director Dihle stated that it had a visible increase in production.”

In addition to the use of Jewish women from the Kraków ghetto, it is likely that from the end of August 1943 a group of 96 male Jews from Wieliczka were deployed in the Kabelwerk. The men were accommodated in a “barracks-type” area in the Kraków ghetto. After the evacuation of “Ghetto A” on October 27 and 28, 1942, all Jewish forced laborers in the cable factory were transferred to the newly established forced labor camp at Plaszow. Following the final liquidation of the Kraków ghetto on March 13, 1943, the company’s management housed them in barracks on the factory grounds. As was the case with Schindler’s enamel factory, the Kabelwerk Krakau established a “firm camp” (Firmenlager).

A total of between 200 and 300 Jewish forced laborers were assigned to work for Kabelwerk, probably 50 percent male and 50 percent female. From the beginning of September 1942, they worked in three shifts. Among them was Leon tyra Opoczyńska who was 20 in 1941. She was assigned to work in the wire factory within the Kabelwerk. According to Opoczyńska, they were given substitute coffee in the morning, bread and soup for lunch, and bread in the evening. The Polish workers with whom she worked secretly gave her additional food.

Even though the forced labor and their accommodation on the factory grounds initially protected the Jewish prisoners
from deportation, it did not protect them from persecution. Opoczyńska stated that following a nervous breakdown, it was only the solidarity of her fellow prisoners that prevented her from being selected. “I was not taken away and shot,” said Opoczyńska, “because my fellow workers put part of their output down on me.”¹²

The AEG commenced the evacuation of the Kabelwerk at the beginning of August 1943 in the following order: unfinished products and raw materials such as cable wrapping, copper wires, or artificial silk were shifted to an AEG raw material depot to the east of Berlin and sold to the Berlin KWO.¹³ Food such as vegetables, which had been grown on the fields of Kabelwerk Krakau to feed the workers, was also removed. The production facilities including the wire factory, where many of the Jewish prisoners worked, was shut down. The AEG relocated the enamel wire factory to the Sudetenland. Other attempts to relocate machines were refused by the armaments authorities. Representatives of the Mährische Bank stated that “those machines which probably would be damaged during transport and whose reassembly would be uneconomic should remain [in the Kabelwerk].”¹⁴

Unlike Schindler’s case, the Jewish forced laborers in Kabelwerk were not evacuated. They were transferred to the forced labor camp at Plaszow, which in January 1944 had become a concentration camp. Opoczyńska, with many other female concentration camp prisoners from Plaszow, was deported to Auschwitz. When Auschwitz was evacuated, the SS transported her via the Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald concentration camps to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she was liberated by British soldiers in April 1945.¹⁵ She and more than half of the Jewish forced laborers at Kabelwerk Krakau survived the deportations.

**SOURCES** Some background information on the AEG project in Kraków may be found in Artur Eisenbach, Hitlerowska polityka zagłady Żydów (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1961). For the documentary record of Schindler’s business relations with the KWK, see Erika Rosenberg, ed., Ich, Oskar Schindler: Die persönlichen Aufzeichnungen; Briefe und Dokumente (Munich: Herbig, 2000). On the KWK and Oskar Schindler, see Ewald Böhme and Ulrich Dihle to Oskar Schindler April 27, 1944, LA-B, A Rep 227-06, Nr. 9.

**NOTES**

1. See Kabelwerk Krakau an Kabelfabrik AG, Bratislava of August 26, 1940, Betr.: Kündigung des Gestionsvertrages, as well as Bl. 124, Beschuss Kreisgericht Krakau, September 14, 1940, DTM, I.2.060 A, Nr. 00580, pp. 223–224.


5. See KWK an Arbeitsamt Krakau of May 19, 1942, Betr.: Säumige Gefolgschaftsmitglieder.


11. Opoczyńska estimates the numbers at 300 people. After 1945, the AEG stated there were 200. See Davies transcript, USHMMA, RG-02-070; as well as the letter from Max Stein to E. Katzenstein and the Claims Conference of April 21, 1960, Re: AEG and Telefunken, YVS [YVA], 400/1, Korrespondenz Telefunken (Akte Dr. Stein).

12. Davies transcript, USHMMA, RG-02-070.


15. Davies transcript, USHMMA, RG-02-070.

**MIELEC**

The town of Mielec lies about 120 kilometers (75 miles) east of Kraków and about the same distance to the southwest of Lublin. For a few weeks during the war, there was a Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp labor detail located in Mielec. The forced labor camp that was established after the occupation, as well as the subcamp that came later, was located at the site of the former aircraft factory at Mielec. This was a small-to medium-sized camp that only existed for a short time as a subcamp. As a result, only a few records remain. Prisoner statements, which form part of the documents in International Tracing Services (ITS) documents, suggest that at first a forced labor camp was established on March 7–9, 1942, for male Jewish prisoners in this part of the General Government.¹ The first mention of female Jewish prisoners in the Mielec forced labor camp is dated from March 1942.
Contradictory statements about the date of closure make it impossible to determine the precise period it existed as an independent camp. In the Central Office of State Justice Administrations (ZdL) in Ludwigsburg, an interrogation report on the Plaszow camp titled “Die mörderische Aussiedlungsaktion” (The Murderous Deportation Operation) can be found. According to that report, 2,000 prisoners of the detachment were taken from Mielec to Plaszow on July 26, 1944. However, there are a number of postwar witness statements challenging this evacuation report. The testimonies state that prisoners from this detachment were transferred to the Wieliczka labor detail and the Flossenbürg concentration camp on July 22, 1944. Another statement, made sometime after the events, suggests the camp still existed in August 1944. There is no further mention of the outside detail after this date. The reason for the rapid evacuation of the outside detail was the approaching Soviet Army into the steadily shrinking territory of the Third Reich.

A file note of the Chief of the Office W IV of the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA), dated January 13, 1944, shows that the Krakau-Plaszow main camp remained a Jewish forced labor camp until January 11, 1944, and only from then on became a concentration camp. This means that the Mielec forced labor camp could only have become an outside detail of the now-independent concentration camp, the main camp Krakau-Plaszow, sometime later, namely, on June 12, 1944.

According to the statements of prisoners and the few remaining personnel documents, the inmates were solely Jews of Polish nationality. On the other hand, the little available literature points to the Mielec prisoners as being “Poles and Jews.” As was the custom in most forced labor camps, prisoners wore civilian clothing with colored stripes; in addition, Jews were forced to wear a yellow star. After the transformation of the camp into a concentration camp, the prisoners had to wear the conventional striped camp clothing. The prisoners were accommodated in barracks for the entire duration of their persecution.

A peculiarity of this camp was how the prisoners were tattooed. In contrast to the usual practice at Auschwitz where the entire prisoner number was tattooed on the left forearm, those responsible at the Mielec detail only tattooed the letters KL on the forearm. According to the literature, this was done alternately on the right and the left forearm. However, numerous postwar prisoner statements say that the tattoos were only made on the right forearm. The same procedure, that is, tattoos with the letters KL, possibly occurred in Budzyn (a Lublin subcamp) and Wieliczka.

The Mielec inmates worked at the Heinkel aircraft works. The surviving registration cards often display the abbreviation “FWM” in the top left-hand corner, which stands for Flugzeugwerke Mielec. The aircraft works were enclosed by walls, and on top of the walls was an electric wire. The work was done in two shifts, from 6:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. and from 6:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. The prisoners’ main task was rivetting aircraft wings. The prisoners also had to perform cleaning and general metalwork. The prisoner cards of the Mielec subcamp as well as the concentration camps to which the prisoners were transferred, such as Flossenbürg, state, among other things, the main trades, which include bakers, tailors, plumbers, and assemblymen, and the prisoners’ secondary trades, such as locksmith or unskilled workers (Bau Hilfsarbeiter). There are also notations for the actual work, that is, deployment, such as turner, brush maker, milling, drilling, and unskilled workers.

The available sources vary regarding the total size of the subcamp: from 800 to 2,000 to even more male prisoners and from 50 to 300 female prisoners. The largest number of prisoners at the Mielec camp, which was closed during the summer of 1944, is 4,000; however, there is no precise date for this figure, which was estimated by the Main Commission for the Investigation of Hitlerite Crimes in Poland by the Council for the Protection of Monuments, Struggle and Martyrdom (Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce Rada Ochrony Pomników Walki i Męczeństwa).

The prisoners were fed one meal of soup at lunch and received 1.4 kilograms (3.1 pounds) of bread per week. Initially, the prisoners were guarded by members of the Luftwaffe and later by the SS and the Ukrainian SS, respectively. According to postwar documents, the Gestapo and SS shot prisoners in the Mielec camp.

SOURCES
The following reference books were helpful in preparing this entry: GKBZHwP, Rada Ochrony Pomników Walki i Męczeństwa, Obrazy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945: informator encyklopedyczny (Warsaw, 1979); and Edward Kossoy, Handbuch zum Bundesentschädigungsgesetz (BEG), Law & Notarial- Offices Apel (Munich, 1956), p. 166.

This essay on the Mielec subcamp is based nearly exclusively on sources that are contained in the general collection of ITS. The sources include statements and the documents generated from investigations by former prisoners, referring to the total period of their persecution and imprisonment, respectively. This makes possible a distinction between information relating to the forced labor camp and the later subcamp. The prisoner cards of the Mielec aircraft works as well as the Flossenbürg concentration camp provide documentary confirmation, as the cards refer to the Mielec labor camp as the place of admission.

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NOTES
1. March 7, 1942, according to a statement dated December 24, 1959, and held by ITS. On the other hand, the OKBNWk puts the opening date as March 9, 1942.
2. ITS, Call number Documents M3 Mielec, Statement of the former prisoners Fried. Sz.
3. First Supplement to the “Verzeichnis von Ghettoen, Zwangsarbeitslagern und Konzentrationslagern,” August 1, 1953, presented by the Oberregierungsrat Dr. Ungerer, München, on January 1, 1954.
4. GKBZHp, Rada Ochrony Pomników Walki i Męczeństwa, Obózy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939–1945; informator encyklopedyczny (Warsaw, 1979), ¶ 2719, p. 318.
7. ITS, Call number Documents M3 Mielec, Statement of the former prisoners Fried. Sz.
8. ITS, Call number M3 Mielec, note regarding investigations into the death at the Mielec camp, filed by the former prisoner St. Sy.

OLCZA [AKA ZAKOPANE, ZAKOPANE-OLCZA]
Zakopane lies 90 kilometers (56 miles) to the south of Kraków (Krakau). Between 1943 and the spring of 1944, in nearby Olcza a subcamp of the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp was in operation.

At the beginning of the 1940s, a hydroelectricity power station was constructed in Olcza. The construction workers were initially members of the Góralska Służba Ojczyzny (Polish Highlanders’ Homeland Service). This service was similar to the Reich Labor Service (RAD) and comprised the Polish national minority, the Goralen (Polish Highlanders), who were regarded by the Germans as a separate “race.” Some of the Goralen people were classified as Group III of the German national list (Volksliste).

These workers were replaced at the beginning of 1943 by around 150 male Jewish prisoners from the SS labor camp in Krakau-Plaszow. When this camp was converted into a concentration camp, Olcza became a subcamp of the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp.

The prisoners were accommodated in the Villa Prymułka. According to Obózy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich, around 10 prisoners died during the camp’s existence. The camp was dissolved in the spring of 1944 due to the approaching front.


There are few original sources on the subcamp. The camp is listed in the material of the GKBZHp, Signatur Zh III/31/33/68, obozy pracy, województwo krakowskie, p. 34. Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Pallavicini

WIELICZKA

The Wieliczka subcamp of the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp is closely connected with the underground production of Heinkel aircraft at the end of the war. The production site was the salt mines at Wieliczka about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) to the southeast of Kraków (Krakau). It is a site of world cultural significance due to its geological uniqueness and because for hundreds of years it operated as a salt mine.

Heinkel established in the early 1940s a number of aircraft production sites in Poland, for example, at Mielec and Budzyn. Production of the He 111 and He 177 aircraft intensified in the spring of 1943. In the Mielec camp, work was done by people who had either no or limited qualifications, that is, by forced laborers including many Junaks, or unskilled non-Jewish Poles. In the spring of 1942, 2,000 Jews from Krakau-Plaszow were brought to Mielec. A camp for Jews (Judenlager) was established at the factory. In addition to the Jews of Polish nationality, there were also Hungarian Jews from the Auschwitz concentration camp. At the beginning of July 1944, they were deported first to Krakau-Plaszow and from there to the Wieliczka mine, where Heinkel continued its production.

A second Heinkel production site was at Budzyn near Krasnił. This forced labor camp was established in the autumn of 1943 by the SS and was administered from October 1943 by the Lublin-Majdanek concentration camp. According to historian Józef Marszałek, who cites a report by the Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK), from the middle of March 1944, there was a camp in Mielec with 2,457 Jewish prisoners, which included 319 women. The prisoners were of German and Polish (Jewish) origin. Among the men there were at least 800 engineers and technicians. In May 1944, the relocation of this camp began due to the rapid advance of the Eastern Front and the fear that the production facilities would be bombed. The prisoners at the Budzyn camp were deported to Majdanek and to the camps at Skrężysko, Starachowice, and Wieliczka. The final group of prisoners deported, 450, were deported to Germany. Morris Wyszogrod, a survivor of the Wieliczka camp, stated that he arrived in May 1944 in Wieliczka in a transport from Budzyn that included about 900 prisoners. The transport was relatively bearable, with about 40 to 50
prisoners in each railway car. For the journey, the prisoners were given straw as bedding as well as bread, cheese, and water. There were already 2,000 prisoners in the camp when they arrived. With the arrival of the new transport, there were about 2,900 prisoners in the camp. According to Wyszogrod, after the prisoners arrived at the camp, they went through the usual procedures: they were deloused, cautioned, and threatened. The prisoners' hair was shaved in stripes (so-called lice streets), and the letters KL were tattooed on their wrists. The tattooing was done by the camp doctor, Dr. Mosbach, and a German soldier. All the prisoners were given strips of cloth with prisoner numbers, which they had to sew onto their clothes.

In May 1944, the Jews deported from Mielec and Budzyń began to assemble the production facilities in Wieliczka. The prisoners had to construct the barracks in the camp, the barbed-wire fence, and guard towers. According to survivors, the prisoners lived in small, dilapidated houses (others say barracks), with two-tiered beds. Wyszogrod stated that an SS officer, Schrager, was the camp leader (Lagerführer). The camp was situated on the edge of Wieliczka, and on one side there was an open field. According to *Obózy bitewowe*, the camp was located in the Królowa Kinga Park directly adjacent to the salt mine. On the other hand, Wyszogrod stated that the prisoners had to walk 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) before they went into a large basket that was lowered several hundred feet into the mine.

The salt supplies that gave Wieliczka its existence continued to be mined by Polish workers during the period of the concentration camp. Wyszogrod described the difficult conditions in the mine and the devastating effects on the malnourished and poorly clothed prisoners: the tunnels with their chasms and underground lakes were a dangerous place for the weakened prisoners, who staggered around the dangerous work site. The air was cold and damp, and salt water dripped from the ceilings and the walls. According to Polish historians, the total number of prisoners in the Wieliczka camp was around 6,000. Included in this number are the women, who probably had their own camp, working mainly in the kitchens and as cleaners.

Armaments production in Wieliczka lasted only for a few months: in September 1944, production ceased, and the camp was abandoned. The reason was the advance of the Soviet Army as well as the high humidity and the salty air in the mine. Machines and tools were dismantled and transported to Germany. The Wieliczka prisoners were initially sent to Plaszow. From there, they were taken to Gross-Rosen and Flossenburg.

**Sources**


The AZIH holds several statements of survivors of the Wieliczka camp under the collections Wspomnienia 2352, as well as Pamiętniki 1018, 1166, and 5266. Other documents on Wieliczka are to be found in the following archives: IPN, Signatur 48, Karte 107; Bestand “Bd” Signatur 4362, Bestand “2,” Signatur 924; Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy, Signatur 327, k. 6–7; Signatur 326, p. 150; AIZ, Dokument V 26, vol. 4, p. 96; and GKBZHwP, Signatur Zh III/31/35/68, obozy pracy, województwo Krakowskie, pp. 82–84. There are several survivors’ accounts on the camp, including that by Morris Wyszogrod, *An Artist in the Death Camps* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), where reference is made to Wieliczka at pp. 183–187.

Evelyn Zegenhagen trans. Stephen Polliavicini

**Zablocie**

Although very little and only incomplete source material exists on the outside detail Zablocie of the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp, the name Zablocie (Polish; Zabłocie) has become well known since the film *Schindler’s List* appeared in 1993. The movie is a strong portrayal of the suffering of many prisoners and shows the chronology of the persecution of a group of Jewish prisoners in the Kraków area—including a detailed account on their imprisonment in the Zablocie detachment. The film reveals the contradictions of people being subject to forced labor by the National Socialist regime, which at the same time provided a chance for survival. For many, the suffering began in the ghetto Krakau-Podgorze, which was located in the city of Kraków.

At that time, many inmates were already forced to walk to and from work in Zablocie every day. This continued after their transfer to the forced labor camp for Jews, Krakau-Plaszow, which was a little further to the east.

As the prisoners were often late for work, Oskar Schindler negotiated with the SS authorities to get permission to establish a camp in the vicinity of their work. He was supported by other employers who also used Jews from the camp at Krakau-Plaszow. After permission was granted, the Jewish forced labor camp in Zablocie was opened in the spring of 1943.

On January 11, 1944, simultaneously with the transformation of the Jewish forced labor camp Krakau-Plaszow into an...
independent concentration camp, the Zablocie outside detail became its subcamp. The outside detail was located at 4 ulica Lipowa, in an industrial area in the southern district of Kraków. It exclusively contained Jewish men and women of Polish nationality. According to statements in the novel Schindler’s List, the prisoners were guarded by the SS.¹

The majority of the prisoners in Zablocie worked at Oskar Schindler's firm Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik—Email- und Metallwaren aller Art (German Enamel Factory—Enamel and Metal Wares of All Types, DEF). The prisoners worked not only in the enamel factory but also in the munitions factory that was also established there. They worked in three shifts.

The prisoners were accommodated in barracks on Schindler's factory grounds. Altogether there were between 1,000 and 1,200 prisoners.

When questioned, the prisoners replied that they worked in a munitions factory, knowing full well that this was an essential war activity; this provided a certain degree of protection from deportation. In addition, the prisoners were used as forced labor by the Neue Kühler- und Flugzeugteile-Fabriken (NKF)—Kurt Hodermann—Spezialfabriken für die Flugzeugindustrie—Werk Krakau GmbH (New Cooling and Airplane Parts Factory—Kurt Hodermann—Special Factories for the Aircraft Industry—Factory Krakau Ltd), 9 ulica Romanowicza,² and at the crate factory, Kühnpast.¹

There were also men imprisoned in the outside details who had previously, from the late summer of 1943 on, worked in the so-called Siemens detachment. Their task was also of service to the war industry. They had to construct a new building for punching machines for Schindler's firm. The prisoners, who supposedly numbered between 200 and 300, were required to excavate, pour foundations, and erect the side walls.³ After the war, many prisoners remembered an accident in which a young Jewish prisoner was buried during the first excavation work. According to a report of the Compensation Trust, the “Stanzhalle” was finished except for the roof. Electrical installations had begun as well as the installation of a few machines.

Personnel files of concentration camps to which former prisoners of the Zablocie subcamp were transferred to, as well as statements made by liberated prisoners after the war, refer to the following trades in the camp: metalworker trainee, metal processing worker trainee, office worker, laborer, automotive welder, female accountant, wood turner, lathe operator, iron worker, homemaker, woodworker, skilled builder, salesman, plumber, engine assembler, machinist, pharmacist (female), nurse, locksmith, apprentice locksmith, tailor (male and female), grade school pupil, university student, metal presser, and skilled textile worker.

The approaching front line caused the evacuation of Zablocie to begin in the summer of 1944. The evacuation was complete in October 1944. The prisoners who worked for the NKF and the crate factory were transferred back to the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp, together with prisoners who had also worked at Schindler's DEF.

At the same time, one or two U.S. airplanes were shot down and crashed at Zablocie. As a result, a few barracks burned down completely; however, they were not occupied because the evacuation had already begun. As a result, the remaining prisoners were transferred back to the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp, as were most of the prisoners prior to the evacuation. This resulted in the complete liquidation of the subcamp, since the prisoners kept walking daily to and from Zablocie only for a short time. They had to load machines that were to be transported to the Brünnlitz detachment.⁵

From Krakau-Plaszow, the prisoners were deported to various concentration camps. The female prisoners were sent to Auschwitz, among other concentration camps, and the males were sent to Gross-Rosen. Thanks to Schindler’s intervention, these prisoners were transferred from Auschwitz and Gross-Rosen to the outside detail at Brünnlitz, which was administered by Gross-Rosen. They worked in his newly established company in Brünnlitz until they were liberated.

Other prisoners, for instance, were transferred to the Flossenbürg and Mauthausen concentration camps.

SOURCES There is no history of the Zablocie subcamp of Krakau-Plaszow apart from the historical novel by Thomas Keneally, Schindler’s List (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 1994).

Due to the lack of sources, most knowledge on the Krakau-Plaszow concentration camp Zablocie subcamp is derived from the interim report on Siemens-Plaszow by the Compensation Treuhand GmbH, New York, dated February 4, 1965. This report is based on statements made by former prisoners. Statements by former victims of persecution, which are to be found at ITS, have provided additional information. They have been valuably complemented by the evaluation of personnel files, particularly of prisoners who were transferred to Brünnlitz. Two letters to the SSPF Lublin dated March 9, 1943, provide documentary evidence of the work deployment. Because of the lack of primary sources, two collection vouchers dated March 9, 1943, were used to provide details about the firms’ headquarters. They were issued by the DEF as well as the NKF.

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NOTES

2. ITS, Call number: Technical Document M 3 Zablocie, Statements by former prisoners.
4. Ibid., p. 3.