

Chris Webb

# **The Auschwitz Concentration Camp**

History, Biographies,  
Remembrance



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*Dedicated To :*

**Mr Marian Koszewski** from Kościan—Survivor of Auschwitz and Gusen camps.

I met him in Kościan in September 2005, thanks to Artur Hojan and Cameron Munro.

**Frank Bright** who survived Auschwitz, although his Father and Mother did not.

He kindly shared the story of the Brichta family with me, part of which is included in this book.

For **Freya Isabel**

I therefore became Commandant of the Quarantine Camp which  
was to be built at Auschwitz.  
It was far away, in the back of beyond, in Poland.

**Rudolf Höss**  
**Commandant of Auschwitz**

We had read the name of Auschwitz on the labels on the trucks—  
trucks or wagons—trucks. But nobody of us knew  
what Auschwitz meant.

**Primo Levi**  
**Italian Jew who was deported to Auschwitz in 1944,**  
**but survived.**

# Foreword

I have known Chris Webb since 2003. I myself had been involved in Holocaust research for many years prior to this, though on a purely private basis. It was in 2003 that I came across the Aktion Reinhardt Camps (ARC) website. I sent an inquisitive email to the website enquiring about becoming a member. A very enthusiastic response came back from Chris, welcoming me to the fold.

The website was run on a very devolved basis—if you wanted to contribute something you went ahead and did it. There was some proof checking and review of facts, but those who wanted to contribute could. And so the website and interest grew. It generated the most extensive research undertaken to date on the three Aktion Reinhardt Camps. As I was to discover, it was Chris who was the real driving force behind the website.

We met for the first time on the ARC field trip to Poland in 2004 and we have met several times each year since then, as well as undertaking research trips to Poland and the United States of America, and swapping research material and ideas by email. Chris has always provided excellent feedback on my research efforts. He has been researching the Aktion Reinhardt Camps and the Holocaust in general for over 40 years.

I have met many researchers and talked to many institutes of Holocaust research around the world. Almost all agree that the ARC website is still the most comprehensive and user-friendly website on the Holocaust. Since the ARC website was frozen some years ago, existing on the web but not being added to, Chris has moved on to other projects, including setting up H.E.A.R.T. and the Holocaust Historical Society. He has also written a trilogy of books on Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka, that have been published by Ibidem-Verlag and he has self-published other Holocaust related works.

Chris joined the Tiergarten 4 Association in 2015, of which I am the Chairman and founder. The Tiergarten 4 Association is a Berlin registered association which researches and publishes works on

Nazi war crimes, with a focus on the Warthegau, Chełmno, Aktion Reinhardt Camps, gas vans, Sonderkommando 1005, other Concentration Camps, euthanasia institutes and War crimes trials. The Tiergarten 4 Association has an extensive library of some 20,000 books and more than a million pages of original documents relating to the Nazi period and War crimes trials. Some of these documents have been consulted in producing this book on Auschwitz.

Chris has also very generously given his time and expertise to Holocaust education in the UK. He has given many lectures at Universities and has more recently acted as a consultant and guide to Auschwitz and Kraków, where he has imparted his knowledge about the Camp in particular and the Holocaust in general. It is thus an opportune moment for Chris to publish his book on 'The Auschwitz Concentration Camp, History, Biographies, Remembrance.'

As with all of his works, in his book on the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Chris produces a fine balance between detailing the sufferings of the victims and the actions and characters of the perpetrators. He manages in a concise form to give an excellent overview of all aspects of Auschwitz and its many complex of camps.

The book will be useful both for those coming to the Holocaust for the first time, and those seasoned researchers like myself, who have read many books on Auschwitz. Although the number of existing published works on Auschwitz is vast, this book on the Auschwitz Concentration Camp is a very worthy addition to the bibliography of one of the most important Camps established by the Nazis.

**Cameron Munro**

Tiergarten 4 Association

Berlin

March 2017



# Author's Introduction



The Author—Auschwitz-Birkenau January 2017

Photograph: Taken By Mark Handscomb

This book was inspired by my recent visits to Auschwitz-Birkenau whilst acting as a guide for the University of Teesside in 2016 and 2017. I have now visited the site four times and every visit brings new things to learn and understand. It remains a sobering and humbling experience, from my first visit in 2004, up to the current day, and these experiences will stay with me for life.

This book has been constructed using the excellent book by Dánuta Czech, *'Auschwitz Chronicle'* to tell the chronological history of the Concentration Camp, from its conception in 1940 to its demise in 1945. This is the best way to chart the development of the police Camp which became the greatest cemetery without a grave in the history of mankind. Whilst the *'Chronicle'* has been used as the foundation, accounts from both survivors and members of the Camp

garrison, some of which have never been published in book form to date, tell the heartbreaking story of life and death, in the most infamous of places, created by man.

This work covers the establishment of the Camp, its development from a Security Police prison holding Polish political prisoners to the industrial mass killing of a large portion of the Jewish race in Europe. The story is told from all sides; the Polish prisoners, the Jews, the Germans, the Resistance workers, the survivors and the victims, the heroes and the villains. Biographies of the perpetrators and remembrance for both the survivors and the victims. Chronological tables of the deportations and details of some of the survivors, and the post-war statements and Trials, all tell the story of the hell called Auschwitz.

My first visit to Auschwitz was made in 2004, as part of a group visiting many of the major Holocaust related sites, including former Camps such as Płaszów, Treblinka, Sobibór, Bełżec, Trawniki, Poniatowa, and Majdanek. I was lucky enough to be guided around Auschwitz by the Swedish expert Börje Hallström, who joined us on the trip. He had visited the Camp and the surrounding area many times before, and he passed on his knowledge freely, for which I am most grateful.

In terms of thanking people, I would first like to thank Tom Nixon from Teesside University who designed the book cover, with such consummate skill. I was delighted to renew my working relationship with Tania Mühlberger, who once again proof read and copy edited this book in her exemplary style, I am blessed to know her. For introducing me to Tania and for being instrumental in the great privilege of inviting me to work with Teesside University, I must thank Professor Matthew Feldman. Our long standing friendship is a source of much joy. I must also thank Mark Handscomb and Lucy Jolly, for our three trips to Auschwitz, along with the students from Teesside University who made the journey to Poland. Mark very kindly took some photographs of me on the ramp in Birkenau, in freezing weather in January 2017, specifically for this book.

I am also indebted to Cameron Munro, the founder of the Tiergarten 4 Association in Berlin, who very kindly wrote the foreword to this book, and provided information used in this work. He was part of the ARC group which toured the Auschwitz-Birkenau murder factory in 2004, and along with the late Artur Hojan, produced a study of the Auschwitz sub-camps, which was completed in 2009, but to date is unpublished. Artur also obtained some original items of correspondence from Auschwitz for me, which have been included in this work.

Cameron Munro is a dedicated researcher on the Holocaust and we have worked together on many projects and research trips, in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States of America. From the same organization I must also pay thanks to Robert Parzer, who supported my many requests for information and documents. I thank Robert wholeheartedly for all of his efforts.

I am grateful for the support of a number of people helping me with my research. I must place on record my thanks to Frank Bright, who survived Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, before settling in the UK after the War. He very kindly sent me his fantastic account of his families' experiences growing up in Nazi Germany. Both of Frank's parents were murdered in Auschwitz. I am sincerely grateful to him for sharing this tragic story with me. His full account was first published online on the Holocaust Education and Research Team (H.E.A.R.T.) website during 2008. In a similar vein, I must also thank Dr. Thomas Nowotny, for providing me with the account of Max Block, who perished in Auschwitz during 1944, also for the H.E.A.R.T. website in 2012.

I must also place on record my thanks to the late Sir Martin Gilbert, who inspired me greatly with his research on the Holocaust, and who kindly donated maps to aid me in my research. His sad passing in 2014 was a great loss.

During the writing of this book, I must express my thanks to Piotr Setkiewicz from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, who helped me with a number of questions. I am also grateful for the assistance given to me by Miriam Haardt, Deputy Senior Librarian at the Wiener Library, in London, who helped me with my research

into transports to Auschwitz, from a number of European countries occupied by the Nazis.

A big thank-you to my publisher, ibidem-Verlag, who are a real pleasure to work with. I am extremely appreciative of their continual support, and the kindness and patience of Valerie Lange and Florian Bölter. This is my fourth published work with them, and I am proud that we have such a productive working relationship.

My wife Shirley, my daughter Heather and son-in-law Mark all deserve a mention in supporting my research and published works, over the many years. They mean the world to me.

To everyone who has supported me with my life-long interest in the Holocaust—I thank you all.