

Things in Motion...

No. 26

All things are in motion and nothing is at rest. You cannot go into the same (river) twice. —Heraclitus (540?-480?) B.C.



Entrance to Auschwitz

MAY THIS NEVER HAPPEN IN AMERICA

On a recent trip to Poland, Austria, Czech and Hungary, we had the opportunity to take a pilgrimage to a concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau. There were probably 20 of these camps located in Germany, Poland, and other countries, the main ones being Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Treblinka, Majdnek and others such as this one, Auschwitz-Birkenau.

In the late 1930s, Adolph Hitler and his henchmen began rounding up Jews, gypsies, and political enemies, first shoving them in ghettos before transferring them to death

camps. Auschwitz-Birkenau, a UNESCO World Heritage Site now, is located about 50 miles northwest of Krakow, Poland. It was the largest Nazi concentration and death camp in Europe—the site where 1.6 million people were put to death. Nine of our group, after a city tour, made the sobering journey to Auschwitz one afternoon.

Many of the original buildings still stand, along with the guard houses, brick ovens, the barbed wire, railroad tracks and the world's largest cemetery of ashes of the people put to death. The ghosts of these unfortunates roam the rough streets in the dusky night hours, walking along with us Americans now in 2007.

They were put to death by various methods; starvation, gassing, shooting. The gas used was Cyclone B, which could kill about 1500 people in twelve minutes in a chamber referred to as “the shower.” Bodies were burned in the ovens, then the ashes were strewn in fields or dumped in the river. Railroads brought people in cattle cars. Inmates attempting to escape died on the electrified fences. Thousands were shot, the bullet holes still visible on execution walls. A display shows eye glasses, clothing, prayer shawls, suitcases, and human hair of those killed. Medical experiments were done on twins, dwarfs, and pregnant women before they were put to death. All Polish children 14 years old are required to visit the site to learn their history—a serious lesson. May this never happen in America!

--Russell and Delores Miller



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