

## From the Testimony of Max Dreimer about Auschwitz-Birkenau- Then and Today

...We are now walking towards the main entrance gate of the prisoner section of the camp. Here is where parents of the SS....(?) The picture shakes a little bit - we were walking on cobblestone all the way along. These are the gates with the barbed wire fences. They were loaded with five thousand volts. These fences would be covered with bodies as the prisoners gave up their will to live - they committed suicide by walking out and just grabbing onto the wires and then they would burn as it was described that there was never a time in the camp when there weren't a dozen people who had gone out and committed suicide on these fences and their bodies were burnt brown and crisp and the smell was throughout the camp.

These are the first barracks we come through. This is the picture of the band that played continuously in Birkenau as the people were led into the gas chambers. Coco Schuman was one of the people who had to play there fourteen hours a day, but it kept him alive playing his guitar.

This was one of the first buildings dedicated to the Russian prisoners.

It's very deceptive because everything is well manicured now. There are lawns, there are lots of trees - it looks like a very pleasant place to visit.

This is the building where Mengele did his experiments. This was where Mengele operated. All of the experiments.

These were all Israeli students who were on a field trip who were going on a tour.

These were inside the barracks, pictures that are left in there. These are pictures of "Kanada" which was where they gathered up all the possession and clothes, everything from the inmates. Dr. Schoenberg did a doctoral thesis on the economic effect of what they confiscated from the Jews and the Nazis basically funded the entire war effort for one hundred and eighty-six days on the combined revenues from what they confiscated from all of the Jews.

What we are looking at now is the execution wall in Block "J" where they took

in over twenty thousand inmates were executed. It was an honor to be executed. The two buildings that surrounded this centre court where the people were shot were used for torture and...people who would be killed. If they needed to try and get some extra information out of them...we'll be going inside there in a few minutes.

If you noticed how many people were in the main thoroughfares and now we're heading towards the building...the Jewish prisoners. On the side street there were only a couple of people. The pictures are not very good because everything is very, very dark.

This was a special plaque that was dedicated to sixteen inmates who were killed because they had something to do with an escape, either...people who tried to escape. They didn't talk to people outside about an escape or in any way connected were all taken out.

We are now going back out of the front gate.

This is Birkenau. The arrival point at Birkenau. Mengele stood there. Mengele decided who would live, who would die with a flip of his thumb to indicate who was going where. Guard towers, electric fences, train tracks.

"At that moment we came in, we didn't know before. But when we came in, then we know that we are going to hell. And when I came in here, there were dozens of bodies, burned bodies hanging on the electric fence. And then you have to stand, you are not allowed to move - "appell", rollcall - you are not allowed to move and then they, with machine guns in the direction of....and then they switched off the wire and the prisoners have to take off the burned bodies."

"The barracks, before they became barracks they were horse stables and they got...not heated for us, but for horses they got a chimney on it to heat."

These are the crematoriums which they blew up near the end. These are the fields where when crematoriums were overloaded, they would just plow the bodies into the ground. And right next to the crematoriums there was a huge memorial.

This memorial is basically where the gas chambers were.

Q: "Does it seem almost unimaginable? I mean, how it sits today compared to how it was."

A: "So peaceful today. It's hard to imagine that anything like this ever could happen. I still cannot grasp it. I mean, walking around this whole area here, everything is so peaceful. It's just unbelievable."

Q: "Was it ever this quiet?"

A: "Never. Four million people walked through here....."

**Source: Yad Vashem Archives 0.3- 9557**