

Konzentrationslager-Dachau Allach

Dachau Allach concentration camp, the first of the Nazi concentration camps opened in Germany, initially was intended to hold political prisoners. It was located on the grounds of an abandoned munitions factory northeast of the medieval town of Dachau, about 16 km northwest of Munich in the state of Bayern (Bavaria), in southern Germany.

Opened in 1933 by Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the Schutzstaffel, (SS) its purpose was enlarged to include forced labour, and eventually, the imprisonment of Jews, homosexuals, Roma ("Gypsies"), ordinary German and Austrian criminals, and eventually a host of foreign nationals from countries that Germany occupied or invaded. The Dachau camp system grew to include nearly 100 sub-camps, which were mostly work camps or "Arbeitskommandos," and were located throughout southern Germany and Austria.

Prisoners lived in constant fear of brutal treatment and terror detention including standing cells, floggings, the so-called tree or pole hanging, and standing at attention for extremely long periods. There were 32,000 documented deaths at the camp, and thousands that went undocumented. Approximately 10,000 of the then 30,000 prisoners were sick at the time of liberation.

The camps were liberated by U.S. forces on or about 29th April 1945.

Philatelic details of the Dachau Concentration Camp Cinderellas: Perforated and imperforate sheets of one, four or six Cinderellas printed on white or creamy, watermarked or unwatermarked paper, without gum. Varieties exist with missing cross embossing or inverted top left stamp. Catalogue: Fischer

On 1st November 1945, the Polish Red Cross issued two souvenir stamp sheets. The one sheet had six stamps with values in German currency. The stamps had various face values and were sold for R.M. 10 each in order to raise funds for the work of the Red Cross in the Dachau camps. The sheets were issued both perforated and imperforated.

The second souvenir sheet bearing a single stamp to the value of R.M. 3 was also produced by the Polish Red Cross and sold for R.M. 10. It too was issued both perforated and imperforated.

Neither sheet was accepted by the American authorities as being valid for postal purposes.

Sociological History of the 1945 Dachau-Allach (Displace Persons Camp), Bavaria and the Polish Red Cross souvenir sheets: These were created to raise funds whilst commemorating the lives of the 31,951 known victims of the Dachau Concentration Camp (1933-1945) and "the tortured, gassed, burnt ... the unknown, unnamed, (and) already forgotten dead." Beyond Lost Dreams. Janusz Nel Siedlecki (1994)

The background to the creation of this series of Cinderellas is fascinating.

We Were in Auschwitz was written in 1945 by three young Polish former inmates of Auschwitz, Janusz Nel Siedlecki (1916-2000), Krystyn Olszewski (1921-2004) and Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951). It was published with American permission in the spring of 1946 by a fourth, Anatol Girs (1904-1990), a graphic artist, painter, book designer, typographer and publisher who, together with Boleslaw Barcz in Warsaw (1938) created the publishing company, Oficyna Warszawska. Its premises were bombed and Barcz lost his life during The Warsaw Uprising in 1944. It was Girs who conceived of *We Were in Auschwitz* and recruited its three authors. The book reported the horrors of the Nazi concentration camp; and was dedicated to the liberators of Dachau, the American Seventh Army. It originally appeared as a Polish edition of 10,000 numbered copies, unspecified numbers of which were bound in material cut from concentration camp stripes and from SS uniforms.

After liberation, the group soon dispersed, Tadeusz Borowski and Krystyn Olszewski returning to Poland, Janusz Siedlecki emigrating to England and Anatol Girs to the United States of America. In his book *Beyond Lost Dreams*, Siedlecki reports that the book met with very mixed reaction. Girs' hope of selling the books to the Polish-American community did not materialise and he, unable to pay the cost of storage, was forced to destroy most of them, keeping only a few. Today they are valued collectors' items.

With the Liberation of Dachau on 29 April 1945, living and working at 15 Pienzenauerstrasse in Munich, Anatol Girs headed up a Christian group for the Polish Information Centre, and establish the Family Tracing Service affiliated to the Polish Red Cross. Further, between 1945-1947, he ran Oficyna Warszawska compiling, designing, typesetting and publishing memorial literature. It is Tadeusz Borowski who in correspondence (Mieczyslaw Grydzewski March 1946) mentions the following: "I continue to work with Girs of the Oficyna Warszawska, at present at the Polish Red Cross. By creating the Dachau Concentration Camp postage stamps, he contributed large sums of money to the Red Cross. Four tons of medicines (a thousand ampoules of penicillin among them) were sent to Poland".

<p>This author considers it is reasonable to assume therefore that Girs designed, typeset and printed these famous Cinderellas.</p>
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And what of the four prisoners after the liberation of Dachau Allach?

Tadeusz Borowski, a poet of great talent, became a journalist and political commentator under the Communist regime. On July 1, 1951, at the age of 28, he committed suicide. His wife had given birth to their daughter three days prior to his death

Krystyn Olszewski graduated in architecture at the Warsaw Polytechnic and created post-war urban redevelopment plans for Polish cities as well as Skopje and Baghdad. He lived in Singapore for over 17 years, where he became one of the founders of that Asian tiger.

Janusz Nel Siedlecki After the war Nel Siedlecki did not return to Poland. He went to live in London, where he studied engineering. Until 1994, when he published his memoirs, *Beyond Lost Dreams*, he was not concerned with literature. He died in 2000.

Anatol Girs, left for the U.S.A. in 1947, settling in Detroit where, for the third time, he created *Oficina Warszawska*. Later, as an independent typographer and publisher, he created a summer gallery in West Chesterfield, New Hampshire. In 1969, after retiring, he settled on his own farm in West Chesterfield, and there produced decorative publications under the name Girs Press. In 1973, he received an award from the *American Fundacja im. Alfred Jurzykowski* for his achievements in art. He together with his former partner, Boleslaw Barcz (1906-1944) are acknowledged for their ever-lasting contribution to Polish graphic art.



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