

# Heinrich Himmler, Frank Ziereis, and Ernst Kaltenbrunner at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp (April 27, 1941)

## Abstract

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This 1941 photograph shows Heinrich Himmler (left) during an inspection of the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Also featured are camp commander, SS-Obersturmbannführer Franz Ziereis (middle) and Ernst Kaltenbrunner (right), who at the time was the Higher SS- and Police Leader for the eastern part of Austria. The Mauthausen camp opened in August 1938, six months after the annexation [*Anschluss*] of Austria. It was to serve as a penal and work camp. The camp's location was chosen on account of its proximity to numerous granite quarries and because the regime saw the need for an internment facility in Austria. Initially, most of the prisoners interned at Mauthausen came from Germany and Austria. After the start of the war, however, growing numbers of prisoners from all of the occupied territories and theaters of war were also sent there. Most of the prisoners came to Mauthausen from other concentration camps and worked in the quarries under the most demanding conditions—correspondingly, the death rate was extremely high. Most of the deaths in Mauthausen were attributable to the inhumane living and working conditions, but mass executions also took place.

In 1941 Reinhard Heydrich devised a classification system for the various concentration camps. The camps were divided into three categories. According to this system, Mauthausen was a “Category III” camp for “prisoners against whom strong accusations have been made, particularly those who have criminal convictions at the same time and are asocial—i.e, virtually incapable of correction.” It was the only camp in this category. For all practical purposes, being sent to Mauthausen was akin to a verdict of “annihilation through work.”

## Source

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Source: Heinrich Himmler, Franz Ziereis, and Ernst Kaltenbrunner (left to right) inspecting the Mauthausen concentration camp. April 27, 1941. Photo: Heinrich Hoffmann. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Archiv der KZ-Gedenkstaette Mauthausen. Available online at: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa7728>

Archiv der KZ-Gedenkstaette Mauthausen

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