

Echoes from the Abyss – confessions of a Nazi war criminal

by Phillip W. Weiss

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Cast of Characters

Rudolf Hoess – Former commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Sendar Jaari – Interrogator

Lt. Whitney Harris – Interrogator

Lieut.-Colonel Smith W. Brookhart – Interrogator

Otto Moll – Hoess's subordinate at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Ingrid Hoess – Rudolf Hoess's wife

Man #1

Man #2

Military guard

This is a one-act play consisting of five scenes.

Time: April 1946

Place: Nuremberg, Germany.

Scene 1 – Ingrid Hoess and Rudolf Hoess (page 1)

Scene 2 – Interrogation of Rudolf Hess, April 1, 1946

Scene 3 – Interrogation of Rudolf Hess, April 2, 1946

Scene 4 – Interrogation of Rudolf Hoess and Otto Moll, April 16, 1946

Scene 5 – Rudolf Hoess and Ingrid Hoess (page 115)

The interrogations of Rudolf Hoess and Otto Moll were extracted and reproduced from actual historical sources. However, their behavior depicted in this play has been fictionalized for dramatic purposes.

The characters Ingrid Hoess, Man #1 and Man #2 are fictitious and have been included in this play for dramatic purposes. Their resemblance to any person living or dead is purely coincidental and entirely unintentional. In addition, the actual interrogations of Rudolf Hoess and Otto Moll were conducted in German and English.

Scene 1

Time: The present

Place: A room

A man and woman are seated at a table. Both are in their 40s. The man is neatly attired in a black uniform of an SS officer. The woman is plainly attired in a house dress and sandals and is appears haggard and disheveled. She gets up, stands in front of the table and speaks directly to the audience.

WOMAN

My name is Ingrid Hoess. I was married to that man (*points to the man at the table.*) His name is Rudolf Hoess. Rudolf was the commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War Two and after the war was accused of committing some of the vilest crimes in history, crimes that were so wicked, so depraved, so terrible and on a scale so vast as to defy belief. In fact, there are some who believe to this day that the events that took place at Auschwitz never happened, are mere fabrications. Well, you can decide for yourself what really happened in that awful place as you hear my husband tell his interrogators from the International Military Tribunal what he did, how he did it and why. And now Rudolf would like to tell you a little bit about himself.

(HOESS gets up from his chair, walks around the table to center stage and speaks directly to the audience.)

HOESS

(flat, apathetic tone of voice)

My name is Rudolf Hoess. I was born in 1900 in Baden, Germany. I was the oldest of three children, the other two being girls; my parents were Catholic. I served in the German Army during World War One and after the war fought against the Bolsheviks so that Germany would not go Communist. In 1922 I joined the Nazi Party and in 1923 murdered a traitor, an act for which I spent five years in prison. In 1934 I joined the SS and moved up the in the ranks till I was made commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp. I was commandant of Auschwitz from May 1, 1940 until December 1, 1943 and again from June to August 1944. My wife and five children lived with me at Auschwitz. What you will hear today may upset you or make you angry, but please keep in mind that in Germany orders were everything and I was just following orders. Thank you.

(HOESS returns to his seat.)

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Time: April 1, 1946

Place: An interrogation room in a prison.

HOESS and two other men are seated at a table. The two other men are interrogators. HOESS is wearing a prisoner's uniform; one of HOESS's interrogators is attired in a business suit; his name is SENDAR JAARI. The other man is dressed in a British military uniform. His name is LT. WHITNEY HARRIS. The scene opens with the interrogation currently in progress.

JAARI

Who else did you discuss the details of extermination of Jews in Auschwitz with?

HOESS

I was not allowed to discuss this with anybody; it was a top secret matter.

JAARI

Did Himmler give you orders about the construction of gas chambers?

HOESS

No, he told me the following: that I was supposed to look at an extermination camp in Poland and eliminate in the construction of my camp the mistakes and inefficiency existing in the Polish camp. I was supposed to show him plans of how I intended to construct my camp in a period of about four weeks. He told me that he could not give me the exact figures at that time, nor the numbers in which they would arrive, but added that the figure would run into several millions.

JAARI

And what did you do?

HOESS

He explained to me that the most important matter was that when an action was being carried on in one of these countries it was not to be stopped or delayed because of inadequate facilities in Auschwitz. He told me that the camps in Poland were not suitable for enlargement and the reason why he had chosen Auschwitz was because of the fact that it had good railroad connections and could be enlarged and was removed enough from centers of people and could be cut off from connections with the people.

JAARI

And did he tell you anything else. Did you go there immediately after your talk with him on your tour of inspection?

HOESS

No, at first I returned to Auschwitz. He explained to me that it was not his habit to discuss such matters with inferiors; however, this case was so important and of such great significance that he had decided to explain to me his reasons and they were as follows: he said to me that if the extermination of Jewery did not take place at this time the German people would be eliminated by the Jews.

JAARI

Did he explain to you how the Jews would be able to eliminate the German people?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

What other reasons did he give?

HOESS

That was the reason. He had planned originally to dispatch a higher ranking officer to Auschwitz to continue this extermination action, but reconsidered because he felt that it would only be a cause of friction between myself as the Camp Commandant and the higher ranking officer in charge of the exterminations. Therefore, he gave me the orders in addition to that the fact that I was supposed to treat this as top secret matter and not discuss it with anybody was explained. All the instructions such as procedure and orders I was to receive from the RSHA through Eichmann.

JAARI

And then before you went on your tour of inspection you returned to Auschwitz?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

What did you do in Auschwitz?

HOESS

I immediately got in touch with the chief of a construction unit and told him that I needed a large crematorium. I told him that we were going to receive a large number of sick people, but I did not give him my real reason.

JAARI

And then?

HOESS

And after we had completed our plans, I sent them to the Reichsfuehrer. After I had changed them in accordance with the real purpose of his instructions, they were approved.

JAARI

Didn't you visit any of the three existing extermination camps?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Which ones?

HOESS

Treblinka ...

JAARI

What did you see there?

HOESS

At that time the action in connection with the Warsaw Ghetto was in progress, and I watched the procedure.

JAARI

How was it done there?

HOESS

They had chambers for about 200 people. Into these chambers the fumes from an exhaust machine came in. These motors had been taken from captured enemy equipment such as tanks, trucks and had been installed next to the gas chambers. They were run by gas, and those victims were supposed to be suffocated by the fumes.

JAARI

How many chambers were there, and how many people were killed?

HOESS

I do not know the exact figure, but there may have been about ten chambers. It was built next to a ramp and the train drove right up to it. The people were unloaded right into the chambers, and this procedure was necessary because the motors did not always work right.

JAARI

Weren't the people first registered or interrogated?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

They were put directly into the chambers from the trains?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And what happened to their clothing?

HOESS

They had to undress before they were put into the chambers.

JAARI

And their valuables?

HOESS

That was all sorted. I saw a number of shacks there in which there were piles of clothing, shoes, valuables, etc., all sorted separately and neatly stacked. They were later packed.

JAARI

What happened to these things?

HOESS

I do not know.

JAARI

Who did the sorting?

HOESS

Inmates.

JAARI

Who guarded the trains in which the Jews were to be gassed alive?

HOESS

The train that I saw in Treblinka arrived guarded by members of the Security Police; also the trains that came into Auschwitz from Poland were guarded by the Security Police.

JAARI

Did the train loads consist of women, men and children all together?

HOESS

All together.

JAARI

We are now talking about the train in Treblinka?

HOESS

Yes, the one in Treblinka.

JAARI

Were there babies, real small children and very old people also?

HOESS

All kinds, if they were evacuated from Warsaw.

JAARI

You only saw one train in Treblinka during your visit there?

HOESS

Yes, only one.

JAARI

How many people were in that train?

HOESS

One train generally handled 2,000 people.

JAARI

When you said generally, do you mean that the trains arriving in Auschwitz also usually had 2,000 people?

HOESS

Yes, 2,000 on an average. Some trains held 2400; others, 1,500 and 1,800 but the average was 2,000.

JAARI

Was this the first time that you observed exterminations?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Now I understand from your statement that the people — men, women and children had to strip themselves completely naked. Am I right?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And the women carried their babies with them into the chambers?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And they know what was going to happen to them?

HOESS

Yes, I assume so.

JAARI

Did they knew what was going to happen to them?

HOESS

Yes, they did.

JAARI

And what was your reaction?

HOESS

I did not consider this problem, or the means, or the manner in which it was conducted because in my opinion they knew it was going to happen to them.

JAARI

But you found it lawful and right that they were to be exterminated. It was only the manner you objected to?

HOESS

Yes, according to my discussions with Himmler it was the way you just stated.

JAARI

Did anyone try to escape?

HOESS

No, I didn't see that.

JAARI

How long did you remain in Treblinka?

HOESS

About three or four hours.

JAARI

Did you discuss the matter with the Camp Commandant In Treblinka?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Who was he?

HOESS

I don't remember his name.

JAARI

Just one moment. How did you get into the camp? What kind of a pass or permit did you have?

HOESS

I was introduced by Eichmann. They had been advised of my arrival by Eichmann.

JAARI

Was Eichmann with you?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

Did you see Eichmann in Berlin before you left?

HOESS

Eichmann had been in Auschwitz in the meantime and at that time I told him that I had to see this camp and that he should advise them of my coming. Otherwise, I would not be able to get into the camp.

JAARI

Did Eichmann have the power to let anyone visit the camp?

HOESS

No I don't believe so.

JAARI

How could he get you the orders to get in?

HOESS

I assume that he had already received instructions from the Reichsfuehrer via Gruppenfuehrer Mueller.

JAARI

While he was visiting you in Auschwitz did you discuss the plans with him?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Then he was completely in the know?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Didn't he want to go with you to Treblinka?

HOESS

No, he returned to Berlin.

JAARI

Did he take the plans with him?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

How did you send the plans to Himmler?

HOESS

By courier.

JAARI

Directly to Himmler?

HOESS

Yes, personally.

JAARI

You didn't approve of the methods used in Treblinka, so you made up your mind to improve these methods. What methods were you going to use?

HOESS

I wanted to avoid, in any case, that the persons who came into Auschwitz should know ahead of time that they were going to be gassed.

JAARI

How did you plan to avoid that?

HOESS

At the beginning I had to improvise because I didn't have the necessary buildings. Signs were installed reading "To Delousing" "To Disinfecting" "To Bath" "To the Showers", etc. In addition to that, inmates helped the new arrivals with undressing and gave them instructions as to where they were to place their clothing so that they would find it upon their return. It was done in order to avoid exciting them in any way or to give them an inkling of actually what was going to happen.

JAARI

And after the undressing, where did the victims go?

HOESS

They went into these rooms.

JAARI

What rooms?

HOESS

These chambers. At first there were two old farms before the crematoriums were built. They were made airproof. The windows were shut by cement and air proof doors were constructed and in every chamber there was a small hole through which the gas was blown in.

HARRIS

What kind of gas was used?

HOESS

Cyclone B. It was a crystal-like substance.

HARRIS

From where did you receive these crystals?

HOESS

Originally, this Cyclone B was used in order to gas rooms and to exterminate insects. Since it was very poisonous and had to be treated with great care we assumed that it was the proper thing to use against humans.

HARRIS

Was it long before the human beings were killed by this gas?

HOESS

It depended on weather, humidity, time of day, and the number of people present in the chamber. Also the gas was not always composed the same way and was not as effective every time.

JAARI

In general. how long a time did it take?

HOESS

I saw it happen often enough. Generally it took from three to fifteen minutes. The effect varied. Wherever the gas was thrown into the chamber, the people standing right next to it were immediately anaesthetized. It gradually spread out to the far corners of the room and generally after five minutes one could no longer discern the human forms in the chamber. Everybody was dead after fifteen minutes, and the chambers were opened after a half an hour and not once was anybody alive at that time.

JAARI

How were you able to hear voices from the chambers if they were so air-proof, as you said before?

HOESS

They were air-tight, but the walls were not too thick. They were only ordinary walls.

JAARI

So what noises did you hear while you were standing outside?

HOESS

At first they all screamed, of course.

JAARI

Did you have any observation windows?

HOESS

In the chambers made up out of the farm houses we did not have any but later on in the concrete crematorium we did.

JAARI

Who delivered the gas to you?

HOESS

A gas company in Hamburg.

JAARI

To whom were the shipments of this gas addressed?

HOESS

To the Administration of the Concentration Camps Auschwitz.

JAARI

Who paid them?

HOESS

I do not know, but I assume the Administration paid for it. I am sure they were paid.

JAARI

When was the construction of the permanent gas chambers finished?

HOESS

All four were finished in 1943. We were already functioning in 1942.

JAARI

When in 1942 was the first one put into use? It was there already, perhaps, in November of 1941?

HOESS

No, 1942.

JAARI

So these gas chambers, the provincial gas chambers, were used from the summer of 1941 up until 1942.

HOESS

November of 1942, They were also used later on whenever the crematoriums were insufficient to handle the work.

JAARI

How big were the chambers in the crematorium?

HOESS

They could accommodate 2,000 persons.

JAARI

Each?

HOESS

Yes, each.

JAARI

When the people arrived in Auschwitz, there was a railroad station within the camp already, wasn't there?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

They were unloaded, and were they marched?

HOESS

In this railroad station there was a side track. The people stepped down from the train, discarded their baggage and were then examined by doctors and sorted.

JAARI

Who were the doctors? What kind of doctors did you use?

HOESS

The SS camp physicians.

JAARI

According to what principles were they sorted out?

HOESS

According to the principles of whether they were fit for work or not.

JAARI

Now you say a trainload consisted on the average of 2,000 people. How many doctors did you have assigned to check on each trainload?

HOESS

There were always two doctors on duty.

JAARI

How many trains arrived daily?

HOESS

The largest number of trains that ever arrived in one day were five. This was in 1944 during the Hungarian action.

JAARI

But on the average how many trains arrived daily?

HOESS

Two.

JAARI

4,000 people?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And two doctors examined them?

HOESS

Yes, they filed by them.

JAARI

So the examination really never took place; they just had a look?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And according to which plan was the decision taken?

HOESS

According to the order as to whether or not a man or a woman was strong and healthy.

JAARI

And what about the children? Were all the children killed?

HOESS

That depended upon their stature. Some of the 15 and 16-year old children also went to work, if they were strong.

JAARI

In other words, children below 15 were exterminated.

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Just because of Himmler's order?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And because they were dangerous to the German people?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

So a child of three or four years old was dangerous to the German people.

HOESS

No, it isn't quite that way. I should have elaborated perhaps a little more on my statement before of Himmler's explanation. He said the German people would not have carried rights unless the Jewish people were now exterminated.

JAARI

So that is really a confirmation of what you said. The German people could not rise at all because of the four-year old Jewish children.

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

In general, what was the percentage of the number of people killed and the number of people used for labor?

HOESS

It varied between 20 and 30% that were set aside for work.

JAARI

And was this the percentage with men and women inclusively?

HOESS

There were always more men fit for labor than women.

JAARI

Just to take an example, when you received the 65,000 Jews from Greece, how many of them were found fit for labor?

HOESS

The Greeks were very ill and arrived in a very bad condition so that I believe the percentage in this case was approximately 15%.

JAARI

Right now, let's go back to the procedure at Auschwitz; they arrived, they had been what you call inspected by the SS doctors, one row was marched into the camp and they were the ones who were fit for labor, is that right?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And the other row was marched into the farm houses?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Where they undressed?

HOESS

Next to where they undressed in separate shacks next to the farm houses. Later on, in inclement weather other military barracks were constructed for them.

JAARI

And then?

HOESS

And then They *<sic>* were separated according to sizes and marched in groups into the chambers.

JAARI

Groups of 200?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And the people who remained outside, could they hear what was going on in the two farm houses?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

How many people could be accommodated in each farm house for extermination?

HOESS

The farm houses accommodated in their various chambers one complete train shipment all at once.

JAARI

You told us that after one half hour the doors were opened?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Who removed the bodies?

HOESS

A commando that worked there. It was primarily a commando of inmates.

JAARI

And where were the bodies taken?

HOESS

Behind the farm houses there were open pits in which the bodies were burned.

JAARI

Who took care of the burning?

HOESS

The same commando took care of all these duties.

JAARI

And when three trains arrived a day and the first trainload was taken care of was the second train set on the side track until every trace of the first trainload had been removed?

HOESS

Yes, two trainloads could be taken care of at the same time in the two farm houses. In case a third train arrived too early, it had to wait on the side track.

JAARI

Who removed bodies from the trains when they arrived. I understand that there were bodies in the trains when they arrived.

HOESS

That was another commando of inmates who took care of that work. They would be put on a truck and thrown into these pits where they were burned.

JAARI

How many were generally dead? How many of the passengers were already dead upon arrival?

HOESS

That depended on where the train originally came from and how long they had been on their way. In the case of the Greek Jews who had been ten days in transit over 100 had died on the way.

JAARI

And what about the Hungarian?

HOESS

There were more.

JAARI

How many more?

HOESS

They varied. Sometimes the trains were composed of different parts. Sometimes a hospital had been put on to a train. In that case, of course, there were many more dead than when the trainload was from an agricultural region.

JAARI

Do you know whether or not bodies were removed from the trains while in transit?

HOESS

I never heard of that.

JAARI

And these bodies, before they were thrown on the fires, was their clothing taken off?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

By your inmates?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

What happened to the gold from the mouths of the victims?

HOESS

That was melted.

JAARI

That I can understand, but was it removed from the victims before execution or after execution?

HOESS

They were removed from the bodies before they were taken to the pits to be burned.

JAARI

Who did that? Who removed the gold?

HOESS

There were among these commandos of inmates a few dentists.

JAARI

Who supervised their work?

HOESS

The dental work was supervised by an SS Dentist whose duty it was to see that the work was done in a satisfactory manner.

JAARI

And when did the victims take off their rings, bracelets, ear rings, etc.?

HOESS

They took that off at the time when they got undressed with the exception of rings, which they kept on when they went into the gas chambers. Those were removed after the bodies were removed from the gas chambers.

JAARI

Just a moment — returning to the dental work, were their gold teeth pulled out?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Did you have any complaints from the surrounding villages about the smell from these pits?

HOESS

When there was an Eastern wind the smell could be noticed across the Vistula.

JAARI

And you received complaints from the Poles?

HOESS

No, they didn't complain; it was only discussed among the population but they did not complain.

JAARI

Well, this will be all for today.

INGRID and two men enter the room.

INGRID

(speaking to HARRIS)

Gentlemen, please don't hate my husband.

HARRIS

What we think about your husband is not important. What IS important is that your husband be forthright with us so we can determine his degree of culpability in the crimes that we are investigating.

INGRID

I just ask that you treat him fairly.

HARRIS

We are treating him fairly, which is more than can be said for the way he treated his victims.

MAN #1

(angry, speaks directly to HOESS)

I was one a Russian POW you received at Auschwitz and you tried to work me to death but I survived so I could live to tell you to your face that what you did was wrong, and what's even worse is the fact that YOU KNEW BETTER, that you KNEW that what you were doing was wrong, but you did it anyway. Outrageous!

MAN #2

(angry, speaks directly to HOESS)

I'm a Jew and you killed my entire family! For no reason other than they were Jewish! Like you, I was born and raised in Germany, I served in the German army in World War One, paid my taxes, my children attended German public schools, we all spoke German, in fact it was the only language we knew, my wife's father was even a high level official in the Kaiser's government, yet that did not stop you from murdering my entire family, leaving me with nothing ... NOTHING! *(pounds his fist on the table.)* What do you have to say about THAT!?

HOESS

Gentlemen, I was just doing my duty.

INGRID

(in anguish, screams at HOESS)

RUDOLF, WHAT DID YOU DO?

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: April 2, 1946

Place: The interrogation room.

Seated at the table are HOESS and JAARI

JAARI

Are you the same Rudolf Hoess who appeared for interrogation yesterday afternoon?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

You understand your statements are still made under oath?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Did the selecting of the able bodied Jews take place in a building, or outside?

HOESS

Outside as before mentioned when the train arrived.

JAARI

That is, the Jews marched past the two SS doctors?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

So, when a train with two thousand persons arrived, two thousand marched past the two doctors. and they just nodded, this one to labor and this one to the plant.

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

What kind of an examination was that. Was that a sufficient examination?

HOESS

Yes, the doctors said that was sufficient.

JAARI

Were they real high-classed doctors?

HOESS

Not all of them. There were a lot of doctors around.

JAARI

They must have been exceedingly clever, just to look at persons dressed up and still being able to say, "He is good and this other one is a bad one."

HOESS

Yes, that is the way in which it was done.

JAARI

Have you ever been examined by a doctor for military duty?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Did he just take a glance at you, and then say that you were OK?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

What did he do to examine you?

HOESS

I had to undress, and was closely examined, my heart, lungs and other organs.

JAARI

Did not it ever enter your mind that the people that you were to employ in your war industries, and in your factories should be perfect specimens of manhood, physically strong and able bodied persons?

HOESS

Only those who appeared at first glance to be strong and healthy were selected.

JAARI

Now long did a laborer last, on an average?

HOESS

That depended where he worked and at what he worked.

JARRI

How many hours a day did he work?

HOESS

In an armament industry, ten hours. It also depended on the route of march from the place where they were housed. Also whether they did outside or inside work, and also whether they worked in subterranean rooms.

JAARI

And how much food did such a worker receive?

HOESS

Those who worked in permanent industries received a normal food ration from the economic office, and they also received an additional supply of bread rations.

JAARI

Did they receive the same food as the guards?

HOESS

No, the guards were fed according to military rations, and the prisoners were fed civilian rations.

JAARI

But the prisoners quota was so large that it did not matter whether or not workers survived?

HOESS

No, that is not correct, No, I was reprimanded repeatedly by my superior authority, OGRU Fu <SIC> Pohl, who complained that not enough workers or men fit for labor were selected and used for labor purposes.

JAARI

But on the other hand you received complaints from Mueller and Eichmann that not enough were executed, didn't you?

HOESS

Yes, that is correct, that was the opposition, or contrast.

JAARI

Which point of view won?

HOESS

Pohl won, because the armament industry needed so many men that it was made a duty of every camp commandant, no matter where he was to preserve as many labors as possible for purposes of labor.

JAARI

But still Auschwitz succeeded in exterminating quite a number, something like in the millions, didn't they?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

How many millions?

HOESS

I again refer back to the statement made to me by Eichmann in March or April, 1944, when he had to go and report to Reichfuehrer that his offices had turned over two and one-half million to the camp.

JAARI

To the Auschwitz area?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Only in the Auschwitz area?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Two and one-half million, you say?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Are yout <sic> you a little confused just now?

HOESS

The reasons why I remember the number, two and one-half million, is because it was repeatedly told to me that Auschwitz was to have exterminated four or five million, but that was not so. We had an order by the Reichsfuehrer of SS to destroy all materials in numbers immediately, and not to preserve any records of the executions that were being carried out.

JAARI

The two and one-half million were people delivered to Auschwitz, were they the ones that were executed?

HOESS

Executed and exterminated.

JAARI

Then quite number more were delivered to the camp of Auschwitz?

HOESS

Yes. According to the percentage that I have already mentioned, you would have to add twenty to thirty percent, who were used for labor purposes.

JAARI

Were these two and one-half million gassed?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And how about the half of million, which were put to death by other means?

HOESS

They were those who died from diseases, and who perished by other sicknesses in the camp.

JAARI

Didn't you know what was going on in Auschwitz up until the last moment even when you had left your position as commandant?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

You were with the administration and economic office, weren't you?

HOESS

That is with the superior authority.

JAARI

So you were promoted from commandant of Auschwitz to what?

HOESS

As chief of an Amt, or a department. In one of the departments as inspector of concentration camp.

JAARI

Was it Amt VI?

HOESS

That was in the Economic Amt Group D, in the economic and administration main office, That is, Amt Group entitled "Inspectorate of Concentration Camps."

JAARI

The people who were to be gassed in the permanent plants undressed in the free outside these large buildings. didn't they?

HOESS

No. there was a special room.

JAARI

Just a moment ago you said they were undressed in the free outside?

HOESS

No. The train was unloaded, they deposited their baggage, they were sorted out according to those fit for labor, and then the ones who had been selected marched away, and all the others undressed in an undressing room.

JAARI

What was told would happen to them there?

HOESS

They were told that they were going to be conditioned to take a bath, and to be deloused and disinfected, and the signs were there corresponding to these institutions.

JAARI

They undressed and put their things away just the same way you told us yesterday, as it would happen in the farm houses?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

How many people could be gassed at the same time in one of the chambers in a permanent plant?

HOESS

In one chamber, two thousand.

JAARI

A whole train load?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And. how did the gassing take place?

HOESS

It was all below ground. In the ceiling of these gas chambers, there were three or four openings that were fenced around with a grating that reached to the floor of the gas chamber, and through these openings the gas was poured into the gas chambers.

JAARI

And then what happened?

HOESS

The same thing happened as I already told you happened in the farm houses. It depended on the weather conditions. If it were dry and a lot of people were in the chambers, it went comparatively fast.

JAARI

How long a time did the gassing take?

HOESS

As I already stated, from three or five minutes to fifteen minutes.

JAARI

And how would you know when they all were dead?

HOESS

There was an aperture, or vision slit through which one could look.

JAARI

And did you hear any noises from the outside?

HOESS

Yes, but only muffled, because the walls were very thick cement, so that it was almost impossible to hear anything.

JAARI

And after how long a time were the doors opened?

HOESS

After half an hour, as in the case of the other places.

JAARI

And who went in to remove the bodies?

HOESS

The detail of prisoners who were working there. I might add that in the installations of the plants electrical ventilators were added which removed the gas fumes.

JAARI

But was not it quite dangerous work for these inmates to go into these chambers and work among the bodies and among the gas fumes?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

Did they carry gas masks?

HOESS

They had some, but they did not need them as nothing ever happened.

JAARI

Then the bodies were removed to where?

HOESS

Into the crematorium that was situated above.

JAARI

Did they have elevators?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Where were the rings removed. Was it in the gas chamber itself?

HOESS

No. there was an anti-chamber outside the gas chamber just before the elevator where the rings were removed.

JAARI

And where they pulled out the gold teeth?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

How were the crematoriums arranged?

HOESS

There were four crematoriums. The first two larger ones had five double furnaces and they could burn two thousand human beings in twelve hours.

JAARI

What kind of fuel did you, use?

HOESS

Coke.

JAARI

And the bodies were just shoved in, were they?

HOESS

There were little barrows used in the crematoriums and the bodies were pushed up to the opening and slid in.

JAARI

How many bodies could one oven take or hold?

HOESS

The double furnace could take in three corpses at one time.

JAARI

How many minutes would it take before the body was reduced to ashes?

HOESS

It was difficult to say. When the full burning power of this furnace was still available, the process took place comparatively fast, but later on after a lot of bodies had been burned, it was more slowly, but then it also depended on the body composition of the corpse.

JAARI

What kind of bodies burned faster?

HOESS

The heavy set fat persons.

JAARI

Did you get any fat persons, or strong persons into the ovens?

HOESS

I do not mean strong bodies, but heavy fat persons.

JAARI

Were you often present at these executions and burnings?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Why?

HOESS

Because I had to do this. I had to supervise these proceedings.

JAARI

Why did you have to supervise these proceedings?

HOESS

To see that everything was carried out in an orderly manner.

JAARI

Was it interesting?

HOESS

No, certainly not.

JAARI

Why not? They were enemies of German people who were executed, weren't they?

HOESS

But the procedure was not such that one might take an interest in.

JAARI

You told me yesterday that Himmler had explained to you that every Jew irrespective of sex, or age, was a danger to the German people?

HOESS

Yes

JAARI

So it must have been quite a satisfaction for you, wasn't it, to see that danger to the German people was removed so efficiently?

HOESS

No, certainly not.

JAARI

You reported very often in Berlin, didn't you?

HOESS

No, never.

JAARI

You never left Auschwitz after the execution on a large scale started?

HOESS

Not to report about these proceedings.

JAARI

What did you report in Berlin?

HOESS

I was called for a commanders' meeting which was called by my superior authority, and my superior officer did the questioning as to what they wanted to know from me, but I do not know any more what they were.

JAARI

You remember in November 1942 you were, in Berlin at Eichmann's a office to a meeting of experts belonging to the section organized for the solution of the Jewish question?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Did you give a lecture there?

HOESS

No, not I.

JAARI

Didn't you explain how efficient the set-up in Auschwitz worked?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

Who gave the lectures there?

HOESS

Eichmann and various leaders from the countries of Belgium, and Hungary and so on, whatever they were.

JAARI

What did Eichmann lecture upon?

HOESS

It was the other way around. The various representatives of the different countries had to report on the conditions in their countries to Eichmann.

JAARI

But in the presence of all the participants in the meeting?

HOESS

Yes. It was more in the manner of a round table discussion. Every participant asked Eichmann what he was to do about difficulties that had come up. For instance, in France, it was asked what was to be done about difficulties that had come up with the railroad and the Wehrmacht, and so on, and then these questions were answered.

JAARI

What difficulties were there in connection with the Wehrmacht?

HOESS

Mostly it was a question of transport and the Wehrmacht control of rail transportation, that they did not always make the rolling stock available.

JAARI

What was Eichmann's answer to this difficulty?

HOESS

Eichmann told them they should turn in their difficulties. That he knows them, and that he knew they might request assistance there, and, besides that, the people at the meeting had to disclose how many Jews they had already evacuated, and how many according to their estimate were still to be expected, and that was also the reason why I had to be present.

JAARI

Was the word "Endloesung", final solution, used at this meeting?

HOESS

Yes, that was Eichmann's expression.

JAARI

What did that mean?

HOESS

That meant extermination, as I have already explained it to you.

JAARI

Can you state, absolutely definitely, what did the word "Endloesung", final solution, stand for?

HOESS

I can only tell you what I understand by it, as I understood it from the Reichsfuehrer.

JAARI

And what did it meant?

HOESS

It meant, extermination.

JAARI

Of whom?

HOESS

Of the Jews.

JAARI

So that the word or words "final solution" were used in this circle, which meant biological extermination of the Jews?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And after this meeting, did you go back to Auschwitz?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

What was the next meeting you attended?

HOESS

Never attended another meeting with Eichmann.

JAARI

In 1943, were you in Berlin at a meeting where Eichmann explained to the different ministries, or representatives from the different ministries, what "Endloesung" meant?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

Where he explained that "Endloesung" allegedly only meant sterilization and evacuation of the Jews?

HOESS

No, I do not know.

JAARI

Did you hear of such a meeting?

HOESS

No, this is the first time I heard about it.

JAARI

Are you sure of that?

HOESS

Yes, I only participated in one meeting with Eichmann; never at any other time.

JAARI

You were never at any meeting in which representatives of the ministry were present?

HOESS

No, never.

JAARI

Why did you go to Budapest in May 1944?

HOESS

Because I had received a commission by my superior Gruppenfuehrer Gluecks who had charged me to go there to find out how many Jews could still be expected for the armament industries that were to be started, so they could know how many they should count on for manpower.

JAARI

How did you find that out?

HOESS

First, after I had received this commission of Gruppenfuehrer Gluecks, I got in touch with Gruppenfuehrer Mueller in Berlin. In order to find out information from him because he was the superior authority.

JAARI

Just a moment. Was he the superior echelon for Gluecks?

HOESS

No, this has nothing to do with Gluecks. He was the superior authority for Eichmann.

JAARI

Why did you go to Mueller?

HOESS

Because Gruppenfuehrer Mueller had to be informed by his expert, Eichmann how many Jews could still be expected from Hungary.

JAARI

How would Eichmann know that?

HOESS

Because Eichmann was the competent man charged with this question.

JAARI

For what was he competent? Hungary was not Germany?

HOESS

But Eichmann was in Hungary at that time.

JAARI

What did he do there?

HOESS

He was in charge of all of the evacuation, of the entire evacuation.

JAARI

What evacuation?

HOESS

The evacuation of Jews.

JAARI

But there were no German Jews in Hungary?

HOESS

No Hungarian Jews.

JAARI

How could the Germans take care of the evacuation, as you call it, of Hungarian Jews?

HOESS

I don't know that.

JAARI

Is not that peculiar?

HOESS

It happened in other countries, too.

JAARI

But Hungary was an Ally?

HOESS

I don't know the Agreements that had been reached between the governments of these various countries.

JAARI

But you know there were agreements between Hungary and Germany?

HOESS

Yes, because otherwise they could not have been evacuated.

JAARI

Have you seen any agreement?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

Eichmann tell you anything about agreements?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

In the Hotel Astoria in Budapest?

HOESS

No. I was never in any hotel in Budapest, but I was in his office on Schwabenberg in Budapest.

JAARI

Where did you stay in Budapest?

HOESS

I stayed with Eichmann in his house.

JAARI

Let's go back to Berlin, and talk about Gruppenfuehrer Mueller, what kind of information did he give you?

HOESS

He could not give me any information. He only told me that I should go to Budapest myself and get in touch with Eichmann and ask him about it.

JAARI

So you went to Budapest?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

When was that?

HOESS

I cannot give you the date exactly.

JAARI

What month?

HOESS

It was in the Spring 1944.

JAARI

So when you saw Eichmann, what did he tell you?

HOESS

He also could not give an exact figure, but that it was estimated about two million Jews were present in Hungary.

JAARI

And all two million were to be sent to Auschwitz?

HOESS

He said right away this estimate in his opinion was too high. He did not know how many there were, but that he believed that number was too much.

JAARI

Did he feel sorry he could not get two million?

HOESS

No, he merely said that was not correct.

JAARI

How many did he expect to get from Hungary?

HOESS

Half a million.

JAARI

All for labor purposes?

HOESS

No, Eichmann had nothing to do with selecting those who were fit for labor. His office took no interest in this question at all.

JAARI

They only had the interest of getting them exterminated, hadn't they?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

So Eichmann could not give you any figures. Who gave you the figures?

HOESS

Nobody could give me any information.

JAARI

Who was present at that discussion with Eichmann in his office?

HOESS

So far as I know they were Eichmann, Hunsche and Brunner.

JAARI

And Wisliceny?

HOESS

I met him later in Mungatz.

JAARI

During your discussion with Eichmann in his office in Budapest, did you discuss the percentage of Jews who possibly could be used for labor?

HOESS

Yes, that was the very reason for my trip.

JAARI

How many persons did you estimate could be used from Hungary, of the Jews, for purposes other than gassing?

HOESS

I didn't know that at the time. I only found that out later.

JAARI

I am not talking about the number of Jews you were going to get for labor, or other purposes. I am talking about the percentage?

HOESS

I cannot get any picture of that.

JAARI

But, you had an experience second to no other in the whole world, as to the percentage of Jews who could be used for labor. You had viewed Jews arriving in Auschwitz for years, and yesterday you mentioned a percentage between twenty to thirty percent were useful, is that right?

HOESS

Yes, but I did also mention that it was different for each country.

JAARI

But you hoped, didn't you, that you would be able to get around twenty to twenty five percent for labor?

HOESS

I hoped even more than that. I hoped that in Hungary we should be able to use at least thirty-five percent for labor purposes.

JAARI

Did you mention that to Eichmann?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

How did he like it?

HOESS

He said that he could not form an opinion, because he had not seen them, so he could not make any estimate.

JAARI

What was your reason to believe that thirty-five percent of the Hungarian Jews could be used for labor?

HOESS

Because for a large part, the Jews there were people from the farms, and from the agriculture districts. .

JAARI

So you were unable to get any definite information in Eichmann's offices, then you decided to take a little trip around to the concentration camps to look at the Jews, didn't you?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Then you went first of all to Mungatz?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

Who was in charge there?

HOESS

Wisliceny.

JAARI

Why was he there?

HOESS

He was in charge for the total area of Mungatz, that is to say Section No. 1.

JAARI

How was it that the German SS Hauptsturmfuehrer was in charge of the collecting of Hungarian Jews?

HOESS

No, that is not correct. The actual collecting and imprisonment of these Hungarian Jews was carried out by the Hungarian police and Gendarmerie.

JAARI

And what was Wisliceny's job there?

HOESS

So far as I could find out he was commissioned by Eichmann to determine that the collection and the gathering of the Jews were carried out in proper manner.

JAARI

What is a proper manner?

HOESS

Proper manner was perhaps of two functions, to see that the Hungarian police stayed to the agreements that had been reached between the various governments, but I do not know what agreements they were and that all the Jews were collected.

JAARI

Did he have a Hungarian opposite number? Was his name Ferency?

HOESS

Ferency is the name I heard in Budapest. He was a Chief of the Hungarian Field Gendarmerie, but I do not know the name of Wisliceny's opposite number.

JAARI

How long did you stay in Mungatz?

HOESS

One day.

JAARI

What did you do there?

HOESS

I went out to the brickyards where the Jews had been collected, and took about one-thousand Jews at random, and with the help of a Jewish doctor <*sic*>, who had been given the job by a Hungarian Officer from the Field Gendarmerie, selected those people whom he considered fit for labor, or in order to get an idea.

JAARI

How many were fit for labor?

HOESS

About thirty percent in Mungatz, but there were many brickyards in Mungatz, and in the vicinity of Mungatz, about thirty.

JAARI

So you went from one camp to another?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And the average was about thirty percent?

HOESS

Yes, the average for the area of Mungatz was about thirty percent.

JAARI

And this was Sector 1?

HOESS

Yes. I am not quite sure that I can state definitely whether this sector was called Sector 1, or Sector 1V. It was the area "Karpatho-Ukraine."

JAARI

And then you travelled from sector to sector, and made your investigation.

HOESS

No, I only travelled to the south in the neighborhood of the Danube River. That was another sector. I didn't know whether No. 1, or No. 1V, but it was in the southern sector, and there Dannecker was in charge.

JAARI

And what was the quality of the Jews there?

HOESS

It was less good, because there were more city people there.

JAARI

Then you returned to Budapest?

HOESS

Yes.

JAARI

And reported to whom?

HOESS

Again to Eichmann's office, and then I returned immediately to Berlin.

JAARI

Did you see Mueller?

HOESS

No. I did not go there.

JAARI

Did you see any well known faces in Budapest while you were outside your narrow circle of collaborators?

HOESS

I only went, together with Eichmann, to the Obergruppenfuehrer Winkelmann higher SS and Police leader, because I had to report to him anyhow.

JAARI

Did you meet Kaltenbrunner there?

HOESS

No.

JAARI

Did you hear that Kaltenbrunner was in Budapest?

HOESS

No, not when I was there.

JAARI

We will finish now and continue the hearing later on.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time: April 16, 1946

Place: Same interrogation room.

Seated at the right side of the table is OTTO MOLL, who is shackled to a guard; seated on the left side, wearing an American military uniform, is Lieut.-Colonel SMITH W. BROOKHART.

BROOKHART

You are the same Otto Moll who appeared here this morning and you understand that your statements here are made under oath?

MOLL

Yes. May I make a request please?

BROOKHART

Yes.

MOLL

In Landsberg I made the request that I be confronted with Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of the Auschwitz Camp, so that I may testify in front of Hoess and Hoess may testify in front of me. I request you now that this may be granted. I would like to have Hoess testify in my presence, as I would like to see him make the statements in my presence and I can testify as to the truth.

BROOKHART

Assuming that you are confronted by Hoess, are you going to tell the truth, or are you going to continue to give us the same kind of a story you gave us this morning?

MOLL

No. I want Hoess to come here and state just what orders he gave me and I can say `yes' or `no' as to what is true and what is not true. Hoess should come here and say what orders he gave me, what duties I fulfilled and in what manner I accomplished them and then I can deny or confirm what he says.

BROOKHART

We will conduct the interrogation in the manner we wish and on the basis of the subjects in which we are interested. You are to listen carefully, you are not to interrupt or make any sound whatsoever until you are requested. Do you understand that?

MOLL

I will remain silent and I will listen to him.

BROOKHART

You will be given the opportunity to speak at the proper time.

MOLL

Please approve this request that Hoess may come in here and repeat his incriminating testimony against me. It hurts me to see that he, the commandant, is running around free, when I have to go around shackled to a guard.

BROOKHART

We are not interested whatsoever in your feelings in this matter.

(RUDOLF HOESS, commandant of the Auschwitz Camp, enters room)

BROOKHART

Are you the same Rudolf Hoess that has appeared here on numerous occasions and given testimony?

HOESS

Yes.

BROOKHART

Do you understand that the statements you make here this afternoon are made under oath?

HOESS

Yes.

BROOKHART

Do you know this person sitting to your right that is shackled to the guard?

HOESS

Yes.

BROOKHART

What is his name?

HOESS

Otto Moll.

BROOKHART

Where did you know him?

HOESS

First at Sachsenhausen and later at Auschwitz.

BROOKHART

What did this Otto Moll do at Sachsenhausen and later at Auschwitz?

HOESS

In Sachsenhausen he was a gardener and later at Auschwitz he was used as a leader of a work detail and later on he was used as a supervisor during the various actions.

BROOKHART

You mean the actions whereby people were executed and later cremated?

HOESS

Yes.

BROOKHART

You told us this morning about his first assignment in 1941 when farm buildings were converted into an extermination plant. Will you restate what you said about that?

HOESS

At first he worked on the farm and then I later moved him into the farm house, which was used as a professional extermination plant.

Questions directed to OTTO MOLL

BROOKHART

Otto Moll, is what the witness has just said true?

MOLL

First, I was used in work in connection with the excavation of the mass graves. Hoess must know that. He is in error if he said that I worked in the buildings where the gassing was carried out. At first I was used for the excavation of the mass graves and he must remember that. Hoess, do you remember Swosten, Blank, Omen, Hatford and Garduck? Those are the people who worked in the building at the time when you alleged I worked there and I was working on excavations. Surely Hoess remembers that.

Question directed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART.

Is that right?

HOESS

Moll is correct insofar as he says he was first used in the excavations - that was before he was being used for the executions.

Question directed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

What is being said here, as I told you this morning, is that you are responsible for this operation, namely for killing and destruction of the bodies in the first improvised slaughter house.

MOLL

I was responsible to see that corpses were burned after the people were killed. I was never responsible for the actual supervision of the killing. It was always the officers or the physicians who were present at the time. As my commandant, at the time, Hoess should be able to confirm this.

Questions directed to RUDOLF HOESS

BROOKHART

What do you say about this?

HOESS

As I said this morning, Moll is only partly correct. As I explained, the gas was actually thrown into the chamber by the medical personnel and Moll was not responsible for supervising the entire process, beginning with the arrival of the transport and the burning of the corpses, he was only responsible for a part of this process, at least initially.

BROOKHART

You did say that he was responsible for seeing that these people were exterminated.

HOESS

I could have been misunderstood. What I said, or meant to say, was that Moll was responsible in the buildings where he worked. At first, to see that the people were undressed in orderly fashion, and after they were killed, to see that the bodies were disposed of in an orderly fashion, later on when the extensive extermination plant was completed, he was responsible for the entire plant.

BROOKHART

Just what operations in the plant was he responsible for?

HOESS

He was responsible for everything up to and including the actual leading into the gas chambers of the people and after that, to remove the bodies to burn them.

BROOKHART

Will you please repeat about Moll shooting people through the neck.

HOESS

As I explained this morning, those that were too weak to be moved to the gas chamber, or who could not be moved for some other reason, were shot through the neck by him or ... some of the other fellows around, with small caliber arms.

Questions directed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART.

Well, what do you say about that?

MOLL

It may be possible that some of them were shot by me, but it was a comparatively small number and I would like to know if Hoess ever saw me do it.

BROOKHART

I told you this morning that Hoess said he saw you do it many times and so did many others.

Questions directed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

Hoess, isn't that right?

HOESS

Yes, it is true. I mentioned this morning that there were comparatively few killed in that manner.

BROOKHART

You could not tell if it was a few dozen or a few hundred. That was your problem.

HOESS

I cannot quote you an exact number - that is impossible for so many years; there were many. Sometimes there were a few out of each incoming transport and sometimes there were none. That is why I cannot tell you the exact number.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

Well, this is the first thing you have admitted, now you are telling the truth about which you lied this morning. Are you ready to tell us the truth regarding your responsibility about other operations?

MOLL

Yes, I will tell you the truth as long as my Commandant is present. Let my Commandant tell you what I did and what my duties were.

BROOKHART

We know what Hoess said. What we want to know is your story. You are asking us for the opportunity to tell your story and that caused us to bring Hoess in here.

MOLL

No, I asked that I be interrogated in the presence of Hoess.

Question addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

You told us this morning that Moll was considered the best man for exterminations because he handled the teams of prisoners and guards better than your other subordinates. Is that right?

HOESS

Yes.

Question addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

Moll, suppose you tell us what was your method of selection of foremen from the Capos and just what you found to be the best method of handling the guards that had charge of the transports after they came in.

MOLL

When I was ordered to do this work, the work details had already been selected. My Oberfuehrers had already selected the Capos or foremen, whatever you call them. I carried out correctly the work in all kinds of weather. I was never drunk on duty, or when I was with the prisoners, and I never mistreated any of the prisoners. I achieved good success in the work of the prisoners because I, myself, helped them with their work with my own hands. The prisoners had respect for me because I always behaved as an exemplary soldier toward them, therefore, I was designated for any kind of difficult work that came up. May I ask Hoess to confirm that?

Question addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

Is that correct?

HOESS

Yes, that is what I stated this morning.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

You were decorated for your work, were you not?

MOLL

I received a decoration for my services. Almost all of them who served for a number of years in the whole of Germany received these decorations. I did not receive any decoration for special work that I had done like this work. I would not have wanted to receive a decoration for this kind of work.

BROOKHART

Why?

MOLL

Because I did not look upon this work as honorable work.

BROOKHART

Did you ever protest?

MOLL

I asked many times why those things had to be done, why they could not be stopped. I even asked Hoess and he answered that he himself did not like this, but he himself had strict orders and nothing could be done about it. He, like the rest of us, suffered by this work and none of us were really sane anymore.

Questions addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

Is that right, Hoess?

HOESS

Yes, others also said that and already testified to that in the Reich.

BROOKHART

When do you think you lost your sanity, Hoess?

HOESS

I think you mean that: just when our nerves started to crack. I can testify that I was not healthy in 1942. I told you about my leave in 1943, however, I had to do those things as there was no one there who would do it for us. There were strict orders and they had to be followed. Many of the others felt as I did and subordinate leaders came to me in the same manner as Moll did and discussed it and they had the same feeling.

BROOKHART

Do you think that Moll is crazy?

HOESS

No.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

How long do you think you have been without your sanity?

MOLL

I did not mean to say that I was insane or I have been insane, what I mean is that my nerves have cracked and have cracked repeatedly. They were very bad after the accident I described in 1937, later, they were very bad after I had an attack of typhus and I was in the hospital and was granted a leave of absence by the doctors for the conditions of my nerves. I was never declared unfit for duty on account of bad nerve, or because of the so-called paragraph 51.

BROOKHART

How many people do you estimate went through the operation, which you were responsible for – how many victims?

MOLL

When you use the words – 'you were responsible' – I want to emphasize again that I do not wish to have that word applied in any way to the actual killing of the people, as I was not responsible for the actual physical ending of their lives and I will not admit that as it is not the fact.

BROOKHART

You did not pull the trigger, but you caused someone else to do it. Is that your position?

MOLL

I do not understand the question.

BROOKHART

How many victims were exterminated in the camp from 1941 on?

MOLL

I don't know the number and I don't think I would be able to give you any number at all as far as the total number of victims goes. I believe Hoess might know that.

BROOKHART

The only thing we are interested in is what you have knowledge of.

MOLL

When I was in charge of these excavations, as I told you about before, together with another comrade, which was confirmed by Hoess today, we put between 30,000 and 40,000 people in these mass graves. It was the most terrible work that could be carried out by any human being.

BROOKHART

Stick to the figures.

MOLL

I don't know who those people were or how they got there. I only excavated the mass graves. I was responsible for burning the bodies right there.

Question addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

How does that figure strike you, Hoess?

HOESS

It is impossible for him to know the exact figures, but they appear to me to be much too small as far as I can remember today. The people buried in the two big mass graves of the so-called dugouts one and two, amounted to 106,000 or 107,000 people.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

MOLL

I could not complete the excavation detail, which I mentioned before, I then got the attack of typhus.

BROOKHART

What do you estimate was the number of bodies you handled?

MOLL

It was later they went through my crematory plant and I would say, between 40,000 and 50,000, that is at the crematory where I was responsible. I was not responsible for the two large crematories, as they were two SS corps [members] Nussfeld and also Foss, who were responsible for the two large cremations and Hoess will remember that.

BROOKHART

You tell us about the figures you know.

MOLL

I told you the number, maybe 50,000 and possibly there were more.

BROOKHART

Is that for all times from 1941 clear to the end?

MOLL

Yes, that is from 1941 for the entire length of my service when I had anything to do with the matter.

BROOKHART

Don't you think you are much too modest? You had the reputation of being the biggest killer in Auschwitz. The figures there run into millions. Won't you change your answer?

MOLL

It is not true that I was the greatest killer in Auschwitz.

BROOKHART

You were the greatest cremator.

MOLL

That is not true either. The number is not right and is probably brought up by the men who want me to be punished by death.

Questions addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

Hoess, what do you think would be the correct figures?

HOESS

Moll, in my opinion, cannot possibly have any idea of the number of killings in the dugouts where he was working and responsible. At any rate, they were far, far too low - that is, Moll's figure.

BROOKHART

What figure would you attribute to Moll's responsibility?

HOESS

It is impossible for me to quote the exact, or even a very rough figure, of the number of corpses that were handled by Moll. As the use of the extermination plant varied at all times, I do not know how many corpses I would have to attribute to Moll and how many to Nussfeld and the others.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

Moll, how many women and children do you estimate were among the bodies you handled?

MOLL

Men and women were there in about equal numbers and the ratio of children to the other people was about one child in one hundred people brought in. Sometimes transports arrived without children. I would also like to say that I was not constantly working with these transports and of course, I cannot tell you what happened during my absence when I was not there, as I was away on leave of absence, etc.

BROOKHART

We have heard that there were more children than that. Do you want to change your statement?

MOLL

As I told you, it may be one child in a hundred or it may be more. I cannot remember that exactly.

Questions addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

What do you say to that Hoess?

HOESS

My estimate is that one-third of all the victims would be men and two-thirds women and children. I am not able to quote the exact ratio between women and children, as that depended or/and [sic] varied greatly with the transports that came in, however, I do remember that in the transports that came in from the Ukraine and Hungary the proportion of children was particularly high.

BROOKHART

In what year was that?

HOESS

That was particularly in 1943, or it may have been early in the year 1944.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

Moll, yesterday, you told us you had two installations and spoke of the furnace in which there were twelve large ovens and two additional with two ovens each, making a total of twenty-eight separate burning units. How many human beings could you cremate at one time?

MOLL

Two to three corpses could be burned in one furnace at one time. The furnaces were built large enough for that.

BROOKHART

Did you operate at full capacity often?

MOLL

I would like to emphasize that I had no responsibility at all with the cremation in the stoves. What I was responsible for was the burning of the corpses out in the open. Corporals Nussfeld and Foss were responsible for the cremation in the furnaces.

Questions addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

Is that right, Hoess?

HOESS

First of all, Moll is slightly wrong in regard to the figures he quoted on the furnaces. The two large units were made up of five double furnaces each and the others of four double furnaces each. It is true that Nussfeld and Foss were responsible for the furnace details, each had a large and a small one and Moll was responsible for the bodies out in the open. Moll was responsible for the disposition of the ashes, but later on I put Moll in charge of the entire cremation. This was in the year 1944.

BROOKHART

Was that in the two months you were back at Auschwitz after you were away?

HOESS

Yes, that is when I was transferred back to Auschwitz.

BROOKHART

How often were the crematoria detail of prisoners exterminated?

HOESS

As far as I can remember, it was twice before I left for the first time and they were exterminated again after the action against the Hungarians was completed.

BROOKHART

On whose orders were the prisoners exterminated?

HOESS

I received that order from Eichmann and he ordered in particular that the furnace commandoes should be shot every three months, however, I failed to comply with these orders as I did not think it was right.

Questions addressed to Otto Moll

BROOKHART

You have said that your detail was never exterminated. What do you say now?

MOLL

No, that is not true. The work detail with which I worked was never exterminated as long as I was there and as long as I worked. As regard to the first work detail I had for the excavation of mass graves, which I had to leave because of my attack of typhus, they may have been exterminated when I returned to duty. The only thing that I know of is when I left, the last work detail I worked with, was still alive and that is, every member of the detail was alive when I left. Sometime later when I left mutiny broke out in the camp. I know that the entire guard company at the camp was used to suppress this mutiny. I was not there, I was at Gleiwitz at the time. I do not know anything about this but Hoess can tell you that.

BROOKHART

Did you ever cremate any of your crematorium detail?

MOLL

No.

BROOKHART

You mentioned that in the killing of the people in the gas chambers that it took only one half minute. On what do you base that?

MOLL

The gas was poured in through an opening. About one half minute after the gas was poured in, of course I am merely estimating this time as we never had a stop-watch to clock it and we were not interested, at any rate, after one half minute there were no more heavy sounds and no sounds at all that could be heard from the gas chamber.

BROOKHART

What kind of sounds were heard before that?

MOLL

The people wept and screeched.

BROOKHART

You observed all of this and heard the sounds?

MOLL

Yes, I had to hear this because I was near there with my work detail. There is nothing that I could do against this as I had no possibility of changing this in any way.

BROOKHART

We are not interested in your opinions on that. You helped make the arrangements to put them in the gas chamber and burned them afterwards when they were killed. The only thing you failed to do personally was pour in the gas. Is that it?

MOLL

I was not responsible for the preparations as there were no special preparations. The victims were led to the gas chamber by the duty officer and then there was a work detail from the administrator, they told them to undress, there was a further detail from the proper administration [sic] which were responsible to collect all the valuables from the people. The whole thing happened vary correctly and in no instance was there any reason to interfere. I had no right to interfere, always a doctor supervised the entire thing.

BROOKHART

You recall yesterday, you said you were told that if any prisoners coming off of new transports detailed for the gas chambers would escape, you would be court-martialled.

MOLL

I was talking about the work detail, not about the transports.

BROOKHART

This came at the time you were testifying about your responsibilities at the crematorium.

MOLL

No, I only say as far as the work detail is concerned for which I was responsible.

BROOKHART

We will not argue about it, as the notes show otherwise.

Questions addressed to Rudolf Hoess

BROOKHART

What do you say of the detail of Moll.

HOESS

Moll is not looking at this the right way. It actually is true and I have explained this before, that the officer was responsible for the entire transport, that is he was responsible to see that all were unloaded from each transport, the doctors were responsible for the phase of work to see that the people were killed and all the bodies disposed of. It was the responsibility of the subordinate, like Moll, to see that the people actually got into the gas chambers under the doctors and then to see that their bodies were burned. As far as the subordinate leader was concerned, it was his responsibility to see that none of his work detail escaped and he would be responsible to see that none got away. In the last analysis I was responsible for the entire matter, that is for the entire situation dealing with these transports.

BROOKHART

You have told us about some of the problems of making sure that everyone was exterminated. For instance, that mothers hid their children under their clothing after they undressed. Who was the person that gathered up the children, searched them out and put them into the gas chamber?

HOESS

I think that this thing has been slightly misunderstood. The way this thing happened is that mothers had babies with them, who would be wrapped in blankets or cloth. The people had been told that they were going to take a bath, they had no idea that they were going to be killed. It was not the idea, the mothers did not want to take the children with them to the bath and they left them outside. Later on, the work detail from the administration which was responsible for them, would pick up the babies and put them in the gas chamber then.

BROOKHART

Was it Moll's responsibility to see that the children were disposed of?

HOESS

Yes, but it would not mean on the other hand that Moll would have the particular task of picking out the babies from under the blankets. I did not tell any one of the officers or non-coms [NCOs] that they would be responsible for any particular thing, but the entire team was responsible for the extermination. It was to be done and all of them carried out the orders smoothly and properly.

*Questions addressed to Otto Moll***BROOKHART**

You, Moll, said that your team respected you because you gave them a hand. Was this job of picking up small children and gassing them a part of the hand you loaned them?

MOLL

Possibly this was not expressed correctly by Hoess. I had nothing to do with the searching of the clothes because that was not my duty. As I said, the officers that had charge of the duty when the transport came in was responsible for them until the moment they entered the gas chamber. I had nothing to do with that, I never touched the babies or had anything to do with it.

BROOKHART

Did any of your men have anything to do with that? Anyone under you?

MOLL

Yes, the prisoners were responsible for that. They had to clean up the room after it had been cleared of people, they would then take the babies and throw them into the gas chamber. There was a strict order against any SS men touching any of this property.

BROOKHART

We are not talking about property. We are talking of people. Did you have a special operation to kill these babies or were they thrown into the room where people were still alive and all were gassed together?

MOLL

Such a thing only happened rarely and I cannot remember a case where a baby was found, but if they were found they were thrown into the gas chamber.

BROOKHART

How do you know?

MOLL

Well, that was an order for the officer responsible for the transport and if any children were found out they were to be disposed of like all the rest in the gas chamber.

BROOKHART

You carried out your orders?

MOLL

I emphasize again that I myself did not find any children, but if I did find any, I would have to do it too.

BROOKHART

Did you shoot any babies in the neck, like you did the other victims?

MOLL

Such a thing never happened.

BROOKHART

That is what you said about shooting other people this morning, then we proved you a liar. Are you sure you are telling the truth this time? . . .

End of scene 4

Scene 5

Time: Two days later.

Place: A visitor's room in the prison where HOESS is being detained. The room is empty except for a table and two chairs. INGRID is seated at the table. A door opens and HOESS enters, escorted by a guard. HOESS is handcuffed and his legs shackled. He sits down; the guard leaves the room.

HOESS

Ingrid, how are they treating you?

INGRID

We're barely getting by.

HOESS

Are the children well?

INGRID

They ask me all the time when you will be coming home. I don't know what to tell them.

HOESS

Say what you must.

INGRID

Tell me what I must say.

HOESS

What do you want from me?

INGRID
(screams)

THE TRUTH!

HOESS
(bewildered)

The truth?

INGRID

Yes, the truth.

HOESS

You were there with me.

INGRID

I know that, but that doesn't mean I knew what you were doing. You made sure of that.

HOESS

I wanted to protect you and children.

INGRID

Protect us from WHAT? What did we need to be protected from?

HOESS

The prisoners.

INGRID

(incredulous)

The prisoners!? You were the commandant of the camp! What was there for you to be afraid of?

HOESS

Things took place; unpleasant things that I thought would upset you.

INGRID

They're accusing you of having committed the most horrible crimes. I can't believe it.

HOESS

I was just doing my duty.

INGRID
(screams)

DOING YOUR DUTY? THAT'S ALL YOU HAVE TO SAY?

HOESS

What else can I say? I had my orders and was obliged to carry them out.

INGRID

But Rudolf, they're saying that you're responsible for millions of deaths. How can this be?

HOESS

I answered their questions; that's all I could do.

INGRID

But they may execute you.

HOESS

I know that, but what's done is done.

INGRID
(baffled)

How can you be so calm when you know that you'll be leaving behind a widow and young children?

HOESS

Many bad things happened in this war.

INGRID

That doesn't help me and the children.

HOESS

If I could help you, I would.

INGRID
(reproving)

You and Hitler and your cronies were so sure that Germany would win the war. And we all believed you.

HOESS
I had no reason to doubt the Fuhrer.

INGRID
Well, what do you think about him now?

HOESS
Does that matter?

INGRID
Yes it does matter because you're being accused of the most awful crimes and if you thought the Fuhrer was right, then how can you possibly explain yourself?

HOESS
Ingrid, I did not make policy. I carried out orders.

INGRID
(imploring)
But if you can explain that you were misled or deceived, then maybe they'll let you live.

HOESS
I'm afraid that is not possible.

INGRID
Why not? Why can't you say that it was all one big misunderstanding; that you were made to follow orders, that otherwise they would have punished you ... punished us ... if you had refused to obey?

HOESS
Because it would not be the truth.

INGRID

(hysterical)

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? THAT YOU AGREED TO DO ALL THOSE AWFUL THINGS THEY SAY YOU DID?

HOESS

(flustered)

It had nothing to do with whether I agreed. It had to do with what I was ORDERED to do.

INGRID

But they do not believe you. They're holding you responsible. You were the commandant. They know that.

HOESS

And they also know that I had my orders, which I was expected to follow.

INGRID

(imploring)

My poor, deluded husband, how can you say such a thing when they're telling you that you were ordered to commit mass murder?

HOESS

I did not murder anyone. In fact, during the war I never so much as even laid a finger on anyone, German, Russian, Jew, you, our children, anyone.

INGRID

But, Rudolf, they're saying that you ORDERED these things.

HOESS

You just don't understand.

INGRID

What is there not to understand?

HOESS

I was following orders, not giving orders.

INGRID

Rudolf, even though you tried to shield me from what was going on at the camp, I saw and heard enough to know that you were in charge of something really BIG.

HOESS

I was merely an administrator.

INGRID

Do you really think you're fooling anyone by saying that?

HOESS

I'm not looking to fool anyone. I did what I was ordered, that's all.

INGRID
(frantic)

But you are being accused of killing women, children, even little infants, entire families, wiped out by your own guards, under your command, right in front of your eyes!

HOESS

Yes, that did happen, but they were Jews, and I was told that they were the enemy.

INGRID
(horrified)

Including the little babies? They were enemies too!?

HOESS

Yes, I was told that and I believed it.

INGRID

Are you for real?

HOESS

Yes.

INGRID

(incredulous, screams)

**YOU KILLED LITTLE BABIES!?! WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
WERE YOU INSANE!?! YOU COULD HAVE TALKED TO ME!**

HOESS

What good would that have done?

INGRID

(angry, screams)

I'M YOUR WIFE! DIDN'T THAT MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

HOESS does not respond.

INGRID

(terrified)

Rudolf, what is going to become of me and the children?

HOESS

Have you contacted my sisters?

INGRID

I tried but they refuse to speak to me. They call me Nazi pig, whore, slut, murderer's tramp and other awful names. I don't know who to turn to.

HOESS

I don't know what to say. I just know that you are innocent.

INGRID

I wish I could say the same for you.

Ingrid starts to weep as the guard enters the room.

THE END

Sources:**Hoess-Moll interrogation****<http://www.codoh.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p=1895>****Hoess interrogations****<http://www.mazal.org/archive/H%D6SS/TEXT/HOS1-000.htm>****Richard Overy, *Interrogations – The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands, 1945* (Penguin Books, New York), 2003.*****Dachau Trials, US vs. Martin Gottfried Weiss, et al*****<http://www.scrapbookpages.com/dachauscrapbook/dachautrials/Kaufering.html>****Summaries of Interrogations of Rudolf Höss****<http://www.fpp.co.uk/Auschwitz/Hoess/HoessInterrogations.html>****Robert E. Conot, *Justice at Nuremberg*, New York: Harper & Row, 1983.****G. M. Gilbert, *The Psychology of Dictatorship*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1950**