MAUTHAUSEN

THE GRAPHIC CHRONICLE

Museum of Jewish History

From June 2022 to January 2023



PATRONAT CALL DE GIRONA

Museu d'Història de Catalunya

Amical de Mauthausen i altres camps i de totes les víctimes del nazisme d'Espanya

Ajuntament de Girona

Diputació de Girona

Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura

Xarxa de Museus d'Història i Monuments de Catalunya

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Presentation

Between 1938 and 1945 millions of people died in Nazi camps in Europe, most of whom were Jewish. But there were also gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, prisoners of war, political dissidents and many people exiled from Spain in 1939. When the camps were liberated, the world contemplated a landscape of indescribable horror.

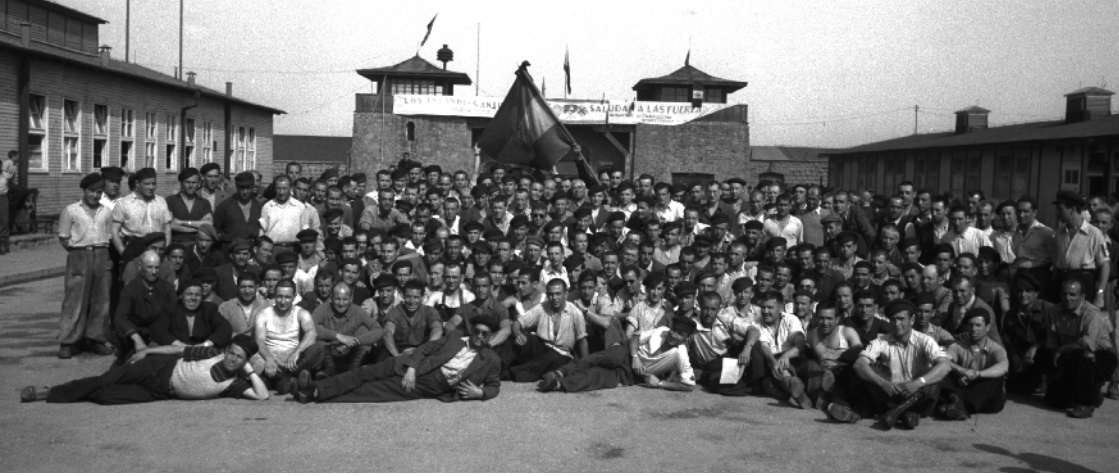
In 1946, at the Nuremberg and Dachau Trials, photographs from Mauthausen that had been saved from destruction were presented, many taken by a Republican and exiled Catalan, Francesc Boix. Those images were a heartbreaking testimony to the atrocities committed by the Nazis and some of the most indisputable pieces of evidence of their guilt.

Photography, a tool for recovering the past and a key to the construction of memory, has since been an essential element in documenting times of terror.

Sílvia Planas
Director of the Museum of Jewish History

"**The meaning of any photograph is the use given to it**"

Susan Sontag



The exhibition

In 1996, the Spanish association Amical de Mauthausen deposited part of their historical collections in the History Museum of Catalonia. Amongst these funds, there was a collection of negatives which came from the Nazi concentration camps of Mauthausen and Gusen (Austria).

Part of this photographic collection, made between 1940 and 1945, was taken by the Nazis of the *Erkennungsdienst* (Identification Department) of the Mauthausen camp. This department, overseen by the Gestapo, was in charge of, among other tasks, the documentation of the entry and exit records of those deported and of the operation and life in the camp.

The remaining negatives corresponded to a report on the liberation of the Mauthausen camp (1945), taken by the Catalonian photographer Francesc Boix, who was up until then a prisoner in the camp and a forced worker of the Identification Department.

The “Mauthausen, The Graphic Chronicle” exhibition presents a selection of these photographs, some of which were used in testimony against the Nazis in the Nuremberg Trials in 1946. Through them, one reawakens episodes of barbarism and horror of the worst kind, etched forever in contemporary world history, of which millions of people from all over Europe were victim, and among whom numbered more than ten thousand Catalonian and Spanish Republicans.

The Mauthausen Camp

In August 1938, one of the largest concentration camps the Nazis built in Austria, the Mauthausen camp, was founded with prisoners taken from the Dachau camp. The camp operated until 1945, when World War II ended.

The location of the camp responded to an economic factor: the use of the resources offered by the quarries in the area, exploited by the *Deutsch-Erd-Und Steinwerke* (German Company of Mines and Quarries), an important source of income for the SS.

Over the years, the area of the camp increased considerably, reaching thirty-nine annexed camps, including Gusen, known as the "Sanatorium," where most of the deported Spanish Republicans were sent between 1940 and 1941.

Like all Nazi camps, Mauthausen was used as a tool to eliminate deportees. This process was often done slowly and indirectly, through grueling work, hunger and continued abuse.

On the next page:
The 186 steps leading to the quarry platform. Part of the work involved in building the structure and subsequent modifications are attributed to the Republican group.

May 1945
Photograph by Francesc Boix

Chronology 1033-1946

1933

30 January – Hitler is appointed **chancellor** of Germany after his party (NSDAP, German Workers National Socialist Party) wins the parliamentary elections in July 1932.

27 February – **Fire of the Reichstag** (seat of the German Parliament). State of emergency that confers special powers on Hitler to persecute his political opponents.

22 March – Opening of the first concentration camp, at **Dachau**, where German political dissidents are interned.

1 April – First day of the **boycott** of Jewish businesses. Later it will affect doctors, lawyers and other liberal professions.

10 May – Beginning of the Nazi regime's **intellectual censorship**. Burning of books written by Jews and members of the opposition to Nazism in Bebelplatz, Berlin.

14 July – Prohibition of forming new parties in Germany. Previously, on 5 July, all existing parties except the Nazi party (NSDAP) had been banned. Passing of the **law** that forbids granting foreigners and Jews German nationality and the law of sterilisation of the physically and mentally handicapped.

1934

2 August – After the death of President Von Hindenburg, Hitler combines the posts of president and chancellor and becomes the sole leader (*Führer*) of Germany.

1935

1 April – Harassment of Jehovah's witnesses begins.

15 September – **Nuremberg Laws**, which isolate the Jewish community from other Germans. Other countries that are allies of Germany pass similar legislations.

1936

6 June – Harsher restrictions against the Gypsies.

17 June – Heinrich Himmler is appointed *Reichsführer SS*, leader of the Nazi Germany elite combat group (SS).

12 July –**Sachsenhausen** camp, near Berlin, is set up.

17-19 July – **Coup d'état** by part of the Spanish army led by General Franco against the Second Republic. Outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Hitler and Mussolini provide aid to the rebels.

1 August – The Summer **Olympic Games** are held in Berlin.

10 October – The SS create the Central Office for the struggle against homosexuality and abortion. About 15,000 German **homosexuals** die in the concentration camps.

1937

The **"Arianisation" of the German economy** begins. The Jews are forced, on baseless legal grounds, to sell their businesses, in most cases at prices well below their real value.

26 April – The Condor Legion of German aviation bombs **Guernica**.

15 July –**Buchenwald** camp in Germany, is set up.

1938

11-13 March – Germany annexes **Austria** (*Anschluss*) to the Third Reich.

6-15 July – **Évian Conference** (France). Delegates of 32 countries and representatives of refugee aid organisations deal with the immigration quotas for refugees fleeing Germany. The United States and other countries refuse to soften restrictions on immigration.

25 July – Beginning of the **Battle of the Ebro**, the longest and bloodiest of the Spanish Civil War, which will drag on until November.

8 August – **Mauthausen** camp is set up in Austria.





17 August – Decree by which German Jews have to add Israel and Sara to their **first names**.

1 October – Occupation and annexation by Germany of the **Sudetenland** region of Czechoslovakia.

28 October – **Expulsion** of the Polish Jews living in Germany.

9 November – **Night of Broken Glass** in Germany. Thousands of Jewish businesses and synagogues are attacked and burned. About 30,000 Jews are sent to concentration camps. About 10,000 would die there. In the following months about 115,000 Jews leave the country.

12 November – The **Decree on the Elimination** of the Jews from Economic Life closes all the companies that belong to Jews.

1939

15 March – German occupation of **Czechoslovakia**.

1 April – End of the Spanish Civil War. About 500,000 Republican **refugees** flee to France.

15 May –**Ravensbrück** women's camp is set up (Germany).

23 August – The governments of Germany and the Soviet Union sign the **Molotov-Ribbentrop** non-aggression pact, in which they undertake to share Eastern Europe.

1 September – Germany invades Poland. Outbreak of the **Second World War**. Start of the **extermination programme** of 70,000 German mental defectives.

3 September – Great Britain, France, India, Australia and New Zealand declare war on Germany. **Internment** of about 20,000 German and Austrian Jews.

1940

9 April – German invasion of **Denmark** and **Norway**.

10 May – German invasion of **Holland, Belgium and France**.

20 May –**Auschwitz I** concentration camp (Poland) is set up.

10 June – **Italy** enters the war on Germany's side.

22 June – Signing of the armistice between Germany and France. The north of the country is occupied by the German army, the regions of Alsace and Lorraine are annexed to the Third Reich and the south remains unoccupied under the leadership of Marshal Pétain. The capital moves to **Vichy**. Vichy France collaborates actively with the Germans.

13 August – Start of the **Battle of Britain**. The German bombings do not achieve a British surrender.

6 August – Arrival of the first 398 Spanish Republicans at **Mauthausen**.

13 September – **Meeting** in Berlin between the Spanish foreign minister Ramón Serrano Súñer and Adolf Hitler.

27 September – Germany, Italy and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact in Berlin constituting the **Axis army**.

12 October – The **Warsaw Ghetto** with a population of about 350,000 persons, 30% of the inhabitants of the city, is set up.

23 October – Hitler and Franco meet in **Hendaye**. The head of the SS Himmler visits Barcelona.

1941

6 April – German invasion of **Greece** and **Yugoslavia**.

22 June – German invasion of the **Soviet Union**. During this year and the next, hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews are shot and dumped in common graves by the SS.

31 July – Reinhard Heydrich, head of the of German security forces, starts preparations for **Operation Reinhard**, the code name the Nazis gave to the plan to murder the Polish Jews and responsible for the extermination of 1,700,000 of them.

18 August – **Drancy** becomes the internment camp for the Jews arrested in France.

3 September – First experimental gassing with **Zyklon B** at Auschwitz. The victims are Soviet prisoners of war.

October – Building of the first extermination camp at **Belzec** (Poland), which comes into definitive operation on 17 March 1942. **Majdanek** camp is set up for Polish prisoners of war; it is turned into a concentration camp in February 1943. Start of the building of Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau) extermination camp.

24 November –**Theresienstadt** concentration camp (Czechoslovakia) is set up.

6 December – Soviet counteroffensive in the **Battle of Moscow**. The Nazis' expansion plans are halted.

7 December – Japanese attack on the American naval base at **Pearl Harbor** (Hawaii). The United States enter the war on the side of the Allies.

8 December – Start of extermination operations using gas at **Chelmno** camp (Poland).

11 December – Germany declares war on the **United States**.

1942

20 January – Wansee Conference (Germany), at which various German ministries and agencies coordinate to implement the **"Final Solution"** to the Jewish question in Europe.

1 March – The Auschwitz **gas chambers** come into operation.

7 March – First mass deportation of Jews to **Belzec** camp, the largest of the whole Operation Reinhard. About 435,000 Jews are gassed between 17 March and 31 December that year.

27 March – Departure of the first **convoy** from Drancy to Auschwitz.

April – **Sobibor** extermination camp (Poland) comes into operation.

4 June – American victory at **Midway**. The avalanche of Japanese victories is halted.

11 June – **Auschwitz III** (Auschwitz-Monowitz) set up. The IG Farben company is installed.

28 June –German summer offensive against the **Caucasus** and **Stalingrad**.

4 July – Start of **mass gassing** of Jews at Auschwitz II.

16 July – Round-up at the **Vélodrome d'Hiver** in Paris, which ends in 12,884 arrests.

22 July – Mass deportation of 260,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to **Treblinka II**, where the mass gassing operations begins the next day.

4 November – End of the **Battle of El Alamein**. Germans and Italians are expelled from Egypt by the British and retreat to Tunisia.

8 November – Anglo-American landing in North Africa.

11 November – The German army invades the unoccupied zone of France and seals off the **Pyrenees**.

19 November – Beginning of the Soviet **winter counteroffensive at Stalingrad**. The German Sixth Army is surrounded.

1943

2 February – The German Sixth Army surrenders at **Stalingrad**.

19 April – **Warsaw Ghetto uprising**. The last 70,000 Jews of the city are exterminated.

13 May – The German and Italian forces surrender in **Tunisia**.

16 July – End of the **Battle of Kursk**, the last major German offensive on the Eastern Front.

3 September – Allied invasion of **Italy**.

8 September – Official surrender of Italy to the Allies. The Germans deport the **Italian Jews**.

1944

19 March – German occupation of **Hungary**.

15 May – Mass deportation of **Hungarian Jews** begins.

6 June – Allied landing in **Normandy** (France).

22 June – Start of a major Soviet summer offensive that expels the Germans from the Soviet Union and reaches the gates of Warsaw. Forced evacuations of the camps, known as the **"Death Marches"**, begin.

23 August – Liberation of **Drancy** internment camp.

25 August – Liberation of **Paris**.

2 October – **Warsaw uprising** against the Germans. 250,000 Poles die and the city is razed to the ground.

19 October – Attempted invasion of the **Val d'Aran** by a group of communist guerrillas with the aim, as part of the so-called "Operation Reconquest", of advancing south and overthrowing the Franco regime. The operation fails and the Maquis have to return to France.

1945

27 January – Liberation of **Auschwitz** by Soviet forces.

29 April – The Americans liberate **Dachau**.

30 April – Adolf Hitler commits suicide in his bunker in Berlin. Soviet troops liberate **Ravensbrück**.

5 May – Liberation of **Mauthausen** by American forces.

8 May – Official **surrender** of Germany.

2 September – Official surrender of Japan. Officially that is the **end of the Second World War**.

20 November – The International Military Tribunal, made up of judges from the United States, England, France and Russia, is set up. The trial of 22 high-ranking Nazis begins in the city of **Nuremberg**.

1946

28 and 29 January – The photographer Francesc Boix makes a statement at the Nuremberg trials. **Photographs** stolen by the Republicans deported to Mauthausen are submitted as proof against some of the Nazi officials, who are condemned for crimes against humanity and sentenced to death.



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From June 2022 to January 2023

An exhibition of the **History Museum of Catalonia** and **Amical de Mauthausen**

Curator
Margarida Sala

Photographic reproductions
Pep Parer

Design and adaptation in Girona
Museum of Jewish History, Patronat Call de Girona

Additional videos
History Museum of Catalonia and Ona Arpa

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Publication
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– Page 15: History Museum of Catalonia (Amical de Mauthausen Collection)

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