

Former Auschwitz guard who was on duty when Anne Frank arrived in 1944 is deemed fit enough to face charges of murdering 3,681 people

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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A former SS guard who was on duty when Jewish diarist Anne Frank arrived at the Auschwitz death camp in 1944 has been fit enough to stand trial on charges of mass murder. Hubert Zafke, 95, was examined by psychiatric doctors this week appointed by a court in Rostock and judged mentally sound enough to go on trial for his part in the murders of 3,681 people. Zafke served at the Nazi extermination facility in occupied Poland as a medic and claims he took no part in the estimated 1.2 million murders of Jews and others that took place there.

Earlier this year a lower court ruled Zafke was incompetent to stand trial but that has now been overturned and he could be in the dock by the early spring. The **indictment** says that prisoners in the medical block at Auschwitz-Birkenau – the part of the camp where the gas chambers were located – were murdered while Zafke was on duty. According to the indictment, Zafke is accused of knowing that he worked in an extermination camp, knew that it was an extermination camp and that he was 'supportive of the running of this extermination camp.'

in 1948 he was sentenced by a Polish court because of his S.S. membership to three years in jail,, returning to Neubrandenburg in Germany after serving his time.

Zafka was present when Anne Frank came in on a train from Holland's Westerbork concentration camp on September 5, 1944 carrying 498 men, 442 women and 79 children.

Anne, whose memoir of a life in hiding from the Nazis became the single most poignant piece of Holocaust literature, was later transferred to the Belsen concentration camp in Germany where she died early in 1945.

Although classed as a medic, such personnel at Auschwitz were not concerned with the health of inmates, but often poured in the **Zyklon-B** pesticide crystals into the gas chamber to murder them.

The son of a farmer, he attended high school and an agricultural college intending to follow in his father's footsteps. In 1933, aged 13, he joined the Hitler Youth and six years later was in the S.S.

He received his grounding in concentration camp training at Dachau, the first of the Nazi camps where 36,000 people were murdered during its 12 years of operation. As a junior squad leader – a rank usually given to men singled out as future officer material – Zafke transferred to Auschwitz in the summer of 1944.

He is charged with being accomplice to the murders of the 3,681 victims between August 14 and September 14 1944. Prosecutors said: 'He is not charged with any single specific murder but as a **functionary** in the Nazi murder machine which he enabled.'

Auschwitz was liberated by the Red Army on January 27 1945, now World Holocaust Day, but Zafke had already gone west and fell into

British hands. He was later transferred back to Poland where he was given his jail sentence in 1948 for his membership in the S.S. and service at Auschwitz. He returned to Germany, married and fathered four sons who he brought up in Gnevkwow.

He made a career out of manufacturing and selling agricultural products, including pesticides.

Gnevkwow lay in former East Germany. When the Berlin Wall fell and archives in Poland, East Germany and former Soviet Russia became **accessible**, he came on to the radar of Nazi hunters.

The verdict against John Demjanjuk, a former guard at the Sobibor death camp in occupied Poland, in 2011 paved the way for Zafke's prosecution. Demjanjuk was sentenced to five years in jail for his part in the murders of 28,000 Dutch Jews. It was the first time that there did not have to be specific eyewitness evidence against an individual: the mere fact he was present in the camp was enough for a guilty verdict.

Zafke does not deny his service at Auschwitz but claims: "I heard nothing, saw nothing, killed no-one."

Christoph Heubner, executive vice president of the International Auschwitz Committee, said: "For the survivors of Auschwitz this is all about justice, not revenge. Justice has had to wait decades." He added: "Those perpetrators who ensured, as members of the S.S., that the Auschwitz-Birkenau death factory worked smoothly, and that the Jewish families of Europe disappeared into the gas chambers, have developed no sense of awareness of wrongdoing over the years. Therefore these legal processes are first and foremost an **inquiry** to the Germans: who actually owns your compassion?"

Earlier this year, Oskar Groening, 94, was sentenced in Germany to four years behind bars for his role in the murders of 300,000 people while he served as a guard at Auschwitz.

Questions

1. What was Zafke's role in Auschwitz?
2. Reread this portion of the article: "As a junior squad leader – a rank usually given to men singled out as future officer material – Zafke transferred to Auschwitz in the summer of 1944." What inference can we make about how Zafke's commanding officers viewed him?
3. Why was Zafke able to avoid prosecution for so long?
4. Zafke does not hide the fact that he was at Auschwitz but insists he "heard nothing, saw nothing, killed no-one." Using background knowledge, how do you assess these claims?