

PROFITING FROM HATRED



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

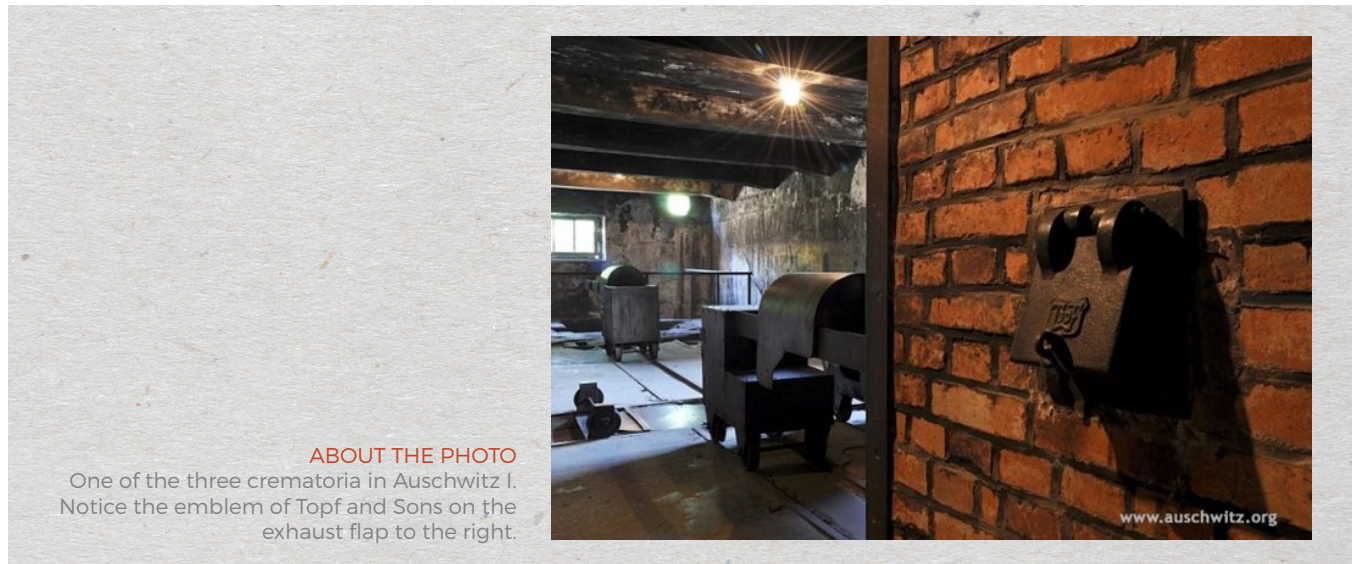
TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.

"We can show here how easy it is for a human being to ignore his responsibility towards his fellow human beings in his daily work," said Annegret Schule, the director of the Holocaust memorial at the site of the Topf and Sons headquarters near Buchenwald.

Topf and Sons was established in the late nineteenth century as a brewing and milling company. As society came to accept cremation as a respectable method for handling the remains of human beings, the company expanded into the crematorium business. When brothers Ludwig and Ernest-Wolfgang, grandsons of the founder, assumed the leadership of the company, they offered their experience with building crematoria and the accompanying ventilation systems to the Nazis. Over the course of several years, Topf and Sons supplied cremation ovens to Dachau, Mauthausen, Buchenwald, Gusen, and Auschwitz. Karen Bartlett, in her article, "These Men Offered 'Perfection in Cremation Technology' to the Nazis. We Can Learn From the Records They Left," wrote,

What to make of the men and women of Topf and Sons? By any assessment today they must surely be monsters; the engineers who drew up the plans, the secretaries who saw the memos, the accounts department who stamped the orders, and the playboy directors, Ernst Wolfgang and Ludwig Topf, who signed every letter to the SS with the words, "always at your service." These were the office-workers who greenlit the Holocaust, yet they were far from fervent Nazis.¹

Topf and Sons was not the only corporation that chose to work with the Nazis. A few, such as Siemens, created the electrical infrastructure for the camps. Bosch installed the plumbing and water and Kori also built crematoria for the camps. These companies and others provided infrastructure to make imprisonment and murder possible. Other companies profited from the use of prisoners as enslaved labor. This forced labor occurred within ghettos as well as in camps.



ABOUT THE PHOTO

One of the three crematoria in Auschwitz I. Notice the emblem of Topf and Sons on the exhaust flap to the right.

¹ Bartlett, K. (2018, August 21). These Men Offered 'Perfection in Cremation Technology' to the Nazis. We Can Learn From the Records They Left. Time. Retrieved from <https://time.com/5371687/nazi-camp-crematorium-builders/>.