The travelling exhibition ‘From Sachsenburg to Sachsenhausen. Pictures from the Photo Album of a Concentration Camp Commandant’ presents around 80 photographs from the service photo album of the first commandant of Sachsenhausen, Karl Otto Koch. Staff of the Sachsenhausen Memorial found the photo album in the archives of the Russian intelligence service. The setting-up of the concentration camp system in Germany from 1933 to July 1937 is documented in it from the point of view of the SS perpetrators. With around 500 pictures from the period between Spring 1933 and Summer 1937, the album documents Koch’s rise from SS officer to expert on the reorganisation and reconstruction of concentration camps. The album was presumably put together as a present for Koch’s 40th birthday in 1937.

The photographs show Koch as commandant of Hohnstein, Sachsenburg, Columbia and Esterwegen concentration camps, which he reorganised following the principle of total control of inmates developed in Dachau concentration camp by his mentor, the ‘Inspector of Concentration Camps’ Theodor Eicke. The setting up from the Summer of 1936 onwards of Sachsenhausen concentration camp, conceived as a model camp and as a camp for training SS guards, was a completely new phase of development of the concentration camps, which went from elimination of domestic political opposition to being instruments of racial and social persecution, population policy and preparation for war.

At the opening of the exhibition in the Sachsenhausen Memorial in June 2006, the Director of the Brandenburg Memorials Foundation and curator of this exhibition, Prof. Günter Morsch, said the following,

“What distinguishes the pictures in Koch’s service album from all previously-known picture sources is the direct look they afford at how the concentration camp SS saw themselves, unfalsified by artificial posing. The photos show how human beings were degraded by the SS in the
concentration camp to sub-humans. This contrasts with the cynical master race attitude enthusiastically lived to the full by the SS, which on the outside is marked by cleanliness, discipline and order. In the exhibition this perspective on the perpetrators is contrasted with testimonies of former inmates taking issue with the photos and presenting the other side of the story."

The exhibition presents the photos in a uniform format of 18 x 24 cm. The frames can be mounted either directly on existing walls or on floor-length mounting panels (60 to 45 cm wide) which are hinged together. Depending on the room situation, the frames can be hung on one side or both sides of these.

The exhibition is designed to be very flexible and can be specifically tailored to your room situation. It is also possible to concentrate on different areas of focus or to divide the individual exhibition units among several rooms. However, an area of at least 100 m² must be available. We will be happy to send you some possible room layout designs if you wish.

Mounting and transport of the exhibition are carried out by staff of the Sachsenhausen Memorial. Designs for posters and invitation cards can be provided upon request if desired.

No lending fee is charged. The borrower undertakes the cost of transport (€ 0.30 per km) and any expenses incurred by the Sachsenhausen Memorial staff (overnight accommodation, meals and daily allowance). There may additionally be rental charges for a 7.5 t lorry.

Your Contact Person

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