

An aerial, black and white photograph of a dense forest. A railway track with multiple parallel rails runs horizontally across the middle of the frame, separating the upper and lower sections of the forest. The trees are small and densely packed, creating a textured, needle-like appearance.

BRIGHT

SURVIVING GUSEN

Documentary



Synopsis

Surviving Gusen pays tribute to three survivors of a camp complex, of which the Gusen II concentration camp in particular is described as the hell of all hells. In the film, however, we see idyllic landscapes, covered with a delicate blanket of snow or tall grass, a neat settlement of single-family houses at the former camp site. Only the reports of the contemporary witnesses, in original sound or with the voices of Maria Hofstätter and Peter Simonischek, act like dissecting knives, exposing something from which we would prefer to avert our gaze. But sometimes something like hope comes to the surface when we hear that often only small help was enough to enable someone to survive.

One of the last Gusen survivors in a conversation with Alexander van der Bellen, the current President of Austria:

„(...) that is the hope, that today's younger generation understands,
that poverty and hate are the things that need to be fought.“

DUŠAN STEFANČIČ, SURVIVOR (born in Gorji Grad, Slovenia, 14 August, 1927)



„After several freezing days outside, the remaining group of
depleted survivors was thrown into overloaded open coal wagons.
We travelled two harrowing weeks without food, drink, or sanitary
arrangements. Many of us died before we reached our destination.“

KARL LITTNER, SURVIVOR
(born in Oswiecim, Poland on January 15, 1924)

**“IF CAMPS WERE HELL, THEN
GUSEN WAS THE LAST ABYSS
OF HELL.”**

STANISLAW LESZCZYNSKI, SURVIVOR
(born in Lodz, Poland, May 29, 1922)

The on and off-voices in combination with the images of the
crime scenes create a collage of different perspectives on the
dreadful events, which ultimately can neither be depicted nor
really imagined. The film ends with the liberation, and time and
again embarks on a search for traces of hope.

Gusen

The "Invisible Camp"

The concentration camp complex Gusen I, II & III was bigger than the related concentration camp at Mauthausen.

Together, these camps formed the Mauthausen-Gusen complex.

From 1939 till 1945 at least 71,000 people were deported to Gusen, over half of them died in the camps.

In 1944 and 1945 there were up to twice as many prisoners in Gusen and there were significantly more victims than in its infamous twin camp Mauthausen. The average life expectancy of inmates in camp Gusen II was only 4 months. Especially Jewish prisoners hardly stood a chance of surviving this ordeal.



SURVIVING GUSEN

Austria 2021 / Color, 68min

German, English, Polish

Directed by Gerald Harringer, Johannes Pröll

Script: Gerald Harringer

Cinematography: Fritz Steipe, Raffael Portugal

Editing: Werner Beham

Narrators: Maria Hofstätter, Peter Simonischek

Music/ Sounddesign: Wolfgang Dorninger

Producer: Johannes Pröll

Production: BRIGHT Films

Contact:

BRIGHT FILMS GmbH

Johannes Pröll

+43 650 777 8855

johannes.proell@brightfilms.at