

## Becher, Kurt

(1909-- ) Nazi official. During the first years of World War II, Kurt Becher fought on the Russian front. In 1944, he arrived in Hungary. His official SS assignment was to buy horses and horse-drawn vehicle equipment for the *Waffen-SS*. However, he played a key role in acquiring the huge Weiss Manfred Works for the Germans. He also represented the SS in negotiations with the Relief and Rescue Committee of Budapest concerning the fate of Hungarian Jewry. Dr. Israel Rezso Kasztner, a committee leader, depended on Becher to transport Hungarian Jews from Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland (called the "Kasztner transport"). With the approval of Heinrich Himmler, Becher also met with the head of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Switzerland, Mayer, and the War Refugee Board representative, Roswell McClelland, on November 4, 1944. Becher considered the meeting to be extremely important, as he was encountering President Roosevelt's intermediary.

In January 1945 Himmler appointed Becher Special Reich Commissioner for all concentration camps. Becher and Kasztner worked together to prevent the liquidation of the camps during the last few weeks of the war. After Germany surrendered, Becher was arrested by the Allies and imprisoned in Nuremberg. However, Kasztner testified on his behalf, and he was released from jail.