

# Concentration and Extermination Camps and Major “Euthanasia” Centers

## Abstract

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Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazi regime set up over 40,000 camps to imprison, exploit, and annihilate its declared enemies. This map shows major camps, grouped according to function. The term “concentration camp” applies to those camps built from 1933 on for the purpose of imprisoning political and ideological opponents of the regime and “racial enemies” under the pretense of “protective” or “preventative” custody. In the first years of the Nazi dictatorship, most of those imprisoned in the camps were Communists and Socialists, Social Democrats, Roma and Sinti, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, and individuals deemed “asocial.” After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 9, 1938, Jews in the German Reich were imprisoned en masse for the first time.

After the beginning of the Second World War, the camp system was quickly expanded and supplemented with POW camps and work camps in the occupied territories. Additionally, the camps began to function more and more as execution sites for members of particular groups, for example, Soviet POWs, members of the resistance, and partisans. To this end, gas chambers were built in the camps Auschwitz, Majdanek, Sachsenhausen, and Mauthausen starting in 1941. To implement the National Socialists’ plan for the “final solution of the Jewish question,” extermination camps were built in occupied Poland. The sole purpose of these camps was to carry out the mass murder of the European Jews in an efficient manner. The first of these camps, which were supposed to remain secret, was opened in December 1941 in Chelmno. In 1942, the camps Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka were built, and Auschwitz was equipped with a neighboring extermination camp, Auschwitz II-Birkenau. Jews from all over Europe were deported there via transit camps and were usually murdered within 24 hours after arrival.

The map also shows the places where the National Socialists carried out their secret “Euthanasia Program.” Starting in the fall of 1939, various institutions euthanized individuals who were deemed “unworthy to live” on account of either actual or alleged hereditary illnesses. After the revelation of the “Euthanasia Program” met with public protest, gas-administered euthanasia was halted in August 1941. It was replaced by lethal injections in “euthanasia clinics,” which continued until the end of the war.

## Source

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Source: Source and cartography: "Concentration and Extermination Camps and Major 'Euthanasia' Centers," in Jeremy Noakes, ed., *Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 3: Foreign Policy, War, and Racial Extermination*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998, p. 645. Original cartography by Cherie Norton/Mapping Solutions. Revised cartography by Gabriel Moss, 2021.

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