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The Concentration Camps Inside the Nazi System of Incarceration and Genocide

Part 4: Mass Incarceration and Extermination (1941-1945)

This document contains historical images
of the Holocaust and the concentration camps.

Please be advised that some of these pictures
and descriptions are graphic
and may be disturbing to viewers.



On November 3, 1943, approximately 18,000 Jews were murdered at Majdanek, a major extermination camp near the city of Lublin in Nazi-occupied eastern Poland.

This was the largest massacre by the Nazis in a single day in any concentration camp during the Holocaust.

Prisoners' barracks at Majdanek extermination camp, 1944. *Photo credit: USHMM #73996.*



View of the walled entrance to the gas chamber in the main camp of Auschwitz I.

Photo credit: USHMM #50773.

Despite killing over a million Jews by the end of 1941, the Nazis implemented plans to exterminate its stated enemies at a faster rate.

By 1942, the Nazis built dozens of new gas chambers—as well as enlarged existing ones—at several large concentration camps. Auschwitz became the Nazis' largest killing center with the addition of 4 large gas chambers and crematoria at the nearby Birkenau (Auschwitz II) satellite camp.



In 1942, the Nazis discovered that using the insecticide Zyklon B was more effective for murdering mass numbers of prisoners than other poisons or gases, such as carbon monoxide.

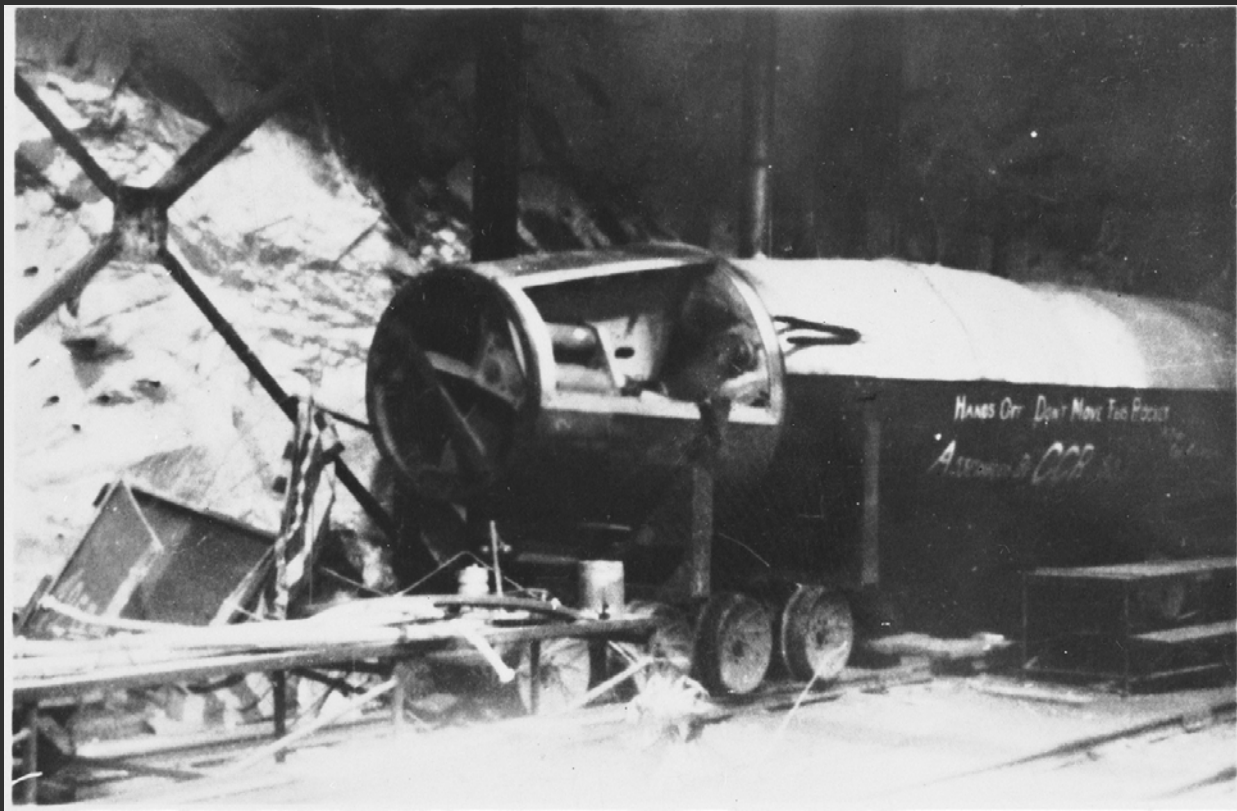
Zyklon B was first experimented on Soviet POWs. It subsequently became the preferred poison in most Nazi extermination camps during World War II.

Two canisters of Zyklon B found in the Dachau concentration camp and clearly marked as poison with a skull and crossbones. *Photo credit: USHMM #75047.*



At Majdanek extermination camp, women, children, and elderly prisoners were usually considered unfit for forced labor by Nazi guards. Upon arrival to the camp, these prisoners were immediately murdered in gas chambers.

A warehouse filled with canisters of Zyklon B (poison gas pellets) at the Majdanek extermination camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. *Photo credit: USHMM #50575.*



View of an subterranean rocket factory at Dora-Mittelbau. *Photo credit: USHMM #62980.*

Many prisoners in Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp in central Germany were forced to live underground for up to a year. One inside the factory tunnels, prisoners had insufficient air, food, light, and water, as well as high exposure to toxic chemicals.

Because of this harsh treatment, Dora-Mittelbau had the highest death rate among concentration camps in Germany.



Jewish women before their execution on Šķēde Beach, near Liepāja, Latvia, 1942. *Photo credit: Yad Vashem #85DO2.*

Of the 7,000 Jews living in the Liepāja, Latvia ghetto, just 800 were left alive after the Nazis carried out mass shootings in 1941 and 1942.

The ghetto in Liepāja was liquidated the following year, when all remaining Jews were deported to concentration camps.



The Nazis murdered approximately 300 Jews in Częstochowa, Poland on September 4, 1939—a day known as “Bloody Monday.”

Nazi-German soldiers round-up a group of Jewish men on Strażacka Street in Częstochowa before their murder in September 1939. *Photo credit: USHMM #26824.*



The Częstochowa ghetto in Nazi-occupied southern Poland was liquidated in September 1942. Hundreds of elderly Jews and children were killed and collected in the public square, and more than 39,000 were sent to the Treblinka extermination camp.

Nazi-German soldiers patrol a public square in Częstochowa, Poland where the bodies of those they shot were collected. *Photo credit: USHMM #26829.*



In an attempt to escape the Nazi killing squads (Einsatzgruppen), Jews in the Mizocz, Ukraine ghetto resisted by setting houses on fire and fleeing the town.

Many were caught, and most of the remaining women, men, children, and elderly Jews in the ghetto were shot in mass pits on October 14, 1942.

A member of a Nazi Einsatzgruppe (killing squad) shoots women that were still alive after a mass execution of Jews from the Mizocz, Ukraine ghetto. *Photo credit: USHMM #17878.*



The Nazis privileged certain prisoners to help run the camps. Prisoners called “kapos” supervised other prisoners or worked in the camp offices. Kapos were treated much better by the Nazis and also helped torture other prisoners.

A kapo (right) oversees prisoners at the Płaszów concentration camp near Kraków, Poland.
Photo credit: USHMM #05272.



Roma were one of the most persecuted ethnic groups during the Holocaust. Approximately 250,000 Roma were killed during the war.

Roma family who escaped the horrors of persecution and imprisonment at Auschwitz-Birkenau, relaxing on their farm in Straubing, Germany after World War II. *Photo credit: USHMM #99180, courtesy of Eva Davidova.*



The Germans starved nearly 3,000,000 POWs in the months following the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union. However, in light of Germany's growing need for workers, Nazi leaders began to feed Soviet POWs in the spring of 1942 for use in forced labor projects.

German soldiers forcing Soviet POWs to construct a rail line. *Photo credit: USHMM #16888.*



Nazi Germany's largest mass shooting action took place during Operation "Harvest Festival," when 42,000 Jewish laborers were shot in several concentration camps over two days (November 3-4, 1941).

Prisoners march to their death at the Majdanek concentration camp, November, 1941. *Photo credit: USHMM, courtesy of Staatsanwalt beim Landgericht Hamburg.*



The Reinhard and Chelmno extermination camps used carbon monoxide from engine exhaust to murder their victims, while Auschwitz-Birkenau used prussic acid from a cyanide-based pesticide (Zyklon B).

An emaciated Jewish man in the Łódź ghetto awaits deportation to the Chelmno death camp. *Photo credit: USHMM #37344.*



During the deportation of prisoners, pregnant women and small children were regarded as “incapable of work” and were routinely sent to their deaths.

Jewish children and women from Subcarpathian Rus who had been selected for death at Auschwitz-Birkenau wait to be led to the gas chambers. *Photo credit: USHMM #77349.*



Sites of Nazi concentration camps.

approximately 2,700,000 of 6,000,000 Jews that were killed during the Holocaust were murdered in Nazi extermination camps.

Map of the major Nazi concentration and extermination camps. *Photo credit: USHMM #55041.*



During World War II,
approximately
23,000,000 people were
incarcerated in Nazi-
controlled
concentration sites

Prisoners' bodies in a mass grave at Mauthausen. *Photo credit: USHMM #06362.*



Jewish prisoners await selection on the ramp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. *Photo credit: USHMM #77225.*

In a span of 56 days (May 15-July 9, 1944), more than 434,000 Hungarian Jews were crowded onto 147 trains and sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Approximately 320,000 of these prisoners were gassed upon arrival in the camp.



Three Soviet POWs who were captured near Wisznice, Poland stand with their hands tied behind their backs. They were later executed. *Photo credit: USHMM #03835.*

At least 3,300,000 Soviet POWs died in Nazi captivity between 1941-1945, mostly as a result of starvation and execution.