

## Blechhammer

(in Polish, Blachownia Slaska), concentration camp located near the Polish town of Kozle. Blechhammer was originally established in April 1942 as a forced labor camp for Jews. The first prisoners to arrive at the camp worked on the construction of a chemical-products plant. Soon, a typhus epidemic broke out. The 120 prisoners who became ill with the disease were sent to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. The remaining prisoners were moved to a new, larger site nearby.

New prisoners were then brought to Blechhammer; most were Jews from Upper Silesia, but there were also Jews there from 15 other countries. The number of prisoners peaked at 5,500. They lived in wooden barracks without running water. Diarrhea and tuberculosis affected many of the prisoners, and all were malnourished. A Jew from Vienna named Karl Demerer served as the "camp elder." In various instances he stood up to the camp authorities and helped the other prisoners.

In April 1944 Blechhammer became a satellite camp of Auschwitz. In January 1945 some 4,000 prisoners were sent on a death march; 800 were executed along the way. The survivors reached the Gross-Rosen camp, and then moved on to Buchenwald. Prisoners who tried to hide in Blechhammer during the evacuation were killed immediately.