

Oranienburg

Concentration camp located near Berlin, in the Potsdam district of Germany. Oranienburg was one of the first camps to be instituted by the Nazis. The first group of prisoners arrived at the camp on March 31, 1933, less than three months after the Nazis rose to national power in Germany. This transport was made up of 40 communists and social democrats.

Just a few weeks after Oranienburg had been set up, the camp commandant, an officer in the SA, submitted his command to the Potsdam Chief of Police, who agreed to take responsibility for the camp's costs. Soon, the number of prisoners began to rise, and by August 1933 there were 900 people interned at the camp. This made Oranienburg one of the three largest concentration camps in Germany, besides Dachau and Esterwegen.

Oranienburg quickly became infamous as a camp where the prisoners were treated very harshly. Because of that stinging reputation, and because the facility was rather limited in size, Hermann Goering (at that time Prussian Minister of the Interior) decided to close down the camp. During the summer of 1933 Goering and the chief of the *Gestapo* at that time, Rudolf Diels, concluded that the facilities set aside for political prisoners were too disorganized, and that they should be replaced with a few large camps that would be controlled by the government. In November 1933 some 300 prisoners from Oranienburg were moved to camps at Sonnenberg, Brandenburg, Moringen, and at other locations within the Reich.

On June 30, 1934 many SA men, including SA leader Ernst Rohm, were murdered by the SS in a massacre called the "Night of the Long Knives." At that point, the SS took over the administration of Oranienburg, and Goering stepped up his efforts to shut the camp down. That September, he ordered that the camp should only be used in a case of overflow from other camps. The last report about the camp was issued in March 1935.