

Poniatowa

Forced Labor and Prisoners of War Camp, located in the Polish town of Poniatowa, near Lublin. Poniatowa was established in September 1941 as a camp for Soviet prisoners of war. By December, 24,000 Soviet prisoners were interned there. The conditions were so harsh that hundreds of prisoners died daily; by early spring 1942, some 22,000 prisoners had died or had been executed. During that summer the German army gave the SS control of the camp. Soon, the SS began using Poniatowa as a forced labor camp for Jews. The first Jews arrived in October 1942. By January 1943 some 1,500 Jews were interned there. After the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943, 16,000-18,000 more Jews were brought to Poniatowa. Ten thousand prisoners were made to work in a textile factory that had been transferred from the Warsaw Ghetto. The rest worked at various outdoor jobs. Hundreds of prisoners were executed or tortured to death by the SS staff and the Ukrainian guards.

On November 4, 1943, the Germans began destroying Poniatowa: some 15,000 Jews were shot to death in a one-day massacre as part of Operation "Erntefest". Prisoners who resisted were burnt alive inside their barracks. Only a few survivors escaped the camp before it was totally liquidated.