

## Organization Schmelt

Program of forced labor first imposed upon the Jews of Eastern Upper Silesia and later extended to other areas. In effect from 1940 to 1944, Organization Schmelt was named for its director, SS-*Oberfuehrer* Albrecht Schmelt.

Organization Schmelt began establishing forced labor camps for Jews in 1940. The camps were built next to factories where war materials were manufactured, so that Jewish labor could be exploited. In March 1941 SS chief Heinrich Himmler decided to use Jews from Organization Schmelt camps to construct even more factories. While previously there had been 1,500 Jews working for Organization Schmelt, now there were 4,000. As the program's factories became more important to the army, Jews from Silesia were joined by Jews from the *Generalgouvernement*. In mid-1942 some 10,000 Western European Jews were taken out of transports to Auschwitz and brought to work for Organization Schmelt.

Altogether, Organization Schmelt established 160 labor camps, and by early 1943, the program included more than 50,000 Jewish forced laborers. However, later that year the Germans began liquidating the organization's factories and camps and deporting workers to Auschwitz. Only those prisoners working for indispensable armaments and ammunitions factories were allowed to remain. Eventually, the remaining camps were attached to Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, and Blechhammer. (see also Silesia, Easter Upper.)