

Stutthof

Concentration camp in northern Poland, located 22 miles east of Danzig. Stutthof was first set up in September 1939 as a civilian prison camp. In January 1942 its status changed to that of a concentration camp. Altogether, some 115,000 prisoners passed through Stutthof; 65,000 of them perished, while another 22,000 were transferred to other concentration camps.

Stutthof, which eventually included several dozen forced labor sub-camps all over northern and central Poland, was guarded by members of the SS Death's Head Units and Ukrainian collaborators (see also Ukrainian Auxiliary Police). At the beginning of its existence, there were very few Jewish prisoners at Stutthof. Most of the prisoners were non-Jewish Poles from Danzig and Pomerania. Later, more Poles arrived from Warsaw and from all over northern Poland. Large groups of Soviets, Norwegians, Danes, and others soon joined them. Large numbers of Jews began arriving in 1944. These were mainly women who had been transferred from labor camps in the Baltic states or from Auschwitz.

The conditions at Stutthof were unbearable; starvation and disease were rampant, and the prisoners were made to do hard labor. In fact, so many of the prisoners died at Stutthof that it was almost like an extermination camp. In addition, prisoners were often executed, usually those who had taken part in the resistance movement. Selections would also take place from time to time (see also *Selektion*). Those prisoners who were found to be too sick to work anymore were exterminated in the camp's gas chamber. Wounded or sick prisoners recuperating in the camp infirmary were often killed by the doctors there.

By late 1944 the Soviet army was approaching. At that point, in the dead of winter, the SS sent some 50,000 prisoners on forced death marches towards the west. Tens of thousands of the prisoners died or were murdered en route. Other groups of prisoners were evacuated by sea in small boats; many drowned along the way. The main camp at Stutthof was liberated by the Soviet army on May 9, 1945.

