

## Vittel

Detention camp located in Northeastern France. Vittel was established by the Germans in 1940 to house citizens of neutral or enemy countries whom they wanted to exchange for German prisoners. Vittel did not look like other Nazi camps: it was made up of luxurious hotels situated inside a park. Of course, the park was surrounded by three rows of barbed wire and guarded by German patrols.

In early 1943 the internees at Vittel included British and American citizens and a group of Polish, Belgian, and Dutch Jews. Some of these prisoners were holders of Latin American passports or visas. In January 1944 the SS sent a special delegation from Berlin to check the validity of the Latin American passports held by prisoners at Vittel. The delegation decided that the passports were invalid, and as the Latin American governments themselves did not recognize the passports, the bearers of the documents were now in mortal danger. Humanitarian and Jewish organizations begged the American and British authorities to pressure the Latin American countries to honor the documents. The passports were finally validated in late March 1944, but this was too late: about 250 Jews at Vittel had already been sent to their deaths at Auschwitz. Among them was the poet Yitzhak Katzenelson.

Vittel was liberated by the Allies on September 12, 1944.