



Westerbork

A Transit camp located in the northeastern Netherlands through which most Dutch Jewry passed on their way to Nazi extermination camps in Eastern Europe. Westerbork had originally been established in October 1939 by the Dutch government, in order to detain German Jewish refugees who had entered the Netherlands illegally.

In late 1941 the Germans decided to use Westerbork as one of the three transit camps in Western Europe where Jews would be assembled for deportation. The Nazis took control of the camp on July 1, 1942. The first Jews arrived on July 14, and the first deportation transport left for Auschwitz the next day. In total, nearly 100,000 Jews were deported from Westerbork to Nazi extermination and concentration camps, including Auschwitz, Sobibor, Bergen-Belsen, and the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

Not all Jews brought to Westerbork were automatically deported. While many Jews were brought into the camp and sent away after a week or two, there was also a "permanent" population that was made to work in the camp, performing jobs such as metalworking, outdoor tasks, and various services for the camp staff and population.

Westerbork was liberated by the Allies in mid-April 1945. At that point, 876 prisoners remained in the camp, of which 569 were Dutch nationals.