

Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt (WVHA)

(Economic-Administrative Main Office), central administration for SS economic activities. Located in Berlin, the WVHA was established in February 1942. It included the SS's office of concentration camp inspectors.

The reason the concentration camps were incorporated into the WVHA was that, as of 1942, concentration camp prisoners were expected to play a larger role in the manufacture of armaments. The WVHA negotiated contracts with industrial companies regarding the use of concentration camp prisoners in their factories; the number of prisoners to be employed; the type of work they would do; the food and lodging they would receive; and the amount of money the firms would make per prisoner per day.

At first, because the WVHA's main goal was to expand the SS's contribution to the war effort, prisoners working for them were given better conditions than usual. However, this improvement was short-lived. The WVHA then sought to increase the amount of work done by the prisoners without increasing the amount of food provided or creating reasonable sanitary living conditions for the prisoners. As a result, they had to turn to brutality to make the prisoners work, and of course, replacement workers were always readily available. Prisoners working for the WVHA were terribly exploited and abused.