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# EUROPE

## SINCE 1914

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE AGE OF WAR  
AND RECONSTRUCTION

Volume 2

Child Care to Futurism

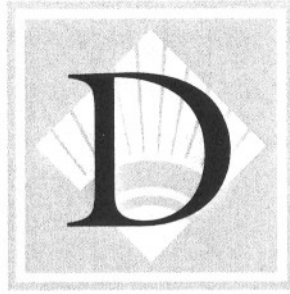
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**CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**

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**DACHAU.** Dachau was the longest continually existing Nazi concentration camp. Of about 200,000 prisoners who were registered at the camp, more than 41,500 died there. Dachau attained especial notoriety as the camp where pseudo-medical experiments were conducted, where prominent prisoners were held, and where postwar trials took place.

#### ORIGINS

The antecedents of the Dachau concentration camp date back to World War I. Prior to 1914 Dachau was a town of about five thousand residents located ten miles northwest of Munich. In 1915 the Bavarian government built a new munitions factory there because of the abundant supply of water. The nearly eight thousand munitions workers were demobilized in 1919 under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Many remained in the area, and in 1927 Dachau had the highest unemployment rate in Germany. In 1933—before Hitler became chancellor on 30 January—local officials requested that the Bavarian government set up a “militia or work conscription camp” on the abandoned factory grounds.

Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945), the head of Adolf Hitler’s SS (Schutzstaffel), chose the Dachau munitions factory as the site of a prison camp to intern political opponents while the Nazis consolidated their power. (Such camps were anticipated in the Nazi constitution drafted for their November 1923 coup d’état attempt.) On 21 March 1933

newspapers announced that the next day a “protective custody camp” would be opened in Dachau. It could hold five thousand inmates, to include “all communist functionaries, and as necessary Reichsbanner [an organization of veterans that tried to curb the violence of the Nazi SA] and marxists” for “as long as necessary” to achieve the “pacification of the national populace.”

#### SCHOOL OF VIOLENCE

Himmler’s personal role in Dachau was crucial for the future of the Nazi concentration camp network. Initially Dachau was the only camp under SS control (the SA [Sturmabteilung] controlled other early camps). As the SS grew, it took over the entire camp system. Theodor Eicke (1892–1943), a World War I veteran Himmler named commandant in June 1933, became Inspector of the Concentration Camps in 1934. Eicke spread his system of organization with its draconian punishments to the entire camp system. He mentored Rudolf Höss, who became commandant of Auschwitz in 1940. A dozen camp commandants were trained in Dachau. Of Dachau’s six main commandants, one was killed at the front, three committed suicide, and two were sentenced and executed after the war.

#### POPULATION AND DEATH RATE

The early camps served to neutralize political opposition and utilized prisoner labor but mostly for make-work projects. Lethal violence was commonplace from the start. By the end of May 1933 a

TABLE 1

Number of officially recorded deaths in Dachau			
Time period	Number of deaths recorded by the Dachau camp	Additional documented deaths	Totals
March 1933–May 1938	150		
June–Nov. 1938	68		2,318
11 Nov. 1938–Feb. 1939	243		
Jan. –April 1939	342		
1940	1,515		
1941	2,576	ca. 4,500	9,546
1942	2,470	(Soviet POWs)	
1943	1,100		1,100
Jan. –Aug. 1944	1,154	2,946	7,740
Sept. –Dec. 1944	3,640		
Jan. –May 1945	15,384	2,966	18,350
Red Cross registered deaths not in col. 1		3,309	3,309
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,642</b>	<b>13,721</b>	<b>42,363</b>

SOURCES: Col. 1: Kimmel, pp. 372, 385, after Smikalla's reckoning based on *Die Toten von Dachau*. Col. 2: Zamecnik, pp. 399f. Note: Zamecnik's addition on p. 400 is off by 4.

enclosure with thirty-four barracks and a service building, with a much larger compound for SS guards and troops in the adjacent munitions factory buildings. With the addition of two new categories of prisoner, "asocials" and "criminals," and the March 1938 annexation of Austria, the number of inmates rose to 3,500 by July 1938. The November 1938 *Kristallnacht* pogroms added 11,911 Jewish inmates to Dachau, so that 14,232 were imprisoned as of 1 December 1938. Large releases reduced the total to 3,300 to 3,900 after April 1939. From September 1939 to February 1940 all but about a hundred inmates were sent to other camps so that Dachau could be used to train SS combat troops.

During the war years the number of foreign inmates surpassed the number of Germans. Of the thirty-seven nations of origin represented in the camp, Poland had the largest total with about 35,000, followed by Russians and Hungarian Jews. In 1940 Dachau became the central camp for clergymen, with 2,720 ultimately registered. One barracks (later several more) housed the prisoner infirmary, others a camp store and library for German inmates. In the summer of 1940 a two-chamber crematory began operating in the camp. A much larger building with a gas chamber and an eight-chamber crematory was constructed between May 1942 and April 1943. Although there is no evidence that the gas chamber was used for the systematic mass murder for which it was designed, prisoner reports smuggled out at the time and testimony after the war indicate that experimental and test gassings were conducted there. Why was it never used for systematic gassings? Just as it was completed in 1943 prisoner labor for the war effort was given priority, then near the end of the war death by starvation and disease kept the eight ovens working at capacity.

TABLE 2

Number and size of work detachments		
Year	Number of branch camps	Approximate total of inmates in new branch camps
1933–1939	3	120
1940	6	260
1941	4	170
1942	26	2,300
1943	6	5,300
1944	86	32,000
1945	40	600

Note: Most large branch camps continued to exist until 1945

SOURCE: Martin Weinmann, ed., *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem* (Frankfurt, 1990), pp. 554–558.

dozen men had been tortured to death or murdered, with Jews being singled out for the most brutal treatment.

Dachau's inmate population rose from 2,000 to 2,600 by the end of 1933, then fell to 1,300 by the end of 1934. In early 1935 Himmler convinced Hitler to expand the camp system instead of dissolving it. Beginning in 1936 three camps were constructed with a design capacity of six to eight thousand inmates each. Dachau was completely rebuilt between January 1937 and August 1938. The prisoners' section was a 250-by-600-meter

#### WORK DETACHMENTS

In 1943 living conditions were improved so that inmates could contribute to the war effort. External sub-camps were set up to utilize prisoner labor at more distant locations. Of 188 total work detachments, only thirty were based in the main camp. Eleven of the external camps were for women only (on 24 November 1944, 5,044 women were registered). Thirteen of the external camps had 1,000 to 4,300 inmates; ninety-one had fifty or fewer. The



**Journalists view bodies following the liberation of Dachau, May 1945.** The victims shown here had been alive at the time U.S. soldiers first arrived but succumbed to disease or starvation soon afterward.

BMW plant in Allach was one of the largest external labor camps, averaging 3,800 inmates from March 1943 until the end of the war. One inmate worked for the mayor of Dachau, and two for the mayor of Munich. On 22 April 1945 there were 27,649 prisoners registered in the main camp, 37,964 in sub-camps. About 43,000 were categorized as political prisoners, 22,000 as Jews. At liberation some of the barracks, designed to accommodate 360 inmates, held nearly 2,000.

Doctors conducted lethal human experiments in Dachau. From February 1942 to April 1945 about a thousand inmates were infected with malaria, from April to August 1942 inmates were subjected to ultra-low air pressure, from August

1942 to May 1943 others were frozen in ice baths, and from July to September 1944 they were forced to drink seawater. An inmate brothel was set up in 1944.

#### RESISTANCE

Brutal punishments and a system of spies made prisoner resistance essentially impossible. However, political prisoners (mostly communists) managed to occupy most of the crucial administrative positions delegated to inmates. These included the labor detachment office and the infirmary, as well as the positions of barracks- and room-elders for most barracks. They used informal networks of personal trust to improve and save the lives of many inmates, especially in comparison with camps

where criminals fulfilled the prisoners' administrative functions. There was also a network of clandestine radios, and prisoners participated in secret religious and cultural activities, such as the ordination of a priest and literary discussion groups. In the spring of 1945 prisoners in the various national groups came together to form an international camp leadership that took over the running of the camp after liberation. Survivors in this Comité International de Dachau fought to preserve the camp as a memorial site, and still participate in its administration.

### LIBERATION

On 26 April 1945, the SS began the evacuation of the camp with a march of 7,000 inmates, south toward Hitler's "Alpine redoubt" (which did not exist). On 28 April some escaped inmates joined with townspeople to take over city hall, but the uprising was put down by the camp's SS garrison. On 29 April the U.S. army's Forty-fifth and Forty-second Divisions arrived within hours of each other and liberated the camp, killing forty to fifty of the 560 surrendering SS men. Of the 3,000 corpses found in the camp, about 2,200 were added to a mass grave of 4,000 that the SS had started, and 700 to 800 were cremated. Another 2,200 who died after liberation were buried in the town cemetery.

### POSTWAR

In July 1945 the U.S. army used the prisoner and SS compounds to intern up to thirty thousand German suspects. From November 1945 to December 1947 eleven concentration camp and atrocity trials were conducted in Dachau. The last internees were released in August 1948. The Bavarian state took over the camp and converted it into a residential settlement for two thousand refugees from Eastern Europe. A museum set up in the large crematory building in 1945 was removed in May 1953, but re-established in 1960 after heavy lobbying by survivors. A memorial site with a much larger museum opened in 1965 after the last refugees were moved out. The museum was renovated and expanded from 1995 to 2003.

See also **Auschwitz-Birkenau; Buchenwald; Concentration Camps; Holocaust.**

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HAROLD MARCUSE

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**DADA.** "Let us rewrite life every day. What we are celebrating is both buffoonery and a requiem mass" (Ball, p. 56). When the German poet Hugo Ball set down those lines in his diary on 12 March 1916, he invoked both Christian liturgical prayers for the salvation of the souls of the dead ("requiem mass") and the comic performances of clowns and acrobats ("buffoonery") as points of reference for what he and a group of fellow poets and artists had been doing of late in the newly established Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, Switzerland.

### DADA IN ZURICH

Named in honor of the eighteenth-century French philosopher Voltaire, author of the satirical novel *Candide, or Optimism* (1759), and founded by Ball, along with the German poet and cabaret singer Emmy Hennings, the Alsatian artist Jean Arp, the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, and the Romanian artist Marcel Janco, the Cabaret Voltaire opened on 5 February 1916 and lasted only until late June of that year. The naming of the Cabaret Voltaire was a gesture that acknowledged the political and philosophical despair as well as the artistic ambitions of Ball and his collaborators, including, in addition to those named above, the Swiss artist Sophie Taeuber, the German poet and medical student Richard Huelsenbeck, and the German artist, writer, and filmmaker Hans Richter. "The ideals of culture and of art as a program for a variety show—that is