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The Chełmno nad Nerem Death Camp (SS Sonderkommando Kulmhof)

Located in the Turek Landkreis in the Kalisz Government District (Regierungsbezirk Kalisch) in Reichsgau Wartheland, ca. 70km. from Łódź, near the train station in Koło.

Established in November 1941, the camp functioned under the name of SS-Sonderkommando Kulmhof. In chronological order its commandants were: SS-Sturmbannführer Herbert Lange and SS-Hauptsturmführer Hans Bothmann (from 1942).

The camp was the center of the liquidation of Jews from Reichsgau Wartheland and the Łódź ghetto from December 8, 1941 to April 7, 1943 and from June 26, to July 14, 1944. Other victims of the camps included Jews from Austria, Belgium, France, Holland, and Hungary, Polish children from the Zamość region subjected to a deportation operation during the war, Poles from social service institutions in Łódź and Włocławek, ca. 5,000 Soviet POWs, Roma, and probably 82 Czech children from Lidice.

The victims were brought to the camp by narrow-gauge from the train station in Koło. They were killed using exhaust fumes in specially constructed cars, which were in fact gas chambers. Then the corpses were buried in mass graves. In the spring of 1942 the bodies of the previous victims began to be removed from the mass graves and burnt on piles of timber and in the crematorium. The closure of the camp began in April 1943. The barracks and the crematorium were dismantled and the employees were sent to serve in the Waffen-SS. In the spring of 1944 the Death camp in Chełmno was opened anew and new infrastructure was built. As before, the victims were killed in specially constructed cars/gas chambers, while the bodies were burnt in two newly-built crematoriums. In July 1944 the transports to the camps ceased and the barracks were dismantled. On the night of January 17 to 18, 1945 the Waffen-SS shot the remaining dozen or so prisoner/workers.

The number of victims of the camp was ca. 160,000–200,000 people, mostly Jews.

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