

## Gross-Rosen

German concentration camp located south of the town of Gross-Rosen (Rogozhnica) in Lower Silesia (today Poland). Gross-Rosen was established in Summer 1940 as a satellite labor camp of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. On May 1, 1941 Gross-Rosen became an independent camp; it functioned as such until its evacuation in February 1945. Altogether, 125,000 prisoners passed through Gross-Rosen; 40,000 perished.

Gross-Rosen was commanded by Arthur Roedl, Wilhelm Gideon, and Johannes Hasebroock. At the beginning, prisoners were forced to work at constructing the camp and in the nearby granite quarry, which was owned by the SS German Earth and Stone Works (SS-Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH). However, as the Germans' need for armaments grew, Gross-Rosen also grew: arms factories were built, 70 sub-camps (satellite camps) were ultimately added, and the number of prisoners swelled.

Jews made up the largest group of inmates. The first small group of Jews arrived at Gross-Rosen from Dachau on June 8, 1941. Throughout the rest of 1941 and 1942 several more small groups of Jews were brought from other camps and from Polish ghettos. The Jewish prisoners were subjected to extremely hard work in the quarry and were forced to carry out special assignments during their breaks. Inmates of different blocks were not allowed to talk to each other. They were also denied medical treatment. Some of these Jews were then sent on to Dachau, and 119 were murdered in December 1941 as part of the Euthanasia Program. The last of these Jewish prisoners were transferred to Auschwitz in October 1942; for the following year there were no Jews in Gross-Rosen.

From October 1943 until January 1945, 57,000 Jews were brought to the camp (including 26,000 women). They were mostly from Poland and Hungary, with smaller groups originally from France, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Italy, Slovakia, and Greece. Many were placed in the sub-camps where they worked for the German company, I.G. Farben and Krupp. Gross-Rosen took over 28 camps from Organization Schmoldt and kept 20 in operation. Fifteen

of those were set aside for 6,000--7,000 women prisoners. Altogether, Gross-Rosen had 20 sub-camps for women, which were governed less harshly.

More sub-camps were set up between April and June 1944 to house 13,000 new Jewish arrivals. Most had come from Hungary and were used to build Hitler's underground home. Prisoners were frequently transferred from one sub-camp to another. In all, the Jews were spread out over 50 sub-camps, where the death rate was extraordinarily high.

In its last stage of existence, the Gross-Rosen compound held 78,000 prisoners, including 52,000 men and 26,000 women. These made up 11 percent of the prisoners in all concentration camps at that time.

The Nazis began evacuating Gross-Rosen at the very end of 1944. The first sub-camps to be destroyed were those on the eastern bank of the Oder River. The prisoners from those camps were sent away on foot in Death Marches; many died along the way. The main camp was cleared out in February 1945, followed by the rest of the sub-camps. The prisoners of the main camp were evacuated by train rather than by foot, but many died anyway because they were not given any food en route. Altogether, at least 19,500 Jewish inmates were transferred from Gross-Rosen to camps within the German Reich; nothing is known about the fate of the other 37,500. It is also not clear how many Jewish prisoners actually died in the Gross-Rosen camp, but approximately one-half of the prisoners in the sub-camps were left behind during evacuation. About 9,000 survived in 13 of the 20 women's sub-camps. However, it does seem that many Gross-Rosen inmates did survive long enough to be liberated.