

WESTERBORK

Located in the northeast Netherlands, the Westerbork camp was established by the Dutch Government to serve as an internment camp for Jewish refugees entering the country illegally.

Under Nazi occupation, however, Westerbork served as a transit camp for Dutch Jews awaiting deportation to concentration and death camps. From July 1942 until September 1944, the Germans deported a total of 97,776 Jews from Westerbork — 54,930 to Auschwitz, 34,313 to Sobibor, 4,771 to Theresienstadt and 3,762 to Bergen-Belsen.

While most inmates only stayed in Westerbork for a short time before being deported, there was also a “permanent” camp population of approximately 2,000 prisoners. Some of the prisoners exempt from deportation were Jewish Council members, camp employees and the Jewish police who assisted with deportations. Prisoners were encouraged to maintain a “normal” life, including cultural activities. Eventually, many of these prisoners were also deported to concentration and death camps.

On April 12, 1945, Canadian troops liberated the abandoned Westerbork camp with its remaining 876 prisoners.