

Topic Page: [Concentration camp](#)

Definition: **Concentration camp** from *Brewer's Dictionary of Modern Phrase and Fable*

A guarded camp for nonmilitary (usually political) prisoners. Concentration camps were first used by the British to intern Boer families in the Second Boer War (1899-1902), but the most infamous were the camps set up by the Nazis after 1933 for the detention and persecution of their political opponents. See *also* Holocaust.

Summary Article: **concentration camp**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

a detention site outside the normal prison system created for military or political purposes to confine, terrorize, and, in some cases, kill civilians. The term was first used to describe prison camps used by the Spanish military during the Cuban insurrection (1868–78), those created by America in the Philippines (1898–1901), and, most widely, to refer to British camps built during the South African War (Boer War) to confine Afrikaners in the Transvaal and Cape Colony (1899–1902). The term soon took on much darker meanings. In the USSR, the Gulag elaborated on the concept beginning as early as 1920. After 1928, millions of opponents of Soviet collectivization as well as common criminals were imprisoned under extremely harsh conditions and many died.

During World War II concentration camps were established throughout Europe by the Nazis, and throughout Indochina and Manchuria by the Japanese. Of the millions of people of many nationalities detained in them, a large proportion died of mistreatment, malnutrition, and disease. In both Nazi and Japanese camps inmates were exploited for slave labor and medical experimentation, but the Nazis also established extermination camps. In the best known of these—Majdanek, Treblinka, and Oświęcim (Auschwitz), in Poland—more than six million mainly Jewish men, women, and children were killed in gas chambers. Also detained and often killed in Nazi camps were Communists, Romani (Gypsies), homosexuals, and others. Among the most notorious Nazi camps liberated by U.S. and British troops in 1945 were Buchenwald, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen.

See Wachsmann, N. , *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (2015);

Imperial War Museum, *German Concentration Camps Factual Survey* (documentary, 2014).

The term has also been applied to the U.S. relocation centers for American citizens of Japanese origin and others interned in the W United States during World War II. In China during the Cultural Revolution (1966–69) millions were sent to euphemistically named “reeducation” camps, and in Cambodia after Pol Pot came to power (1976) an estimated one million civilians died in “reeducation” camps. North Korea maintains a system of political and criminal prison camps in which inmates are sentenced to harsh physical labor and are underfed and mistreated. In 1992, reports of malnutrition and killings in concentration camps for Muslim, Croat, and Serb male civilians in Bosnia led to attempts by international organizations to identify the location of the camps and inspect them.

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