

Wirth, Christian

(1885--1944), SS officer and designer of Polish concentration camps. Trained as a carpenter, Wirth distinguished himself in World War I. After the war he joined the German police; he became infamous for his brutal interrogation methods. Wirth joined the Nazi Party in 1931. In 1939 he transferred to the *Gestapo*.

By the end of 1939 Wirth moved on to the Euthanasia Program. At that point he also took part in the first gassing experiments on certifiably insane Germans. In 1940 Wirth became an inspector of Euthanasia Program facilities within the Reich, and in 1941 he was posted in Lublin, where he was charged with instituting a new euthanasia facility. This was the first euthanasia center to be established outside Greater Germany.

Next, Wirth set up three extermination camps in Poland---Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka---where he introduced new gassing methods. With the help of Odilo Globocnik and Lublin's SS police headquarters, Wirth supervised the murders of more than 1.5 million Jews.

Belzec was closed in fall 1943, at which point Wirth was sent to Trieste, Italy, to accelerate Jewish deportation. He was killed by Partisans while on a trip to Fiume.