



## Building The Fortress

On 10 January 1780, the Habsburg emperor Joseph II ordered the erection of the fortress, named Theresienstadt after his mother Empress Maria Theresa. In the times of Austria–Prussia rivalry, it was meant to secure the bridges across the Ohře and Elbe rivers against Prussian troops invading the Bohemian lands from neighbouring Saxony.

Construction of Theresienstadt started at the westernmost cavalier on 10 October 1780 and lasted ten years. The fortress consisted of a citadel, the "Small Fortress" (Kleine Festung), to the east of the Ohře, and a walled town, the "Main Fortress" (Große Festung), to the west. The total area of the fortress was 3.89 km<sup>2</sup> (960 acres). In peacetime it held 5,655 soldiers, and in wartime around 11,000 soldiers could be placed here. Trenches and low-lying areas around the fortress could be flooded for defensive purposes. Garrison church in the Main Fortress was designed by Heinrich Hatzinger, Julius D'Andreis and Franz Joseph Fohmann.

## Fortress During WWI

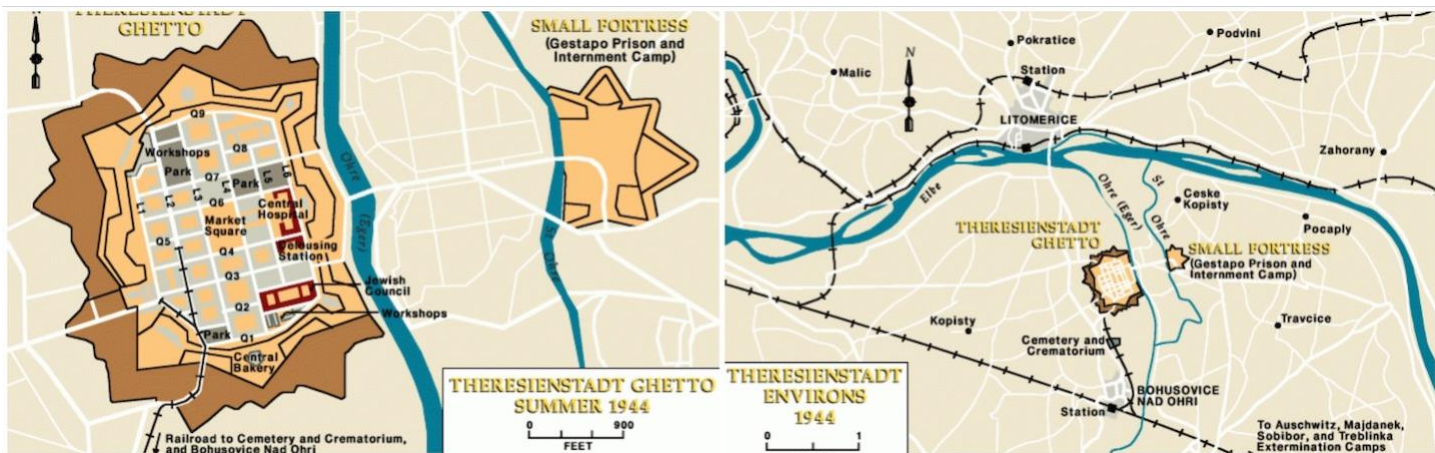
During the second half of the 19th century, the fortress was also used as a prison. During World War I, the fortress was used as a political prison camp. Many thousand supporters of Russia (Ukrainian Russophiles from Galicia and Bukovina) were placed by Austro-Hungarian authorities in the fortress. Gavrilo Princip, who assassinated Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria and his wife, died there of tuberculosis in 1918.

## Terezin WWII Concentration Camp

Terezin was a concentration camp 30 miles north of Prague in the Czech Republic during the World War II. It was originally a holiday resort reserved for Czech nobility. Terezín is contained within the walls of the famed fortress Theresienstadt, which was created by Emperor Joseph II of Austria in the late 18th century and named in honor of his mother, Empress Maria Theresa.

By 1940 Nazi Germany had assigned the Gestapo to turn Terezín into a Jewish ghetto and concentration camp. It held primarily Jews from Czechoslovakia, as well as tens of thousands of Jews deported chiefly from Germany and Austria, as well as hundreds from the Netherlands and Denmark. More than 150,000 Jews were sent there, including 15,000 children, and held there for months or years, before being sent by rail transports to their deaths at Treblinka and Auschwitz extermination camps in occupied Poland, as well as to smaller camps elsewhere. Less than 150 children survived.

Although Terezin was not an extermination camp, about 33,000 died in the ghetto. This was mostly due to the appalling conditions arising out of extreme population density, malnutrition and disease. About 88,000 inhabitants were deported to Auschwitz and other extermination camps. At the end of World War II, there were 17,247 survivors of Terezin (including some who had survived the death camps).



## After WWII

After the German surrender the small fortress was used as an internment camp for ethnic Germans. The first prisoners arrived on 10 May 1945. On 29 February 1948 the last German prisoners were released and the camp was officially closed.

Among the interned Germans were former Nazis like Heinrich Jöckel, the former commander of Terezín and other SS members. A great group of internees were arrested because of their German nationality, among them young boys and elderly people.

In the first phase of the camp lasting until July 1945 mortality was high due to diseases, malnutrition and incidents of simple outright murder. Commander of the camp in that period was Stanislav Franc. He was guided by a spirit of revenge and tolerated whimsical mistreatment of the prisoners by the guards.

In July 1945 the camp shifted under the control of the Czech Ministry for Domestic Affairs. The new commander appointed was Otakar Kálal. From then on the inmates were gradually transferred to Germany and Terezín was increasingly used as a hub for the forced migration of Germans from the Czech lands into Germany proper.



## Modern History

After the related war uses, the government retained a military garrison until 1996. In 2002 the town was struck by floods during which the crematorium was damaged. According to the Fund, a long-term conservation plan was conceived, which includes further repairs, documentation, and archaeological research. In mid-April 2008, 327 bronze grave markers were stolen from the Jewish cemetery; another 700 were stolen the following week. The high price of metal encouraged the vandalizing thieves. Some grave markers were recovered.

<http://www.terezin.org/the-history-of-terezin>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terez%C3%ADn>