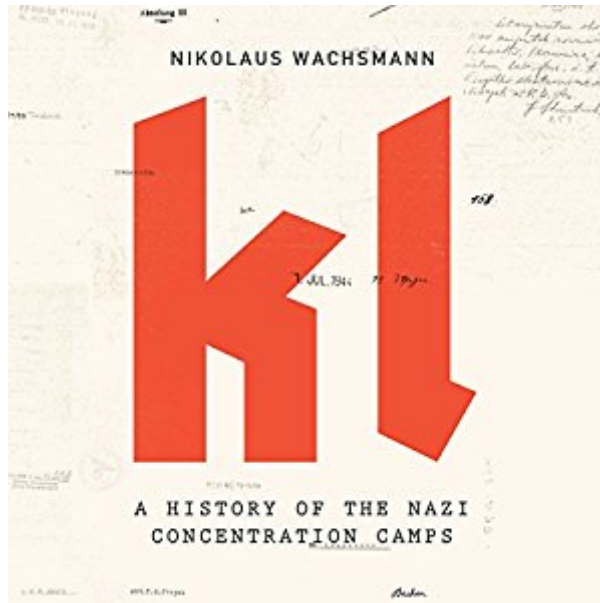


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# KL: A History Of The Nazi Concentration Camps



## Synopsis

In *KL*, Wachsmann fills this glaring gap in our understanding. He not only synthesizes a new generation of scholarly work, much of it untranslated and unknown outside of Germany, but also presents startling revelations, based on many years of archival research, about the functioning and scope of the camp system. Examining, close up, life and death inside the camps, and adopting a wider lens to show how the camp system was shaped by changing political, legal, social, economic, and military forces, Wachsmann produces a unified picture of the Nazi regime and its camps that we have never seen before. A boldly ambitious work of deep importance, *KL* is destined to be a classic in the history of the 20th century. Many books have explored the general history of the Holocaust and the Nazis, or anatomized individual concentration camps. But there has, surprisingly, never been a comprehensive history of the camps that integrates the stories of both the broad development of the system and daily life in the camps. In *KL* (the widely used acronym for *konzentrationslager*, German for concentration camps), Wachsmann offers an unprecedented account of the development of the camps, similar in scope and approach to Anne Applebaum's best-selling and award-winning *Gulag: A History* (2003). We will publish on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of most of the camps in April 1945. Wachsmann is the first to synthesize a new generation of original scholarship on the camps, much of it only available in German and little-known in the English-speaking world. And he has unearthed a wide range of new documents, offering startling new revelations about the history of the camps.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is unlikely to be surpassed. It documents for the first time the complete and comprehensive history of the Nazi concentration and extermination camp system from 1933-1945. In the process it clears up some misunderstood beliefs and showcases how the Nazi march toward the Holocaust was based on a continuum rather than an overnight momentous decision. Wachsmann demonstrates how the first concentration camps - ramshackle holding cells really - were set up in 1933 after Hitler came to power. The purpose of these camps was to intimidate and silence all kinds of opponents, from vagabonds and Communists to drunks and Jews. Targeting only Jews was not the purpose of these camps. The camps subsided for a few years after 1933 but were rekindled in the late 30s after Hitler, Himmler and others set their plan for a 'Master Order' based on race in effect. Jews, gypsies and homosexuals started to be specifically targeted after 1938, although even then until 1941 or so the main plan was intimidation, financial extortion and forced migration. It was only in 1942 that the plan turned toward extermination; the Wannsee conference was an important touchstone (although again not the most important or the only one). But even here, the methods for extermination were based on older ones. Killing by gas was a legacy of the horrific T-4 euthanasia program of the 30s. Wachsmann also reminds us that the Holocaust did not suddenly start with the gas chambers but was initiated by the SS Einsatzgruppen killing squads in the Ukraine and the Soviet Union. Also, the first casualties of many of the camps were not Jews but Soviet POWs. Another book that details this background very well is Richard Rhodes's "Masters of Death". The book also demolishes some myths.

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