

# WORLD WAR II GHETTOS



During the Holocaust, the creation of ghettos was a key step in the Nazi process of separating, persecuting, and ultimately destroying Europe's Jews. Ghettos were set up to segregate Jews from the rest of the population. The vast majority of ghetto inhabitants died from disease or starvation, were shot, or deported to killing centers.



## HISTORY

The term "ghetto" originated from the name of the Jewish quarter in Venice, Italy. Venetian authorities forced the city's Jews to live in the area established in 1516. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, officials ranging from local authorities to the Austrian emperor ordered the creation of ghettos for Jews in Frankfurt, Rome, Prague, and other cities.



## WORLD WAR II

During World War II, Germans placed Jews in ghettos. The living conditions were miserable because they were often enclosed districts that isolated Jewish communities from the non-Jewish population. At least 1,000 ghettos were established in

German-occupied and annexed Poland and the Soviet Union alone. There were three types of ghettos: closed, open, and destruction.

## GHETTOS

German occupation authorities established the first ghetto in Poland in October 1938. The largest ghetto in Poland was in Warsaw. More than 400,000 Jews crowded into an area of 1.3 square miles. Other major ghettos were established all over. Tens of thousands of western European Jews were deported to ghettos in eastern Europe.

## OPERATIONS

Germans ordered Jews in the ghettos to wear identifying badges or armbands. Many Jews were required to carry out forced labor for the German Reich. Nazi-appointed Jewish councils administered daily life in the ghettos. A ghetto police enforced the orders of the German authorities and the ordinances of the Jewish councils, including facilitating deportations to killing centers. Germans did not hesitate to kill Jewish policemen who failed to carry out orders.

## LENGTH

The amount of time Jews were required to stay in ghettos varied from a few days, to months, or years. Germans saw ghettos as a temporary measure to control and segregate Jews, while Nazi leadership in Berlin considered options for the removal of the Jewish population.



## JEWISH RESPONSE

Jews responded to the ghettos with a variety of resistance efforts. Ghetto residents frequently smuggled food, medicine, weapons, or intelligence across ghetto walls. This was usually done without the approval of Jewish councils. However, in some cases they had their approval because it kept residents alive. Organized gatherings of people within ghettos were not usually allowed because Germans saw them as a security threat. The ringleaders or participants of any gatherings were typically killed. Education was generally forbidden in ghettos. Members of Jewish resistance movements occurred in many ghettos. The largest of these was the Warsaw ghetto uprising in the spring of 1943. Many other ghettos also experienced revolts.

## FINAL SOLUTION

In late 1941, The Nazis began carrying out the "Final Solution," the plan to murder all European Jews. They systematically destroyed the ghettos. Germans either shot ghetto residents and buried them in mass graves, or deported them to killing centers. German SS and police authorities sent a small minority of Jews to forced-labor camps and concentration camps. In August of 1944, German SS and police completed the destruction of the last major ghetto.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**IDENTIFY:** Use the word bank to identify each description.

Warsaw	Italy	Poland
Jewish Council	armband	Final Solution
killing centers	education	food
1.	Most World War II ghettos were located here.	
2.	Jews were kept in ghettos starting in 1516 here.	
3.	Large ghetto with well-known uprising	
4.	Nazi appointed group that ran ghettos	
5.	This was typically banned from ghettos	
6.	Plan to murder all European Jews	
7.	Jews were forced to wear a badge or this.	
8.	Most Jews were sent to these when deported.	
9.	This was often smuggled into ghettos	

**MULTIPLE CHOICE:** Choose the best answer.

10. "At least 1,000 ghettos were established in German-occupied and annexed Poland and the Soviet Union alone." What is the best definition of annexed in the previous quote?

- A. To add something important
- B. Taken without permission
- C. To attach
- D. Something added to a document

11. What is the most likely reason some Jewish councils allowed items to be smuggled into ghettos?

- A. It was the only way of keeping people alive
- B. They were against what the Nazis were doing
- C. They hated Hitler and his role in Germany
- D. They thought it was the right thing to do

12. Which of the following was NOT a way the majority of people died in ghettos?

- A. Fights among residents
- B. Disease or starvation
- C. Gunshot wound
- D. Deported to killing centers

13. How long were Jews kept in ghettos?

- A. Only a few days
- B. Several weeks
- C. Months
- D. The length varied

14. What was the main purpose of Jewish ghettos during World War II?

- A. To carry out the Nazi "Final Solution"
- B. To murder Jews
- C. To keep disease contained
- D. To segregate Jews from non-Jews