

Studying the Holocaust

RESISTANCE, RESCUE AND SURVIVAL

4. Jewish Victims

What is a ghetto?

A section of a city where all Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to live.

The term "ghetto" originated in Venice, where in 1516 the Jews were forced into a closed quarter called the Geto Nuovo (New Foundry). Other Italian cities ... also put their Jews into ghettos, and the practice was adopted by towns in southern France that belonged to the pope; by several large cities in Germany, in Bohemia and Moravia; and in Polish cities. The purpose of ghettoizing the Jews was to restrict contacts between them and Christians and to confine the Jews to certain economic activities.

None of these forms of ghetto can be compared to the ghettos established by the Germans in the countries they occupied in World War II. These were not designed to serve as a separate area for Jewish habitation; they were merely a transitional phase in a process that was to lead to the "Final Solution" of the Jewish question. The Nazi-instituted ghettos were, in fact, camps where the Jews were held under duress, with their internal life and organization imposed on them and enforced through violent means, from the outside, by the Nazi regime. The ghettos were introduced after the outbreak of the war in the towns and cities in eastern Europe — [including] Poland, the Baltic states, and the occupied parts of the Soviet Union.

— Encyclopedia of the Holocaust. Israel Gutman, Ed. NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990. vol. 2, p. 579

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss Elie Wiesel's quote at the beginning of the article.

"While not all victims of the Holocaust were Jews, all Jews were victims."

— Elie Wiesel
2. Jewish people had many different experiences during the Holocaust.
 - Describe some of the different experiences that you have heard/read about.
 - What stories stand out in your mind?
3. Next to the article is a picture of a Jewish star badge. In many areas, Jews were forced to attach these badges to their clothing.
 - What do you think was the purpose of these badges?
 - How might this object impact one's personal identity? How might it impact group identity?

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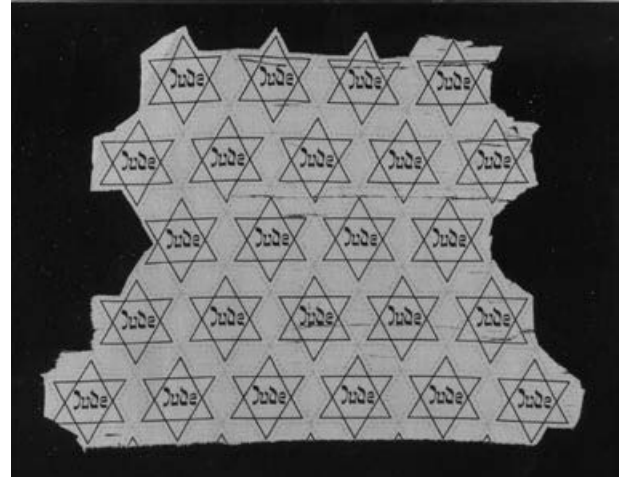
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[On] September 1, 1941, Jews were made to sew the yellow star of David on their clothes as a distinguishing mark. On the star the word Jude, which means Jew in German, was written in Hebrew-like letters. Papa told me to sit in such a position on the train so as to "naturally" cover my yellow badge, even though it was strictly forbidden to hide that "mark of shame." This was not always possible, and other children taunted and heckled me.

— Inge Auerbacher

"I am a Star: Child of the Holocaust." NY: Prentice-Hall Books, 1986. p. 28

Note: Inge Auerbacher was born in Kippenheim, Germany. From 7 – 10 years of age, she was imprisoned with her parents in the concentration camp Terezin in Czechoslovakia. In 1946, she immigrated to the U.S. and has lived since then in New York City.



"Jude"

Framed is a piece of cloth from a bolt of fabric with yellow "Stars of David" and the word "Jude" (Jew), printed with Hebraic-looking calligraphy in black, in the center of each star. These Stars of David were to be cut (notice the outline) and sold to Jews so that they might be sewn onto their clothing for identification as Jews.

The original bolt of fabric was four feet by six feet. It was possibly made sometime in 1942 in Poland. Mr. Thomas Blatt, author and survivor of the death camp Sobibor, found this piece in Poland in 1984. He brought the piece back to the United States for conservation. It is now on display at the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center.

Photograph by Harve Bergmann.

For more information on the use of the yellow star as a badge, visit:

history1900s.about.com/library/holocaust/aa031298.htm

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APPENDIX G

ESTIMATED JEWISH LOSSES IN THE HOLOCAUST

COUNTRY	INITIAL JEWISH POPULATION	MINIMUM LOSS	MAXIMUM LOSS
AUSTRIA	185,000	50,000	50,000
BELGIUM	65,700	28,900	28,900
BOHEMIA & MORAVIA	118,310	78,150	78,150
BULGARIA	50,000	0	0
DENMARK	7,800	60	60
ESTONIA	4,500	1,500	2,000
FINLAND	2,000	7	7
FRANCE	350,000	77,320	77,320
GERMANY	566,000	134,500	141,500
GREECE	77,380	60,000	67,000
HUNGARY	825,000	550,000	569,000
ITALY	44,500	7,680	7,680
LATVIA	91,500	70,000	71,500
LITHUANIA	168,000	140,000	143,000
LUXEMBOURG	3,500	1,950	1,950
NETHERLANDS	140,000	100,000	100,000
NORWAY	1,700	762	762
POLAND	3,300,000	2,900,000	3,000,000
ROMANIA	609,000	271,000	287,000
SLOVAKIA	88,950	68,000	71,000
SOVIET UNION	3,020,000	1,000,000	1,100,000
YUGOSLOVIA	78,000	56,200	63,300
TOTAL	9,796,840	5,596,029	5,860,129
ROUNDED	9,797,000	5,596,000	5,860,000

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust, Volume 4, Page 1799

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