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## The Situation of the Jews in Berlin 1940–1943

## ETERNAL ECHOES

Teach and Learn About the Holocaust

# The Situation of the Jews in Berlin 1940–1943

## Confiscation of Property and Forced Labour

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Confiscation of all radios from Jews without compensation, as demanded by the Reich security office on 20th September 1939 in Berlin.

In the course of the war, German Jews had to suffer further, severe restrictions in everyday life: they received smaller quantities of rationed foods and were denied access to a large number of goods. A nightly, strictly monitored curfew for Jews was introduced, and they had to surrender all valuables, technical devices, bicycles and even certain winter clothes. Due to the restrictions many could barely meet their needs.

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Walter Frankenstein took this photo of his colleagues who were employed by the Jewish Community in Berlin. From early 1942 Walter and the others were forced by the Gestapo to work for Nazi institutions.

More and more Jewish women and men had to perform forced labour. The majority of them had to carry out factory work, primarily in the armaments industry. Others like Walter Frankenstein were even forced to work in Nazi institutions. In 1941 about 26 000–28 000 Berlin Jews were already doing forced labour, mostly in separate departments in local factories. But they were not forced into labour camps. Doing work shifts of up to ten hours a day, they were only allowed to shop between 4 and 5 p.m. when most of them were still at work.

Labelled with the yellow star on their clothes since September 1941, Jews became the target for scorn and hostility and were even more conspicuous than before. But not all gentiles responded with hostility. Some Berliners instead wanted to

express their solidarity with small gestures of compassion. For example some would whisper statements of disapproval, or greet Jews explicitly friendly. During the war time, some passers-by even smuggled little quantities of food into the bags of Jews.

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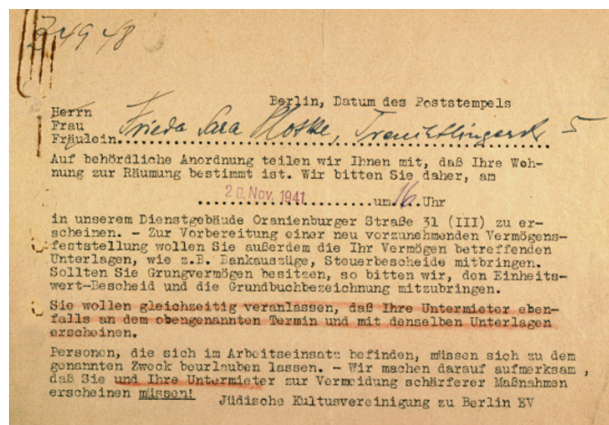


The column in this American daily newspaper reads: "German police today ordered that all Jews over 16 years of age must wear a yellow, six-pointed star of David on the left side of the coat whenever appearing in public." (Note: Wearing the star was compulsory for all Jews over 6 years. In this article the text by mistake say 16 years of age.) The Boston Herald, September 7, 1941.



## Deportations to “the East”

© Jewish Museum Berlin



A standardised letter by the housing office of the Jewish community in Berlin addressed to a member, ordering her to come to the office on November 20, 1941 with all her relevant documents. The reason for this was ostensibly the cancellation of her tenancy but it also signified the imminent deportation of the respective person. This fact was not known at first, however Jews soon realized that friends and neighbours who received such a letter were afterwards deported.

The worst blow followed in October 1941, when Hitler ordered the deportation of all Jews from Germany to ghettos and extermination sites on German-occupied territories in Poland and the Soviet Union. The deportations were conducted by the Gestapo under the central auspices of SS officer Adolf Eichmann, supported by regular police forces and local administrations. Even Jewish communities were forced to cooperate, as their employees were forced to compile lists of persons to be deported.

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Photo: Verlag Jbn, Ludwig Walter



Synagogue on Levetzowstrasse. The synagogue was turned into the first Berlin collection camp in October 1941.

In Berlin, the large synagogue in Levetzowstrasse in the central district of Moabit was turned into a local collection camp. Here the deportees were incarcerated for several days, and tax inspectors confiscated all their belongings.

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Later the Jews had to walk through the inhabited urban area to Grunewald train station from where they were sent to the East, mostly in freight wagons. In 1942, additional collection camps were set up in town, such as the cleared retirement home in Grosse Hamburger Strasse.

Places of deportation in the Berlin city centre.

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Tracks at the Putlitz Street railway station in Berlin. Jews were deported from this station. (Date uncertain.)

Grunewald train station was soon incapable of dealing with the volume of deportations of Jews to ghettos and camps so, after a while, other stations usually serving regular freight and passenger transport were put into use as well.

Many people thus became witnesses to the deportations, both in Berlin and in other places in Nazi Germany.

© bpk



Jewish deportees in Wuerzburg, Bavaria, in 1942. They are being forced to walk through the town towards the train station, guarded by local policemen. Wuerzburg Gestapo officers took pictures and compiled an album of the whole procedure.

In the beginning, although forced labourers and their families were exempted from deportation, they lost all protection at their workplaces. Illness could now result in instant dismissal and deportation. From this point onwards, Jews were forbidden to emigrate, thus more than 65 000 Jews were now trapped in Berlin.

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Jewish forced labourers at Tempelhof in Berlin. Three of these men were later deported. Berlin, Germany, 1940.



25 a ① 06/222  
Litzmannstadt, den 13.11.1941  
...AK.-Nord.  
Herrn Biebow  
-la (J)-

Erfahrungsbericht

Betrifft: Einweisung von 20 000 Juden und 5 000 Zigeunern  
in das Getto Litzmannstadt.  
Bezug: Sonderbefehle-S la (J)-vom 14.10.41 und 5.11.41

1.) Juden:

In der Zeit vom 16.10.41 bis einschliesslich 4.11.41 wurden auf dem Bahnhof Badegast 19 837 Juden aus dem Reich in Empfang genommen und in das Getto eingewiesen. Die Juden (in der Mehrzahl ältere Frauen und Männer) trafen in 20 Transporten mit durchschnittlich 1 000 Personen mit Sonderzügen der Reichsbahn (Personenwagen) in der vorgenannten Zeit täglich hier ein.

Es kamen an:

5 Transporte aus Wien.....	mit 5 000 Juden
5 " " Prag.....	" 5 000 "
4 " " Berlin .....	" 4 187 "
2 " " Köln .....	" 2 007 "
1 Transport " Luxemburg.....	" 512 "
1 " " Frankfurt a.M.....	" 1 113 "
1 " " Hamburg.....	" 1 034 "
1 " " Düsseldorf .....	" 984 "

20 Transporte.....insgesamt 19 837 Juden

n Archives O.6/222

On October 18, 1941 the first deportation train with more than 1 000 people left Berlin towards the ghetto in the city of Łódź in occupied Poland. Among the victims was the journalist Fritz Hirschfeld, a cousin of Walter Frankenstein.

Later deportations from Berlin went to ghettos in Riga (now Latvia), Kaunas (Russian Kowno, now Lithuania), Minsk (now Belarus), and in spring 1942 to the Warsaw Ghetto and several smaller ghettos in occupied Poland. German Jews were initially imprisoned in ghettos before they were brought to killing sites a few months later. In late 1941 in Riga and Kaunas, however, arriving German Jews were shot immediately after their arrival.

The picture shows a report from the German ghetto administration in Łódź dated November 13, 1941 concerning the arrival of nearly 20 000 Jews in 20 trains from various German cities as well as Vienna and Luxembourg between October 16 and November 4, 1941. 4 187 Jews were deported from Berlin. Apart from the Jews, 5 000 Sinti and Roma people (named as Gypsies in the document) had been also deported to Lodz. Łódź was renamed "Litzmannstadt" following the German occupation.



Judar i ett uppsamlingsläger vid Killesberg nära Stuttgart väntar på att deporteras till Riga, november 1941.

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© Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, courtesy of Edith and Kurt Hirschfeldt



Walter's cousin Kurt Hirschfeldt was able to obtain an ID card from a Gentile man called Heinz Gützloff and found a Jewish forger who exchanged the photos.

The Jews in Berlin remained unaware of events “in the East”, and the authorities tried to persuade them into believing that they were going to be placed in labour camps. Some also received short messages from deported friends and relatives in the ghettos, which initially had a reassuring effect but these messages soon ended. Most correspondence faded out, because the Jews in the ghettos were deported somewhere else or killed. The SS on the other hand sometimes allowed these messages, and sometimes interrupted it completely or just for a while.

Fear and scepticism soon grew among Berlin Jews. Some had already attempted to go into hiding or to illegally escape into neutral Switzerland. Others desperately tried to obtain false identity papers, or looked for genuine or false employment in the armaments industries.

© Transportliste 21, Okttransport Welle 34, 19.10.1942  
International Tracing Service (ITS)

Lin. Nr.	N a m e	Vorname	geb. am	Ort	Beruf	rel.	sch.	sonst.	Wohnort	Stunde	Kategorie	Notizen	Bemerk.
281	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Heidelberg	ohne	ja	15	ja	228, Lehnstr. 162	1943			
282	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
283	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
284	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
285	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
286	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
287	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
288	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
289	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
290	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
291	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
292	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
293	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
294	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
295	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
296	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
297	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
298	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
299	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
300	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			

A page from the deportation list for the 21st “Transport to the East” from Berlin on October 19, 1942, featuring children from the Auerbach orphanage in Schoenhauser Allee 162. They were sent to German-occupied Riga (now Latvia) where they were shot soon after arrival.

Although deportations followed week after week, there were still 33 000 Jews living in Berlin by the end of 1942, mostly involved in forced labour. Jewish welfare institutions like Berlin’s Jewish hospital as well as childcare facilities were still operating, but the Gestapo constantly restricted their ability to function. All Jewish schools in Germany were ordered to close on June 30, 1942. Giving lessons to Jewish pupils was thereafter strictly forbidden.

From autumn 1942 onwards all deportation trains left for the extermination camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau or to the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto. At the same time, the situation for the Jews in Berlin got even worse with ever-growing fear and turmoil: they no longer received letters of notification before deportations, but were instead raided without prior warning in their dwellings and immediately transferred into the collection camps.

© Statistik des Holocaust website | NARA A 3355 Film Teil

Lin. Nr.	N a m e	Vorname	geb. am	Ort	Beruf	rel.	sch.	sonst.	Wohnort	Stunde	Kategorie	Notizen	Bemerk.
301	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Heidelberg	ohne	ja	15	ja	228, Lehnstr. 162	1943			
302	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
303	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
304	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
305	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
306	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
307	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
308	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
309	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
310	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
311	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
312	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
313	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
314	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
315	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
316	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
317	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
318	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
319	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			
320	Leib	Ilse	19.12.27	Berlin	ohne	ja	15	ja	etc.	1943			

A page from the deportation list to Theresienstadt on October 3, 1942, with numbers 45 and 46 denoting Walter’s uncle and aunt Selmar and Otilie Frankenstein. Both died in the Theresienstadt camp-ghetto.





Rumours about the Germans' mass murders in the East now proliferated. Returning soldiers reported about their experiences and people with access to foreign radio stations broadcasting information that was banned by the Nazis, had more awareness of atrocities. Around the autumn 1942, the Jews in Berlin were certain that deportations meant death. More and more of them fled into hiding places, or at least tried to prepare for their own escape. But as long as they were still protected as forced labourers in the war production, this step into complete uncertainty seemed far too risky for many.

Jews from Hanau boarding a deportation train, 30/05/1942.

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