

Roma and Sinti Women Weave Reed Mats in the Ravensbrück Concentration Camp (1941)

Abstract

In 1938 and 1939, more than two thousand Roma and Sinti were classified as “asocial” and sent to concentration camps as part of a “crime prevention measure.” In a circular dated December 8, 1938, Heinrich Himmler announced a “regulation of the Gypsy question on the basis of race.” An urgent directive from the Reich Security Main Office [*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* or RSHA] on October 17, 1939 – known as the *Festschreibungs*erlass – prohibited Roma and Sinti from leaving their places of residence and ordered that they be interned in detention camps “until their final deportation.” Ravensbrück, the largest concentration camp for women, opened on May 15, 1939 with the arrival of nearly 1,000 female prisoners from Lichtenburg. The first 440 female Roma prisoners arrived on June 29, 1939 from Lower Austria and Burgenland. Ravensbrück evolved into a complex of sub-camps and forced labor facilities where SS-owned enterprises – such as the *Gesellschaft für Textil & Lederwertung* (Texled), a textile company, and the *Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Ernährung und Verpflegung* GmbH [German Experimental Institute for Nutrition and Provisions], an agricultural enterprise – forced female prisoners to carry out traditional “women’s work,” such as basket-weaving, weaving, and tailoring.

Source



Source: In the women’s concentration camp Ravensbrück: Sinti and Roma women weave straw mats under the supervision of a Kapo. Unknown photographer.

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