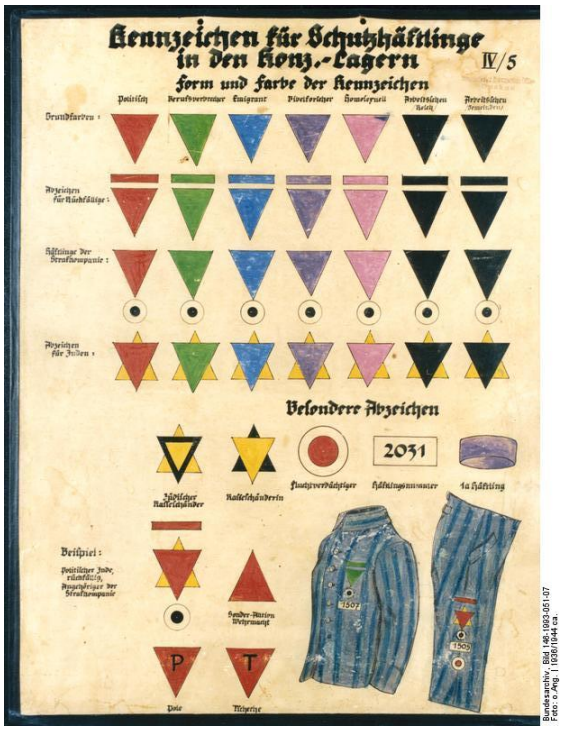
Table of Colored Classification Symbols for Prisoners in Concentration Camps (c. 1938-1944)

Abstract

In 1935-36, individual commanders of various concentration camps began forcing newly admitted groups of prisoners to wear badges indicating the alleged grounds for their incarceration. Starting in the winter of 1937-38, these classification symbols were standardized for all camps. Additionally, colors were introduced to differentiate different prisoner groups: red for political prisoners, green for criminals, blue for emigrants, purple for Jehovah's Witnesses, pink for homosexuals, and black for "asocials" [*Asoziale*] or "work shirkers" [*Arbeitsscheue*]. Inmates wore triangles of fabric in the assigned color on their prison uniforms (left side of the shirt, right pant leg) along with their number and any required additional markings (e.g., potential escapee). Jewish prisoners also wore a yellow triangle that formed a Star of David when placed over the other badge (see below). The origin of non-German prisoners was indicated by the first letter of the German name of their native country (e.g., "P" for *Polen* [Poland] or "T" for *Tschechoslowakei* [Czechoslovakia], as shown in the photo,). The cynical social Darwinist classification and hierarchical ranking of the prisoners by the SS intensified the competition among prisoners in the daily struggle for survival.

Source



Source: Table of Colored Classification Symbols for Prisoners in Concentration Camps. Date: 1936-1944 [more likely 1938/39-1944]. Photographer: Unknown. Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1993-051-07. Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e1/Bundesarchiv_Bild_146-1993-051-07,_Tafel_mit_KZ-Kennzeichen_(Winkel).jpg

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