

The Bridge on Kirchenplatz Connecting Two Parts of the Lodz Ghetto (1940/41)

Abstract

After the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the Nazis' newly expanded sphere of power included the approximately three million Jews living there. From the outset, the Polish Jews were treated with extreme brutality. Within a short time, Nazi occupiers began driving Jews out of their apartments, houses, and homelands and forced them to live in ghettos under appalling conditions. Between 1939 and 1941, more than 500,000 Polish Jews died in ghettos and work camps throughout the country. One of the largest Jewish ghettos was established in the Polish city of Lodz (Germanized as "Litzmannstadt") in the winter of 1939. After April 1940, the area set aside for the ghetto was completely cut off from the rest of the city and its non-Jewish population. Jews from all over Poland (and almost all of Europe) were penned up in Lodz's catastrophically overcrowded ghetto. In 1940 alone, an estimated 230,000 people were living in about 30,000 apartments, some of which consisted of only one room. Of these apartments, only 725 had running water. The inhabitants of the Lodz ghetto had to earn their minimal food rations through forced labor. Tens of thousands of them died there as a result of disease, malnourishment, and abuse. After 1941, the ghetto became a stopping point for European Jews bound for systematic annihilation in the extermination camps of the east. In August 1944, the last Jews were transported from Lodz to Auschwitz.

The Lodz ghetto was intersected by two main thoroughfares (one of which is seen below) and was thus divided into three parts, which were connected by two bridges. The bridge on Kirchenplatz is shown here. The thoroughfare was not part of the ghetto; streetcars used by Lodz's non-Jewish population could drive through the ghetto but were not permitted to stop.

Source



Source: Bridge at the church square (place Koscielny) connecting both parts of the ghetto. Photo: Zermin.

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