

The Lodz Ghetto Jewish Council (1941/42)

Abstract

Everyday life in the ghettos was managed by the so-called Jewish Councils. Their official task was to carry out the orders of the German occupiers. This mostly involved drawing up lists of ghetto inhabitants and property owners and handing them over to Nazi officials. At the same time, however, these councils also tried to make ghetto life as bearable and orderly as possible through welfare initiatives, health care, and the distribution of food. But they, too, were subject to the omnipotence of the Nazi regime, and their room for action was minimal. Council members who opposed German orders were deposed or murdered. For example, the first Jewish Council of the [Lodz ghetto](#) “disappeared” in its entirety after being summoned by the Gestapo. The photograph below shows the Jewish Council of Lodz in 1941-42; its chairman, Chaim Rumkowski, is shown standing.

To this day, the Jewish Councils continue to be regarded as controversial institutions. A few critics condemn their cooperation with the Nazi regime and their role in exploiting and murdering European Jews. Others lament the corruption of a few individuals and their thirst for power. Rumkowski, for example, behaved like a regular dictator in the ghetto. He fueled a cult of his own personality and even had money coined and postage stamps printed with his own image. In August 1944, he was one of the last Jews deported from Lodz to Auschwitz, where he was murdered.

Source



Source: The Jewish Council of the Lodz Ghetto. Standing in the center, the chairman, Chaim Rumkowski. Unknown photographer.

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Recommended Citation: The Lodz Ghetto Jewish Council (1941/42), published in: German History in Documents and Images,
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-1970>> [May 11, 2024].