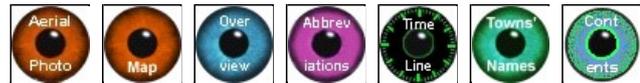


## Terezin (Theresienstadt)

Last Update 23 September 2006



Terezin

The "Ghetto Theresienstadt" was established in NW Czechoslovakia. Terezin (Theresienstadt) was founded as a garrison town in the late 18th Century, during the reign of Emperor **Joseph II** and named after his mother, Empress **Maria Theresa**.

In WW2 the town served as a ghetto to which the Nazis expelled 140,000 Jews, mostly from the "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia", but also from central and western Europe. The ghetto was controlled by the *Zentralamt für die Regelung der Judenfrage in Böhmen und Mähren*, which was under the jurisdiction of the RSHA.

The commandants were: **Siegfried Seidl**, November 1941 - July 1943; **Anton Burger**, July 1943 - February 1944, and **Karl Rahm**, February 1944 - May 1945.

All of the above were selected from **Adolf Eichmann's** staff, and as well as SS men; Czech gendarmes served as ghetto guards. The small fortress near the ghetto was used as an internment camp for political prisoners.

Terezin was first mentioned in a Nazi document on **10 October 1941**. The plan was to concentrate there most of the Jews from the "Protectorate", Germany and other western European countries, particularly prominent persons, old people, or those who had served in the German Army during WW 1. The Jews should be transferred from Terezin gradually to the death camps of **Aktion Reinhard** and **Auschwitz**.

Terezin also served to camouflage the extermination of the Jews from world opinion, by presenting it as a model Jewish settlement.



Gate #1 \*



Gate #2



Arrival at Bohusovice Station

The first group of Jews from **Praha** arrived at the **end of November 1941**. By **end of May 1942**, 28,887 Jews were deported to the ghetto, which was approximately one third of the Jewish population in the "Protectorate". The first deportation from Terezin was 2,000 Jews to **Riga** in **1942**, where they were massacred in the **Rumbuli forest**.

In the **summer of 1942** thousands of Jews from Germany and Austria arrived, some were highly decorated WW 1 soldiers. There was a permanent population of 30,000 - 40,000 in the Terezin Ghetto, compared to a pre-war population of approximately 7,000. This gives some idea of the extent of overcrowding. The peak population was 58,497 on **18 December 1942**, living in an area of 125,770 square yards.

Internal affairs were run by a Council of Elders - heading the council was **Jacob Edelstein**, succeeded by **Paul Epstein** and Rabbi **Benjamin Murelstein** of **Vienna**. Rabbi **Leo Baeck** was also imprisoned in Terezin. The Jewish leaders had the terrible task of making up deportation lists, allocating work in the ghetto, distribution of food, providing housing, overseeing sanitation, and education. There was an intense cultural programme of activities, there were a large number of writers, artists, several orchestras, an opera, theatre troupe, and 60,000 volume library, specialising on Jewish subjects. The ghetto also had its own **currency**.



Bunks



Prison Cells

In **September 1942**, 18,639 Jews arrived in Terezin. 13,004 persons were deported to the extermination camps in the east, 3,941 died in the ghetto. The five transports to **Treblinka** left Terezin **between 5 and 25 October 1942**. **Richard Glazar**, famous author of the book "Trap with a Green Fence", was deported to **Treblinka** on **Transport BU**, his registration number was BU639. This transport arrived in **Treblinka** on **10 October 1942**, at almost four o'clock in the afternoon.

**Between 11 March 1942 and 13 June 1942**, 13,001 Jews from Terezin were deported to the **Lublin District** and the **Warsaw Ghetto** (to **Warsaw** only one transport - 1,000 people). **Between 19 September and 22 October 1942**, 17,004 Jews were deported from Terezin directly to **Treblinka**. 30,005 Terezin Jews were victims of **Aktion Reinhard**.

Deportations to Terezin came to a halt in the **first half of 1943**, by which time 90% of the Jews from the "Protectorate" and nearly all the Jews left in the *Reich* had been brought to the ghetto, also Jews **from the Netherlands** and Denmark were transferred there. Deportations to **Auschwitz** continued from time to time, until the **fall of 1944**, then only 11,068 people remained in the ghetto.

In **1942** epidemics killed almost half the population, 15,891, by the **end of 1943**, the ghetto health department had set up a network of hospitals with 2,163 beds.

At the **end of 1943**, the Nazis allowed an International Red Cross investigation committee to visit Terezin in **1944**, in order to show the world that the Nazis did no harm to the Jews. In preparation for this visit the Nazis deported more prisoners to **Auschwitz** so as to reduce the population. A number of changes were made, such as dummy stores, a café, kindergardens, a school and flower gardens.

The Red Cross visited Terezin on **23 July 1944** and the Nazis made a propaganda film, "The *Führer* gives the Jews a town". After filming most of the cast, all the members of the internal leadership, and nearly all the children were deported to **Auschwitz**.



Gallows



Postcard

During the last six months of the camp's existence, some Jews were transferred to neutral countries, 1,200 Jews to Switzerland, Danish Jews to Sweden.

At the **end of April 1945**, thousands of Jews were brought from other camps, resulting in new outbreaks of epidemics. On **3 May 1945**, five days before the ghetto was liberated by the Red Army, the Nazis handed over Terezin to the Red Cross. A gas chamber was installed in **1945**, in a corridor of the fortifications wall near the former Litomerice gate, but not put in action.

**Between November 1941 and April 1945**, 140,000 Jews were deported to Terezin. Of these, 33,000 died there, 88,000 were deported to the extermination camps. At the time of liberation 19,000 were still alive, or had been transferred to neutral countries. Only 3,000 of those Jews deported to the extermination camps survived (mainly **Auschwitz**).

The 140,000 people deported to Terezin by country, were as follows:

Czechoslovakia - 75,500

Germany - 42,000



Austria - 15,000  
Holland - 5,000  
Hungary - 1,150  
Poland - 1,000  
Denmark - 500

[Crematorium](#)

**Seidl** and **Rahm** were sentenced to death and hanged by a Czech court. **Anton Burger** escaped and was sentenced to death in absentia.

#### [The Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names \(Yad Vashem\)](#)

Photos: GFH

Terezin Memorial Museum (Donation of former prisoner Dr. Burian) \*

Sources:

Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

Richard Glazar: "Trap with a Green Fence"

Thanks to [Struan Robertson](#) for corrections.

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