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On Yom Kipper, in 1940, Warsaw's Jews learned very disturbing news. On that day, the 12th of October, a new living arrangement was announced. All Jews would be forced to live within a "Jewish Quarter" of the city.

One month later, in November, the "Jewish Ghetto" was sealed off from the rest of Warsaw. A wall, more than ten feet high and topped with barbed wire, kept the Jews inside. All Poles living within the newly designated ghetto area had to leave.

No Warsaw Jew could have imagined the ghetto would become just the first step of a systematic plan of extermination. The Nazis established a Jewish Council (called the *Judenrat*) to administer the ghetto's affairs. Members of the *Judenrat*, who often did the Nazis' bidding, were detested by the other ghetto residents.

It wasn't just the Jews of Warsaw who were forced to live inside the ghetto's walls. People from other towns were sent there as well. It is estimated that 500,000 people lived within the confined space.

Because food rations were grossly insufficient, very young children were homeless and the lack of proper clothing caused even greater hardship, smuggling in the ghetto (especially by children who could slip under the ghetto walls) was a way of life. Despite the smuggling, people died of starvation.

A group of rabbis, writers, historians and teachers attempted to document life in the Warsaw ghetto. They stuffed their work (referred to as the "Ringelblum's Archives") inside metal boxes and three milk cans, then hid them in the cellars of various Warsaw buildings. Two of those milk cans were found after the war. The third remains buried somewhere.

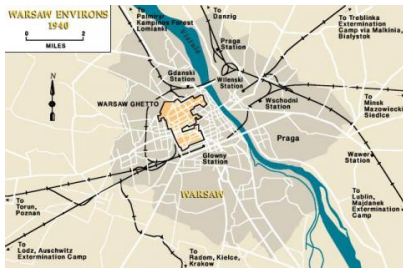
Once half a million Jews were grouped together, it was easy for the Nazis to begin the process of "evacuating" or "resettling" them.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WARSAW-GHETTO-Pianist-The>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WARSAW-GHETTO-Pianist-The>



1940 Warsaw - Map

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw - Map

Map image originally appeared in *Das Spiegel*; online, courtesy Szpilman.net.

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