

0. EVACUATION of the WARSAW GHETTO - Story Preface

1. JEWS IN WARSAW

2. THE LAST BROADCAST

3. GERMANY INVADES POLAND

4. WARSAW GHETTO

5. EVACUATION of the WARSAW GHETTO

6. DESTROY THE GHETTO

7. WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

8. THE WARSAW GHETTO IS NO MORE

9. DEATH OF WARSAW

10. ALONE IN WARSAW

11. WILM HOSENFELD

12. HOSENFELD'S DIARY

13. THE REST OF THE STORY



When Jurgen Stroop prepared a report to Heinrich Himmler, called "The Stroop Report," he included many photographs to document his efforts to evacuate and then destroy the Warsaw Ghetto. This image appeared in that report. Historians are unsure about the photographer. It could have been Franz Konrad or it could have been one of the photographers from Propaganda Kompanie nr 689. The identity of the young boy is in dispute. It could be Artur Dab Siemiatek, Levi Zelinwarger (next to his mother, Chana Zelinwarger) or Tsvi Nussbaum. On the report's cover, Stroop tells Himmler: "Es gibt keinen jüdischen Wohnbezirk in Warschau mehr!" [There Is No Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw Anymore!]. Online via several places including the U.S. National Archives (where the image appears at page 15 of the report) and Wikimedia Commons.

All non-exempt Jews were ordered to leave the Warsaw Ghetto beginning July 22, 1942 at 11 a.m. The Third Reich referred to it as a "resettlement."

Families were allowed to take their valuables, a small amount of luggage and enough food for three days. Six thousand people would be shipped out every day until the Warsaw ghetto was cleared of all Jews. Even youngsters were treated like criminals.

It took less than three weeks for the Szpilman family to be swept away by the evacuation order. In his book, Wladyslaw describes what happened as his family waited for the transport train:

At one point a boy made his way through the crowd in our direction with a box of sweets on a string around his neck. He was selling them at ridiculous prices, although heaven knows what he thought he was going to do with the money. Scraping together the last of our small change, we bought a single cream caramel. Father divided it into six parts with his penknife. That was our last meal together. (The Pianist, page 104)

Warsaw's Jews, including starving children, were being sent to Treblinka. With little doubt, everyone inside the ghetto would meet the same terrible fate. By June of 1942, some inside the ghetto wanted to alert the rest of the world to the "systematic extermination" underway:

Only a miracle can save us: a sudden end to the war, otherwise we are lost.

The Jewish Resistance urged all to "Awake and Fight!" Families tried to live in hiding places like bunkers, single-rooms and make-shift "residences." Jews lining up against ghetto walls, about to be shot, became common events. Revolutionaries were sometimes betrayed by their own people.

By February of 1943, Himmler (head of the SS) had grown tired of the Jewish resistance. He thought the total destruction of the Warsaw ghetto would make a great April 20th birthday present for Hitler.

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

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

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



Heinrich Himmler

Image online, via German Federal Archives.

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