

# The Area of the Ghetto

**Rumours about the establishment of a ghetto had been circulating in Warsaw since the first months of the war, and were finally confirmed by a decision issued by the governor of the Warsaw district, Ludwig Fischer, at the beginning of October 1940.**

The regulation was accompanied by a plan of the streets that would form part of the ghetto and at once constitute its borders. However, this differed from the arrangement of streets delineating the “typhus danger zone”, which had been published in August by the collaborationist press – “Nowy Kurier Warszawski” and “Gazeta Żydowska”. The previously proposed area between Bankowy Square and Senatorska and Bielańska streets, also including part of the Saski Garden, was excluded from the ghetto, which was expanded, however, by the incorporation of the Jewish cemetery and the vicinity of Okopowa Street. The walls that had been previously built on these streets and squares (among others in the Old Town) and which eventually were not located within the ghetto, were demolished. Before the gates of the enclave were closed for good, numerous corrections were made to its borders, with various streets and buildings passing from one zone to the other. This was due, among others, to economic factors (for example, the functioning on a given street of an industrial or manufacturing plant that could not be relocated) or simple logistics (if the placement of a wall would have made it difficult to access various institutions, for example, hospitals).

**Emanuel Ringelblum**, the chronicler of the ghetto, noted thus:

“Today, on 23 October, it was once again conveyed through a megaphone that Waliców and Ceglana streets had been excluded from the ghetto, and at the same time it turned out that information about the extension of the deadline from 31 October to 15 November was false. The people have lost their heads, they simply do not know where to move. No

street is secure, for everywhere there is something that can put a given street in danger. Ulrich's factory is located on Ceglana Street, and this has led to it being excluded from the ghetto".

There were many more such changes, always entailing a hunt for new accommodation.

The ghetto was sealed off on **16 November 1940**. Some 113,000 Poles were forced to leave the designated area, their places being taken by 138,000 Jews who had previously lived in various other parts of Warsaw. The new district covered approximately four square kilometres, which accounted for less than three percent of the city's then area. It was surrounded by a wall three metres high, which was additionally topped off with broken glass and at some points secured with barbed wire entanglements. Over the following months, the borders of the ghetto were changed. After the so-called Grossaktion, its size was cut down significantly.

Twenty-two guarded gates, each open in designated hours, led to the ghetto. In order to leave or enter the enclave, one had to obtain the requisite permit. Attempts to pass illegally entailed serious penalties – even death. **Ludwik Hirsztfeld** reminisced:

"At the exits [the gates of the ghetto] there are guards, called wacha in the local jargon. These comprise several armed Germans, who look at the crowd with contempt, Polish policemen, and servile Jewish policemen who, when they fail to act with the required efficiency, get their faces smacked".

The closure of the ghetto generated a multitude of emotions among its inhabitants. Some believed that although their living conditions would deteriorate and they would come to function in isolation from their former space and friends, they would still live relatively freely.

See also:

<https://1943.pl/en/artykul/16-november-1940-the-establishment-of-the-warsaw-ghetto-by-the-germans/>

---

**Author:** Martyna Grądzka-Rejak

**Publication date:** 2023-03-14

**Print date:** 2023-05-01 05:52

**Source:** <http://1943.pl/en/artykul/the-ghetto-area/>