

Wires

Categories: Objects

The Łódź ghetto was surrounded by a fence with barbed wire on poles, not a wall (as was the case in Warsaw, for example). This was due to the open nature of one part of the area (Marysin) and to the fact that the ghetto was originally only planned to operate for a short time. German guards (Schupo officers) initially had their sentry posts spread out from 50 to 100 meters apart outside the wires. They served in the 101. Reserve Police Bataillon from Hamburg and later (beginning April 7, 1941) the special Reserve Police Bataillon Ghetto. As the war progressed and the Third Reich required increasingly more men to fight, the number of German guards posted was gradually decreased.

Crossing the wires, or even coming too close to them, was regarded as an escape attempt potentially punished with a gunshot by the guard. Shooting a ghetto resident was treated as a means to prevent escape and was rewarded; therefore, there were cases of people shot while standing several meters from the wires. Approaching the wires was also a way of committing suicide (“a shot of grace”, as it was known). The wires were not, however, entirely impossible to cross, as evidenced by the practice though on a relatively small scale of smuggling.

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Resources

Encyclopedia, p. 59.

Tags

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