

Opole and Dombrowa Jewish Ghettos

The tiny town of Opole, in the Lublin vicinity of Poland, had a Jewish population of 4,325 before the German conquest, two thirds of the town's total population. Perhaps because of its Jewish majority, in the summer of 1940 the Nazis ordered a ghetto to be constructed there, whose population more than doubled as transports of Jews arrived from Austria and elsewhere. In May of 1942, most were deported to the Sobibór death camp, and those who remained were murdered by the Nazis in late October. The small Dombrowa Jewish ghetto near Bendzin, Poland, was built in 1942. Almost immediately afterward, deportations to the Auschwitz death camp began. The Dombrowa ghetto was liquidated June 26, 1943, when the few remaining residents were dispersed to the Srodula ghetto, a stop on the way to Auschwitz.

Two items of seldom seen Jewish ghetto mail: Before an April 7, 1942, Opole postal cancel was struck on the 12-grozy stamp indicium, the postal card received a postmark at the Opole postal exchange office of the Jewish Council. The purple handstamped "Z" (Zensur) on the 6-pfennig postal card canceled June 29, 1943, is the characteristic censor marking on mail that originated from the Dombrowa ghetto. The card was sent from a German Jewish man ("Israel" in the sender's name) to a German Jewish inmate ("Sara" in the addressee's name) of a women's slave labor camp at Gellenau, Austria. The sender may have been a privileged survivor; the card is dated immediately after the ghetto was liquidated.

