

Jewish Ghetto Theresienstadt

At the end of 1943, to counter rumors about extermination camps, Nazi officials decided to invite a delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Theresienstadt. In preparation for their arrival, thousands of residents were deported to the death camp at Auschwitz, to reduce congestion in the ghetto. A Potemkin village was built, consisting of dummy stores, a café, a bank, kindergartens, an elementary school, and a flower garden. The visit took place on July 23, 1944. All meetings with inmates were supervised by the Nazis, who filmed a propaganda motion picture of the event, claiming to prove that Jews were leading comfortable lives under benevolent Nazi protectors.



Postal and philatelic souvenirs, including imperforate sheetlets of parcel admission stamps, were presented to the Red Cross visitors. Although ghetto administrations were forbidden to place their markings on Adolf Hitler's image, the Nazis made an exception to the rule for this occasion. The black cancellation, "Jewish Postal Authority Theresienstadt," was created for this event, but was never used on real mail. The red ink cachet at the left reads, "Reply only by postcard or letter written in German, addressed to the Council of Jewish Elders at Prague."