

Bendzin (Bendsburg) Jewish Ghetto Alfred Schwarcbaum

Unlike the Warsaw and Łódź (Litzmannstadt) ghettos, the Jewish ghetto at Bendzin was not sealed off from the outside until the spring of 1943, but life was harsh for the residents all the same. One of the more prosperous among them, Alfred Schwarcbaum, escaped to Switzerland. From there he conducted relief and rescue work for Jews in his homeland, together with Dr. Abraham Silberschein's Relico Organization in Geneva and with the New York-based American Joint Distribution Committee. Schwarcbaum also used an undercover address in Lisbon to conduct illegal communication with Jewish anti-Nazi resistance groups. Youth movement members arose in armed resistance when the Nazis liquidated the ghetto on August 1, 1943, and held out for two weeks. While nearly all the Bendzin Jews were being deported to the Auschwitz extermination camp, a small group escaped to Slovakia and Hungary, where they continued underground work until the end of the war.

April 11, 1943, registered letter from Izaak Israel Demter in the Bendzin (Bendsburg) Jewish ghetto to Alfred Schwarcbaum at Lausanne, Switzerland, censored at Munich, with April 29 Lausanne arrival backstamp. The purple marking across the flap reads: "Sender: Elders Council of the Jewish Community in Bendsburg O/S [Upper Silesia], Mail Collection Center."

