

Hotel Polski

Hotel in Warsaw. In mid-1943 the *Gestapo* used the Hotel Polski to house Jews who bore citizenship papers of neutral countries—mostly South American countries—and thus were to be exchanged for German citizens imprisoned by the Allies.

Most of these citizenship papers were forged documents prepared by the neutral countries' consulates in Europe, without the knowledge of their home governments. Jews who had gone into hiding risked their lives to obtain the papers. Then they abandoned their hiding places, once again risking their lives, despite warnings by the Warsaw underground, because they no longer felt that they could survive in hiding.

Ultimately, 300 Jews living at the Hotel Polski were deported to the Vittel camp, while another 2,000--2,500 were sent to Bergen-Belsen. The last group of 420 Jews to be taken to Bergen-Belsen was instead unloaded at the Pawiak prison and shot. The South American governments did not regard the citizenship papers as authentic, and thus refused to honor them. As a result, 2,500 Jews who considered those papers their ticket to life were deported to Auschwitz in 1943 and 1944, where they were murdered. Only a few hundred Jews were saved by their documents, most of them exchanged for Germans imprisoned in Palestine.