

Badge, Jewish,

Distinguishing sign that Jews in Nazi Germany and in Nazi-occupied countries were compelled to wear to facilitate their identification as Jews. Such a distinctive sign had been imposed on Jews in ancient times, in the form of the color or shape of the clothes, shoes, hats, or scarves they were obliged to wear in order to differentiate between them and the rest of the population and humiliate them in other people's eyes. The first to introduce such a sign were the Muslims, who in the eighth century decreed that all the dhimmi (protected people) - Christians, Jews, and Samaritans - must wear clothes that set them apart from the Muslims. In Yemen such clothes were obligatory for Jews until the twentieth century. In Christian countries, distinctive signs for Jews were introduced on the basis of a canon issued by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, under Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), which laid down that Jews "of both sexes, in all Christian lands, shall be differentiated from the rest of the population by the quality of their garment." The form of this differentiation was not specified, but the decision makes it clear that its purpose was to prevent sexual intercourse between Jews and Christians.

The Lateran Council decision was not applied in all Christian countries at all times, or in a uniform manner, but the introduction of a "Jewish badge" did spread, and it became a means of shaming and humiliating Jews. The pointed hat, as a distinctive sign for Jews, is known to have been in use from the thirteenth century in various Germanic countries. Yellow as a distinguishing color for Jews had been decreed earlier, in Muslim countries, and the practice may have been taken over by Christian countries, though the reason for choosing this particular color is not clear.

A distinction must be made between the voluntary concentration of Jews in a certain part of a town and their forced confinement to a ghetto; between distinctive clothes and outward appearance that Jews adhered to of their own will, out of loyalty to their tradition, and the distinctive signs imposed on them by a hostile government for purposes of humiliation.

In modern times the Jewish badge was gradually abolished, disappearing altogether during the nineteenth-century Emancipation. Under the Nazis the term "yellow badge" first appeared in Robert Weltsch's article "Tragt ihn mit Stolz, den gelben Fleck" ("Wear the Yellow Badge with Pride"), published in the *Judische Rundschau* on April 4, 1933, in reaction to the anti-Jewish boycott of April 1, 1933 (see boycott, anti-Jewish). At that point no official Jewish sign was in existence and there were no plans to introduce such a sign. Weltsch was apparently referring to the slanderous and abusive inscriptions painted on the windows of Jewish-owned stores and businesses in "Operation Boycott" of April 1, and the relapse to medieval times that it signified. The proposal to impose a distinctive mark on the Jews was first made by Reinhard Heydrich at a meeting held in the wake of the Kristallnacht pogrom, in November 1938.

At the height of the fighting in Poland, in September 1939, local German military and civilian authorities issued the first decrees ordering Jewish stores to be marked as such. Later decrees required Jews to wear a distinctive sign. In November 1939 the Jews of Lublin, for example, were ordered to wear a yellow badge on the left side of their breast, bearing the inscription Jude. On November 23, Hans Frank, in one of the first regulations he issued as Generalgouverneur, stipulated that as of December 1, 1939, all "Jews and Jewesses" over the age of twelve living in the Generalgouvernement were to wear, on the right sleeve of their jacket or dress and on their overcoat, a white band at least 4 inches (10 cm) in width, with a blue Star of David inscribed on it. The Lublin order requiring a yellow badge was promptly withdrawn, and the Lublin Jews had to wear a white armband, like the Jews in the rest of the Generalgouvernement.

On November 14, SS-Brigadeführer Friedrich Uebelhor, Regierungspräsident (administrative president) of the Kalisz district, issued an order for "all Jews, irrespective of sex or age, to wear a band 10 centimeters [4 inches] in width on the right arm, below the armpit, of Jewish-yellow color [judengelber

Farbe]." On December 12, Uebelhor issued a revised order: "Reichsstatthalter [Reich governor] Arthur Greiser has decreed that all Jews in the warthegau [must] wear a uniform distinctive sign. Accordingly, my order of November 14 under which Jews were obliged to wear a yellow band is amended, and I now order [that] Jews have to wear a yellow badge in the form of a Star of David, 10 centimeters in height, on the right side of their breast and on their back." In Zagebie, a district that was also annexed to the Reich, like the Warthegau, the Jews were ordered to wear a band on the left sleeve, with a blue Star of David painted on it; this was later replaced by a badge.

When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, in June 1941, they lost no time introducing into the newly occupied areas the various marks and methods used in Poland for differentiating between the Jews and the rest of the population. The guidelines on the treatment of Jews issued in 1941 by Heinrich Lohse, the Reichskommissar Ostland (Reich Commissar of the Occupied Eastern Territories), contained the provision that "orders have to be issued that Jews be at all times identifiable as such by a yellow six-pointed star, clearly visible, at least 10 centimeters high, on the left side of their breast and on the back." In Biaystok, which had its own civil administration, the first announcement made by the Judenrat (Jewish Council), on German orders, stated that "as of the morning of July 10, 1941, all men, women, and children aged fourteen and over must wear a white armband on their left sleeve, with a blue Star of David painted on it; the Star of David has to be 10 centimeters high and its outline at least 10 centimeters wide." The next order issued by the Bialystok Judenrat, on July 11, 1941, however, spoke of "a yellow badge, as ordered"; the first order was presumably amended within a few days, and the armband was replaced by a yellow badge.

Forcing the Jews to wear a distinctive sign was one of the tactics of harassment that enabled the Germans to recognize Jews as such on sight, and was designed to create a gulf between the Jews and the rest of the population. The Jews were themselves responsible for acquiring the badges and distributing them. Even when the Jews were separated from the general

population by being confined to ghettos, the orders requiring them to wear distinguishing signs remained valid and were strictly enforced. Jews who left the badge at home when they went out or whose badges did not meet the regulations were subject to fines and prison sentences. In Warsaw, warnings were posted in the hallways of apartment buildings, reminding Jews not to forget the badge when they went out. An announcement by the Bialystok Judenrat of July 26, 1941, stated: "The authorities have warned that severe punishment - up to and including death by shooting - is in store for Jews who do not wear the yellow badge, on back and front."

In some ghettos various other distinctive badges were introduced - for identifying Jewish police, doctors, Judenrat employees, and people who held jobs in one of the many official factories. The purpose of these additional badges was to replace the Jewish badge and give the bearer a sense of being better protected and more favored than the anonymous masses in the ghetto. One of the Warsaw ghetto diarists drew up a list of nineteen different kinds of badges - in addition to the regular badge that all Jews had to wear - that were in use, at one time or another, during the existence of the ghetto. In May 1942 a decree was published in Warsaw forbidding the wearing of additional badges by the factory employees and confining the use of special badges to the Jewish police.

Frank's November 1939 decree on the wearing of distinctive signs in the Generalgouvernement was followed by a regulation issued by the governor of the Warsaw district, Hauptamtsleiter SA-Brigadeführer Dr. Ludwig Fischer; the regulation stipulated that the decree applied to Jews by "race" and was therefore also binding on converts to Christianity and their progeny. The converts living in Warsaw appealed to the Rada Główna Opiekuncza (Central Welfare Council; RGO), which was approved by the Germans, to intervene on their behalf so that they might be exempted from this shameful obligation. When the RGO applied to the Germans on the converts' behalf, the Germans requested a list of the persons to be exempted, but on receiving it, they rejected the RGO's request. In October and November 1940, when the

Warsaw ghetto was set up, the Germans used the list to round up the converts and force them to enter the ghetto with the Jews.

Inside the Third Reich, the regulation requiring a yellow badge to be worn by the Jews (a Judenstern, or "Jewish star," in the regulation's wording) was promulgated in September 1941, that is, nearly two years after it had been imposed on the Jews of Poland. The regulation also applied to the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and officially also to the Polish areas that had been incorporated into the Reich, even though in the latter areas the practice had been introduced shortly after the German occupation of Poland. The September 1941 regulation required all Jews over the age of six to wear a yellow six-pointed star, the size of a fist, on the left side of the breast, with Jude inscribed on it in black. As in the other places where it was applied, the yellow-badge decree in the Reich and the areas annexed to it was one of a series of anti-Jewish measures and signified a further intensification of the anti-Jewish line. The distinctive mark imposed on the Jews in Germany became an integral part of the preparations for the "final solution." That same month, restrictions were imposed on the freedom of movement of Jews in Germany. In October, emigration of Jews from Germany was prohibited; and this was followed in November by an announcement that Jews "who are not employed by factories essential to the country's economy" would be dispatched to the east in the next few months.

The Jewish badge was also adopted by Germany's satellite states. On September 9, 1941, a "Jewish code" became law in Slovakia, stipulating in part that the Jews of that country were to wear a yellow badge, and that only the president of the country could exempt certain individuals from this obligation. German authorities ran into difficulties when they tried to introduce the wearing of the badge in the occupied countries of Western Europe and Vichy France. The opposition seems to have come both from local quarters that still wielded a measure of power in the internal administration of these countries and, in rare instances, from German military authorities on the spot. In December 1942 the Germans began exerting pressure on the Vichy regime

to impose the wearing of the yellow badge on the Jews of France - a preparatory step for the planned deportation and annihilation of the Jews of German-occupied Western Europe. Adm. Francois Darlan, Vichy premier at the time, rejected the German proposal, arguing that the anti-Jewish measures being applied in France were adequate and that a distinctive sign for Jews would come as a "great shock" to the French people. Adolf Eichmann's office continued to press for the yellow badge to be applied in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In March 1942 the subject was discussed at meetings in Berlin and Paris, at one of which Helmut Knochen, Chef des SD und der Sicherheitspolizei (Chief of the Security Service and the Security Police) for occupied France and Belgium, stated that in his opinion the yellow badge was "another step on the road to the final solution." The implementation of the yellow-badge decree was delayed, however, owing to the resistance shown by the French and the reservations raised by the German military administration, and also because the question of how to deal with Jews who were nationals of neutral countries or of Allied countries remained to be resolved.

In the Netherlands - where it was easier for the Germans to overcome resistance and obstacles - a decree was issued on April 29 1942, according to which all Jews were obliged to wear a yellow star on the left side of their breast with the word *Jood* inscribed on it, in black ink. In Belgium the same decree was issued on May 27, 1942, to go into effect on June 3. In occupied France the decree was issued on June 7; it ordered all Jews aged six and over to wear a yellow star, the size of a clenched fist, on the left side of their breast, with the word *Juif* (Jew) or *Juive* (Jewess) inscribed on it. In the unoccupied zone of France the wearing of the yellow badge was not introduced, since the Vichy government persisted in its opposition to the measure. Some scholars of the Holocaust believe that the main reason for the Vichy regime's opposition - apart from concern over the reaction of the French public - was the fact that while the imposition of the yellow badge did not apply to Jews who were foreign nationals, Vichy authorities themselves would not be empowered to grant exemption from the badge to French Jews who had

rendered distinguished service to France and French culture. In the end the Germans refrained from imposing the Jewish badge in Vichy France, even after November 1942, when they seized control of all of France, apparently because of the many manifestations of public opposition to the measure that they had encountered in occupied France.

In the satellite states and states that were otherwise dependent on Germany, the Nazis brought their power and influence to bear in order to have the Jewish badge adopted. In Hungary such pressure was applied in December 1942, but the government there was able to resist it. In March 1944, however, when the German army occupied Hungary, the first decision on Jewish affairs adopted by the new government under Dome Sztojay, on March 31, was to impose the yellow badge on the country's Jews. Romania applied the yellow badge in the new territories that it occupied (Bukovina and Bessarabia in July and September 1941, and Transnistria in June 1942). The intention was to introduce the yellow star also in the Regat (the pre-1914 borders of the country), but Jewish intervention succeeded in foiling this design, except in Moldavia, in the final phase of the war (May 1944), when the yellow badge was applied "because the area is close to the battle front." In Bulgaria, where there was strong opposition to anti-Jewish legislation and the persecution of the Jews, the government, in August 1942, decided to introduce a distinctive sign for Jews, in the form of a small yellow button. Even the wearing of that sign, however, was not strictly enforced, and most of the Jews in the country did not observe the order.

In Denmark the German authorities considered introducing the yellow badge, but at no point did they dare risk making it mandatory. According to legend - which has also found its way into non-fictional writings - King Christian X threatened that if the Jewish badge were to be introduced in Denmark, he would be the first to wear one. While the king's opposition to anti-Jewish measures, like his personal courage, is unquestionable, he in fact never made such a declaration; the Germans, who were well aware of the Danes'

unconditional resistance to anti-Jewish measures of any sort, never even attempted to force the yellow badge on Denmark.

The Jewish population's reaction to the yellow badge and the non-Jewish population's opposition to the measure in the German-occupied countries and in Germany itself were broadly as follows. In Poland, where a distinctive sign for Jews was first introduced, it initially had a considerable psychological impact, but further measures, much more severe in their effect on the Jews, overwhelmed this initial impact. Diaries from the period contain bitter and sarcastic references to the Jewish badge, such as one that compares the ghetto to Hollywood, because both are full of stars. The threat of severe penalties accounted for the almost uniform observance of the wearing of the Jewish badge; exceptions included members of the underground who served as illegal liaison officers among the ghettos, and Jews who had escaped from the ghetto to the "Aryan" side of the city.

In Germany the introduction of the Jewish badge was followed by a wave of suicides. Some Jewish sources report that there were a few instances of Germans' displaying solidarity with the Jews in the matter of the yellow badge. On the other hand, an internal SS report on the public mood, dated November 1941, includes an item to the effect that among the German population, surprise was voiced about the many Jews still to be found in Germany, as revealed by the yellow badges. The report mentions the special problem of persons classified as Jews under the Nazi racist legislation who were Christians by religion; congregants attending church services allegedly complained of having to sit next to persons wearing the yellow badge. Though Protestant clergymen were not prepared to exclude wearers of the yellow badge from services, they considered assigning them separate seating. Among the Catholic clergy, Cardinal Adolf Bertram in Germany and Cardinal Theodor Innitzer in Austria opposed such separation.

In Western Europe many Jews defied orders and did not wear the yellow badge. In occupied France it had been estimated that more than one hundred

thousand Jews would have to wear the badge, but in the weeks that followed the issuance of the order, only eighty-three thousand persons came to pick up the badges. Among the French population the yellow badge caused great dismay, and quite a few took effective steps against it. For example, yellow became a fashionable color, and some people wore stars or other items to express solidarity with the Jews. Even the French police, which had a poor record in its treatment of Jews, either found it difficult to overcome the defiance of the order to wear the yellow badge, or did not care to collaborate in this effort. Passersby who were asked to identify themselves because they looked Jewish sometimes turned out to be "proper" Frenchmen, and this experience too seems to have deterred policemen from trying to arrest violators of the yellow-badge decree. In the Netherlands there were many instances of demonstrative solidarity with the Jews. On May 1, 1942, a Dutch underground newspaper printed 300,000 stars bearing the inscription "Jews and non-Jews are one and the same."

In the Nazi concentration camps, prisoners were marked by triangular patches in various colors (in the case of Jews, by a Star of David consisting of two triangles in different colors) and by letters, the purpose being to indicate the ethnic and national identity of the prisoner and the prisoner's particular "offense." Poles brought to Germany on forced labor were marked by the letter P, and severe restrictions were imposed on them in their day-to-day contacts with Germans; but special distinctive marks, in all occupied countries or countries under the influence of the Third Reich, were applied only to Jews.