





1,000 Years *of* Jewish Life in Poland

A TIMELINE














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FRONT COVER PHOTOS
(from left to right)

First Row

Julian Tuwim by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz • Emanuel Ringelblum, Icyk Manger, and Rachela Auerbach • King Kazimierz III the Great from Artur Szyk's *Statute of Kalisz* • Rabbi Baruch Steinberg speaking in front of the Warsaw's Great Synagogue during the memorial roll call organized by the Union of Jewish Participants in the Fights for Polish Independence in 1924

Second Row

Post stamp with the logo of ŻKS Makkabi Kraków issued before 1918 • Zuzanna Ginczanka • Ride of the Living 2018 participants reaching the finish-line at JCC Krakow

Third Row

Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur* by Maurycy Gottlieb • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

Fourth Row

The synagogue in Narowla (Naroulia) by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz • Works on recreation of Gwoździec's synagogue ceiling paintings displayed in the POLIN Museum • Icchok Lejbusz Perec (Isaac Leib Peretz) by Władysław Wajntraub

1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland

A TIMELINE

Published by the
Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

FUNDACJA CENTRUM TAUBEGO ODNOWY ŻYCIA ŻYDOWSKIEGO W POLSCE
TAUBE CENTER FOR THE RENEWAL OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND FOUNDATION

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Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

TAUBE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH LIFE & CULTURE

and the
Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area

Categorically Jewish, distinctly Polish: Polish Jewry was authentically and intimately linked to the Jewish past as well as interconnected with contemporary Jewry over the world over. It was also leavened with characteristically Polish features.

- Moshe Rosman

Dear Readers:

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation is pleased to present you with this new, third edition of one of our primary publications, *1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland: A Timeline*.

This new edition offers you an opportunity to explore a millennium of the Polish Jewish experience: From the first appearance of Jewish merchants at the time of the creation of the Polish state in the 10th century, through the 16th century's Golden Age and Jewish communal autonomy, 123 years of a partitioned Poland, on to the transition into modernity and the rebirth of a free Poland in 1918, World War II and the tragedy of the Holocaust, decades of Communist rule, all the way through today's revival of Jewish life in Poland.

It is said that there is no Polish history without Jewish history and there is no Jewish history without Polish history. We have, therefore, maintained an integrated balance, introducing major events, trends, and historical figures that have contributed to the diversity of Polish Jewish culture, tradition, and politics and left a lasting impact on the Ashkenazi Jewish world.

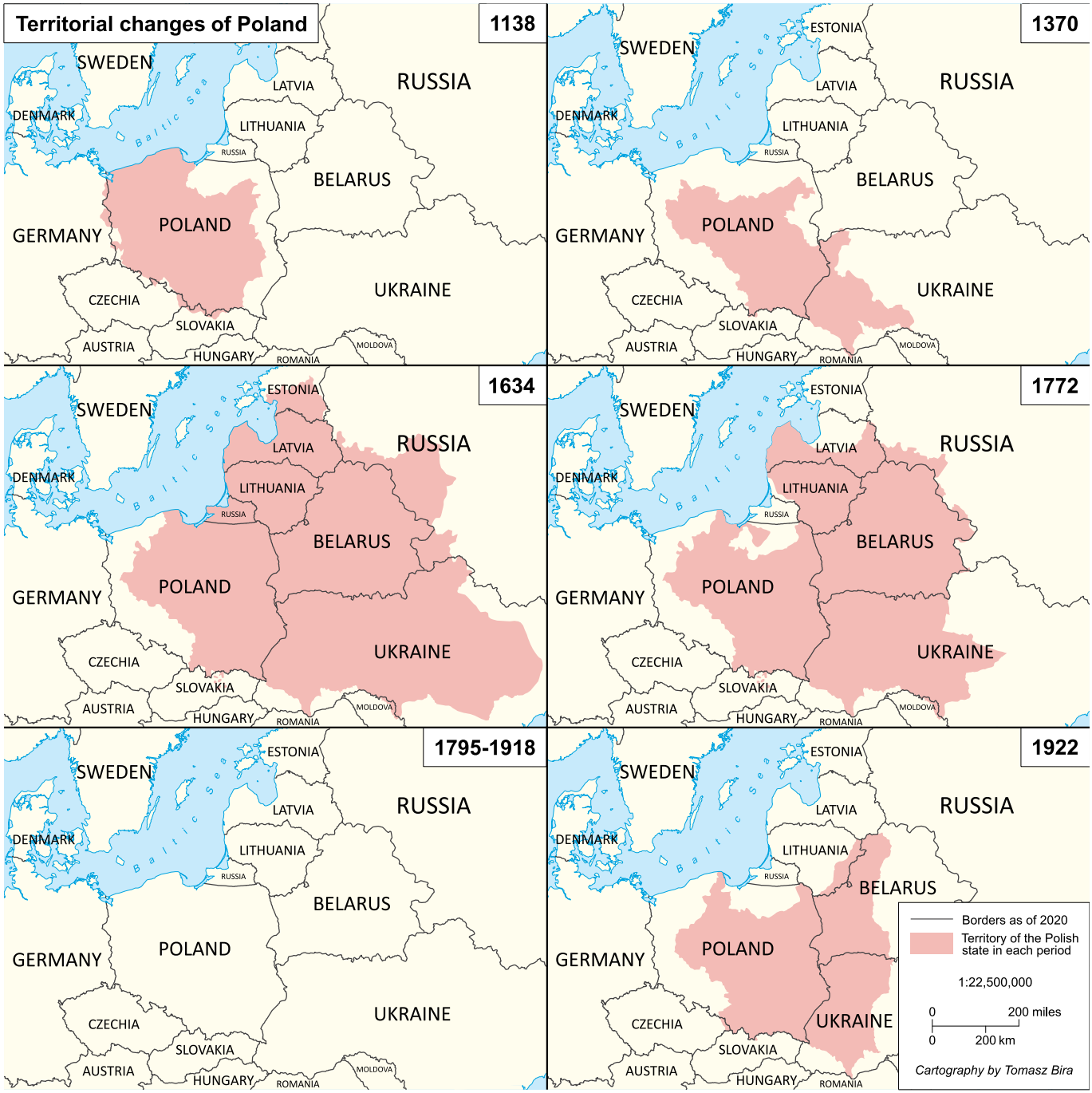
To more fully appreciate the development of Polish Jewish life over almost 1,000 years, we have enriched this edition with illustrations and maps, bringing the Timeline to life and placing the historiography in ›

a clear geographical context. With the first two maps on the pages to follow, we demonstrate the instability of Poland's borders and perception of what are or were "Polish lands" throughout history. This factor has had a significant impact on how Jews identified with Poland as their homeland, trends in Jewish religious observance and cultural expression, and the shaping of Polish nationhood, memory, and the country's role in contemporary Europe.

Engagement in Jewish life was not monolithic. Jews reflected the politics and social norms of the day, especially after the move into modernity in the 19th century, when the more cloistered life of the small town, often referred to as a shtetl, gave way to the challenges and opportunities of urban life and mobility. Poland's Jewry produced unique religious and social movements, among them Hasidism and Bundism, which brought Jews into national politics and divided the religious world. Although records of women's contributions appear already in the Middle Ages, it is not until the end of the 19th century that women begin to assume a more recognized and equal position in Polish society. As we sought greater gender parity in presenting this historical narrative, many under-acknowledged women have been included in this new edition.

We hope that you will find this publication enlightening and that it will encourage you to visit and learn more.

The Editorial Board


Territorial changes of Poland
1138
1370
1634
1772
1795-1918
1922
SWEDEN
ESTONIA
LATVIA
RUSSIA
DENMARK
LITHUANIA
BELARUS
GERMANY
POLAND
UKRAINE
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
MOLDOVA
Baltic Sea
Borders as of 2020
Territory of the Polish state in each period
1:22,500,000
0 200 miles
0 200 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira


Historical Regions in Polish and Adjacent Lands
Baltic Sea
Livonia
Courland
Semigallia
Samogitia
Lithuania
White Ruthenia
Prussia
Sudovia
Pomerania
Kuyavia
Great Poland
Mazovia
Podlachia
Black Ruthenia
Polesia
Severia
Left-bank Ukraine
Silesia
Lesser Poland
Volhynia
Right-bank Ukraine
Red Ruthenia
Podolia
Zaporizhia
Msta
Volga
Oka
Daugava
Neris
Nemen
Berezina
Dniepr
Sozh
Desna
Seym
Pripyat
Psel
Bug
Warta
Vistula
Oder
Elbe
San
Goryn
Sluch
Boh
Donets
Inhulets
Danube
Tisza
Mures
Siret
Prut
Dniester
Sea of Azov
Black Sea
Borders of contemporary Poland
Carpathian Mountains
Sudety Mountains
Pripyat Marshes
1:9,500,000
0
150 miles
0
150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

I. POLIN: JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN POLAND 965-1569

The Polish state was formed out of territories of several Lechitic (West Slavic) tribes during the course of the 10th century by local dynasty – the Piasts. The most formative events of the Polish state were the Christianization of Poland in 966 (in the Western, Latin rite) and the establishment of the Polish Kingdom in 1025. From its very beginnings Jews were present in Polish history, first as travelers and merchants crossing the Polish lands, and later as settlers. Already by the 11th century, Jews were recorded as living in Gniezno, the capital at the time. The turbulent period of the Crusades sparked anti-Jewish riots in the Rhineland prompt- ›

ing the first large wave of Jewish migrants to come into Polish lands. Jews were welcomed here, served as middlemen, fostered commerce and trade, and brought administrative innovations and technical novelties from the West. When the last king of the Piast dynasty, Kazimierz the Great, died in 1370, the Jewish community in Poland was already large and thriving. They kept growing under the rule of the next dynasty, the Jagiellons.

965 A Sephardic Jewish merchant from Moorish Spain, Ibrahim ibn Yakub, travels to Slavic lands in Central Europe and writes the first descriptions of the Polish state.

During the 11th-13th centuries, Jewish merchants and artisans settle in Poland with the first big wave of migration mentioned by the chronicler, Cosmas of Prague coming around 1100. Persecuted and expelled from Western Europe in the times of the Crusades, Jews find refuge and a safe haven in Poland under the benevolent reign of the Piast dynasty.



Early Polish coin with Hebrew inscription.

1206 Early **Polish coins** are minted during the reign of Duke Mieszko III the Old. Some bear Hebrew-character inscriptions in Knaanic (an extinct Judeo-Slavic language), as the mint masters are Jews.

1237 The Jewish settlement in the city of Płock is the first to be mentioned in written records.



Illuminated illustration by Arthur Szyk, inspired by the Statute of Kalisz.

1264 The **Statute of Kalisz** is issued by Duke Bolesław the Pious. The Statute, a general charter of Jewish liberties in Poland, establishes a legal foundation for a Jewish presence in Poland. Subsequently, Jews are granted special status subject directly to the king or the duke and are excluded from municipal jurisdiction. Jews assume positions in commercial and economic life, becoming merchants, money lenders, tax collectors, and innkeepers.

1267 The Catholic Council of Wrocław, the capital city of the province of Silesia, creates a segregated Jewish district. Jews are ordered to wear special emblems and are banned from holding public offices higher than those held by Christians. While these measures prove largely ineffective, they are repeated in subsequent years.

1285 The first recorded mention of a *kahal* ("community" in Hebrew) in the city of Kalisz. The *kahal* collects taxes, oversees communal services, enforces Jewish law and is responsible for the education and social welfare of its members.



Kazimierz the Great visiting Esther (painting by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, 1870).

1334 King **Kazimierz the Great** extends the Statute of Kalisz throughout Poland and broadens Jewish privileges. According to medieval chronicler Jan Długosz, the king had a love affair with a Jewish ›

woman named **Esther** (Polish: *Esterka*). This legend will reverberate through Polish folklore over the ages.

1348 Waves of migrations from Western Europe bring more Jews to Poland after a plague – known as the Black Death – for which the Jews are blamed. Anti-Jewish riots are perpetrated in Silesia and later in Poznań and Kraków.

1364 A Jew from Olkusz named Lewko, a personal banker and financier of King Kazimierz, is entrusted with administration of the saltworks in Wieliczka and Bochnia, among the primary sources of royal income. Lewko also oversees the royal mint.

Between the 11th and 16th centuries, Jews from communities along the Rhine in Germany, known in Hebrew as *Ashkenaz*, migrate east, settling in today's Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. In the Polish lands, some of them serve the king, as well as members of the Polish aristocracy, as tax collectors, becoming merchants and innkeepers. They bring with them Jewish religious practices and political and commercial experience, as well as Yiddish, a German-based language with a Hebrew component, written in Hebrew letters. Yiddish, with its geographical nuances and range of dialects, becomes the *lingua franca* among Ashkenazic Jews in Eastern Europe. Yiddish will preserve the richness and vibrancy of Eastern European Jewish culture and heritage, despite many shifts in national borders and changes in political regimes.

1385 The Kingdom of Poland forms a personal union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania through the marriage of Poland's Queen regnant Jadwiga to Władysław Jagiełło (Lithuanian: *Jogaila*), the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The descendants of Jagiełło, members of the Jagiellonian dynasty, will rule over Poland and Lithuania until 1572. In 1388, Jagiełło extends the provisions of the Statute of Kalisz to all the lands of the Grand Duchy.



The Old Synagogue in Kraków.

1407 Anti-Jewish riots in Kraków, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. Jews, for the first time, are expelled from the city. They start to settle in Kazimierz, a separate town located outside the city walls of Kraków. The construction of the **Old Synagogue** (Polish: *Stara Synagoga*) on Szeroka Street begins.

1414 Documentation confirms that Jews first lived in Warsaw, between Wąski Dunaj and Piekarska Streets, in Warsaw's Old Town, with a synagogue on the corner of Jewish (Polish: *Żydowska*) and Dunaj Streets. The community numbered approximately 120.

1483 Jews, expelled from Warsaw, are permitted to live outside the city limits. The expulsion order, although largely ineffective, is nevertheless repeated in subsequent years.

1495 Jews are expelled again from Kraków. The capital is granted the royal privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* ("to not tolerate Jews" in Latin). King Jan Olbracht designates a Jewish inhabited part of **Kazimierz**, as *Oppidum Judaeorum* ("Jewish Town" in Latin), an official settlement for Jews, with the parallel right de non *tolerandis Christianis* ("to not tolerate Christians" in Latin).



Kazimierz (left) and Kraków (right) according to Hartmann Schedel's „Nuremberg Chronicle" from 1493.

1504 King Alexander I Jagiellon allows his court Jew, Rachela Fiszel, to buy a property and settle in Krakow. Rachela, a widow to Jewish banker Moses Fiszel, became the banker of four subsequent Polish kings, for her loyal services to the crown, she was given exemption from the ban on settlement for Jews in Krakow restricting them to reside in the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz. Rachela, an important figure in the Jewish community, was instrumental in establishing Jacob Polak, her son-in-law, as the rabbi of Krakow.

1509 Rabbi Jacob Polak sets up a yeshiva ("Talmudic academy" in Hebrew) in Kraków, which introduces the methodology of *pilpul* ("sharp analysis" in Hebrew), which becomes the standard method of Talmudic and Jewish textual studies in the Ashkenazic world.

1525 King Zygmunt I for the first and only time knights a Jew, **Michał Ezofowicz,** without requiring his conversion. Jewish converts to Catholicism, until the partitions of Poland, were usually granted noble status.



Michał Ezofowicz (engraving by Michał Elwiro Andriolli, 1879).

1527 Jews are again expelled from Warsaw, after the Duchy of Mazovia is re-incorporated into the Polish Kingdom. ›

1534 The first book printed in Yiddish in Poland, a biblical concordance by Rabbi Asher Anshel, is published in Kraków.



Katarzyna Weigel being burned at the stake (drawing by Jan Matejko, 1859).

1539 On April 19 **Katarzyna Weigel** (nee Zalasowska), an alderman's widow from Krakow is burned at the stake at the age of 80 (after ten years of imprisonment) under the charges of apostasy and conversion to Judaism, when she refused to recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Weigel was involved in the sectarian protestant movement, known as Judaizers, who endorsed adopting Jewish law and customs based on the Old Testament as a base for the reform of Christianity. They were especially active in Lublin and eastern parts of Polish and Lithuanian lands.



Prewar panoramic view of the Jewish district of Lublin.

1541 Rabbi Shalom Shakhna, nominated as Chief Rabbi of Poland by King Zygmunt I. Shalom Shakhna is also the founder of the first yeshiva in Lublin. His household becomes an important center of Jewish cultural and religious life. In 1568, **the Jewish district of Lublin** receives the privilege *de non tolerandis Christianis*.



Page of an early Hebrew text printed in Poland.

1547 Poland's first **Hebrew-language printing house** is established in Lublin. «

II. THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH 1569-1795

During the first century of the Commonwealth, often referred to as the Paradisus Judaeorum ("Jews' Paradise" in Latin) or the Golden Age, Jewish life in Poland flourishes.

The overwhelming majority of Ashkenazic Jewry live in the Polish and Lithuanian lands, now forming the center of the Ashkenazic Jewish world. Granted relative autonomy, Jewish communities enjoy economic growth and stability. Jewish culture thrives with the opening of Talmudic academies and centers of learning, as well as a proliferation of Jewish literature, secular and religious. Tensions between the king and the nobility, however, provoke instability, with many parties vying for power. Embroiled in wars with Sweden, Russia, and Turkey, the Commonwealth begins to deteriorate. Growing poverty and discontent give rise to increasing antisemitism.


Conflicts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-17th century
Territories occupied by:
Khmelnytsky Uprising 1648-1654
Muscovite Invasion 1654-1667
The Swedish Deluge 1655-1660
Directions of movement:
Cossack armies
Russian armies
Swedish armies
Important centers of Jewish life
Va'ad Arba Aratzot Meeting Site
Fiefs of Poland-Lithuania
1:9,000,000
0 150 miles
0 150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
TSARDOM (RUSSIA) OF MUSCOVY
Baltic Sea
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
KINGDOM OF DENMARK
Dorpat
Pskov
Riga
Duchy of Courland
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Grand Duchy of Lithuania
Kovno
VILNA
(Capital of the Grand Duchy)
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
Navahrudak
Rahachow
Tykocin
Gomel
Königsberg
Duchy of Prussia
Gdańsk
Elbląg
ELECTORATE OF BRANDENBURG
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Łomża
Płock
Kingdom of Poland
Poznań
WARSAW
(Royal capital after 1596)
Brest
Pinsk
Czernihów
Kalisz
Owrucz
Lublin
Breslau
Częstochowa
Zamość
Łuck
Żytomierz
Kiev
Połtawa
Oppeln
Pińczów
HABSBURG EMPIRE
KRAKOW
(Royal capital until 1596)
Tarnów
Jarosław
Lwów
Przemyśl
Kamieniec Podolski
Bracław
VIENNA
Kassa
Buda
Pest
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

1569 The Union of Lublin creates the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, also known as the Republic of the Two Nations, with a unified federal system and an elective monarchy. It is one of Europe's major political and cultural powers.

1570 Warsaw obtains the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis,* which remains in force almost until the end of 18th century. Jews are forbidden to settle within two miles of the city limits, except when the Sejm (Polish term for the Polish Parliament) is in session.



Rabbi Moses Isserles matzeva in Kraków's Remuh cemetery.

1572 **Rabbi Moses Isserles,** known as the ReMa (or Remuh) and author of the "Mapa" ("Tablecloth" in Hebrew), the fundamental Ashkenazic commentary on the Sephardic "Shulchan Aruch" ("Set Table" in Hebrew), dies in Kraków. The "Shulchan Aruch" is the fundamental codex of *halakhah*, Jewish law, and is still considered authoritative. His grave is in the Kazimierz district of Kraków in the cemetery adjoining the synagogue that bears his name. Recently renovated, the synagogue continues to serve Kraków's Jewish community.

1576 King **Stephen Báthory** issues decrees forbidding blood-libel accusations, effectively preventing such trials during his lifetime. They will resume, however, after his death in 1586.

From the late 16th to the mid-18th century, Polish Jews were governed by the *Va'ad Arba' Aratzot* ("Council of the Four Lands" in Hebrew): Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Lithuania, and Ruthenia. The Va'ad's primary function was to levy and collect taxes among Jewish communities. The Council, made up of delegates from the different Jewish communities and recognized by the king, becomes the central body of Jewish self-government, the only institution of its kind in the history of the Jewish Diaspora.



King Stephen Báthory (painting by Martin Kober)

1580 The first session of the Va'ad Arba' Aratzot is held in Lublin.

1587 According to popular legend, after King Stephen Báthory's death, his "court Jew" Saul Wahl (actually Saul Katzenellenbogen, 1541-1617) is elected king of Poland for one night until the procedure for electing a new king is put into place.

1588 The first Jewish community in **Zamość** is established by Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean Basin (originally from Spain and Portugal). By the 17th century, with migrations from Western Europe, Ashkenazic Jews become the majority. Zamość's Jewish character will later again be transformed, reflecting the influences of the *Haskalah* ("enlightenment" in Hebrew). ›



The synagogue in Zamość built in 1610s.

1609 "Meynekes Rivke" ("Rebecca's Nursemaid" in Yiddish), an erudite work by Rivke Tiktiner of Tykocin is a guide for married Jewish women and is published posthumously in Prague. Her work, the first known publication in Yiddish by a woman in Poland, will be re-published in Kraków in 1618.

1618 The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) brings the last major wave of Jewish refugees from Western Europe to Polish lands.

1622 "Tzena U-Rena" ("Go Out and See" in Hebrew), a commentary on the Pentateuch for women written by Rabbi Yaakov Ashkenazi and one of the most important works in Yiddish to date, is published in Kraków and Lublin.

1623 The Va'ad of Lithuania is established as a separate entity from the Va'ad of the lands of the Crown Lands of the Kingdom of Poland, to administrate issues of Lithuanian Jewry.

1632 King Władysław IV Wasa of Poland forbids anti-Jewish books and publications.

1648 Bohdan Chmielnicki (Ukrainian: *Bohdan Khmelnytsky*), a Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Orthodox Christian petty nobleman rebels against the magnates ruling the Ukrainian lands that belong to the Polish Kingdom. He leads Zaporizhian Cossacks and the local Orthodox Christian peasantry in an uprising against Polish or Polonized gentry, the Jesuits, and the Jews. Tens of thousands of Jews and Catholics fall victim to the massacres. Many Jews were sold into Turkish and Tatar slavery and were later ransomed by a multinational fundraising campaign for *pidyon shvuyim* ("redeeming the captives" in Hebrew) among Jewish communities throughout the Four Lands and reaching as far as Amsterdam.

1654 The Khmelnytsky Uprising ends with Muscovite intervention and the subsequent war with the Tsardom of Muscovy (1654-67) that brings destruction to the eastern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the decline of its influence and the rise of Russia as the main power in the east of Europe. The Jews are expelled from Russian-conquered Kiev in 1654 (the ban will be lifted in 1793). The next year in Wilno (Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), the Tsar's forces massacre thousands of civilians, with Russian Cossacks destroying the Jewish district and killing most of its inhabitants.



Swedish troops pillaging Polish village
(painting by Henryk Pilatti)

1655 The Khmelnytsky Uprising and the war with Muscovy prompts the Swedish king to invade Poland. The destructive war with Sweden, known as the "**Swedish Deluge**," lasts until 1660 and ravages the western part of the Commonwealth. The war brings pogroms, as Jews are occasionally accused of being in complicity with the enemy.

In the second half of the 17th century, Jewish communities, in spite of being shaken by the ferocity of the attacks and crippled by the heavy loss of life and property, move to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible when the period of destructive wars and warti-me-associated epidemics is over. Although the destruction and massacres, first and foremost those perpetrated by Khmelnytsky's forces, are remembered by Polish Jews as the *Gezerah* (the "Evil Decree" or "Catastrophe" in Hebrew), they mark the end of the golden age not only for the history of Polish Jews but for the overall history of Poland as well.

1670 The Polish Va'ad condemns Shabbetai Tzvi, the false messiah from Ottoman Turkey. His activities, which attract many of those who survived Khmelnytsky's atrocities, will influence Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a Polish-born false messiah preaching against the Talmud and claiming to be Shabbetai Tzvi's successor.

The 18th century sees the birth of the Hasidic movement, founded by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov. While its tenets are embraced by many in the Ukraine and Central Poland, it is criticized by the *Mitnagdim* ("opponents" in Hebrew) as being incompatible with traditional rabbinic Judaism. These tensions create new frictions and factions within the growing Jewish world. At the same time, the Commonwealth slowly turns into a failed state, with flawed government and a weak army, a country torn apart by the private interests of powerful magnates. Growing intolerance and Catholic bigotry increase religious tensions. By mid-century, the Commonwealth becomes a de facto Russian protectorate.

1698 **Israel Ba'al Shem Tov**, known as the Besht, is born in Okopy in southeastern Poland (now in Western Ukraine). Hasidism, stressing spontaneity over observance and spirituality over learning, represented a direct challenge to the Jewish religious and communal establishments.



Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's synagogue in Medzhybizh, Ukraine, destroyed by the Germans in 1941.

1710 A blood libel accusation and the resulting trial of members of the Jewish community in Sandomierz, end with expulsion of the city's Jews in 1712 at the order of King August II and the execution of several of the accused the following year.

1720 The Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, is born (d. 1797). Although he held no official position, he was regarded as the spiritual leader of the Mitnagdim. The Mitnagdim reaffirmed study, ritual observance and *halakhah* as the cornerstones of Jewish life.

1749 Polish aristocrat Count Walentyn Potocki, after converting to Judaism, is allegedly burned at the stake in Wilno for renouncing Catholicism. The story of Potocki, known among Jews as Abraham ben Abraham or *Ger Tzedek* ("righteous proselyte" in Hebrew), has not been confirmed in historical sources so far, but became a popular Jewish legend about a representant of one of the wealthiest and most powerful magnate families of the Commonwealth voluntarily choosing to become an observant Jew. ›

1757 The Bishop of Kamieniec in Podolia (now Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine), Mikołaj Dembowski, instigates a debate between Jacob Frank's followers and Orthodox rabbis, counting on conversion of the schismatics to Catholicism. The debate in front of the consistory court ends with the Frankists being condemned and declared accursed by the rabbis. In reprisal, the burning of the Talmud is ordered by the court.

1758 The Polish Va'ad sends an emissary to Pope Benedict XIV with a petition from Polish Jews asking for protection against multiplying accusations of ritual murder. The Pope condemns the accusations. The last blood libel trial takes place in Olkusz in 1787.

1759 An estimated 500 Jewish families, followers of Jacob Frank, convert to Catholicism and join the ranks of the Polish nobility.



Szmul Zbytkower (fragment of a painting by Bernardo Belloto)

1760 Warsaw's east bank suburb of Praga, which will become a district of the city in the 19th century, is exempted from the *de non tolerandis Judaeis* law. The Praga Jewish community develops as a center of commerce and Jewish life, largely due to the efforts of **Joseph Samuel Sonnenberg,** commonly called Szmul Zbytkower, a merchant and developer, and protégé of the last Polish king Stanisław August. Szmul Zbytkower and his wife Judyta contribute toward building of the communal synagogue and the Jewish Cemetery in Praga's neighborhood of Bródno.

1764 The Commonwealth's Parliament (Sejm) abolishes the Va'ads on the grounds that they are no longer capable of collecting taxes effectively. With the abolition of the Va'ads, a census of the Jewish population is taken. According to the figures, there were 748,968 Jews over a year old in Poland-Lithuania: 548,777 in Poland and 201,191 in Lithuania. It is estimated that at least 20% of Jews, afraid that the results would lead to heavier taxation, do not participate.

1768 The de facto Russian protectorate over the Commonwealth combined with tensions between traditionalist nobility and the reformist king Stanisław August, supported by his political allies, the Czartoryski family, spark a nobles' revolt known as the Bar Confederation and a subsequent civil war in the Commonwealth. The rebellious nobles claim to defend internal and external independence, the Catholic faith, and patriotic values, accusing the king of being a Russian puppet. Fighting ends after four years, with Russian military intervention, leaving the Commonwealth extremely weakened. The civil war provides the surrounding powers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with a pretext for partitioning the Commonwealth to eradicate what they call "the Polish anarchy."

1768 Simultaneously to the Bar Confederation, during the so-called *Koliyivshchina* rebellion, provoked by Russia, thousands of Jews, Catholic Poles, and Ukrainian Uniates are massacred in the city of Humań (now Uman' in Ukraine) by Cossack rebels, known as haidamaks. The rebellion spreads across the Ukraine. After claiming at least 100,000 Catholic, Uniate and Jewish victims, it is suppressed by intervening Russian troops.

1772 The first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Austrian Habsburg monarchy.

The Vilna Gaon puts Hasidim in herem (Hebrew for "the ban"; describes an exclusion from the community). The conflict intensifies between the Mitnagdim and Hasidim.

1790 Death of Leah Horowitz (born ca. 1720) from Bolechów (now Bolekhiv, in Ukraine), the author of „Tkhinne imohes" (Supplication of the Matriarchs), an eight-page, trilingual prayer for the Sabbath before the New Moon for women. Leah, a rabbinic and kabbalistic scholar born into a famous rabbinical family and daughter of the Rabbi of Brody, one of the most important centers of Jewish life in the Commonwealth, wrote her work in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish showing great erudite skills, praised by her contemporaries. She was also strongly promoting women's participation in daily prayers, as well in Halachic and Talmudic studies.

1791 On May 3rd, Poland becomes the first European country with a modern codified constitution in an attempt to reform and save the country from further partitioning by aggressive neighboring monarchies. One of the bills following the new constitution passed by the Sejm in 1792 grants Jews personal inviolability.

1791 Empress Catherine the Great of Russia establishes the Pale of Settlement, restricting Jewish settlement in the Russian Empire to the lands that were annexed by Russia in the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Pale includes parts of present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Jews in the Russian Empire, with very few exceptions, are forbidden to reside outside the Pale's borders.

1792 Russia starts a war with the Commonwealth, as reforms in Poland endanger its domination over the country. The last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, seeks a diplomatic solution against the advice of military leaders.

1793 The second partition of the Commonwealth, by the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, creates new territorial divisions.

1794 Many Jews join Major General Tadeusz Kościuszko, a veteran and hero of the American Revolutionary War, who leads a national insurrection against the partitioning powers. After some initial successes, the Kosciuszko Uprising fails to overcome the overwhelming combined forces of Russia and Prussia.



Berek Joselewicz (painting by Juliusz Kossak)

1794 **Berek Joselewicz** joins the Kościuszko Insurrection and forms a Jewish light cavalry regiment, probably the first Jewish military unit in the history of the Jewish Diaspora, that bravely fought during the Russian siege of Praga. Later, as a colonel, Joselewicz leads another regiment during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1809, he dies in a skirmish with the Austrians near the town of Kock.

1795 The third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth erases Poland and Lithuania from the map of Europe. The hope of regaining independence will inspire Polish social, political, cultural and intellectual life throughout the 123 years of foreign occupation. Jewish life under the partitions, in spite of the challenges and difficulties, continues to expand and develop. The influence of the three empires will manifest itself in the development of Polish Jewish life and culture. «

III. POLAND PARTITIONED 1795-1918

By 1795, as a result of the third partition of Poland, the country is essentially erased from the map of Europe until it regains independence in 1918 at the end of World War I. During the partitions, the population falls under the domination of one of the three empires: Russian, Prussian or Austrian. Polish Jewish families find themselves on different sides of the borders, serving in different armies, and integrating different cultural traditions. It will become difficult to define Polish Jewry as a monolithic entity.

The Jewish population in the territories of the former Commonwealth experiences a demographic explosion in the course of the 19th century: for example, the number of Jews living in the Pale of Settlement grows

at least fivefold during this century. Before the mass emigration to the United States and other Western countries starts in the 1880s, roughly 80% of world Jewry lives in the partitioned Polish lands. The Haskalah ("Enlightenment" in Hebrew) begins to take root in the Polish lands during the 19th century. Maskilim, the followers of the Haskalah, introduce the notion of Jews as citizens of Europe, encouraging assimilation and engagement in secular life. The Haskalah quickly becomes a common enemy of the Hasidim and Mitnagdim. The latter half of the 19th century sees the spread of Yiddish culture and increasing Jewish involvement in Polish society, as well as a growing interest in Zionism and socialism.


Partitioned Poland in the 19th Century
The Volozhin Yeshiva
Major hassidic centers
Borders of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772
Congress Kingdom of Poland 1815-1915 (autonomy 1815-1832)
Austrian Partition (Galicia)
Prussian partition
Russian partition
Free City of Krakow in 1815 (annexed by Austria in 1846)
Maximum extent of the Pale of Settlement (1791-1917)
1:10,500,000
0
250 miles
0
250 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Baltic Sea
PETERSBURG
Revel
Dorpat
Pskov
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
Riga
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Lubavitch
Smolensk
Bryansk
Kovno
Vilna
Volozhin
Minsk
Rogachev
Gomel
Kursk
Danzig
Königsberg
PRUSSIA
Stettin
Thorn
Posen
Grodno
Łomża
Warsaw
Pinsk
Stolin
Chernigov
Amshinov
Ger
Biala
Aleksander
Kotsk
Pshiskhe
Breslau
Izhbitsa
Zamość
Lutsk
Zhitomir
Kiev
Kharkov
Poltava
Lelov
Kattowitz
Krakow
Lizhensk
Pshevorsk
Belz
Berditchev
Skver
Mezhbizh
Bobov
Sanz
Rimanov
Lwów
Zidichov
Kamenets Podolskiy
Breslov
Zaporozhye
Brünn
Kassa
VIENNA
Vizhnits
Budapest
Debrecen
Kishinev
Odessa
Graz
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
KINGDOM OF ROMANIA
Agram
Brasso
Sea of Azov
Black Sea

1797 The Warsaw Jewish Community is recognized by the Prussian government.

1800 By the turn of the century, rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1812) founds the Chabad Hasidic movement. Now known as Chabad-Lubavitch, it has become the largest and most influential of the Hasidic movements.



The Volozhin Yeshiva in the early 20th century.

1802 The **Volozhin Yeshiva,** one of the most important centers of Talmudic learning in the 19th century, is established. The yeshiva will be re-established in Israel after World War II. Other yeshivot, including the Mir Yeshiva, are also re-established in Israel and in the United States after the Shoah.



Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw.

1802 The first progressive synagogue in Warsaw, influenced by the German enlightenment, is opened on Daniłowiczowska Street.

1806 The Warsaw Jewish community is granted permission to establish a **cemetery on Okopowa Street** then outside the city limits. With approximately 250,000 graves, the cemetery, still in use today, is one of the largest in Europe. The other Warsaw Jewish cemetery, established in 1780 in Bródno on the right-bank side of the city, has a similar number of burials. Some of the *matzevot* ("headstones" in Hebrew), though badly damaged, can still be found in the Bródno cemetery.

1807 The constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, a short-lived and semi-independent Polish rump state set up under Napoleon from parts of the Prussian and Austrian partitions, grants Jews equal rights. Despite the suspension of this ruling in 1808, Jews begin to integrate into the wider society.

> Jews living under Prussian rule are granted full equal rights in 1812, under Austrian rule in 1867, and under Russian rule only after the fall of the Tsars in 1917. Each regime requires that Jews take on hereditary surnames for purposes of tax collection and the draft.

1812 Jews living in Prussia and the Prussian partition are given equal rights and granted full citizenship according to the Edict of Emancipation by Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III.

1815 Following Napoleon's defeat, as a result of the Congress of Vienna's stipulations, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, with Warsaw as its capital, functions as an autonomous Polish rump state in personal union with Russia through the rule of the Russian emperors as Polish kings. It grants Jews limited rights and the ability to work in banking and industry. ›

1821 The Congress Kingdom abolishes the institution of the *kahal*, replacing it with Jewish community boards with limited powers.

1823 The first Jewish newspaper in Poland, founded by Antoni Eisenbaum, the weekly "Dostrzegacz Nadwiślański/Der Beobachter an der Weichsel" ("The Vistula Observer"), is published in Polish and strongly Germanized Yiddish.



Antoni Eisenbaum (lithography by Maksymilian Fajans)

1826 A rabbinical school, the first such institution accredited by the government of the Congress Kingdom, is established in Warsaw. The institute is directed by a radical *maskil*, **Antoni Eisenbaum.** The institute will be closed by Russian authorities in 1864, following years of Polish patriotic agitation there.



Jewish City Guard (engraving by Friedrich Christoph Dietrich)

1830 During the year-long and ultimately unsuccessful November Uprising in the Congress Kingdom against the Russian Tsar Nicholas I, Jewish militias and volunteers take part in fighting, mainly in the defense of Warsaw where the over 1,000 men strong **Jewish City Guard** (Polish: *Gwardia Miejska Starozakonna*) is active. The failed uprising brings the end of Polish autonomy and the emigration of the elite.

1832 Influential Polish émigré Joachim Lelewel issues an appeal from Paris encouraging Polish Jews to support the Polish national cause.



The Poznański Palace, now housing the City Museum of Łódź.

1833 Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański is born in Aleksandrów Łódzki. Poznański (d. 1900), who built a textile empire in Łódź, is remembered as a pre-eminent entrepreneur and philanthropist. The **Poznański palace** now houses the City Museum of Łódź.

In the course of the 19th century, a town of Łódź (Yiddish: *Lodsh*) undergoes fast industrialization and grows from a small town into a city of over half a million inhabitants, populated by Poles (Catholic and Jewish), Germans, and Russians. It becomes the largest center for textile manufacturing on the continent, the so-called "Polish Manchester." Jewish manufacturers and industrialists were a major driving force of the Polish economy, especially in Russian Poland. Many among them, like Izrael Poznański, were also major philanthropists, contributing to worthy Polish and Jewish

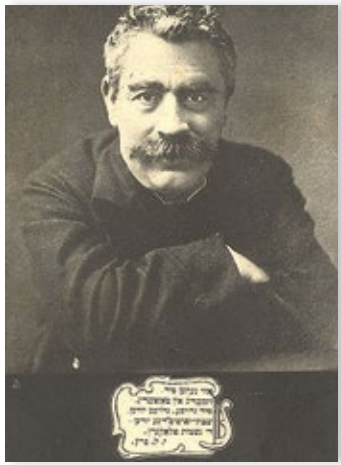
causes, creating public housing and hospitals and founding museums and schools. These successful entrepreneurs were frequently referred to with the German-derived term Lodzermensch.

1835 The Round Synagogue is built in the Praga district of Warsaw.

1843 The first Jewish confirmation ceremony for girls is celebrated in Warsaw.

1846 A failed Polish uprising against the Austrians in Kraków is supported by local Jews, who decide to support Polish aspirations for independence and are subsequently accused of treason by Austrian authorities.

1848 A failed Polish uprising against the Prussians in Poznań is not supported by local Jews, who decide to support the Prussian authorities instead and are subsequently accused of treason by the Poles.



Isaac Leib Peretz

1852 **Isaac Leib Peretz** (d. 1915), known as one of the fathers of Yiddish literature, is born in Zamość. The cultural association *Hazomir* ("The Nightingale" in Hebrew) he founded becomes a center of Yiddish life in Warsaw. In 1951, a street in Warsaw where he lived from 1888 until his death is named after him. He is buried in Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in the "Tomb of the Three Writers" alongside Yakov Dinezon and Shimon An-ski.

1858 Samuel Orgelbrand, a Warsaw-based printer and publisher, begins work on what will become the first modern Polish encyclopedia (in 28 volumes). Among many works published, Orgelbrand also prints a 20-volume edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

1859 Several Polish newspapers in Warsaw, for the first time, initiate an antisemitic campaign.



Unveiling of the plaque dedicated to Michał Landy in Warsaw, 2018.

1861 Jews in the Kingdom of Poland participate in the Polish national movement against Russian rule. **Michał Landy,** a rabbinical student in Warsaw, is killed by Cossack fire during a patriotic demonstration, having picked up a cross that a slain Catholic protester had been carrying. Landy represented a significant number of Jews with pro-Polish sympathies.

1862 Polish conservative politician Margrave Aleksander Wielopolski is appointed as the civil governor of the Kingdom of Poland and starts a series of reforms, trying through cooperation with the Tsarist authorities to restore autonomy and cool down rebellious moods among a younger generation longing for independence. One of his reforms is the emanci- ›

pation of Jews. A law is introduced that gives them equal rights and allows them to reside outside designated settlement zones.

1862 "Ha-Zefira" ("The Siren" in Hebrew), the first Hebrew-language newspaper printed in Warsaw, was founded by Chaim Zelig Słonimski, a prolific inventor, rabbi and government advisor. "Ha-Zefira" offered both secular and religious perspectives. Słonimski's grandson Antoni will become one of the major Polish poets of the 20th century.



Henryk Wohl

1863 Wielopolski's conciliatory policy fails, he resigns and goes into exile. Triggered by a decree instituting mass conscription, the ill-fated January Uprising against Russian rule lasts through two years of guerilla fighting. A talented Jewish financier and Polish patriot, **Henryk Wohl,** becomes a highly effective head of the finance department in the clandestine Polish National Government, for which later he is deported by the Russians to Siberia. Heroic, but poorly armed Polish fighters, among them also Polish Jews, have little chance against the modern Russian military. The end of the uprising brings with it the liquidation of the last remnants of autonomy, a brutal and coercive Russification in the Kingdom of Poland, and its unification with the rest of the Russian Empire.

1863 During the January Uprising, Chief Rabbi of Warsaw **Dov Ber Meisels,** a political activist in the fight for Polish independence, is arrested and deported from Warsaw and moves, temporarily, to Kraków, located in the Austrian partition.



Dov Ber Meisels

1867 After losing wars with France and Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy reforms itself, through the so-called *Ausgleich* ("Compromise" in German), into the dual state of Austria-Hungary. Poles in Galicia (the colloquial name for the Austrian partition) gain a high level of autonomy, which enables modern Polish political life in the region. The language of administration and education reverts back to Polish. Jews in Austria-Hungary are granted full citizenship and civil rights. In Galicia, many will choose to fully assimilate into Polish society. Looking back from the perspective of the tragic events of the first half of the 20th century, although not quite rightly, the lengthy reign of emperor Franz Joseph of Austria (1848-1916) will appear to posterity as a period of peace and prosperity, religious tolerance, and harmonious coexistence of various nationalities under the rule of the Habsburgs.

1871 Prussia unites Germany after the victory over France. In the decades to follow, forced Germanization becomes the official policy toward the population of the Prussian partition. The local Jews, now citizens of the German Empire, undergo an accelerated process of assimilation into German culture, as

Polish culture and language are suppressed by the German authorities.

1873 Mendele Moicher Sforim's "Di Kliatche" ("The Mare" in Yiddish) is published, which is a milestone in the development of Yiddish literature.

1876 Jan Jeleński publishes "Żydzi, Niemcy i my" ("The Jews, the Germans, and Us" in Polish) the first manifesto of modern Polish antisemitism.



Naftali Hirsch Imber

1878 **Naftali Hirsch Imber** from Austrian Galicia pens the words of "Hatikvah" ("The Hope" in Hebrew), which becomes the Zionist anthem and, subsequently, the national anthem of the State of Israel in 1948.

1878 The **Great Synagogue of Warsaw,** designed by Leandro Marconi, a progressive synagogue that seated 2,200 people, is dedicated on Tłomackie Street. While the prayers are conducted in Hebrew, the sermons are given regularly in Polish.

1879 Samuel Gelbfisz, born in Warsaw, emigrates to the United States in 1899. He will become known as Samuel Goldwyn, co-founder of one of Hollywood's leading film studios, Metro Goldwyn Mayer. The Wonsal brothers, four cinema entrepreneurs originating from Krasnosielc in Mazovia, will be other Polish Jews who make their mark on the film industry, known worldwide as the Warner Bros.



The Great Synagogue of Warsaw.

1881 Pogroms in the Pale of Settlement follow the assassination of the reformist Tsar Alexander II. As a result of Russian law, which forbids Jews to move east of the Pale, thousands of Russian Jews flee to the west, many settling in Warsaw and Łódź, with many others making their way to Prussian Poland, and the United States.

Between 1881 and 1914, in the face of pogroms, rising antisemitism, and increasing economic hardship, more than one and a half million Jews emigrate from the Pale of Settlement and Galicia to the United States and elsewhere. The question of whether to stay or to leave will come up frequently as Jewish communal identities and political movements change.

1884 The first conference of *Hibbat Zion* ("The Love of Zion" in Hebrew) organization, a forerunner of Zionism, is held in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*) in Prussian Silesia. Zionist ideology takes root and begins to spread.

1887 The Yiddish play "Shulamis" by Abraham Goldfaden, known as the "father of the Yiddish theater," is performed for the first time in Warsaw. ›

1887 Dr. **Ludwik Zamenhof** publishes his treatise on Esperanto, a constructed language he devised, titled "Lingvo Internacia: Antaŭparolo kaj plena lernolibro" ("The International Language: Introduction and Complete Textbook" in Esperanto). He believed that a common language would facilitate co-existence among different cultures. Esperanto is still spoken by millions of people worldwide. Zamenhof dies in Warsaw in 1917 and is buried in the Okopowa cemetery.



Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof

1891 Identifying herself as a "revolutionary Jewish woman," **Pua Rakowska** (Puah Rakovsky) becomes the director of a modern Jewish elementary school for girls in Warsaw. In 1893, she establishes a Hebrew high school for Jewish girls and soon after becomes a leader of the women's Zionist movement in Poland.

Many Jewish women receiving secular educations begin to seek new avenues for expression and social equality, often leaving behind their traditional religious roots. Overcoming discrimination, Jewish women become community activists and gain recognition in Jewish political movements such as the Bund and Zionism and in social welfare, education and, later, in the cultural and political arenas.



Pua Rakowska (center)



Hipolit Wawelberg (painting by Kazimierz Pochwalski)

1895 Industrialists and philanthropists **Hipolit Wawelberg** and Stanisław Rotwand establish a prestigious mechanical and technical college, which will eventually become the Warsaw Polytechnic.

1896 Helena (Chaja) Rubinstein, born in 1872 to a family of Polish Jewish shopkeepers in Krakow's Kazimierz, migrates to Australia seeking new opportunities. Starting from scratch, she will go on to establish a lucrative cosmetics empire, becoming the first self-made female millionaire in the world.

1897 The *Bund* ("Union" in Yiddish), or by its full name, the General Jewish Workers Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, is founded. The party's ideology is based on the tenets of socialism and a commitment to

Yiddish language and culture. It will become one of the most important Jewish political parties in interwar Poland.

1897 Delegates from Poland's partitioned lands participate in the first Zionist Congress in Basel.

The early 20th century ushers in a new era of Jewish political expression and national aspirations in partitioned Poland, which find their expression through the Bund or the many different Zionist movements ranging from religious to Marxist in ideology.



Regina Liliental

1898 **Regina Liliental** (1875-1924, née Gitla Eiger), a pioneering ethnographer and folklorist, publishes her first work "Przesądy Żydowskie" ("Jewish Superstitions" in Polish), one of the earliest publications about Polish Jewish folklore.

1902 The Nożyk Synagogue, funded by Zalman and Rywka Nożyk, is dedicated in Warsaw. The synagogue, which continues to serve the Warsaw Jewish community, was among the more than 400 Jewish houses of worship in Warsaw prior to World War II.

1902 While Zionism is banned by the Tsarist authorities, the religious Zionist movement Mizrachi (an acronym for Hebrew *Merkaz Ruhani:* Religious Center) is established in Wilno (Yiddish: *Vilna*).

1904 The founding conference of the Zionist-Socialist movement *Poalei Zion* ("Workers of Zion" in Hebrew) is held in Kraków. Among the delegates is Dawid Grün, born in Płońsk in 1886. He leaves for Palestine in 1906 and, as David Ben Gurion, becomes Israel's first prime minister in 1948.



Barricades in Łódź, 1905.

1905 During the mass unrest in the Russian Empire, which was sparked by the costly and unsuccessful war with the Empire of Japan (1904-1905), a wave of strikes, demonstrations and protests, usually suppressed with bloody violence by the tsarist regime, sweeps across the country, in the event later named as the Revolution of 1905. In Łódź, between June 18-25, Polish, Jewish, and German workers of the textile industry, led by Socialists from PPS (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, "Polish Socialist Party" in Polish) and Bund, clash with the tsarist police and military, building barricades and taking control over large parts of the city, during the so-called **Łódź Uprising**. The regime manages to quell the insurrection, with the official death ›

toll reaching 151 civilian casualties (55 Poles, 79 Jews, and 17 Germans), and the unofficial as high as 800 dead and 2,000 wounded. Many other incidents of lesser scale take place in all of the Russian Partition. The outcome of the 1905 revolution is the relative relaxation of absolutist rule of tsars and establishment of the first parliament in Russia, the *Duma*.

1905 The failed revolution incites another wave of pogroms in Russia, mostly in the Pale of Settlement but also in the Congress Poland. Pogroms are usually provoked by the infamous Tsarist Russian secret police - the *Okhrana*, and supported by the authorities. The bloodiest take place in Odessa, Kiev, and Białystok. Before the elections to the *Duma*, designated for March 1906, a boycott of Jewish businesses is organized in Warsaw by Polish nationalists as Jews refuse to endorse their candidate.

1905 The Bund organizes an armed attack on Warsaw's brothel district near Grzybowski Square. Many of the brothels at that time were owned by Jews. The Bund attacks them in the name of the "defense of the dignity of the Jewish woman." Tsarist police side with the mobsters and suppress the attackers after a gun battle that lasts several hours.

1905 Mathias Bersohn, an active philanthropist, donates his private art collection to the Jewish community of Warsaw. The community establishes a Jewish museum next to its headquarters on Grzybowska Street, which will be looted by the Germans during World War II.

1908 The mass-circulation Yiddish newspaper "Haynt" ("Today" in Yiddish) is launched, followed by "Der Moment" ("The Moment" in Yiddish) in 1910.

1910 The Old People's Home Association (Hebrew/Yiddish: *Moshav Zkenim*) is established in Warsaw, with Adolf Peretz as its president.

1911 The first Yiddish films, among them "The Hasidic Woman and Apostate," are produced, inspiring many full-length features and documentaries. Twelve new Yiddish-language films will be produced before World War I.

1912 *Agudat Israel* ("Union of the Jews" in Hebrew), or Agudah, an Orthodox Jewish political party dedicated to preserving rabbinic authority, is founded in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*). The union will have seats in the Polish parliament during the interwar years as the leading political representation of the Polish Jewry. After the War, the Agudah will serve as an umbrella organization for many Orthodox Jews in the United States representing the vast majority of members of the traditional Orthodox world, sometimes known by the old label of *mitnagdim,* as well as several of the Hasidic dynasties.



Former Dom Sierot at 92 Krochmalna St. with Janusz Korczak memorial in front.

1912 A Jewish orphanage (Polish: ***Dom Sierot***) opens on Krochmalna Street in Warsaw, directed by Janusz Korczak (born Henryk Goldszmidt). He becomes the most famous inter-war Polish pedagogue and author of popular children's books that are still read by Polish children.

1913 *Hashomer Hatzair* ("The Young Guard" in Hebrew), a Zionist-Socialist youth movement, is established in Galicia.

The First World War breaks out in the summer of 1914, with Austria and Germany (the so-called Central Powers) fighting against Russia (allied with the United Kingdom and France in an alliance known as the *Entente*). The war between the partitioning powers, brings hope for a restoration of some sort of independent Polish state. Nonetheless, the war is a disaster for inhabitants of the Polish lands of all faiths. Drafted men serve in each of the imperial armies, with family members sometimes fighting one another. As the eastern front gradually moves to the east, destruction and collateral damage brought by four years of heavy fighting leave many towns and villages in ruins. If not expelled from their homes, the residents are left impoverished, endangered by hunger as the local economy and food production collapse.

1914 In the early months of the war, Russian authorities deport thousands of Jews from border zones, suspecting them of disloyalty. By late 1915, much of Russian Poland is occupied by Germany and Austria. Jewish community life revives and starts to flourish under the rule of the Central Powers.



Jewish Writers and Journalists' Union membership card of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

1916 The **Jewish Writers' and Journalists' Union** is formed. Its headquarters is at 13 Tłomackie Street. "Tłomackie 13," a book about the union written by Zusman Segałowicz, will be published by the Central Union of Polish Jews in Argentina in 1946.



Girls from Beis Yaakov school in Ostrów Mazowiecka, 1928

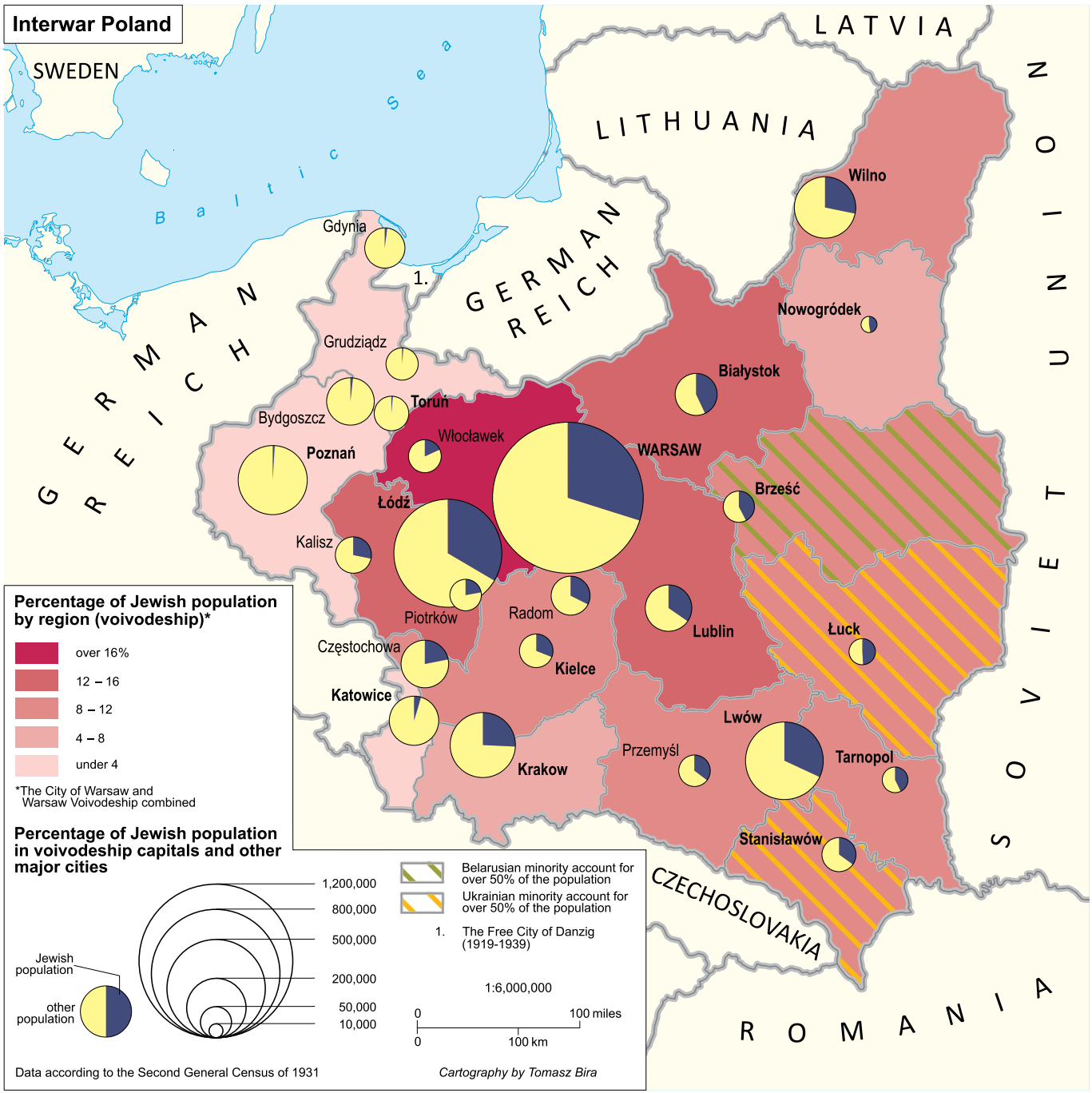
1917 Sarah Schenirer**,** a daughter of Hasidic parents and a pioneer of Jewish religious education for girls, organizes in Kraków her first group of Orthodox girls. She will teach them, apart from traditional women activities, also the tenets of Judaism. She develops a network of schools, ***Beis Yaakov,*** which is supported by *Agudat Israel*. After World War II, the *Beis Yaakov* movement takes root in Israel, the United Kingdom, and North America, and is now one of the major educational networks for Orthodox girls worldwide.

1917 The February Revolution in Russia overthrows the Tsarist regime. The Pale of Settlement is abolished in March 1917 and Jews in Russia are granted full citizenship. Those provisions are confirmed after the successful Bolshevik coup in November. «

IV. INDEPENDENT POLAND: INTERWAR PERIOD 1918-1939

Poland regains its independence in the fall of 1918, when all of the three partitioning empires, Russian, Austrian and German, collapse by the end of the First World War.

Many ethnically mixed areas are claimed at the same time as national territories by different nation states emerging in the lands of central and eastern Europe. The newly reborn Polish state is involved in border conflicts with almost all of its neighbors. The Jewish population suffers from collateral damage and war-related violence, including pogroms committed by almost all belligerents. Some of the Polish forces are involved in antisemitic actions. The most well-known is the infamous November 1918 pogrom in Lwów, followed by pogroms in Pińsk, Lida, and Wilno in April 1919.


Interwar Poland
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
GERMAN REICH
GERMAN REICH
SOVIET UNION
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
ROMANIA
Gdynia
1.
Grudziądz
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Włocławek
Poznań
Łódź
Kalisz
Piotrków
Radom
Częstochowa
Kielce
Katowice
Krakow
Lublin
WARSAW
Białystok
Nowogródek
Wilno
Brześć
Łuck
Lwów
Przemyśl
Tarnopol
Stanisławów
Percentage of Jewish population by region (voivodeship)*
over 16%
12 – 16
8 – 12
4 – 8
under 4
*The City of Warsaw and Warsaw Voivodeship combined
Percentage of Jewish population in voivodeship capitals and other major cities
Jewish population
other population
1,200,000
800,000
500,000
200,000
50,000
10,000
Belarusian minority account for over 50% of the population
Ukrainian minority account for over 50% of the population
1. The Free City of Danzig (1919-1939)
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Data according to the Second General Census of 1931
Cartography by Tomasz Bira



Józef Piłsudski

1918 The core of pre-partitioned Poland is reunited in the Second Polish Republic. **Józef Piłsudski**, past leader of the struggle for independence and now the interim head of state, invites Jewish parties to participate in coalition talks.



Rosa Luxemburg

1919 On January 15, **Rosa Luxemburg** and Karl Liebknecht are murdered by rightwing Freikorps troopers (nationalist paramilitary groups in a revolution-torn post-WWI Germany), after a failed Communist coup in Berlin known as the Spartacist Uprising. Rosa Luxemburg, born in 1871 as Rozalia Luxenburg in Zamość to a family of Polish Jewish merchants, was a prominent Marxist revolutionary, leading feminist, and activist of the European Socialist movement of the early 20th century. An advocate of the proletarian revolution, she was nonetheless critical of the policies of the Bolsheviks in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917, on the grounds of defending democratic Socialism.

1919 The Committee of the Jewish Delegations represents Polish Jewry at the Versailles Peace Conference. The conference obliges the newly independent countries, including Poland, to sign a treaty guaranteeing minority rights.

1919 The first parliamentary elections, held on January 26th, give seats to Jews in the Sejm and the Senate. As Polish women gain the right to vote already by 1918, Róża Pomerantz-Melzer, a member of a Zionist party, is the first woman to be elected to the Polish parliament.

1919 Bela Szpiro-Nissenbaum is elected to the City Council of Lublin. An active member of the Bund and a devoted fighter for women's rights, the poor, and the working class, Bela gained wide popularity. Concerned about the condition of Jewish children and their education, Bela became a co-founder of CISZO (Central Organization of Jewish Schools) and the Icchok Lejbusz Peretz House of Culture. She will be elected to the city council five more times before 1939. During the war, active in the underground, Bela will be arrested by the Gestapo in 1942 and will perish in the German concentration camp Ravensbrück two years later.

1920 About 17,000 Polish Jewish army volunteers during the Polish-Soviet War are interned by Polish authorities as "potential Bolshevik supporters" at the peak of the Red Army's offensive. The move brings huge protests from centrist, left, and Jewish parties. Detainees will be released after 25 days when the Bolshevik troops will be in full retreat after losing the Battle of Warsaw in mid-August.

1921 Following two years of bitter war and a strategic Red Army defeat at the gates of Warsaw, the Polish-Soviet

peace treaty is eventually signed in Riga in March. The Polish-Soviet border is drawn to the east of **Lwów** (a city now in Ukraine, Ukrainian: *Lviv,* Yiddish: *Lemberik*) and Wilno (a city now in Lithuania, Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), two major cities and important centers of Polish and Jewish culture in the so-called *Kresy* region (Polish term for the eastern Borderlands, roughly equaling to today's Lithuania, western Belarus, and western Ukraine). Thousands of Jews from the territory located east of the new border, in particular shopkeepers and professionals forbidden to work in the Soviet Union, move to Poland and are eventually granted citizenship.

The period of post-WWI conflicts in the region ends by the end of 1921. With its deep legal, administrative and cultural differences, the unification of the three parts of the partitioned country into one nation is a challenge to the Polish state. Combined, numerous ethnic and religious minorities constitute almost one-third of the Second Polish Republic's population. For the first time in 123 years, Jews like other minorities, are to be governed by one set of laws that protected their rights as equal citizens of Poland.

The redrawn map of Poland creates the largest Jewish population center in Europe. Despite massive unemployment, antisemitic incidents and pogroms and growing tensions between a multicultural Polish society and increasing nationalism, Jewish life and culture flourish in the interwar period. Synagogues, schools, youth movements, sports clubs, theater, cinema, literature and the press, all develop exponentially to meet the needs of the growing Jewish population and the diversity of Jewish expression.

1921 The Polish Constitution of March 17th grants legal equality to all citizens of Poland.

1921 The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) appoints Yitzhak Gitterman as its first director in Poland. During World War II, he will be active in the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto, and he will die during the first episode of armed struggle in the ghetto in January 1943.



Lwów

1921 Polish Jewish historian Szymon Askenazy is elected as Poland's representative in the League of Nations in Geneva, an interwar predecessor to the United Nations organization.

1921 The first Polish national conference of the Hebrew-language Tarbut educational network convenes in Warsaw, attended by 178 delegates. The number of Jewish schools proliferates to include secular, Yiddish-language and religious schools, as well as Polish schools called *szabasówki*, which offer classes on Sundays rather than on Saturdays.

1922 Poland's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, elected by the political center, left, and minority voters, including Jews, is assassinated in the gallery of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts „Zachęta" on December 16 by a nationalist fanatic just five days after his election.

1923 The first issue of "Nasz Przegląd" ("Our Review" in Polish), the largest and best-known Jewish daily in Polish, is published in Warsaw. The **Jewish press**, which appeared in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish, provided entrées into different Polish Jewish milieus, often serving as bridges among the assimilation- ›

ists, the Bundists, the Zionists, and the more traditionally religious communities. "Nasz Przegląd" will be published until September 1939.



Street stand with Jewish press.

1924 Due to an economic downturn, which Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Władysław Grabski was trying to overcome with restrictive economic policies, thousands of Jewish businessmen make *aliyah* to Palestine feeling threatened by difficult economic environment – a phenomenon known as the "Grabski aliyah" or "the fourth aliyah."

1925 According to the resolution of the conference of Jewish cultural institutions in Berlin, the *Yidisher Visnshaftlikher Institut* (YIVO) or Jewish Scientific Institute, the first secular Jewish research institution, is created. Housed in Wilno , it will study and document Jewish life and promote Yiddish language and culture until the outbreak of WWII. Its work is continued today by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.

1925 The "mother of Yiddish theater" **Ester Rachel Kamińska** dies in Warsaw. At this time, there are many Yiddish theaters in the city.

1926 Marshal Józef Piłsudski seizes power in a **military coup in May 1926** and institutes a quasi-authoritarian government in order to settle the political and social situation in Poland. A promoter of a multicultural Poland, envisioning it as a greater federation of different ethnic and religious groups as a counterbalance to Soviet Russia, he earns the nickname of "Grandpa," widespread also among Polish Jews.



Ester Rachel Kamińska



The funeral of Jewish soldiers killed in the Coup of May 1926.

1926 The Polish government expresses its official support for the Balfour Declaration which calls for the creation of a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. Polish support for Zionism will increase over the years.



Mojżesz Kusewicki

1927 Hazzan (cantor) **Mojżesz Kusewicki** (Moshe Koussevitsky), hired away from Wilno's Great Synagogue, becomes the chief cantor of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw, contributing to the growing canon of Jewish liturgical music created in Central and Eastern Europe.

1928 The Institute for Judaic Studies is established in Warsaw. The languages of instruction are Polish and Hebrew. The founding committee included Rabbis Markus Braude, Ozjasz Thon, and Mojżesz Schorr, members of the Polish parliament and committed Zionists.

By 1930, the world Jewish population is estimated at 15,000,000 — with 4,200,000 in the United States, 3,000,000 in Poland and 2,500,000 in the Soviet Union. Despite waves of emigration, the Jewish population in Poland increases to an estimated 3.5 million by 1939. Jews constitute almost one-tenth of the population in Poland and provide one-half of all the lawyers, one-third of all the doctors in Warsaw and one-quarter of all the university students in Poland.

Assimilated Polish Jews make significant contributions to Polish culture in the 20th century. Educators such as Janusz Korczak, painters such as Henryk Berlewi, poets such as Julian Tuwim, writers such as Bruno Schulz, musicians such as Artur Rubinstein, and a host of others contribute new content and form, which enrich Polish culture. Many Polish-born Jews who emigrate make significant contributions to Jewish life, literature, science, the arts and the humanities around the world: Rabbis Joseph Ber Soloveitchik and Israel Meir Lau, Nobel Prize laureates author Isaac Bashevis Singer, physicist Joseph Rotblat, and politician Menachem Begin, businesswoman Helena Rubinstein, artist Artur Szyk, and architect Daniel Liebeskind, to name but a few.



The Mausoleum of Three Writers

1930 Abraham Ostrzega designs a monument of Ludwik Zamenhof for Białystok. Ostrzega, born in 1889, was considered the greatest Polish Jewish sculptor, specializing in sepulchral art. A large collection of matzevot and tombstones carved by Ostrzega, including the "**Mausoleum of Three Writers**" (i.e. Peretz, Dinezon, An-ski) is located in Warsaw's Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street.

1930 The opening ceremony of the ***Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin*** ("Yeshiva of the Sages of Lublin" in Hebrew) takes place in June. It is founded by Rabbi Meir Shapiro, the creator of *Daf Yomi* – the daily regimen of learning Talmud and its commentaries, which is still practiced ›

worldwide. The Yeshiva becomes a major center of Orthodox learning until the outbreak of World War II.



The Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva



A picket organized by nationalist Polish students demanding implementation of bench ghettos at the Lwów Polytechnic in the 1930s.

1931 **Clashes at universities** in Wilno and Lwów between antisemitic National Democratic Party (the so-called *Endecja*) supporters and Jewish students leave one Catholic student dead, as tensions and calls for the imposition of quotas at universities increase.

1932 Jewish artist Arthur Szyk, born in Łódź and living in Paris at the time, publishes 45 illustrations for the thirteenth-century "Bill of Rights" for Polish Jews, the "Statute of Kalisz" (**see illustration, page 8**). A committed Polish patriot, political activist and prolific artist, his contributions to the art world in Europe and the U.S. span several decades.

1932 At the first worldwide Maccabiah in Tel Aviv, Poland sends the largest delegation with 66 members. Between World War I and World War II, more than 100 Jewish sports clubs were registered in Warsaw alone.

1933 Mieczysław Kaplicki, born Maurycy Kapellner, becomes the first mayor of Kraków of Jewish origin.

1934 Shimon Peres, born as Szymon Perski in Wiszniewo in 1923, moves to Palestine with his family. He will go on to serve Israel in a variety of government positions, including prime minister and president, and will win the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1994. Peres dies in 2016 and his funeral in Jerusalem is attended by more than eighty heads of state from all over the world.

1934 The Museum of Jewish Art opens in Lwów, organized by Wiktor Chajes, the chairman of the Jewish community, and deputy mayor of Lwów.



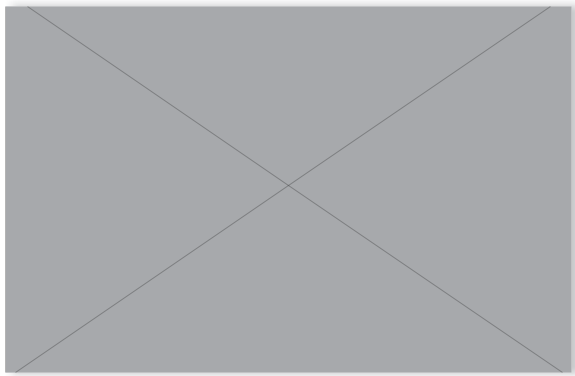
Zuzanna Ginczanka

1935 Polish poet **Zuzanna Ginczanka** (born Gincburg) becomes a member of "Skamander," a group of avant-garde poets created, among others, by Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski. Tuwim and Słonimski, along with Jan Brzechwa and Bolesław Leśmian, all assimilated Jews, are still beloved authors in Poland, having made significant contributions to Polish literature.

1935 Józef Piłsudski dies on May 12, marking a dramatic change in the life of Jews in interwar Poland and the beginning of a rise in state-sanctioned antisemitism. Memorial services for Piłsudski are held throughout the country, including in Warsaw's Great Synagogue. After Piłsudski's death, the ruling *Sanacja* (semi-authoritarian regime closely tied with the military), having no definite leader, will start to drift into nationalism.

1936 The prime minister and Catholic primate endorse an economic boycott, proclaimed by the extreme right, of Jewish businesses and shops, yet condemn physical violence against Jews.

1936 As violent boycotts of Jewish businesses become commonplace, Jews sometimes organize in self-defense. On March 9, in the small market town of Przytyk, members of one such group attack an organized antisemitic group, killing one member. A riot ensued, in which a Jewish couple extraneous to the incident is murdered. Members of both the Jewish self-defense and the antisemitic group are subsequently sentenced, though the latter are treated with lenience. Boycotts and antisemitic riots, sometimes with fatalities, continue to occur elsewhere in Poland of the late 1930s.



Students of the Institute of Judaic Studies near the side entrance to the Main Judaic Library (now JHI building).

1936 The **Main Judaic Library** and the Institute of Judaic Studies move into a new building designed by Zachariasz Eber, adjacent to the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street in Warsaw. One of the few Jewish edifices in Warsaw to survive World War II, the building is now home to the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

1936 First congress of Polish "Progressive" Judaism is held in May in Warsaw and the *Centralny Związek Synagog Postępowych* ("Central Union of Progressive Synagogues" in Polish) is established.

1936 Zionist Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky (born in Russia as Vladimir Zhabotinsky), calls for at least 750,000 Jews to be evacuated to Palestine over the next ten years in the wake of growing antisemitism in Europe and particularly the rise of Nazi Germany. The so-called "evacuation plan" is largely rejected by Jews, but the Polish government strengthens ties with the Revisionists, while considering other "solutions to the Jewish question," including emigration to Madagascar. Jabotinsky starts cooperation with the Polish government and members of right-wing Zionist militias are to be trained by the Polish army before going to Mandate Palestine.

1936 Right-wing extremist leader Adam Doboszyński and his followers organize the so-called March on Myślenice, on June 23, occupying the town south of Kraków, arresting local authorities, plundering Jewish shops and attempting to set fire to the synagogue. Doboszyński is arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in jail.

1936 The Yiddish language musical "**Yidl mit'n fidel**" ("Yiddle With His Fiddle" in Yiddish, Polish title: "Judeł gra na skrzypcach") premiers in Warsaw on September 1936 in Warsaw to become a blockbuster in Poland, and subsequently in the United States. It tells the story of an impoverished klezmorim, Jewish musicians, a father and his daughter disguised as a young boy, Yiddle. The leading female role is played by Moly Picon, born as ›

Małka Opiekun in New York City to Polish Jewish parents, recent immigrants to the United States. Moly Picon (1898-1992) became the first world-wide star of the Yiddish-language film.



"Yidl mit'n fidel" advertisement poster from 1937.

1937 The Sejm introduces a draft law restricting *shechitah* (Hebrew term for kosher ritual slaughter) to only religious purposes, generating heated debate. Attempts will be made again in 2014 and 2018 to introduce such a provision.

1937 Colonel Adam Koc, spokesman of the *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* (OZN, "Camp of National Unity" in Polish), the official political representation of the ruling *Sanacja* regime, officially declares anti-semitism as part of its political platform in a political program published in the daily "Gazeta Polska".



Lili Liliana in „The Dybbuk."

1937 "**The Dybbuk**," Michał Waszyński's (born Moshe Waks) feature film based on Shimon An-ski's play, premieres in Warsaw to critical acclaim. It will become one of the greatest hits of Polish Jewish cinema.



University ID card of a Jewish student with a "bench ghetto" seal.

1937 The so-called "**bench ghettos**" (separate seating for Jewish students) are introduced in a majority of Polish universities with the start of the new academic year in October. Some universities also introduce the *numerus clausus* ("quota" in Latin), limiting the number of places for Jews, based on their percentage of the country's population (10%). The first unsuccessful attempt to introduce this provision took place in 1923. While those moves are opposed by the democrats and by members of academia, the right and others demand a *numerus nullus* ("null number" in Latin), i.e. the total exclusion of Jews.



„The Old Town of Warsaw," a xylograph by Aniela Cukier.

1938 An exhibition of artworks, mostly paintings and wood engravings by **Aniela Cukier**, opens at

Instytut Propagandy Sztuki (The Art Propagation Institute) in Warsaw. Cukier was one of the leading female artists of the artist colony in the town of Kazimierz Dolny.

1938 On March 31, the Sejm passes a law stripping Polish citizens who have resided abroad for more than five consecutive years of their citizenship.

1938 Nazi Germany in the course of the so-called *Polenaktion* ("Polish action" in German) brutally deports 17,000 Polish Jews in October to the border crossing at Zbąszyń. They will initially be denied admission and forced into a transfer camp. In spite of official protests in Poland, the situation in Zbąszyń deteriorates, provoking widespread outrage among the Jewish communities in Poland. Assistance is provided by the General Aid Committee for Refugees from Germany, established by Emanuel Ringelblum and Yitzhak Gitterman, as well as by a local Jewish committee and the Polish Red Cross. After an international outcry, refugees will eventually be let into Polish territory. Among the deportees is Warsaw-born Abraham Joshua Heschel, who had been living in Frankfurt. He spends ten months, prior to emigrating to the U.S., teaching philosophy and Torah at the Institute for Judaic Studies in Warsaw.



Herszel Grynszpan

1938 **Herszel Grynszpan**, a Polish Jew, assassinates a German diplomat in Paris on November 7, in outrage over the persecution of Polish Jews in Germany. The assassination provides the Nazis with a pretext for the Reich's *Kristallnacht* (the "Crystal Night" in German, which refers to the streets covered with broken glass from synagogues and Jewish shop windows) two days later.

1939 A Polish-German agreement provides for the restitution of property of deported Polish Jews. Poland re-admits the majority of the deportees from the Zbąszyń transfer camp in advance of the outbreak of the war.

1939 Covert military training is organized for Irgun fighters near Andrychów in Southern Poland by the Polish Army's secret service as a culmination of the cooperation between the *Sanacja* and Jabotinsky's right-wing Zionists. Members of Irgun will later fight the Arabs and the British in British Mandate Palestine.



Jewish recruits of the 20th Land of Kraków Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army taking military oath at the Wawel Castle in the 1930s.

1939 From early spring, as the war with Germany looms, Polish Jewry massively supports, politically and financially, the Polish war-preparedness effort. Jews constitute approximately 10% of the **Polish military forces** at the outbreak of the war. «

V. THE WAR AND THE HOLOCAUST 1939-1945

Although the early Nazi policies of antisemitism and racism in Germany were becoming widely known and with antisemitism on the rise in Poland and elsewhere throughout Europe, the enormity of the tragedy of the Shoah could not have been foreseen. Germany's "Final Solution," the plan for complete extermination of the Jews, was implemented primarily in the occupied Polish territory, because it was where the largest European Jewish population lived. The loss of 90% of Polish Jewry meant the near-end of the Ashkenazi civilization that had developed and thrived on Polish lands for almost a millennium.


Poland During Second World War (1939-45)
SWEDEN
Kalmar
Baltic Sea
Latvia
Riga
Rumbula Forest
Daugavpils
Šiauliai
Klaipėda
Lithuania
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Katyn
9th Fort
Kaunas
Wilno
09.1943
Ponary
Königsberg
Danzig
Köslin
Allenstein
SOVIET UNION
MALY TROSTINETS
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
GERMAN REICH
Białystok
08.1943
Słonim
Bydgoszcz
TREBLINKA
08.1943
Bronna Góra
Poznań
KULMHOF
04.1943
Warsaw
08-09.1944
Międzyrzec Podlaski
Siedlce
Brześć
Pińsk
Mazyr
Kalisz
Łódź (Litzmannstadt)
Tomaszów Mazowiecki
MAJDANEK
Majdanek (Aktion Erntefest)
SOBIBOR
10.1943
Sarny
Piotrków
Radom
Kowel
Trawniki (Aktion Erntefest)
Breslau
Radomsko
Poniatowa (Aktion Erntefest)
Częstochowa
06.1943
Kielce
Izbica
Łuck
Górka Polonka
Kiev
Babi Yar
Zhytomyr
Mizocz
10.1942
BELZEC
Berdychiv
Będzin
08.1943
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU
10.1944
KRAKÓW
(Capital of the GG)
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Lwów
Tarnopol
Nowy Sącz
Janowska
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
Žilina
Prešov
Košice
Munkács
HUNGARY
Stanisławów
Kamianets Podilskyi
Kołomyja
Chernivtsi
ROMANIA
Northern Transylvania (Hungarian from 09.1940)
Territories annexed into the Soviet Union (1939-1941)
Territory of the German Reich prior to September 1, 1939 (including territories annexed before the war)
Bezirk Bialystok (annexed into the German Reich from July 22, 1941)
Territories annexed into the German Reich (1939-1945)
General Government (1939-1945)
District of Galicia (incorporated into the GG from August 01, 1941)
Borders of Poland on August 31, 1939
Range of the Soviet occupation to June 22, 1941
Borders of the Greater German Reich (1941-45)
Ghettos over 100,000 people
Other large ghettos
Largest mass executions of Jews
Major killing centers
Ghetto and camp uprisings (with dates)
1944 Warsaw Uprising (Polish Home Army)
1940 Katyn massacre
1:6,500,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

1939 Germany invades Poland on September 1. Subsequently, the Soviet Union invades on September 17, following the secret German-Soviet pact signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov on August 23. After one month of desperate fighting, the last units of the Polish army surrender in early October. Poland never officially capitulates and a new government and army start to form in exile, first in France and, after it falls in June 1940, in the United Kingdom.

1939 When the last Polish units are defeated, Germany annexes directly into the German Reich western parts of Poland including Poznań, Katowice, and Łódź. Central Poland, with Warsaw, Kraków, and Lublin, is located in the German occupation zone renamed the "General Government for the Occupied Polish Territories." Eastern Poland, in accordance with the German-Soviet pact, is taken over by the Soviet Union, which annexes the area respectively to Soviet Belarus and Soviet Ukraine. Immediately thereafter, German Nazi and Soviet terror targeting Poles and symbols of Polishness, including Polish intelligentsia and clergy, begins.

1939 In the areas of Poland taken by Nazi Germany, the Nazis target Jews from the very beginning with the introduction of antisemitic laws. The new laws include the confiscation of private property, limitation of travel, freezing of bank accounts, forced labor and restrictions on which jobs Jews could hold. Mandatory white armbands with the Star of David (in the General Government) and yellow badges in the shape of the Star of David (in territories annexed to the Reich) are imposed.

1939 Prominent Bund leaders **Wiktor Alter** and Henryk Erlich, both with a symbolic grave in Warsaw's Jewish cemetery, are arrested by the Soviet authorities in October to be released in 1941. They are re-arrested as "German spies" three months later and executed.

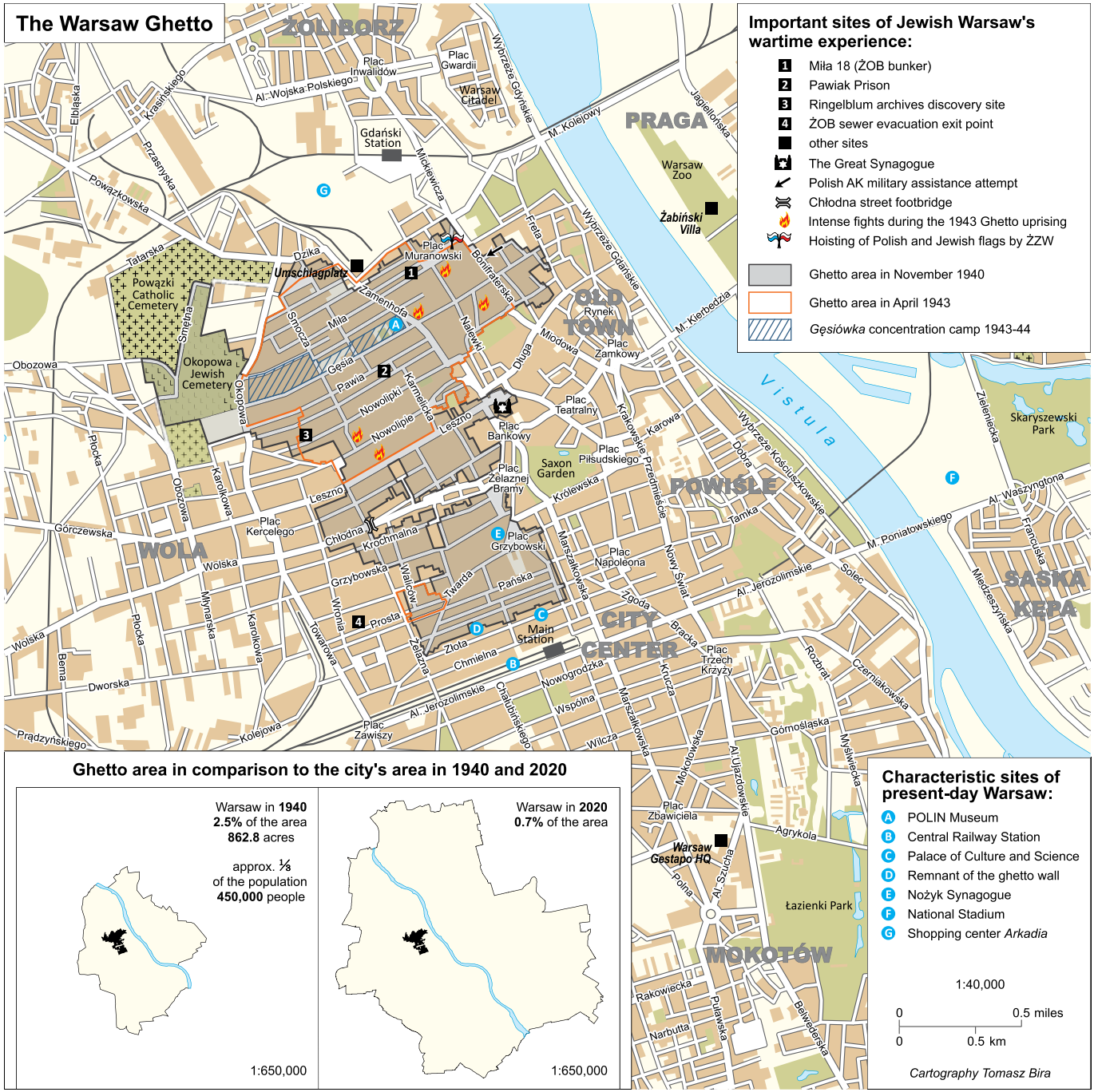


Wiktor Alter

1939 The first of approximately six hundred ghettos in occupied Poland is established by the Germans in Piotrków Trybunalski on October 5.

The **Warsaw Ghetto**, the largest ghetto created in German-occupied Europe, is sealed on November 16, 1940. While several thousand Jews manage to remain illegally outside of the closed area and others manage to flee with the help of non-Jews, the vast majority of the city's Jewish population is forced into the ghetto. Many Jewish communal and religious institutions and cultural organizations are re-established in the so-called Jewish Residential District. Schools, hospitals, orphanages, and theaters are set up. The Judenrat, an administrative body set up the Germans, tries to reconcile submission to the Nazi authorities with protection of the welfare and interests of the Jewish population. Underground activity, including the publishing of newspapers, begins almost immediately. Of the Warsaw Ghetto's population of approximately 450,000 at its peak in April 1941, 100,000 will die of cold, hunger and disease. Over 300,000 will be gassed in Treblinka.

1940 Zionist Ignacy Schwarzbart joins the Polish National Council in London, the Polish parliament-in-exile. Poland is the only country in occupied Europe to have a form of parliament-in-exile. ›


The Warsaw Ghetto
Important sites of Jewish Warsaw's wartime experience:
1 Miła 18 (ŻOB bunker)
2 Pawiak Prison
3 Ringelblum archives discovery site
4 ŻOB sewer evacuation exit point
other sites
The Great Synagogue
Polish AK military assistance attempt
Chłodna street footbridge
Intense fights during the 1943 Ghetto uprising
Hoisting of Polish and Jewish flags by ŻZW
Ghetto area in November 1940
Ghetto area in April 1943
Gęsiówka concentration camp 1943-44
ŻOLIBORZ
PRAGA
OLD TOWN
POWIŚLE
WOLA
CITY CENTER
SAŚKA KĘPA
MOKOTÓW
Umschlagplatz
Okopowa Jewish Cemetery
Powązki Catholic Cemetery
Saxon Garden
Warsaw Zoo
Żabiński Villa
Warsaw Gestapo HQ
Łazienki Park
Skaryszewski Park
Vistula
Ghetto area in comparison to the city's area in 1940 and 2020
Warsaw in 1940
2.5% of the area
862.8 acres
approx. ⅓
of the population
450,000 people
1:650,000
Warsaw in 2020
0.7% of the area
1:650,000
Characteristic sites of present-day Warsaw:
A POLIN Museum
B Central Railway Station
C Palace of Culture and Science
D Remnant of the ghetto wall
E Nożyk Synagogue
F National Stadium
G Shopping center Arkadia
1:40,000
0 0.5 miles
0 0.5 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira

1940 The YIVO Institute relocates its headquarters from Wilno to New York City.

1940 In February, Soviet authorities begin the first of four mass deportations of Polish citizens from the Soviet occupation zone to the east of the Soviet Union, mostly to Siberia and Kazakhstan. The third wave of deportations of May-June 1940 primarily targets Polish Jews, with 80% of the deportees being Jewish. By 1945, at least one and a half million Poles will become target of the Soviet repressions. Approximately 150,000-200,000 of them will lose their lives.



Katyń Memorial in Jersey City, NJ.

1940 From April through May, the Soviets murder approximately 21,500 captured Polish Army and police officers, members of the Polish intelligentsia and social elite. Their bodies are buried in **Katyn** forest, near the Russian city of Smolensk, and in various other locations in the western Soviet Union. Roughly 8-10% of the victims were Jews, among them Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army Baruch Steinberg.

1940 **Witold Pilecki**, a Polish cavalry captain and veteran of the Polish-Bolshevik war, now a member of the Polish underground, volunteers to be sent to Auschwitz (by allowing himself to be caught by German police in a roundup) in order to gather information about the camp from the inside and to start resistance there. Pilecki also delivers the first report on the mass murder of Jews in Auschwitz. After two and a half years in Auschwitz, he successfully escapes. Then, he fights in the Polish underground army. After the war in 1948, targeted as dangerous to the new Communist regime, he is arrested, tortured, and sentenced to death in a show trial and subsequently executed.



Auschwitz concentration camp photo of Witold Pilecki.



Emanuel Ringelblum

1940 *Oneg Shabbat* ("The Joy of the Sabbath" in Hebrew), a clandestine network founded in the Warsaw Ghetto, is established by **Emanuel Ringelblum** to document Jewish suffering during the German occupation. The members, including historians, writers, artists and

teachers, are charged with researching each aspect of life and death in the ghetto. What they collect will form the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, now known as the Ringelblum Archive.

1941 In secret radio messages, the Polish Prime Minister-in-Exile, General Władysław Sikorski, warns the Polish population against participating in German atrocities against Jews.

1941 Nazi Germany invades Soviet Russia on June 22. Germany occupies former eastern Poland in the wake of its invasion codenamed "Operation Barbarossa." The Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* ("Special Operations Groups" in German) – the killing squads of the SS, in cooperation with local Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian auxiliary forces, murder approximately one million Jews in Eastern Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Western Russia as the German offensive moves towards Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow.

1941 In the first days after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, following accusations of the Jews supporting the Soviets during the past two years of occupation, local Poles murder their Jewish neighbors in the small town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland. It is the largest such massacre, among similar other cases, to take place in occupied Poland.



Gravestones of Jewish soldiers at the Monte Cassino Polish war cemetery.



Menachem Begin wearing Polish Army uniform, Tel Aviv, December 1942.

1941 The Polish Army-in-Exile is set up in Russia under the command of General Władysław Anders. The almost eighty thousand men strong Anders' Army will eventually be evacuated in 1942 through the Middle East to fight at the Italian front (among other battlefields at **Monte Cassino** in May 1944). Anders' Army, with approximately 4,000 Jewish soldiers, also evacuates thousands of civilians from Soviet Russia, including many Polish Jews. General Anders, despite the death penalty for desertion, tacitly allows 3,000 Jewish soldiers to stay in Palestine and join the ranks of the *Haganah* ("The Defense" in Hebrew, a Jewish military organization that later will become the Israeli army). Among them is Mieczysław Biegun, later known as **Menachem Begin**. A 1935 graduate of Warsaw University's law faculty, born in Brest (Polish: *Brześć*, Yiddish: *Brisk*) in Eastern Poland (now in Western Belarus), in 1977 Begin will become Israeli prime minister and will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978.

1941 The death penalty is introduced by German authorities for Jews leaving ghettos without authorization. Thousands of Jews are executed as a result. Unlike in other German-occupied countries, the death penalty is also introduced by German authorities for Poles providing any help for the Jews. Hun- ›

dreds of Poles who helped Jews escape or hide are summarily murdered along with their families and neighbors.

1941 The first German death camp is set up in December in Kulmhof (Polish: *Chełmno nad Nerem*), prior to the infamous Wannsee Conference of January 1942, where the Final Solution policy will be confirmed. The Jews of Koło are the first victims. All of the German death camps (Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibór, Bełżec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Chełmno) are located in occupied Poland.



Abba Kovner (standing, center) among FPO fighters, 1943.

1942 The **United Partisan Organization** (FPO – from Yiddish *Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye*) is set up in the Wilno Ghetto by Abba Kovner and Yitzhak Wittenberg. Similar armed-resistance organizations are set up in Warsaw, Kraków, Białystok, and elsewhere.

1942 The first transport of Jews following the Wannsee Conference reaches Auschwitz, originally set up in 1940 as a concentration camp for the Polish intelligentsia, clergy, and members of the resistance. Auschwitz-Birkenau will claim about 1.1 million victims from Nazi-occupied Europe, 90% of them Jews.

1942 The British BBC airs a program about the ongoing extermination of Polish Jews by the Germans. Emanuel Ringelblum writes on that day in his diary: "The *Oneg Shabbat* group fulfilled in this way its great historical mission: it alerted the world to our fate and maybe saved hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews from extermination (…). We struck the enemy with a strong blow. We have exposed his diabolical plan to murder all Polish Jews secretly."



Tosia Altman

1942 The so-called *kashariyot* become a crucial element in the activities of Jewish underground in the German-occupied Eastern Europe. The term refers to a group of Jewish female couriers who, under false identities, establish and maintain connections between isolated ghettos, as well with the non-Jewish resistance. The group's name comes from the Hebrew word for "connection"—*kesher*—as these brave women, smuggling weapons and money, fake documents and medicine, constitute a network between the ghettos, a lifeline that provides rare news and information from the outside world. The leader of the group is **Tosia Altman**, a member of Hashomer Hatzair before the war, serving now as a liaison between the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for the Polish: Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) and the Polish Home Army (AK, for the Polish: Armia Krajowa). She will perish during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on May 26, 1943, at the age of twenty-three. Her friend Chajka (Haika) Grossman,

another *kasharit*, will survive the war and become an Israeli politician and member of the Knesset.



Janusz Korczak and Stefania Wilczyńska

1942 Mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, codenamed in German *Großaktion Warschau* ("Great Action Warsaw" in German), begins on July 22, 1942. Judenrat chairman Adam Czerniaków commits suicide, unwilling to enact the German orders. Treblinka ultimately claims 850,000 Jewish victims over the 14 months of its existence. Among those deported and gassed are **Janusz Korczak** and **Stefania Wilczyńska**, who refused to abandon the children of their orphanage.



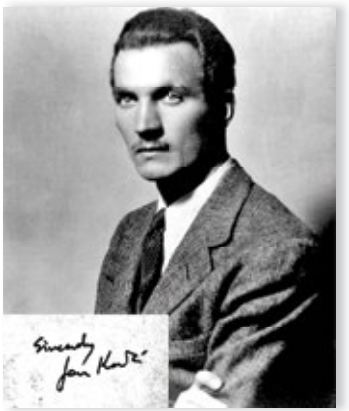
Gela Seksztajn

1942 On the thirteenth day of the great deportation, Izrael Lichtensztajn, a member of the *Oneg Shabbat* and close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum, together with his two students, Dawid Graber and Nachum Grzywacz, hide the first cache of the Ghetto archive in the basement of the Ber Borochov school in the Warsaw Ghetto. Izrael's wife, **Gela Seksztajn**, also working with *Oneg Shabbat,* was a Polish Jewish artist and painter, whose works were included in the secret archive. The second cache of the archive is hidden in January 1943 and the alleged third cache on the eve of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Out of approximately 60 *Oneg Shabbat* collaborators, only three survive the war, Rachela Auerbach, and Bluma and Hersz Wasser, with the latter being the last person alive to know the location of the hidden documentation.



Irena Sendler

1942 *Żegota*, the Polish Underground Council to Aid Jews, is set up by the Polish Government-in-Ex-ile on September 27. It is the only underground state-run organization in German-occupied Europe created solely to help Polish Jews. Its initiator, Catholic writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, publishes an appeal in the underground Catholic press condemning Allied and Polish inactivity in the face of the Holocaust two weeks after the beginning of the great deportation. At least several thousand Jews were saved by *Żegota*, among them almost 2,500 children rescued by *Żegota's* children's section, including over 200 saved by **Irena Sendler** (leading the section from October 1943) and her colleagues. ›



Jan Karski

1942 After secret visits to the Warsaw Ghetto and the transfer ghetto in Izbica Lubelska, the Polish Government-in-Exile courier and emissary **Jan Karski** (born Jan Kozielewski), successfully arrives in London in November. He delivers the first eyewitness account of the mass murder of Jews to the Polish, British, and American governments, including to the Prime Minister of Great Britain Winston Churchill and the President of the United States of America Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, they do not undertake any action in response. Karski, together with another emissary Jerzy Lerski, will later be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

1942 The Polish National Council (PNC) in London launches an appeal to the Allies to prevent what it calls "the German attempt to murder all the Jews in Europe."

1942 On November 19, the writer **Bruno Schulz** is shot by a German Gestapo officer in the Drohobycz ghetto. The eastern Galician city of Drohobycz (today Drohobych in Ukraine) had become a booming center of the oil industry in the late 19th century, growing rapidly and attracting many Jewish entrepreneurs. Into one such merchant family of assimilated Polish Jews, Bruno was born in 1892. During the interbellum period he published two collections of short fiction, while also establishing himself as a painter and illustrator and art critic. Blending comedy and tragedy, the quaint and the grotesque, his works depict his personal obsessions and sketch out the uneasy mood of the interbellum period. A uniquely gifted fabulist, Schulz is now seen as one of the greatest authors of Polish prose of the 20th century.



Bruno Schulz

1943 On December 10, Poland addresses an official Note to the Governments of the United Nations entitled „The Mass Extermination of Jews in German-Occupied Poland" calling on them to speed up military action and intensify international help to the remaining Jews.

1943 The next wave of deportations to Treblinka is halted for three months when, in January 1943, shots are fired on German wardens from among the deportees walked to the Umschlagplatz. It is the first act of armed struggle instigated by the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Resistance in the ghettos took on different forms: cultural, intellectual, physical and spiritual. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Szapira, Piaseczner tsaddik (Hassidic spiritual leader), during the war was known as the "Preacher of the Warsaw Ghetto," who recorded his weekly sermons, addressing the difficult questions of faith and religious

observance in the face of increased suffering in the ghetto. In January 1943, prior to being transported to the sub-camp of Majdanek in Trawniki, where he will be killed ten months later, Rabbi Szapira gave his writings to *Oneg Shabbat*, together with a letter to his brother and Hasidim in Palestine. His work was later published in Israel in 1960 under the title "Esh Kodesh" ("The Holy Fire" in Hebrew).

1943 As the tide of the war shifts, a new Communist-dominated Polish Army is set up in the Soviet Union under the command of General Zygmunt Berling. It is largely commanded by Soviet officers and includes many Polish Jews in its ranks.



Prewar photo of Mordechaj Anielewicz (standing, right) with Hashomer Hatzair members, Warsaw 1938.

1943 The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, beginning on the eve of Passover, April 19, is the largest act of Jewish armed resistance in German-occupied Europe to date, triggering smaller uprisings in the ghettos in Białystok, Częstochowa, and Będzin. Different organizations and factions operating in the Warsaw Ghetto, among them the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for Polish: *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*) led by **Mordechaj Anielewicz** and the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW, for Polish: *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*) led by Paweł Frenkel. Combat rages on for several weeks and sporadic fighting continues into June.

1943 Anielewicz and most of the leaders of the Jewish Fighting Organization die in their besieged bunker at 18 Miła Street on May 8, 1943. A group of fighters, led by Marek Edelman and Szymon Rathajzer (Simcha Rotem), manage to escape the bunker and, with the help of the Polish underground, flee to the other side of the ghetto wall through the sewers. They join the Polish underground and continue to fight the Germans in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

1943 Soviet partisans, allegedly among them also Jews from the Bielski brothers' squad, kill 129 Poles during a raid on Naliboki in Belarus. The villagers were falsely accused of collaborating with the Germans. On January 29, 1944, another massacre perpetrated by the Soviet partisans will be committed in the village of Koniuchy.



Szmul Zygielbojm

1943 On May 11, **Szmul Zygielbojm**, the Bund representative to the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, commits suicide in an act of protest to the world's indifference to the mass murder of Jews in Poland.

1943 To mark the end of the Ghetto uprising and to proclaim that Europe's largest Jewish community had been exterminated and Warsaw made *Judenrein* ("cleansed of Jews" in German), on May 16, the Germans blow up the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street. ›

1943 On July 11, the "Volhynian Bloody Sunday" marks the peak of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Ukrainian UPA partisans in the region with the help of Ukrainian locals. A series of bloody massacres, from February 1943 through the end of 1944, are now commonly known as the "Volhynian Slaughter." In its course, approximately 100,000 Poles, among them many hiding Polish Jews, are killed by Ukrainian nationalists in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (both nowadays in Western Ukraine). In reprisal, Polish partisans kill several thousand Ukrainians. The genocide will continue to this day to sour Polish-Ukrainian relations and provoke ongoing fervent debate about the events.



| Samuel Willenberg

1943 Prisoners in the Treblinka death camp stage an uprising on August 2, attacking the Germans and auxiliary Ukrainian guards. Among the over 300 who manage to escape is **Samuel Willenberg**. He will later join Polish underground and will fight in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. After the war and emigration to Israel, he will become a famous sculptor and painter. He will be also active in reviving Polish-Israeli relations after the fall of Communism, considered as a war hero by both nations. The last survivor of Treblinka, he passes away in 2016.

1943 Prisoners of Sobibór death camp stage an uprising on October 14. In the outcome, twelve SS staff members are killed and, of the over 500 Jewish prisoners, three hundred manage to escape.

1943 After uprisings in Treblinka and Sobibór, the Germans decide to close all killing centers, apart from Auschwitz-Birkenau, and to liquidate the remaining Jewish population in other camps. In the process of the so-called *Aktion Erntefest* ("Operation Harvest Festival" in German), that takes place on November 3-4, approximately 43,000 Jewish inmates of Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki camps are shot. Afterwards, the district of Lublin is declared *Judenfrei* ("free of Jews" in German) by the Nazis.



| Rachela Auerbach

1944 In the aftermath of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, Rachela Auerbach writes an essay titled "Yizkor" (*Yizkor* is the Hebrew word opening the memorial prayer for the dead recited on the most solemn Jewish holiday, *Yom Kippur*, The Day of Atonement), describing the destruction of Polish Jewry. **Rachela Auerbach**, born in 1903 in Podolia, a prewar journalist and poet writing both in Polish and Yiddish, during the war finds herself imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. She runs a soup kitchen on Leszno street, and is a close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum. One of the only three

members of the Oneg Shabbat group to survive the war, Aurebach becomes a custodian of the memory of the destroyed Jewish community and works at the Jewish Historical Institute on retrieval of the Ringelblum archives and documentation of German Nazi crimes. In 1950 she immigrates to Israel, where she works at Yad Vashem, before passing away in 1975.

1944 In the course of the spring offensive, the Soviets take control of eastern Poland, including the city of Lublin and the concentration camp of Majdanek, the first concentration camp to be liberated. The evidence and the extent of German atrocities there is discovered.

1944 An unelected, Communist-dominated government – The Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN, Polish: *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*) is set up on July 22 by the Soviets in Lublin reconquered by the Red Army and Polish Army under General Berling. It has a separate bureau for Jewish affairs in its structure. The PKWN's policy of equal rights for Jews attracts many of them and some receive high positions in the new regime. The conflicting opinions about the Soviet-installed government oppose many Jews to the non-Jewish majority rejecting the enforced Sovietization of Poland. The situation strengthens Polish popular antisemitism and the stereotype *of Żydokomuna* (literally: "Judeo-Communism" in Polish; an antisemitic presumption, dating back to Polish-Bolshevik war, which states that most Jews universally support the Soviets and thus are against Polish independence), already widespread in the interwar period.

1944 Hundreds of Jews, who had previously been hiding in Warsaw during the German occupation, among them the veterans of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, including **Marek Edelman**, Antek Zuckerman and **Zivia Lubetkin**, and other Polish fighters and civilians, participate in the Warsaw Uprising that begins on August 1, triggered by German panic retreat in the last days of July. It is intended to chase out German forces from the city as the Red Army approaches from the east and to install sovereign Polish authorities in the liberated capital to counter the Lublin government (PKWN). Despite general Jewish support for the uprising, some 50 Jews are murdered by members of various right-wing Polish units.



Marek Edelman



Zivia Lubetkin

1944 On the fifth day of the uprising, soldiers of Polish Armia Krajowa (the "Home Army" in Polish) elite unit "Zośka" liberate 348 Jewish prisoners held in ›

the German concentration camp "KL Warschau" on Gęsia street, the so-called ***Gęsiówka***, established on the ruins of the former ghetto. Most of the liberated prisoners join the fight.



Liberated prisoners of Gęsiówka, August 1944.

1944 The German forces regroup and begin to brutally quell the uprising, murdering tens of thousands of civilian Varsovians while advancing into the heart of the city. With Western allies providing no significant support and with Stalin's decision to halt the Soviet offensive on the east bank of the Vistula and wait for the uprising to be crushed by the Germans, the ill-fated 63-day-long battle is eventually lost and the insurgents surrender on October 3. The battle leaves the capital in ruins, with approximately 150,000 civilians and 16,000 Polish military killed, leaving no significant Polish forces to oppose the future Sovietization of the country. After the fall of the uprising, the Germans expel the remaining population (many are taken to concentration camps), and subsequently raze what has left of the city to the ground. The Vistula River that divides Warsaw from its east-bank district of Praga becomes a frontline for the next four months.

1944 The last 60,000 Jews from the **ghetto in Litzmannstadt** (Łódź, renamed by the Germans and annexed into the *Reich*), the longest existing ghetto in occupied Europe, are deported to Auschwitz by August 29, as the eastern front nears.



Resettlement of Jews into the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, March 1940.



Róża Robota

1944 On October 7, a Jewish underground organization in Auschwitz-Birkenau stages an unsuccessful uprising upon learning that the *Sonderkommando* workers (prisoners forced to work in the crematoria) were selected for imminent killing. The underground managed to secure some arms, explosives, and gunpowder brought in secretly by female inmates, including **Róża Robota**, from the Monowitz chemical factory (part of the

camp's industrial complex known as *Auschwitz III - Monowitz*). In the revolt, three SS guards are killed and a dozen are wounded but almost all of the *Sonderkomanndo* workers are murdered, with Róża and three other women being hanged by the SS in January 1945.

1944 As Soviet forces drive German forces out of eastern Poland, in August the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Polish: *Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich*, CKŻP) is organized in Lublin. Nearly 300,000 Jews will eventually register with the CKŻP, which organizes aid programs, providing food, housing, education, medical assistance, employment and vocational services, as well as cultural activities and providing help in finding and tracing survivors. A "Committee to Help the Poles," which will eventually provide material assistance to dozens among those Poles who saved Jews during the war, is also set up.

1944 The Bund becomes the first of eleven Jewish political parties to re-establish itself in the part of Poland already taken from the Germans. Three of them, including Agudat Israel, do so illegally. All active Jewish organizations support the Communist government, which they see as the sole bulwark of their security in the face of growing antisemitism. The majority of the population is vehemently opposed to the government, as it is illegitimately introduced by the Soviets against popular will. Jewish Communists become prominent in the new State apparatus, including the dreaded secret police. As suspected opponents of the new regime are jailed and deported, clashes bordering on civil war break out.

1944 The Central Jewish Historical Commission (Polish: *Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*, CŻKH), the first institution in Poland to collect Holocaust documentation, survivor testimonies and evidence of war crimes, is established in Lublin.



Władysław Szpilman

1945 The Red Army, having camped on the right bank of the Vistula River since September of 1944, takes the core of Warsaw in the course of the 1945 Winter Offensive. Close to 85% of the city lies in ruins. Out of the prewar population of over one million, only a few hundred men and women are living in hiding amid the ruins of the city's left bank since the end of the 1944 uprising. Among them are many Jews, including famous pianist **Władysław Szpilman**. On the day of liberation, January 17, those so-called "Warsaw Robinsons" re-emerge from their hideouts scattered around the sea of rubble, to greet the Soviet and Polish Berling Army forces entering Warsaw. ›



The gate of Auschwitz I concentration camp.

1945 **Auschwitz-Birkenau** is liberated by the Soviet Army on January 27. In 2005, the UN will declare the date as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



Righteous Among the Nations medals and diplomas handed over during a ceremony in the Polish Senate on 17th April 2012.

1945 On May 8, the war in Europe ends after 2,190 days.

Almost six million Polish citizens perished in World War II. Of these, three million were Polish Jews murdered by the Germans in death and concentration camps, ghettos, and execution sites. This constituted 90% of pre-war Poland's Jewish population. While some Jews trying to survive under the German occupation received help from the Poles, there were also some Poles, the so-called *szmalcownicy*, who blackmailed Jews in hiding or denounced them to the Germans. The majority of Poles were indifferent to Jewish suffering as, among other factors, they themselves tried to survive the occupation. It is to be noted that in the east of Europe helping Jews was punishable by death and that, in Poland, there was no organized collaboration with the Germans, unlike in many Western countries. In 1963, Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust and Remembrance Center, was established in Israel. One of the center's activities is to grant the title of **Righteous Among the Nations** to those who helped Jews during World War II. Poles are the single largest national group recognized by the Institute. «

VI. POST-WAR COMMUNIST POLAND 1945-1968

The war ended in stages as the Soviet army advanced from the east in 1944, with Auschwitz and Warsaw only liberated in January 1945. Withal, initiatives to rebuild the country begin immediately. The map of Poland, along with much of Central and Eastern Europe, is once again redrawn, this time based on the tripartite Roosevelt -Stalin-Churchill 1943 Teheran and 1945 Yalta conferences' agreements. Poland is to be shifted westwards, the Soviet Union, which will dominate the region until 1989, annexes the eastern half of prewar Poland, incorporating the cities of Lwów and Wilno, and the majority of the Belarussian and Ukrainian minorities. According to the stipulations of the Potsdam Peace Conference, Poland receives territorial "compensation" from the defeated Germany in the north and west with the cities of Breslau (Polish: *Wrocław*), Stettin (Polish: *Szczecin*), and now fully incorporated Free City of Danzig (Polish: *Gdańsk*). After the genocide of Polish Jews, the expulsion of Germans and ›

of the remaining Ukrainians, Poland's population becomes almost homogeneous.

A Communist-led government is imposed on the country against popular will. More than one and a half million Poles from the former eastern Poland, now part of the Soviet Union, are resettled within Poland's new borders. Many of those rendered homeless by the war, particularly residents of Warsaw, must find new homes as well. The remnants of the Jewish community, made up primarily of those who survived the war in the Soviet Union, begin to rebuild Jewish communal life. Some choose to affiliate with Jewish communities around the country, others opt to assimilate, while the majority choose to emigrate. Thousands of others, along with those who had been hidden as children during the war with no inkling of their Jewish roots, make their lives in post-war Poland. Some Jews assume high positions in the Communist regime, which will strengthen post-war Polish antisemitism.


Postwar Poland (1945-49)
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Šiauliai
Klaipėda
Lithuanian SSR
Kaunas
Vilnius
Wilno
Kaliningrad
Koenigsberg
Suwałki
Minsk
Słupsk
Stolp
Koszalin
Köslin
Gdańsk
Danzig
Elbląg
Elbing
Olsztyn
Allenstein
Hrodna
Grodno
Navahrudak
Nowogódek
Szczecin
Stettin
Grudziądz
Piła
Schneidemühl
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Łomża
Białystok
0.2 million
3.5 million
BERLIN
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Poznań
Konin
WARSAW
Siedlce
Brest
Brześć
Pinsk
Pińsk
Belarussian SSR
EAST GERMANY
Zielona Góra
Grünberg
Leszno
Kalisz
Łódź
Biała Podlaska
Głogów
Glogau
Sieradz
Radom
Lublin
0.5 million
Kovel
Kowel
Dresden
Legnica
Liegnitz
Wrocław
Breslau
Chełm
Kielce
Częstochowa
Zamość
Lutsk
Łuck
Rivne
Równe
Wałbrzych
Waldenburg
Dzierżoniów
Reichenbach
Opole
Oppeln
Tarnobrzeg
1.8 million
PRAGUE
Gliwice
Gleiwitz
Katowice
Kraków
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Ukrainian SSR
Lviv
Lwów
Ternopil
Tarnopol
Ostrava
Przemyśl
Bielsko-Biała
Nowy Sącz
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
Brno
Žilina
Stanislaviv
Stanisławów
Košice
Mukachevo
HUNGARY
Debrecen
Baia Mare
Suceava
ROMANIA
Békès
Cluj-Napoca
Bacău
SOVIET UNION
Borders of Poland in 1939
Curzon Line
Curzon Line "B"
Territory of Poland in 1946
Recovered Territories (acquired from Germany)
Territories lost to USRR
Lower Silesian cluster of Jewish Settlement
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
Cities with a larger Jewish population in 1946
20,000 – 30,000
15,000 – 20,000
10,000 – 15,000
5,000 – 10,000
Resettlement of:
Germans
Poles
Ukrainians and Belarusians
Polish Jews
1945-47 Emigration of Jews from Poland to the West (150,000)

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities.



Jewish settlers in Dzierżoniów, 1960s.

1945 Some 200,000 Polish Jews begin returning from the Soviet Union. Many are met with growing hostility. Most resettle in the former German territories in what is now western Poland including the cities of Wroclaw and Szczecin. The town of **Dzierżoniów** (formerly German *Reichenbach*) with several other nearby localities in Lower Silesia, will become, for a short time, a center of Jewish life in Poland.

1945 The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is granted the right to function in Poland anew. It is largely the Joint that will finance the reconstruction of post-war Jewish life, but it will be forced to discontinue its work temporarily in 1949. JDC will later return and will continue to support Jewish communal life.

1945 The Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw, used as a stable and storehouse by the Germans, is reopened. It becomes a meeting point for Jewish survivors looking for relatives and friends. The only other synagogue to survive in Warsaw, although also damaged, is the **Round Synagogue** in the Praga district.



The Round Synagogue

1945 The first post-war pogrom takes place in Kraków on August 11, in the course of which at least one person is killed. Other pogroms will follow. In a climate of post-war lawlessness and growing internal political conflict, the total number of victims of anti-Jewish violence in Soviet-dominated Poland is estimated at between 500 and 2,000 in the period 1944-47.

1945 The Polish Communist government signs a border treaty ceding to the Soviet Union the area located to the east of the so-called Curzon Line, being almost all of the Polish territories previously occupied by the Soviets under the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. As a result, approximately 1.8 million Poles eventually are resettled westward into Poland's new borders, mostly to the lands recently acquired from Germany. Officially, the formerly German area is proclaimed to be "Recovered Territories," as Communist propaganda tries to portray the border change as an act of historical justice, enacted through the return of Poland to its borders from the medieval times of the Piast dynasty, roughly six centuries earlier. Polish Jewish survivors from the eastern borderlands, who decide not to take Soviet citizenship, resettle into post-war Poland along with other Poles. At the same time, the remaining German population of the "Recovered Territories" is deported to areas within Germany's new borders.

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities.



Sholem Aleichem Jewish School in Wrocław.

1945 Jewish schools are established in the larger cities in which Jews settled or were resettled after the war. By 1950, the Jewish school in Warsaw is closed and the remaining schools are nationalized. The curriculum is divested of Hebrew and Jewish history and, while Yiddish often remains part of the program, Polish studies are increased as Stalinist policies take hold. The I.L. Peretz School in Łódź and the **Sholem Aleichem School** in Wrocław will eventually be closed by the end of the 1960s, following the forced emigration of Jews in 1968.

1945 The Communist government issues a decree about the nationalization of industry in Poland. The new authorities' general policy was gradually to nationalize all private and communal property. The return of pre-war Jewish communal property, in spite of a 1997 ruling, remains an issue which is being addressed by the Jewish communities in Poland and the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODŻ), as well the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

1946 The first edition of "Folks Sztyme – Głos Ludu" ("People's Voice" respectively in Yiddish/Polish), an official Yiddish-language periodical sanctioned by the authorities and following the propaganda line of the Communist party, is published for the first time on April 19, 1946 in Łódź as a monthly journal. In 1949, it will be moved to Warsaw and will be issued weekly up until 1991.

1946 One of the world's first Holocaust memorials, designed in the shape of a manhole cover with a sculpture of a sprouting plant and the letter "bet" signifying *bereshit* ("in the beginning" in Hebrew, the first word of the Torah), is dedicated in Warsaw by members of the Polish Jewish community on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Ghetto Uprising.



The funeral of Kielce Pogrom victims.

1946 The **Kielce Pogrom** on July 4, provoked by a blood-libel rumor, claims at least 40 victims, including three non-Jewish Poles who tried to stop the killing. It is the largest post-war pogrom in Poland. Attempts to provoke similar pogroms also occur in other cities. The pogroms are condemned by the liberal intelligentsia, but the Catholic Church largely keeps silent or expresses only general condemnations of "all violence." The primate of Poland, speaking to American journalists, says that the pogrom, though deplorable, is a result of Jews ›

having too much power in the Communist government. Nonetheless, in subsequent show trials, several members of the mob are sentenced to death. The pogrom was widely suspected by Poles of being a provocation of the Communist regime to divert attention from the Communist power grab, but this has not been proven.

1946 Following the Kielce Pogrom, the Communist government unofficially allows mass Jewish emigration and permits the creation of armed Jewish self-defense units. The emigration of Jews from Poland accelerates. In the following months, tens of thousands of Polish Jews leave Poland heading to the West, first to DP (Displaced Persons) camps in Allied-occupied West Germany, then further on to America or Palestine.



Ringelblum Archives discovery in 1946.

1946 The first cache of the buried **Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in the summer of 1942, is recovered from the ruins on Nowolipki Street in Warsaw on September 18. The collection includes diaries, documents, leaflets, newspapers, posters and paintings collected by the members of *Oneg Shabbat*.

1947 In the early months of 1947, the policy of the government changes and the borders are sealed. In the course of the so-called *Brichah* ("The Flight" in Hebrew; also a name of the clandestine Jewish organization supporting the mass emigration of Jews from post-Holocaust Europe to Palestine), out of some 250,000 Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust, over 150,000 leave the country in the period between 1944 and 1947. The remaining Polish Jewish population is estimated at about 100,000.

1947 Inspired by former prisoners, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is established at the site of the camps by an act of the Polish Parliament. It is to commemorate "the martyrdom of the Polish and other nations." Jewish suffering is consistently underplayed throughout the Eastern Bloc. This will be corrected only after the fall of Communism in 1989.

1947 A *Haganah* training camp, set up in the Lower Silesian town of Bolków under Polish Army auspices, provides military training for several thousand Zionist volunteers who then move to Palestine to fight for Israel's independence.



The Jewish Historical Institute in the 1960s.

1947 The **Jewish Historical Institute** (JHI; Polish: *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH*), successor to the Central Jewish Historical Commission, is established in Warsaw and housed in the former Main Judaic Library of the Great Synagogue. The Institute, which holds the Ringelblum Archives, is the largest repository of Polish Jewish material heritage in the world, with collections of wartime testimonies and survivor records, a vast collection of artwork and Judaica, pre-war press, books, and documentation.

1947 Poland actively supports the UN resolution on the partition of Mandate Palestine into Jewish and Arab territories.



The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes in the 1950s.

1948 Amidst the sea of rubble that was once the Warsaw Ghetto, the **Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes**, designed by Polish Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport, is unveiled on the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A replica will be put up at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Memorial in 1976.

1948 The State of Israel is proclaimed on May 14. Poland recognizes the new Jewish state on May 19. The first Israeli diplomatic mission opens in Poland, initially housed in Warsaw's Hotel Bristol.



Vladka Meed

1949 A survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, **Vladka Meed** (1921-2012, born Feigele Peltel), publishes in Yiddish a recollection of her war experiences titled "Fun Beyde Zaytn Geto-Moyer" (English title: "On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto"). Vladka (after her Polish wartime pseudonym *Władka*), one of the *kashariyot*, during the German occupation served as a liaison between ŻOB and the Polish Home Army, and as a smuggler of weapons and explosives into the ghetto prior and during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 1946 migrates with her husband to the United States where she will become one of the founders of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Her book becomes one of the most important first-hand accounts and resources on the history of Jewish resistance in Warsaw, and was subsequently translated into English in 1972, Polish, German, and Japanese.

1949 As Stalinism grows more severe, the Bund and other Jewish parties are disbanded. Bundists and members of other leftist parties are strongly encouraged to join the recently created, unified Communist party (Polish: *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza,* PZPR, "Polish United Workers' Party"). Emigration to Israel is restricted. Independent Jewish organizations and institutions are closed down.

1950 Polish Radio starts regular programs in Yiddish that will be continued up to 1958.

1950 The government sets up the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association (Polish: *Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów*, TSKŻ) to replace Jewish organizations which have been officially dissolved. The Union of Religious Congregations is the only other recognized Jewish organization. TSKŻ and the Union support Jewish communal life throughout the Communist period, but only a few Jewish cultural, social and educational activities are permitted to continue. ›



Review of the second cache of Ringelblum Archives, 1950.

1950 A **second cache of the Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in February 1943, is recovered on December 1. The archives, which have been listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register since 1999, are housed in the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

1951 The *Jidysz Buch* ("Yiddish Book" in Yiddish) publishing house starts printing mass editions of Yiddish classics. The publishing house will be active until 1968.

1952 A new Communist constitution is adopted on July 22, the eighth anniversary of the establishment of the first Communist government. Poland is renamed the Polish People's Republic (Polish: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL). The new constitution marks the high point of Stalinism in Poland.

1953 Józef Światło (born Izaak Fleischfarb), a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Public Security supervising the torture of prisoners, escapes to the West. In a series of interviews broadcast in December to Poland by Radio Wolna Europa (Polish: Radio Free Europe) and the Voice of America, he describes in detail the use of torture and other crimes committed by the Communists. These revelations shake the Polish Communist party, already disturbed by the death of Stalin in March.

1955 The **State Jewish Theater** is formed through the merger of the Jewish Theater of Lower Silesia established in Wrocław in 1946 with the Jewish Theater in Łódź opened in 1949. The theater is directed by Ida Kamińska (Ester Rachel Kamińska's daughter) and settles permanently in Warsaw. Yiddish-language plays are still performed today, as interest in Polish Jewish and Yiddish culture continues to grow.



"The Dybbuk" by S. An-ski at the State Jewish Theater in Warsaw, season 1956/1957.



Władysław Gomułka addresses hundreds of thousands of people during a demonstration in Warsaw on October 24, 1956.

1956 De-Stalinization in Poland is in progress. Władysław Gomułka becomes the new leader of Communist Poland during the so-called "Thaw" period **mass protests taking place in October**. The loosening of the regime brings both increased popular antisemi-

tism and new repatriations of Jews from the Soviet Union. Almost 20,000 Jews arrive from the Soviet Union, however most of them, around 13,000, will soon migrate farther to the West. The JDC is once more permitted to operate. An aliyah known in Israel as "Gomułka's Aliyah" starts with another wave of Jews numbering up to 50,000 emigrants leaving Poland in the years 1956-60. By 1960, approximately 45,000 Jews still live in Poland. There are seven active Jewish State Schools, in: Łódź, Wrocław, Dzierżoniów, Wałbrzych, Legnica, Szczecin, and Katowice.

1957 A Polish-language addition to "Folks Sztyme" entitled "Nasz Głos" ("Our Voice" in Polish), directed to Polish-Jewish youth, is published for the first time with 24-year-old Szmul Tenenblatt as its chief editor.



Front cover of the 1957 edition of Piechotkas' book Bóżnice Drewniane (Wooden Synagogues).

1959 First edition of ***Bóżnice drewniane*** ("Wooden Synagogues" in Polish) is published. Co-created by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka, the book is a pioneering work on the architecture of Baroque wooden synagogues that were characteristic of territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

1961 After a three-year-long renovation, a branch of the Kraków City Museum opens in the Old Synagogue in Kraków's district of Kazimierz.

1957 The Round Synagogue, located on Warsaw's right-bank district of Praga, the only other synagogue in Warsaw to survive the War apart from the Nożyk synagogue, is demolished after being partially ruined since the war, due to the combination of ill will of the authorities and a lack of Jewish communal funds for renovation.



Wojciech Jerzy Has.

1962 The premiere of "Samson," a film by future Academy Award winner Andrzej Wajda, telling the story of the Holocaust experience. Wajda is a representative of an informal group of Polish film directors and screenwriters whose activity between 1955 and approximately 1963 is described as the "Polish Film School." Among the most important topics treated in their works is World War II and the Holocaust. Artists of Jewish origin such as Roman Polański, Janusz Morgenstern, and **Wojciech Jerzy Has** were prominent members of the group. Polish directors will continue to raise important issues about Polish Jewish history through film works in the decades to come.

1962 Opening of the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association's Youth Club Babel in Warsaw.

1965 The Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council issues a breakthrough declaration "Nostra Aetate" on ›

relations with Judaism, opening opportunities for dialogue between the two religions.

1967 In the wake of the Six-Day War, following the Soviet lead, Poland breaks off diplomatic relations with Israel. Most Poles, including non-Jews, cheer Israel's victory in the war, going against the official line of the Communist party that supports the Arab countries in the conflict.

1968 With Gomułka still at the helm during the late 1960s, control of the government is gradually taken by Communist hardliners flirting with Polish nationalism. During this year of worldwide youth unrest, student strikes and demonstrations in support of democratic socialism erupt in many Polish universities in early March. They are suppressed by the regime with police force.



Workers' meeting organized by the Communist party, with banners saying in Polish "Zionists to Israel," during the 1968 antisemitic campaign.

1968 Many of the so-called **March'68** activists are identified as Jews, triggering the Communist regime's so-called anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. About 15,000 Polish Jews are pressured into emigration, their Polish citizenship revoked. Jewish schools around the country are closed. Remaining Jewish organizations are largely prevented from functioning. The Jewish Historical Institute, TSKŻ, and the State Yiddish Theatre in Warsaw are the only secular Jewish institutions that will continue to function, apart from the religious congregations. «

VII. JEWISH LIFE IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (PRL) 1968-1989

The expulsion of Polish Jews in 1968 is one of the most passionately debated issues in contemporary Polish Jewish history. While some Jews who remain in Poland go further underground, others begin to clandestinely explore their Jewish roots. During this period, several Jews create "the Flying Jewish University," following a Polish tradition of underground study during political repression. It is from this group that the founders of the revival of Jewish communal life after the fall of Communism in 1989 will come.



Kniefall von Warschau, Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1970.

1970 **Willy Brandt**, Chancellor of West Germany, during a state visit in Warsaw on December 7, kneels in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in a famous and symbolic gesture of penitence.

1970 Mass protests in the port cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg, and Szczecin against the rise of state-controlled prices of food, when they begin to evolve into a revolt against the regime, are suppressed by the army. Brutal suppression leaves 42 civilian protesters dead. Eventually, Gomułka is forced to resign. A new Communist government is formed by Edward Gierek. Under his rule, Poland anxiously opens to the West, as the regime is relatively moderate in comparison with those in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc.

1971 150 artists, writers and Jewish activists meet in Śródborów, a TSKŻ retreat outside of Warsaw, to celebrate the 25 anniversary of *„Folks-Sztyme."*

1971 Zew Wawa Morejno of Łódź, the last rabbi in Poland, is forced to emigrate.

1975 Poland, like most of the Eastern Bloc countries, votes in favor of the UN's "Zionism is Racism" resolution.

1976 Hanna Krall, hidden child survivor and a well-known Polish author, publishes an exclusive interview with Marek Edelman "Zdążyć przed panem Bogiem" (English title: "Shielding the Flame"), which will be listed as required reading in Polish high schools.

1977 Renovation of the Nożyk Synagogue begins, it having been closed since 1968. Religious services are held in the adjacent community building.



Isaac Bashevis Singer

1978 Polish-born Yiddish writer **Isaac Bashevis Singer** wins the Nobel Prize for Literature and becomes widely published in Poland in Polish translation.



Pope John Paul II by the Western Wall during his visit to Jerusalem.

1978 Kraków Cardinal Karol Wojtyła is elected pope. As **John Paul II**, he will spearhead a breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish relations by clearly and consistently

calling antisemitism a sin and seeking out ties with Jews as Christians' "elder brothers in faith."

1978 In the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a pavilion commemorating Jewish victims is opened.

1979 Pope John Paul II makes his first official visit as Pope to Poland in June. The visit galvanizes the nation in opposition to the ruling Communist party, eventually leading to the creation of the Solidarity movement.

1979 The Polish socialist economy falls into structural crisis and public dissent against Communism grows. As a result, the democratic opposition formalizes by the mid-1970s. One of its aspects is the creation of the unofficial "Jewish Flying University," set up in 1979 in Warsaw by, among others, Konstanty Gebert and Stanisław Krajewski. In the future, they will become intellectual and communal leaders of the revival of Jewish life in Poland.



Lech Wałęsa and the famous „Solidarity" logo.

1980 The Solidarity movement is established after a victorious strike, led by **Lech Wałęsa**, in the Gdańsk shipyard, with subsequent strikes erupting in support throughout the country. The story will later be told by the European Center of Solidarity in Gdańsk, which will be opened in 2014.

Solidarność ("Solidarity" in Polish), in a year's time becomes a 10,000,000-strong trade union, with one in three adult Poles being its member, campaigning for human rights and political self-determination. *Solidarność* condemns antisemitism, although some expressions of antisemitism reverberate within its ranks. Many assimilated Jews will be at the forefront of the movement. After 1989, Polish Jewish members of Solidarity and underground activists will lead the revival of Jewish communal institutions.



Jan Jagielski (center)

1981 The Citizens' Committee for Jewish Cultural Monuments is set up. It focuses largely on the preservation of cemeteries. It is the first organization dedicated to Jewish heritage preservation legalized since 1950. One of its co-founders is **Jan Jagielski**, who will become the head of the heritage documentation section of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. For his work, he receives a number of awards and honors, including the Irena Sendler Memorial Award in 2009.

1981 The Polish Communist military stages a coup and declares **martial law** on December 13, to defend the Communist regime and, allegedly, to prevent Soviet military intervention in Poland. Some 5,000 Solidarity activists are interned without trial ›

and the trade union is eventually banned. Though about 100 people will be killed in the years following the coup, nonviolent responses to the military take-over will eventually lead to the fall of Communism eight years later.



Polish People's Army tanks on the streets during martial law.

1981 The Polish government authorizes the JDC's re-entry into Poland.

1981 As Poland remains internationally isolated following the military coup of 1981, the Communist authorities invite Jews worldwide, including some from Israel, to participate in the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Former uprising deputy commander and Solidarity activist Marek Edelman calls on visitors to boycott the official ceremonies, yet his appeal goes unheeded. Unofficial ceremonies, organized by the Jewish Flying University, are disrupted by police. The anniversary is covered in both the official and underground press and spurs a publishing boom of books of Jewish interest, which will continue unabated.

1982 Artist and photographer Monika Krajewska publishes "Czas Kamieni" ("Time of Stones" in Polish), a book about abandoned and forgotten Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and other Jewish material heritage in the country. It is the first publication to document and discuss the state of neglect and oblivion of Jewish heritage in Communist Poland and to educate readers about symbolism in these artifacts of material heritage.



Nożyk Synagogue

1983 The **Nożyk Synagogue** in Warsaw is reopened after six years of renovation. The city's only synagogue serves in the 1980s a small community of mostly elderly Jews, but it will become a center of Jewish life after the fall of Communism. An iconic symbol of Jewish continuity in the country's capital, it continues to serve the growing Warsaw community.

1983 Sigmund Nissenbaum, a Holocaust survivor born in Warsaw, establishes the Nissenbaum Family Foundation, which will finance the restoration and preservation of many Jewish cemeteries and cultural monuments in Poland.

1983 First informal contacts between the Polish and Israeli governments since 1967 are established.

1984 A Carmelite convent is set up near the site of the Auschwitz I concentration camp and is met with international protests.

1984 The first conference on the history of Polish Jews is held at Somerville College in Oxford, England. Several Polish historians participate. The conference launches the Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies (IPJS) at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and leads to contacts between academics in Poland, the U.S., and Israel.

1986 An abbreviated version of Claude Lanzmann's documentary "Shoah" is shown on Polish State TV. Debate in the official and underground press ensues. The full version is subsequently shown in cinemas.

1986 The first volume of "Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry" is published in Oxford. By 2018, there will be 31 volumes.

1986 Poland and Israel establish interest sections in the Dutch Embassy in Warsaw and in the Polish PKO Bank's Tel Aviv branch.



Collegium Casimirianum, the seat of the Center of Polish Jewish Studies of the Jagiellonian University.

1986 The **Center for Polish Jewish Studies** opens at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. By 2018, Jewish studies departments are opened at major universities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź, and Lublin.

1986 The Polish Episcopate's Commission for Dialogue with Judaism is initiated.

1987 The first major public discussion on wartime Polish-Jewish relations is triggered by the publication in Catholic opposition weekly "Tygodnik Powszechny" of an essay by Jan Błoński "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto" ("The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" in Polish), stating that Poles, as witnesses to the Shoah, bear a moral responsibility which they have yet to acknowledge.

1987 The Catholic Church and Jewish organizations sign an agreement stipulating that the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz will be moved in 1989.



Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

1987 In Kraków, Janusz Makuch and Krzysztof Gierat organize a series of events presenting Polish Jewish culture, which will eventually become the world-famous **Kraków Jewish Culture Festival**. From a modest local event, the festival has grown into one of the most important cultural events in Poland, drawing performers and presenters from around the world. Each year, the festival features more than 300 events during 10 days of programs and draws more than 25,000 participants from Poland and around the world. ›

1987 A direct air link between Warsaw and Tel Aviv is established.

1987 The March of the Living is held for the first time in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1988 A worldwide invitation is extended by the Polish government to Jews to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The anti-Communist opposition, boycotting the large official ceremony as it was seen as propaganda, commemorates the anniversary with its own ceremony at The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes. The authorities this time do not intervene.



The Umschlagplatz memorial

1988 The Memorial Route to the Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews is created between the Ghetto Uprising Memorial and a new monument erected on the site of the **Umschlagplatz**, from which Jews were transported to Treblinka in 1942-43.



Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz

1988 **Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz**, a Polish-born Israeli and Auschwitz survivor, becomes Poland's first Chief Rabbi after a two-decade-long hiatus.

1988 A summer Jewish educational retreat which focuses on Jewish tradition and observance is organized outside of Warsaw by a small group of Polish Jews. It will lay the foundations for the creation of future Jewish educational initiatives.

1988 The first post-war Jewish kindergarten, started by a small group of Jewish families, opens in a private apartment in Warsaw.

1988 The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation begins operating in Poland. The RSLF and the JDC will finance the rebuilding of much of Poland's Jewish communal infrastructure in the 1990s. «

VIII. THE REBIRTH OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND 1989-present

In 1989, Poland becomes the first Soviet Bloc country to dismantle its Communist system. Following groundbreaking negotiations, semi-free elections are held in June and the first non-Communist government is formed under Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a former political internee. Jewish communities, suppressed for decades under Communism, begin to re-emerge and to re-establish Jewish communal institutions. The revival of Polish Jewish life, with its spiritual leaders, Polish-born Rabbi Chaskel Besser and American-born Rabbi Michael Schudrich, was initially supported by American Jewish foundations in the United States, such as the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, as well ›

as significantly by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and other organizations worldwide. Since the start of the 21st century, philanthropist Tad Taube, born in Kraków, has become one of the largest American Jewish patrons of Poland's Jewish cultural renaissance and works in concert with donors such as Sigmund Rolat, Victor Markowicz, David Mitzner (z"l), and Irene Pletka, and foundations such as the JDC, the Rothschild Foundation, the Koret Foundation, Hanadiv Europe, the Dutch Humanitarian Fund, the Shavei Israel Foundation, and others. The generations coming of age in post-Communist Poland are moving the Jewish community toward sustainability and a vibrant future.


Jewish Experience in Contemporary Poland
Baltic Sea
RUSSIA
LITHUANIA
BELARUS
GERMANY
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
UKRAINE
HUNGARY
Kaunas
Kaliningrad
Nemen
Slupsk
Gdynia
Gdańsk
Koszalin
Tczew
Elbląg
Sejny
Suwałki
Olsztyn
Ełk
Hrodna
Szczecin
Grudziądz
Piła
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Vistula
Łomża
Tykocin
Białystok
Ostrołęka
Narew
Orla
Gorzów Wielkopolski
Noteć
Oder
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Bug
Poznań
Konin
Warta
WARSAW
Siedlce
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Leszno
Głogów
Krotoszyn
Kalisz
Łódź
Sieradz
Pilica
Wieprz
Włodawa
Pripyat
Ostrów Wielkopolski
Bóbr
Radom
Kazimierz Dolny
Przysucha
Piotrków Trybunalski
Szydłowiec
Lublin
Kovel
Chełm
Legnica
Wrocław
Kamienna Góra
Wałbrzych
Częstochowa
Chęciny
Kielce
Szczebrzeszyn
Zamość
Opole
Szczekociny
Chmielnik
Tarnobrzeg
Pińczów
Vistula
Gliwice
Katowice
Dąbrowa Tarnowska
San
Krakow
Rzeszów
Markowa
Oświęcim
Tarnów
Lviv
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Bobowa
Przemyśl
Rymanów
Lesko
Dniester
PRAGUE
Elbe
Žilina
Prešov
Váh
Zvolen
Mukachevo
Seats of Jewish communities
Selected historic synagogues
Selected historic cemeteries
Lauder-Morasha School
Jewish Community Centers
Jewish studies
Jewish press
Theaters
Major festivals
Museums
Hillels
Taube Center
1:4,300,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

1989 On June 4, the first elections since the end of World War II to include opposition parties bring the anti-Communist opposition to power.

1989 Poland replaces Hungary as the main transit point for Soviet Jews moving to Israel. Tens of thousands transit through Warsaw without incident.

1990 The Polish Council of Christians and Jews is established.

1990 Poland becomes the second ex-Communist country, after Czechoslovakia, to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel.



Agnieszka Holland in 2017

1990 The historical drama "Europa Europa," directed by **Agnieszka Holland**, premiers on November 14. The film wins the 1991 Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film and is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. It is one of the first films about the Holocaust in post-Communist Poland, and so is not subject to the censorship of the state. Holland, herself Jewish, is a leading Polish film director of the post-war generation who has portrayed the Holocaust in several internationally celebrated films.

1990 Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa is elected president. His use of antisemitic innuendo against his rival Tadeusz Mazowiecki is condemned by a large segment of public opinion.

1991 Polish delegates participate in the First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II in New York City. They return to Poland and establish the Association of the Children of the Holocaust. Many of the "hidden children," saved and raised by non-Jewish Poles, begin to seek out their Jewish roots and become active in Jewish communal life, as do many of their children and grandchildren.

1991 The Catholic Church publishes a pastoral letter deploring antisemitism.

1991 President Lech Wałęsa visits Israel. In a speech to the Knesset, he asks forgiveness for wrongs committed against Jews by his country throughout history.

1991 "Menora" is the first kosher restaurant in 30 years to open in Warsaw.

1992 Chaim Herzog, President of Israel, visits Poland. It is the first Israeli state visit to Poland. Polish-Israeli ties will continue to develop and strengthen.

1992 Poland co-sponsors the repeal of the UN's "Zionism is racism" resolution.



A meeting of ZOOM, the Polish Youth Organization.

1992 The Polish Union of Jewish Students (Polish: *Polska Unia Studentów Żydowskich*, PUSZ) is founded. It will be succeeded by **ZOOM**, the Polish Jewish Youth Organization, in 2007.

1992 TSKŻ begins to publish "Słowo Żydowskie – Dos Yiddishe Vort" ("The Jewish Word" in Polish/Yiddish) in Yiddish and Polish. It is the successor to "Folks-Sztyme".

1992 Under pressure from Pope John Paul II, the convent in Auschwitz finally relocates.

1993 The 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is commemorated with the participation of Polish President Lech Wałęsa and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

1993 The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland is recognized as the legal successor to pre-war Jewish communities. The Union currently represents and serves Jewish communities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków, Łódź, Lublin, Szczecin, Katowice, Bielsko-Biała, Poznań, Legnica, Gdańsk, and Białystok.



The Lauder-Morasha School

1994 The **Lauder-Morasha School**, the first primary school under Jewish auspices in Warsaw since 1949, opens with a first grade of 18 students. In 1999, Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek will participate in the dedication ceremony of the school's permanent home, quoting the Talmud in his remarks.



"And I Still See Their Faces"

1994 "**And I Still See Their Faces**," an exhibition of pre-war photos of Jews and Jewish families collected from the public at large by the Shalom Foundation, is enthusiastically received in Warsaw and around the world. Its catalogue sells out immediately.

1995 The Polish Association of Jewish Studies is launched in Kraków.

1995 An international commemoration marks the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Inside Poland, it fosters public discourse and Holocaust education, shedding light on the history of the Nazi death camps and the extermination of Europe's Jewry – a history that had been distorted or denied during the Communist era.

1996 At a commemoration for the 50th anniversary of the Kielce Pogrom, Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz expresses contrition.

1997 The Sejm passes a law governing relations between the State and Jewish Religious Communities allowing, among other things, for the partial restitution ›

of pre-war Jewish communal property seized by the State. To date, there is no law regulating the restitution of private properties of Jews or other Polish citizens.



"Midrasz"

1997 "**Midrasz**" magazine is launched. Founded by Konstanty Gebert, it is the first Polish-language Jewish monthly published in decades. The annual Jewish Book Festival is inaugurated a year later.

1997 The Conference of the Episcopate of Poland declares an annual "Day of Judaism" to be celebrated by the Catholic Church and parishes around the country on January 17 each year.

1998 The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations is created. The Forum's educational and leadership development initiatives foster Polish-Jewish dialogue, promoting tolerance and understanding through exchange programs, publications and school-based educational programs.

1999 Beit Warszawa, a Reform congregation and a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, is founded in Warsaw.

1999 Professor Bronisław Geremek, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and at this time Polish Foreign Minister, signs accession of Poland to NATO.

2000 The publication of Jan Gross' book "Sąsiedzi" ("Neighbors" in Polish), documenting the July 10, 1941 wartime massacre of local Jews by local Poles in the town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland, sets off anguished public debate about the involvement of some Catholic Poles in the Holocaust.



The Auschwitz Jewish Center

2000 The **Auschwitz Jewish Center**, now affiliated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, opens in the renovated Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, comprised of an educational center and a museum presenting the Jewish history of the town of Oświęcim (German: *Auschwitz*, Yiddish: *Oshpitzin*).



Shevah Weiss

2001 **Shevah Weiss**, former Israeli Knesset Speaker, becomes Ambassador to Poland. Weiss, rescued by a Polish Catholic family during the war, becomes

one of the leaders of the Polish Jewish dialogue and he is awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland in 2004 and the highest Polish medal, the Order of the White Eagle, in 2017.



Memorial to the victims of the 1941 pogrom in Jedwabne.

2001 Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, at a 60th-anniversary commemoration in **Jedwabne**, expresses contrition for the wartime massacre, marking the first official apology by a Polish head of state for crimes against Jews committed by non-Jewish Poles during the Holocaust. Local residents boycott the ceremony, as does the Catholic Church – which, however, held an earlier penitential service of its own, attended by half of Poland's bishops.

2001 The first post-war edition of the Torah with Polish translation is published in Poland by Pardes Lauder, followed by the publishing of a prayer book and a Passover *Haggadah*, as well as other Jewish texts.

2002 The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (Polish: *Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Żydowskiego*, FODŻ) is established by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) to preserve Jewish heritage sites in Poland and to promote awareness of the history of Polish Jewish communities.

2003 Two Jewish film festivals (the Warsaw Jewish Film Festival and the Jewish Motifs Film Festival) are launched in Warsaw and draw large crowds during each of their editions.

2003 The Jewish Agency for Israel in Poland assumes responsibility for Taglit-Birthright Poland. By 2018, it will have sent more than 800 participants on ten-day tours of Israel.

2003 The Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland (JHIP), established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, is created to support and promote Jewish culture and education.

2003 The Professor Moses Schorr Foundation, named in memory of the last rabbi of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, is established to support the expanding adult education programs of the Moses Schorr Center in Warsaw. The Center, Poland's largest Hebrew-language program, also offers lecture series and seminars, an intensive summer school, and an e-platform "Mikledet."



Rabbi Michael Schudrich

2004 **Rabbi Michael Schudrich** is appointed Chief Rabbi of Poland. Rabbi Schudrich previously served as Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź. ›

2004 Poland joins the European Union on May 1.



The Galicia Jewish Museum

2004 The **Galicia Jewish Museum**, created by photographer Chris Schwartz and Professor Jonathan Webber, opens in Kraków. The museum celebrates and commemorates Jewish life in Polish Galicia.

2004 The Warsaw Rising Museum, commemorating the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, is established with a section on the Jewish participation in the armed revolt.

2004 "Czulent," a Jewish youth and student group, is created in Kraków.

2004 The first annual "Singer's Warsaw" festival, a celebration of Yiddish culture and I.B. Singer's writings, is organized in September by the Shalom Foundation in Warsaw.

2005 Chabad-Lubavitch opens a center in Warsaw, followed by a center that opens in Krakow the following year.

2006 Polish-born Rabbi Maciej Pawlak, ordained in the U.S., becomes principal of the Lauder-Morasha Jewish Day School in Warsaw.

2007 **Tad Taube**, founder and chairman of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, is named Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Tad Taube

2007 The groundbreaking ceremony for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews is held in Warsaw's district of Muranów, facing the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes.

2007 The Polish State Radio's "Kol Polin" ("Voice of Poland" in Hebrew) service starts broadcasting in Hebrew. It will continue to broadcast until 2014.

2007 The long-neglected building of the Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin is renovated. The former lodging rooms of the students now serve as a hotel, while the synagogue maintained by the Warsaw Jewish Community is reopened and rededicated. An accompanying museum about the Yeshiva and its founder, Rabbi Majer Szapira (Meir Shapiro), opens in 2017.

2007 Lech Kaczyński becomes the first Polish President to visit a synagogue and light Hanukkah candles

in the Presidential Palace. This tradition of presidential Hanukkah candle lightings continues to this day.

2008 The commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the March 1968 ant-Zionist campaign, begin a discussion on the restitution of Polish citizenship to Jews who were expelled. In the following years, hundreds will receive Polish passports. Among them is well-known Israeli author Etgar Keret.

2008 The Polish Year in Israel, a nationally-sponsored cultural promotion program, is celebrated.



One of the Ghetto Wall markers.

2008 The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the City of Warsaw and the Jewish Historical Institute create the "Ghetto Borders" installation in Warsaw. The project consists of **21 markers** erected at different points along the borders of the former ghetto and signs in Polish and English embedded in the sidewalks marking the former Ghetto Wall. An additional, twenty second marker will be put up on Sienna Street in 2010 at the initiative of students of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Public High School.

2008 As a result of a visit from Prince Charles of Wales, the **Jewish Community Center in Kraków** is opened with the support of World Jewish Relief, the JDC and the Jewish Community of Kraków. It serves the city's growing Jewish community.



Jewish Community Center in Kraków.

2008 Righteous Among the Nations honoree Irena Sendler dies at age 98. Sendler, a social worker and a member of anti-Nazi underground organization „Żegota" which rescued about 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto, had been previously nominated by the Polish government for the Nobel Peace Prize.

2008 A premiere of the first ever Polish-Israeli film coproduction, "Spring 1941" (Polish title: "Wiosna 1941"), takes places on December 1. The story of an Israeli violinist who comes after many years to Poland to play concert, and relives her war trauma and the loss of her family during the Holocaust, is based on a book by awarded Polish-born Israeli writer, Ida Fink, a Holocaust survivor herself.

2009 The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center, is established as a department of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. It grew from a project dating back to 1994 created by the Lauder Foundation. The Center, which helps Jews with Polish roots and Poles with Jewish roots explore their family heritage, assists in finding documentation, reconstructing family histories and reuniting lost family and friends. ›



The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

2009 The **Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institut**e (formerly the Jewish Historical Institute) is formally established by Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage at the initiative of JHI's director Dr. Eleonora Bergman.

2009 The Irena Sendler Memorial Award is established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture to honor Poles who contribute to the preservation of Jewish life and promote Jewish culture in Poland. Janusz Makuch, creator and director of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, is the first recipient. Future honorees will include Jan Jagielski, director of the Jewish Historical Institute's Historical Documentation Department, former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska, honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 2009, who worked with Irena Sendler, helping save Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto.

2009 Marek Edelman, deputy commander of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, veteran of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, well-known cardiologist and an active and important member of Solidarity, passes away in Warsaw and receives a state funeral in the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery with full military honors. A year earlier he is widowed by **Alina Margolis-Edelman**, also a Holocaust survivor and a veteran of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Although Marek Edelman decided not to leave Poland during the antisemitic campaign in 1968, Alina with their children was forced to migrate to France, where she was later involved, cooperating with Bernard Kouchner, in the *Doctors Without Borders* initiative and later the *Doctors of The World*, as well in providing help to political dissidents in Poland in 1970-80s. In 2011, an award named in her honor was established to recognize those who work to protect children.



Marek Edelman and Alina Margolis-Edelman

2009 Beit Kraków, a Reform congregation, is established in the city.

2009 The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture establishes the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Polish: *Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce*) in Warsaw.

2009 Ec Chaim, a progressive community, is opened in Warsaw under the auspices of the Jewish Community. Stas Wojciechowicz is selected as its rabbi.

2010 By 2010, rabbis, with the support of the Union of Polish Jewish Communities, Shavei Israel, and other organizations, serve communities in Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice, Łódź, and Wrocław. The rabbis, along with students from Warsaw's Kollel, provide

religious and spiritual outreach and Jewish learning opportunities in smaller communities, including Gdańsk and Lublin.

2010 The Yiddish Culture Center is opened in Warsaw by the Shalom Foundation, joining the Foundation's Open Jewish University and University of the Third Age.

2010 The Polish Association of Yiddish Studies is launched in Warsaw.



Inside the Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum in Kraków.

2010 A branch of the Kraków City Museum in the former **Schindler factory** opens in Kraków. The Museum documents the fate of the inhabitants of Kraków during the Nazi occupation with a special focus on the destruction of Jewish Kraków.

2010 The Second Generation Association, children of survivors, is created by and for Jews raised during the Communist period. This is the first initiative of its kind in Poland.

2010 A memorial service is held by the Jewish community in the Nożyk Synagogue for the Polish President Lech Kaczyński, First Lady and 94 other victims of the Smoleńsk plane crash of April 10, 2010.

2010 The Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków celebrates its 20th year with more than 25,000 attendees from all over the world.

2010 The Bauman family establishes the Janina Bauman Prize, for publishing a dissertation addressing an area of "significant ethical or moral relevance," which was the main area of interest of Janina Bauman, a Polish Jewish writer, and the wife of a one of the most important philosophers and sociologists of the latter half of the 20th century, Zygmunt Bauman. The Baumans were both Holocaust survivors who left Poland in 1968, settling eventually in Leeds, with part of their work focused on tracing connections between modernity and the Holocaust.

2012 The first March of Remembrance commemorating the July 22, 1942 deportations of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, is organized by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute with the walk starting at the Umschlagplatz and ending at the site of Janusz Korczak's *Dom Sierot* ("Orphans' House" in Polish).



Alina Szapocznikow

2012 An art exhibition titled "Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955–1972" opens at the New York's Museum of Modern Art contributing to rediscovery of sculptress' artist work. **Alina Szapocznikow** (born 1926 in Kalisz), a holocaust survivor of Pabianice and Litzmannstadt ghettos, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, and Theresienstadt, after the war studied at Parisian École Nationale Supérieure ›

des Beaux-Arts, becoming one of the leading European surrealism, *Nouveau réalisme*, and pop-art artists working mainly in bronze and stone.



POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

2013 The construction of **POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews** is completed. The building, designed by Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamäki and located next to the Ghetto Heroes' Monument in the heart of Warsaw's Muranów, is made accessible to the public.



The glass bimah in Chmielnik.

2013 The Museum & Educational Centre "Świętokrzyski Sztetl" is inaugurated in the town of Chmielnik, a former shtetl. Housed in the town's renovated synagogue, the center becomes famous for its **glass *bimah***, inspired by the 18th-century original platform that was destroyed during the war.

2013 The **70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** is widely commemorated by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, with a state ceremony held by the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes, during which the last surviving veterans of the uprising, **Simcha Rotem** and Havka Folman -Raban (d. 2016), give a memorable speech. Bells toll in the churches of Warsaw and ecumenical prayers are recited during the public commemoration.



Postage stamps commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.



Simcha Rotem (left) in 1943.

2013 On June 13, a renovated Jewish national exhibition prepared by the Yad Vashem Institute opens at Block 27 in the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. In the Polish capital, the **Jewish Community Center in Warsaw** is opened. Located in the center of the city, it is a project of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the Taube and Koret Foundations.

2013 The Makabi Warsaw Sport Club is officially relaunched by young Polish Jews after a 74-year-long hiatus. Makabi continues the pre-war tradition of the Makabi organization established in 1915 in Warsaw.

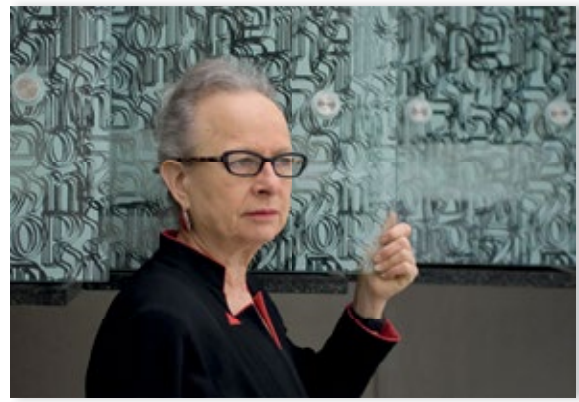


Jewish Community Center in Warsaw.

2014 The Ride for the Living, an annual fundraising event organized by the JCC Kraków under the patronage of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, is inaugurated. The 55-mile bicycle ride from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to the Kraków JCC follows the route of 10-year-old Auschwitz survivor Marcel Zieliński. After liberation by the Red Army, he walked all the way from the camp to Kraków in a search for his mother, with whom he reunited eventually in August 1945. The ride draws participants from Poland and around the world and the funds raised support Jewish life in Kraków.

2014 The Marek Edelman Center for Dialogue in Łódź opens in its permanent space in the Park of Survivors.

2014 The POLIN museum's Core Exhibition, created by a team led by chief curator **Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**, opens on October 28. It is funded by a unique public-private partnership among the Polish Government, the City of Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute Association and individual and institutional donors worldwide. The Museum will transmit, through state-of-the-art and virtual exhibits, the 1,000-year long history of Polish Jews. It quickly becomes a focal point on the map of contemporary Jewish Poland.



Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

2014 *Hashomer Hatzair* renews the activity of the group of Polish-Jewish teens.

2014 The director of the Taube Center, Helise Lieberman, is awarded the prestigious Bene Merito Medal "for a friend of Poland, in recognition for contributions made to the promotion and strengthening of the Republic of Poland on the international arena," by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The fellow honorees were Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and Executive Director of the JCC Kraków, Jonathan Ornstein.

2015 The Museum of Independence Traditions opens an exhibit and memorial at the former Radegast Station in Łódź commemorating the victims of Ghetto Litzmannstadt.

2015 **Władysław Bartoszewski**, prisoner of KL Auschwitz, soldier of the Home Army, activist of the Council to Aid Jews *Żegota*, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue, with ›

a special responsibility for the development of post-war Polish-German relations and contacts with the Jewish diaspora and Israel, dies in Warsaw at 93.



Władysław Bartoszewski

2015 Miriam Gonczarska of Poland is the first European woman who graduates from Yeshivat Maharat in New York and receives the title of *Maharat*.

2015 Margalit Kordowicz graduates from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and becomes the first Polish-born woman rabbi.

2015 The Upper Silesian Jews House of Remembrance is opened in the restored pre-burial house at the New Jewish Cemetery in Gliwice.

2016 On February 19, Samuel Willenberg, last survivor of the Treblinka prisoners' revolt, dies at 93. After participating in the heroic revolt and setting "hell on fire," Willenberg joined the Polish resistance and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the Germans, later becoming an artist in Israel after emigrating in 1950.

2016 The **Ulma Family Museum** of Poles Saving Jews in World War II is opened in Markowa by Polish president Andrzej Duda. During the German occupation, despite poverty and the threat of the death penalty, the Ulma family gave shelter to eight Jews beginning from late 1942 through March 1944. Turned in by a Polish policeman, Józef Ulma, his pregnant wife Wiktoria, and their eight children, together with the Jewish families Goldman and Szall whom they were hiding, were all executed by the German police. In 1995, Wiktoria and Józef Ulma are posthumously awarded the "Righteous Among the Nations" title.



The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa.

2016 Hillel International opens Hillel Warsaw. It is the first operation in Poland of Hillel International to better serve the needs of its growing Jewish population.

2016 The American Jewish Committee (AJC) opens an office in Warsaw that serves as their center for Central and East European countries.

2017 A Jewish student association in Kraków, "Gimel," named after the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet to represent the third post-war generation, re-opens as Hillel Kraków.

2017 The JCC Kraków opens "**Frajda**," the first post-1968 Jewish kindergarten in the city.



Children from „Frajda" kindergarten at the Krakow JCC's Taube Family Playground.



"What we were unable to shout out to the world" exhibition.

2017 The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw opens its new permanent exhibition "**What we were unable to shout out to the world**" which includes artifacts and selections from the Ringelblum Archives collected by the clandestine network *Oneg Shabbat*.

2018 The Polish Sejm passes an amendment to the bill establishing the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) that penalizes public accusation of Polish involvement in German Nazi crimes. The new legislation stirs much controversy internally and abroad, especially in the US and Israel, as its wording provides a legal platform for whitewashing any involvement of individual Poles in crimes against Jews during the war and attempts to quell any public discussion of the subject. After several months of international protests and the eruption of the largest crisis in Polish-Israeli relations in the post-1989 era, the section about punishment is removed from the controversial legislation.



Former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital

2018 Polish Ministry of Culture announces plan to create the Warsaw Ghetto Museum with an exhibition opening in 2023, on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After completion of renovation works, the museum will be housed in the former **Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital**, which in 1941-42 acted as one of the few medical facilities of the Warsaw Ghetto, and one of the very few buildings connected with its history to survive the war.

2018 A temporary exhibition entitled "Estranged. March'68 and Its Aftermath," about the 1968 student unrest, the infamous antisemitic campaign and the forced emigration of Jewish Poles that followed, opens at POLIN. It becomes the best attended temporary exhibition in the history of Polish museums and an important voice in the discussion about ›

what happened and the resulting repercussions in Polish-Jewish relations on the 50th anniversary of the events.

2018 Warsaw and Poland commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with guests coming from around the world to the Polish capital. Sirens are sounded across the city with a moment of silence in a similar manner to the annual commemoration of the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising of 1944 on August 1.

2018 The first Polish showing of "Who Will Write Our History?," a docudrama based on Dr. Samuel Kassow's book about the Oneg Shabbat group, takes place at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish to honor the anniversary of the ghetto uprising.

2018 In Kielce, on the 72th anniversary of the infamous pogrom, plaques are unveiled with names of the victims put in the pavement next to the building on Planty 7 where in 1946 the massacre took place. The plaques were installed at the initiative of the Jan Karski Society, founded in 2005 and headed by Bogdan Białek, a 2017 recipient of the Irena Sendler Award. The Society is devoted to combating racial, ethnic, and religious prejudices and is instrumental in honoring the memory of the tragic events of 1946 and in working on Polish-Jewish reconciliation.

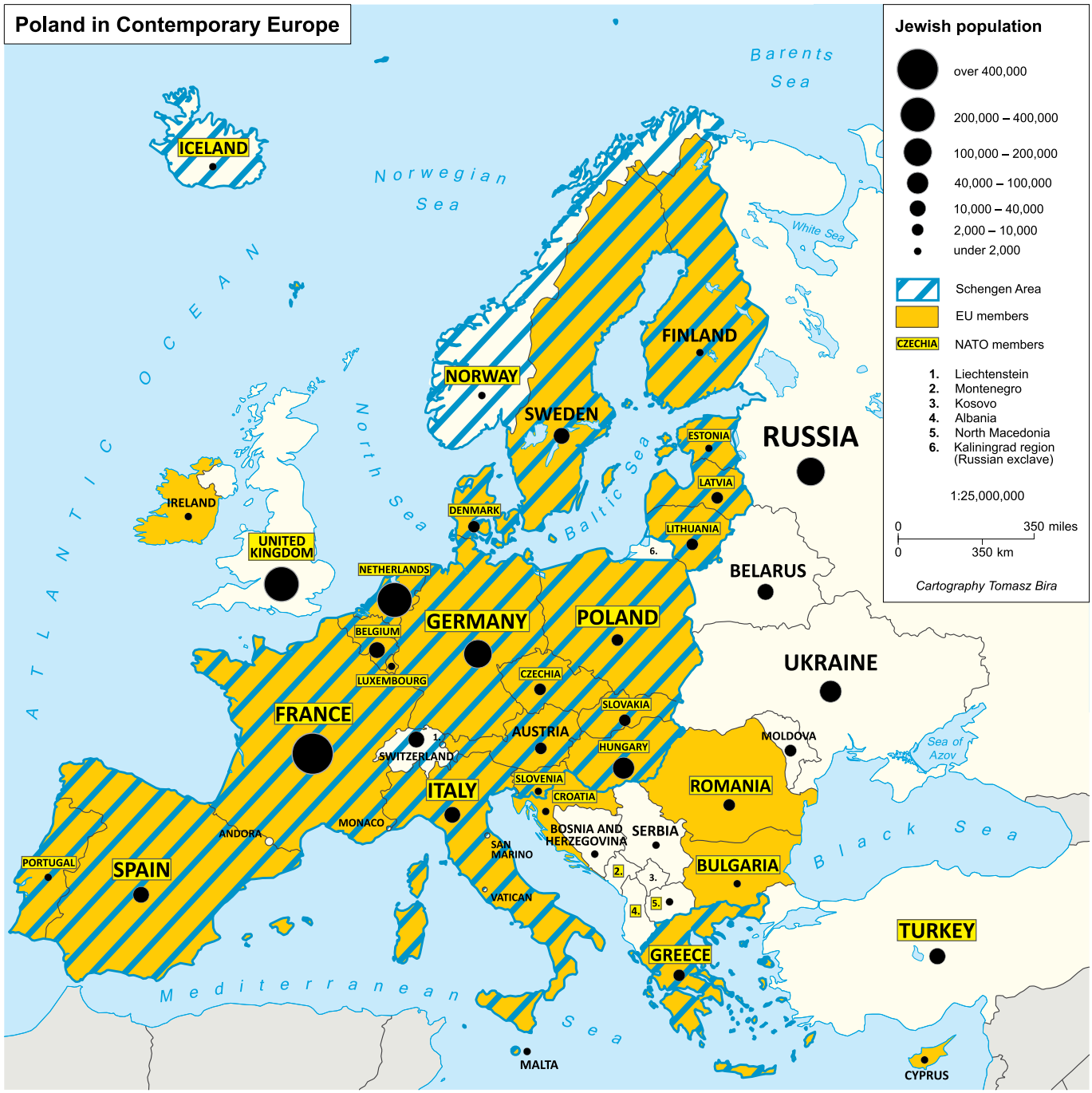
2018 The 38th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy is held in Warsaw. Hundreds of attendees come from around the world to partake in discussions, panels, and lectures about archives, research, and rediscovering family roots and communal Jewish heritage.

2018 The authorities of the City of Warsaw announce that the Jewish State Theater will have its new permanent space in the renovated tenement house of Majer Wolanowski at **14 Prożna Street**.



The former Majer Wolanowski's tenement at 14 Próżna Street.

2019 The Lauder-Morasha School declared it would launch a high school named after Zuzanna Ginczanka in the school year 2020/21, the first Jewish high school to open in Poland since 1968. «


Poland in Contemporary Europe
Jewish population
over 400,000
200,000 – 400,000
100,000 – 200,000
40,000 – 100,000
10,000 – 40,000
2,000 – 10,000
under 2,000
Schengen Area
EU members
CZECHIA
NATO members
1. Liechtenstein
2. Montenegro
3. Kosovo
4. Albania
5. North Macedonia
6. Kaliningrad region (Russian exclave)
1:25,000,000
0 350 miles
0 350 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira
Barents Sea
Norwegian Sea
White Sea
ATLANTIC OCEAN
North Sea
Baltic Sea
Black Sea
Sea of Azov
Mediterranean Sea
ICELAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
RUSSIA
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
BELARUS
IRELAND
DENMARK
UNITED KINGDOM
NETHERLANDS
BELGIUM
LUXEMBOURG
GERMANY
POLAND
UKRAINE
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
MOLDOVA
SWITZERLAND
SLOVENIA
CROATIA
ROMANIA
ITALY
MONACO
ANDORA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
SERBIA
SAN MARINO
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
BULGARIA
VATICAN
TURKEY
GREECE
MALTA
CYPRUS

Glossary of Terms, Phrases, and Organizations

Please note that there is no single, universal system for representing Hebrew and Yiddish words in English. The Glossary offers common spellings, which in some cases may differ from what you are accustomed to seeing.

Aram. = Aramaic Ger. = German
Heb. = Hebrew Pol. = Polish Yid. = Yiddish

AK. Armia Krajowa. (Pol. "Home Army"). An underground army in occupied Poland during World War II, loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London.

Ashkenazi. The term derives from a Hebrew name "Ashkenaz", a biblical figure mentioned in Genesis. Ashkenaz was later associated with a region where Jews lived in the Middle Ages along the Rhine River in parts of France and Germany, from where they had fled to the East to avoid growing persecution. Eastern Europe became the center where Ashkenazi life and culture of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish populations flourished in the lands of contemporary Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, until the outbreak of World War II. The Eastern European Jews constituted majority of the Holocaust victims. Survivors live now in Ashkenazi communities dispersed throughout the Jewish world.

Bimah (Heb.). Elevated platform inside the synagogue from which the Torah is read during prayers.

Bund (Yid. "league" or "union") or **Jewish Labor Bund.** Established in 1897, was a Jewish Socialist party active in Poland until 1948. The party promoted political, cultural and social autonomy of Jewish workers, fought antisemitism, and was generally opposed to Zionism, believing that Polish Jews belong into the Polish lands.

Cheder (Heb. "room"). Jewish religious elementary school.

Chevra Kadisha (Aram. "holy society"). A group of community members dedicated to the ritual preparation of bodies for burial according to Jewish tradition and to conducting funerals. It is one of the most important organizations of the kehillah.

Conservative. One of three main religious streams of contemporary Judaism. It began as a reaction to Reform Judaism. Among other characteristics, it affirms the divine inspiration of the Torah and the authority (if not immutability) of the body of Jewish law (see **halakhah**).

General Government (often abbreviated to **GG**). A separate administrative and territorial unit of Nazi Germany established by Adolf Hitler in the German occupied Polish territories not annexed directly into the Third Reich, after the conquest of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. It had its capital in Kraków and existed until the Soviets took Polish territories in 1944-1945

Gmina (Pol. "Community"). See: **kehillah**.

Haggadah (Heb. "telling"). A Jewish text that presents the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the haggadah at the Seder table is a fulfillment of commandment to retell the Jewish

liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus.

Kahal (Yid. "community"). See *kehillah*.

Halakhah (Heb.). The body of Jewish law as derived from the (written) Torah, debated in the Talmud (oral Torah), and codified by the rabbis; or a particular law drawn from these sources. Also the portions of the Talmud dealing with legal issues.

Hanukkah (Chanukah) (derived from the Heb. *Chanah*, "to dedicate") Eight-day festival starting on the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (usually December) to commemorate the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration and the Maccabean revolt (2nd century B.C.E.).

Hashomer Hatzair (Heb. "Young Guard"). Left-wing Zionist youth organization founded in 1913.

Hasidism. From hasid (Heb. "pious"). A religious movement started in Polish lands in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eleazar Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). Hasidism stressed joy, spirituality, and mysticism and denied that learning is the only way to God. Opposed bitterly throughout the 19th century by the mitnagdim, Hasidism developed into sects centered on spiritual teachers, known as tsaddikim (tsaddiks) or rebbeim, and their descendants. Today, the Hasidim and their erstwhile opponents constitute the two main branches of Orthodox Judaism. See **mitnagdim**.

Haskalah (Heb. "Enlightenment"). An assimilationist intellectual and social movement among Central European Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries that advocated the adoption of European culture, language and mores, while maintaining a Jewish identity. Its followers were called maskilim.

JCC. Jewish Community Center. Jewish communal institution that provides pluralistic social, cultural, and educational programs under one roof. Originating in the United States, the JCC model is becoming popular in Central Europe.

Judenrat (Ger. "Jewish Council"). The Jewish administrative body that the Nazis imposed on ghettos to implement their policies. Its authority was enforced, in part, by the Jewish Ghetto Police.

Kaddish (Aram.). The traditional prayer recited in memory of the dead in the presence of a minyan.

Kehillah (Heb. "community"). The organization regulating daily life in a Jewish community. A kehillah is generally governed by a board of elected and honorary officials who hire rabbis, conduct tribunals, maintain ritual baths, administer interest-free loans, provide social relief and kosher food, and supervise Jewish education. In Polish, the corresponding term is *Gmina* or *Gmina Żydowska*.

Lodzermensch (Yid. and Germ. "a man of Łódź"), was a popular term to describe the wealthiest and most successful manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and businessmen of the late 19th and early 20th century Łódź. Used as a pejorative or ironical epithet when referring to their ruthlessness, moral ambiguity, and pursue for power and money.

Maskil (Heb. "scholar," "follower of the Haskalah"), pl. **maskilim**.

Matzevah (Heb. "sacred pillar") Plural: matzevot. Jewish tombstone ritually marking a grave.

Menorah (Heb. "lamp"). Seven-branched candelabrum made of gold that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. Though a symbol of Judaism and an emblem of Israel, it is not used in Jewish ritual outside the Temple. The type of menorah used for Hanukkah (called a *hanukkiyah*) has eight main branches, plus the middle ninth lamp set apart, which is used to kindle the other lights.

Mezuzah (Heb. "doorpost"), plural, mezuzot. A crafted container, attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home, which encases a parchment bearing specific citations from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21). The verses include the biblical commandment to "affix these words to the doorposts of your home" (Deut. 6.9).

Midrash (Heb. "commentary" or "interpretation"). An interpretative commentary on the biblical texts. ›

Mikveh (Heb. "ritual bath"). A place for Jewish women and men (separately) to immerse themselves in water from a natural source to meet the requirements of ritual purity.

Minyan (Heb. "quorum"). The minimum number of Jews, 10, necessary for the recitation of certain prayers, including Kaddish (prayer for the deceased) and the public reading of Torah.

Mitnagdim (Heb. "opponents"). Adversaries of Hasidism who sought to maintain traditional rabbinic Judaism and were especially prevalent in Lithuania.

Oneg Shabbat (Heb. "Joy of the Sabbath"). The underground group of historians and researchers, led by Emanuel Ringelblum, established in the Warsaw Ghetto to document daily life. Its meetings were disguised as Sabbath observances, hence the name. The group's collections, found after the war and preserved at the Emanuel Ringleblum Jewish Historical Institute, are known as the Ringelblum Archives.

Orthodox. One of the three main streams of contemporary Judaism, based on the belief that the Torah is the literal word of God and halakhah is ever binding and cannot be changed (though it may be amended). Orthodoxy developed in response to the Haskalah's perceived threat to Jewish continuity.

Pesach (Heb. "Passover"). An eight-day festival starting on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan to commemorate the Exodus of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A confederation of Poland and Lithuania between 1569-1795, ruled by a common monarch who was both the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. It was one of the largest countries of 16th- and 17th-century Europe.

Rebbe (Yid. "rabbi"). Often used to designate a Hasidic leader.

Rebbetsin (Yid.). Wife of a rabbi.

Reform. One of the three main streams in contemporary Judaism. Reform arose in opposition to Orthodoxy and taught that Scripture, while possibly divinely inspired, is not the literal word of God, while halakhah is a human creation and has to adapt to changing times. Reform also stressed that Jews are a faith, not a people.

Seder (Heb. "order"). Ritual meal, including the retelling of the Exodus story, eaten during the first, and in the Diaspora second, eve of Pesach.

Sephardic (From Heb. *Sepharad*, lit. "Spain"). Usually denoting the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15th century. Many Sephardic Jews subsequently established new communities around the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere.

Sabbath (Heb.). Seventh day of the week, Saturday, observed by many Jews with special prayers, foods, rituals, and rest.

Shabbas, Shabbat. See **Sabbath**.

Shoah (Heb. "total destruction"). The Hebrew term for the Holocaust, used to designate the German Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II.

Shtetl (Yid. "small town"). A small town, which had a significant Jewish population or Jewish majority.

Solidarność (Pol. "Solidarity"). Polish trade union, founded in 1980 in opposition to the communist regime, was the first independent labor union in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc. By September 1981, it had about 10 million official members, which constituted over one third of the total working-age population of Poland. Forcibly suppressed by the Communist government in December 1981, it reemerged in 1989 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a Soviet-bloc nation since the 1940s.

Taglit-Birthright Israel. Non-profit organization providing trips to Israel for Jewish young adults around the world. Known also as Birthright Israel or simply Birthright.

Talmud (Heb. "learning"). According to tradition, Jews received a written and an oral Torah. The latter was eventually written down and redacted as the Mishnah. Commentaries were also compiled as the Gemara. Together they

make up the Talmud, in Babylonian and Jerusalem versions, which share the Mishnah but have different Gemaras.

Torah (Heb. "Instruction", "Teaching," or "Law") most specifically means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (hence also *Pentateuch* or five books of Moses). It is the most important religious text of Judaism.

TSKŻ. Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce (Pol. "Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland"). Founded in 1950 to ensure the development of Communist Yiddishist culture after all other Jewish organizations but the kehillah had been disbanded, it is currently the largest Jewish organization.

Umschlagplatz (Ger. "loading place"). The site at the northern edge of the Warsaw Ghetto near railway sidetracks and warehouses where Jews were loaded onto trains bound for the Treblinka death camp.

Va'ad Arba' Aratzot (Heb. "Council of the Four Lands"). A Jewish governing body (1580- 1764) that met to collect taxes to be paid to the royal treasury and to discuss other matters of importance to Polish Jewry. The four Lands were Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Ruthenia, and Volhynia. In 1623, the Jews of Lithuania established their own Va'ad.

Yad Vashem (Heb.). Israeli national institution located in Jerusalem that studies, documents, and exhibits the history of the Holocaust (Shoah). It also documents and publicly acknowledges the Righteous Among the Nations — Gentiles who, at great personal risk, saved Jews during World War II.

Yeshiva (Heb.), pl. **yeshivot**. Jewish religious secondary or higher educational institution.

Yiddish. An international Jewish vernacular, with a vocabulary based on medieval High German, Hebrew, and Slavic, and a grammar based largely on German, written in Hebrew characters with competing different spellings. It was the spoken language of Ashkenazi Jews. Enclaves of mainly Orthodox Yiddish speakers still exist in Jewish centers in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Yiddishkeit (Yid. "Jewishness"; "Jewish way of life"). A term referring to the "Jewish essence" of Ashkenazi Jews in general and the traditional Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern and Central Europe in particular. It can also refer to an emotional or cultural identification with the Jewish peoplehood.

Żegota. Polish codename for the Council to Aid the Jews. Established by the Polish underground in 1942, this joint organization of Jews and non-Jews from different political orientations was united by the common cause of saving Jews. Poland's Żegota was the only organization in all of Europe explicitly tasked with the rescue of Jews.

ŻIH. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Pol. "Jewish Historical Institute"). Established in Warsaw in 1947 to study the heritage and history of Polish Jewry and preserve its records and artifacts. Today called the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

Zionism (After *Zion*, *Tzion* or *Sion*, the Hebrew name for the Mount Temple in Jerusalem). A political and national movement established by an assimilated Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl in the late 19th century. It encouraged Jews to move to the land of Israel, where a form of Jewish collective self-government was to be organized. With the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, the primary objective of Zionism was fulfilled.

ŻOB. Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (Pol. "Jewish Fighting Organization"). Created by leftwing parties during 1942 in the Warsaw Ghetto, ŻOB was one of the two groups that participated in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, alongside ŻZW (see **ŻZW**).

ŻZW. Żydowski Żydowski Związek Wojskowy (Pol. "Jewish Military Union"). An underground fighting organization, established in the Warsaw Ghetto, connected politically with the Revisionist movement and the Betar. ŻZW was formed mostly from former Jewish officers of the prewar Polish Army; it maintained contact with and was supported by the Polish Underground (see **AK**). ŻZW was one of the two groups that participated in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, alongside ŻOB (see **ŻOB**). «

Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce) was established in Warsaw in 2009 with generous support from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture. The Taube Center is dedicated to enriching Jewish life in Poland and connecting Jews from around the world with their East European heritage, providing engaging educational experiences, including professional development programs, internships, educational heritage study tours, publications, and partnerships that extend throughout Poland and internationally. The Center contributes to Polish Jewish literacy, the development of leadership and Jewish institutions, and increases global Jewish engagement in a living Polish Jewish heritage.

The Taube Center's Educational Programs

In 2012, the Taube Center created **Mi Dor Le Dor** (Heb. from generation to generation), a nationwide program for young professionals and academics involved in the promotion and preservation of tangible and intangible Polish Jewish heritage. With support from the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe and Taube Philanthropies, the program, which concluded in 2016, graduated four cohorts. The graduates currently work for various partner organizations, among them the POLIN Museum and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and the JCCs in Warsaw and Krakow. The Taube Center is currently planning to model the program for other European Jewish communities.

The Taube Center responded to a growing demand for targeted professional development programs in Polish, specifically designed for Polish Jewish communities and drawing on local experts, by launching **Yerusha** (Heb. inheritance) in 2019. The two-semester program is funded in part by a grant from the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. The cohorts represent Jewish organizations and institutions from around the country.

The **Exploring Poland/Polin Heritage Study Tour** (2014-2016), supported by a grant from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Senate, was a heritage education program that brought American university students of Polish and Polish Jewish descent to Poland. It was a unique opportunity to explore Polish history, rediscover the country and their shared heritage, and strengthen the participants' identities through connection with their Polish roots.

The Taube Center offers up to three one-month **Libitzky Family Foundation Internships** each year for undergraduates and post-graduates from the United States with a special interest in Polish Jewish history, heritage, culture, and tradition. The one-month program can be scheduled according to the candidate's academic or work schedule.

Taube Center Publications

The Taube Center's **Sefarim Book Publishing Project** provides support for the writing, translation, and publication of non-fiction works in Polish Jewish studies, making them accessible to academia and the wider Polish public. The Project, initially supported by grants from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, provides seed grants for high-caliber works of Polish Jewish interest that reflect a broad range of issues and contribute to the field of Polish Jewish studies for domestic and international readers.

Through its own signature publications — *Field Guide to Jewish Łódź; Field Guide to Jewish Warsaw & Kraków; Deep Roots, New Branches: Personal Essays on the Rebirth of Jewish Life in Poland Since 1989; and A Timeline: 1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland* — the Taube Center provides resources that enrich an understanding of Jewish Poland, past and present, from both historical and personal perspectives. The materials can be used by individuals and groups in both field and formal settings. Future Field Guides will include Lublin, Częstochowa, and Wrocław. «

For more information, please visit: www.centrumtaubego.org.pl



TAUBE JEWISH HERITAGE TOURS

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours (TJHT), the flagship program of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, invites people from around the world to explore Polish Jewish culture and to connect with the country's enduring Jewish legacy, which has shaped modern-day Israeli and American Jewish societies and permeated all facets of Western culture. Taube Jewish Heritage Tours is committed to strengthening the bonds between Poland and Jewish communities worldwide.

The mission-driven, on-the-ground Jewish educational tour program designs customized journeys for families, community organizations, students and faculty, VIP delegations, and individuals from the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and Europe. The TJHT professional team of academics, guides, educators, and community leaders provides meaningful and participatory explorations of Poland's multicultural landscape, infusing each encounter with illuminating personal stories and insights from those engaged in Polish Jewish life and committed to the preservation of Polish Jewish heritage.

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours offers:

- TJHT's full-service operation oversees travel logistics, offers special rates at five- and four-star hotels, and partners with land providers in the U.S. and Israel.
- TJHT guides are scholars and educators who have been trained to present Poland's multicultural narratives in stimulating, informative tours and workshops.
- TJHT tours are available in English, Hebrew, French, German, and Spanish. ›

» TJHT provides orientation programs and educational resources in advance of the journey, as well as post-tour opportunities to remain connected.

» TJHT works with an array of partner institutions in the United States, Israel and Poland, as well as in Europe.

» TJHT has extensive experience in organizing educational and community group tours, family genealogy excursions, and VIP delegations and can work with groups of all sizes, types, and ages.

Revenue from the nonprofit Taube Jewish Heritage Tours supports publications, educational programs, and cultural and public events that enrich Jewish communal life, promote civil society, ensure the continued transmission of Polish Jewish history, and strengthen connections among Poles, Polish Jews, and Jews from around the world.

TJHTalks, with an international reach, is the Taube Center's newest educational heritage program. This series of ZOOM-based conversations about Polish Jewry and global Jewish concerns features world-renowned scholars, authors, and journalists, and community leaders who contribute to the Taube Jewish Heritage Tour program. The program brings an array of topics to a worldwide audience, exploring both the past and the present, and engaging our participants in contemporary Polish Jewish life. «

For more information about TJHT, please visit:
www.taubejewishheritagetours.com



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BACK COVER PHOTOS
(from left to right)

First Row

Julian Tuwim by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz • Emanuel Ringelblum, Icyk Manger, and Rachela Auerbach • King Kazimierz III the Great from Artur Szyk's *Statute of Kalisz* • Rabbi Baruch Steinberg speaking in front of the Warsaw's Great Synagogue during the memorial roll call organized by the Union of Jewish Participants in the Fights for Polish Independence in 1924

Second Row

Post stamp with the logo of ŻKS Makkabi Kraków issued before 1918 • Ride of the Living 2018 participants reaching the finish-line at JCC Krakow

Third Row

Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

Fourth Row

The synagogue in Narowla (Naroulia) by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz • Works on recreation of Gwoździec's synagogue ceiling paintings displayed in the POLIN Museum • Icchok Lejbusz Perec (Isaac Leib Peretz) by Władysław Wajntraub • POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews










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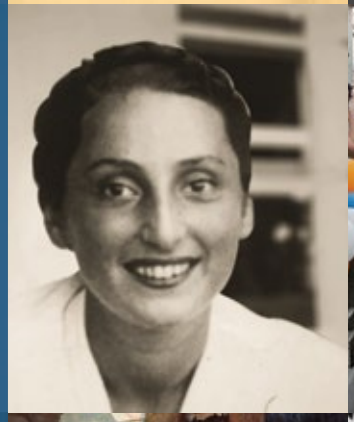
1,000 Years *of* Jewish Life in Poland

A TIMELINE

















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Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur* by Maurycy Gottlieb • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

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1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland

Published by the
Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

FUNDACJA CENTRUM TAUBEGO ODNOWY ŻYCIA ŻYDOWSKIEGO W POLSCE
TAUBE CENTER FOR THE RENEWAL OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND FOUNDATION

with the support of the
Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

TAUBE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH LIFE & CULTURE

and the
Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area

Categorically Jewish, distinctly Polish: Polish Jewry was authentically and intimately linked to the Jewish past as well as interconnected with contemporary Jewry over the world over. It was also leavened with characteristically Polish features.

- Moshe Rosman

Dear Readers:

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation is pleased to present you with this new, third edition of one of our primary publications, *1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland*: *A Timeline*.

This new edition offers you an opportunity to explore a millennium of the Polish Jewish experience: From the first appearance of Jewish merchants at the time of the creation of the Polish state in the 10th century, through the 16th century's Golden Age and Jewish communal autonomy, 123 years of a partitioned Poland, on to the transition into modernity and the rebirth of a free Poland in 1918, World War II and the tragedy of the Holocaust, decades of Communist rule, all the way through today's revival of Jewish life in Poland.

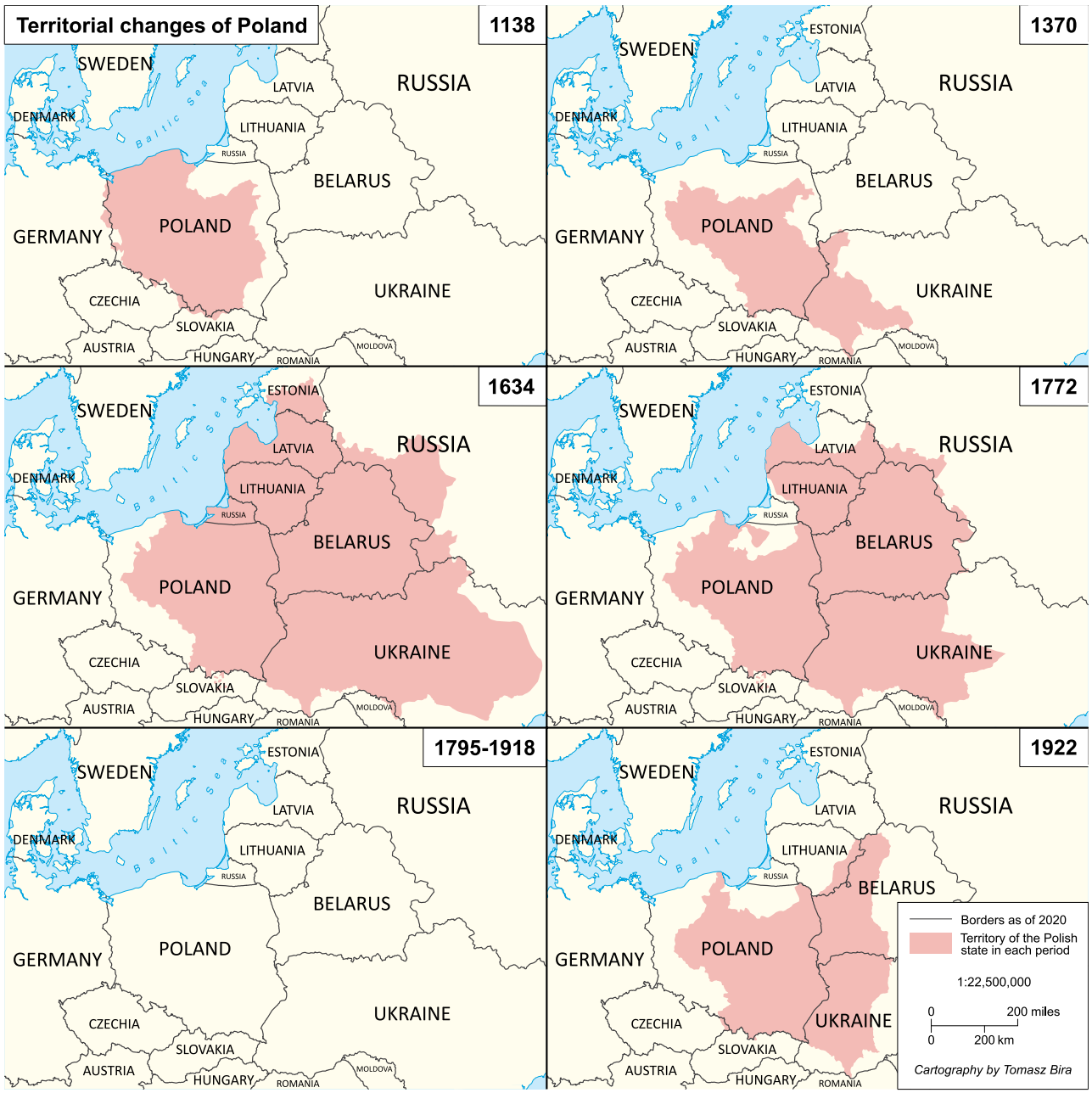
It is said that there is no Polish history without Jewish history and there is no Jewish history without Polish history. We have, therefore, maintained an integrated balance, introducing major events, trends, and historical figures that have contributed to the diversity of Polish Jewish culture, tradition, and politics and left a lasting impact on the Ashkenazi Jewish world.

To more fully appreciate the development of Polish Jewish life over almost 1,000 years, we have enriched this edition with illustrations and maps, bringing the Timeline to life and placing the historiography in a clear geographical context. With the first two maps on the pages to follow, we demonstrate the instability of Poland's borders and perception of what are or were "Polish lands" throughout history. This factor has had a significant impact on how Jews identified with Poland as their homeland, trends in Jewish religious observance and cultural expression, and the shaping of Polish nationhood, memory, and the country's role in contemporary Europe.

Engagement in Jewish life was not monolithic. Jews reflected the politics and social norms of the day, especially after the move into modernity in the 19th century, when the more cloistered life of the small town, often referred to as a shtetl, gave way to the challenges and opportunities of urban life and mobility. Poland's Jewry produced unique religious and social movements, among them Hasidism and Bundism, which brought Jews into national politics and divided the religious world. Although records of women's contributions appear already in the Middle Ages, it is not until the end of the 19th century that women begin to assume a more recognized and equal position in Polish society. As we sought greater gender parity in presenting this historical narrative, many under-acknowledged women have been included in this new edition.

We hope that you will find this publication enlightening and that it will encourage you to visit and learn more.

The Editorial Board


Territorial changes of Poland
1138
1370
1634
1772
1795-1918
1922
SWEDEN
DENMARK
GERMANY
POLAND
RUSSIA
BELARUS
UKRAINE
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
ESTONIA
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
MOLDOVA
Baltic Sea
Borders as of 2020
Territory of the Polish state in each period
1:22,500,000
0 200 miles
0 200 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira


Historical Regions in Polish and Adjacent Lands
Baltic Sea
Livonia
Courland
Semigallia
Samogitia
Lithuania
White Ruthenia
Prussia
Sudovia
Pomerania
Kuyavia
Podlachia
Black Ruthenia
Polesia
Severia
Left-bank Ukraine
Greater Poland
Mazovia
Lesser Poland
Silesia
Volhynia
Right-bank Ukraine
Red Ruthenia
Podolia
Zaporizhia
Msta
Volga
Oka
Daugava
Neris
Nemen
Berezina
Dniepr
Sozh
Desna
Seym
Pripyat
Psel
Bug
Vistula
Warta
Oder
Elbe
Danube
Tisza
Mures
Siret
Prut
Dniester
Donets
Inhulets
Goryn
Sluch
Boh
Sea of Azov
Black Sea
Borders of contemporary Poland
Carpathian Mountains
Sudety Mountains
Pripyat Marshes
1:9,500,000
0
150 miles
0
150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

I. POLIN: JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN POLAND 965-1569

The Polish state was formed out of territories of several Lechitic (West Slavic) tribes during the course of the 10th century by local dynasty – the Piasts. The most formative events of the Polish state were the Christianization of Poland in 966 (in the Western, Latin rite) and the establishment of the Polish Kingdom in 1025. From its very beginnings Jews were present in Polish history, first as travelers and merchants crossing the Polish lands, and later as settlers. Already by the 11th century, Jews were recorded as living in Gniezno, the capital at the time. The turbu-

lent period of the Crusades sparked anti-Jewish riots in the Rhineland prompting the first large wave of Jewish migrants to come into Polish lands. Jews were welcomed here, served as middlemen, fostered commerce and trade, and brought administrative innovations and technical novelties from the West. When the last king of the Piast dynasty, Kazimierz the Great, died in 1370, the Jewish community in Poland was already

965 A Sephardic Jewish merchant from Moorish Spain, Ibrahim ibn Yakub, travels to Slavic lands in Central Europe and writes the first descriptions of the Polish state.

During the 11th-13th centuries, Jewish merchants and artisans settle in Poland with the first big wave of migration mentioned by the chronicler, Cosmas of Prague coming around 1100. Persecuted and expelled from Western Europe in the times of the Crusades, Jews find refuge and a safe haven in Poland under the benevolent reign of the Piast dynasty.



Early Polish coin with Hebrew

Early **Polish coins** are minted during the reign of Duke Mieszko III the Old. Some bear Hebrew-character inscriptions in Knaanic (an extinct Judeo-Slavic
1237 language), as the mint masters are Jews.

The Jewish settlement in the city of Płock is the first



Illuminated illustration by Arthur Szyk, inspired by the Statute of Kalisz.

1264 to be mentioned in written records.

The **Statute of Kalisz** is issued by Duke Bolesław the Pious. The Statute, a general charter of Jewish liberties in Poland, establishes a legal foundation for a Jewish presence in Poland. Subsequently, Jews are granted special status subject directly to the king or the duke and are excluded from municipal jurisdiction. Jews assume positions in commercial and economic life, becoming merchants,
1267 money lenders, tax collectors, and innkeepers.

The Catholic Council of Wrocław, the capital city of the province of Silesia, creates a segregated Jewish district. Jews are ordered to wear special emblems and are banned from holding public offices higher than those held by Christians. While these mea-
1285 sures prove largely ineffective, they are repeated in subsequent years.

The first recorded mention of a *kahal* ("community" in Hebrew) in the city of Kalisz. The *kahal* collects



Kazimierz the Great visiting Esther (painting by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, 1870).

taxes, oversees communal services, enforces Jewish law and is responsible for the education and social welfare of its members.

King **Kazimierz the Great** extends the Statute of Kalisz throughout Poland and broadens Jewish privileges. According to medieval chronicler Jan Długosz, the king had a love affair with a Jewish woman named **Esther** (Polish: *Esterka*). This legend will reverberate through Polish folklore over the ages.

Waves of migrations from Western Europe bring more Jews to Poland after a plague – known as the Black Death – for which the Jews are blamed. Anti-Jewish riots are perpetrated in Silesia and later in Poznań and Kraków.

A Jew from Olkusz named Lewko, a personal banker and financier of King Kazimierz, is entrusted with administration of the saltworks in Wieliczka and Bochnia, among the primary sources of royal income. Lewko also oversees the royal mint.

Between the 11th and 16th centuries, Jews from communities along the Rhine in Germany, known in Hebrew as *Ashkenaz*, migrate east, settling in today's Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. In the Polish lands, some of them serve the king, as well as members of the Polish aristocracy, as tax collectors, becoming merchants and innkeepers. They bring with them Jewish religious practices and political and commercial experience, as well as Yiddish, a German-based language with a Hebrew component, written in Hebrew letters. Yiddish, with its geographical nuances and range of dialects, becomes the

1385 *lingua franca* among Ashkenazic Jews in Eastern Europe. Yiddish will preserve the richness and vibrancy of Eastern European Jewish culture and heritage, despite many shifts in national borders and changes in political regimes.

The Kingdom of Poland forms a personal union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania through the marriage



The Old Synagogue in Kraków.

1407 of Poland's Queen regnant Jadwiga to Władysław Jagiełło (Lithuanian: *Jogaila*), the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The descendants of Jagiełło, members of the Jagiellonian dynasty, will rule over Poland and Lithuania until 1572. In 1388, Jagiełło extends the provisions of the Statute of Kalisz to all the lands of the Grand Duchy.
Anti-Jewish riots in Kraków, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. Jews, for the first time, are expelled from the city. They start to settle in Kazimierz, a separate town located outside the city walls of Kraków. The construction of the **Old Synagogue** (Polish: *Stara Synagoga*) on Szeroka Street begins.

Documentation confirms that Jews first lived in Warsaw, between Wąski Dunaj and Piekarska Streets, in Warsaw's Old Town, with a synagogue on the corner

1495 of Jewish (Polish: *Żydowska*) and Dunaj Streets. The community numbered approximately 120.

Jews, expelled from Warsaw, are permitted to live outside the city limits. The expulsion order, although largely ineffective, is nevertheless repeated in subsequent years.



Kazimierz (left) and Kraków (right) according to Hartmann Schedel's „Nuremberg Chronicle" from 1493.

1504 Jews are expelled again from Kraków. The capital is granted the royal privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* ("to not tolerate Jews" in Latin). King Jan Olbracht designates a Jewish inhabited part of **Kazimierz**, as *Oppidum Judaeorum* ("Jewish Town" in Latin), an official settlement for Jews, with the parallel right de non *tolerandis Christianis* ("to not tolerate Christians" in Latin).

1509 King Alexander I Jagiellon allows his court Jew, Rachela Fiszel, to buy a property and settle in Krakow. Rachela, a widow to Jewish banker Moses Fiszel, became the banker of four subsequent Polish kings, for her loyal services to the crown, she was given exemption from the ban on settlement for Jews in Krakow restricting them to reside in the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz. Rachela, an important

1525 figure in the Jewish community, was instrumental in establishing Jacob Polak, her son-in-law, as the rabbi of Krakow.



Michał Ezofowicz (engraving by Michał Elwiro Andriolli, 1879).

1527 Rabbi Jacob Polak sets up a yeshiva ("Talmudic

1534 academy" in Hebrew) in Kraków, which introduces the methodology of *pilpul* ("sharp analysis" in Hebrew), which becomes the standard method of



Katarzyna Weigel being burned at the stake (drawing by Jan Matejko, 1859).

1539 Talmudic and Jewish textual studies in the Ashkenazic world.

King Zygmunt I for the first and only time knights a Jew, **Michał Ezofowicz,** without requiring his conversion. Jewish converts to Catholicism, until the partitions of Poland, were usually granted noble status.
Jews are again expelled from Warsaw, after the Duchy of Mazovia is re-incorporated into the Polish Kingdom.
The first book printed in Yiddish in Poland, a biblical concordance by Rabbi Asher Anshel, is published in



Prewar panoramic view of the Jewish district of Lublin.

1541 Kraków.
On April 19 **Katarzyna Weigel** (nee Zalasowska), an alderman's widow from Krakow is burned at the stake at the age of 80 (after ten years of imprisonment) under the charges of apostasy and conversion to Judaism, when she refused to recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Weigel was involved in the sectar-



Page of an early Hebrew text printed in Poland.

ian protestant movement, known as Judaizers, who endorsed adopting Jewish law and customs based on the Old Testament as a base for the reform of Christianity. They were especially active in Lublin and eastern parts of Polish and Lithuanian lands.

II. THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN

During the first century of the Commonwealth, often referred to as the Paradisus Judaeorum ("Jews' Paradise" in Latin) or the Golden Age, Jewish life in Poland flourishes.

The overwhelming majority of Ashkenazic Jewry live in the Polish and Lithuanian lands, now forming the center of the Ashkenazic Jewish world. Granted relative autonomy, Jewish communities enjoy economic growth and stability. Jewish culture thrives with the opening of Talmudic academies and centers of learning, as well as a proliferation of Jewish literature, secular and religious. Tensions between the king and the nobility, however, provoke instability, with many parties vying for power. Embroiled in wars with Sweden, Russia, and Turkey, the Commonwealth begins to deteriorate. Growing poverty and discontent give rise to


Conflicts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-17th century
Territories occupied by:
Khmelnytsky Uprising 1648-1654
Muscovite Invasion 1654-1667
The Swedish Deluge 1655-1660
Directions of movement:
Cossack armies
Russian armies
Swedish armies
Important centers of Jewish life
Va'ad Arba Aratzot Meeting Site
Fiefs of Poland-Lithuania
1:9,000,000
0 150 miles
0 150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
TSARDOM (RUSSIA) OF MUSCOVY
KINGDOM OF DENMARK
HABSBURG EMPIRE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Baltic Sea
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Dorpat
Pskov
Riga
Duchy of Courland
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Grand Duchy of Lithuania
Kovno
VILNA
(Capital of the Grand Duchy)
Königsberg
Gdańsk
Elbląg
Duchy of Prussia
ELECTORATE OF BRANDENBURG
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
Navahrudak
Rahachow
Tykocin
Łomża
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Płock
Gomel
Kingdom of Poland
Poznań
WARSAW
(Royal capital after 1596)
Brest
Pinsk
Czernihów
Kalisz
Owrucz
Lublin
Breslau
Częstochowa
Zamość
Łuck
Żytomierz
Kiev
Połtawa
Oppeln
Pińczów
KRAKOW
(Royal capital until 1596)
Tarnów
Jarosław
Lwów
Przemyśl
Kamieniec Podolski
Bracław
VIENNA
Kassa
Buda
Pest
Vistula
Warta
Oder
Bug
Sluch
Dniester
Dnieper
Pripyat
Berezina
Desna
Sozh
Oka
Donets
Psel
Sejm
Vistula
Boh
Prut
Tisza
Danube

1569 The Union of Lublin creates the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, also known as the Republic of the Two Nations, with a unified federal system and an elective monarchy. It is one of Europe's major political and cultural powers.

Warsaw obtains the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis,* which remains in force almost until the end of 18th century. Jews are forbidden to settle within two miles of the city limits, except when the Sejm (Polish term for the Polish Parliament) is in session.



Rabbi Moses Isserles matzeva in Kraków's Remuh cemetery.

Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as the ReMa (or Remuh) and author of the "Mapa" ("Tablecloth" in Hebrew), the fundamental Ashkenazic commentary on the Sephardic "Shulchan Aruch" ("Set Table" in Hebrew), dies in Kraków. The "Shulchan Aruch" is the fundamental codex of *halakhah*, Jewish law, and is still considered authoritative. His grave is in the Kazimierz district of Kraków in the cemetery adjoining the synagogue that bears his name. Recently renovated, the synagogue continues to
1576 serve Kraków's Jewish community.

King **Stephen Báthory** issues decrees forbidding blood-libel accusations, effectively preventing such trials during his lifetime. They will resume, however, after his death in 1586.

From the late 16th to the mid-18th century, Polish Jews were governed by the *Va'ad Arba' Aratzot* ("Council of the Four Lands" in Hebrew): Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Lithuania, and Ruthenia. The Va'ad's primary function was to levy and collect taxes among Jewish communities. The Council, made up of delegates from the different Jewish communities and recognized



King Stephen Báthory (painting by Martin Kober)

by the king, becomes the central body of Jewish
1580 self-government, the only institution of its kind in the history of the Jewish Diaspora.

1587 The first session of the Va'ad Arba' Aratzot is held in Lublin.

According to popular legend, after King Stephen Báthory's death, his "court Jew" Saul Wahl (actual-
1588 ly Saul Katzenellenbogen, 1541-1617) is elected king of Poland for one night until the procedure for electing a new king is put into place.

The first Jewish community in **Zamość** is established by Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean Basin



The synagogue in Zamość built in 1610s.

1609 (originally from Spain and Portugal). By the 17th century, with migrations from Western Europe, Ashkenazic Jews become the majority. Zamość's Jewish character will later again be transformed, reflecting the influences of the *Haskalah* ("enlightenment" in Hebrew).

"Meynekes Rivke" ("Rebecca's Nursemaid" in Yiddish), an erudite work by Rivke Tiktiner of Tykocin is
1618 a guide for married Jewish women and is published posthumously in Prague. Her work, the first known publication in Yiddish by a woman in Poland, will be re-published in Kraków in 1618.

The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) brings the last major wave of Jewish refugees from Western Europe to Polish lands.

1623 "Tzena U-Rena" ("Go Out and See" in Hebrew), a commentary on the Pentateuch for women written by Rabbi Yaakov Ashkenazi and one of the most important works in Yiddish to date, is published in Kraków and Lublin.

1632

The Va'ad of Lithuania is established as a separate entity from the Va'ad of the lands of the Crown
1648 Lands of the Kingdom of Poland, to administrate issues of Lithuanian Jewry.

King Władysław IV Wasa of Poland forbids anti-Jewish books and publications.

Bohdan Chmielnicki (Ukrainian: *Bohdan Khmelnytsky*), a Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Orthodox Christian petty nobleman rebels against the magnates ruling the Ukrainian lands that belong to the Polish Kingdom. He leads Zaporizhian Cossacks and the local Orthodox Christian peasantry in an uprising against Polish or Polonized gentry, the Jesuits, and the Jews. Tens of thousands of
1654 Jews and Catholics fall victim to the massacres. Many Jews were sold into Turkish and Tatar slavery and were later ransomed by a multinational fundraising campaign for *pidyon shvuyim* ("redeeming the captives" in Hebrew) among Jewish communities throughout the Four Lands and reaching as far as Amsterdam.

The Khmelnytsky Uprising ends with Muscovite intervention and the subsequent war with the Tsardom of Muscovy (1654-67) that brings destruction to the



Swedish troops pillaging Polish village (painting by Henryk Pilatti)

1655 eastern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the decline of its influence and the rise of Russia as the main power in the east of Europe. The Jews are expelled from Russian-conquered Kiev in 1654 (the ban will be lifted in 1793). The next year in Wilno (Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), the Tsar's forces massacre tho-

usands of civilians, with Russian Cossacks destroying the Jewish district and killing most of its inhabitants.
The Khmelnytsky Uprising and the war with Muscovy prompts the Swedish king to invade Poland. The destructive war with Sweden, known as the "**Swedish Deluge**," lasts until 1660 and ravages the western part of the Commonwealth. The war brings pogroms, as Jews are occasionally accused of being in complicity with the enemy.

In the second half of the 17th century, Jewish communities, in spite of being shaken by the ferocity of the attacks and crippled by the heavy loss of life and property, move to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible when the period of destructive wars and wartime-associated epidemics is over. Although the destruction and massacres, first and foremost those perpetrated by Khmelnytsky's forces, are remembered by Polish Jews as the *Gezerah* (the "Evil Decree" or "Catastrophe" in Hebrew), they mark the end of the golden age not only for the history of Polish Jews but for the overall history of Poland as well.

The Polish Va'ad condemns Shabbetai Tzvi, the false messiah from Ottoman Turkey. His activities, which attract many of those who survived Khmelnytsky's atrocities, will influence Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a Polish-born false messiah preaching against the Talmud and claiming to be Shabbetai Tzvi's successor.

The 18th century sees the birth of the Hasidic movement, founded by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov. While its tenets are embraced by many in the Ukraine and Central Poland, it is criticized by the *Mitnagdim* ("opponents" in Hebrew) as being incompatible with traditional rabbinic Judaism. These tensions create new frictions and factions within the growing Jewish world. At the same time, the Commonwealth slowly turns into a failed state, with flawed government and a weak army, a country torn apart by the private interests of powerful magnates. Growing intolerance and Catholic bigotry increase religious tensions. By mid-century, the Commonwealth becomes a de facto Russian protectorate.



Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's synagogue in Medzhybizh, Ukraine, destroyed by the Germans in 1941.

1720 **Israel Ba'al Shem Tov**, known as the Besht, is born in Okopy in southeastern Poland (now in Western Ukraine). Hasidism, stressing spontaneity over observance and spirituality over learning, represented a direct challenge to the Jewish religious and communal establishments.

1749 A blood libel accusation and the resulting trial of members of the Jewish community in Sandomierz, end with expulsion of the city's Jews in 1712 at the order of King August II and the execution of several of the accused the following year.

The Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, is born (d. 1797). Although he held no official

1757 position, he was regarded as the spiritual leader of the Mitnagdim. The Mitnagdim reaffirmed study, ritual observance and *halakhah* as the cornerstones of Jewish life.

Polish aristocrat Count Walentyn Potocki, after converting to Judaism, is allegedly burned at the stake in Wilno for renouncing Catholicism. The story of Potocki, known among Jews as Abraham ben Abra-
1758 ham or *Ger Tzedek* ("righteous proselyte" in Hebrew), has not been confirmed in historical sources so far, but became a popular Jewish legend about a representant of one of the wealthiest and most powerful magnate families of the Commonwealth voluntarily
1759 choosing to become an observant Jew.
The Bishop of Kamieniec in Podolia (now Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine), Mikołaj Dembowski, instigates



Szmul Zbytkower (fragment of a painting by Bernardo Belloto)

1760 a debate between Jacob Frank's followers and Orthodox rabbis, counting on conversion of the schismatics to Catholicism. The debate in front of the consistory court ends with the Frankists being condemned and declared accursed by the rabbis. In reprisal, the burning of the Talmud is ordered by the court.

The Polish Va'ad sends an emissary to Pope Bene-
dict XIV with a petition from Polish Jews asking for protection against multiplying accusations of ritual murder. The Pope condemns the accusations. The
1764 last blood libel trial takes place in Olkusz in 1787.

An estimated 500 Jewish families, followers of Jacob Frank, convert to Catholicism and join the ranks of the Polish nobility.

Warsaw's east bank suburb of Praga, which will become a district of the city in the 19th century, is exempted from the *de non tolerandis Judaeis* law. The Praga Jewish community develops as a center of commer-
1768 ce and Jewish life, largely due to the efforts of **Joseph Samuel Sonnenberg,** commonly called Szmul Zbytkower, a merchant and developer, and protégé of the last Polish king Stanisław August. Szmul Zbytkower and his wife Judyta contribute toward building of the communal synagogue and the Jewish Cemetery in Praga's neighborhood of Bródno.

The Commonwealth's Parliament (Sejm) abolishes the Va'ads on the grounds that they are no longer capable of collecting taxes effectively. With the abolition of the Va'ads, a census of the Jewish population is taken. According to the figures, there were 748,968 Jews over a year old in Poland-Lithuania: 548,777 in
1768 Poland and 201,191 in Lithuania. It is estimated that at least 20% of Jews, afraid that the results would lead to heavier taxation, do not participate.

The de facto Russian protectorate over the Commonwealth combined with tensions between traditionalist nobility and the reformist king Stanisław August, supported by his political allies, the Czartoryski family, spark a nobles' revolt known as the Bar Confederation and a subsequent civil war in the Com-
1772 monwealth. The rebellious nobles claim to defend internal and external independence, the Catholic

faith, and patriotic values, accusing the king of being a Russian puppet. Fighting ends after four years, with Russian military intervention, leaving the Commonwealth extremely weakened. The civil war provides the surrounding powers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with a pretext for partitioning the Commonwealth to eradicate what they call "the Polish anarchy."

1790

Simultaneously to the Bar Confederation, during the so-called *Koliyivshchina* rebellion, provoked by Russia, thousands of Jews, Catholic Poles, and Ukrainian Uniates are massacred in the city of Humań (now Uman' in Ukraine) by Cossack rebels, known as haidamaks. The rebellion spreads across the Ukraine. After claiming at least 100,000 Catholic, Uniate and Jewish victims, it is suppressed by intervening Russian troops.

1791 The first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Austrian Habsburg monarchy.
The Vilna Gaon puts Hasidim in herem (Hebrew for "the ban"; describes an exclusion from the community). The conflict intensifies between the Mitnagdim and Hasidim.

1791 Death of Leah Horowitz (born ca. 1720) from Bolechów (now Bolekhiv, in Ukraine), the author of „Tkhinne imohes" (Supplication of the Matriarchs), an eight-page, trilingual prayer for the Sabbath before the New Moon for women. Leah, a rabbinic and kabbalistic scholar born into a famous rabbinical family and daughter of the Rabbi of Brody, one of the most important centers of Jewish life in the Commonwealth, wrote her work in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish showing great erudite skills, praised by her contemporaries. She was also strongly promoting women's participation in daily prayers, as well in Halachic and Talmudic studies.

1792

1793

On May 3rd, Poland becomes the first European country with a modern codified constitution in an attempt to reform and save the country from further partitioning by aggressive neighboring monarchies. One of the bills following the new constitution passed by the Sejm in 1792 grants Jews personal inviolability.

1794

Empress Catherine the Great of Russia establishes



Berek Joselewicz (painting by Juliusz Kossak)

the Pale of Settlement, restricting Jewish settlement in the Russian Empire to the lands that were annexed by Russia in the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Pale includes parts of present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Jews in the Russian Empire, with very few exceptions, are forbidden to reside outside the Pale's borders.

1794

1795

Russia starts a war with the Commonwealth, as reforms in Poland endanger its domination over the country. The last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, seeks a diplomatic solution against the advice of military leaders.
The second partition of the Commonwealth, by the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, creates new territorial divisions.

III. POLAND PARTITIONED 1795-1918

By 1795, as a result of the third partition of Poland, the country is essentially erased from the map of Europe until it regains independence in 1918 at the end of World War I. During the partitions, the population falls under the domination of one of the three empires: Russian, Prussian or Austrian. Polish Jewish families find themselves on different sides of the borders, serving in different armies, and integrating different cultural traditions. It will become difficult to define Polish Jewry as a monolithic entity.

The Jewish population in the territories of the former Commonwealth experiences a demographic explosion in the course of the 19th century:

for example, the number of Jews living in the Pale of Settlement grows at least fivefold during this century. Before the mass emigration to the United States and other Western countries starts in the 1880s, roughly 80% of world Jewry lives in the partitioned Polish lands. The Haskalah ("Enlightenment" in Hebrew) begins to take root in the Polish lands during the 19th century. Maskilim, the followers of the Haskalah, introduce the notion of Jews as citizens of Europe, encouraging assimilation and engagement in secular life. The Haskalah quickly becomes a common enemy of the Hasidim and Mitnagdim. The latter half of the 19th century sees the spread of Yiddish culture and increasing Jewish involvement in


Partitioned Poland in the 19th Century
The Volozhin Yeshiva
Major hassidic centers
Borders of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772
Congress Kingdom of Poland 1815-1915 (autonomy 1815-1832)
Austrian Partition (Galicia)
Prussian partition
Russian partition
Free City of Krakow in 1815 (annexed by Austria in 1846)
Maximum extent of the Pale of Settlement (1791-1917)
1:10,500,000
0
250 miles
0
250 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Baltic Sea
PETERSBURG
Revel
Dorpat
Pskov
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
Riga
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Lubavitch
Smolensk
Kovno
Vilna
Volozhin
Minsk
Grodno
Danzig
Königsberg
PRUSSIA
Stettin
Thorn
Łomża
Posen
Warsaw
Pinsk
Stolin
Rogachev
Gomel
Bryansk
Kursk
Chernigov
Kharkov
Kiev
Zhitomir
Poltava
Zaporozhye
Amshinov
Ger
Biala
Aleksander
Kotsk
Pshiskhe
Breslau
Izhbitsa
Zamość
Lutsk
Lelov
Kattowitz
Krakow
Lizhensk
Belz
Pshevorsk
Bobov
Rimanov
Lwów
Zidichov
Berditchev
Skver
Mezhbizh
Breslov
Kamenets Podolskiy
Sanz
Brünn
Kassa
VIENNA
Vizhnits
Budapest
Debrecen
Graz
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
Agram
Brasso
KINGDOM OF ROMANIA
Kishinev
Odessa
Sea of Azov
Black Sea

1797 The Warsaw Jewish Community is recognized by the Prussian government.

1800 By the turn of the century, rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1812) founds the Chabad Hasidic movement. Now known as Chabad-Lubavitch, it has become the largest and most influential of the Hasidic movements.



The Volozhin Yeshiva in the early 20th century.

1802 The **Volozhin Yeshiva,** one of the most important centers of Talmudic learning in the 19th century, is established. The yeshiva will be re-established in Israel after World War II. Other yeshivot, including the Mir Yeshiva, are also re-established in Israel and in the United States after the Shoah.



Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw.

1802 The first progressive synagogue in Warsaw, influenced by the German enlightenment, is opened on Daniłowiczowska Street.

The Warsaw Jewish community is granted permission to establish a **cemetery on Okopowa Street** then outside the city limits. With approximately 250,000 graves, the cemetery, still in use today, is one of the largest in Europe. The other Warsaw Jewish cemetery, established in 1780 in Bródno on the right-bank side of the city, has a similar number of burials. Some of the *matzevot* ("headstones" in Hebrew), though badly damaged, can still be found in the Bródno cemetery.

1807 The constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, a short-lived and semi-independent Polish rump state set up under Napoleon from parts of the Prussian and Austrian partitions, grants Jews equal rights. Despite the suspension of this ruling in 1808, Jews begin to integrate into the wider society.

> Jews living under Prussian rule are granted full equal rights in 1812, under Austrian rule in 1867, and under Russian rule only after the fall of the Tsars in 1917. Each regime requires that Jews take on hereditary surnames for purposes of tax collection and the draft.

1815 Jews living in Prussia and the Prussian partition are given equal rights and granted full citizenship according to the Edict of Emancipation by Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III.

Following Napoleon's defeat, as a result of the Congress of Vienna's stipulations, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, with Warsaw as its capital, functions as an autonomous Polish rump state in personal union with Russia through the rule

1821 of the Russian emperors as Polish kings. It grants Jews limited rights and the ability to work in banking and industry.
The Congress Kingdom abolishes the institution of the *kahal*, replacing it with Jewish community boards with limited powers.

The first Jewish newspaper in Poland, founded by Antoni Eisenbaum, the weekly "Dostrzegacz



Antoni Eisenbaum (lithography by Maksymilian Fajans)

1826 Nadwiślański/Der Beobachter an der Weichsel" ("The Vistula Observer"), is published in Polish and strongly Germanized Yiddish.

A rabbinical school, the first such institution accredited by the government of the Congress Kingdom, is established in Warsaw. The institute is directed by



Jewish City Guard (engraving by Friedrich Christoph Dietrich)

1830 a radical *maskil*, **Antoni Eisenbaum.** The institute will be closed by Russian authorities in 1864, following years of Polish patriotic agitation there.
During the year-long and ultimately unsuccessful November Uprising in the Congress Kingdom against the Russian Tsar Nicholas I, Jewish militias and volunteers take part in fighting, mainly in the defense of Warsaw where the over 1,000 men strong **Jewish City Guard** (Polish: *Gwardia Miejska Starozakonna*) is active. The failed uprising brings the end of Polish autonomy and the emigration of the elite.



The Poznański Palace, now housing the City Museum of Łódź.

Influential Polish émigré Joachim Lelewel issues an appeal from Paris encouraging Polish Jews to support the Polish national cause.
Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański is born in Aleksandrów Łódzki. Poznański (d. 1900), who built a textile empire in Łódź, is remembered as a pre-eminent entrepreneur and philanthropist. The **Poznański palace** now houses the City Museum of Łódź.

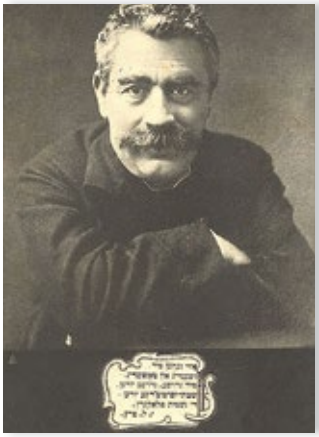
In the course of the 19th century, a town of Łódź (Yiddish: *Lodsh*) undergoes fast industrialization and grows from a small town into a city of over half a million inhabitants, populated by Poles (Catholic and Jewish), Germans, and Russians. It becomes the largest center for textile manufacturing on the continent, the so-called "Polish Man-

chester." Jewish manufacturers and industrialists were a major driving force of the Polish economy, especially in Russian Poland. Many among them, like Izrael Poznański, were also major philanthropists, contributing to worthy Polish and Jewish causes, creating public housing and hospitals and founding museums and schools. These successful entrepreneurs were frequently referred to with the German-derived term Lodzermensch.

The Round Synagogue is built in the Praga district of Warsaw.

The first Jewish confirmation ceremony for girls is celebrated in Warsaw.

1848 A failed Polish uprising against the Austrians in Kraków is supported by local Jews, who decide to support Polish aspirations for independence and are subsequently accused of treason by Austrian



authorities.

A failed Polish uprising against the Prussians in Poznań is not supported by local Jews, who decide to support the Prussian authorities instead and are subsequently accused of treason by the Poles.

Isaac Leib Peretz (d. 1915), known as one of the fathers of Yiddish literature, is born in Zamość. The cultural association *Hazomir* ("The Nightingale" in Hebrew) he founded becomes a center of Yiddish life in Warsaw. In 1951, a street in Warsaw where he lived from 1888 until his death is named after him. He is buried in Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in the "Tomb of the Three Writers" alongside Yakov Dinezon and Shimon An-ski.



Unveiling of the plaque dedicated to Michał Landy in Warsaw, 2018.

Samuel Orgelbrand, a Warsaw-based printer and publisher, begins work on what will become the first modern Polish encyclopedia (in 28 volumes). Among many works published, Orgelbrand also prints a 20-volume edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

1862 Several Polish newspapers in Warsaw, for the first time, initiate an antisemitic campaign.

Jews in the Kingdom of Poland participate in the Polish national movement against Russian rule. **Michał Landy,** a rabbinical student in Warsaw, is killed by Cossack fire during a patriotic demonstration, having

picked up a cross that a slain Catholic protester had been carrying. Landy represented a significant number of Jews with pro-Polish sympathies.

1862 Polish conservative politician Margrave Aleksander Wielopolski is appointed as the civil governor of the Kingdom of Poland and starts a series of reforms, trying through cooperation with the Tsarist authorities to restore autonomy and cool down rebellious moods among a younger generation longing for



Henryk Wohl

independence. One of his reforms is the emancipation of Jews. A law is introduced that gives them equal rights and allows them to reside outside designated settlement zones.

"Ha-Zefira" ("The Siren" in Hebrew), the first Hebrew-language newspaper printed in Warsaw, was founded by Chaim Zelig Słonimski, a prolific inventor, rabbi and government advisor. "Ha-Zefira" offered both secular and religious perspectives. Słonimski's grandson Antoni will become one of the major Polish poets of the 20th century.
Wielopolski's conciliatory policy fails, he resigns and goes into exile. Triggered by a decree instituting mass conscription, the ill-fated January Uprising against Russian rule lasts through two years of guerilla fighting. A talented Jewish financier and Polish patriot, **Henryk Wohl,** becomes a highly effective head of the finance department in the clandestine Polish National Government, for which later he is deported



Dov Ber Meisels

1867 by the Russians to Siberia. Heroic, but poorly armed Polish fighters, among them also Polish Jews, have little chance against the modern Russian military. The end of the uprising brings with it the liquidation of the last remnants of autonomy, a brutal and coercive Russification in the Kingdom of Poland, and its unification with the rest of the Russian Empire.

During the January Uprising, Chief Rabbi of Warsaw **Dov Ber Meisels,** a political activist in the fight for Polish independence, is arrested and deported from Warsaw and moves, temporarily, to Kraków, located in the Austrian partition.
After losing wars with France and Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy reforms itself, through the so-called *Ausgleich* ("Compromise" in German), into the dual state of Austria-Hungary. Poles in Galicia
1871 (the colloquial name for the Austrian partition) gain a high level of autonomy, which enables modern Polish political life in the region. The language of administration and education reverts back to Polish. Jews in Austria-Hungary are granted full citizenship and civil

rights. In Galicia, many will choose to fully assimilate into Polish society. Looking back from the perspective of the tragic events of the first half of the 20th century, although not quite rightly, the lengthy reign of emperor Franz Joseph of Austria (1848-1916) will appear to posterity as a period of peace and prosperity, religious tolerance, and harmonious coexistence of various nationalities under the rule of the Habsburgs.

Prussia unites Germany after the victory over



Naftali Hirsch Imber

France. In the decades to follow, forced Germanization becomes the official policy toward the population of the Prussian partition. The local Jews, now citizens of the German Empire, undergo an accelerated process of assimilation into German culture, as Polish culture and language are suppressed by the German authorities.

Mendele Moicher Sforim's "Di Kliatche" ("The Mare" in Yiddish) is published, which is a milestone in the development of Yiddish literature.

1879

Jan Jeleński publishes "Żydzi, Niemcy i my" ("The Jews, the Germans, and Us" in Polish) the first manifesto of modern Polish antisemitism.
Naftali Hirsch Imber from Austrian Galicia pens the words of "Hatikvah" ("The Hope" in Hebrew), which becomes the Zionist anthem and, subsequently,



The Great Synagogue of Warsaw.

the national anthem of the State of Israel in 1948.

The **Great Synagogue of Warsaw,** designed by Leandro Marconi, a progressive synagogue that seated 2,200 people, is dedicated on Tłomackie Street. While the prayers are conducted in Hebrew, the sermons are given regularly in Polish.

Samuel Gelbfisz, born in Warsaw, emigrates to the United States in 1899. He will become known as Samuel Goldwyn, co-founder of one of Hollywood's leading film studios, Metro Goldwyn Mayer. The Wonsal brothers, four cinema entrepreneurs originating from Krasnosielc in Mazovia, will be other Polish Jews who make their mark on the film industry, known worldwide as the Warner Bros.

1884

Pogroms in the Pale of Settlement follow the assassination of the reformist Tsar Alexander II. As a result of Russian law, which forbids Jews to move east of the Pale, thousands of Russian Jews flee to the west, many settling in Warsaw and Łódź, with many others making their way to Prussian Poland, and the United States.

1887 Between 1881 and 1914, in the face of pogroms, rising antisemitism, and increasing economic hardship, more than one and a half million Jews emigrate from the Pale of Settlement and Galicia to the United States and elsewhere. The question of whether to stay or to leave will come up frequently as Jewish communal identities and political movements change.

The first conference of *Hibbat Zion* ("The Love of Zion" in Hebrew) organization, a forerunner of Zionism, is held in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*) in Prussian Silesia. Zionist ideology takes root and begins to spread.



Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof

The Yiddish play "Shulamis" by Abraham Goldfaden, known as the "father of the Yiddish theater," is performed for the first time in Warsaw.

Dr. **Ludwik Zamenhof** publishes his treatise on Esperanto, a constructed language he devised, titled "Lingvo Internacia: Antaŭparolo kaj plena lernolibro" ("The International Language: Introduction and Complete Textbook" in Esperanto). He believed that a common language would facilitate co-existence among different cultures. Esperanto is still spoken by millions of people worldwide. Zamenhof dies in Warsaw in 1917 and is buried in the Okopowa cemetery.



Pua Rakowska (center)



Hipolit Wawelberg (painting by Kazimierz Pochwalski)

Identifying herself as a "revolutionary Jewish woman," **Pua Rakowska** (Puah Rakovsky) becomes the director of a modern Jewish elementary school for girls in Warsaw. In 1893, she establishes a Hebrew high school for Jewish girls and soon after becomes a leader of the women's Zionist movement in Poland.

Many Jewish women receiving secular educations begin to seek new avenues for expression and social equality, often leaving behind their traditional religious roots. Overcoming discrim-

ination, Jewish women become community activists and gain recognition in Jewish political movements such as the Bund and Zionism and in social welfare, education and, later, in the cultural and political arenas.

Industrialists and philanthropists **Hipolit Wawelberg** and Stanisław Rotwand establish a prestigious mechanical and technical college, which will eventually become the Warsaw Polytechnic.

Helena (Chaja) Rubinstein, born in 1872 to a family of Polish Jewish shopkeepers in Kra-



Regina Liliental

kow's Kazimierz, migrates to Australia seeking new opportunities. Starting from scratch, she will go on to establish a lucrative cosmetics empire, becoming the first self-made female millionaire in the world.

1902 The *Bund* ("Union" in Yiddish), or by its full name, the General Jewish Workers Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, is founded. The party's ideology is based on the tenets of socialism and a commitment to Yiddish language and culture. It will become one of the most important Jewish political parties in interwar Poland.

Delegates from Poland's partitioned lands participate in the first Zionist Congress in Basel.

The early 20th century ushers in a new era of Jewish political expression and national aspirations in partitioned Poland, which find their expression through the Bund or the many different Zionist movements ranging from religious to



Barricades in Łódź, 1905.

Marxist in ideology.

Regina Liliental (1875-1924, née Gitla Eiger), a pioneering ethnographer and folklorist, publishes her first work "Przesądy Żydowskie" ("Jewish Superstitions" in Polish), one of the earliest publications about Polish Jewish folklore.

The Nożyk Synagogue, funded by Zalman and Rywka Nożyk, is dedicated in Warsaw. The synagogue, which continues to serve the Warsaw Jewish community, was among the more than 400 Jewish houses of worship in Warsaw prior to World War

II.

While Zionism is banned by the Tsarist authorities, the religious Zionist movement Mizrachi (an acronym for Hebrew *Merkaz Ruhani:* Religious Center) is established in Wilno (Yiddish: *Vilna*).

The founding conference of the Zionist-Socialist movement *Poalei Zion* ("Workers of Zion" in Hebrew) is held in Kraków. Among the delegates is Dawid Grün, born in Płońsk in 1886. He leaves for Palestine in 1906 and, as David Ben Gurion, becomes Israel's first prime minister in 1948.

During the mass unrest in the Russian Empire, which was sparked by the costly and unsuccessful war with the Empire of Japan (1904-1905), a wave of strikes, demonstrations and protests, usually suppressed with bloody violence by the tsarist

1905 regime, sweeps across the country, in the event later named as the Revolution of 1905. In Łódź, between June 18-25, Polish, Jewish, and German workers of the textile industry, led by Socialists from PPS (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, "Polish Socialist Party" in Polish) and Bund, clash with the tsarist police and military, building barricades and taking control over large parts of the city, during the so-called **Łódź Uprising**. The regime manages to quell the insurrection, with the official death toll reaching 151 civilian casualties (55 Poles, 79 Jews, and 17 Germans), and the unofficial as high as 800 dead and 2,000 wounded. Many other incidents of lesser scale take place in all of the Rus-

1908 sian Partition. The outcome of the 1905 revolution is the relative relaxation of absolutist rule of tsars and establishment of the first parliament in Russia, the *Duma*.

The failed revolution incites another wave of

1911 pogroms in Russia, mostly in the Pale of Settlement but also in the Congress Poland. Pogroms are usually provoked by the infamous Tsarist Russian secret police - the *Okhrana*, and supported by the authorities. The bloodiest take place in Odessa, Kiev, and Białystok. Before the elections to the *Duma*, designated for March 1906, a boycott of Jewish businesses is organized in Warsaw by Polish nationalists as Jews refuse to endorse their candidate.

The Bund organizes an armed attack on Warsaw's brothel district near Grzybowski Square. Many of the brothels at that time were owned by Jews. The Bund attacks them in the name of the "defense of the dignity of the Jewish woman." Tsarist police side with the mobsters and suppress the attackers after a gun battle that lasts several hours.



Former Dom Sierot at 92 Krochmalna St. with Janusz Korczak memorial in front.

1912 Mathias Bersohn, an active philanthropist, donates his private art collection to the Jewish community of Warsaw. The community establishes a Jewish museum next to its headquarters on Grzybowska Street, which will be looted by the Germans during

1913 World War II.

The mass-circulation Yiddish newspaper "Haynt" ("Today" in Yiddish) is launched, followed by "Der Moment" ("The Moment" in Yiddish) in 1910.

The Old People's Home Association (Hebrew/Yiddish: *Moshav Zkenim*) is established in Warsaw, with Adolf Peretz as its president.
The first Yiddish films, among them "The Hasidic Woman and Apostate," are produced, inspiring many full-length features and documentaries. Twelve new Yiddish-language films will be produced before World War I.

Agudat Israel ("Union of the Jews" in Hebrew), or Agudah, an Orthodox Jewish political party dedicated to preserving rabbinic authority, is founded in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*). The union will have seats in the Polish parliament during the interwar years as the leading political representation of the
1914 Polish Jewry. After the War, the Agudah will serve as an umbrella organization for many Orthodox Jews in the United States representing the vast majority of members of the traditional Orthodox world, sometimes known by the old label of *mitnagdim,* as well as several of the Hasidic dynasties.



Jewish Writers and Journalists' Union membership card of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

1916 A Jewish orphanage (Polish: ***Dom Sierot***) opens on Krochmalna Street in Warsaw, directed by Janusz Korczak (born Henryk Goldszmidt). He becomes the most famous inter-war Polish pedagogue and author of popular children's books that are still read



Girls from Beis Yaakov school in Ostrów Mazowiecka, 1928

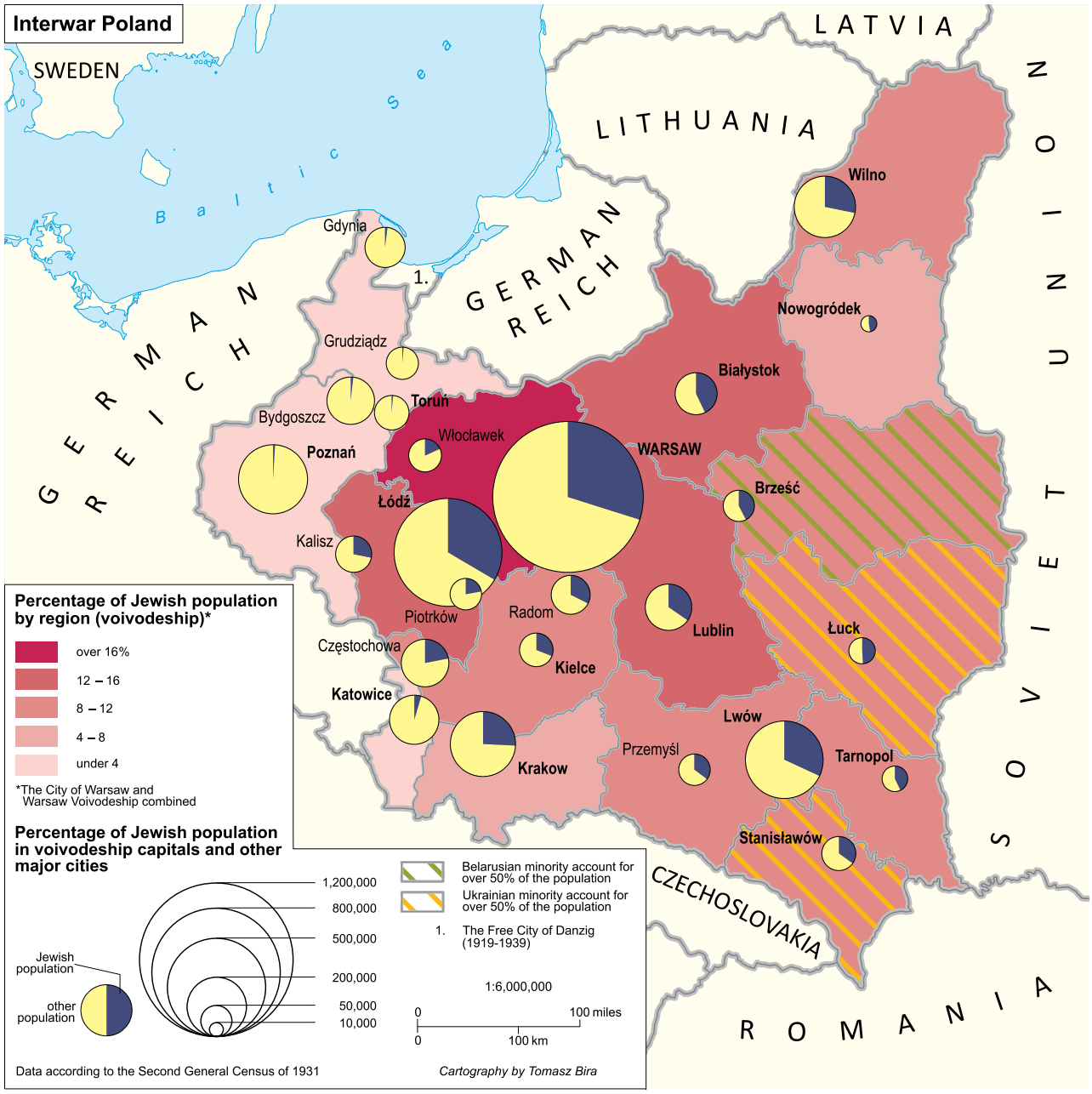
1917 by Polish children.
Hashomer Hatzair ("The Young Guard" in Hebrew), a Zionist-Socialist youth movement, is established in Galicia.

1917 The First World War breaks out in the summer of 1914, with Austria and Germany (the so-called Central Powers) fighting against Russia (allied with the United Kingdom and France in an alliance known as the *Entente*). The war between the partitioning powers, brings hope for a restoration of some sort of independent Polish state. Nonetheless, the war is a disaster for inhabitants of the Polish lands of all faiths. Drafted men serve in each of the imperial armies, with family members sometimes fighting one another. As the eastern front gradually moves to the east, destruction and collateral damage brought by four years of heavy fighting leave many towns and villages in ruins. If not expelled from their homes, the residents are

IV. INDEPENDENT POLAND: INTERWAR PERIOD 1918-1939

Poland regains its independence in the fall of 1918, when all of the three partitioning empires, Russian, Austrian and German, collapse by the end of the First World War.

Many ethnically mixed areas are claimed at the same time as national territories by different nation states emerging in the lands of central and eastern Europe. The newly reborn Polish state is involved in border conflicts with almost all of its neighbors. The Jewish population suffers from collateral damage and war-related violence, including pogroms committed by almost all belligerents. Some of the Polish forces are involved in antisemitic actions. The most well-known is the infamous November 1918 pogrom in Lwów, followed by pogroms in Pińsk, Lida, and Wilno in April 1919.


Interwar Poland
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
GERMAN REICH
GERMAN REICH
SOVIET UNION
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
ROMANIA
Gdynia
1.
Grudziądz
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Włocławek
Poznań
Łódź
Kalisz
Piotrków
Częstochowa
Katowice
Radom
Kielce
Krakow
WARSAW
Lublin
Białystok
Brześć
Nowogródek
Wilno
Łuck
Lwów
Przemyśl
Tarnopol
Stanisławów
Percentage of Jewish population by region (voivodeship)*
over 16%
12 – 16
8 – 12
4 – 8
under 4
*The City of Warsaw and Warsaw Voivodeship combined
Percentage of Jewish population in voivodeship capitals and other major cities
1,200,000
800,000
500,000
200,000
50,000
10,000
Jewish population
other population
Belarusian minority account for over 50% of the population
Ukrainian minority account for over 50% of the population
1. The Free City of Danzig (1919-1939)
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Data according to the Second General Census of 1931
Cartography by Tomasz Bira



Józef Piłsudski

The core of pre-partitioned Poland is reunited in the Second Polish Republic. **Józef Piłsudski**, past leader of the struggle for independence and now the interim head of state, invites Jewish parties to participate in coalition talks.



Rosa Luxemburg

On January 15, **Rosa Luxemburg** and Karl Liebknecht are murdered by rightwing Freikorps troopers (nationalist paramilitary groups in a revolution-torn post-WWI Germany), after a failed Communist coup in Berlin known as the Spartacist Uprising. Rosa Luxemburg, born in 1871 as Rozalia Luxenburg in Zamość to a family of Polish Jewish merchants, was a prominent Marxist revolutionary, leading feminist, and activist of the European Socialist movement of the early 20th century. An advocate of the proletarian revolution, she was nonetheless critical of the policies of the Bolsheviks in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917, on the grounds of defending democratic Socialism.

1919

The Committee of the Jewish Delegations represents Polish Jewry at the Versailles Peace Conference. The conference obliges the newly independent countries, including Poland, to sign a treaty guaranteeing minority rights.

The first parliamentary elections, held on January 26th, give seats to Jews in the Sejm and the Senate. As Polish women gain the right to vote already by 1918, Róża Pomerantz-Melzer, a member of a Zionist party, is the first woman to be elected to the Polish parliament.

Bela Szpiro-Nissenbaum is elected to the City Council of Lublin. An active member of the Bund and a devoted fighter for women's rights, the poor, and the working class, Bela gained wide popularity. Concerned about the condition of Jewish children and their education, Bela became a co-founder of CISZO (Central Organization of Jewish Schools) and the Icchok Lejbusz Peretz House of Culture. She will be elected to the city council five more times before 1939. During the war, active in the underground, Bela will be arrested by the Gestapo in 1942 and will perish in the German concentration camp Ravensbrück two years later.

About 17,000 Polish Jewish army volunteers during the Polish-Soviet War are interned by Polish authorities as "potential Bolshevik supporters" at the peak of the Red Army's offensive. The move brings huge protests from centrist, left, and Jewish parties. Detainees will be released after 25 days when the

Bolshevik troops will be in full retreat after losing the Battle of Warsaw in mid-August.

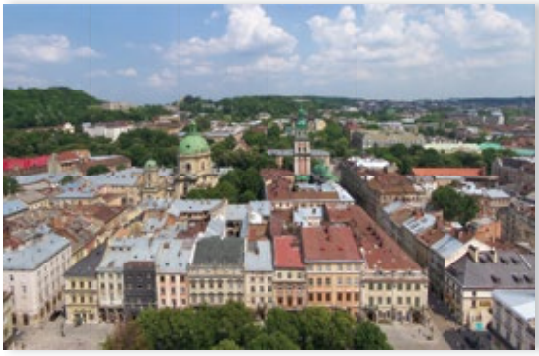
Following two years of bitter war and a strategic Red Army defeat at the gates of Warsaw, the Polish-Soviet peace treaty is eventually signed in Riga in March. The Polish-Soviet border is drawn to the east of **Lwów** (a city now in Ukraine, Ukrainian: *Lviv,* Yiddish: *Lemberik*) and Wilno (a city now in Lithuania, Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), two major cities and important centers of Polish and Jewish culture in the so-called *Kresy* region (Polish term for the eastern Borderlands, roughly equaling to today's Lithuania, western Belarus, and western Ukraine). Thousands of Jews from the territory located east of the new border, in particular shopkeepers and professionals forbidden to work in the Soviet Union, move to Poland and are eventually granted citizenship.

The period of post-WWI conflicts in the region ends by the end of 1921. With its deep legal, administrative and cultural differences, the unification of the three parts of the partitioned country into one nation is a challenge to the Polish state. Combined, numerous ethnic and religious minorities constitute almost one-third of the Second Polish Republic's population. For the first time in 123 years, Jews like other minorities, are to be governed by one set of laws that protected their rights as equal citizens of Poland.

The redrawn map of Poland creates the largest Jewish population center in Europe. Despite massive unemployment, antisemitic incidents and pogroms and growing tensions between a multicultural Polish society and increasing nationalism, Jewish life and culture flourish in the interwar period. Synagogues, schools, youth movements, sports clubs, theater, cinema, literature and the press, all develop exponentially to meet the needs of the growing Jewish population and the diversity of Jewish expression.

1921

The Polish Constitution of March 17th grants legal



Lwów

1921 equality to all citizens of Poland.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) appoints Yitzhak Gitterman as its first director in Poland. During World War II, he will be active in

1921 the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto, and he will die during the first episode of armed struggle in the ghetto in January 1943.
Polish Jewish historian Szymon Askenazy is elected as Poland's representative in the League of Nations in Geneva, an interwar predecessor to the United Nations organization.

The first Polish national conference of the Hebrew-language Tarbut educational network convenes in Warsaw, attended by 178 delegates. The number of Jewish schools proliferates to include secular, Yiddish-language and religious schools, as well as Polish schools called *szabasówki*, which offer

1923 classes on Sundays rather than on Saturdays.

Poland's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, elected by the political center, left, and minority voters, including Jews, is assassinated in the gallery

of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts „Zachęta" on December 16 by a nationalist fanatic just five days after his election.



Street stand with Jewish press.

The first issue of "Nasz Przegląd" ("Our Review" in Polish), the largest and best-known Jewish daily in Polish, is published in Warsaw. The **Jewish press**, which appeared in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish, provided entrées into different Polish Jewish milieus, often serving as bridges among the assimilationists, the Bundists, the Zionists, and the more traditionally religious communities. "Nasz Przegląd" will be published until September 1939.
Due to an economic downturn, which Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Władysław Grabski was trying to overcome with restrictive economic policies, thousands of Jewish businessmen make *aliyah* to Palestine feeling threatened by difficult economic environment – a phenomenon known as the "Grabski aliyah" or "the fourth aliyah."

1925

According to the resolution of the conference of Jewish cultural institutions in Berlin, the *Yidisher Visnshaftlikher Institut* (YIVO) or Jewish Scientific Institute, the first secular Jewish research institution, is created. Housed in Wilno , it will study and document Jewish life and promote Yiddish language and culture until the outbreak of WWII. Its work is continued today by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.


Ester Rachel Kamińska


The funeral of Jewish soldiers killed in the Coup of May 1926.

The "mother of Yiddish theater" **Ester Rachel Kamińska** dies in Warsaw. At this time, there are many Yiddish theaters in the city.



Mojżesz Kusewicki

1928

Marshal Józef Piłsudski seizes power in a **military coup in May 1926** and institutes a quasi-authoritarian government in order to settle the political and social situation in Poland. A promoter of a multicultural Poland, envisioning it as a greater federation of different ethnic and religious groups as a counterbalance to Soviet Russia, he earns the nickname of "Grandpa," widespread also among Polish Jews.

The Polish government expresses its official support for the Balfour Declaration which calls for the creation of a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. Polish support for Zionism will increase over the years.
Hazzan (cantor) **Mojżesz Kusewicki** (Moshe Koussevitsky), hired away from Wilno's Great Synagogue, becomes the chief cantor of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw, contributing to the growing canon of Jewish liturgical music created in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Institute for Judaic Studies is established in Warsaw. The languages of instruction are Polish and Hebrew. The founding committee included Rabbis Markus Braude, Ozjasz Thon, and Mojżesz Schorr, members of the Polish parliament and committed Zionists.

By 1930, the world Jewish population is estimated at 15,000,000 — with 4,200,000 in the United States, 3,000,000 in Poland and 2,500,000 in the Soviet Union. Despite waves of emigration, the Jewish population in Poland increases to an estimated 3.5 million by 1939. Jews constitute almost one-tenth of the population in Poland and provide one-half of all the lawyers, one-third of all the doctors in Warsaw and one-quarter of all the university students in Poland.



The Mausoleum of Three Writers

1930

Assimilated Polish Jews make significant contributions to Polish culture in the 20th century. Educators such as Janusz Korczak, painters such as Henryk Berlewi, poets such as Julian Tuwim, writers such as Bruno Schulz, musicians such as Artur Rubinstein, and a host of others contribute new content and form, which enrich Polish culture. Many Polish-born Jews who emigrate make significant contributions to Jewish life, literature, science, the arts and the humanities around the world: Rabbis Joseph Ber Soloveitchik and Israel Meir Lau, Nobel Prize laureates author Isaac Bashevis Singer, physicist Joseph Rotblat, and politician Menachem Begin, businesswoman

Helena Rubinstein, artist Artur Szyk, and architect Daniel Liebeskind, to name but a few.



The Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva



A picket organized by nationalist Polish students demanding implementation of bench ghettos

1931 Abraham Ostrzega designs a monument of Ludwik Zamenhof for Białystok. Ostrzega, born in 1889, was considered the greatest Polish Jewish sculptor, specializing in sepulchral art. A large collection of matzevot and tombstones carved by Ostrzega, including the "**Mausoleum of Three Writers**" (i.e. Peretz, Dinezon, An-ski) is located in Warsaw's
1932 Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street.

The opening ceremony of the ***Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin*** ("Yeshiva of the Sages of Lublin" in Hebrew) takes place in June. It is founded by Rabbi Meir Shapiro, the creator of *Daf Yomi* – the daily regimen of learning Talmud and its commentaries, which is still practiced worldwide. The Yeshiva becomes a major center of Orthodox learning until the outbreak of World War II.
1932

Clashes at universities in Wilno and Lwów between antisemitic National Democratic Party (the so-called *Endecja*) supporters and Jewish students leave one Catholic student dead, as tensions and calls for the imposition of quotas at universities increase.
1934

Jewish artist Arthur Szyk, born in Łódź and living in Paris at the time, publishes 45 illustrations for the thirteenth-century "Bill of Rights" for Polish Jews, the "Statute of Kalisz" (**see illustration, page 8**). A committed Polish patriot, political activist and prolific artist, his contributions to the art world in Europe and the U.S. span several decades.
1934



Zuzanna Ginczanka

1935 At the first worldwide Maccabiah in Tel Aviv, Poland sends the largest delegation with 66 members. Between World War I and World War II, more than 100 Jewish sports clubs were registered in Warsaw alone.

Mieczysław Kaplicki, born Maurycy Kapellner,

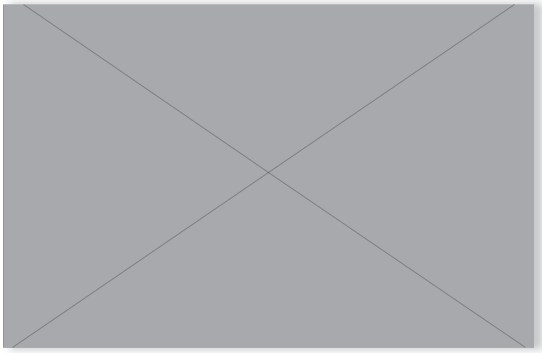
1935 becomes the first mayor of Kraków of Jewish origin.

Shimon Peres, born as Szymon Perski in Wiszniewo in 1923, moves to Palestine with his family. He will go on to serve Israel in a variety of government positions, including prime minister and president, and will win the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1994. Peres dies in 2016 and his funeral in Jerusalem is attended by more than eighty heads of state from all over the world.

1936

The Museum of Jewish Art opens in Lwów, organized by Wiktor Chajes, the chairman of the Jewish community, and deputy mayor of Lwów.

1936 Polish poet **Zuzanna Ginczanka** (born Gincburg) becomes a member of "Skamander," a group of avant-garde poets created, among others, by Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski. Tuwim and Słonimski, along with Jan Brzechwa and Bolesław Leśmian, all assimilated Jews, are still beloved authors in Poland, having made significant contributions to Polish literature.
Józef Piłsudski dies on May 12, marking a dramatic change in the life of Jews in interwar Poland and the beginning of a rise in state-sanctioned antisemitism.



Students of the Institute of Judaic Studies near the side entrance to the Main Judaic Library (now JHI building).

1936 Memorial services for Piłsudski are held throughout the country, including in Warsaw's Great Synagogue.

After Piłsudski's death, the ruling *Sanacja* (semi-authoritarian regime closely tied with the military), having no definite leader, will start to drift into nationalism.

1936 The prime minister and Catholic primate endorse an economic boycott, proclaimed by the extreme right, of Jewish businesses and shops, yet condemn physical violence against Jews.

1936 As violent boycotts of Jewish businesses become commonplace, Jews sometimes organize in self-defense. On March 9, in the small market town of Przytyk, members of one such group attack an organized antisemitic group, killing one member. A riot ensued, in which a Jewish couple extraneous to the incident is murdered. Members of both the Jewish self-defense and the antisemitic group are subsequently sentenced, though the latter are treated with lenience. Boycotts and antisemitic riots, sometimes with fatalities, continue to occur elsewhere in Poland of the late 1930s.

The **Main Judaic Library** and the Institute of Judaic Studies move into a new building designed by Zachariasz Eber, adjacent to the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street in Warsaw. One of the few Jewish edifices in Warsaw to survive World War II, the building is now home to the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

First congress of Polish "Progressive" Judaism is held in May in Warsaw and the *Centralny Związek Synagog Postępowych* ("Central Union of Progressive Synagogues" in Polish) is established.

Zionist Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky (born in Russia as Vladimir Zhabotinsky), calls for at least 750,000 Jews to be evacuated to Palestine over the next ten years in the wake of growing antisemitism in Europe and particularly the rise of Nazi Germany. The so-called "evacuation plan" is large-

ly rejected by Jews, but the Polish government strengthens ties with the Revisionists, while considering other "solutions to the Jewish question," including emigration to Madagascar. Jabotinsky



"Yidl mit'n fidel" advertisement poster from 1937.

1937 starts cooperation with the Polish government and members of right-wing Zionist militias are to be trained by the Polish army before going to Mandate Palestine.

1937 Right-wing extremist leader Adam Doboszyński and his followers organize the so-called March on Myślenice, on June 23, occupying the town south of Kraków, arresting local authorities, plundering Jewish shops and attempting to set fire to the synagogue. Doboszyński is arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in jail.



Lili Liliana in

1937

The Yiddish language musical "**Yidl mit'n fidel**" ("Yiddle With His Fiddle" in Yiddish, Polish title: "Judeł gra na skrzypcach") premiers in Warsaw on

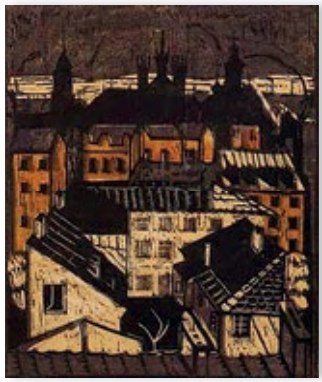


University ID card of a Jewish student with a "bench ghetto" seal.

1937

September 1936 in Warsaw to become a blockbuster in Poland, and subsequently in the United States. It tells the story of an impoverished klezmorim, Jewish musicians, a father and his daughter disguised as a young boy, Yiddle. The leading female role is played by Moly Picon, born as Małka Opiekun in New York City to Polish Jewish parents, recent immigrants to the United States. Moly Picon (1898-1992) became the first worldwide star of the Yiddish-language film.

The Sejm introduces a draft law restricting *shechi-*



„The Old Town of Warsaw," a xylograph by Aniela Cukier.

tah (Hebrew term for kosher ritual slaughter) to

only religious purposes, generating heated debate. Attempts will be made again in 2014 and 2018 to introduce such a provision.

Colonel Adam Koc, spokesman of the *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* (OZN, "Camp of National Unity" in Polish), the official political representation of the ruling *Sanacja* regime, officially declares antisemitism as part of its political platform in a political program published in the daily "Gazeta Polska".

"**The Dybbuk**," Michał Waszyński's (born Moshe Waks) feature film based on Shimon An-ski's play, premieres in Warsaw to critical acclaim. It will become one of the greatest hits of Polish Jewish cinema.

The so-called "**bench ghettos**" (separate seating for Jewish students) are introduced in a majority of Polish universities with the start of the new academic year in October. Some universities also introduce the *numerus clausus* ("quota" in Latin), limiting the number of places for Jews, based on their percentage of the country's population (10%). The first unsuccessful attempt to introduce this provision took place in 1923. While those moves are opposed by the democrats and by members of academia, the right and others demand a *numerus nullus* ("null



Herszel Grynszpan

1938 number" in Latin), i.e. the total exclusion of Jews.

An exhibition of artworks, mostly paintings and wood engravings by **Aniela Cukier**, opens at Instytut Propagandy Sztuki (The Art Propagation Institute) in Warsaw. Cukier was one of the leading female artists of the artist colony in the town of Kazimierz Dolny.

On March 31, the Sejm passes a law stripping Polish citizens who have resided abroad for more than five consecutive years of their citizenship.

1939 Nazi Germany in the course of the so-called *Polenaktion* ("Polish action" in German) brutally deports 17,000 Polish Jews in October to the border crossing at Zbąszyń. They will initially be denied admission and forced into a transfer camp. In spite of official protests in Poland, the situation in Zbąszyń deteriorates, provoking widespread outrage among the Jewish



Jewish recruits of the 20th Land of Kraków Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army taking military oath at the Wawel Castle in the 1930s.

1939 communities in Poland. Assistance is provided by the General Aid Committee for Refugees from Germany, established by Emanuel Ringelblum and Yitzhak Gitterman, as well as by a local Jewish committee

V. THE WAR AND THE HOLOCAUST 1939-1945

Although the early Nazi policies of antisemitism and racism in Germany were becoming widely known and with antisemitism on the rise in Poland and elsewhere throughout Europe, the enormity of the tragedy of the Shoah could not have been foreseen. Germany's "Final Solution," the plan for complete extermination of the Jews, was implemented primarily in the occupied Polish territory, because it was where the largest European Jewish population lived. The loss of 90% of Polish Jewry meant the near-end of the Ashkenazi civilization that had developed and thrived on Polish lands for almost a millennium.


Poland During Second World War (1939-45)
Riga
Latvia
Rumbula Forest
Kalmar
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Šiauliai
Daugavpils
Klaipéda
Lithuania
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Katyn
9th Fort
Kaunas
Wilno
09.1943
Ponary
Königsberg
Danzig
Köslin
Allenstein
SOVIET
UNION
MALY TROSTINETS
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
GERMAN
REICH
Białystok
08.1943
Słonim
Bydgoszcz
Bronna Góra
TREBLINKA
08.1943
Poznań
Warsaw
08-09.1944
Międzyrzec Podlaski
Pińsk
Mazyr
KULMHOF
04.1943
Siedlce
Brześć
Kalisz
Łódź (Litzmannstadt)
Tomaszów Mazowiecki
MAJDANEK
Majdanek (Aktion Erntefest)
SOBIBOR
10.1943
Sarny
Piotrków
Radom
Trawniki (Aktion Erntefest)
Kowel
Breslau
Radomsko
Poniatowa (Aktion Erntefest)
Izbica
Łuck
Kiev
Babi Yar
Częstochowa
06.1943
Kielce
Górka Polonka
Zhytomyr
Mizocz
10.1942
BELZEC
Berdychiv
Bedzin
08.1943
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU
10.1944
KRAKÓW
(Capital of the GG)
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Lwów
Tarnopol
Nowy Sącz
Janowska
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
Žilina
Prešov
Stanisławów
Kamianets Podilskyi
Košice
Munkács
Kołomyja
Chernivtsi
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
Northern Transylvania (Hungarian from 09.1940)
Territories annexed into the Soviet Union (1939-1941)
Territory of the German Reich prior to September 1, 1939 (including territories annexed before the war)
Bezirk Bialystok (annexed into the German Reich from July 22, 1941)
Territories annexed into the German Reich (1939-1945)
General Government (1939-1945)
District of Galicia (incorporated into the GG from August 01, 1941)
Borders of Poland on August 31, 1939
Range of the Soviet occupation to June 22, 1941
Borders of the Greater German Reich (1941-45)
Ghettos over 100,000 people
Other large ghettos
Largest mass executions of Jews
Major killing centers
Ghetto and camp uprisings (with dates)
1944 Warsaw Uprising (Polish Home Army)
1940 Katyn massacre
1:6,500,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

Germany invades Poland on September 1. Subsequently, the Soviet Union invades on September 17, following the secret German-Soviet pact signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov on August 23. After one month of desperate fighting, the last units of the Polish army surrender in early October. Poland never officially capitulates and a new government and army start to form in exile, first in France and, after it falls in June 1940, in the United Kingdom.

When the last Polish units are defeated, Germany annexes directly into the German Reich western parts of Poland including Poznań, Katowice, and Łódź. Central Poland, with Warsaw, Kraków, and Lublin, is located in the German occupation zone renamed the "General Government for the Occupied Polish Territories." Eastern Poland, in accordance with the German-Soviet pact, is taken over by the Soviet Union, which annexes the area respectively to Soviet Belarus and Soviet Ukraine. Immediately thereafter, German Nazi and Soviet terror targeting Poles and symbols of Polishness, including Polish intelligentsia and clergy, begins.

In the areas of Poland taken by Nazi Germany, the Nazis target Jews from the very beginning with the introduction of antisemitic laws. The new laws include the confiscation of private property, limitation of travel, freezing of bank accounts, forced labor and restrictions on which jobs Jews could hold. Mandatory white armbands with the Star of David (in the General Government) and yellow badges in the shape of the Star of David (in territories annexed to the Reich) are imposed.

Prominent Bund leaders **Wiktor Alter** and Henryk Erlich, both with a symbolic grave in Warsaw's Jewish cemetery, are arrested by the Soviet authorities



Wiktor Alter

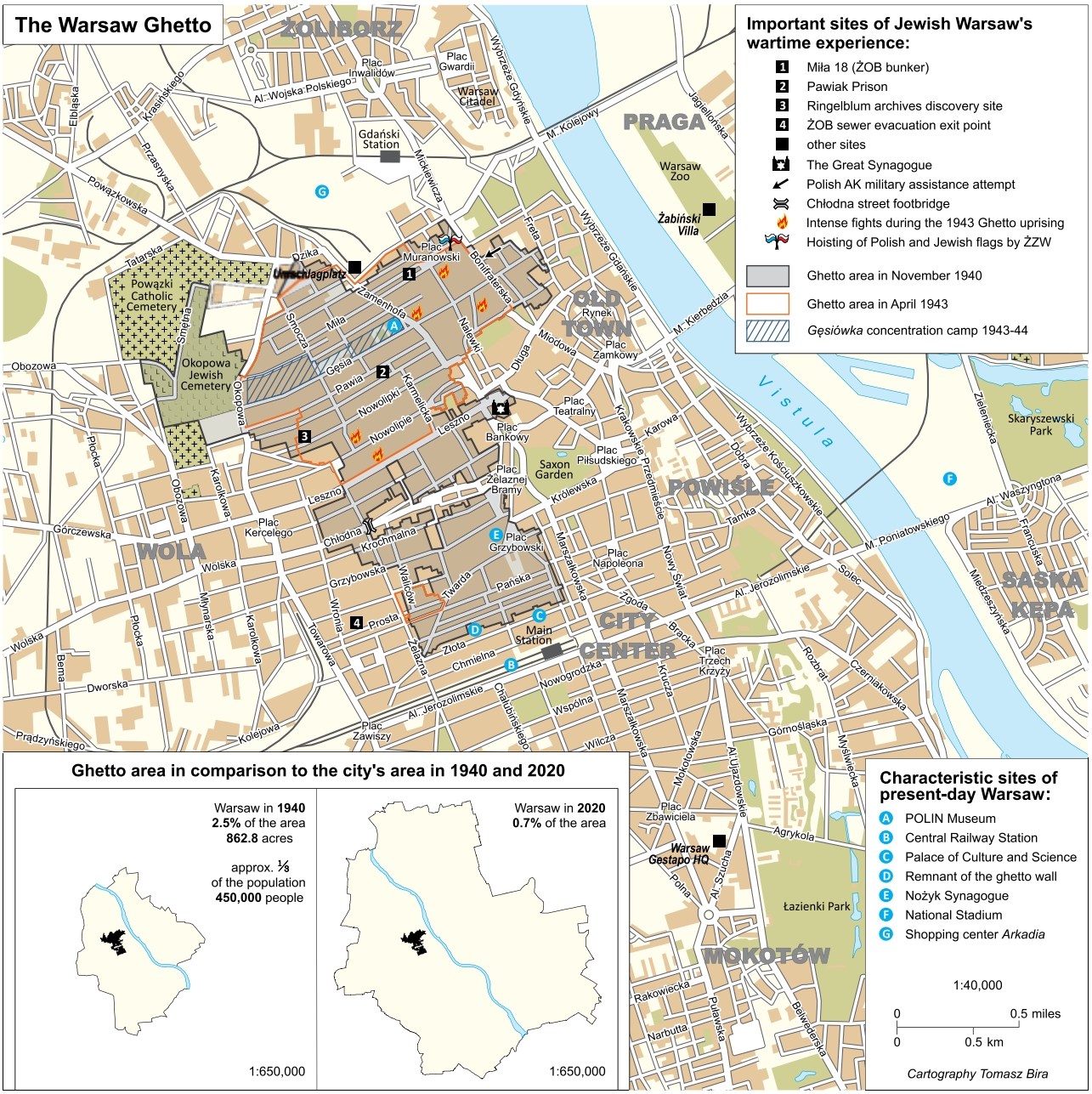
in October to be released in 1941. They are re-arrested as "German spies" three months later and executed.

1939

The first of approximately six hundred ghettos in occupied Poland is established by the Germans in Piotrków Trybunalski on October 5.

The **Warsaw Ghetto**, the largest ghetto created in German-occupied Europe, is sealed on November 16, 1940. While several thousand Jews manage to remain illegally outside of the closed area and others manage to flee with the help of non-Jews, the vast majority of the city's Jewish population is forced into the ghetto. Many Jewish communal and religious institutions and cultural organizations are re-established in the so-called Jewish Residential District. Schools, hospitals, orphanages, and theaters are set up. The Judenrat, an administrative body set up the Germans, tries to reconcile submission to the Nazi authorities with protection of the welfare and interests of the Jewish population. Underground activity, including the publishing of newspapers, begins almost immediately. Of the Warsaw Ghetto's population of approximately 450,000 at its peak in April 1941, 100,000 will die of cold, hunger and disease. Over 300,000 will be gassed in Treblinka.

1940


The Warsaw Ghetto
Important sites of Jewish Warsaw's wartime experience:
1 Miła 18 (ŻOB bunker)
2 Pawiak Prison
3 Ringelblum archives discovery site
4 ŻOB sewer evacuation exit point
other sites
The Great Synagogue
Polish AK military assistance attempt
Chłodna street footbridge
Intense fights during the 1943 Ghetto uprising
Hoisting of Polish and Jewish flags by ŻZW
Ghetto area in November 1940
Ghetto area in April 1943
Gęsiówka concentration camp 1943-44
ŻOLIBORZ
PRAGA
OLD TOWN
POWIŚLE
WOLA
CITY CENTER
MOKOTÓW
SASKA KĘPA
Vistula
Umschlagplatz
Okopowa Jewish Cemetery
Powązki Catholic Cemetery
Warsaw Zoo
Żabiński Villa
Warsaw Citadel
Gdański Station
Main Station
Saxon Garden
Łazienki Park
Skaryszewski Park
Warsaw Gestapo HQ
Ghetto area in comparison to the city's area in 1940 and 2020
Warsaw in 1940
2.5% of the area
862.8 acres
approx. ⅛
of the population
450,000 people
1:650,000
Warsaw in 2020
0.7% of the area
1:650,000
Characteristic sites of present-day Warsaw:
A POLIN Museum
B Central Railway Station
C Palace of Culture and Science
D Remnant of the ghetto wall
E Nożyk Synagogue
F National Stadium
G Shopping center Arkadia
1:40,000
0 0.5 miles
0 0.5 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira

1940

Zionist Ignacy Schwarzbart joins the Polish National Council in London, the Polish parliament-in-exile.

1940

Poland is the only country in occupied Europe to have a form of parliament-in-exile.
The YIVO Institute relocates its headquarters from Wilno to New York City.

In February, Soviet authorities begin the first of four mass deportations of Polish citizens from the Soviet occupation zone to the east of the Soviet Union, mostly to Siberia and Kazakhstan. The third wave



Katyń Memorial in Jersey City, NJ.

of deportations of May-June 1940 primarily targets Polish Jews, with 80% of the deportees being Jewish. By 1945, at least one and a half million Poles will become target of the Soviet repressions. Approximately 150,000-200,000 of them will lose their lives.

From April through May, the Soviets murder approx-

1940

imately 21,500 captured Polish Army and police officers, members of the Polish intelligentsia and social elite. Their bodies are buried in **Katyn** forest, near the Russian city of Smolensk, and in various other locations in the western Soviet Union. Roughly 8-10% of the victims were Jews, among them Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army Baruch Steinberg.

Witold Pilecki, a Polish cavalry captain and veteran of the Polish-Bolshevik war, now a member of the Polish underground, volunteers to be sent to Auschwitz (by allowing himself to be caught by German police in a roundup) in order to gather information about the camp from the inside and to start resis-



Auschwitz concentration camp photo of Witold Pilecki.



Emanuel Ringelblum

1940

tance there. Pilecki also delivers the first report on the mass murder of Jews in Auschwitz. After two and a half years in Auschwitz, he successfully escapes. Then, he fights in the Polish underground

army. After the war in 1948, targeted as dangerous to the new Communist regime, he is arrested, tortured, and sentenced to death in a show trial and subsequently executed.

1941 *Oneg Shabbat* ("The Joy of the Sabbath" in Hebrew), a clandestine network founded in the Warsaw Ghetto, is established by **Emanuel Ringelblum** to document Jewish suffering during the German occupation. The members, including historians, writers, artists and
1941 teachers, are charged with researching each aspect of life and death in the ghetto. What they collect will form the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, now known as the Ringelblum Archive.

In secret radio messages, the Polish Prime Minister-in-Exile, General Władysław Sikorski, warns the Polish population against participating in German atrocities against Jews.

1941 Nazi Germany invades Soviet Russia on June 22. Germany occupies former eastern Poland in the wake of its invasion codenamed "Operation Barbarossa." The Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* ("Special Operations Groups" in German) – the killing squads of the SS, in cooperation with local Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian auxiliary forces, murder approximately one million Jews in Eastern Poland,



Gravestones of Jewish soldiers at the Monte Cassino Polish war cemetery.



Menachem Begin wearing Polish Army uniform, Tel Aviv, December 1942.

1941 Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Western Russia as the German offensive moves towards Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow.

In the first days after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, following accusations of the Jews supporting the Soviets during the past two years of occupation, local Poles murder their Jewish neighbors in the small town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland. It is the largest such massacre, among similar other cases, to take place in occupied Poland.
The Polish Army-in-Exile is set up in Russia under the command of General Władysław Anders. The almost eighty thousand men strong Anders' Army will eventually be evacuated in 1942 through the Middle East to fight at the Italian front (among other battlefields at **Monte Cassino** in May 1944). Anders' Army, with approximately 4,000 Jewish soldiers, also evacuates thousands of civilians from Soviet Russia, including many Polish Jews. General Anders, despite the death
1941 penalty for desertion, tacitly allows 3,000 Jewish soldiers to stay in Palestine and join the ranks of the *Haganah* ("The Defense" in Hebrew, a Jewish military organization that later will become the Israeli army). Among them is Mieczysław Biegun, later known

as **Menachem Begin**. A 1935 graduate of Warsaw University's law faculty, born in Brest (Polish: *Brześć*, Yiddish: *Brisk*) in Eastern Poland (now in Western Belarus), in 1977 Begin will become Israeli prime

1941 minister and will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978.

The death penalty is introduced by German authorities for Jews leaving ghettos without authorization. Thousands of Jews are executed as a result. Unlike in other German-occupied countries, the death penalty is also introduced by German author-



Abba Kovner (standing, center) among FPO fighters, 1943.

1942 ities for Poles providing any help for the Jews. Hundreds of Poles who helped Jews escape or hide are summarily murdered along with their families and neighbors.

1942 The first German death camp is set up in December in Kulmhof (Polish: *Chełmno nad Nerem*), prior to the infamous Wannsee Conference of January 1942, where the Final Solution policy will be confirmed. The Jews of Koło are the first victims. All of the German death camps (Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibór, Bełżec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Chełmno) are located in occupied Poland.

1942 The **United Partisan Organization** (FPO – from Yiddish *Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye*) is set up in the Wilno Ghetto by Abba Kovner and Yitzhak Wittenberg. Similar armed-resistance organizations are set up in Warsaw, Kraków, Białystok, and elsewhere.

The first transport of Jews following the Wannsee Conference reaches Auschwitz, originally set up in



Tosia Altman

1942 1940 as a concentration camp for the Polish intelligentsia, clergy, and members of the resistance. Auschwitz-Birkenau will claim about 1.1 million victims from Nazi-occupied Europe, 90% of them Jews.

The British BBC airs a program about the ongoing extermination of Polish Jews by the Germans. Emanuel Ringelblum writes on that day in his diary: "The *Oneg Shabbat* group fulfilled in this way its great historical mission: it alerted the world to our fate and maybe saved hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews from extermination (…). We struck the enemy with a strong blow. We have exposed his diabolical plan to murder all Polish Jews secretly."
The so-called *kashariyot* become a crucial element in the activities of Jewish underground in the German-occupied Eastern Europe. The term refers to a group of Jewish female couriers who, under false identities, establish and maintain connections

between isolated ghettos, as well with the non-Jewish resistance. The group's name comes from the



Janusz Korczak and

1942 Hebrew word for "connection"—*kesher*—as these brave women, smuggling weapons and money, fake documents and medicine, constitute a network between the ghettos, a lifeline that provides rare news and information from the outside world. The leader of the group is **Tosia Altman**, a member of Hashomer Hatzair before the war, serving now as a liaison between the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for the Polish: Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) and the Polish Home Army (AK, for the Pol-



Gela Seksztajn

1942 ish: Armia Krajowa). She will perish during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on May 26, 1943, at the age of twenty-three. Her friend Chajka (Haika) Grossman, another *kasharit*, will survive the war and become an Israeli politician and member of the Knesset.

Mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, codenamed in German *Großaktion Warschau* ("Great Action Warsaw" in German), begins on July 22, 1942. Judenrat chairman Adam Czerniaków commits suicide, unwilling to enact the German orders. Treblinka ultimately claims 850,000 Jewish victims over the 14 months of its existence. Among those deported and gassed are **Janusz Korczak** and **Stefania Wilczyńska**, who refused to abandon the children of their orphanage.



Irena Sendler

1942 On the thirteenth day of the great deportation, Izrael Lichtensztajn, a member of the *Oneg Shabbat* and close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum, together with his two students, Dawid Graber and Nachum Grzywacz, hide the first cache of the Ghetto archive in the basement of the Ber Borochov school in the Warsaw Ghetto. Izrael's wife, **Gela Seksztajn**, also working with *Oneg Shabbat,* was a Polish Jewish artist and painter, whose works were included in the secret archive. The second cache of the archive is hidden in January 1943 and the alleged third cache on the eve of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Out



Jan Karski

1942 of approximately 60 *Oneg Shabbat* collaborators, only three survive the war, Rachela Auerbach, and Bluma and Hersz Wasser, with the latter being the last person alive to know the location of the hidden documentation.

Żegota, the Polish Underground Council to Aid Jews, is set up by the Polish Government-in-Ex-ile on September 27. It is the only underground state-run organization in German-occupied Europe created solely to help Polish Jews. Its initiator, Catholic writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, publishes an appeal in the underground Catholic press condemning Allied and Polish inactivity in the face of the Holocaust two weeks

1942 after the beginning of the great deportation. At least several thousand Jews were saved by *Żegota*, among them almost 2,500 children rescued by *Żegota's* children's section, including over 200 saved by **Irena Sendler** (leading the section from October 1943)

1942 and her colleagues.

After secret visits to the Warsaw Ghetto and the transfer ghetto in Izbica Lubelska, the Polish Government-in-Exile courier and emissary **Jan Karski** (born Jan Kozielewski), successfully arrives in London in November. He delivers the first eyewitness account of the mass murder of Jews to the Polish, British, and American governments, including to the Prime Minister of Great Britain Winston Churchill and the President of the United States of America Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, they do not undertake any action in response. Karski, together with another emissary Jerzy Lerski, will later be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.



Bruno Schulz

1943 The Polish National Council (PNC) in London launches an appeal to the Allies to prevent what it calls "the German attempt to murder all the Jews in Europe."

On November 19, the writer **Bruno Schulz** is shot by

1943 a German Gestapo officer in the Drohobycz ghetto. The eastern Galician city of Drohobycz (today Drohobych in Ukraine) had become a booming center of the oil industry in the late 19th century, growing rapidly and attracting many Jewish entrepreneurs. Into one such merchant family of assimilated Polish Jews, Bruno was born in 1892. During the interbellum period he published two collections of short fiction, while also establishing himself as a painter and illustrator and art critic. Blending comedy and tragedy, the quaint and the grotesque, his works depict his personal obsessions and sketch out the uneasy mood of the interbellum period. A unique-

ly gifted fabulist, Schulz is now seen as one of the greatest authors of Polish prose of the 20th century. On December 10, Poland addresses an official Note to the Governments of the United Nations entitled „The Mass Extermination of Jews in German-Occupied Poland" calling on them to speed up military action and intensify international help to the remaining Jews.

1943 The next wave of deportations to Treblinka is halted for three months when, in January 1943, shots are fired on German wardens from among the deportees walked to the Umschlagplatz. It is the first act of armed struggle instigated by the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto.



Prewar photo of Mordechaj Anielewicz (standing, right) with Hashomer Hatzair members, Warsaw 1938.

1943 Resistance in the ghettos took on different forms: cultural, intellectual, physical and spiritual. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Szapira, Piaseczner tsaddik (Hassidic spiritual leader), during the war was known as the "Preacher of the Warsaw Ghetto," who recorded his weekly sermons, addressing the difficult questions of faith and religious observance in the face of increased suffering in the ghetto. In January 1943, prior to being transported to the sub-camp of Majdanek in Trawniki, **1943** where he will be killed ten months later, Rabbi Szapira gave his writings to *Oneg Shabbat*, together with a letter to his brother and Hasidim in Palestine. His work was later published in Israel in 1960 under the title "Esh Kodesh" ("The Holy Fire" in Hebrew).

As the tide of the war shifts, a new Communist-dominated Polish Army is set up in the Soviet Union under the command of General Zygmunt **1943** Berling. It is largely commanded by Soviet officers and includes many Polish Jews in its ranks.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, beginning on the eve of Passover, April 19, is the largest act of Jewish armed resistance in German-occupied Europe to date, trig-



Szmul Zygielbojm

gering smaller uprisings in the ghettos in Białystok, **1943** Częstochowa, and Będzin. Different organizations and factions operating in the Warsaw Ghetto, among them the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for Polish: *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*) led by **Mordechaj Anielewicz** and the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW, for **1943** Polish: *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*) led by Paweł Frenkel. Combat rages on for several weeks and sporadic fighting continues into June.
Anielewicz and most of the leaders of the Jewish

1943 Fighting Organization die in their besieged bunker at 18 Miła Street on May 8, 1943. A group of fighters, led by Marek Edelman and Szymon Rathajzer (Simcha Rotem), manage to escape the bunker and, with the help of the Polish underground, flee to the other side of the ghetto wall through the sewers. They join the Polish underground and continue to fight the Germans in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

Soviet partisans, allegedly among them also Jews from the Bielski brothers' squad, kill 129 Poles during a raid on Naliboki in Belarus. The villagers were falsely accused of collaborating with the Germans. On January 29,



Samuel Willenberg

1943 1944, another massacre perpetrated by the Soviet partisans will be committed in the village of Koniuchy.
On May 11, **Szmul Zygielbojm**, the Bund representative to the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, commits suicide in an act of protest to the world's indifference to the mass murder of Jews in Poland.

To mark the end of the Ghetto uprising and to proclaim that Europe's largest Jewish community had been exterminated and Warsaw made *Judenrein* ("cleansed
1943 of Jews" in German), on May 16, the Germans blow up the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street.
On July 11, the "Volhynian Bloody Sunday" marks the peak of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Ukrainian
1943 UPA partisans in the region with the help of Ukrainian locals. A series of bloody massacres, from February 1943 through the end of 1944, are now commonly known as the "Volhynian Slaughter." In its course, approximately 100,000 Poles, among them many hiding Polish Jews, are killed by Ukrainian nationalists in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (both nowadays in Western Ukraine). In reprisal, Polish partisans kill several thousand Ukrainians. The genocide will continue to this day to sour Polish-Ukrainian relations and provoke ongoing fervent debate about the events.



1944

Prisoners in the Treblinka death camp stage an uprising on August 2, attacking the Germans and auxiliary Ukrainian guards. Among the over 300 who manage to escape is **Samuel Willenberg**. He will later join Polish underground and will fight in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. After the war and emigration to Israel, he will become a famous sculptor and painter. He will be also active in reviving Polish-Israeli relations after the fall of Communism, considered as a war hero by both nations. The last survivor

of Treblinka, he passes away in 2016.

Prisoners of Sobibór death camp stage an uprising on October 14. In the outcome, twelve SS staff members are killed and, of the over 500 Jewish prisoners, three hundred manage to escape.

1944 After uprisings in Treblinka and Sobibór, the Germans decide to close all killing centers, apart from Auschwitz-Birkenau, and to liquidate the remaining Jewish population in other camps. In the process of the so-called *Aktion Erntefest* ("Operation Harvest Festival" in German), that takes place on November 3-4, approximately 43,000 Jewish inmates of Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki camps are shot. Afterwards, the district of Lublin **1944** is declared *Judenfrei* ("free of Jews" in German) by the Nazis.

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, Rachela Auerbach writes an essay titled "Yizkor" (*Yizkor* is the Hebrew word opening the memorial prayer for the dead recited on the most solemn Jewish holiday, *Yom Kippur*, The Day of Atonement), describing the destruction of Polish Jewry. **Rachela Auerbach**, born in 1903 in Podolia, a prewar journalist and poet writing both in Polish and Yiddish, during the war finds herself imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. She runs a soup kitchen on Leszno street, and is a close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum. One of the only three members of the Oneg Shabbat group to survive the war, Aurebach becomes a custodian of the memory of the destroyed Jewish community and works at the Jewish Historical Institute on retriev- **1944** al of the Ringelblum archives and documentation of German Nazi crimes. In 1950 she immigrates to Israel, where she works at Yad Vashem, before passing away in 1975.

In the course of the spring offensive, the Soviets take control of eastern Poland, including the city of Lublin and the concentration camp of Majdanek, the first concentration camp to be liberated. The evidence and the extent of German atrocities there is discovered.

An unelected, Communist-dominated government – The Polish Committee of National Liber-



Marek Edelman



Zivia Lubetkin

1944 ation (PKWN, Polish: *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*) is set up on July 22 by the Sovi-

ets in Lublin reconquered by the Red Army and Polish Army under General Berling. It has a separate bureau for Jewish affairs in its structure. The PKWN's policy of equal rights for Jews attracts



Liberated prisoners of Gęsiówka, August 1944.

1944 many of them and some receive high positions in the new regime. The conflicting opinions about the Soviet-installed government oppose many Jews to the non-Jewish majority rejecting the enforced Sovietization of Poland. The situation strengthens Polish popular antisemitism and the stereotype *of Żydokomuna* (literally: "Judeo-Communism" in Polish; an antisemitic presumption, dating back to Polish-Bolshevik war, which states that most Jews universally support the Soviets and thus are against Polish independence), already widespread in the interwar period.

Hundreds of Jews, who had previously been hiding in Warsaw during the German occupation, among them the veterans of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, including **Marek Edelman**, Antek Zuckerman and **Zivia Lubetkin**, and other Polish fighters and civilians, participate in the Warsaw

1944 Uprising that begins on August 1, triggered by German panic retreat in the last days of July. It is intended to chase out German forces from the city as the Red Army approaches from the east and to install sovereign Polish authorities in the liberated



Resettlement of Jews into the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, March 1940.



Róża Robota

1944 capital to counter the Lublin government (PKWN). Despite general Jewish support for the uprising, some 50 Jews are murdered by members of various right-wing Polish units.

On the fifth day of the uprising, soldiers of Polish Armia Krajowa (the "Home Army" in Polish) elite unit "Zośka" liberate 348 Jewish prisoners held in the German concentration camp "KL Warschau" on

Gęsia street, the so-called ***Gęsiówka***, established on the ruins of the former ghetto. Most of the liberated prisoners join the fight.

1944 The German forces regroup and begin to brutally quell the uprising, murdering tens of thousands of civilian Varsovians while advancing into the heart of the city. With Western allies providing no significant support and with Stalin's decision to halt the Soviet offensive on the east bank of the Vistula and wait for the uprising to be crushed by the Germans, the ill-fated 63-day-long battle is eventually lost and the insurgents surrender on October 3. The battle leaves the capital in ruins, with approximately 150,000 civilians and 16,000 Polish military killed, leaving no significant Polish forces to oppose the future Sovietization of the country. After the fall of the uprising, the Germans expel the remaining population (many are taken to concentration camps), and subsequently raze **1944** what has left of the city to the ground. The Vistula River that divides Warsaw from its east-bank district of Praga becomes a frontline for the next four months.

1944 The last 60,000 Jews from the **ghetto in Litzmannstadt** (Łódź, renamed by the Germans and annexed into the *Reich*), the longest existing ghetto in occupied Europe, are deported to Auschwitz by August 29, as the eastern front nears.
On October 7, a Jewish underground organization in Auschwitz-Birkenau stages an unsuccessful uprising upon learning that the *Sonderkommando* workers (prisoners forced to work in the crematoria) were selected for imminent killing. The **1944** underground managed to secure some arms, explosives, and gunpowder brought in secretly by female inmates, including **Róża Robota**, from the Monowitz chemical factory (part of the



| Władysław Szpilman

1945 camp's industrial complex known as *Auschwitz III - Monowitz*). In the revolt, three SS guards are killed and a dozen are wounded but almost all of the *Sonderkomanndo* workers are murdered, with Róża and three other women being hanged by the SS in January 1945.

As Soviet forces drive German forces out of eastern Poland, in August the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Polish: *Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich*, CKŻP) is organized in Lublin. Nearly 300,000 Jews will eventually register with the CKŻP, which organizes aid programs, providing food, housing, education, medical assistance, employment



| The gate of Auschwitz I concentration camp.

1945 and vocational services, as well as cultural activities and providing help in finding and tracing survivors. A "Committee to Help the Poles," which will eventually provide material assistance to dozens among



Righteous Among the Nations medals and diplomas handed over during a ceremony in the Polish Senate on 17th April 2012.

1945 those Poles who saved Jews during the war, is also set up.

The Bund becomes the first of eleven Jewish political parties to re-establish itself in the part of Poland already taken from the Germans. Three of them, including Agudat Israel, do so illegally. All active Jewish organizations support the Communist government, which they see as the sole bulwark of their security in the face of growing antisemitism. The majority of the population is vehemently opposed to the government, as it is illegitimately introduced by the Soviets against popular will. Jewish Communists become prominent in the new State apparatus, including the dreaded secret police. As suspected opponents of the new regime are jailed and deported, clashes bordering on civil war break out.

The Central Jewish Historical Commission (Polish: *Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*, CŻKH), the first institution in Poland to collect Holocaust documentation, survivor testimonies and evidence of war crimes, is established in Lublin.

The Red Army, having camped on the right bank of the Vistula River since September of 1944, takes the core of Warsaw in the course of the 1945 Winter Offensive. Close to 85% of the city lies in ruins. Out of the prewar population of over one million, only a few hundred men and women are living in hiding amid the ruins of the city's left bank since the end of the 1944 uprising. Among them are many Jews, including famous pianist **Władysław Szpilman**. On the day of liberation, January 17, those so-called "Warsaw Robinsons" re-emerge from their hideouts scattered around the sea of rubble, to greet the Soviet and Polish Berling Army forces entering Warsaw.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is liberated by the Soviet Army on January 27. In 2005, the UN will declare the date as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
On May 8, the war in Europe ends after 2,190 days.

Almost six million Polish citizens perished in World War II. Of these, three million were Polish Jews murdered by the Germans in death and concentration camps, ghettos, and execution sites. This constituted 90% of pre-war Poland's Jewish population. While some Jews trying to survive under the German occupation received help from the Poles, there were also some Poles, the so-called *szmalcownicy*, who blackmailed Jews in hiding or denounced them to the Germans. The majority of Poles were indifferent to Jewish suffering as, among other factors, they

VI. POST-WAR COMMUNIST POLAND 1945-1968

The war ended in stages as the Soviet army advanced from the east in 1944, with Auschwitz and Warsaw only liberated in January 1945. Withal, initiatives to rebuild the country begin immediately. The map of Poland, along with much of Central and Eastern Europe, is once again redrawn, this time based on the tripartite Roosevelt -Stalin-Churchill 1943 Teheran and 1945 Yalta conferences' agreements. Poland is to be shifted westwards, the Soviet Union, which will dominate the region until 1989, annexes the eastern half of prewar Poland, incorporating the cities of Lwów and Wilno, and the majority of the Belarussian and Ukrainian minorities. According to the stipulations of the Potsdam Peace Conference, Poland receives territorial "compensation" from the defeated Germany in the north and west with the cities of Breslau (Polish: *Wrocław*), Stettin (Polish: *Szczecin*), and now fully incorporated Free City of Danzig (Polish: *Gdańsk*).

After the genocide of Polish Jews, the expulsion of Germans and of the remaining Ukrainians, Poland's population becomes almost homogeneous.

A Communist-led government is imposed on the country against popular will. More than one and a half million Poles from the former eastern Poland, now part of the Soviet Union, are resettled within Poland's new borders. Many of those rendered homeless by the war, particularly residents of Warsaw, must find new homes as well. The remnants of the Jewish community, made up primarily of those who survived the war in the Soviet Union, begin to rebuild Jewish communal life. Some choose to affiliate with Jewish communities around the country, others opt to assimilate, while the majority choose to emigrate. Thousands of others, along with those who had been hidden as children during the war with no inkling of their Jewish roots, make their lives in post-war Poland.


Postwar Poland (1945-49)
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Lithuanian SSR
Belarussian SSR
Ukrainian SSR
SOVIET UNION
EAST GERMANY
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
BERLIN
PRAGUE
Dresden
Šiauliai
Klaipėda
Kaunas
Vilnius
Wilno
Kaliningrad
Koenigsberg
Brasław
Minsk
Suwałki
Hrodna
Grodno
Navahrudak
Nowogódek
Olsztyn
Allenstein
Elbląg
Elbing
Słupsk
Stolp
Gdańsk
Danzig
Koszalin
Köslin
Szczecin
Stettin
Grudziądz
Piła
Schneidemühl
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Łomża
Białystok
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Poznań
Konin
WARSAW
Siedlce
Brest
Brześć
Pinsk
Pińsk
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Grünberg
Leszno
Kalisz
Łódź
Głogów
Glogau
Sieradz
Radom
Lublin
Chełm
Kovel
Kowel
Lutsk
Łuck
Rivne
Równe
Legnica
Liegnitz
Wrocław
Breslau
Walbrzych
Waldenburg
Dzierżoniów
Reichenbach
Opole
Oppeln
Częstochowa
Kielce
Zamość
Tarnobrzeg
Gliwice
Gleiwitz
Katowice
Kraków
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Lviv
Lwów
Ternopil
Tarnopol
Stanislaviv
Stanisławów
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Nowy Sącz
Brno
Žilina
Košice
Mukachevo
Debrecen
Békès
Baia Mare
Suceava
Cluj-Napoca
Bacău
0.2 million
0.5 million
1.8 million
3.5 million
Borders of Poland in 1939
Curzon Line
Curzon Line "B"
Territory of Poland in 1946
Recovered Territories (acquired from Germany)
Territories lost to USRR
Lower Silesian cluster of Jewish Settlement
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
Cities with a larger Jewish population in 1946
20,000 – 30,000
15,000 – 20,000
10,000 – 15,000
5,000 – 10,000
Resettlement of:
Germans
Poles
Ukrainians and Belarusians
Polish Jews
1945-47 Emigration of Jews from Poland to the West (150,000)

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities. Some 200,000 Polish Jews begin returning from the Soviet Union. Many are met with growing hostility. Most resettle in the former German territories in what is now western Poland including the cities of Wroclaw and Szczecin. The town of **Dzierżoniów** (formerly German *Reichenbach*) with several other nearby localities in Lower Silesia, will become, for a short time, a center of Jewish life in Poland.



Jewish settlers in Dzierżoniów, 1960s.

1945 The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is granted the right to function in Poland anew. It is largely the Joint that will finance the reconstruction of post-war Jewish life, but it will be forced to discontinue its work temporarily in 1949. JDC will later return and will continue to support Jewish communal life.

1945 The Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw, used as a stable and storehouse by the Germans, is reopened. It becomes a meeting point for Jewish survivors looking for relatives and friends. The only other synagogue to survive in Warsaw, although also damaged, is the **Round Synagogue** in the Praga district. The first post-war pogrom takes place in Kraków on August 11, in the course of which at least one person is killed. Other pogroms will follow. In a climate of post-war lawlessness and growing internal political conflict, the total number of victims of anti-Jewish violence in Soviet-dominated Poland is estimated at between 500 and 2,000 in the period 1944-47.



The Round Synagogue

1945 The Polish Communist government signs a border treaty ceding to the Soviet Union the area located to the east of the so-called Curzon Line, being almost all of the Polish territories previously occupied by the Soviets under the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. As a result, approximately 1.8 million Poles eventually are resettled westward into Poland's new borders, mostly to the lands recently acquired from Germany. Officially, the formerly German area is proclaimed to be "Recovered Territories," as Communist propaganda tries to portray the border change as an act of historical justice, enacted through the return of Poland to its borders from the medieval times of the Piast dynasty, roughly six centuries earlier. Polish Jewish survivors from the eastern borderlands, who decide not to take Soviet citizenship, resettle into post-war Poland along

1945 with other Poles. At the same time, the remaining German population of the "Recovered Territories" is deported to areas within Germany's new borders.
The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized



Sholem Aleichem Jewish School in Wrocław.

1945 by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities.

Jewish schools are established in the larger cities in which Jews settled or were resettled after the war. By 1950, the Jewish school in Warsaw is closed and the remaining schools are nationalized. The curriculum is divested of Hebrew and Jewish history and, while Yiddish often remains part of the program, Polish studies are increased as Stalinist policies take
1945 hold. The I.L. Peretz School in Łódź and the **Sholem Aleichem School** in Wrocław will eventually be closed by the end of the 1960s, following the forced emigration of Jews in 1968.

The Communist government issues a decree about the nationalization of industry in Poland. The new authorities' general policy was gradually to nationalize all private and communal property. The return

1946 of pre-war Jewish communal property, in spite of a 1997 ruling, remains an issue which is being addressed by the Jewish communities in Poland and the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODŻ), as well the World Jewish Restitution Organization.
The first edition of "Folks Sztyme – Głos Ludu" ("People's Voice" respectively in Yiddish/Polish), an official Yiddish-language periodical sanctioned by the
1946 authorities and following the propaganda line of the Communist party, is published for the first time on April 19, 1946 in Łódź as a monthly journal. In 1949, it will be moved to Warsaw and will be issued weekly up until 1991.

One of the world's first Holocaust memorials, designed



The funeral of Kielce Pogrom victims.

1946

in the shape of a manhole cover with a sculpture of a sprouting plant and the letter "bet" signifying *bereshit* ("in the beginning" in Hebrew, the first word of the Torah), is dedicated in Warsaw by members of the Polish Jewish community on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Ghetto Uprising.

The **Kielce Pogrom** on July 4, provoked by a blood-libel rumor, claims at least 40 victims,

including three non-Jewish Poles who tried to stop the killing. It is the largest post-war pogrom in Poland. Attempts to provoke similar pogroms also occur in other cities. The pogroms are condemned by the liberal intelligentsia, but the Catholic Church largely keeps silent or expresses only general condemnations of "all violence." The primate of Poland, speaking to American journalists,

1946 says that the pogrom, though deplorable, is a result of Jews having too much power in the Communist government. Nonetheless, in subsequent show trials, several members of the mob are sentenced to death. The pogrom was widely suspected by Poles of being a provocation of the Communist regime to divert attention from the Communist power grab, but this has not been proven.



Ringelblum Archives discovery in 1946.

1946 Following the Kielce Pogrom, the Communist government unofficially allows mass Jewish emigration and permits the creation of armed Jewish self-defense units. The emigration of Jews from Poland accelerates. In the following months, tens of thousands of Polish Jews leave Poland heading to the West, first to DP

1947 (Displaced Persons) camps in Allied-occupied West Germany, then further on to America or Palestine.

The first cache of the buried **Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in the summer of 1942, is recovered from the ruins on Nowolipki Street in Warsaw on September 18. The collection includes diaries, documents, leaflets, newspapers, posters and paintings collected by the members of *Oneg Shabbat*.

1947 In the early months of 1947, the policy of the government changes and the borders are sealed. In the course of the so-called *Brichah* ("The Flight" in Hebrew; also a name of the clandestine Jewish organization supporting the mass emigration of Jews from post-Holocaust Europe to Palestine), out of some 250,000 Polish Jews who survived the Holo-

1947 caust, over 150,000 leave the country in the period between 1944 and 1947. The remaining Polish Jewish population is estimated at about 100,000.

Inspired by former prisoners, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is established at the site of the



The Jewish Historical Institute in the 1960s.

1947 camps by an act of the Polish Parliament. It is to commemorate "the martyrdom of the Polish and other nations." Jewish suffering is consistently underplayed throughout the Eastern Bloc. This will be corrected only after the fall of Communism in 1989.

A *Haganah* training camp, set up in the Lower Silesian town of Bolków under Polish Army auspices, provides military training for several thousand

1947 Zionist volunteers who then move to Palestine to fight for Israel's independence.

The **Jewish Historical Institute** (JHI; Polish: *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH*), successor to the Central Jewish Historical Commission, is established in Warsaw and housed in the former Main Judaic Library of the Great Synagogue. The Institute, which holds the Ringelblum Archives, is the largest repository of Polish Jewish material heritage in the world, with collections of wartime testimonies and survivor records, a vast collection of artwork and Judaica, pre-war press, books, and documentation.



The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes in the 1950s.

1948

1948 Poland actively supports the UN resolution on the partition of Mandate Palestine into Jewish and Arab territories.



Vladka Meed

1949 Amidst the sea of rubble that was once the Warsaw Ghetto, the **Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes**, designed by Polish Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport, is unveiled on the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A replica will be put up at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Memorial in 1976.

The State of Israel is proclaimed on May 14. Poland recognizes the new Jewish state on May 19. The first Israeli diplomatic mission opens in Poland, initially housed in Warsaw's Hotel Bristol.

A survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, **Vladka Meed** (1921-2012, born Feigele Peltel), publishes in Yiddish a recollection of her war experiences titled "Fun Beyde Zaytn Geto-Moyer" (English title: "On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto"). Vladka (after her Polish wartime pseudonym *Władka*), one of the *kashariyot*, during the German occupation served as a liaison between ŻOB and the Polish Home Army, and as a smuggler of weapons and explosives into the ghetto prior and during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 1946 migrates with her husband to the United States where she will become one of the founders of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Her book becomes one of the most important first-hand accounts and resources on the history of Jewish resistance in Warsaw, and was subsequently translated into English in 1972, Polish, German, and Japanese.

1950 As Stalinism grows more severe, the Bund and other Jewish parties are disbanded. Bundists and members of other leftist parties are strongly encouraged to join the recently created, unified Communist party (Polish: *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza,* PZPR, "Polish United Workers' Party"). Emigration



Review of the second cache of Ringelblum Archives, 1950.

to Israel is restricted. Independent Jewish organizations and institutions are closed down.

Polish Radio starts regular programs in Yiddish that will be continued up to 1958.

1951 The government sets up the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association (Polish: *Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów*, TSKŻ) to replace Jewish organizations which have been officially dissolved. The Union of Religious Congregations is the only other recognized Jewish organization. TSKŻ and the Union support Jewish communal life throughout the Communist period, but only a few Jewish cultural, social and educational activities are permitted to continue.

A **second cache of the Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in February 1943, is recovered on December 1. The archives, which have been listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register since 1999, are housed in the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

The *Jidysz Buch* ("Yiddish Book" in Yiddish) publishing house starts printing mass editions of Yiddish classics. The publishing house will be active until 1968.

A new Communist constitution is adopted on July 22, the eighth anniversary of the establishment of the first Communist government. Poland is renamed the Polish People's Republic (Polish: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL). The new constitution marks the high point of Stalinism in Poland.

Józef Światło (born Izaak Fleischfarb), a high-rank-



"The Dybbuk" by S. An-ski at the State Jewish Theater in Warsaw, season 1956/1957.



Władysław Gomułka addresses hundreds of thousands of people during a demonstration in Warsaw on October 24, 1956.

1956 ing official of the Ministry of Public Security supervising the torture of prisoners, escapes to the West. In a series of interviews broadcast in December to Poland by Radio Wolna Europa (Polish: Radio Free Europe) and the Voice of America, he describes in

detail the use of torture and other crimes committed by the Communists. These revelations shake the Polish Communist party, already disturbed by the death of Stalin in March.

The **State Jewish Theater** is formed through the merger of the Jewish Theater of Lower Silesia established in Wrocław in 1946 with the Jewish Theater in Łódź opened in 1949. The theater is directed by Ida Kamińska (Ester Rachel Kamińska's daughter) and settles permanently in Warsaw. Yiddish-language plays are still performed today, as interest in Polish Jewish and Yiddish culture continues to grow.

De-Stalinization in Poland is in progress. Władysław Gomułka becomes the new leader of Communist Poland during the so-called "Thaw" period **mass protests taking place in October**. The loosening of the regime brings both increased popular antisemitism and new repatriations of Jews from the Soviet Union. Almost 20,000 Jews arrive from the Soviet Union, however most of them, around 13,000, will soon migrate farther to the West. The JDC is once more permitted to operate. An aliyah known in Israel as "Gomułka's Aliyah" starts with another wave of Jews numbering up to 50,000 emigrants leaving



Front cover of the 1957 edition of Piechotkas' book Bóżnice Drewniane (Wooden Synagogues).

1957 Poland in the years 1956-60. By 1960, approximately 45,000 Jews still live in Poland. There are seven active Jewish State Schools, in: Łódź, Wrocław, Dzierżoniów, Wałbrzych, Legnica, Szczecin, and Katowice.

A Polish-language addition to "Folks Sztyme" entitled



Wojciech Jerzy Has.

"Nasz Głos" ("Our Voice" in Polish), directed to Polish-Jewish youth, is published for the first time with 24-year-old Szmul Tenenblatt as its chief editor.

First edition of ***Bóżnice drewniane*** ("Wooden Synagogues" in Polish) is published. Co-created by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka, the book is a pioneering work on the architecture of Baroque wooden synagogues that were characteristic of territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

1962 After a three-year-long renovation, a branch of the Kraków City Museum opens in the Old Synagogue in Kraków's district of Kazimierz.

The Round Synagogue, located on Warsaw's right-bank district of Praga, the only other synagogue in Warsaw to survive the War apart from the Nożyk

synagogue, is demolished after being partially ruined since the war, due to the combination of ill will of the authorities and a lack of Jewish communal funds for renovation.

1967

The premiere of "Samson," a film by future Academy Award winner Andrzej Wajda, telling the story of the Holocaust experience. Wajda is a representative of an informal group of Polish film directors and screenwriters whose activity between 1955 and approximately 1963 is described as the "Polish Film School." Among the most important topics treated in their works is World War II and the Holocaust. Artists of Jewish origin such as Roman Polański, Janusz Morgenstern, and **Wojciech Jerzy Has** were prominent members of the group. Polish directors will continue to raise important issues about Polish Jewish history through film works in the decades to come.



Workers' meeting organized by the Communist party, with banners saying in Polish "Zionists to Israel," during the 1968 antisemitic campaign.

1968

Opening of the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association's Youth Club Babel in Warsaw.

The Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council issues a breakthrough declaration "Nostra Aetate" on relations with Judaism, opening opportunities for dialogue between the two religions.

In the wake of the Six-Day War, following the Soviet lead, Poland breaks off diplomatic relations with Israel. Most Poles, including non-Jews, cheer Israel's victory in the war, going against the official line of the Communist party that supports the Arab countries in the conflict.

With Gomułka still at the helm during the late 1960s, control of the government is gradually taken by Communist hardliners flirting with Polish nationalism. During this year of worldwide youth unrest, student strikes and demonstrations in support of democratic socialism erupt in many Polish universities in early March. They are suppressed by the regime with police force.

Many of the so-called **March'68** activists are identified as Jews, triggering the Communist regime's so-called anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. About 15,000 Polish Jews are pressured into emigration, their Polish citizenship revoked. Jewish schools around the country are closed. Remaining Jewish organizations are largely prevented from functioning. The Jewish Historical Institute, TSKŻ, and the State Yiddish Theatre in Warsaw are the only secular Jewish institutions that will continue to function, apart from the religious congregations. «

VII. JEWISH LIFE IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (PRL) 1968-1989

The expulsion of Polish Jews in 1968 is one of the most passionately debated issues in contemporary Polish Jewish history. While some Jews who remain in Poland go further underground, others begin to clandestinely explore their Jewish roots. During this period, several Jews create "the Flying Jewish University," following a Polish tradition of underground study during political repression. It is from this group that the founders of the revival of Jewish communal life after the fall of Communism in 1989 will come.



Kniefall von Warschau, Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1970.

Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany, during a state visit in Warsaw on December 7, kneels in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in a famous and symbolic gesture of penitence.

1970 Mass protests in the port cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg, and Szczecin against the rise of state-controlled prices of food, when they begin to evolve into a revolt against the regime, are suppressed by the army. Brutal suppression leaves 42 civilian protesters dead. Eventually, Gomułka is forced to resign. A new Communist government is formed by Edward Gierek. Under his rule, Poland anxiously opens to the West, as the regime is relatively moderate in comparison with those in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc.

150 artists, writers and Jewish activists meet in Śródborów, a TSKŻ retreat outside of Warsaw, to celebrate the 25 anniversary of *„Folks-Sztyme."*

1971

Zew Wawa Morejno of Łódź, the last rabbi in Poland, is forced to emigrate.

Poland, like most of the Eastern Bloc countries, votes in favor of the UN's "Zionism is Racism" resolution.

Hanna Krall, hidden child survivor and a well-known Polish author, publishes an exclusive interview with Marek Edelman "Zdążyć przed panem Bogiem" (English title: "Shielding the Flame"), which will be listed as required reading in Polish high schools.

Renovation of the Nożyk Synagogue begins, it having been closed since 1968. Religious services are held in the adjacent community building.



Isaac Bashevis Singer

1978 Polish-born Yiddish writer **Isaac Bashevis Singer**



Pope John Paul II by the Western Wall during his visit to Jerusalem.

wins the Nobel Prize for Literature and becomes widely published in Poland in Polish translation.

Kraków Cardinal Karol Wojtyła is elected pope. As **John Paul II**, he will spearhead a breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish relations by clearly and consistently calling antisemitism a sin and seeking out ties with Jews as Christians' "elder brothers in faith."

In the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a pavilion commemorating Jewish victims is opened.

Pope John Paul II makes his first official visit as Pope to Poland in June. The visit galvanizes the nation in opposition to the ruling Communist party, eventually leading to the creation of the Solidarity movement.

The Polish socialist economy falls into structural crisis and public dissent against Communism grows. As a result, the democratic opposition formalizes by the mid-1970s. One of its aspects is the creation of the unofficial "Jewish Flying University," set up in



Lech Wałęsa and the famous „Solidarity" logo.

1979 in Warsaw by, among others, Konstanty Gebert and Stanisław Krajewski. In the future, they will become intellectual and communal leaders of the revival of Jewish life in Poland.

The Solidarity movement is established after a victorious strike, led by **Lech Wałęsa**, in the Gdańsk shipyard, with subsequent strikes erupting in support throughout the country. The story will later be told by the European Center of Solidarity in Gdańsk, which will be opened in 2014.

Solidarność ("Solidarity" in Polish), in a year's time becomes a 10,000,000-strong trade union, with one in three adult Poles being its member, campaigning for human rights and political self-determination. *Solidarność* condemns


Jan Jagielski (center)

antisemitism, although some expressions of antisemitism reverberate within its ranks. Many assimilated Jews will be at the forefront of the movement. After 1989, Polish Jewish members of Solidarity and underground activists will lead the revival of Jewish communal institutions.

The Citizens' Committee for Jewish Cultural Monuments is set up. It focuses largely on the preservation of cemeteries. It is the first organization dedicated to Jewish heritage preservation legalized since 1950. One of its co-founders is **Jan Jagielski**, who will become the head of the heritage documentation section of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. For his work, he receives a number

of awards and honors, including the Irena Sendler Memorial Award in 2009.

The Polish Communist military stages a coup and declares **martial law** on December 13, to defend the Communist regime and, allegedly, to prevent Soviet military intervention in Poland. Some 5,000 Solidarity activists are interned without trial and the trade union is eventually banned. Though about 100 people will be killed in the years following the coup, nonviolent responses to the military take-over will eventually lead to the fall of Communism eight years later.



Polish People's Army tanks on the streets during martial law.

The Polish government authorizes the JDC's re-entry into Poland.

1982 As Poland remains internationally isolated following the military coup of 1981, the Communist authorities invite Jews worldwide, including some from Israel, to participate in the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Former uprising deputy commander and Solidarity activist Marek Edelman calls on visitors to boycott the official ceremonies, yet his appeal goes unheeded. Unofficial ceremonies, organized by the Jewish Flying University, are disrupted by police. The anniversary is covered in both the official and underground press and spurs a publishing boom of books of Jewish interest, which will continue unabated.



Nożyk Synagogue

1983 Artist and photographer Monika Krajewska publishes "Czas Kamieni" ("Time of Stones" in Polish), a book about abandoned and forgotten Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and other Jewish material heritage in the country. It is the first publication to document and discuss the state of neglect and oblivion of Jewish heritage in Communist Poland and to educate readers about symbolism in these artifacts of material heritage.

1983 The **Nożyk Synagogue** in Warsaw is reopened after six years of renovation. The city's only synagogue serves in the 1980s a small community of mostly elderly Jews, but it will become a center of Jewish life after the fall of Communism. An iconic symbol of Jewish continuity in the country's capital, it continues to serve the growing Warsaw community.

1984 Sigmund Nissenbaum, a Holocaust survivor born in Warsaw, establishes the Nissenbaum Family Foundation, which will finance the restoration and preservation of many Jewish cemeteries and cultural monuments in Poland.

First informal contacts between the Polish and Israeli governments since 1967 are established.

A Carmelite convent is set up near the site of the Auschwitz I concentration camp and is met with international protests.

The first conference on the history of Polish Jews is held at Somerville College in Oxford, England. Several Polish historians participate. The conference launches the Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies

1986 (IPJS) at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and leads to contacts between academics in Poland, the U.S., and Israel.



Collegium Casimirianum, the seat of the Center of Polish Jewish Studies of the Jagiellonian University.

1986

An abbreviated version of Claude Lanzmann's documentary "Shoah" is shown on Polish State TV. Debate in the official and underground press

1986 ensues. The full version is subsequently shown in cinemas.

1987 The first volume of "Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry" is published in Oxford. By 2018, there will be 31 volumes.

Poland and Israel establish interest sections in the Dutch Embassy in Warsaw and in the Polish PKO Bank's Tel Aviv branch.

The **Center for Polish Jewish Studies** opens at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. By 2018, Jewish studies departments are opened at major universities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź, and Lublin.

The Polish Episcopate's Commission for Dialogue



Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

1987

with Judaism is initiated.

The first major public discussion on wartime Polish-Jewish relations is triggered by the publication in Catholic opposition weekly "Tygodnik Powszechny" of an essay by Jan Błoński "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto" ("The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" in Polish), stating that Poles, as witnesses to the Shoah, bear a moral responsi-

1987 bility which they have yet to acknowledge.

1987 The Catholic Church and Jewish organizations sign an agreement stipulating that the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz will be moved in 1989.

In Kraków, Janusz Makuch and Krzysztof Gierat organize a series of events presenting Polish Jewish culture, which will eventually become the world-famous **Kraków Jewish Culture Festival**. From a modest local event, the festival has grown into one of the most important cultural events in Poland, drawing performers and presenters from around the world. Each year, the festival features more than



The Umschlagplatz memorial

1988 300 events during 10 days of programs and draws more than 25,000 participants from Poland and around the world.
A direct air link between Warsaw and Tel Aviv is established.



Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz

1988

The March of the Living is held for the first time in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1988 A worldwide invitation is extended by the Polish government to Jews to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The anti-Communist opposition, boycotting the large official ceremony as it was seen as propaganda, commemorates the anniversary with its own ceremony at The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes. The authorities this time do not intervene.
The Memorial Route to the Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews is created between the Ghetto Uprising Memorial and a new monument erected on the site of the **Umschlagplatz**, from which Jews were transported to Treblinka in 1942-43.
Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz, a Polish-born Israeli and Auschwitz survivor, becomes Poland's first Chief Rabbi after a two-decade-long hiatus.

A summer Jewish educational retreat which focuses on Jewish tradition and observance is organized outside of Warsaw by a small group of Polish Jews. It will lay the foundations for the creation of future Jewish educational initiatives.

The first post-war Jewish kindergarten, started by a small group of Jewish families, opens in a private apartment in Warsaw.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation begins operating in Poland. The RSLF and the JDC will finance the rebuilding of much of Poland's Jewish communal infrastructure in the 1990s. «

VIII. THE REBIRTH OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND 1989-present

In 1989, Poland becomes the first Soviet Bloc country to dismantle its Communist system. Following groundbreaking negotiations, semi-free elections are held in June and the first non-Communist government is formed under Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a former political internee. Jewish communities, suppressed for decades under Communism, begin to re-emerge and to re-establish Jewish communal institutions. The revival of Polish Jewish life, with its spiritual leaders, Polish-born Rabbi Chaskel Besser and American-born Rabbi Michael Schudrich, was initially supported by American Jewish foundations in the United States, such as the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, as well as significantly by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and other organizations worldwide. Since the start of the 21st

century, philanthropist Tad Taube, born in Kraków, has become one of the largest American Jewish patrons of Poland's Jewish cultural renaissance and works in concert with donors such as Sigmund Rolat, Victor Markowicz, David Mitzner (z"l), and Irene Pletka, and foundations such as the JDC, the Rothschild Foundation, the Koret Foundation, Hanadiv Europe, the Dutch Humanitarian Fund, the Shavei Israel Foundation, and others. The generations coming of age in post-Communist Poland are moving the Jewish community toward sustainability and a vibrant future.


Jewish Experience in Contemporary Poland
Baltic Sea
RUSSIA
LITHUANIA
BELARUS
GERMANY
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
UKRAINE
HUNGARY
Kaunas
Kaliningrad
Nemen
Slupsk
Gdynia
Gdańsk
Koszalin
Tczew
Elbląg
Olsztyn
Sejny
Suwałki
Ełk
Hrodna
Szczecin
Grudziądz
Piła
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Vistula
Noteć
Oder
Łomża
Tykocin
Białystok
Narew
Ostrołęka
Orla
Gorzów Wielkopolski
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Bug
Poznań
Konin
Warta
WARSAW
Siedlce
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Leszno
Głogów
Krotoszyn
Kalisz
Łódź
Bóbr
Sieradz
Ostrów Wielkopolski
Pilica
Wieprz
Włodawa
Pripyat
Radom
Kazimierz Dolny
Przysucha
Piotrków Trybunalski
Szydłowiec
Lublin
Kovel
Chełm
Legnica
Wrocław
Kamienna Góra
Wałbrzych
Częstochowa
Chęciny
Kielce
Szczebrzeszyn
Zamość
Szczekociny
Chmielnik
Opole
Oder
Tarnobrzeg
Pińczów
Vistula
San
Gliwice
Katowice
Dąbrowa Tarnowska
Rzeszów
Markowa
Kraków
Oświęcim
Tarnów
Lviv
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Bobowa
Przemyśl
Rymanów
Lesko
Dniester
PRAGUE
Elbe
Žilina
Prešov
Váh
Zvolen
Mukachevo
Seats of Jewish communities
Selected historic synagogues
Selected historic cemeteries
Lauder-Morasha School
Jewish Community Centers
Jewish studies
Jewish press
Theaters
Major festivals
Museums
Hillels
Taube Center
1:4,300,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

1989 On June 4, the first elections since the end of World War II to include opposition parties bring the anti-Communist opposition to power.

1989 Poland replaces Hungary as the main transit point for Soviet Jews moving to Israel. Tens of thousands transit through Warsaw without incident.

The Polish Council of Christians and Jews is established.

Poland becomes the second ex-Communist country, after Czechoslovakia, to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel.



Agnieszka Holland in 2017

The historical drama "Europa Europa," directed by **Agnieszka Holland**, premiers on November 14. The film wins the 1991 Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film and is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. It is one of the first films about the Holocaust in post-Communist Poland, and so is not subject to the censorship of the state. Holland, herself Jewish, is a leading Polish film director of the post-war generation who has portrayed the Holocaust in several internationally celebrated films.

1990 Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa is elected president. His use of antisemitic innuendo against his rival Tadeusz Mazowiecki is condemned by a large segment of public opinion.

1991

Polish delegates participate in the First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II in New York City. They return to Poland and establish the Association of the Children of the Holocaust. Many of the "hidden children," saved and raised by non-Jewish Poles, begin to seek out their Jewish roots and become active in Jewish communal life, as do many of their children and grandchildren.

The Catholic Church publishes a pastoral letter deploring antisemitism.

1991 President Lech Wałęsa visits Israel. In a speech to the Knesset, he asks forgiveness for wrongs committed against Jews by his country throughout history.

1992 "Menora" is the first kosher restaurant in 30 years to open in Warsaw.

Chaim Herzog, President of Israel, visits Poland. It is the first Israeli state visit to Poland. Polish-Israeli ties will continue to develop and strengthen.



A meeting of ZOOM, the Polish Youth Organization.

1992

Poland co-sponsors the repeal of the UN's "Zionism is racism" resolution.

1992

The Polish Union of Jewish Students (Polish: *Polska Unia Studentów Żydowskich*, PUSZ) is founded. It will be succeeded by **ZOOM**, the Polish Jewish Youth Organization, in 2007.

TSKŻ begins to publish "Słowo Żydowskie – Dos Yiddishe Vort" ("The Jewish Word" in Polish/Yiddish) in Yiddish and Polish. It is the successor to "Folks-Sztyme".

Under pressure from Pope John Paul II, the convent in Auschwitz finally relocates.

1993

The 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is commemorated with the participation of Polish President Lech Wałęsa and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland is recognized as the legal successor to pre-war Jewish communities. The Union currently represents and serves Jewish communities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków, Łódź, Lublin, Szczecin, Katowice, Bielsko-Biała, Poznań, Legnica, Gdańsk, and Białystok.



The Lauder-Morasha School



"And I Still See Their Faces"

1994

The **Lauder-Morasha School**, the first primary school under Jewish auspices in Warsaw since 1949, opens with a first grade of 18 students. In 1999, Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek will participate in the dedication ceremony of the school's permanent home, quoting the Talmud in his remarks.

"**And I Still See Their Faces**," an exhibition of pre-war photos of Jews and Jewish families collected from the public at large by the Shalom Foundation, is enthusiastically received in Warsaw and around the world. Its catalogue sells out immediately.

The Polish Association of Jewish Studies is launched in Kraków.

1996

An international commemoration marks the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Inside Poland, it fosters public discourse and Holocaust education, shedding light on the history of the Nazi death camps and the extermination of Europe's Jewry – a history that had been distorted or denied during the Communist era.

At a commemoration for the 50th anniversary of the Kielce Pogrom, Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz



"Midrasz"

1997 Cimoszewicz expresses contrition.

The Sejm passes a law governing relations between the State and Jewish Religious Communities allowing, among other things, for the partial restitution of pre-war Jewish communal property seized by the State. To date, there is no law regulating the restitution of private properties of Jews or other Polish citizens.
"**Midrasz**" magazine is launched. Founded by Konstanty Gebert, it is the first Polish-language Jewish monthly published in decades. The annual Jewish Book Festival is inaugurated a year later.

The Conference of the Episcopate of Poland declares an annual "Day of Judaism" to be celebrated by the Catholic Church and parishes around the country on January 17 each year.

1999

The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations is created. The Forum's educational and leadership development initiatives foster Polish-Jewish dialogue, promoting tolerance and understanding through

2000 exchange programs, publications and school-based educational programs.

Beit Warszawa, a Reform congregation and a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, is founded in Warsaw.


The Auschwitz Jewish Center

2000 Professor Bronisław Geremek, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and at this time Polish Foreign Minister, signs accession of Poland to NATO.
The publication of Jan Gross' book "Sąsiedzi" ("Neighbors" in Polish), documenting the July 10, 1941 wartime massacre of local Jews by local


Shevah Weiss

2001 Poles in the town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland, sets off anguished public debate about

the involvement of some Catholic Poles in the Holocaust.

The **Auschwitz Jewish Center**, now affiliated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, opens



Memorial to the victims of the 1941 pogrom in Jedwabne.

2001 in the renovated Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, comprised of an educational center and a museum presenting the Jewish history of the town of Oświęcim (German: *Auschwitz*, Yiddish: *Oshpitzin*).

Shevah Weiss, former Israeli Knesset Speaker, becomes Ambassador to Poland. Weiss, rescued by a Polish Catholic family during the war, becomes one of the leaders of the Polish Jewish dialogue and he is awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit

2001 of the Republic of Poland in 2004 and the highest Polish medal, the Order of the White Eagle, in 2017.

Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, at a 60th-anniversary commemoration in **Jedwabne**, expresses contrition for the wartime massacre, mark-

2002 ing the first official apology by a Polish head of state for crimes against Jews committed by non-Jewish Poles during the Holocaust. Local residents boycott the ceremony, as does the Catholic Church – which, however, held an earlier penitential service of its own, attended by half of Poland's bishops.

2003

The first post-war edition of the Torah with Polish translation is published in Poland by Pardes Lauder, followed by the publishing of a prayer book and a Passover *Haggadah*, as well as other Jewish texts.

2003

The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (Polish: *Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Żydowskiego*, FODŻ) is established by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish

2003 Restitution Organization (WJRO) to preserve Jewish heritage sites in Poland and to promote awareness of the history of Polish Jewish communities.

Two Jewish film festivals (the Warsaw Jewish Film Festival and the Jewish Motifs Film Festival) are launched in Warsaw and draw large crowds during each of their editions.

The Jewish Agency for Israel in Poland assumes responsibility for Taglit-Birthright Poland. By 2018, it will have sent more than 800 participants on ten-day tours of Israel.



Rabbi Michael Schudrich

2004 The Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland (JHIP), established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish

2004 Life & Culture, is created to support and promote



The Galicia Jewish Museum

2004 Jewish culture and education.

The Professor Moses Schorr Foundation, named in memory of the last rabbi of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, is established to support the
2004 expanding adult education programs of the Moses Schorr Center in Warsaw. The Center, Poland's largest Hebrew-language program, also offers lecture series and seminars, an intensive summer school, and an e-platform "Mikledet."

Rabbi Michael Schudrich is appointed Chief Rabbi of Poland. Rabbi Schudrich previously served as Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź.
Poland joins the European Union on May 1.
The **Galicia Jewish Museum**, created by photographer Chris Schwartz and Professor Jonathan Webber, opens in Kraków. The museum celebrates and commemorates Jewish life in Polish Galicia.
2005

2006

The Warsaw Rising Museum, commemorating the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, is established with a section on the Jewish participation in the armed revolt.

2007

"Czulent," a Jewish youth and student group, is created in Kraków.


Tad Taube

2007

The first annual "Singer's Warsaw" festival, a celebration of Yiddish culture and I.B. Singer's writings, is organized in September by the Shalom Foundation in Warsaw.

2007

Chabad-Lubavitch opens a center in Warsaw, followed by a center that opens in Krakow the following year.

Polish-born Rabbi Maciej Pawlak, ordained in the U.S., becomes principal of the Lauder-Morasha Jewish Day School in Warsaw.

Tad Taube, founder and chairman of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, is named Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area.

2007

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews is held in Warsaw's district of Muranów, facing the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes.

2008

The Polish State Radio's "Kol Polin" ("Voice of Poland" in Hebrew) service starts broadcasting in Hebrew. It will continue to broadcast until 2014.

2008

The long-neglected building of the Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin is renovated. The former lodging rooms of the students now serve as a hotel, while the synagogue maintained by the Warsaw Jewish Community is reopened and rededicated. An accompanying museum about the Yeshiva and its founder, Rabbi Majer Szapira (Meir Shapiro), opens in 2017.



One of the Ghetto Wall markers.

2008

Lech Kaczyński becomes the first Polish President to visit a synagogue and light Hanukkah candles in the Presidential Palace. This tradition of presidential Hanukkah candle lightings continues to this day.

2008

The commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the March 1968 ant-Zionist campaign, begin a discussion on the restitution of Polish citizenship to Jews who were expelled. In the following years, hundreds will receive Polish passports. Among them is well-known Israeli author Etgar Keret.


Jewish Community Center in Kraków.

2008

The Polish Year in Israel, a nationally-sponsored cultural promotion program, is celebrated.

2008

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the City of Warsaw and the Jewish Historical Institute create the "Ghetto Borders" installation in Warsaw. The project consists of **21 markers** erected at different points along the borders of the former ghetto and signs in Polish and English embedded in the sidewalks marking the former Ghetto Wall. An additional, twenty second marker will be put up on Sienna Street in 2010 at the initiative of students of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Public High School.

2009

As a result of a visit from Prince Charles of Wales, the **Jewish Community Center in Kraków** is opened with the support of World Jewish Relief, the JDC and the Jewish Community of Kraków. It serves the city's growing Jewish community.



The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

2009 Righteous Among the Nations honoree Irena Sendler dies at age 98. Sendler, a social worker and a member of anti-Nazi underground organization „Żegota" which rescued about 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto, had been previously nominated by the Polish government for the Nobel Peace Prize.

2009

A premiere of the first ever Polish-Israeli film coproduction, "Spring 1941" (Polish title: "Wiosna 1941"), takes places on December 1. The story of an Israeli violinist who comes after many years to Poland to play concert, and relives her war trauma and the loss of her family during the Holocaust, is based on a book by awarded Polish-born Israeli writer, Ida Fink, a Holocaust survivor herself.

The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center, is established as a department of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. It grew from a project dating back to 1994 created by the Lauder

2009 Foundation. The Center, which helps Jews with Polish roots and Poles with Jewish roots explore their family heritage, assists in finding documentation, reconstructing family histories and reuniting lost family and friends.

The **Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute** (formerly the Jewish Historical Institute) is formally established by Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage at the initiative of JHI's director Dr. Eleonora Bergman.

The Irena Sendler Memorial Award is established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture to honor Poles who contribute to the preservation of Jewish life and promote Jewish culture in Poland. Janusz Makuch, creator and director of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, is the first recipient.



Marek Edelman and Alina Margolis-Edelman

Future honorees will include Jan Jagielski, director of the Jewish Historical Institute's Historical Documentation Department, former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska, honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 2009, who worked with Irena Sendler, helping save Jewish children

2009 from the Warsaw Ghetto.

Marek Edelman, deputy commander of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, veteran of the 1944 Warsaw

2010 Uprising, well-known cardiologist and an active and important member of Solidarity, passes away in Warsaw and receives a state funeral in the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery with full military honors. A year earlier he

is widowed by **Alina Margolis-Edelman**, also a Holocaust survivor and a veteran of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Although Marek Edelman decided not to leave Poland during the antisemitic campaign in

2010 1968, Alina with their children was forced to migrate to France, where she was later involved, cooperating with Bernard Kouchner, in the *Doctors Without Borders* initiative and later the *Doctors of The World*,

2010 as well in providing help to political dissidents in Poland in 1970-80s. In 2011, an award named in her



Inside the Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum in Kraków.

2010 honor was established to recognize those who work to protect children.

Beit Kraków, a Reform congregation, is established in the city.

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture establishes the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Polish: *Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce*) in Warsaw.

2010 Ec Chaim, a progressive community, is opened in Warsaw under the auspices of the Jewish Community. Stas Wojciechowicz is selected as its rabbi.

2010 By 2010, rabbis, with the support of the Union of Polish Jewish Communities, Shavei Israel, and other organizations, serve communities in Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice, Łódź, and Wrocław. The rabbis, along with students from Warsaw's Kollel, provide religious and spiritual outreach and Jewish learning opportunities in smaller communities, including Gdańsk and Lublin.

The Yiddish Culture Center is opened in Warsaw by the Shalom Foundation, joining the Foundation's Open Jewish University and University of the Third Age.

2012 The Polish Association of Yiddish Studies is launched in Warsaw.

A branch of the Kraków City Museum in the former **Schindler factory** opens in Kraków. The Museum documents the fate of the inhabitants of Kraków during the Nazi occupation with a special focus on the destruction of Jewish Kraków.



Alina Szapocznikow

2012 The Second Generation Association, children of survivors, is created by and for Jews raised during the Communist period. This is the first initiative of its kind in Poland.

A memorial service is held by the Jewish commu-

nity in the Nożyk Synagogue for the Polish President Lech Kaczyński, First Lady and 94 other victims of the Smoleńsk plane crash of April 10, 2010.



POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

2013

The Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków celebrates its 20th year with more than 25,000 attendees from all over the world.

The Bauman family establishes the Janina Bau-



The glass bimah in Chmielnik.

2013 man Prize, for publishing a dissertation addressing an area of "significant ethical or moral relevance," which was the main area of interest of Janina Bauman, a Polish Jewish writer, and the wife of a one of the most important philosophers and sociologists of the latter half of the 20th century, Zygmunt Bauman. The Baumans were both Holocaust survivors

2013 who left Poland in 1968, settling eventually in Leeds, with part of their work focused on tracing connections between modernity and the Holocaust.

The first March of Remembrance commemorating the July 22, 1942 deportations of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, is organized by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute with the walk



Postage stamps commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.



Simcha Rotem (left) in 1943.

2013 starting at the Umschlagplatz and ending at the site of Janusz Korczak's *Dom Sierot* ("Orphans' House" in Polish).

An art exhibition titled "Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955–1972" opens at the New York's Museum of Modern Art contributing to rediscovery of sculptress' artist work. **Alina Szapocznikow**

2013 (born 1926 in Kalisz), a holocaust survivor of Pabianice and Litzmannstadt ghettos, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, and Theresienstadt, after the war studied at Parisian École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, becoming one of the leading Euro-



Jewish Community Center in Warsaw.

2014 pean surrealism, *Nouveau réalisme*, and pop-art artists working mainly in bronze and stone.

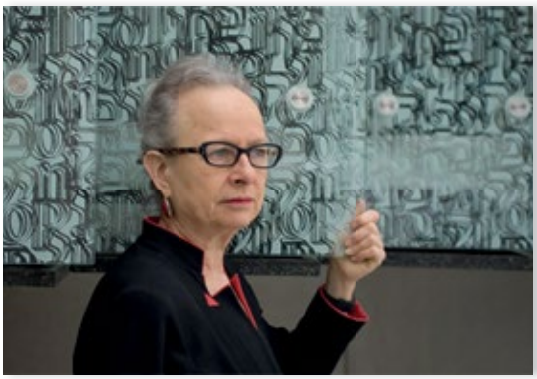
The construction of **POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews** is completed. The building, designed by Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamäki and located next to the Ghetto Heroes' Monument in the heart of Warsaw's Muranów, is made accessible to the public.

The Museum & Educational Centre "Świętokrzyski Sztetl" is inaugurated in the town of Chmielnik, a former shtetl. Housed in the town's renovated synagogue, the center becomes famous for its **glass**

2014 ***bimah***, inspired by the 18th-century original platform that was destroyed during the war.

2014 The **70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** is widely commemorated by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, with a state ceremony held by the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes, during which the last surviving veterans of the uprising, **Simcha Rotem** and Havka Folman -Raban (d. 2016), give a memorable speech. Bells toll in the churches of Warsaw and ecumenical prayers are recited during the public commemoration.

On June 13, a renovated Jewish national exhibi-



Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

2014 tion prepared by the Yad Vashem Institute opens at Block 27 in the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

In the Polish capital, the **Jewish Community Cen-**

2014 **ter in Warsaw** is opened. Located in the center of the city, it is a project of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the Taube and Koret Foundations.

The Makabi Warsaw Sport Club is officially relaunched by young Polish Jews after a 74-year-long hiatus. Makabi continues the pre-war tradition of the Makabi organization established in 1915 in Warsaw.

2015 The Ride for the Living, an annual fundraising event organized by the JCC Kraków under the patronage of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, is inaugurated. The 55-mile bicycle ride from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to the Kraków JCC

2015 follows the route of 10-year-old Auschwitz survivor Marcel Zieliński. After liberation by the Red Army, he walked all the way from the camp to Kraków

in a search for his mother, with whom he reunited eventually in August 1945. The ride draws participants from Poland and around the world and the funds raised support Jewish life in Kraków.



Władysław Bartoszewski

2015 The Marek Edelman Center for Dialogue in Łódź opens in its permanent space in the Park of Survivors.

2015 The POLIN museum's Core Exhibition, created by a team led by chief curator **Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**, opens on October 28. It is funded by a unique public-private partnership among the

2015 Polish Government, the City of Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute Association and individual and institutional donors worldwide. The Museum

2016 will transmit, through state-of-the-art and virtual exhibits, the 1,000-year long history of Polish Jews. It quickly becomes a focal point on the map of contemporary Jewish Poland.
Hashomer Hatzair renews the activity of the group of Polish-Jewish teens.

2016 The director of the Taube Center, Helise Lieberman, is awarded the prestigious Bene Merito Medal "for a friend of Poland, in recognition for contributions made to the promotion and strengthening of the Republic of Poland on the international arena," by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The fellow honorees were Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and Executive Director of the JCC Kraków, Jonathan Ornstein.

The Museum of Independence Traditions opens an exhibit and memorial at the former Radegast Station in Łódź commemorating the victims of Ghetto



The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa.

2016 Litzmannstadt.

2016 **Władysław Bartoszewski**, prisoner of KL Auschwitz, soldier of the Home Army, activist of the Council to Aid Jews *Żegota*, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue, with a special responsibility for the development of

2017 post-war Polish-German relations and contacts with the Jewish diaspora and Israel, dies in Warsaw at 93.

2017 Miriam Gonczarska of Poland is the first European woman who graduates from Yeshivat Maharat in



Children from „Frajda" kindergarten at the Krakow JCC's Taube Family Playground.



"What we were unable to shout out to the world" exhibition.

New York and receives the title of *Maharat*.

Margalit Kordowicz graduates from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and becomes the first Polish-born woman rabbi.

2018 The Upper Silesian Jews House of Remembrance is opened in the restored pre-burial house at the New Jewish Cemetery in Gliwice.

On February 19, Samuel Willenberg, last survivor of the Treblinka prisoners' revolt, dies at 93. After participating in the heroic revolt and setting "hell on fire," Willenberg joined the Polish resistance and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the Germans, later becoming an artist in Israel after emigrating in 1950.

The **Ulma Family Museum** of Poles Saving Jews in World War II is opened in Markowa by Polish pres-



Former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital

2018 ident Andrzej Duda. During the German occupation, despite poverty and the threat of the death penalty, the Ulma family gave shelter to eight Jews beginning from late 1942 through March 1944. Turned in by a Polish policeman, Józef Ulma, his pregnant wife Wiktoria, and their eight children, together with the Jewish families Goldman and Szall whom they were hiding, were all executed by the German police. In 1995, Wiktoria and Józef Ulma are posthumously awarded the "Righteous

2018 Among the Nations" title.

Hillel International opens Hillel Warsaw. It is the first operation in Poland of Hillel International to better serve the needs of its growing Jewish population.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) opens an office in Warsaw that serves as their center for Central and East European countries.

2018 A Jewish student association in Kraków, "Gimel," named after the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet to represent the third post-war generation, re-opens as Hillel Kraków.

The JCC Kraków opens "**Frajda**," the first post-1968 Jewish kindergarten in the city.

2018 The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw opens its new permanent exhibition "**What we were unable to shout out to the world**" which includes artifacts and selections from the Ringelblum Archives collected by the clandestine network *Oneg Shabbat*.

2018

The Polish Sejm passes an amendment to the bill establishing the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) that penalizes public accusation of Polish involvement in German Nazi crimes. The new legislation stirs much controversy internally and abroad, especially in the US and Israel, as its wording provides a legal platform for whitewashing any involvement of individual Poles in crimes against Jews during the war and attempts to quell any public discussion of the subject. After several months of international protests and the eruption of the largest crisis in Polish-Israeli relations in the post-1989 era, the section about punishment is removed from the controversial legislation.

Polish Ministry of Culture announces plan to create the Warsaw Ghetto Museum with an exhibition opening in 2023, on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After completion of ren-

2018 ovation works, the museum will be housed in the former **Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital**, which in 1941-42 acted as one of the few medical



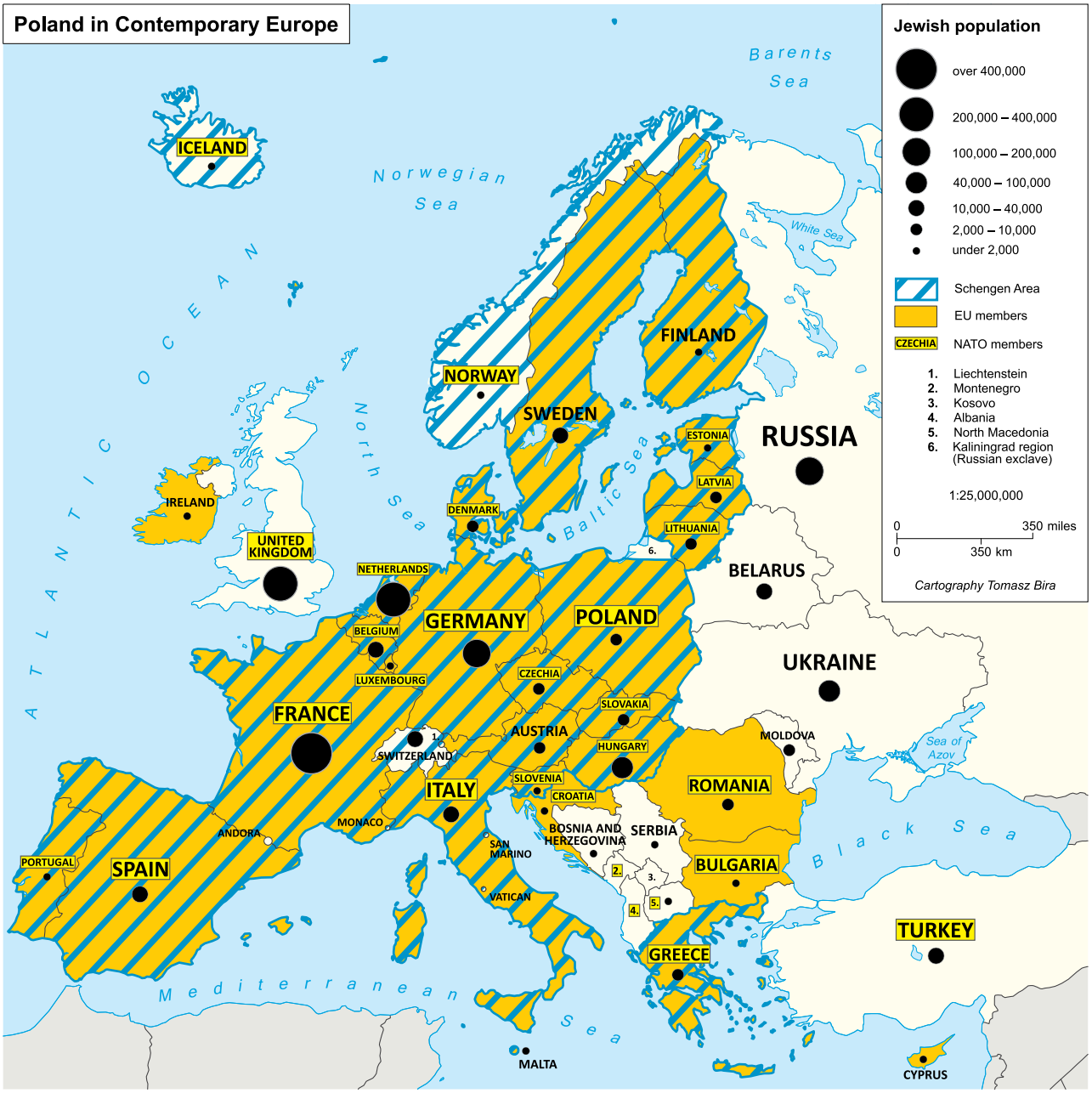
The former Majer Wolanowski's tenement at 14 Próżna Street.

facilities of the Warsaw Ghetto, and one of the very few buildings connected with its history to survive the war.

A temporary exhibition entitled "Estranged. March'68 and Its Aftermath," about the 1968 student unrest, the infamous antisemitic campaign and the forced emigration of Jewish Poles that followed, opens at POLIN. It becomes the best attended temporary exhibition in the history of Polish museums and an important voice in the discussion about what happened and the resulting repercussions in Polish-Jewish relations on the 50th anniversary of the events.

Warsaw and Poland commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with guests coming from around the world to the Polish capital. Sirens are sounded across the city with a moment of silence in a similar manner to the annual commemoration of the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising of 1944 on August 1.

The first Polish showing of "Who Will Write Our His-


Poland in Contemporary Europe
Jewish population
over 400,000
200,000 – 400,000
100,000 – 200,000
40,000 – 100,000
10,000 – 40,000
2,000 – 10,000
under 2,000
Schengen Area
EU members
CZECHIA
NATO members
1. Liechtenstein
2. Montenegro
3. Kosovo
4. Albania
5. North Macedonia
6. Kaliningrad region (Russian exclave)
1:25,000,000
0 350 miles
0 350 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira
Barents Sea
Norwegian Sea
White Sea
ATLANTIC OCEAN
North Sea
Baltic Sea
ICELAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
RUSSIA
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
IRELAND
DENMARK
UNITED KINGDOM
NETHERLANDS
BELGIUM
LUXEMBOURG
GERMANY
POLAND
BELARUS
UKRAINE
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
SWITZERLAND
HUNGARY
MOLDOVA
Sea of Azov
ROMANIA
SLOVENIA
CROATIA
ITALY
MONACO
ANDORA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
SERBIA
Black Sea
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
SAN MARINO
BULGARIA
VATICAN
TURKEY
GREECE
Mediterranean Sea
MALTA
CYPRUS

Glossary of Terms, Phrases, and Organizations

Please note that there is no single, universal system for representing Hebrew and Yiddish words in English. The Glossary offers common spellings, which in some cases may differ from what you are accustomed to seeing.

Aram. = Aramaic Ger. = German

AK. Armia Krajowa. (Pol. "Home Army"). An underground army in occupied Poland during World War II, loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London.

Ashkenazi. The term derives from a Hebrew name "Ashkenaz", a biblical figure mentioned in Genesis. Ashkenaz was later associated with a region where Jews lived in the Middle Ages along the Rhine River in parts of France and Germany, from where they had fled to the East to avoid growing persecution. Eastern Europe became the center where Ashkenazi life and culture of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish populations flourished in the lands of contemporary Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, until the outbreak of World War II. The Eastern European Jews constituted majority of the Holocaust victims. Survivors live now in Ashkenazi communities dispersed throughout the Jewish world.

Bimah (Heb.). Elevated platform inside the synagogue from which the Torah is read during prayers.

Bund (Yid. "league" or "union") or **Jewish Labor Bund.** Established in 1897, was a Jewish Socialist party active in Poland until 1948. The party promoted political, cultural and social autonomy of Jewish workers, fought antisemitism, and was generally opposed to Zionism, believing that Polish Jews belong into the Polish lands.

Cheder (Heb. "room"). Jewish religious elementary school.

Chevra Kadisha (Aram. "holy society"). A group of community members dedicated to the ritual preparation of bodies for burial according to Jewish tradition and to conducting funerals. It is one of the most important organizations of the kehillah.

Conservative. One of three main religious streams of contemporary Judaism. It began as a reaction to Reform Judaism. Among other characteristics, it affirms the divine inspiration of the Torah and the authority (if not immutability) of the body of Jewish law (see **halakhah**).

General Government (often abbreviated to **GG**). A separate administrative and territorial unit of Nazi Germany established by Adolf Hitler in the German occupied Polish territories not annexed directly into the Third Reich, after the conquest of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. It had its capital in Kraków and existed until the Soviets took Polish territories in 1944-1945

Gmina (Pol. "Community"). See:

kehillah.

Haggadah (Heb. "telling"). A Jewish text that presents the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the haggadah at the Seder table is a fulfillment of commandment to retell the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus.

Kahal (Yid. "community"). See *kehillah*.

Halakhah (Heb.). The body of Jewish law as derived from the (written) Torah, debated in the Talmud (oral Torah), and codified by the rabbis; or a particular law drawn from these sources. Also the portions of the Talmud dealing with legal issues.

Hanukkah (Chanukah) (derived from the Heb. *Chanah*, "to dedicate") Eight-day festival starting on the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (usually December) to commemorate the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration and the Maccabean revolt (2nd century B.C.E.).

Hashomer Hatzair (Heb."Young Guard"). Left-wing Zionist youth organization founded in 1913.

Hasidism. From hasid (Heb. "pious"). A religious movement started in Polish lands in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eleazar Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). Hasidism stressed joy, spirituality, and mysticism and denied that learning is the only way to God. Opposed bitterly throughout the 19th century by the mitnagdim, Hasidism developed into sects centered on spiritual teachers, known as tsaddikim (tsaddiks) or rebbeim, and their descendants. Today, the Hasidim and their erstwhile opponents constitute the two main branches of Orthodox Judaism. See **mitnagdim**.

Haskalah (Heb. "Enlightenment"). An assimilationist intellectual and social movement among Central European Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries that advocated the adoption of European culture, language and mores, while maintaining a Jewish identity. Its followers were called maskilim.

JCC. Jewish Community Center. Jewish communal institution that provides pluralistic social, cultural, and educational programs under one roof. Originating in the United States, the JCC model is becoming popular in Central Europe.

Judenrat (Ger. "Jewish Council"). The Jewish administrative body that the Nazis imposed on ghettos to implement their policies. Its authority was enforced, in part, by the Jewish Ghetto Police.

Kaddish (Aram.). The traditional prayer recited in memory of the dead in the presence of a minyan.

Kehillah (Heb. "community"). The organization regulating daily life in a Jewish community. A kehillah is generally governed by a board of elected and honorary officials who hire rabbis, conduct tribunals, maintain ritual baths, administer interest-free loans, provide social relief and kosher food, and supervise Jewish education. In Polish, the corresponding term is *Gmina* or *Gmina Żydowska*.

Lodzermensch (Yid. and Germ. "a man of Łódź"), was a popular term to describe the wealthiest and most successful manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and businessmen of the late 19th and early 20th century Łódź. Used as a pejorative or ironical epithet when referring to their ruthlessness, moral ambiguity, and pursue for power and money.

Maskil (Heb. "scholar," "follower of the Haskalah"), pl. **maskilim**.

Matzevah (Heb. "sacred pillar") Plural: matzevot. Jewish tombstone ritually marking a grave.

Menorah (Heb. "lamp"). Seven-branched candelabrum made of gold that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. Though a symbol of Judaism and an emblem of Israel, it is not used in Jewish ritual outside the Temple. The type of menorah used for Hanukkah (called a *hanukkiyah*) has eight main branches, plus the middle

ninth lamp set apart, which is used to kindle the other lights.

Mezuzah (Heb. "doorpost"), plural, mezuzot. A crafted container, attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home, which encases a parchment bearing specific citations from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21). The verses include the biblical commandment to "affix these words to the doorposts of your home" (Deut. 6.9).

Midrash (Heb. "commentary" or "interpretation"). An interpretative commentary on the biblical texts.

Mikveh (Heb. "ritual bath"). A place for Jewish women and men (separately) to immerse themselves in water from a natural source to meet the requirements of ritual purity.

Minyan (Heb. "quorum"). The minimum number of Jews, 10, necessary for the recitation of certain prayers, including Kaddish (prayer for the deceased) and the public reading of Torah.

Mitnagdim (Heb. "opponents"). Adversaries of Hasidism who sought to maintain traditional rabbinic Judaism and were especially prevalent in Lithuania.

Oneg Shabbat (Heb. "Joy of the Sabbath"). The underground group of historians and researchers, led by Emanuel Ringelblum, established in the Warsaw Ghetto to document daily life. Its meetings were disguised as Sabbath observances, hence the name. The group's collections, found after the war and preserved at the Emanuel Ringleblum Jewish Historical Institute, are known as the Ringelblum Archives.

Orthodox. One of the three main streams of contemporary Judaism, based on the belief that the Torah is the literal word of God and halakhah is ever binding and cannot be changed (though it may be amended). Orthodoxy developed in response to the Haskalah's perceived threat to Jewish continuity.

Pesach (Heb. "Passover"). An eight-day festival starting on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan to commemorate the Exodus of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A confederation of Poland and Lithuania between 1569-1795, ruled by a common monarch who was both the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. It was one of the largest countries of 16th- and 17th-century Europe.

Rebbe (Yid. "rabbi"). Often used to designate a Hasidic leader.

Rebbetsin (Yid.). Wife of a rabbi.

Reform. One of the three main streams in contemporary Judaism. Reform arose in opposition to Orthodoxy and taught that Scripture, while possibly divinely inspired, is not the literal word of God, while halakhah is a human creation and has to adapt to changing times. Reform also stressed that Jews are a faith, not a people.

Seder (Heb. "order"). Ritual meal, including the retelling of the Exodus story, eaten during the first, and in the Diaspora second, eve of Pesach.

Sephardic (From Heb. *Sepharad*, lit. "Spain"). Usually denoting the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15th century. Many Sephardic Jews subsequently established new communities around the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere.

Sabbath (Heb.). Seventh day of the week, Saturday, observed by many Jews with special prayers, foods, rituals, and rest.

Shabbas, **Shabbat**. See **Sabbath**.

Shoah (Heb. "total destruction"). The Hebrew term for the Holocaust, used to designate the German Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II.

Shtetl (Yid. "small town"). A small town, which had a significant Jewish population or Jewish majority.

Solidarność (Pol. "Solidarity"). Polish

trade union, founded in 1980 in opposition to the communist regime, was the first independent labor union in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc. By September 1981, it had about 10 million official members, which constituted over one third of the total working-age population of Poland. Forcibly suppressed by the Communist government in December 1981, it reemerged in 1989 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a Soviet-bloc nation since the 1940s.

Taglit-Birthright Israel. Non-profit organization providing trips to Israel for Jewish young adults around the world. Known also as Birthright Israel or simply Birthright.

Talmud (Heb. "learning"). According to tradition, Jews received a written and an oral Torah. The latter was eventually written down and redacted as the Mishnah. Commentaries were also compiled as the Gemara. Together they make up the Talmud, in Babylonian and Jerusalem versions, which share the Mishnah but have different Gemaras.

Torah (Heb. "Instruction", "Teaching," or "Law") most specifically means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (hence also *Pentateuch* or five books of Moses). It is the most important religious text of Judaism.

TSKŻ. Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce (Pol. "Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland"). Founded in 1950 to ensure the development of Communist Yiddishist culture after all other Jewish organizations but the kehillah had been disbanded, it is currently the largest Jewish organization.

Umschlagplatz (Ger. "loading place"). The site at the northern edge of the Warsaw Ghetto near railway sidetracks and warehouses where Jews were loaded onto trains bound for the Treblinka death camp.

Va'ad Arba' Aratzot (Heb. "Council of the Four Lands"). A Jewish governing body (1580- 1764) that met to collect taxes to be paid to the royal treasury and to discuss other matters of importance to Polish Jewry. The four Lands were Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Ruthenia, and Volhynia. In 1623, the Jews of Lithuania established their own Va'ad.

Yad Vashem (Heb.). Israeli national institution located in Jerusalem that studies, documents, and exhibits the history of the Holocaust (Shoah). It also documents and publicly acknowledges the Righteous Among the Nations — Gentiles who, at great personal risk, saved Jews during World War II.

Yeshiva (Heb.), pl. **yeshivot**. Jewish religious secondary or higher educational institution.

Yiddish. An international Jewish vernacular, with a vocabulary based on medieval High German, Hebrew, and Slavic, and a grammar based largely on German, written in Hebrew characters with competing different spellings. It was the spoken language of Ashkenazi Jews. Enclaves of mainly Orthodox Yiddish speakers still exist in Jewish centers in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Yiddishkeit (Yid. "Jewishness"; "Jewish way of life"). A term referring to the "Jewish essence" of Ashkenazi Jews in general and the traditional Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern and Central Europe in particular. It can also refer to an emotional or cultural identification with the Jewish peoplehood.

Żegota. Polish codename for the Council to Aid the Jews. Established by the Polish underground in 1942, this joint organization of Jews and non-Jews from different political orientations was united by the common cause of saving Jews. Poland's Żegota was the only organization in all of Europe explicitly tasked with the rescue of Jews.

ŻIH. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Pol. "Jewish Historical Institute"). Established in Warsaw in 1947 to study the heritage and history of Polish Jewry and preserve its records and artifacts. Today called the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

Zionism (After *Zion*, *Tzion* or *Sion*, the Hebrew name for the Mount Temple in Jerusalem).

Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce) was established in Warsaw in 2009 with generous support from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture. The Taube Center is dedicated to enriching Jewish life in Poland and connecting Jews from around the world with their East European heritage, providing engaging educational experiences, including professional development programs, internships, educational heritage study tours, publications, and partnerships that extend throughout Poland and internationally. The Center contributes to Polish Jewish literacy, the development of leadership and Jewish institutions, and increases global Jewish engagement in a living Polish Jewish heritage.

The Taube Center's Educational Programs

In 2012, the Taube Center created **Mi Dor Le Dor** (Heb. from generation to generation), a nationwide program for young professionals and academics involved in the promotion and preservation of tangible and intangible Polish Jewish heritage. With support from the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe and Taube Philanthropies, the program, which concluded in 2016, graduated four cohorts. The graduates currently work for various partner organizations, among them the POLIN Museum and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and the JCCs in Warsaw and Krakow. The Taube Center is currently planning to model the program for other European Jewish communities.

The Taube Center responded to a growing demand for targeted professional development programs in Polish, specifically designed for Polish Jewish communities and drawing on local experts, by launching **Yerusha** (Heb. inheritance) in 2019. The two-semester program is funded in part by a grant from the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. The cohorts represent Jewish organizations and institutions from around the country.

The **Exploring Poland/Polin Heritage Study Tour** (2014-2016), supported by a grant from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Senate, was a heritage education program that brought American university students of Polish and Polish Jewish descent to Poland. It was a unique opportunity to explore Polish history, rediscover the country and their shared heritage, and strengthen the participants' identities through connection with their Polish roots.

The Taube Center offers up to three one-month **Libitzky Family Foundation Internships** each year for undergraduates and post-graduates from the United States with a special interest in Polish Jewish history, heritage, culture, and tradition. The one-month program can be scheduled according to the candidate's academic or work schedule.

Taube Center Publications

The Taube Center's **Sefarim Book Publishing Project** provides support for the writing, translation, and publication of non-fiction works in Polish Jewish studies, making them accessible to academia and the wider Polish public.

The Project, initially supported by grants from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, provides seed grants for high-caliber works of Polish Jewish interest that reflect a broad range of issues and contribute to the field of Polish Jewish studies for domestic and international readers.

Through its own signature publications — *Field Guide to Jewish Łódź; Field Guide to Jewish Warsaw & Kraków; Deep Roots, New Branches: Personal Essays on the Rebirth of Jewish Life in Poland Since 1989; and A Timeline: 1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland* — the Taube Center provides resources that enrich an understanding of Jewish Poland, past and present, from both historical and



TAUBE JEWISH HERITAGE TOURS

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours (TJHT), the flagship program of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, invites people from around the world to explore Polish Jewish culture and to connect with the country's enduring Jewish legacy, which has shaped modern-day Israeli and American Jewish societies and permeated all facets of Western culture. Taube Jewish Heritage Tours is committed to strengthening the bonds between Poland and Jewish communities worldwide.

The mission-driven, on-the-ground Jewish educational tour program designs customized journeys for families, community organizations, students and faculty, VIP delegations, and individuals from the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and Europe. The TJHT professional team of academics, guides, educators, and community leaders provides meaningful and participatory explorations of Poland's multicultural landscape, infusing each encounter with illuminating personal stories and insights from those engaged in Polish Jewish life and committed to the preservation of Polish Jewish heritage.

»

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours offers:

» TJHT's full-service operation oversees travel logistics, offers special rates at five- and four-star hotels, and partners with land providers in the U.S. and Israel.

» TJHT guides are scholars and educators who have been trained to present Poland's multicultural narra-

» tives in stimulating, informative tours and workshops.

TJHT tours are available in English, Hebrew, French, German, and Spanish.

» TJHT provides orientation programs and educational resources in advance of the journey, as well as post-tour opportunities to remain connected.

»

TJHT works with an array of partner institutions in the United States, Israel and Poland, as well as in Europe.

TJHT has extensive experience in organizing educational and community group tours, family genealogy excursions, and VIP delegations and can work with groups of all sizes, types, and ages.

Revenue from the nonprofit Taube Jewish Heritage Tours supports publications, educational programs, and cultural and public events that enrich Jewish communal life, promote civil society, ensure the continued transmission of Polish Jewish history, and strengthen connections among Poles, Polish Jews, and Jews from around the world.

TJHTalks, with an international reach, is the Taube Center's newest educational heritage program. This series of ZOOM-based conversations about Polish Jewry and global Jewish concerns features world-renowned scholars, authors, and journalists, and community leaders who contribute to the Taube Jewish Heritage Tour program. The program brings an array of topics to a worldwide audience, exploring both the past and the present, and engaging our participants in contemporary Polish Jewish life. «

For more information about TJHT, please visit:
www.taubejewishheritagetours.com



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BACK COVER PHOTOS

(from left to right)

First Row

Julian Tuwim by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz • Emanuel Ringelblum, Icyk Manger, and Rachela Auerbach • King Kazimierz III the Great from Artur Szyk's *Statute of Kalisz* • Rabbi Baruch Steinberg speaking in front of the Warsaw's Great Synagogue during the memorial roll call organized by the Union of Jewish Participants in the Fights for Polish Independence in 1924

Second Row

Post stamp with the logo of ŻKS Makkabi Kraków issued before 1918 • Ride of the Living 2018 participants reaching the finish-line at JCC Krakow

Third Row

Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

Fourth Row

The synagogue in Narowla (Naroulia) by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz • Works on recreation of Gwoździec's synagogue ceiling paintings displayed in the POLIN Museum • Icchok Lejbusz Perec (Isaac Leib Peretz) by Władysław Wajntraub • POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews


















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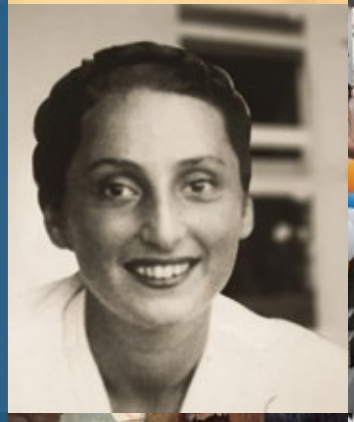
1,000 Years *of* Jewish Life in Poland

A TIMELINE

















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Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • *Jews Praying in the Synagogue on Yom Kippur* by Maurycy Gottlieb • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

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1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland

Published by the
Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

FUNDACJA CENTRUM TAUBEGO ODNOWY ŻYCIA ŻYDOWSKIEGO W POLSCE
TAUBE CENTER FOR THE RENEWAL OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND FOUNDATION

with the support of the
Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

TAUBE FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH LIFE & CULTURE

and the
Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area

Categorically Jewish, distinctly Polish: Polish Jewry was authentically and intimately linked to the Jewish past as well as interconnected with contemporary Jewry over the world over. It was also leavened with characteristically Polish features.

- Moshe Rosman

Dear Readers:

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation is pleased to present you with this new, third edition of one of our primary publications, *1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland: A Timeline*.

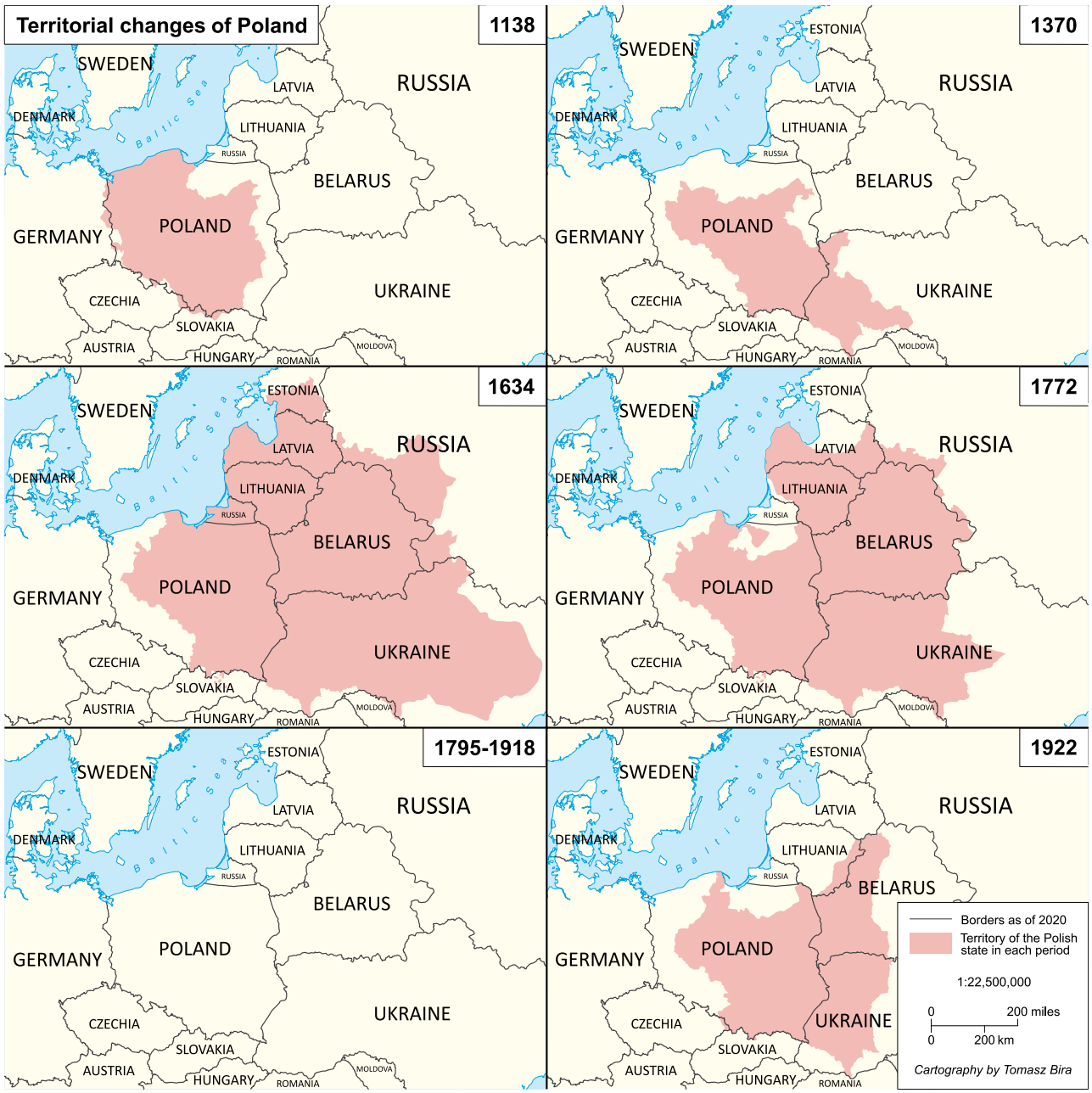
This new edition offers you an opportunity to explore a millennium of the Polish Jewish experience: From the first appearance of Jewish merchants at the time of the creation of the Polish state in the 10th century, through the 16th century's Golden Age and Jewish communal autonomy, 123 years of a partitioned Poland, on to the transition into modernity and the rebirth of a free Poland in 1918, World War II and the tragedy of the Holocaust, decades of Communist rule, all the way through today's revival of Jewish life in Poland.

It is said that there is no Polish history without Jewish history and there is no Jewish history without Polish history. We have, therefore, maintained an integrated balance, introducing major events, trends, and historical figures that have contributed to the diversity of Polish Jewish culture, tradition, and politics and left a lasting impact on the Ashkenazi Jewish world.

To more fully appreciate the development of Polish Jewish life over

almost 1,000 years, we have enriched this edition with illustrations and maps, bringing the Timeline to life and placing the historiography in a clear geographical context. With the first two maps on the pages to follow, we demonstrate the instability of Poland's borders and perception of what are or were "Polish lands" throughout history. This factor has had a significant impact on how Jews identified with Poland as their homeland, trends in Jewish religious observance and cultural expression, and the shaping of Polish nationhood, memory, and the country's role in contemporary Europe.

Engagement in Jewish life was not monolithic. Jews reflected the politics and social norms of the day, especially after the move into modernity in the 19th century, when the more cloistered life of the small town, often referred to as a shtetl, gave way to the challenges and opportunities of urban life and mobility. Poland's Jewry produced unique religious and social movements, among them Hasidism and Bundism, which brought Jews into national politics and divided the religious world. Although records of women's contributions appear already in the Middle Ages, it is not until the end of the 19th century that women begin to assume a more recognized and equal position in Polish society. As we sought greater gender parity in presenting this historical narrative, many under-acknowledged women have been included in this


Territorial changes of Poland
1138
1370
1634
1772
1795-1918
1922
SWEDEN
DENMARK
GERMANY
POLAND
RUSSIA
BELARUS
UKRAINE
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
ESTONIA
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
MOLDOVA
Baltic Sea
Borders as of 2020
Territory of the Polish state in each period
1:22,500,000
0 200 miles
0 200 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira


Historical Regions in Polish and Adjacent Lands
Baltic Sea
Livonia
Courland
Semigallia
Samogitia
Lithuania
White Ruthenia
Prussia
Sudovia
Pomerania
Kuyavia
Podlachia
Black Ruthenia
Polesia
Severia
Left-bank Ukraine
Greater Poland
Mazovia
Lesser Poland
Silesia
Volhynia
Right-bank Ukraine
Red Ruthenia
Podolia
Zaporizhia
Msta
Volga
Oka
Daugava
Neris
Nemen
Berezina
Dniepr
Sozh
Desna
Seym
Pripyat
Psel
Bug
Vistula
Warta
Oder
Elbe
Danube
Tisza
Mures
Siret
Prut
Dniester
Donets
Inhulets
Goryn
Sluch
Boh
Sea of Azov
Black Sea
Borders of contemporary Poland
Carpathian Mountains
Sudety Mountains
Pripyat Marshes
1:9,500,000
0
150 miles
0
150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

I. POLIN: JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN POLAND 965-1569

The Polish state was formed out of territories of several Lechitic (West Slavic) tribes during the course of the 10th century by local dynasty – the Piasts. The most formative events of the Polish state were the Christianization of Poland in 966 (in the Western, Latin rite) and the establishment of the Polish Kingdom in 1025. From its very beginnings Jews were present in Polish history, first as travelers and merchants crossing the Polish lands, and later as settlers. Already by the 11th century, Jews were recorded as living in Gniezno, the capital at the time. The turbu-

lent period of the Crusades sparked anti-Jewish riots in the Rhineland prompting the first large wave of Jewish migrants to come into Polish lands. Jews were welcomed here, served as middlemen, fostered commerce and trade, and brought administrative innovations and technical novelties from the West. When the last king of the Piast dynasty, Kazimierz the Great, died in 1370, the Jewish community in Poland was already

965 A Sephardic Jewish merchant from Moorish Spain, Ibrahim ibn Yakub, travels to Slavic lands in Central Europe and writes the first descriptions of the Polish state.

During the 11th-13th centuries, Jewish merchants and artisans settle in Poland with the first big wave of migration mentioned by the chronicler, Cosmas of Prague coming around 1100. Persecuted and expelled from Western Europe in the times of the Crusades, Jews find refuge and a safe haven in Poland under the benevolent reign of the Piast dynasty.



Early Polish coin with Hebrew

Early **Polish coins** are minted during the reign of Duke Mieszko III the Old. Some bear Hebrew-character inscriptions in Knaanic (an extinct Judeo-Slavic
1237 language), as the mint masters are Jews.

The Jewish settlement in the city of Płock is the first



Illuminated illustration by Arthur Szyk, inspired by the Statute of Kalisz.

1264 to be mentioned in written records.

The **Statute of Kalisz** is issued by Duke Bolesław the Pious. The Statute, a general charter of Jewish liberties in Poland, establishes a legal foundation for a Jewish presence in Poland. Subsequently, Jews are granted special status subject directly to the king or the duke and are excluded from municipal jurisdiction. Jews assume positions in commercial and economic life, becoming merchants,
1267 money lenders, tax collectors, and innkeepers.

The Catholic Council of Wrocław, the capital city of the province of Silesia, creates a segregated Jewish district. Jews are ordered to wear special emblems and are banned from holding public offices higher than those held by Christians. While these mea-
1285 sures prove largely ineffective, they are repeated in subsequent years.

The first recorded mention of a *kahal* ("community" in Hebrew) in the city of Kalisz. The *kahal* collects



Kazimierz the Great visiting Esther (painting by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, 1870).

taxes, oversees communal services, enforces Jewish law and is responsible for the education and social welfare of its members.

King **Kazimierz the Great** extends the Statute of Kalisz throughout Poland and broadens Jewish privileges. According to medieval chronicler Jan Długosz, the king had a love affair with a Jewish woman named **Esther** (Polish: *Esterka*). This legend will reverberate through Polish folklore over the ages.

Waves of migrations from Western Europe bring more Jews to Poland after a plague – known as the Black Death – for which the Jews are blamed. Anti-Jewish riots are perpetrated in Silesia and later in Poznań and Kraków.

A Jew from Olkusz named Lewko, a personal banker and financier of King Kazimierz, is entrusted with administration of the saltworks in Wieliczka and Bochnia, among the primary sources of royal income. Lewko also oversees the royal mint.

Between the 11th and 16th centuries, Jews from communities along the Rhine in Germany, known in Hebrew as *Ashkenaz*, migrate east, settling in today's Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. In the Polish lands, some of them serve the king, as well as members of the Polish aristocracy, as tax collectors, becoming merchants and innkeepers. They bring with them Jewish religious practices and political and commercial experience, as well as Yiddish, a German-based language with a Hebrew component, written in Hebrew letters. Yiddish, with its geographical nuances and range of dialects, becomes the

1385 *lingua franca* among Ashkenazic Jews in Eastern Europe. Yiddish will preserve the richness and vibrancy of Eastern European Jewish culture and heritage, despite many shifts in national borders and changes in political regimes.

The Kingdom of Poland forms a personal union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania through the marriage



The Old Synagogue in Kraków.

1407 of Poland's Queen regnant Jadwiga to Władysław Jagiełło (Lithuanian: *Jogaila*), the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The descendants of Jagiełło, members of the Jagiellonian dynasty, will rule over Poland and Lithuania until 1572. In 1388, Jagiełło extends the provisions of the Statute of Kalisz to all the lands of the Grand Duchy.
Anti-Jewish riots in Kraków, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. Jews, for the first time, are expelled from the city. They start to settle in Kazimierz, a separate town located outside the city walls of Kraków. The construction of the **Old Synagogue** (Polish: *Stara Synagoga*) on Szeroka Street begins.

Documentation confirms that Jews first lived in Warsaw, between Wąski Dunaj and Piekarska Streets, in Warsaw's Old Town, with a synagogue on the corner

1495 of Jewish (Polish: *Żydowska*) and Dunaj Streets. The community numbered approximately 120.

Jews, expelled from Warsaw, are permitted to live outside the city limits. The expulsion order, although largely ineffective, is nevertheless repeated in subsequent years.



Kazimierz (left) and Kraków (right) according to Hartmann Schedel's „Nuremberg Chronicle" from 1493.

1504 Jews are expelled again from Kraków. The capital is granted the royal privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* ("to not tolerate Jews" in Latin). King Jan Olbracht designates a Jewish inhabited part of **Kazimierz**, as *Oppidum Judaeorum* ("Jewish Town" in Latin), an official settlement for Jews, with the parallel right de non *tolerandis Christianis* ("to not tolerate Christians" in Latin).

1509 King Alexander I Jagiellon allows his court Jew, Rachela Fiszel, to buy a property and settle in Krakow. Rachela, a widow to Jewish banker Moses Fiszel, became the banker of four subsequent Polish kings, for her loyal services to the crown, she was given exemption from the ban on settlement for Jews in Krakow restricting them to reside in the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz. Rachela, an important

1525 figure in the Jewish community, was instrumental in establishing Jacob Polak, her son-in-law, as the rabbi of Krakow.



Michał Ezofowicz (engraving by Michał Elwiro Andriolli, 1879).

1527 Rabbi Jacob Polak sets up a yeshiva ("Talmudic

1534 academy" in Hebrew) in Kraków, which introduces the methodology of *pilpul* ("sharp analysis" in Hebrew), which becomes the standard method of



Katarzyna Weigel being burned at the stake (drawing by Jan Matejko, 1859).

1539 Talmudic and Jewish textual studies in the Ashkenazic world.

King Zygmunt I for the first and only time knights a Jew, **Michał Ezofowicz,** without requiring his conversion. Jewish converts to Catholicism, until the partitions of Poland, were usually granted noble status.
Jews are again expelled from Warsaw, after the Duchy of Mazovia is re-incorporated into the Polish Kingdom.
The first book printed in Yiddish in Poland, a biblical concordance by Rabbi Asher Anshel, is published in



Prewar panoramic view of the Jewish district of Lublin.

1541 Kraków.
On April 19 **Katarzyna Weigel** (nee Zalasowska), an alderman's widow from Krakow is burned at the stake at the age of 80 (after ten years of imprisonment) under the charges of apostasy and conversion to Judaism, when she refused to recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Weigel was involved in the sectar-



Page of an early Hebrew text printed in Poland.

ian protestant movement, known as Judaizers, who endorsed adopting Jewish law and customs based on the Old Testament as a base for the reform of Christianity. They were especially active in Lublin and eastern parts of Polish and Lithuanian lands.

II. THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN

During the first century of the Commonwealth, often referred to as the Paradisus Judaeorum ("Jews' Paradise" in Latin) or the Golden Age, Jewish life in Poland flourishes.

The overwhelming majority of Ashkenazic Jewry live in the Polish and Lithuanian lands, now forming the center of the Ashkenazic Jewish world. Granted relative autonomy, Jewish communities enjoy economic growth and stability. Jewish culture thrives with the opening of Talmudic academies and centers of learning, as well as a proliferation of Jewish literature, secular and religious. Tensions between the king and the nobility, however, provoke instability, with many parties vying for power. Embroiled in wars with Sweden, Russia, and Turkey, the Commonwealth begins to deteriorate. Growing poverty and discontent give rise to


Conflicts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-17th century
Territories occupied by:
Khmelnytsky Uprising 1648-1654
Muscovite Invasion 1654-1667
The Swedish Deluge 1655-1660
Directions of movement:
Cossack armies
Russian armies
Swedish armies
Important centers of Jewish life
Va'ad Arba Aratzot Meeting Site
Fiefs of Poland-Lithuania
1:9,000,000
0 150 miles
0 150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
TSARDOM (RUSSIA) OF MUSCOVY
KINGDOM OF DENMARK
HABSBURG EMPIRE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Baltic Sea
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Dorpat
Pskov
Riga
Duchy of Courland
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Grand Duchy of Lithuania
Kovno
VILNA
(Capital of the Grand Duchy)
Königsberg
Gdańsk
Elbląg
Duchy of Prussia
ELECTORATE OF BRANDENBURG
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
Navahrudak
Rahachow
Tykocin
Łomża
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Płock
Gomel
Kingdom of Poland
Poznań
WARSAW
(Royal capital after 1596)
Brest
Pinsk
Czernihów
Kalisz
Owrucz
Lublin
Breslau
Częstochowa
Zamość
Łuck
Żytomierz
Kiev
Połtawa
Oppeln
Pińczów
KRAKOW
(Royal capital until 1596)
Tarnów
Jarosław
Lwów
Przemyśl
Kamieniec Podolski
Bracław
VIENNA
Kassa
Buda
Pest
Vistula
Warta
Oder
Bug
Sluch
Dniester
Dnieper
Pripyat
Berezina
Desna
Sozh
Oka
Donets
Psel
Sejm
Vistula
Boh
Prut
Tisza
Danube

1569 The Union of Lublin creates the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, also known as the Republic of the Two Nations, with a unified federal system and an elective monarchy. It is one of Europe's major political and cultural powers.

Warsaw obtains the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis,* which remains in force almost until the end of 18th century. Jews are forbidden to settle within two miles of the city limits, except when the Sejm (Polish term for the Polish Parliament) is in session.



Rabbi Moses Isserles matzeva in Kraków's Remuh cemetery.

Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as the ReMa (or Remuh) and author of the "Mapa" ("Tablecloth" in Hebrew), the fundamental Ashkenazic commentary on the Sephardic "Shulchan Aruch" ("Set Table" in Hebrew), dies in Kraków. The "Shulchan Aruch" is the fundamental codex of *halakhah*, Jewish law, and is still considered authoritative. His grave is in the Kazimierz district of Kraków in the cemetery adjoining the synagogue that bears his name. Recently renovated, the synagogue continues to
1576 serve Kraków's Jewish community.

King **Stephen Báthory** issues decrees forbidding blood-libel accusations, effectively preventing such trials during his lifetime. They will resume, however, after his death in 1586.

From the late 16th to the mid-18th century, Polish Jews were governed by the *Va'ad Arba' Aratzot* ("Council of the Four Lands" in Hebrew): Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Lithuania, and Ruthenia. The Va'ad's primary function was to levy and collect taxes among Jewish communities. The Council, made up of delegates from the different Jewish communities and recognized



King Stephen Báthory (painting by Martin Kober)

by the king, becomes the central body of Jewish
1580 self-government, the only institution of its kind in the history of the Jewish Diaspora.

1587 The first session of the Va'ad Arba' Aratzot is held in Lublin.

According to popular legend, after King Stephen Báthory's death, his "court Jew" Saul Wahl (actual-
1588 ly Saul Katzenellenbogen, 1541-1617) is elected king of Poland for one night until the procedure for electing a new king is put into place.

The first Jewish community in **Zamość** is established by Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean Basin



The synagogue in Zamość built in 1610s.

1609 (originally from Spain and Portugal). By the 17th century, with migrations from Western Europe, Ashkenazic Jews become the majority. Zamość's Jewish character will later again be transformed, reflecting the influences of the *Haskalah* ("enlightenment" in Hebrew).

"Meynekes Rivke" ("Rebecca's Nursemaid" in Yiddish), an erudite work by Rivke Tiktiner of Tykocin is
1618 a guide for married Jewish women and is published posthumously in Prague. Her work, the first known publication in Yiddish by a woman in Poland, will be re-published in Kraków in 1618.

The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) brings the last major wave of Jewish refugees from Western Europe to Polish lands.

1623 "Tzena U-Rena" ("Go Out and See" in Hebrew), a commentary on the Pentateuch for women written by Rabbi Yaakov Ashkenazi and one of the most important works in Yiddish to date, is published in Kraków and Lublin.

1632

The Va'ad of Lithuania is established as a separate entity from the Va'ad of the lands of the Crown
1648 Lands of the Kingdom of Poland, to administrate issues of Lithuanian Jewry.

King Władysław IV Wasa of Poland forbids anti-Jewish books and publications.

Bohdan Chmielnicki (Ukrainian: *Bohdan Khmelnytsky*), a Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Orthodox Christian petty nobleman rebels against the magnates ruling the Ukrainian lands that belong to the Polish Kingdom. He leads Zaporizhian Cossacks and the local Orthodox Christian peasantry in an uprising against Polish or Polonized gentry, the Jesuits, and the Jews. Tens of thousands of
1654 Jews and Catholics fall victim to the massacres. Many Jews were sold into Turkish and Tatar slavery and were later ransomed by a multinational fundraising campaign for *pidyon shvuyim* ("redeeming the captives" in Hebrew) among Jewish communities throughout the Four Lands and reaching as far as Amsterdam.

The Khmelnytsky Uprising ends with Muscovite intervention and the subsequent war with the Tsardom of Muscovy (1654-67) that brings destruction to the



Swedish troops pillaging Polish village (painting by Henryk Pilatti)

1655 eastern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the decline of its influence and the rise of Russia as the main power in the east of Europe. The Jews are expelled from Russian-conquered Kiev in 1654 (the ban will be lifted in 1793). The next year in Wilno (Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), the Tsar's forces massacre tho-

usands of civilians, with Russian Cossacks destroying the Jewish district and killing most of its inhabitants.
The Khmelnytsky Uprising and the war with Muscovy prompts the Swedish king to invade Poland. The destructive war with Sweden, known as the "**Swedish Deluge**," lasts until 1660 and ravages the western part of the Commonwealth. The war brings pogroms, as Jews are occasionally accused of being in complicity with the enemy.

In the second half of the 17th century, Jewish communities, in spite of being shaken by the ferocity of the attacks and crippled by the heavy loss of life and property, move to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible when the period of destructive wars and wartime-associated epidemics is over. Although the destruction and massacres, first and foremost those perpetrated by Khmelnytsky's forces, are remembered by Polish Jews as the *Gezerah* (the "Evil Decree" or "Catastrophe" in Hebrew), they mark the end of the golden age not only for the history of Polish Jews but for the overall history of Poland as well.

The Polish Va'ad condemns Shabbetai Tzvi, the false messiah from Ottoman Turkey. His activities, which attract many of those who survived Khmelnytsky's atrocities, will influence Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a Polish-born false messiah preaching against the Talmud and claiming to be Shabbetai Tzvi's successor.

The 18th century sees the birth of the Hasidic movement, founded by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov. While its tenets are embraced by many in the Ukraine and Central Poland, it is criticized by the *Mitnagdim* ("opponents" in Hebrew) as being incompatible with traditional rabbinic Judaism. These tensions create new frictions and factions within the growing Jewish world. At the same time, the Commonwealth slowly turns into a failed state, with flawed government and a weak army, a country torn apart by the private interests of powerful magnates. Growing intolerance and Catholic bigotry increase religious tensions. By mid-century, the Commonwealth becomes a de facto Russian protectorate.



Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's synagogue in Medzhybizh, Ukraine, destroyed by the Germans in 1941.

1720 **Israel Ba'al Shem Tov**, known as the Besht, is born in Okopy in southeastern Poland (now in Western Ukraine). Hasidism, stressing spontaneity over observance and spirituality over learning, represented a direct challenge to the Jewish religious and communal establishments.

1749 A blood libel accusation and the resulting trial of members of the Jewish community in Sandomierz, end with expulsion of the city's Jews in 1712 at the order of King August II and the execution of several of the accused the following year.

The Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, is born (d. 1797). Although he held no official

1757 position, he was regarded as the spiritual leader of the Mitnagdim. The Mitnagdim reaffirmed study, ritual observance and *halakhah* as the cornerstones of Jewish life.

Polish aristocrat Count Walentyn Potocki, after converting to Judaism, is allegedly burned at the stake in Wilno for renouncing Catholicism. The story of Potocki, known among Jews as Abraham ben Abra-
1758 ham or *Ger Tzedek* ("righteous proselyte" in Hebrew), has not been confirmed in historical sources so far, but became a popular Jewish legend about a representant of one of the wealthiest and most powerful magnate families of the Commonwealth voluntarily
1759 choosing to become an observant Jew.
The Bishop of Kamieniec in Podolia (now Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine), Mikołaj Dembowski, instigates



Szmul Zbytkower (fragment of a painting by Bernardo Belloto)

1760 a debate between Jacob Frank's followers and Orthodox rabbis, counting on conversion of the schismatics to Catholicism. The debate in front of the consistory court ends with the Frankists being condemned and declared accursed by the rabbis. In reprisal, the burning of the Talmud is ordered by the court.

The Polish Va'ad sends an emissary to Pope Bene-
dict XIV with a petition from Polish Jews asking for protection against multiplying accusations of ritual murder. The Pope condemns the accusations. The
1764 last blood libel trial takes place in Olkusz in 1787.

An estimated 500 Jewish families, followers of Jacob Frank, convert to Catholicism and join the ranks of the Polish nobility.

Warsaw's east bank suburb of Praga, which will become a district of the city in the 19th century, is exempted from the *de non tolerandis Judaeis* law. The Praga Jewish community develops as a center of commer-
1768 ce and Jewish life, largely due to the efforts of **Joseph Samuel Sonnenberg,** commonly called Szmul Zbytkower, a merchant and developer, and protégé of the last Polish king Stanisław August. Szmul Zbytkower and his wife Judyta contribute toward building of the communal synagogue and the Jewish Cemetery in Praga's neighborhood of Bródno.

The Commonwealth's Parliament (Sejm) abolishes the Va'ads on the grounds that they are no longer capable of collecting taxes effectively. With the abolition of the Va'ads, a census of the Jewish population is taken. According to the figures, there were 748,968 Jews over a year old in Poland-Lithuania: 548,777 in
1768 Poland and 201,191 in Lithuania. It is estimated that at least 20% of Jews, afraid that the results would lead to heavier taxation, do not participate.

The de facto Russian protectorate over the Commonwealth combined with tensions between traditionalist nobility and the reformist king Stanisław August, supported by his political allies, the Czartoryski family, spark a nobles' revolt known as the Bar Confederation and a subsequent civil war in the Com-
1772 monwealth. The rebellious nobles claim to defend internal and external independence, the Catholic

faith, and patriotic values, accusing the king of being a Russian puppet. Fighting ends after four years, with Russian military intervention, leaving the Commonwealth extremely weakened. The civil war provides the surrounding powers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with a pretext for partitioning the Commonwealth to eradicate what they call "the Polish anarchy."

1790

Simultaneously to the Bar Confederation, during the so-called *Koliyivshchina* rebellion, provoked by Russia, thousands of Jews, Catholic Poles, and Ukrainian Uniates are massacred in the city of Humań (now Uman' in Ukraine) by Cossack rebels, known as haidamaks. The rebellion spreads across the Ukraine. After claiming at least 100,000 Catholic, Uniate and Jewish victims, it is suppressed by intervening Russian troops.

1791 The first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Austrian Habsburg monarchy.
The Vilna Gaon puts Hasidim in herem (Hebrew for "the ban"; describes an exclusion from the community). The conflict intensifies between the Mitnagdim and Hasidim.

1791 Death of Leah Horowitz (born ca. 1720) from Bolechów (now Bolekhiv, in Ukraine), the author of „Tkhinne imohes" (Supplication of the Matriarchs), an eight-page, trilingual prayer for the Sabbath before the New Moon for women. Leah, a rabbinic and kabbalistic scholar born into a famous rabbinical family and daughter of the Rabbi of Brody, one of the most important centers of Jewish life in the Commonwealth, wrote her work in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish showing great erudite skills, praised by her contemporaries. She was also strongly promoting women's participation in daily prayers, as well in Halachic and Talmudic studies.

1792

1793

On May 3rd, Poland becomes the first European country with a modern codified constitution in an attempt to reform and save the country from further partitioning by aggressive neighboring monarchies. One of the bills following the new constitution passed by the Sejm in 1792 grants Jews personal inviolability.

1794

Empress Catherine the Great of Russia establishes



Berek Joselewicz (painting by Juliusz Kossak)

the Pale of Settlement, restricting Jewish settlement in the Russian Empire to the lands that were annexed by Russia in the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Pale includes parts of present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Jews in the Russian Empire, with very few exceptions, are forbidden to reside outside the Pale's borders.

1794

1795

Russia starts a war with the Commonwealth, as reforms in Poland endanger its domination over the country. The last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, seeks a diplomatic solution against the advice of military leaders.
The second partition of the Commonwealth, by the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, creates new territorial divisions.

III. POLAND PARTITIONED 1795-1918

By 1795, as a result of the third partition of Poland, the country is essentially erased from the map of Europe until it regains independence in 1918 at the end of World War I. During the partitions, the population falls under the domination of one of the three empires: Russian, Prussian or Austrian. Polish Jewish families find themselves on different sides of the borders, serving in different armies, and integrating different cultural traditions. It will become difficult to define Polish Jewry as a monolithic entity.

The Jewish population in the territories of the former Commonwealth experiences a demographic explosion in the course of the 19th century:

for example, the number of Jews living in the Pale of Settlement grows at least fivefold during this century. Before the mass emigration to the United States and other Western countries starts in the 1880s, roughly 80% of world Jewry lives in the partitioned Polish lands. The Haskalah ("Enlightenment" in Hebrew) begins to take root in the Polish lands during the 19th century. Maskilim, the followers of the Haskalah, introduce the notion of Jews as citizens of Europe, encouraging assimilation and engagement in secular life. The Haskalah quickly becomes a common enemy of the Hasidim and Mitnagdim. The latter half of the 19th century sees the spread of Yiddish culture and increasing Jewish involvement in


Partitioned Poland in the 19th Century
The Volozhin Yeshiva
Major hassidic centers
Borders of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772
Congress Kingdom of Poland 1815-1915 (autonomy 1815-1832)
Austrian Partition (Galicia)
Prussian partition
Russian partition
Free City of Krakow in 1815 (annexed by Austria in 1846)
Maximum extent of the Pale of Settlement (1791-1917)
1:10,500,000
0
250 miles
0
250 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Baltic Sea
PETERSBURG
Revel
Dorpat
Pskov
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
Riga
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Lubavitch
Smolensk
Kovno
Vilna
Volozhin
Minsk
Grodno
Danzig
Königsberg
PRUSSIA
Stettin
Thorn
Łomża
Posen
Warsaw
Pinsk
Stolin
Rogachev
Gomel
Bryansk
Kursk
Chernigov
Kharkov
Kiev
Zhitomir
Poltava
Zaporozhye
Amshinov
Ger
Biala
Aleksander
Kotsk
Pshiskhe
Breslau
Izhbitsa
Zamość
Lutsk
Lelov
Kattowitz
Krakow
Lizhensk
Belz
Pshevorsk
Bobov
Rimanov
Lwów
Zidichov
Berditchev
Skver
Mezhbizh
Breslov
Kamenets Podolskiy
Sanz
Brünn
Kassa
VIENNA
Vizhnits
Budapest
Debrecen
Graz
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
Agram
Brasso
KINGDOM OF ROMANIA
Kishinev
Odessa
Sea of Azov
Black Sea

1797 The Warsaw Jewish Community is recognized by the Prussian government.

1800 By the turn of the century, rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1812) founds the Chabad Hasidic movement. Now known as Chabad-Lubavitch, it has become the largest and most influential of the Hasidic movements.



The Volozhin Yeshiva in the early 20th century.

1802 The **Volozhin Yeshiva,** one of the most important centers of Talmudic learning in the 19th century, is established. The yeshiva will be re-established in Israel after World War II. Other yeshivot, including the Mir Yeshiva, are also re-established in Israel and in the United States after the Shoah.



Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw.

1802 The first progressive synagogue in Warsaw, influenced by the German enlightenment, is opened on Daniłowiczowska Street.

The Warsaw Jewish community is granted permission to establish a **cemetery on Okopowa Street** then outside the city limits. With approximately 250,000 graves, the cemetery, still in use today, is one of the largest in Europe. The other Warsaw Jewish cemetery, established in 1780 in Bródno on the right-bank side of the city, has a similar number of burials. Some of the *matzevot* ("headstones" in Hebrew), though badly damaged, can still be found in the Bródno cemetery.

1807 The constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, a short-lived and semi-independent Polish rump state set up under Napoleon from parts of the Prussian and Austrian partitions, grants Jews equal rights. Despite the suspension of this ruling in 1808, Jews begin to integrate into the wider society.

> Jews living under Prussian rule are granted full equal rights in 1812, under Austrian rule in 1867, and under Russian rule only after the fall of the Tsars in 1917. Each regime requires that Jews take on hereditary surnames for purposes of tax collection and the draft.

1815 Jews living in Prussia and the Prussian partition are given equal rights and granted full citizenship according to the Edict of Emancipation by Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III.

Following Napoleon's defeat, as a result of the Congress of Vienna's stipulations, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, with Warsaw as its capital, functions as an autonomous Polish rump state in personal union with Russia through the rule

1821 of the Russian emperors as Polish kings. It grants Jews limited rights and the ability to work in banking and industry.
The Congress Kingdom abolishes the institution of the *kahal*, replacing it with Jewish community boards with limited powers.

The first Jewish newspaper in Poland, founded by Antoni Eisenbaum, the weekly "Dostrzegacz



Antoni Eisenbaum (lithography by Maksymilian Fajans)

Nadwiślański/Der Beobachter an der Weichsel"
1826 ("The Vistula Observer"), is published in Polish and strongly Germanized Yiddish.

A rabbinical school, the first such institution accredited by the government of the Congress Kingdom, is established in Warsaw. The institute is directed by



Jewish City Guard (engraving by Friedrich Christoph Dietrich)

1830 a radical *maskil*, **Antoni Eisenbaum.** The institute will be closed by Russian authorities in 1864, following years of Polish patriotic agitation there.
During the year-long and ultimately unsuccessful November Uprising in the Congress Kingdom against the Russian Tsar Nicholas I, Jewish militias and volunteers take part in fighting, mainly in the defense of Warsaw where the over 1,000 men strong **Jewish City Guard** (Polish: *Gwardia Miejska Starozakonna*) is active. The failed uprising brings the end of Polish autonomy and the emigration of the elite.



The Poznański Palace, now housing the City Museum of Łódź.

Influential Polish émigré Joachim Lelewel issues an appeal from Paris encouraging Polish Jews to support the Polish national cause.
Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański is born in Aleksandrów Łódzki. Poznański (d. 1900), who built a textile empire in Łódź, is remembered as a pre-eminent entrepreneur and philanthropist. The **Poznański palace** now houses the City Museum of Łódź.

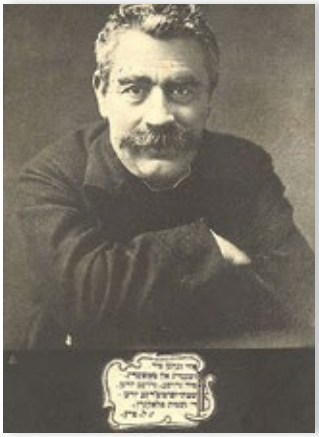
In the course of the 19th century, a town of Łódź (Yiddish: *Lodsh*) undergoes fast industrialization and grows from a small town into a city of over half a million inhabitants, populated by Poles (Catholic and Jewish), Germans, and Russians. It becomes the largest center for textile manufacturing on the continent, the so-called "Polish Man-

chester." Jewish manufacturers and industrialists were a major driving force of the Polish economy, especially in Russian Poland. Many among them, like Izrael Poznański, were also major philanthropists, contributing to worthy Polish and Jewish causes, creating public housing and hospitals and founding museums and schools. These successful entrepreneurs were frequently referred to with the German-derived term Lodzermensch.

The Round Synagogue is built in the Praga district of Warsaw.

The first Jewish confirmation ceremony for girls is celebrated in Warsaw.

1848 A failed Polish uprising against the Austrians in Kraków is supported by local Jews, who decide to support Polish aspirations for independence and are subsequently accused of treason by Austrian



authorities.

A failed Polish uprising against the Prussians in Poznań is not supported by local Jews, who decide to support the Prussian authorities instead and are subsequently accused of treason by the Poles.

Isaac Leib Peretz (d. 1915), known as one of the fathers of Yiddish literature, is born in Zamość. The cultural association *Hazomir* ("The Nightingale" in Hebrew) he founded becomes a center of Yiddish life in Warsaw. In 1951, a street in Warsaw where he lived from 1888 until his death is named after him. He is buried in Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in the "Tomb of the Three Writers" alongside Yakov Dinezon and Shimon An-ski.



Unveiling of the plaque dedicated to Michał Landy in Warsaw, 2018.

Samuel Orgelbrand, a Warsaw-based printer and publisher, begins work on what will become the first modern Polish encyclopedia (in 28 volumes). Among many works published, Orgelbrand also prints a 20-volume edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

1862 Several Polish newspapers in Warsaw, for the first time, initiate an antisemitic campaign.

Jews in the Kingdom of Poland participate in the Polish national movement against Russian rule. **Michał Landy,** a rabbinical student in Warsaw, is killed by Cossack fire during a patriotic demonstration, having

picked up a cross that a slain Catholic protester had been carrying. Landy represented a significant number of Jews with pro-Polish sympathies.

1862 Polish conservative politician Margrave Aleksander Wielopolski is appointed as the civil governor of the Kingdom of Poland and starts a series of reforms, trying through cooperation with the Tsarist authorities to restore autonomy and cool down rebellious moods among a younger generation longing for



Henryk Wohl

independence. One of his reforms is the emancipation of Jews. A law is introduced that gives them equal rights and allows them to reside outside designated settlement zones.

"Ha-Zefira" ("The Siren" in Hebrew), the first Hebrew-language newspaper printed in Warsaw, was founded by Chaim Zelig Słonimski, a prolific inventor, rabbi and government advisor. "Ha-Zefira" offered both secular and religious perspectives. Słonimski's grandson Antoni will become one of the major Polish poets of the 20th century.
Wielopolski's conciliatory policy fails, he resigns and goes into exile. Triggered by a decree instituting mass conscription, the ill-fated January Uprising against Russian rule lasts through two years of guerilla fighting. A talented Jewish financier and Polish patriot, **Henryk Wohl,** becomes a highly effective head of the finance department in the clandestine Polish National Government, for which later he is deported



Dov Ber Meisels

1867 by the Russians to Siberia. Heroic, but poorly armed Polish fighters, among them also Polish Jews, have little chance against the modern Russian military. The end of the uprising brings with it the liquidation of the last remnants of autonomy, a brutal and coercive Russification in the Kingdom of Poland, and its unification with the rest of the Russian Empire.

During the January Uprising, Chief Rabbi of Warsaw **Dov Ber Meisels,** a political activist in the fight for Polish independence, is arrested and deported from Warsaw and moves, temporarily, to Kraków, located in the Austrian partition.
After losing wars with France and Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy reforms itself, through the so-called *Ausgleich* ("Compromise" in German), into the dual state of Austria-Hungary. Poles in Galicia
1871 (the colloquial name for the Austrian partition) gain a high level of autonomy, which enables modern Polish political life in the region. The language of administration and education reverts back to Polish. Jews in Austria-Hungary are granted full citizenship and civil

rights. In Galicia, many will choose to fully assimilate into Polish society. Looking back from the perspective of the tragic events of the first half of the 20th century, although not quite rightly, the lengthy reign of emperor Franz Joseph of Austria (1848-1916) will appear to posterity as a period of peace and prosperity, religious tolerance, and harmonious coexistence of various nationalities under the rule of the Habsburgs.

Prussia unites Germany after the victory over



Naftali Hirsch Imber

France. In the decades to follow, forced Germanization becomes the official policy toward the population of the Prussian partition. The local Jews, now citizens of the German Empire, undergo an accelerated process of assimilation into German culture, as Polish culture and language are suppressed by the German authorities.

Mendele Moicher Sforim's "Di Kliatche" ("The Mare" in Yiddish) is published, which is a milestone in the development of Yiddish literature.

1879

Jan Jeleński publishes "Żydzi, Niemcy i my" ("The Jews, the Germans, and Us" in Polish) the first manifesto of modern Polish antisemitism.
Naftali Hirsch Imber from Austrian Galicia pens the words of "Hatikvah" ("The Hope" in Hebrew), which becomes the Zionist anthem and, subsequently,



The Great Synagogue of Warsaw.

the national anthem of the State of Israel in 1948.

The **Great Synagogue of Warsaw,** designed by Leandro Marconi, a progressive synagogue that seated 2,200 people, is dedicated on Tłomackie Street. While the prayers are conducted in Hebrew, the sermons are given regularly in Polish.

Samuel Gelbfisz, born in Warsaw, emigrates to the United States in 1899. He will become known as Samuel Goldwyn, co-founder of one of Hollywood's leading film studios, Metro Goldwyn Mayer. The Wonsal brothers, four cinema entrepreneurs originating from Krasnosielc in Mazovia, will be other Polish Jews who make their mark on the film industry, known worldwide as the Warner Bros.

1884

Pogroms in the Pale of Settlement follow the assassination of the reformist Tsar Alexander II. As a result of Russian law, which forbids Jews to move east of the Pale, thousands of Russian Jews flee to the west, many settling in Warsaw and Łódź, with many others making their way to Prussian Poland, and the United States.

1887 Between 1881 and 1914, in the face of pogroms, rising antisemitism, and increasing economic hardship, more than one and a half million Jews emigrate from the Pale of Settlement and Galicia to the United States and elsewhere. The question of whether to stay or to leave will come up frequently as Jewish communal identities and political movements change.

The first conference of *Hibbat Zion* ("The Love of Zion" in Hebrew) organization, a forerunner of Zionism, is held in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*) in Prussian Silesia. Zionist ideology takes root and begins to spread.



Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof

The Yiddish play "Shulamis" by Abraham Goldfaden, known as the "father of the Yiddish theater," is performed for the first time in Warsaw.

Dr. **Ludwik Zamenhof** publishes his treatise on Esperanto, a constructed language he devised, titled "Lingvo Internacia: Antaŭparolo kaj plena lernolibro" ("The International Language: Introduction and Complete Textbook" in Esperanto). He believed that a common language would facilitate co-existence among different cultures. Esperanto is still spoken by millions of people worldwide. Zamenhof dies in Warsaw in 1917 and is buried in the Okopowa cemetery.



Pua Rakowska (center)



Hipolit Wawelberg (painting by Kazimierz Pochwalski)

Identifying herself as a "revolutionary Jewish woman," **Pua Rakowska** (Puah Rakovsky) becomes the director of a modern Jewish elementary school for girls in Warsaw. In 1893, she establishes a Hebrew high school for Jewish girls and soon after becomes a leader of the women's Zionist movement in Poland.

Many Jewish women receiving secular educations begin to seek new avenues for expression and social equality, often leaving behind their traditional religious roots. Overcoming discrim-

ination, Jewish women become community activists and gain recognition in Jewish political movements such as the Bund and Zionism and in social welfare, education and, later, in the cultural and political arenas.

Industrialists and philanthropists **Hipolit Wawelberg** and Stanisław Rotwand establish a prestigious mechanical and technical college, which will eventually become the Warsaw Polytechnic.

Helena (Chaja) Rubinstein, born in 1872 to a family of Polish Jewish shopkeepers in Kra-



Regina Liliental

kow's Kazimierz, migrates to Australia seeking new opportunities. Starting from scratch, she will go on to establish a lucrative cosmetics empire, becoming the first self-made female millionaire in the world.

1902 The *Bund* ("Union" in Yiddish), or by its full name, the General Jewish Workers Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, is founded. The party's ideology is based on the tenets of socialism and a commitment to Yiddish language and culture. It will become one of the most important Jewish political parties in interwar Poland.

Delegates from Poland's partitioned lands participate in the first Zionist Congress in Basel.

The early 20th century ushers in a new era of Jewish political expression and national aspirations in partitioned Poland, which find their expression through the Bund or the many different Zionist movements ranging from religious to



Barricades in Łódź, 1905.

Marxist in ideology.

Regina Liliental (1875-1924, née Gitla Eiger), a pioneering ethnographer and folklorist, publishes her first work "Przesądy Żydowskie" ("Jewish Superstitions" in Polish), one of the earliest publications about Polish Jewish folklore.

The Nożyk Synagogue, funded by Zalman and Rywka Nożyk, is dedicated in Warsaw. The synagogue, which continues to serve the Warsaw Jewish community, was among the more than 400 Jewish houses of worship in Warsaw prior to World War

II.

While Zionism is banned by the Tsarist authorities, the religious Zionist movement Mizrachi (an acronym for Hebrew *Merkaz Ruhani:* Religious Center) is established in Wilno (Yiddish: *Vilna*).

The founding conference of the Zionist-Socialist movement *Poalei Zion* ("Workers of Zion" in Hebrew) is held in Kraków. Among the delegates is Dawid Grün, born in Płońsk in 1886. He leaves for Palestine in 1906 and, as David Ben Gurion, becomes Israel's first prime minister in 1948.

During the mass unrest in the Russian Empire, which was sparked by the costly and unsuccessful war with the Empire of Japan (1904-1905), a wave of strikes, demonstrations and protests, usually suppressed with bloody violence by the tsarist

1905 regime, sweeps across the country, in the event later named as the Revolution of 1905. In Łódź, between June 18-25, Polish, Jewish, and German workers of the textile industry, led by Socialists from PPS (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, "Polish Socialist Party" in Polish) and Bund, clash with the tsarist police and military, building barricades and taking control over large parts of the city, during the so-called **Łódź Uprising**. The regime manages to quell the insurrection, with the official death toll reaching 151 civilian casualties (55 Poles, 79 Jews, and 17 Germans), and the unofficial as high as 800 dead and 2,000 wounded. Many other incidents of lesser scale take place in all of the Rus-

1908 sian Partition. The outcome of the 1905 revolution is the relative relaxation of absolutist rule of tsars and establishment of the first parliament in Russia, the *Duma*.

The failed revolution incites another wave of

1911 pogroms in Russia, mostly in the Pale of Settlement but also in the Congress Poland. Pogroms are usually provoked by the infamous Tsarist Russian secret police - the *Okhrana*, and supported by the authorities. The bloodiest take place in Odessa, Kiev, and Białystok. Before the elections to the *Duma*, designated for March 1906, a boycott of Jewish businesses is organized in Warsaw by Polish nationalists as Jews refuse to endorse their candidate.

The Bund organizes an armed attack on Warsaw's brothel district near Grzybowski Square. Many of the brothels at that time were owned by Jews. The Bund attacks them in the name of the "defense of the dignity of the Jewish woman." Tsarist police side with the mobsters and suppress the attackers after a gun battle that lasts several hours.



Former Dom Sierot at 92 Krochmalna St. with Janusz Korczak memorial in front.

1912 Mathias Bersohn, an active philanthropist, donates his private art collection to the Jewish community of Warsaw. The community establishes a Jewish museum next to its headquarters on Grzybowska Street, which will be looted by the Germans during

1913 World War II.

The mass-circulation Yiddish newspaper "Haynt" ("Today" in Yiddish) is launched, followed by "Der Moment" ("The Moment" in Yiddish) in 1910.

The Old People's Home Association (Hebrew/Yiddish: *Moshav Zkenim*) is established in Warsaw, with Adolf Peretz as its president.
The first Yiddish films, among them "The Hasidic Woman and Apostate," are produced, inspiring many full-length features and documentaries. Twelve new Yiddish-language films will be produced before World War I.

Agudat Israel ("Union of the Jews" in Hebrew), or Agudah, an Orthodox Jewish political party dedicated to preserving rabbinic authority, is founded in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*). The union will have seats in the Polish parliament during the interwar years as the leading political representation of the
1914 Polish Jewry. After the War, the Agudah will serve as an umbrella organization for many Orthodox Jews in the United States representing the vast majority of members of the traditional Orthodox world, sometimes known by the old label of *mitnagdim,* as well as several of the Hasidic dynasties.



Jewish Writers and Journalists' Union membership card of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

1916 A Jewish orphanage (Polish: ***Dom Sierot***) opens on Krochmalna Street in Warsaw, directed by Janusz Korczak (born Henryk Goldszmidt). He becomes the most famous inter-war Polish pedagogue and author of popular children's books that are still read



Girls from Beis Yaakov school in Ostrów Mazowiecka, 1928

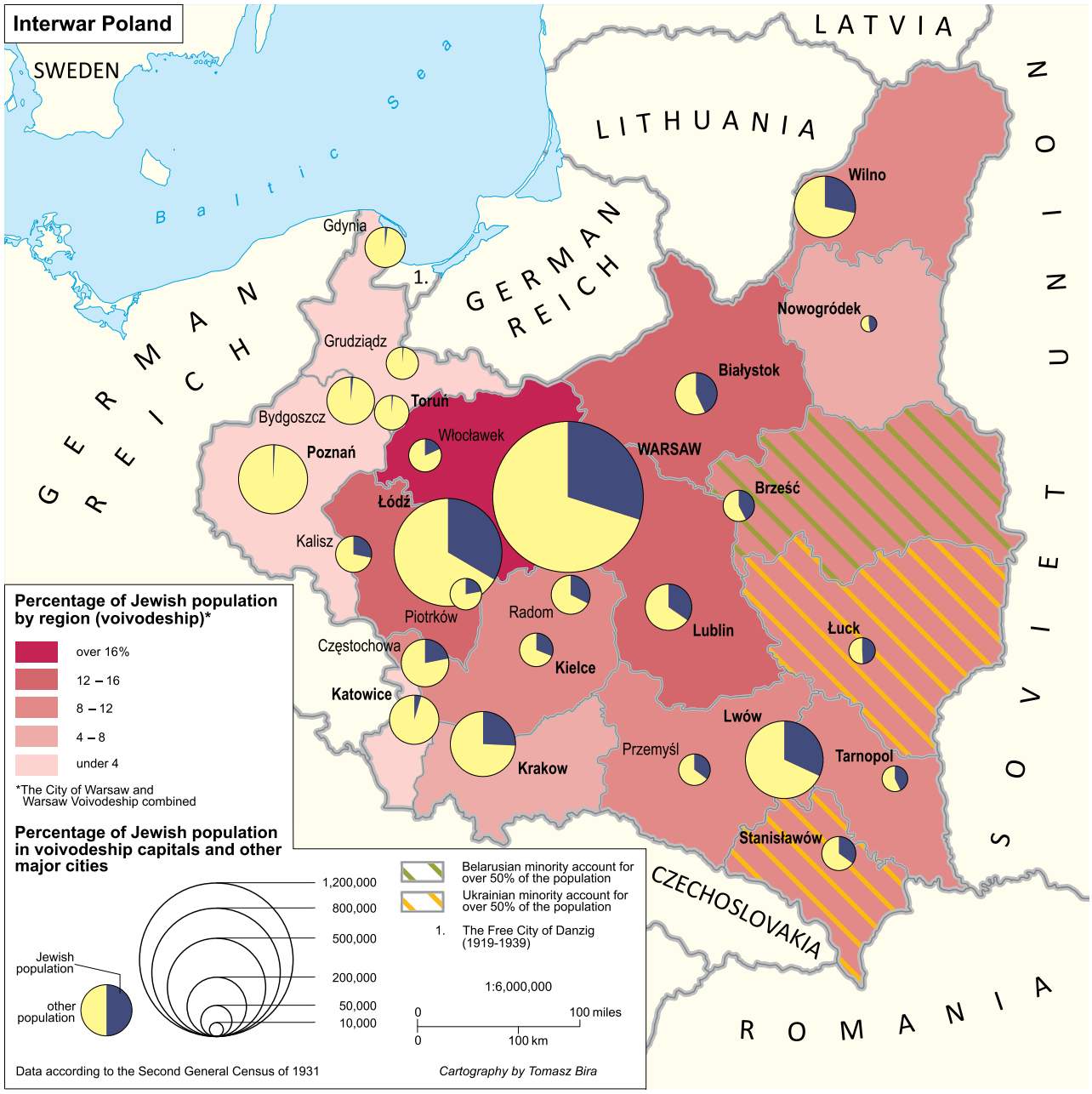
1917 by Polish children.
Hashomer Hatzair ("The Young Guard" in Hebrew), a Zionist-Socialist youth movement, is established in Galicia.

1917 The First World War breaks out in the summer of 1914, with Austria and Germany (the so-called Central Powers) fighting against Russia (allied with the United Kingdom and France in an alliance known as the *Entente*). The war between the partitioning powers, brings hope for a restoration of some sort of independent Polish state. Nonetheless, the war is a disaster for inhabitants of the Polish lands of all faiths. Drafted men serve in each of the imperial armies, with family members sometimes fighting one another. As the eastern front gradually moves to the east, destruction and collateral damage brought by four years of heavy fighting leave many towns and villages in ruins. If not expelled from their homes, the residents are

IV. INDEPENDENT POLAND: INTERWAR PERIOD 1918-1939

Poland regains its independence in the fall of 1918, when all of the three partitioning empires, Russian, Austrian and German, collapse by the end of the First World War.

Many ethnically mixed areas are claimed at the same time as national territories by different nation states emerging in the lands of central and eastern Europe. The newly reborn Polish state is involved in border conflicts with almost all of its neighbors. The Jewish population suffers from collateral damage and war-related violence, including pogroms committed by almost all belligerents. Some of the Polish forces are involved in antisemitic actions. The most well-known is the infamous November 1918 pogrom in Lwów, followed by pogroms in Pińsk, Lida, and Wilno in April 1919.


Interwar Poland
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
GERMAN REICH
GERMAN REICH
SOVIET UNION
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
ROMANIA
Gdynia
1.
Grudziądz
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Włocławek
Poznań
Łódź
Kalisz
Piotrków
Częstochowa
Katowice
Radom
Kielce
Krakow
WARSAW
Lublin
Białystok
Brześć
Nowogródek
Wilno
Łuck
Lwów
Przemyśl
Tarnopol
Stanisławów
Percentage of Jewish population by region (voivodeship)*
over 16%
12 – 16
8 – 12
4 – 8
under 4
*The City of Warsaw and Warsaw Voivodeship combined
Percentage of Jewish population in voivodeship capitals and other major cities
1,200,000
800,000
500,000
200,000
50,000
10,000
Jewish population
other population
Belarusian minority account for over 50% of the population
Ukrainian minority account for over 50% of the population
1. The Free City of Danzig (1919-1939)
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Data according to the Second General Census of 1931
Cartography by Tomasz Bira



Józef Piłsudski

The core of pre-partitioned Poland is reunited in the Second Polish Republic. **Józef Piłsudski**, past leader of the struggle for independence and now the interim head of state, invites Jewish parties to participate in coalition talks.



Rosa Luxemburg

On January 15, **Rosa Luxemburg** and Karl Liebknecht are murdered by rightwing Freikorps troopers (nationalist paramilitary groups in a revolution-torn post-WWI Germany), after a failed Communist coup in Berlin known as the Spartacist Uprising. Rosa Luxemburg, born in 1871 as Rozalia Luxenburg in Zamość to a family of Polish Jewish merchants, was a prominent Marxist revolutionary, leading feminist, and activist of the European Socialist movement of the early 20th century. An advocate of the proletarian revolution, she was nonetheless critical of the policies of the Bolsheviks in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917, on the grounds of defending democratic Socialism.

1919

The Committee of the Jewish Delegations represents Polish Jewry at the Versailles Peace Conference. The conference obliges the newly independent countries, including Poland, to sign a treaty guaranteeing minority rights.

The first parliamentary elections, held on January 26th, give seats to Jews in the Sejm and the Senate. As Polish women gain the right to vote already by 1918, Róża Pomerantz-Melzer, a member of a Zionist party, is the first woman to be elected to the Polish parliament.

Bela Szpiro-Nissenbaum is elected to the City Council of Lublin. An active member of the Bund and a devoted fighter for women's rights, the poor, and the working class, Bela gained wide popularity. Concerned about the condition of Jewish children and their education, Bela became a co-founder of CISZO (Central Organization of Jewish Schools) and the Icchok Lejbusz Peretz House of Culture. She will be elected to the city council five more times before 1939. During the war, active in the underground, Bela will be arrested by the Gestapo in 1942 and will perish in the German concentration camp Ravensbrück two years later.

About 17,000 Polish Jewish army volunteers during the Polish-Soviet War are interned by Polish authorities as "potential Bolshevik supporters" at the peak of the Red Army's offensive. The move brings huge protests from centrist, left, and Jewish parties. Detainees will be released after 25 days when the

Bolshevik troops will be in full retreat after losing the Battle of Warsaw in mid-August.

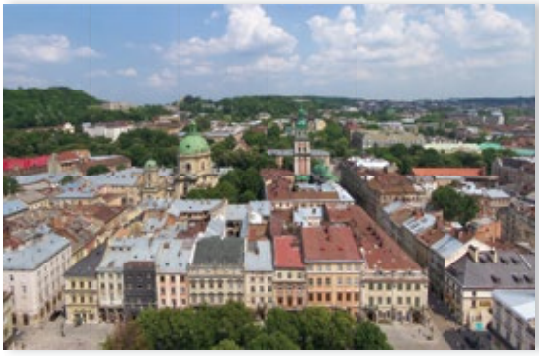
Following two years of bitter war and a strategic Red Army defeat at the gates of Warsaw, the Polish-Soviet peace treaty is eventually signed in Riga in March. The Polish-Soviet border is drawn to the east of **Lwów** (a city now in Ukraine, Ukrainian: *Lviv,* Yiddish: *Lemberik*) and Wilno (a city now in Lithuania, Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), two major cities and important centers of Polish and Jewish culture in the so-called *Kresy* region (Polish term for the eastern Borderlands, roughly equaling to today's Lithuania, western Belarus, and western Ukraine). Thousands of Jews from the territory located east of the new border, in particular shopkeepers and professionals forbidden to work in the Soviet Union, move to Poland and are eventually granted citizenship.

The period of post-WWI conflicts in the region ends by the end of 1921. With its deep legal, administrative and cultural differences, the unification of the three parts of the partitioned country into one nation is a challenge to the Polish state. Combined, numerous ethnic and religious minorities constitute almost one-third of the Second Polish Republic's population. For the first time in 123 years, Jews like other minorities, are to be governed by one set of laws that protected their rights as equal citizens of Poland.

The redrawn map of Poland creates the largest Jewish population center in Europe. Despite massive unemployment, antisemitic incidents and pogroms and growing tensions between a multicultural Polish society and increasing nationalism, Jewish life and culture flourish in the interwar period. Synagogues, schools, youth movements, sports clubs, theater, cinema, literature and the press, all develop exponentially to meet the needs of the growing Jewish population and the diversity of Jewish expression.

1921

The Polish Constitution of March 17th grants legal



Lwów

1921 equality to all citizens of Poland.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) appoints Yitzhak Gitterman as its first director in Poland. During World War II, he will be active in

1921 the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto, and he will die during the first episode of armed struggle in the ghetto in January 1943.
Polish Jewish historian Szymon Askenazy is elected as Poland's representative in the League of Nations in Geneva, an interwar predecessor to the United Nations organization.

The first Polish national conference of the Hebrew-language Tarbut educational network convenes in Warsaw, attended by 178 delegates. The number of Jewish schools proliferates to include secular, Yiddish-language and religious schools, as well as Polish schools called *szabasówki*, which offer

1923 classes on Sundays rather than on Saturdays.

Poland's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, elected by the political center, left, and minority voters, including Jews, is assassinated in the gallery

of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts „Zachęta" on December 16 by a nationalist fanatic just five days after his election.



Street stand with Jewish press.

The first issue of "Nasz Przegląd" ("Our Review" in Polish), the largest and best-known Jewish daily in Polish, is published in Warsaw. The **Jewish press**, which appeared in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish, provided entrées into different Polish Jewish milieus, often serving as bridges among the assimilationists, the Bundists, the Zionists, and the more traditionally religious communities. "Nasz Przegląd" will be published until September 1939.
Due to an economic downturn, which Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Władysław Grabski was trying to overcome with restrictive economic policies, thousands of Jewish businessmen make *aliyah* to Palestine feeling threatened by difficult economic environment – a phenomenon known as the "Grabski aliyah" or "the fourth aliyah."

1925

According to the resolution of the conference of Jewish cultural institutions in Berlin, the *Yidisher Visnshaftlikher Institut* (YIVO) or Jewish Scientific Institute, the first secular Jewish research institution, is created. Housed in Wilno , it will study and document Jewish life and promote Yiddish language and culture until the outbreak of WWII. Its work is continued today by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.


Ester Rachel Kamińska


The funeral of Jewish soldiers killed in the Coup of May 1926.

The "mother of Yiddish theater" **Ester Rachel Kamińska** dies in Warsaw. At this time, there are many Yiddish theaters in the city.



Mojżesz Kusewicki

1928

Marshal Józef Piłsudski seizes power in a **military coup in May 1926** and institutes a quasi-authoritarian government in order to settle the political and social situation in Poland. A promoter of a multicultural Poland, envisioning it as a greater federation of different ethnic and religious groups as a counterbalance to Soviet Russia, he earns the nickname of "Grandpa," widespread also among Polish Jews.

The Polish government expresses its official support for the Balfour Declaration which calls for the creation of a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. Polish support for Zionism will increase over the years.
Hazzan (cantor) **Mojżesz Kusewicki** (Moshe Koussevitsky), hired away from Wilno's Great Synagogue, becomes the chief cantor of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw, contributing to the growing canon of Jewish liturgical music created in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Institute for Judaic Studies is established in Warsaw. The languages of instruction are Polish and Hebrew. The founding committee included Rabbis Markus Braude, Ozjasz Thon, and Mojżesz Schorr, members of the Polish parliament and committed Zionists.

By 1930, the world Jewish population is estimated at 15,000,000 — with 4,200,000 in the United States, 3,000,000 in Poland and 2,500,000 in the Soviet Union. Despite waves of emigration, the Jewish population in Poland increases to an estimated 3.5 million by 1939. Jews constitute almost one-tenth of the population in Poland and provide one-half of all the lawyers, one-third of all the doctors in Warsaw and one-quarter of all the university students in Poland.



The Mausoleum of Three Writers

1930

Assimilated Polish Jews make significant contributions to Polish culture in the 20th century. Educators such as Janusz Korczak, painters such as Henryk Berlewi, poets such as Julian Tuwim, writers such as Bruno Schulz, musicians such as Artur Rubinstein, and a host of others contribute new content and form, which enrich Polish culture. Many Polish-born Jews who emigrate make significant contributions to Jewish life, literature, science, the arts and the humanities around the world: Rabbis Joseph Ber Soloveitchik and Israel Meir Lau, Nobel Prize laureates author Isaac Bashevis Singer, physicist Joseph Rotblat, and politician Menachem Begin, businesswoman

Helena Rubinstein, artist Artur Szyk, and architect Daniel Liebeskind, to name but a few.



The Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva



A picket organized by nationalist Polish students demanding implementation of bench ghettos

1931 Abraham Ostrzega designs a monument of Ludwik Zamenhof for Białystok. Ostrzega, born in 1889, was considered the greatest Polish Jewish sculptor, specializing in sepulchral art. A large collection of matzevot and tombstones carved by Ostrzega, including the "**Mausoleum of Three Writers**" (i.e. Peretz, Dinezon, An-ski) is located in Warsaw's
1932 Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street.

The opening ceremony of the ***Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin*** ("Yeshiva of the Sages of Lublin" in Hebrew) takes place in June. It is founded by Rabbi Meir Shapiro, the creator of *Daf Yomi* – the daily regimen of learning Talmud and its commentaries, which is still practiced worldwide. The Yeshiva becomes a major center of Orthodox learning until the outbreak of World War II.
1932

Clashes at universities in Wilno and Lwów between antisemitic National Democratic Party (the so-called *Endecja*) supporters and Jewish students leave one Catholic student dead, as tensions and calls for the imposition of quotas at universities increase.
1934

Jewish artist Arthur Szyk, born in Łódź and living in Paris at the time, publishes 45 illustrations for the thirteenth-century "Bill of Rights" for Polish Jews, the "Statute of Kalisz" (**see illustration, page 8**). A committed Polish patriot, political activist and prolific artist, his contributions to the art world in Europe and the U.S. span several decades.
1934



Zuzanna Ginczanka

1935 At the first worldwide Maccabiah in Tel Aviv, Poland sends the largest delegation with 66 members. Between World War I and World War II, more than 100 Jewish sports clubs were registered in Warsaw alone.

Mieczysław Kaplicki, born Maurycy Kapellner,

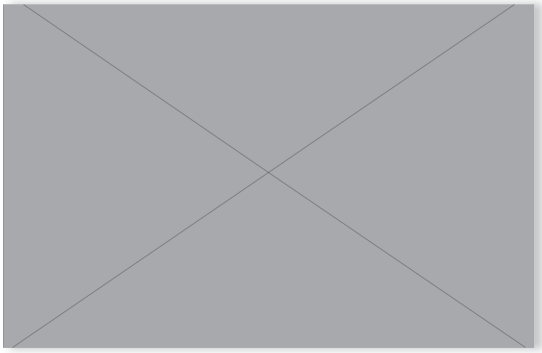
1935 becomes the first mayor of Kraków of Jewish origin.

Shimon Peres, born as Szymon Perski in Wiszniewo in 1923, moves to Palestine with his family. He will go on to serve Israel in a variety of government positions, including prime minister and president, and will win the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1994. Peres dies in 2016 and his funeral in Jerusalem is attended by more than eighty heads of state from all over the world.

1936

The Museum of Jewish Art opens in Lwów, organized by Wiktor Chajes, the chairman of the Jewish community, and deputy mayor of Lwów.

1936 Polish poet **Zuzanna Ginczanka** (born Gincburg) becomes a member of "Skamander," a group of avant-garde poets created, among others, by Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski. Tuwim and Słonimski, along with Jan Brzechwa and Bolesław Leśmian, all assimilated Jews, are still beloved authors in Poland, having made significant contributions to Polish literature.
Józef Piłsudski dies on May 12, marking a dramatic change in the life of Jews in interwar Poland and the beginning of a rise in state-sanctioned antisemitism.



Students of the Institute of Judaic Studies near the side entrance to the Main Judaic Library (now JHI building).

1936 Memorial services for Piłsudski are held throughout the country, including in Warsaw's Great Synagogue.

After Piłsudski's death, the ruling *Sanacja* (semi-authoritarian regime closely tied with the military), having no definite leader, will start to drift into nationalism.

1936 The prime minister and Catholic primate endorse an economic boycott, proclaimed by the extreme right, of Jewish businesses and shops, yet condemn physical violence against Jews.

1936 As violent boycotts of Jewish businesses become commonplace, Jews sometimes organize in self-defense. On March 9, in the small market town of Przytyk, members of one such group attack an organized antisemitic group, killing one member. A riot ensued, in which a Jewish couple extraneous to the incident is murdered. Members of both the Jewish self-defense and the antisemitic group are subsequently sentenced, though the latter are treated with lenience. Boycotts and antisemitic riots, sometimes with fatalities, continue to occur elsewhere in Poland of the late 1930s.

The **Main Judaic Library** and the Institute of Judaic Studies move into a new building designed by Zachariasz Eber, adjacent to the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street in Warsaw. One of the few Jewish edifices in Warsaw to survive World War II, the building is now home to the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

First congress of Polish "Progressive" Judaism is held in May in Warsaw and the *Centralny Związek Synagog Postępowych* ("Central Union of Progressive Synagogues" in Polish) is established.

Zionist Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky (born in Russia as Vladimir Zhabotinsky), calls for at least 750,000 Jews to be evacuated to Palestine over the next ten years in the wake of growing antisemitism in Europe and particularly the rise of Nazi Germany. The so-called "evacuation plan" is large-

ly rejected by Jews, but the Polish government strengthens ties with the Revisionists, while considering other "solutions to the Jewish question," including emigration to Madagascar. Jabotinsky



"Yidl mit'n fidel" advertisement poster from 1937.

1937 starts cooperation with the Polish government and members of right-wing Zionist militias are to be trained by the Polish army before going to Mandate Palestine.

1937 Right-wing extremist leader Adam Doboszyński and his followers organize the so-called March on Myślenice, on June 23, occupying the town south of Kraków, arresting local authorities, plundering Jewish shops and attempting to set fire to the synagogue. Doboszyński is arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in jail.



Lili Liliana in

1937

The Yiddish language musical "**Yidl mit'n fidel**" ("Yiddle With His Fiddle" in Yiddish, Polish title: "Judeł gra na skrzypcach") premiers in Warsaw on

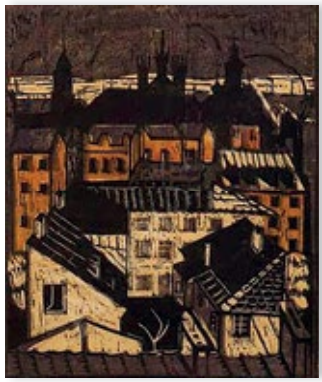


University ID card of a Jewish student with a "bench ghetto" seal.

1937

September 1936 in Warsaw to become a blockbuster in Poland, and subsequently in the United States. It tells the story of an impoverished klezmorim, Jewish musicians, a father and his daughter disguised as a young boy, Yiddle. The leading female role is played by Moly Picon, born as Małka Opiekun in New York City to Polish Jewish parents, recent immigrants to the United States. Moly Picon (1898-1992) became the first worldwide star of the Yiddish-language film.

The Sejm introduces a draft law restricting *shechi-*



„The Old Town of Warsaw," a xylograph by Aniela Cukier.

tah (Hebrew term for kosher ritual slaughter) to

only religious purposes, generating heated debate. Attempts will be made again in 2014 and 2018 to introduce such a provision.

Colonel Adam Koc, spokesman of the *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* (OZN, "Camp of National Unity" in Polish), the official political representation of the ruling *Sanacja* regime, officially declares antisemitism as part of its political platform in a political program published in the daily "Gazeta Polska".

"**The Dybbuk**," Michał Waszyński's (born Moshe Waks) feature film based on Shimon An-ski's play, premieres in Warsaw to critical acclaim. It will become one of the greatest hits of Polish Jewish cinema.

The so-called "**bench ghettos**" (separate seating for Jewish students) are introduced in a majority of Polish universities with the start of the new academic year in October. Some universities also introduce the *numerus clausus* ("quota" in Latin), limiting the number of places for Jews, based on their percentage of the country's population (10%). The first unsuccessful attempt to introduce this provision took place in 1923. While those moves are opposed by the democrats and by members of academia, the right and others demand a *numerus nullus* ("null



Herszel Grynszpan

1938 number" in Latin), i.e. the total exclusion of Jews.

An exhibition of artworks, mostly paintings and wood engravings by **Aniela Cukier**, opens at Instytut Propagandy Sztuki (The Art Propagation Institute) in Warsaw. Cukier was one of the leading female artists of the artist colony in the town of Kazimierz Dolny.

On March 31, the Sejm passes a law stripping Polish citizens who have resided abroad for more than five consecutive years of their citizenship.

1939 Nazi Germany in the course of the so-called *Polenaktion* ("Polish action" in German) brutally deports 17,000 Polish Jews in October to the border crossing at Zbąszyń. They will initially be denied admission and forced into a transfer camp. In spite of official protests in Poland, the situation in Zbąszyń deteriorates, provoking widespread outrage among the Jewish



Jewish recruits of the 20th Land of Kraków Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army taking military oath at the Wawel Castle in the 1930s.

1939 communities in Poland. Assistance is provided by the General Aid Committee for Refugees from Germany, established by Emanuel Ringelblum and Yitzhak Gitterman, as well as by a local Jewish committee

V. THE WAR AND THE HOLOCAUST 1939-1945

Although the early Nazi policies of antisemitism and racism in Germany were becoming widely known and with antisemitism on the rise in Poland and elsewhere throughout Europe, the enormity of the tragedy of the Shoah could not have been foreseen. Germany's "Final Solution," the plan for complete extermination of the Jews, was implemented primarily in the occupied Polish territory, because it was where the largest European Jewish population lived. The loss of 90% of Polish Jewry meant the near-end of the Ashkenazi civilization that had developed and thrived on Polish lands for almost a millennium.


Poland During Second World War (1939-45)
Riga
Latvia
Rumbula Forest
Kalmar
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Šiauliai
Daugavpils
Klaipéda
Lithuania
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Katyn
9th Fort
Kaunas
Wilno
09.1943
Ponary
Königsberg
Danzig
Köslin
Allenstein
SOVIET
UNION
MALY TROSTINETS
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
GERMAN
REICH
Białystok
08.1943
Słonim
Bydgoszcz
Bronna Góra
TREBLINKA
08.1943
Poznań
Warsaw
08-09.1944
Międzyrzec Podlaski
Pińsk
Mazyr
KULMHOF
04.1943
Siedlce
Brześć
Kalisz
Łódź (Litzmannstadt)
Tomaszów Mazowiecki
MAJDANEK
Majdanek (Aktion Erntefest)
SOBIBOR
10.1943
Sarny
Piotrków
Radom
Trawniki (Aktion Erntefest)
Kowel
Breslau
Radomsko
Poniatowa (Aktion Erntefest)
Izbica
Łuck
Kiev
Babi Yar
Częstochowa
06.1943
Kielce
Górka Polonka
Zhytomyr
Mizocz
10.1942
BELZEC
Berdychiv
Bedzin
08.1943
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU
10.1944
KRAKÓW
(Capital of the GG)
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Lwów
Tarnopol
Nowy Sącz
Janowska
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
Žilina
Prešov
Stanisławów
Kamianets Podilskyi
Košice
Munkács
Kołomyja
Chernivtsi
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
Northern Transylvania (Hungarian from 09.1940)
Territories annexed into the Soviet Union (1939-1941)
Territory of the German Reich prior to September 1, 1939 (including territories annexed before the war)
Bezirk Bialystok (annexed into the German Reich from July 22, 1941)
Territories annexed into the German Reich (1939-1945)
General Government (1939-1945)
District of Galicia (incorporated into the GG from August 01, 1941)
Borders of Poland on August 31, 1939
Range of the Soviet occupation to June 22, 1941
Borders of the Greater German Reich (1941-45)
Ghettos over 100,000 people
Other large ghettos
Largest mass executions of Jews
Major killing centers
Ghetto and camp uprisings (with dates)
1944 Warsaw Uprising (Polish Home Army)
1940 Katyn massacre
1:6,500,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

Germany invades Poland on September 1. Subsequently, the Soviet Union invades on September 17, following the secret German-Soviet pact signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov on August 23. After one month of desperate fighting, the last units of the Polish army surrender in early October. Poland never officially capitulates and a new government and army start to form in exile, first in France and, after it falls in June 1940, in the United Kingdom.

When the last Polish units are defeated, Germany annexes directly into the German Reich western parts of Poland including Poznań, Katowice, and Łódź. Central Poland, with Warsaw, Kraków, and Lublin, is located in the German occupation zone renamed the "General Government for the Occupied Polish Territories." Eastern Poland, in accordance with the German-Soviet pact, is taken over by the Soviet Union, which annexes the area respectively to Soviet Belarus and Soviet Ukraine. Immediately thereafter, German Nazi and Soviet terror targeting Poles and symbols of Polishness, including Polish intelligentsia and clergy, begins.

In the areas of Poland taken by Nazi Germany, the Nazis target Jews from the very beginning with the introduction of antisemitic laws. The new laws include the confiscation of private property, limitation of travel, freezing of bank accounts, forced labor and restrictions on which jobs Jews could hold. Mandatory white armbands with the Star of David (in the General Government) and yellow badges in the shape of the Star of David (in territories annexed to the Reich) are imposed.

Prominent Bund leaders **Wiktor Alter** and Henryk Erlich, both with a symbolic grave in Warsaw's Jewish cemetery, are arrested by the Soviet authorities



Wiktor Alter

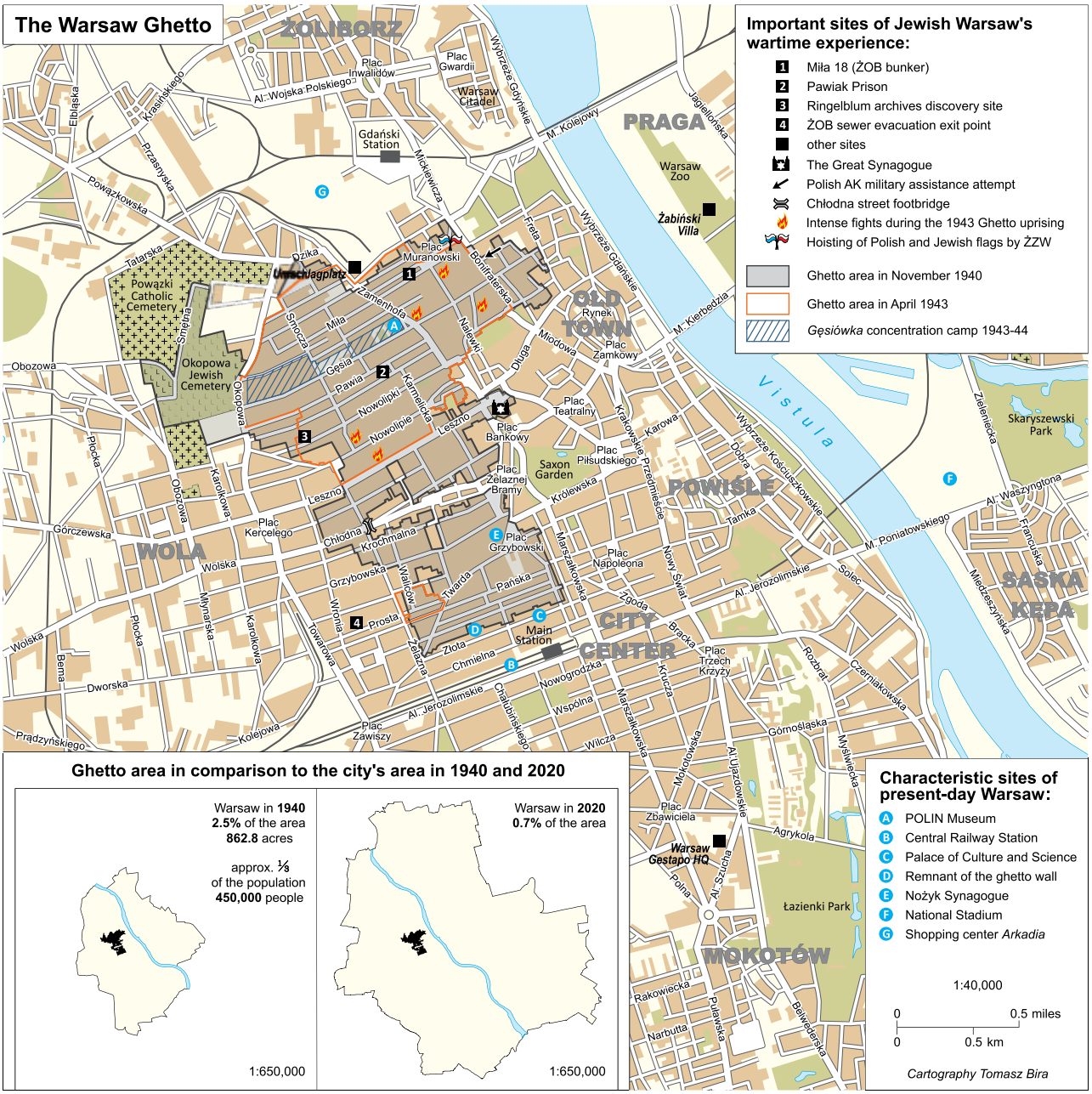
in October to be released in 1941. They are re-arrested as "German spies" three months later and executed.

1939

The first of approximately six hundred ghettos in occupied Poland is established by the Germans in Piotrków Trybunalski on October 5.

The **Warsaw Ghetto**, the largest ghetto created in German-occupied Europe, is sealed on November 16, 1940. While several thousand Jews manage to remain illegally outside of the closed area and others manage to flee with the help of non-Jews, the vast majority of the city's Jewish population is forced into the ghetto. Many Jewish communal and religious institutions and cultural organizations are re-established in the so-called Jewish Residential District. Schools, hospitals, orphanages, and theaters are set up. The Judenrat, an administrative body set up the Germans, tries to reconcile submission to the Nazi authorities with protection of the welfare and interests of the Jewish population. Underground activity, including the publishing of newspapers, begins almost immediately. Of the Warsaw Ghetto's population of approximately 450,000 at its peak in April 1941, 100,000 will die of cold, hunger and disease. Over 300,000 will be gassed in Treblinka.

1940


The Warsaw Ghetto
Important sites of Jewish Warsaw's wartime experience:
1 Miła 18 (ŻOB bunker)
2 Pawiak Prison
3 Ringelblum archives discovery site
4 ŻOB sewer evacuation exit point
other sites
The Great Synagogue
Polish AK military assistance attempt
Chłodna street footbridge
Intense fights during the 1943 Ghetto uprising
Hoisting of Polish and Jewish flags by ŻZW
Ghetto area in November 1940
Ghetto area in April 1943
Gęsiówka concentration camp 1943-44
ŻOLIBORZ
PRAGA
OLD TOWN
POWIŚLE
WOLA
CITY CENTER
MOKOTÓW
SASKA KĘPA
Vistula
Umschlagplatz
Okopowa Jewish Cemetery
Powązki Catholic Cemetery
Warsaw Zoo
Żabiński Villa
Warsaw Citadel
Gdański Station
Main Station
Saxon Garden
Łazienki Park
Skaryszewski Park
Warsaw Gestapo HQ
Ghetto area in comparison to the city's area in 1940 and 2020
Warsaw in 1940
2.5% of the area
862.8 acres
approx. ⅛
of the population
450,000 people
1:650,000
Warsaw in 2020
0.7% of the area
1:650,000
Characteristic sites of present-day Warsaw:
A POLIN Museum
B Central Railway Station
C Palace of Culture and Science
D Remnant of the ghetto wall
E Nożyk Synagogue
F National Stadium
G Shopping center Arkadia
1:40,000
0 0.5 miles
0 0.5 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira

1940

Zionist Ignacy Schwarzbart joins the Polish National Council in London, the Polish parliament-in-exile.

1940

Poland is the only country in occupied Europe to have a form of parliament-in-exile.
The YIVO Institute relocates its headquarters from Wilno to New York City.

In February, Soviet authorities begin the first of four mass deportations of Polish citizens from the Soviet occupation zone to the east of the Soviet Union, mostly to Siberia and Kazakhstan. The third wave



Katyń Memorial in Jersey City, NJ.

of deportations of May-June 1940 primarily targets Polish Jews, with 80% of the deportees being Jewish. By 1945, at least one and a half million Poles will become target of the Soviet repressions. Approximately 150,000-200,000 of them will lose their lives.

1940

From April through May, the Soviets murder approximately 21,500 captured Polish Army and police officers, members of the Polish intelligentsia and social elite. Their bodies are buried in **Katyn** forest, near the Russian city of Smolensk, and in various other locations in the western Soviet Union. Roughly 8-10% of the victims were Jews, among them Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army Baruch Steinberg.

Witold Pilecki, a Polish cavalry captain and veteran of the Polish-Bolshevik war, now a member of the Polish underground, volunteers to be sent to Auschwitz (by allowing himself to be caught by German police in a roundup) in order to gather information about the camp from the inside and to start resis-



Auschwitz concentration camp photo of Witold Pilecki.



Emanuel Ringelblum

1940

tance there. Pilecki also delivers the first report on the mass murder of Jews in Auschwitz. After two and a half years in Auschwitz, he successfully escapes. Then, he fights in the Polish underground

army. After the war in 1948, targeted as dangerous to the new Communist regime, he is arrested, tortured, and sentenced to death in a show trial and subsequently executed.

1941 *Oneg Shabbat* ("The Joy of the Sabbath" in Hebrew), a clandestine network founded in the Warsaw Ghetto, is established by **Emanuel Ringelblum** to document Jewish suffering during the German occupation. The members, including historians, writers, artists and
1941 teachers, are charged with researching each aspect of life and death in the ghetto. What they collect will form the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, now known as the Ringelblum Archive.

In secret radio messages, the Polish Prime Minister-in-Exile, General Władysław Sikorski, warns the Polish population against participating in German atrocities against Jews.

1941 Nazi Germany invades Soviet Russia on June 22. Germany occupies former eastern Poland in the wake of its invasion codenamed "Operation Barbarossa." The Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* ("Special Operations Groups" in German) – the killing squads of the SS, in cooperation with local Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian auxiliary forces, murder approximately one million Jews in Eastern Poland,



Gravestones of Jewish soldiers at the Monte Cassino Polish war cemetery.



Menachem Begin wearing Polish Army uniform, Tel Aviv, December 1942.

1941 Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Western Russia as the German offensive moves towards Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow.

In the first days after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, following accusations of the Jews supporting the Soviets during the past two years of occupation, local Poles murder their Jewish neighbors in the small town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland. It is the largest such massacre, among similar other cases, to take place in occupied Poland.
The Polish Army-in-Exile is set up in Russia under the command of General Władysław Anders. The almost eighty thousand men strong Anders' Army will eventually be evacuated in 1942 through the Middle East to fight at the Italian front (among other battlefields at **Monte Cassino** in May 1944). Anders' Army, with approximately 4,000 Jewish soldiers, also evacuates thousands of civilians from Soviet Russia, including many Polish Jews. General Anders, despite the death
1941 penalty for desertion, tacitly allows 3,000 Jewish soldiers to stay in Palestine and join the ranks of the *Haganah* ("The Defense" in Hebrew, a Jewish military organization that later will become the Israeli army). Among them is Mieczysław Biegun, later known

as **Menachem Begin**. A 1935 graduate of Warsaw University's law faculty, born in Brest (Polish: *Brześć*, Yiddish: *Brisk*) in Eastern Poland (now in Western Belarus), in 1977 Begin will become Israeli prime

1941 minister and will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978.

The death penalty is introduced by German authorities for Jews leaving ghettos without authorization. Thousands of Jews are executed as a result. Unlike in other German-occupied countries, the death penalty is also introduced by German author-



Abba Kovner (standing, center) among FPO fighters, 1943.

1942 ities for Poles providing any help for the Jews. Hundreds of Poles who helped Jews escape or hide are summarily murdered along with their families and neighbors.

1942 The first German death camp is set up in December in Kulmhof (Polish: *Chełmno nad Nerem*), prior to the infamous Wannsee Conference of January 1942, where the Final Solution policy will be confirmed. The Jews of Koło are the first victims. All of the German death camps (Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibór, Bełżec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Chełmno) are located in occupied Poland.

1942 The **United Partisan Organization** (FPO – from Yiddish *Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye*) is set up in the Wilno Ghetto by Abba Kovner and Yitzhak Wittenberg. Similar armed-resistance organizations are set up in Warsaw, Kraków, Białystok, and elsewhere.

The first transport of Jews following the Wannsee Conference reaches Auschwitz, originally set up in



Tosia Altman

1942 1940 as a concentration camp for the Polish intelligentsia, clergy, and members of the resistance. Auschwitz-Birkenau will claim about 1.1 million victims from Nazi-occupied Europe, 90% of them Jews.

The British BBC airs a program about the ongoing extermination of Polish Jews by the Germans. Emanuel Ringelblum writes on that day in his diary: "The *Oneg Shabbat* group fulfilled in this way its great historical mission: it alerted the world to our fate and maybe saved hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews from extermination (…). We struck the enemy with a strong blow. We have exposed his diabolical plan to murder all Polish Jews secretly."
The so-called *kashariyot* become a crucial element in the activities of Jewish underground in the German-occupied Eastern Europe. The term refers to a group of Jewish female couriers who, under false identities, establish and maintain connections

between isolated ghettos, as well with the non-Jewish resistance. The group's name comes from the



Janusz Korczak and

1942 Hebrew word for "connection"—*kesher*—as these brave women, smuggling weapons and money, fake documents and medicine, constitute a network between the ghettos, a lifeline that provides rare news and information from the outside world. The leader of the group is **Tosia Altman**, a member of Hashomer Hatzair before the war, serving now as a liaison between the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for the Polish: Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa) and the Polish Home Army (AK, for the Pol-



Gela Seksztajn

1942 ish: Armia Krajowa). She will perish during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on May 26, 1943, at the age of twenty-three. Her friend Chajka (Haika) Grossman, another *kasharit*, will survive the war and become an Israeli politician and member of the Knesset.

Mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, codenamed in German *Großaktion Warschau* ("Great Action Warsaw" in German), begins on July 22, 1942. Judenrat chairman Adam Czerniaków commits suicide, unwilling to enact the German orders. Treblinka ultimately claims 850,000 Jewish victims over the 14 months of its existence. Among those deported and gassed are **Janusz Korczak** and **Stefania Wilczyńska**, who refused to abandon the children of their orphanage.



Irena Sendler

1942 On the thirteenth day of the great deportation, Izrael Lichtensztajn, a member of the *Oneg Shabbat* and close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum, together with his two students, Dawid Graber and Nachum Grzywacz, hide the first cache of the Ghetto archive in the basement of the Ber Borochov school in the Warsaw Ghetto. Izrael's wife, **Gela Seksztajn**, also working with *Oneg Shabbat,* was a Polish Jewish artist and painter, whose works were included in the secret archive. The second cache of the archive is hidden in January 1943 and the alleged third cache on the eve of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Out



Jan Karski

1942 of approximately 60 *Oneg Shabbat* collaborators, only three survive the war, Rachela Auerbach, and Bluma and Hersz Wasser, with the latter being the last person alive to know the location of the hidden documentation.

Żegota, the Polish Underground Council to Aid Jews, is set up by the Polish Government-in-Ex-ile on September 27. It is the only underground state-run organization in German-occupied Europe created solely to help Polish Jews. Its initiator, Catholic writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, publishes an appeal in the underground Catholic press condemning Allied and Polish inactivity in the face of the Holocaust two weeks

1942 after the beginning of the great deportation. At least several thousand Jews were saved by *Żegota*, among them almost 2,500 children rescued by *Żegota's* children's section, including over 200 saved by **Irena Sendler** (leading the section from October 1943)

1942 and her colleagues.

After secret visits to the Warsaw Ghetto and the transfer ghetto in Izbica Lubelska, the Polish Government-in-Exile courier and emissary **Jan Karski** (born Jan Kozielewski), successfully arrives in London in November. He delivers the first eyewitness account of the mass murder of Jews to the Polish, British, and American governments, including to the Prime Minister of Great Britain Winston Churchill and the President of the United States of America Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, they do not undertake any action in response. Karski, together with another emissary Jerzy Lerski, will later be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.



Bruno Schulz

1943 The Polish National Council (PNC) in London launches an appeal to the Allies to prevent what it calls "the German attempt to murder all the Jews in Europe."

On November 19, the writer **Bruno Schulz** is shot by

1943 a German Gestapo officer in the Drohobycz ghetto. The eastern Galician city of Drohobycz (today Drohobych in Ukraine) had become a booming center of the oil industry in the late 19th century, growing rapidly and attracting many Jewish entrepreneurs. Into one such merchant family of assimilated Polish Jews, Bruno was born in 1892. During the interbellum period he published two collections of short fiction, while also establishing himself as a painter and illustrator and art critic. Blending comedy and tragedy, the quaint and the grotesque, his works depict his personal obsessions and sketch out the uneasy mood of the interbellum period. A unique-

ly gifted fabulist, Schulz is now seen as one of the greatest authors of Polish prose of the 20th century. On December 10, Poland addresses an official Note to the Governments of the United Nations entitled „The Mass Extermination of Jews in German-Occupied Poland" calling on them to speed up military action and intensify international help to the remaining Jews.

1943 The next wave of deportations to Treblinka is halted for three months when, in January 1943, shots are fired on German wardens from among the deportees walked to the Umschlagplatz. It is the first act of armed struggle instigated by the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto.



Prewar photo of Mordechaj Anielewicz (standing, right) with Hashomer Hatzair members, Warsaw 1938.

1943 Resistance in the ghettos took on different forms: cultural, intellectual, physical and spiritual. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Szapira, Piaseczner tsaddik (Hassidic spiritual leader), during the war was known as the "Preacher of the Warsaw Ghetto," who recorded his weekly sermons, addressing the difficult questions of faith and religious observance in the face of increased suffering in the ghetto. In January 1943, prior to being transported to the sub-camp of Majdanek in Trawniki, where he will be killed ten months later, Rabbi Szapira gave his writings to *Oneg Shabbat*, together with a letter to his brother and Hasidim in Palestine. His work was later published in Israel in 1960 under the title "Esh Kodesh" ("The Holy Fire" in Hebrew).

As the tide of the war shifts, a new Communist-dominated Polish Army is set up in the Soviet Union under the command of General Zygmunt **1943** Berling. It is largely commanded by Soviet officers and includes many Polish Jews in its ranks.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, beginning on the eve of Passover, April 19, is the largest act of Jewish armed resistance in German-occupied Europe to date, trig-



Szmul Zygielbojm

1943 gering smaller uprisings in the ghettos in Białystok, Częstochowa, and Będzin. Different organizations and factions operating in the Warsaw Ghetto, among them the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for Polish: *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*) led by **Mordechaj Anielewicz** and the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW, for **1943** Polish: *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*) led by Paweł Frenkel. Combat rages on for several weeks and sporadic fighting continues into June.
Anielewicz and most of the leaders of the Jewish

1943 Fighting Organization die in their besieged bunker at 18 Miła Street on May 8, 1943. A group of fighters, led by Marek Edelman and Szymon Rathajzer (Simcha Rotem), manage to escape the bunker and, with the help of the Polish underground, flee to the other side of the ghetto wall through the sewers. They join the Polish underground and continue to fight the Germans in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

Soviet partisans, allegedly among them also Jews from the Bielski brothers' squad, kill 129 Poles during a raid on Naliboki in Belarus. The villagers were falsely accused of collaborating with the Germans. On January 29,



Samuel Willenberg

1943 1944, another massacre perpetrated by the Soviet partisans will be committed in the village of Koniuchy.
On May 11, **Szmul Zygielbojm**, the Bund representative to the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, commits suicide in an act of protest to the world's indifference to the mass murder of Jews in Poland.

To mark the end of the Ghetto uprising and to proclaim that Europe's largest Jewish community had been exterminated and Warsaw made *Judenrein* ("cleansed
1943 of Jews" in German), on May 16, the Germans blow up the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street.
On July 11, the "Volhynian Bloody Sunday" marks the peak of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Ukrainian
1943 UPA partisans in the region with the help of Ukrainian locals. A series of bloody massacres, from February 1943 through the end of 1944, are now commonly known as the "Volhynian Slaughter." In its course, approximately 100,000 Poles, among them many hiding Polish Jews, are killed by Ukrainian nationalists in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (both nowadays in Western Ukraine). In reprisal, Polish partisans kill several thousand Ukrainians. The genocide will continue to this day to sour Polish-Ukrainian relations and provoke ongoing fervent debate about the events.



1944

Prisoners in the Treblinka death camp stage an uprising on August 2, attacking the Germans and auxiliary Ukrainian guards. Among the over 300 who manage to escape is **Samuel Willenberg**. He will later join Polish underground and will fight in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. After the war and emigration to Israel, he will become a famous sculptor and painter. He will be also active in reviving Polish-Israeli relations after the fall of Communism, considered as a war hero by both nations. The last survivor

of Treblinka, he passes away in 2016.

Prisoners of Sobibór death camp stage an uprising on October 14. In the outcome, twelve SS staff members are killed and, of the over 500 Jewish prisoners, three hundred manage to escape.

1944 After uprisings in Treblinka and Sobibór, the Germans decide to close all killing centers, apart from Auschwitz-Birkenau, and to liquidate the remaining Jewish population in other camps. In the process of the so-called *Aktion Erntefest* ("Operation Harvest Festival" in German), that takes place on November 3-4, approximately 43,000 Jewish inmates of Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki camps are shot. Afterwards, the district of Lublin **1944** is declared *Judenfrei* ("free of Jews" in German) by the Nazis.

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, Rachela Auerbach writes an essay titled "Yizkor" (*Yizkor* is the Hebrew word opening the memorial prayer for the dead recited on the most solemn Jewish holiday, *Yom Kippur*, The Day of Atonement), describing the destruction of Polish Jewry. **Rachela Auerbach**, born in 1903 in Podolia, a prewar journalist and poet writing both in Polish and Yiddish, during the war finds herself imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. She runs a soup kitchen on Leszno street, and is a close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum. One of the only three members of the Oneg Shabbat group to survive the war, Aurebach becomes a custodian of the memory of the destroyed Jewish community and works at the Jewish Historical Institute on retriev- **1944** al of the Ringelblum archives and documentation of German Nazi crimes. In 1950 she immigrates to Israel, where she works at Yad Vashem, before passing away in 1975.

In the course of the spring offensive, the Soviets take control of eastern Poland, including the city of Lublin and the concentration camp of Majdanek, the first concentration camp to be liberated. The evidence and the extent of German atrocities there is discovered.

An unelected, Communist-dominated government – The Polish Committee of National Liber-



Marek Edelman



Zivia Lubetkin

1944 ation (PKWN, Polish: *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*) is set up on July 22 by the Sovi-

ets in Lublin reconquered by the Red Army and Polish Army under General Berling. It has a separate bureau for Jewish affairs in its structure. The PKWN's policy of equal rights for Jews attracts



Liberated prisoners of Gęsiówka, August 1944.

1944 many of them and some receive high positions in the new regime. The conflicting opinions about the Soviet-installed government oppose many Jews to the non-Jewish majority rejecting the enforced Sovietization of Poland. The situation strengthens Polish popular antisemitism and the stereotype *of Żydokomuna* (literally: "Judeo-Communism" in Polish; an antisemitic presumption, dating back to Polish-Bolshevik war, which states that most Jews universally support the Soviets and thus are against Polish independence), already widespread in the interwar period.

Hundreds of Jews, who had previously been hiding in Warsaw during the German occupation, among them the veterans of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, including **Marek Edelman**, Antek Zuckerman and **Zivia Lubetkin**, and other Polish fighters and civilians, participate in the Warsaw

1944 Uprising that begins on August 1, triggered by German panic retreat in the last days of July. It is intended to chase out German forces from the city as the Red Army approaches from the east and to install sovereign Polish authorities in the liberated



Resettlement of Jews into the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, March 1940.



Róża Robota

1944 capital to counter the Lublin government (PKWN). Despite general Jewish support for the uprising, some 50 Jews are murdered by members of various right-wing Polish units.

On the fifth day of the uprising, soldiers of Polish Armia Krajowa (the "Home Army" in Polish) elite unit "Zośka" liberate 348 Jewish prisoners held in the German concentration camp "KL Warschau" on

Gęsia street, the so-called ***Gęsiówka***, established on the ruins of the former ghetto. Most of the liberated prisoners join the fight.

1944 The German forces regroup and begin to brutally quell the uprising, murdering tens of thousands of civilian Varsovians while advancing into the heart of the city. With Western allies providing no significant support and with Stalin's decision to halt the Soviet offensive on the east bank of the Vistula and wait for the uprising to be crushed by the Germans, the ill-fated 63-day-long battle is eventually lost and the insurgents surrender on October 3. The battle leaves the capital in ruins, with approximately 150,000 civilians and 16,000 Polish military killed, leaving no significant Polish forces to oppose the future Sovietization of the country. After the fall of the uprising, the Germans expel the remaining population (many are taken to concentration camps), and subsequently raze **1944** what has left of the city to the ground. The Vistula River that divides Warsaw from its east-bank district of Praga becomes a frontline for the next four months.

1944 The last 60,000 Jews from the **ghetto in Litzmannstadt** (Łódź, renamed by the Germans and annexed into the *Reich*), the longest existing ghetto in occupied Europe, are deported to Auschwitz by August 29, as the eastern front nears.
On October 7, a Jewish underground organization in Auschwitz-Birkenau stages an unsuccessful uprising upon learning that the *Sonderkommando* workers (prisoners forced to work in the crematoria) were selected for imminent killing. The **1944** underground managed to secure some arms, explosives, and gunpowder brought in secretly by female inmates, including **Róża Robota**, from the Monowitz chemical factory (part of the



| Władysław Szpilman

1945 camp's industrial complex known as *Auschwitz III - Monowitz*). In the revolt, three SS guards are killed and a dozen are wounded but almost all of the *Sonderkomanndo* workers are murdered, with Róża and three other women being hanged by the SS in January 1945.

As Soviet forces drive German forces out of eastern Poland, in August the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Polish: *Centralny Komitet Żydów Polskich*, CKŻP) is organized in Lublin. Nearly 300,000 Jews will eventually register with the CKŻP, which organizes aid programs, providing food, housing, education, medical assistance, employment



| The gate of Auschwitz I concentration camp.

1945 and vocational services, as well as cultural activities and providing help in finding and tracing survivors. A "Committee to Help the Poles," which will eventually provide material assistance to dozens among



Righteous Among the Nations medals and diplomas handed over during a ceremony in the Polish Senate on 17th April 2012.

1945 those Poles who saved Jews during the war, is also set up.

The Bund becomes the first of eleven Jewish political parties to re-establish itself in the part of Poland already taken from the Germans. Three of them, including Agudat Israel, do so illegally. All active Jewish organizations support the Communist government, which they see as the sole bulwark of their security in the face of growing antisemitism. The majority of the population is vehemently opposed to the government, as it is illegitimately introduced by the Soviets against popular will. Jewish Communists become prominent in the new State apparatus, including the dreaded secret police. As suspected opponents of the new regime are jailed and deported, clashes bordering on civil war break out.

The Central Jewish Historical Commission (Polish: *Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*, CŻKH), the first institution in Poland to collect Holocaust documentation, survivor testimonies and evidence of war crimes, is established in Lublin.

The Red Army, having camped on the right bank of the Vistula River since September of 1944, takes the core of Warsaw in the course of the 1945 Winter Offensive. Close to 85% of the city lies in ruins. Out of the prewar population of over one million, only a few hundred men and women are living in hiding amid the ruins of the city's left bank since the end of the 1944 uprising. Among them are many Jews, including famous pianist **Władysław Szpilman**. On the day of liberation, January 17, those so-called "Warsaw Robinsons" re-emerge from their hideouts scattered around the sea of rubble, to greet the Soviet and Polish Berling Army forces entering Warsaw.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is liberated by the Soviet Army on January 27. In 2005, the UN will declare the date as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
On May 8, the war in Europe ends after 2,190 days.

Almost six million Polish citizens perished in World War II. Of these, three million were Polish Jews murdered by the Germans in death and concentration camps, ghettos, and execution sites. This constituted 90% of pre-war Poland's Jewish population. While some Jews trying to survive under the German occupation received help from the Poles, there were also some Poles, the so-called *szmalcownicy*, who blackmailed Jews in hiding or denounced them to the Germans. The majority of Poles were indifferent to Jewish suffering as, among other factors, they

VI. POST-WAR COMMUNIST POLAND 1945-1968

The war ended in stages as the Soviet army advanced from the east in 1944, with Auschwitz and Warsaw only liberated in January 1945. Withal, initiatives to rebuild the country begin immediately. The map of Poland, along with much of Central and Eastern Europe, is once again redrawn, this time based on the tripartite Roosevelt -Stalin-Churchill 1943 Teheran and 1945 Yalta conferences' agreements. Poland is to be shifted westwards, the Soviet Union, which will dominate the region until 1989, annexes the eastern half of prewar Poland, incorporating the cities of Lwów and Wilno, and the majority of the Belarussian and Ukrainian minorities. According to the stipulations of the Potsdam Peace Conference, Poland receives territorial "compensation" from the defeated Germany in the north and west with the cities of Breslau (Polish: *Wrocław*), Stettin (Polish: *Szczecin*), and now fully incorporated Free City of Danzig (Polish: *Gdańsk*).

After the genocide of Polish Jews, the expulsion of Germans and of the remaining Ukrainians, Poland's population becomes almost homogeneous.

A Communist-led government is imposed on the country against popular will. More than one and a half million Poles from the former eastern Poland, now part of the Soviet Union, are resettled within Poland's new borders. Many of those rendered homeless by the war, particularly residents of Warsaw, must find new homes as well. The remnants of the Jewish community, made up primarily of those who survived the war in the Soviet Union, begin to rebuild Jewish communal life. Some choose to affiliate with Jewish communities around the country, others opt to assimilate, while the majority choose to emigrate. Thousands of others, along with those who had been hidden as children during the war with no inkling of their Jewish roots, make their lives in post-war Poland.


Postwar Poland (1945-49)
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Lithuanian SSR
Belarussian SSR
Ukrainian SSR
SOVIET UNION
EAST GERMANY
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
BERLIN
PRAGUE
Dresden
Šiauliai
Klaipėda
Kaunas
Vilnius
Wilno
Kaliningrad
Koenigsberg
Brasław
Minsk
Suwałki
Hrodna
Grodno
Navahrudak
Nowogódek
Olsztyn
Allenstein
Elbląg
Elbing
Słupsk
Stolp
Gdańsk
Danzig
Koszalin
Köslin
Szczecin
Stettin
Grudziądz
Piła
Schneidemühl
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Łomża
Białystok
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Poznań
Konin
WARSAW
Siedlce
Brest
Brześć
Pinsk
Pińsk
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Grünberg
Leszno
Kalisz
Łódź
Głogów
Glogau
Sieradz
Radom
Lublin
Chełm
Kovel
Kowel
Lutsk
Łuck
Rivne
Równe
Legnica
Liegnitz
Wrocław
Breslau
Walbrzych
Waldenburg
Dzierżoniów
Reichenbach
Opole
Oppeln
Częstochowa
Kielce
Zamość
Tarnobrzeg
Gliwice
Gleiwitz
Katowice
Kraków
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Lviv
Lwów
Ternopil
Tarnopol
Stanislaviv
Stanisławów
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Nowy Sącz
Brno
Žilina
Košice
Mukachevo
Debrecen
Békès
Baia Mare
Suceava
Cluj-Napoca
Bacău
0.2 million
0.5 million
1.8 million
3.5 million
Borders of Poland in 1939
Curzon Line
Curzon Line "B"
Territory of Poland in 1946
Recovered Territories (acquired from Germany)
Territories lost to USRR
Lower Silesian cluster of Jewish Settlement
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
Cities with a larger Jewish population in 1946
20,000 – 30,000
15,000 – 20,000
10,000 – 15,000
5,000 – 10,000
Resettlement of:
Germans
Poles
Ukrainians and Belarusians
Polish Jews
1945-47 Emigration of Jews from Poland to the West (150,000)

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities.



Jewish settlers in Dzierżoniów, 1960s.

1945 Some 200,000 Polish Jews begin returning from the Soviet Union. Many are met with growing hostility. Most resettle in the former German territories in what is now western Poland including the cities of Wroclaw and Szczecin. The town of **Dzierżoniów** (formerly German *Reichenbach*) with several other nearby localities in Lower Silesia, will become, for a short time, a center of Jewish life in Poland.

1945 The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is granted the right to function in Poland anew. It is largely the Joint that will finance the reconstruction of post-war Jewish life, but it will be forced to discontinue its work temporarily in 1949. JDC will later return and will continue to support Jewish communal life.

1945 The Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw, used as a stable and storehouse by the Germans, is reopened. It becomes a meeting point for Jewish survivors looking for relatives and friends. The only other synagogue to survive in Warsaw, although also damaged, is the **Round Synagogue** in the Praga district. The first post-war pogrom takes place in Kraków on August 11, in the course of which at least one person is killed. Other pogroms will follow. In a climate of post-war lawlessness and growing internal political conflict, the total number of victims of anti-Jewish violence in Soviet-dominated Poland is estimated at between 500 and 2,000 in the period 1944-47.



The Round Synagogue

1945 The Polish Communist government signs a border treaty ceding to the Soviet Union the area located to the east of the so-called Curzon Line, being almost all of the Polish territories previously occupied by the Soviets under the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. As a result, approximately 1.8 million Poles eventually are resettled westward into Poland's new borders, mostly to the lands recently acquired from Germany. Officially, the formerly German area is proclaimed to be "Recovered Territories," as Communist propaganda tries to portray the border change as an act of historical justice, enacted through the return of Poland to its borders from the medieval times of the Piast dynasty, roughly six centuries earlier. Polish Jewish survivors from the eastern borderlands, who decide not to take

1945 Soviet citizenship, resettle into post-war Poland along with other Poles. At the same time, the remaining German population of the "Recovered Territories" is deported to areas within Germany's new borders.



Sholem Aleichem Jewish School in Wrocław.

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities.

Jewish schools are established in the larger cities in which Jews settled or were resettled after the war. By 1950, the Jewish school in Warsaw is closed and the remaining schools are nationalized. The curriculum is divested of Hebrew and Jewish history and, while Yiddish often remains part of the program,

1945 Polish studies are increased as Stalinist policies take hold. The I.L. Peretz School in Łódź and the **Sholem Aleichem School** in Wrocław will eventually be closed by the end of the 1960s, following the forced emigration of Jews in 1968.

The Communist government issues a decree about the nationalization of industry in Poland. The new authorities' general policy was gradually to nation-

1946 alize all private and communal property. The return of pre-war Jewish communal property, in spite of a 1997 ruling, remains an issue which is being addressed by the Jewish communities in Poland and the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODŻ), as well the World Jewish Restitution Organization.

The first edition of "Folks Sztyme – Głos Ludu" ("People's Voice" respectively in Yiddish/Polish), an offi-

1946 cial Yiddish-language periodical sanctioned by the authorities and following the propaganda line of the Communist party, is published for the first time on April 19, 1946 in Łódź as a monthly journal. In 1949, it will be moved to Warsaw and will be issued weekly up until 1991.



The funeral of Kielce Pogrom victims.

1946

One of the world's first Holocaust memorials, designed in the shape of a manhole cover with a sculpture of a sprouting plant and the letter "bet" signifying *bereshit* ("in the beginning" in Hebrew, the first word of the Torah), is dedicated in Warsaw by members of the Polish Jewish community on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Ghetto Uprising.

The **Kielce Pogrom** on July 4, provoked by

a blood-libel rumor, claims at least 40 victims, including three non-Jewish Poles who tried to stop the killing. It is the largest post-war pogrom in Poland. Attempts to provoke similar pogroms also occur in other cities. The pogroms are condemned by the liberal intelligentsia, but the Catholic Church largely keeps silent or expresses only general condemnations of "all violence." The primate of Poland, speaking to American journalists, says that the pogrom, though deplorable, is a result of Jews having too much power in the Communist government. Nonetheless, in subsequent show trials, several members of the mob are sentenced to death. The pogrom was widely suspected by Poles of being a provocation of the Communist regime to divert attention from the Communist power grab,

1946



Ringelblum Archives discovery in 1946.

but this has not been proven.

1946

Following the Kielce Pogrom, the Communist government unofficially allows mass Jewish emigration and permits the creation of armed Jewish self-defense units. The emigration of Jews from Poland accelerates. In the following months, tens of thousands of Polish

1947

Jews leave Poland heading to the West, first to DP (Displaced Persons) camps in Allied-occupied West Germany, then further on to America or Palestine.

The first cache of the buried **Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in the summer of 1942, is recovered from the ruins on Nowolipki Street in Warsaw on September 18. The collection includes diaries, documents, leaflets, newspapers, posters and paintings collected by the members of *Oneg Shabbat*.

1947

In the early months of 1947, the policy of the government changes and the borders are sealed. In the course of the so-called *Brichah* ("The Flight" in Hebrew; also a name of the clandestine Jewish organization supporting the mass emigration of Jews from post-Holocaust Europe to Palestine), out of some 250,000 Polish Jews who survived the Holo-

1947

caust, over 150,000 leave the country in the period between 1944 and 1947. The remaining Polish Jewish population is estimated at about 100,000.

Inspired by former prisoners, the Auschwitz-Birke-



The Jewish Historical Institute in the 1960s.

1947

nau State Museum is established at the site of the camps by an act of the Polish Parliament. It is to commemorate "the martyrdom of the Polish and other nations." Jewish suffering is consistently underplayed throughout the Eastern Bloc. This will be corrected only after the fall of Communism in 1989.

A *Haganah* training camp, set up in the Lower Silesian town of Bolków under Polish Army auspices,

1947 provides military training for several thousand Zionist volunteers who then move to Palestine to fight for Israel's independence.



The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes in the 1950s.

1948 The **Jewish Historical Institute** (JHI; Polish: *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH*), successor to the Central Jewish Historical Commission, is established in Warsaw and housed in the former Main Judaic Library of the Great Synagogue. The Institute, which holds the Ringelblum Archives, is the largest repository
1948 of Polish Jewish material heritage in the world, with collections of wartime testimonies and survivor records, a vast collection of artwork and Judaica, pre-war press, books, and documentation.

Poland actively supports the UN resolution on the



Vladka Meed

1949 partition of Mandate Palestine into Jewish and Arab territories.

Amidst the sea of rubble that was once the Warsaw Ghetto, the **Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes**, designed by Polish Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport, is unveiled on the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A replica will be put up at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Memorial in 1976.

The State of Israel is proclaimed on May 14. Poland recognizes the new Jewish state on May 19. The first Israeli diplomatic mission opens in Poland, initially housed in Warsaw's Hotel Bristol.

A survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, **Vladka Meed** (1921-2012, born Feigele Peltel), publishes in Yiddish a recollection of her war experiences titled "Fun Beyde Zaytn Geto-Moyer" (English title: "On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto"). Vladka (after her Polish wartime pseudonym *Władka*), one of the *kashariyot*, during the German occupation served as a liaison between ŻOB and the Polish Home Army, and as a smuggler of weapons and explosives into the ghetto prior and during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 1946 migrates with her husband to the United States where she will become one of the founders of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Her book becomes
1950 one of the most important first-hand accounts and resources on the history of Jewish resistance in Warsaw, and was subsequently translated into English in 1972, Polish, German, and Japanese.

As Stalinism grows more severe, the Bund and other Jewish parties are disbanded. Bundists and members of other leftist parties are strongly encouraged to join the recently created, unified Communist party (Polish: *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnic-*



Review of the second cache of Ringelblum Archives, 1950.

za, PZPR, "Polish United Workers' Party"). Emigration to Israel is restricted. Independent Jewish organizations and institutions are closed down.

Polish Radio starts regular programs in Yiddish that will be continued up to 1958.

1951

The government sets up the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association (Polish: *Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów*, TSKŻ) to replace Jewish organizations which have been officially dissolved. The Union of Religious Congregations is the only other recognized Jewish organization. TSKŻ and the Union support Jewish communal life throughout the Communist period, but only a few Jewish cultural, social and educational activities are permitted to continue.

A **second cache of the Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in February 1943, is recovered on December 1. The archives, which have been listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register since 1999, are housed in the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

The *Jidysz Buch* ("Yiddish Book" in Yiddish) publishing house starts printing mass editions of Yiddish classics. The publishing house will be active until 1968.

A new Communist constitution is adopted on July 22, the eighth anniversary of the establishment of the first Communist government. Poland is renamed the Polish People's Republic (Polish: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL). The new constitution marks the high point of Stalinism in Poland.



"The Dybbuk" by S. An-ski at the State Jewish Theater in Warsaw, season 1956/1957.



Władysław Gomułka addresses hundreds of thousands of people during a demonstration in Warsaw on October 24, 1956.

1956

Józef Światło (born Izaak Fleischfarb), a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Public Security supervising the torture of prisoners, escapes to the West. In a series of interviews broadcast in December to Poland by Radio Wolna Europa (Polish: Radio Free

Europe) and the Voice of America, he describes in detail the use of torture and other crimes committed by the Communists. These revelations shake the Polish Communist party, already disturbed by the death of Stalin in March.

The **State Jewish Theater** is formed through the merger of the Jewish Theater of Lower Silesia established in Wrocław in 1946 with the Jewish Theater in Łódź opened in 1949. The theater is directed by Ida Kamińska (Ester Rachel Kamińska's daughter) and settles permanently in Warsaw. Yiddish-language plays are still performed today, as interest in Polish Jewish and Yiddish culture continues to grow.

De-Stalinization in Poland is in progress. Władysław Gomułka becomes the new leader of Communist



Front cover of the 1957 edition of Piechotkas' book Bóżnice Drewniane (Wooden Synagogues).

Poland during the so-called "Thaw" period **mass protests taking place in October**. The loosening of the regime brings both increased popular antisemitism and new repatriations of Jews from the Soviet Union. Almost 20,000 Jews arrive from the Soviet Union, however most of them, around 13,000, will soon migrate farther to the West. The JDC is once more permitted to operate. An aliyah known in Israel as "Gomułka's Aliyah" starts with another wave

1957 of Jews numbering up to 50,000 emigrants leaving Poland in the years 1956-60. By 1960, approximately 45,000 Jews still live in Poland. There are seven active Jewish State Schools, in: Łódź, Wrocław, Dzierżoniów, Wałbrzych, Legnica, Szczecin, and Katowice.



Wojciech Jerzy Has.

A Polish-language addition to "Folks Sztyme" entitled "Nasz Głos" ("Our Voice" in Polish), directed to Polish-Jewish youth, is published for the first time with 24-year-old Szmul Tenenblatt as its chief editor.

First edition of ***Bóżnice drewniane*** ("Wooden Synagogues" in Polish) is published. Co-created by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka, the book is a pioneering work on the architecture of Baroque wooden synagogues that were characteristic of territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

1962 After a three-year-long renovation, a branch of the Kraków City Museum opens in the Old Synagogue in Kraków's district of Kazimierz.

The Round Synagogue, located on Warsaw's right-bank district of Praga, the only other synagogue

in Warsaw to survive the War apart from the Nożyk synagogue, is demolished after being partially ruined since the war, due to the combination of ill

1967 will of the authorities and a lack of Jewish communal funds for renovation.

The premiere of "Samson," a film by future Academy Award winner Andrzej Wajda, telling the story of the Holocaust experience. Wajda is a representative of an informal group of Polish film directors and screenwriters whose activity between 1955 and approximately 1963 is described as the "Polish Film School." Among the most important topics treated in their works is World War II and the Holocaust. Artists of Jewish origin such as Roman Polański, Janusz Morgenstern, and **Wojciech Jerzy Has** were prominent members of the group. Polish directors will continue to raise important issues about Polish Jewish history through film works in the decades to come.



Workers' meeting organized by the Communist party, with banners saying in Polish "Zionists to Israel," during the 1968 antisemitic campaign.

1968 Opening of the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association's Youth Club Babel in Warsaw.

The Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council issues a breakthrough declaration "Nostra Aetate" on relations with Judaism, opening opportunities for dialogue between the two religions.

In the wake of the Six-Day War, following the Soviet lead, Poland breaks off diplomatic relations with Israel. Most Poles, including non-Jews, cheer Israel's victory in the war, going against the official line of the Communist party that supports the Arab countries in the conflict.

With Gomułka still at the helm during the late 1960s, control of the government is gradually taken by Communist hardliners flirting with Polish nationalism. During this year of worldwide youth unrest, student strikes and demonstrations in support of democratic socialism erupt in many Polish universities in early March. They are suppressed by the regime with police force.

Many of the so-called **March'68** activists are identified as Jews, triggering the Communist regime's so-called anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. About 15,000 Polish Jews are pressured into emigration, their Polish citizenship revoked. Jewish schools around the country are closed. Remaining Jewish organizations are largely prevented from functioning. The Jewish Historical Institute, TSKŻ, and the State Yiddish Theatre in Warsaw are the only secular Jewish institutions that will continue to function, apart from the religious congregations. «

VII. JEWISH LIFE IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (PRL) 1968-1989

The expulsion of Polish Jews in 1968 is one of the most passionately debated issues in contemporary Polish Jewish history. While some Jews who remain in Poland go further underground, others begin to clandestinely explore their Jewish roots. During this period, several Jews create "the Flying Jewish University," following a Polish tradition of underground study during political repression. It is from this group that the founders of the revival of Jewish communal life after the fall of Communism in 1989 will come.



Kniefall von Warschau, Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1970.

Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany, during a state visit in Warsaw on December 7, kneels in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in a famous and symbolic gesture of penitence.

1970 Mass protests in the port cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg, and Szczecin against the rise of state-controlled prices of food, when they begin to evolve into a revolt against the regime, are suppressed by the army. Brutal suppression leaves 42 civilian protesters dead. Eventually, Gomułka is forced to resign. A new Communist government is formed by Edward Gierek. Under his rule, Poland anxiously opens to the West, as the regime is relatively moderate in comparison with those in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc.

150 artists, writers and Jewish activists meet in Śródborów, a TSKŻ retreat outside of Warsaw, to celebrate the 25 anniversary of *„Folks-Sztyme."*

1971

Zew Wawa Morejno of Łódź, the last rabbi in Poland, is forced to emigrate.

Poland, like most of the Eastern Bloc countries, votes in favor of the UN's "Zionism is Racism" resolution.

Hanna Krall, hidden child survivor and a well-known Polish author, publishes an exclusive interview with Marek Edelman "Zdążyć przed panem Bogiem" (English title: "Shielding the Flame"), which will be listed as required reading in Polish high schools.

Renovation of the Nożyk Synagogue begins, it having been closed since 1968. Religious services are held in the adjacent community building.



Isaac Bashevis Singer

1978 Polish-born Yiddish writer **Isaac Bashevis Singer**



Pope John Paul II by the Western Wall during his visit to Jerusalem.

wins the Nobel Prize for Literature and becomes widely published in Poland in Polish translation.

Kraków Cardinal Karol Wojtyła is elected pope. As **John Paul II**, he will spearhead a breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish relations by clearly and consistently calling antisemitism a sin and seeking out ties with Jews as Christians' "elder brothers in faith."

In the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a pavilion commemorating Jewish victims is opened.

Pope John Paul II makes his first official visit as Pope to Poland in June. The visit galvanizes the nation in opposition to the ruling Communist party, eventually leading to the creation of the Solidarity movement.

The Polish socialist economy falls into structural crisis and public dissent against Communism grows. As a result, the democratic opposition formalizes by the mid-1970s. One of its aspects is the creation of the unofficial "Jewish Flying University," set up in



Lech Wałęsa and the famous „Solidarity" logo.

1979 in Warsaw by, among others, Konstanty Gebert and Stanisław Krajewski. In the future, they will become intellectual and communal leaders of the revival of Jewish life in Poland.

The Solidarity movement is established after a victorious strike, led by **Lech Wałęsa**, in the Gdańsk shipyard, with subsequent strikes erupting in support throughout the country. The story will later be told by the European Center of Solidarity in Gdańsk, which will be opened in 2014.

Solidarność ("Solidarity" in Polish), in a year's time becomes a 10,000,000-strong trade union, with one in three adult Poles being its member, campaigning for human rights and political self-determination. *Solidarność* condemns


Jan Jagielski (center)

antisemitism, although some expressions of antisemitism reverberate within its ranks. Many assimilated Jews will be at the forefront of the movement. After 1989, Polish Jewish members of Solidarity and underground activists will lead the revival of Jewish communal institutions.

The Citizens' Committee for Jewish Cultural Monuments is set up. It focuses largely on the preservation of cemeteries. It is the first organization dedicated to Jewish heritage preservation legalized since 1950. One of its co-founders is **Jan Jagielski**, who will become the head of the heritage documentation section of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. For his work, he receives a number

of awards and honors, including the Irena Sendler Memorial Award in 2009.

The Polish Communist military stages a coup and declares **martial law** on December 13, to defend the Communist regime and, allegedly, to prevent Soviet military intervention in Poland. Some 5,000 Solidarity activists are interned without trial and the trade union is eventually banned. Though about 100 people will be killed in the years following the coup, nonviolent responses to the military take-over will eventually lead to the fall of Communism eight years later.



Polish People's Army tanks on the streets during martial law.

The Polish government authorizes the JDC's re-entry into Poland.

1982 As Poland remains internationally isolated following the military coup of 1981, the Communist authorities invite Jews worldwide, including some from Israel, to participate in the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Former uprising deputy commander and Solidarity activist Marek Edelman calls on visitors to boycott the official ceremonies, yet his appeal goes unheeded. Unofficial ceremonies, organized by the Jewish Flying University, are disrupted by police. The anniversary is covered in both the official and underground press and spurs a publishing boom of books of Jewish interest, which will continue unabated.



Nożyk Synagogue

1983 Artist and photographer Monika Krajewska publishes "Czas Kamieni" ("Time of Stones" in Polish), a book about abandoned and forgotten Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and other Jewish material heritage in the country. It is the first publication to document and discuss the state of neglect and oblivion of Jewish heritage in Communist Poland and to educate readers about symbolism in these artifacts of material heritage.

1983 The **Nożyk Synagogue** in Warsaw is reopened after six years of renovation. The city's only synagogue serves in the 1980s a small community of mostly elderly Jews, but it will become a center of Jewish life after the fall of Communism. An iconic symbol of Jewish continuity in the country's capital, it continues to serve the growing Warsaw community.

1984 Sigmund Nissenbaum, a Holocaust survivor born in Warsaw, establishes the Nissenbaum Family Foundation, which will finance the restoration and preservation of many Jewish cemeteries and cultural monuments in Poland.

First informal contacts between the Polish and Israeli governments since 1967 are established.

A Carmelite convent is set up near the site of the Auschwitz I concentration camp and is met with international protests.

The first conference on the history of Polish Jews is held at Somerville College in Oxford, England. Several Polish historians participate. The conference launches the Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies

1986 (IPJS) at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and leads to contacts between academics in Poland, the U.S., and Israel.



Collegium Casimirianum, the seat of the Center of Polish Jewish Studies of the Jagiellonian University.

1986

An abbreviated version of Claude Lanzmann's documentary "Shoah" is shown on Polish State TV. Debate in the official and underground press ensues. The full version is subsequently shown in cinemas.

1987 The first volume of "Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry" is published in Oxford. By 2018, there will be 31 volumes.

Poland and Israel establish interest sections in the Dutch Embassy in Warsaw and in the Polish PKO Bank's Tel Aviv branch.

The **Center for Polish Jewish Studies** opens at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. By 2018, Jewish studies departments are opened at major universities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź, and Lublin.

The Polish Episcopate's Commission for Dialogue



Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

1987

with Judaism is initiated.

The first major public discussion on wartime Polish-Jewish relations is triggered by the publication in Catholic opposition weekly "Tygodnik Powszechny" of an essay by Jan Błoński "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto" ("The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" in Polish), stating that Poles, as witnesses to the Shoah, bear a moral responsi-

1987 bility which they have yet to acknowledge.

1987 The Catholic Church and Jewish organizations sign an agreement stipulating that the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz will be moved in 1989.

In Kraków, Janusz Makuch and Krzysztof Gierat organize a series of events presenting Polish Jewish culture, which will eventually become the world-famous **Kraków Jewish Culture Festival**. From a modest local event, the festival has grown into one of the most important cultural events in Poland, drawing performers and presenters from around the world. Each year, the festival features more than



The Umschlagplatz memorial

1988 300 events during 10 days of programs and draws more than 25,000 participants from Poland and around the world.
A direct air link between Warsaw and Tel Aviv is established.



Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz

1988

The March of the Living is held for the first time in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

1988 A worldwide invitation is extended by the Polish government to Jews to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The anti-Communist opposition, boycotting the large official ceremony as it was seen as propaganda, commemorates the anniversary with its own ceremony at The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes. The authorities this time do not intervene.
The Memorial Route to the Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews is created between the Ghetto Uprising Memorial and a new monument erected on the site of the **Umschlagplatz**, from which Jews were transported to Treblinka in 1942-43.
Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz, a Polish-born Israeli and Auschwitz survivor, becomes Poland's first Chief Rabbi after a two-decade-long hiatus.

A summer Jewish educational retreat which focuses on Jewish tradition and observance is organized outside of Warsaw by a small group of Polish Jews. It will lay the foundations for the creation of future Jewish educational initiatives.

The first post-war Jewish kindergarten, started by a small group of Jewish families, opens in a private apartment in Warsaw.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation begins operating in Poland. The RSLF and the JDC will finance the rebuilding of much of Poland's Jewish communal infrastructure in the 1990s. «

VIII. THE REBIRTH OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND 1989-present

In 1989, Poland becomes the first Soviet Bloc country to dismantle its Communist system. Following groundbreaking negotiations, semi-free elections are held in June and the first non-Communist government is formed under Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a former political internee. Jewish communities, suppressed for decades under Communism, begin to re-emerge and to re-establish Jewish communal institutions. The revival of Polish Jewish life, with its spiritual leaders, Polish-born Rabbi Chaskel Besser and American-born Rabbi Michael Schudrich, was initially supported by American Jewish foundations in the United States, such as the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, as well as significantly by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and other organizations worldwide. Since the start of the 21st

century, philanthropist Tad Taube, born in Kraków, has become one of the largest American Jewish patrons of Poland's Jewish cultural renaissance and works in concert with donors such as Sigmund Rolat, Victor Markowicz, David Mitzner (z"l), and Irene Pletka, and foundations such as the JDC, the Rothschild Foundation, the Koret Foundation, Hanadiv Europe, the Dutch Humanitarian Fund, the Shavei Israel Foundation, and others. The generations coming of age in post-Communist Poland are moving the Jewish community toward sustainability and a vibrant future.


Jewish Experience in Contemporary Poland
Baltic Sea
RUSSIA
LITHUANIA
BELARUS
GERMANY
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
UKRAINE
HUNGARY
Kaunas
Kaliningrad
Nemen
Slupsk
Gdynia
Gdańsk
Koszalin
Tczew
Elbląg
Olsztyn
Sejny
Suwałki
Ełk
Hrodna
Szczecin
Grudziądz
Piła
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Vistula
Noteć
Oder
Łomża
Tykocin
Białystok
Narew
Ostrołęka
Orla
Gorzów Wielkopolski
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Bug
Poznań
Konin
Warta
WARSAW
Siedlce
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Leszno
Głogów
Krotoszyn
Kalisz
Łódź
Bóbr
Sieradz
Ostrów Wielkopolski
Pilica
Wieprz
Włodawa
Pripyat
Radom
Kazimierz Dolny
Przysucha
Piotrków Trybunalski
Szydłowiec
Lublin
Kovel
Chełm
Legnica
Wrocław
Kamienna Góra
Wałbrzych
Częstochowa
Chęciny
Kielce
Szczebrzeszyn
Zamość
Szczekociny
Chmielnik
Opole
Oder
Tarnobrzeg
Pińczów
Vistula
San
Gliwice
Katowice
Dąbrowa Tarnowska
Rzeszów
Markowa
Kraków
Oświęcim
Tarnów
Lviv
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Bobowa
Przemyśl
Rymanów
Lesko
Dniester
PRAGUE
Elbe
Žilina
Prešov
Váh
Zvolen
Mukachevo
Seats of Jewish communities
Selected historic synagogues
Selected historic cemeteries
Lauder-Morasha School
Jewish Community Centers
Jewish studies
Jewish press
Theaters
Major festivals
Museums
Hillels
Taube Center
1:4,300,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

1989 On June 4, the first elections since the end of World War II to include opposition parties bring the anti-Communist opposition to power.

1989 Poland replaces Hungary as the main transit point for Soviet Jews moving to Israel. Tens of thousands transit through Warsaw without incident.

The Polish Council of Christians and Jews is established.

Poland becomes the second ex-Communist country, after Czechoslovakia, to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel.



Agnieszka Holland in 2017

The historical drama "Europa Europa," directed by **Agnieszka Holland**, premiers on November 14. The film wins the 1991 Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film and is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. It is one of the first films about the Holocaust in post-Communist Poland, and so is not subject to the censorship of the state. Holland, herself Jewish, is a leading Polish film director of the post-war generation who has portrayed the Holocaust in several internationally celebrated films.

1990 Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa is elected president. His use of antisemitic innuendo against his rival Tadeusz Mazowiecki is condemned by a large segment of public opinion.

1991

Polish delegates participate in the First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II in New York City. They return to Poland and establish the Association of the Children of the Holocaust. Many of the "hidden children," saved and raised by non-Jewish Poles, begin to seek out their Jewish roots and become active in Jewish communal life, as do many of their children and grandchildren.

The Catholic Church publishes a pastoral letter deploring antisemitism.

1991 President Lech Wałęsa visits Israel. In a speech to the Knesset, he asks forgiveness for wrongs committed against Jews by his country throughout history.

1992 "Menora" is the first kosher restaurant in 30 years to open in Warsaw.

Chaim Herzog, President of Israel, visits Poland. It is the first Israeli state visit to Poland. Polish-Israeli ties will continue to develop and strengthen.



A meeting of ZOOM, the Polish Youth Organization.

1992

Poland co-sponsors the repeal of the UN's "Zionism is racism" resolution.

1992

The Polish Union of Jewish Students (Polish: *Polska Unia Studentów Żydowskich*, PUSZ) is founded. It will be succeeded by **ZOOM**, the Polish Jewish Youth Organization, in 2007.

TSKŻ begins to publish "Słowo Żydowskie – Dos Yiddishe Vort" ("The Jewish Word" in Polish/Yiddish) in Yiddish and Polish. It is the successor to "Folks-Sztyme".

Under pressure from Pope John Paul II, the convent in Auschwitz finally relocates.

1993

The 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is commemorated with the participation of Polish President Lech Wałęsa and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland is recognized as the legal successor to pre-war Jewish communities. The Union currently represents and serves Jewish communities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków, Łódź, Lublin, Szczecin, Katowice, Bielsko-Biała, Poznań, Legnica, Gdańsk, and Białystok.



The Lauder-Morasha School



"And I Still See Their Faces"

1994

The **Lauder-Morasha School**, the first primary school under Jewish auspices in Warsaw since 1949, opens with a first grade of 18 students. In 1999, Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek will participate in the dedication ceremony of the school's permanent home, quoting the Talmud in his remarks.

"**And I Still See Their Faces**," an exhibition of pre-war photos of Jews and Jewish families collected from the public at large by the Shalom Foundation, is enthusiastically received in Warsaw and around the world. Its catalogue sells out immediately.

The Polish Association of Jewish Studies is launched in Kraków.

1996

An international commemoration marks the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Inside Poland, it fosters public discourse and Holocaust education, shedding light on the history of the Nazi death camps and the extermination of Europe's Jewry – a history that had been distorted or denied during the Communist era.

At a commemoration for the 50th anniversary of the Kielce Pogrom, Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz



"Midrasz"

1997 Cimoszewicz expresses contrition.

The Sejm passes a law governing relations between the State and Jewish Religious Communities allowing, among other things, for the partial restitution of pre-war Jewish communal property seized by the State. To date, there is no law regulating the restitution of private properties of Jews or other Polish citizens.
"**Midrasz**" magazine is launched. Founded by Konstanty Gebert, it is the first Polish-language Jewish monthly published in decades. The annual Jewish Book Festival is inaugurated a year later.

The Conference of the Episcopate of Poland declares an annual "Day of Judaism" to be celebrated by the Catholic Church and parishes around the country on January 17 each year.

1999

The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations is created. The Forum's educational and leadership development initiatives foster Polish-Jewish dialogue, promoting tolerance and understanding through

2000 exchange programs, publications and school-based educational programs.

Beit Warszawa, a Reform congregation and a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, is founded in Warsaw.


The Auschwitz Jewish Center

2000 Professor Bronisław Geremek, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and at this time Polish Foreign Minister, signs accession of Poland to NATO.
The publication of Jan Gross' book "Sąsiedzi" ("Neighbors" in Polish), documenting the July 10, 1941 wartime massacre of local Jews by local


Shevah Weiss

2001 Poles in the town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland, sets off anguished public debate about

the involvement of some Catholic Poles in the Holocaust.

The **Auschwitz Jewish Center**, now affiliated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, opens



Memorial to the victims of the 1941 pogrom in Jedwabne.

2001 in the renovated Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, comprised of an educational center and a museum presenting the Jewish history of the town of Oświęcim (German: *Auschwitz*, Yiddish: *Oshpitzin*).

Shevah Weiss, former Israeli Knesset Speaker, becomes Ambassador to Poland. Weiss, rescued by a Polish Catholic family during the war, becomes one of the leaders of the Polish Jewish dialogue and he is awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit

2001 of the Republic of Poland in 2004 and the highest Polish medal, the Order of the White Eagle, in 2017.

Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, at a 60th-anniversary commemoration in **Jedwabne**, expresses contrition for the wartime massacre, mark-

2002 ing the first official apology by a Polish head of state for crimes against Jews committed by non-Jewish Poles during the Holocaust. Local residents boycott the ceremony, as does the Catholic Church – which, however, held an earlier penitential service of its own, attended by half of Poland's bishops.

2003

The first post-war edition of the Torah with Polish translation is published in Poland by Pardes Lauder, followed by the publishing of a prayer book and a Passover *Haggadah*, as well as other Jewish texts.

2003

The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (Polish: *Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Żydowskiego*, FODŻ) is established by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish

2003 Restitution Organization (WJRO) to preserve Jewish heritage sites in Poland and to promote awareness of the history of Polish Jewish communities.

Two Jewish film festivals (the Warsaw Jewish Film Festival and the Jewish Motifs Film Festival) are launched in Warsaw and draw large crowds during each of their editions.

The Jewish Agency for Israel in Poland assumes responsibility for Taglit-Birthright Poland. By 2018, it will have sent more than 800 participants on ten-day tours of Israel.



Rabbi Michael Schudrich

2004 The Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland (JHIP), established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish

2004 Life & Culture, is created to support and promote



The Galicia Jewish Museum

2004 Jewish culture and education.

The Professor Moses Schorr Foundation, named in memory of the last rabbi of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, is established to support the
2004 expanding adult education programs of the Moses Schorr Center in Warsaw. The Center, Poland's largest Hebrew-language program, also offers lecture series and seminars, an intensive summer school, and an e-platform "Mikledet."

Rabbi Michael Schudrich is appointed Chief Rabbi of Poland. Rabbi Schudrich previously served as Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź.
Poland joins the European Union on May 1.
The **Galicia Jewish Museum**, created by photographer Chris Schwartz and Professor Jonathan Webber, opens in Kraków. The museum celebrates and commemorates Jewish life in Polish Galicia.
2005

2006

The Warsaw Rising Museum, commemorating the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, is established with a section on the Jewish participation in the armed revolt.

2007

"Czulent," a Jewish youth and student group, is created in Kraków.


Tad Taube

2007

The first annual "Singer's Warsaw" festival, a celebration of Yiddish culture and I.B. Singer's writings, is organized in September by the Shalom Foundation in Warsaw.

2007

Chabad-Lubavitch opens a center in Warsaw, followed by a center that opens in Krakow the following year.

Polish-born Rabbi Maciej Pawlak, ordained in the U.S., becomes principal of the Lauder-Morasha Jewish Day School in Warsaw.

Tad Taube, founder and chairman of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, is named Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area.

2007

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews is held in Warsaw's district of Muranów, facing the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes.

2008

The Polish State Radio's "Kol Polin" ("Voice of Poland" in Hebrew) service starts broadcasting in Hebrew. It will continue to broadcast until 2014.

2008

The long-neglected building of the Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin is renovated. The former lodging rooms of the students now serve as a hotel, while the synagogue maintained by the Warsaw Jewish Community is reopened and rededicated. An accompanying museum about the Yeshiva and its founder, Rabbi Majer Szapira (Meir Shapiro), opens in 2017.



One of the Ghetto Wall markers.

2008

Lech Kaczyński becomes the first Polish President to visit a synagogue and light Hanukkah candles in the Presidential Palace. This tradition of presidential Hanukkah candle lightings continues to this day.

2008

The commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the March 1968 ant-Zionist campaign, begin a discussion on the restitution of Polish citizenship to Jews who were expelled. In the following years, hundreds will receive Polish passports. Among them is well-known Israeli author Etgar Keret.


Jewish Community Center in Kraków.

2008

The Polish Year in Israel, a nationally-sponsored cultural promotion program, is celebrated.

2008

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the City of Warsaw and the Jewish Historical Institute create the "Ghetto Borders" installation in Warsaw. The project consists of **21 markers** erected at different points along the borders of the former ghetto and signs in Polish and English embedded in the sidewalks marking the former Ghetto Wall. An additional, twenty second marker will be put up on Sienna Street in 2010 at the initiative of students of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Public High School.

2009

As a result of a visit from Prince Charles of Wales, the **Jewish Community Center in Kraków** is opened with the support of World Jewish Relief, the JDC and the Jewish Community of Kraków. It serves the city's growing Jewish community.



The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

2009 Righteous Among the Nations honoree Irena Sendler dies at age 98. Sendler, a social worker and a member of anti-Nazi underground organization „Żegota" which rescued about 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto, had been previously nominated by the Polish government for the Nobel Peace Prize.

2009 A premiere of the first ever Polish-Israeli film coproduction, "Spring 1941" (Polish title: "Wiosna 1941"), takes places on December 1. The story of an Israeli violinist who comes after many years to Poland to play concert, and relives her war trauma and the loss of her family during the Holocaust, is based on a book by awarded Polish-born Israeli writer, Ida Fink, a Holocaust survivor herself.

2009 The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center, is established as a department of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. It grew from a project dating back to 1994 created by the Lauder Foundation. The Center, which helps Jews with Polish roots and Poles with Jewish roots explore their family heritage, assists in finding documentation, reconstructing family histories and reuniting lost family and friends.

The **Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute** (formerly the Jewish Historical Institute) is formally established by Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage at the initiative of JHI's director Dr. Eleonora Bergman.

The Irena Sendler Memorial Award is established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture to honor Poles who contribute to the preservation of Jewish life and promote Jewish culture in Poland. Janusz Makuch, creator and director of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, is the first recipient.



Marek Edelman and Alina Margolis-Edelman

2009 Future honorees will include Jan Jagielski, director of the Jewish Historical Institute's Historical Documentation Department, former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska, honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 2009, who worked with Irena Sendler, helping save Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto.

2010 Marek Edelman, deputy commander of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, veteran of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, well-known cardiologist and an active and important member of Solidarity, passes away in Warsaw and receives a state funeral in the Warsaw Jewish Cemetery with full military honors. A year earlier he

is widowed by **Alina Margolis-Edelman**, also a Holocaust survivor and a veteran of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Although Marek Edelman decided not to leave Poland during the antisemitic campaign in

2010 1968, Alina with their children was forced to migrate to France, where she was later involved, cooperating with Bernard Kouchner, in the *Doctors Without Borders* initiative and later the *Doctors of The World*,

2010 as well in providing help to political dissidents in Poland in 1970-80s. In 2011, an award named in her



Inside the Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum in Kraków.

2010 honor was established to recognize those who work to protect children.

Beit Kraków, a Reform congregation, is established in the city.

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture establishes the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Polish: *Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce*) in Warsaw.

2010 Ec Chaim, a progressive community, is opened in Warsaw under the auspices of the Jewish Community. Stas Wojciechowicz is selected as its rabbi.

By 2010, rabbis, with the support of the Union of

2010 Polish Jewish Communities, Shavei Israel, and other organizations, serve communities in Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice, Łódź, and Wrocław. The rabbis, along with students from Warsaw's Kollel, provide religious and spiritual outreach and Jewish learning opportunities in smaller communities, including Gdańsk and Lublin.

The Yiddish Culture Center is opened in Warsaw by the Shalom Foundation, joining the Foundation's Open Jewish University and University of the Third Age.

The Polish Association of Yiddish Studies is launched

2012 in Warsaw.

A branch of the Kraków City Museum in the former **Schindler factory** opens in Kraków. The Museum documents the fate of the inhabitants of Kraków during the Nazi occupation with a special focus on the destruction of Jewish Kraków.



Alina Szapocznikow

2012

The Second Generation Association, children of survivors, is created by and for Jews raised during the Communist period. This is the first initiative of its kind in Poland.

A memorial service is held by the Jewish commu-

nity in the Nożyk Synagogue for the Polish President Lech Kaczyński, First Lady and 94 other victims of the Smoleńsk plane crash of April 10, 2010.



POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

2013

The Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków celebrates its 20th year with more than 25,000 attendees from all over the world.

The Bauman family establishes the Janina Bau-



The glass bimah in Chmielnik.

2013 man Prize, for publishing a dissertation addressing an area of "significant ethical or moral relevance," which was the main area of interest of Janina Bauman, a Polish Jewish writer, and the wife of a one of the most important philosophers and sociologists of the latter half of the 20th century, Zygmunt Bauman. The Baumans were both Holocaust survivors

2013 who left Poland in 1968, settling eventually in Leeds, with part of their work focused on tracing connections between modernity and the Holocaust.

The first March of Remembrance commemorating the July 22, 1942 deportations of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, is organized by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute with the walk



Postage stamps commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.



Simcha Rotem (left) in 1943.

2013 starting at the Umschlagplatz and ending at the site of Janusz Korczak's *Dom Sierot* ("Orphans' House" in Polish).

An art exhibition titled "Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955–1972" opens at the New York's Museum of Modern Art contributing to rediscovery of sculptress' artist work. **Alina Szapocznikow**

2013 (born 1926 in Kalisz), a holocaust survivor of Pabianice and Litzmannstadt ghettos, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, and Theresienstadt, after the war studied at Parisian École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, becoming one of the leading Euro-



Jewish Community Center in Warsaw.

2014 pean surrealism, *Nouveau réalisme*, and pop-art artists working mainly in bronze and stone.

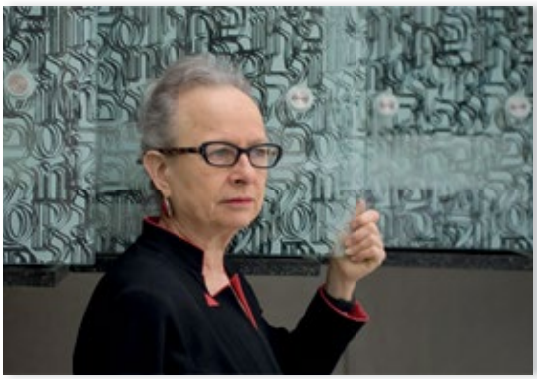
The construction of **POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews** is completed. The building, designed by Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamäki and located next to the Ghetto Heroes' Monument in the heart of Warsaw's Muranów, is made accessible to the public.

The Museum & Educational Centre "Świętokrzyski Sztetl" is inaugurated in the town of Chmielnik, a former shtetl. Housed in the town's renovated synagogue, the center becomes famous for its **glass**

2014 ***bimah***, inspired by the 18th-century original platform that was destroyed during the war.

2014 The **70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** is widely commemorated by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, with a state ceremony held by the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes, during which the last surviving veterans of the uprising, **Simcha Rotem** and Havka Folman -Raban (d. 2016), give a memorable speech. Bells toll in the churches of Warsaw and ecumenical prayers are recited during the public commemoration.

On June 13, a renovated Jewish national exhibi-



Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

2014 tion prepared by the Yad Vashem Institute opens at Block 27 in the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

In the Polish capital, the **Jewish Community Cen-**

2014 **ter in Warsaw** is opened. Located in the center of the city, it is a project of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the Taube and Koret Foundations.

The Makabi Warsaw Sport Club is officially relaunched by young Polish Jews after a 74-year-long hiatus. Makabi continues the pre-war tradition of the Makabi organization established in 1915 in Warsaw.

2015 The Ride for the Living, an annual fundraising event organized by the JCC Kraków under the patronage of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, is inaugurated. The 55-mile bicycle ride from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to the Kraków JCC

2015 follows the route of 10-year-old Auschwitz survivor Marcel Zieliński. After liberation by the Red Army, he walked all the way from the camp to Kraków

in a search for his mother, with whom he reunited eventually in August 1945. The ride draws participants from Poland and around the world and the funds raised support Jewish life in Kraków.



Władysław Bartoszewski

2015 The Marek Edelman Center for Dialogue in Łódź opens in its permanent space in the Park of Survivors.

2015 The POLIN museum's Core Exhibition, created by a team led by chief curator **Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**, opens on October 28. It is funded by a unique public-private partnership among the

2015 Polish Government, the City of Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute Association and individual and institutional donors worldwide. The Museum

2016 will transmit, through state-of-the-art and virtual exhibits, the 1,000-year long history of Polish Jews. It quickly becomes a focal point on the map of contemporary Jewish Poland.
Hashomer Hatzair renews the activity of the group of Polish-Jewish teens.

2016 The director of the Taube Center, Helise Lieberman, is awarded the prestigious Bene Merito Medal "for a friend of Poland, in recognition for contributions made to the promotion and strengthening of the Republic of Poland on the international arena," by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The fellow honorees were Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and Executive Director of the JCC Kraków, Jonathan Ornstein.

The Museum of Independence Traditions opens an exhibit and memorial at the former Radegast Station in Łódź commemorating the victims of Ghetto



The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa.

2016 Litzmannstadt.

2016 **Władysław Bartoszewski**, prisoner of KL Auschwitz, soldier of the Home Army, activist of the Council to Aid Jews *Żegota*, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue, with a special responsibility for the development of

2017 post-war Polish-German relations and contacts with the Jewish diaspora and Israel, dies in Warsaw at 93.

2017 Miriam Gonczarska of Poland is the first European woman who graduates from Yeshivat Maharat in



Children from „Frajda" kindergarten at the Krakow JCC's Taube Family Playground.



"What we were unable to shout out to the world" exhibition.

New York and receives the title of *Maharat*.

Margalit Kordowicz graduates from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and becomes the first Polish-born woman rabbi.

2018 The Upper Silesian Jews House of Remembrance is opened in the restored pre-burial house at the New Jewish Cemetery in Gliwice.

On February 19, Samuel Willenberg, last survivor of the Treblinka prisoners' revolt, dies at 93. After participating in the heroic revolt and setting "hell on fire," Willenberg joined the Polish resistance and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the Germans, later becoming an artist in Israel after emigrating in 1950.

The **Ulma Family Museum** of Poles Saving Jews in World War II is opened in Markowa by Polish pres-



Former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital

2018 ident Andrzej Duda. During the German occupation, despite poverty and the threat of the death penalty, the Ulma family gave shelter to eight Jews beginning from late 1942 through March 1944. Turned in by a Polish policeman, Józef Ulma, his pregnant wife Wiktoria, and their eight children, together with the Jewish families Goldman and Szall whom they were hiding, were all executed by the German police. In 1995, Wiktoria and Józef Ulma are posthumously awarded the "Righteous

2018 Among the Nations" title.

Hillel International opens Hillel Warsaw. It is the first operation in Poland of Hillel International to better serve the needs of its growing Jewish population.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) opens an office in Warsaw that serves as their center for Central and East European countries.

2018 A Jewish student association in Kraków, "Gimel," named after the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet to represent the third post-war generation, re-opens as Hillel Kraków.

The JCC Kraków opens "**Frajda**," the first post-1968 Jewish kindergarten in the city.

2018 The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw opens its new permanent exhibition "**What we were unable to shout out to the world**" which includes artifacts and selections from the Ringelblum Archives collected by the clandestine network *Oneg Shabbat*.

2018

The Polish Sejm passes an amendment to the bill establishing the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) that penalizes public accusation of Polish involvement in German Nazi crimes. The new legislation stirs much controversy internally and abroad, especially in the US and Israel, as its wording provides a legal platform for whitewashing any involvement of individual Poles in crimes against Jews during the war and attempts to quell any public discussion of the subject. After several months of international protests and the eruption of the largest crisis in Polish-Israeli relations in the post-1989 era, the section about punishment is removed from the controversial legislation.

Polish Ministry of Culture announces plan to create the Warsaw Ghetto Museum with an exhibition opening in 2023, on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After completion of ren-

2018 ovation works, the museum will be housed in the former **Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital**, which in 1941-42 acted as one of the few medical facilities of the Warsaw Ghetto, and one of the very few buildings connected with its history to survive the war.

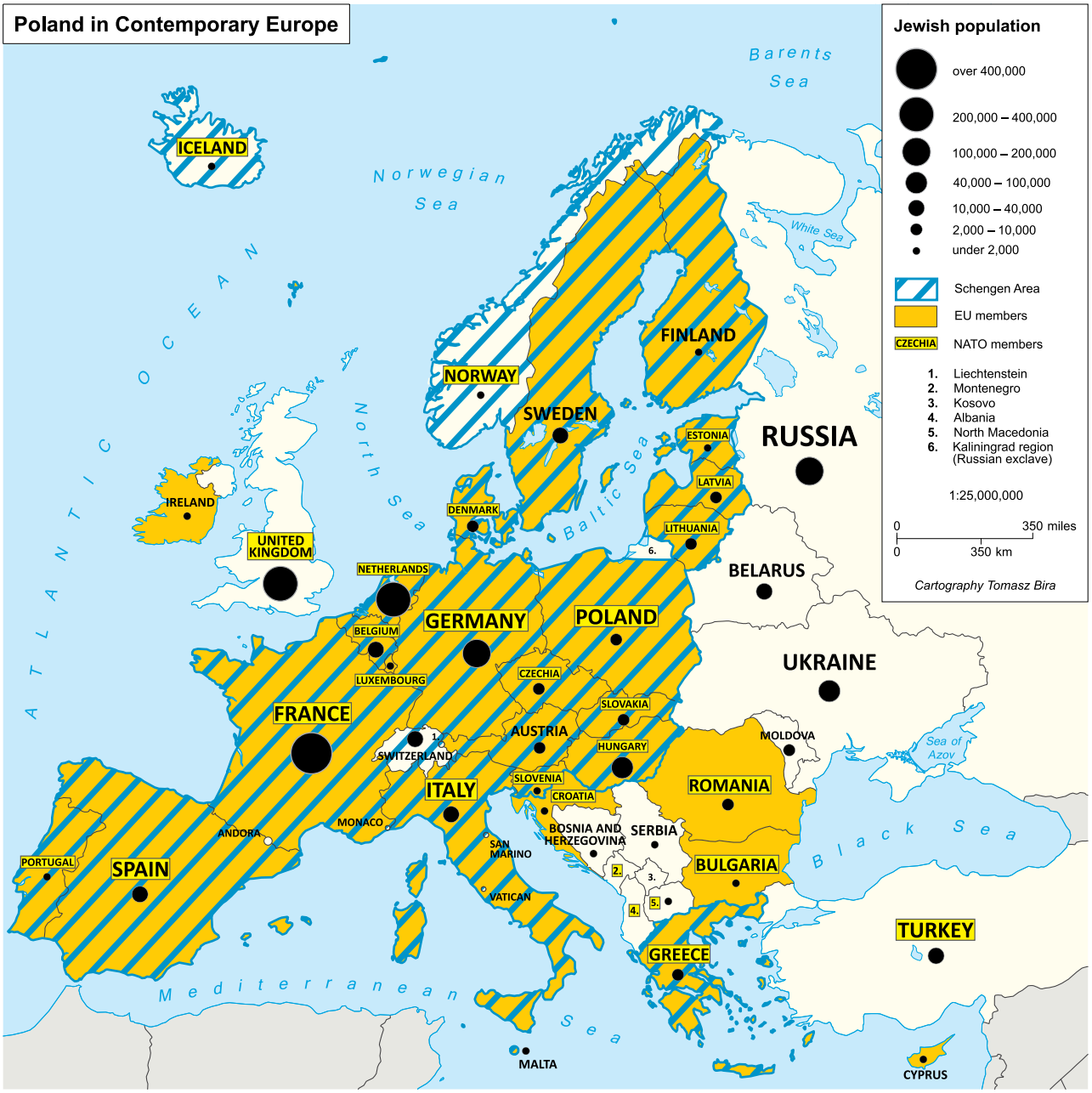


The former Majer Wolanowski's tenement at 14 Próżna Street.

A temporary exhibition entitled "Estranged. March'68 and Its Aftermath," about the 1968 student unrest, the infamous antisemitic campaign and the forced emigration of Jewish Poles that followed, opens at POLIN. It becomes the best attended temporary exhibition in the history of Polish museums and an important voice in the discussion about what happened and the resulting repercussions in Polish-Jewish relations on the 50th anniversary of the events.

Warsaw and Poland commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with guests coming from around the world to the Polish capital. Sirens are sounded across the city with a moment of silence in a similar manner to the annual commemoration of the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising of 1944 on August 1.

The first Polish showing of "Who Will Write Our His-


Poland in Contemporary Europe
Jewish population
over 400,000
200,000 – 400,000
100,000 – 200,000
40,000 – 100,000
10,000 – 40,000
2,000 – 10,000
under 2,000
Schengen Area
EU members
CZECHIA
NATO members
1. Liechtenstein
2. Montenegro
3. Kosovo
4. Albania
5. North Macedonia
6. Kaliningrad region (Russian exclave)
1:25,000,000
0 350 miles
0 350 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira
Barents Sea
Norwegian Sea
White Sea
ATLANTIC OCEAN
North Sea
Baltic Sea
ICELAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
RUSSIA
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
IRELAND
DENMARK
UNITED KINGDOM
NETHERLANDS
BELGIUM
LUXEMBOURG
GERMANY
POLAND
BELARUS
UKRAINE
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
SWITZERLAND
HUNGARY
MOLDOVA
Sea of Azov
ROMANIA
SLOVENIA
CROATIA
ITALY
MONACO
ANDORA
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
SERBIA
Black Sea
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
SAN MARINO
BULGARIA
VATICAN
TURKEY
GREECE
Mediterranean Sea
MALTA
CYPRUS

Glossary of Terms, Phrases, and Organizations

Please note that there is no single, universal system for representing Hebrew and Yiddish words in English. The Glossary offers common spellings, which in some cases may differ from what you are accustomed to seeing.

Aram. = Aramaic Ger. = German

AK. Armia Krajowa. (Pol. "Home Army"). An underground army in occupied Poland during World War II, loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London.

Ashkenazi. The term derives from a Hebrew name "Ashkenaz", a biblical figure mentioned in Genesis. Ashkenaz was later associated with a region where Jews lived in the Middle Ages along the Rhine River in parts of France and Germany, from where they had fled to the East to avoid growing persecution. Eastern Europe became the center where Ashkenazi life and culture of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish populations flourished in the lands of contemporary Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, until the outbreak of World War II. The Eastern European Jews constituted majority of the Holocaust victims. Survivors live now in Ashkenazi communities dispersed throughout the Jewish world.

Bimah (Heb.). Elevated platform inside the synagogue from which the Torah is read during prayers.

Bund (Yid. "league" or "union") or **Jewish Labor Bund.** Established in 1897, was a Jewish Socialist party active in Poland until 1948. The party promoted political, cultural and social autonomy of Jewish workers, fought antisemitism, and was generally opposed to Zionism, believing that Polish Jews belong into the Polish lands.

Cheder (Heb. "room"). Jewish religious elementary school.

Chevra Kadisha (Aram. "holy society"). A group of community members dedicated to the ritual preparation of bodies for burial according to Jewish tradition and to conducting funerals. It is one of the most important organizations of the kehillah.

Conservative. One of three main religious streams of contemporary Judaism. It began as a reaction to Reform Judaism. Among other characteristics, it affirms the divine inspiration of the Torah and the authority (if not immutability) of the body of Jewish law (see **halakhah**).

General Government (often abbreviated to **GG**). A separate administrative and territorial unit of Nazi Germany established by Adolf Hitler in the German occupied Polish territories not annexed directly into the Third Reich, after the conquest of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. It had its capital in Kraków and existed until the Soviets took Polish territories in 1944-1945

Gmina (Pol. "Community"). See:

kehillah.

Haggadah (Heb. "telling"). A Jewish text that presents the order of the Passover Seder. Reading the haggadah at the Seder table is a fulfillment of commandment to retell the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus.

Kahal (Yid. "community"). See *kehillah*.

Halakhah (Heb.). The body of Jewish law as derived from the (written) Torah, debated in the Talmud (oral Torah), and codified by the rabbis; or a particular law drawn from these sources. Also the portions of the Talmud dealing with legal issues.

Hanukkah (Chanukah) (derived from the Heb. *Chanah*, "to dedicate") Eight-day festival starting on the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (usually December) to commemorate the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration and the Maccabean revolt (2nd century B.C.E.).

Hashomer Hatzair (Heb."Young Guard"). Left-wing Zionist youth organization founded in 1913.

Hasidism. From hasid (Heb. "pious"). A religious movement started in Polish lands in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eleazar Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). Hasidism stressed joy, spirituality, and mysticism and denied that learning is the only way to God. Opposed bitterly throughout the 19th century by the mitnagdim, Hasidism developed into sects centered on spiritual teachers, known as tsaddikim (tsaddiks) or rebbeim, and their descendants. Today, the Hasidim and their erstwhile opponents constitute the two main branches of Orthodox Judaism. See **mitnagdim**.

Haskalah (Heb. "Enlightenment"). An assimilationist intellectual and social movement among Central European Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries that advocated the adoption of European culture, language and mores, while maintaining a Jewish identity. Its followers were called maskilim.

JCC. Jewish Community Center. Jewish communal institution that provides pluralistic social, cultural, and educational programs under one roof. Originating in the United States, the JCC model is becoming popular in Central Europe.

Judenrat (Ger. "Jewish Council"). The Jewish administrative body that the Nazis imposed on ghettos to implement their policies. Its authority was enforced, in part, by the Jewish Ghetto Police.

Kaddish (Aram.). The traditional prayer recited in memory of the dead in the presence of a minyan.

Kehillah (Heb. "community"). The organization regulating daily life in a Jewish community. A kehillah is generally governed by a board of elected and honorary officials who hire rabbis, conduct tribunals, maintain ritual baths, administer interest-free loans, provide social relief and kosher food, and supervise Jewish education. In Polish, the corresponding term is *Gmina* or *Gmina Żydowska*.

Lodzermensch (Yid. and Germ. "a man of Łódź"), was a popular term to describe the wealthiest and most successful manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and businessmen of the late 19th and early 20th century Łódź. Used as a pejorative or ironical epithet when referring to their ruthlessness, moral ambiguity, and pursue for power and money.

Maskil (Heb. "scholar," "follower of the Haskalah"), pl. **maskilim**.

Matzevah (Heb. "sacred pillar") Plural: matzevot. Jewish tombstone ritually marking a grave.

Menorah (Heb. "lamp"). Seven-branched candelabrum made of gold that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. Though a symbol of Judaism and an emblem of Israel, it is not used in Jewish ritual outside the Temple. The type of menorah used for Hanukkah (called a *hanukkiyah*) has eight main branches, plus the middle

ninth lamp set apart, which is used to kindle the other lights.

Mezuzah (Heb. "doorpost"), plural, mezuzot. A crafted container, attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home, which encases a parchment bearing specific citations from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21). The verses include the biblical commandment to "affix these words to the doorposts of your home" (Deut. 6.9).

Midrash (Heb. "commentary" or "interpretation"). An interpretative commentary on the biblical texts.

Mikveh (Heb. "ritual bath"). A place for Jewish women and men (separately) to immerse themselves in water from a natural source to meet the requirements of ritual purity.

Minyan (Heb. "quorum"). The minimum number of Jews, 10, necessary for the recitation of certain prayers, including Kaddish (prayer for the deceased) and the public reading of Torah.

Mitnagdim (Heb. "opponents"). Adversaries of Hasidism who sought to maintain traditional rabbinic Judaism and were especially prevalent in Lithuania.

Oneg Shabbat (Heb. "Joy of the Sabbath"). The underground group of historians and researchers, led by Emanuel Ringelblum, established in the Warsaw Ghetto to document daily life. Its meetings were disguised as Sabbath observances, hence the name. The group's collections, found after the war and preserved at the Emanuel Ringleblum Jewish Historical Institute, are known as the Ringelblum Archives.

Orthodox. One of the three main streams of contemporary Judaism, based on the belief that the Torah is the literal word of God and halakhah is ever binding and cannot be changed (though it may be amended). Orthodoxy developed in response to the Haskalah's perceived threat to Jewish continuity.

Pesach (Heb. "Passover"). An eight-day festival starting on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan to commemorate the Exodus of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A confederation of Poland and Lithuania between 1569-1795, ruled by a common monarch who was both the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. It was one of the largest countries of 16th- and 17th-century Europe.

Rebbe (Yid. "rabbi"). Often used to designate a Hasidic leader.

Rebbetsin (Yid.). Wife of a rabbi.

Reform. One of the three main streams in contemporary Judaism. Reform arose in opposition to Orthodoxy and taught that Scripture, while possibly divinely inspired, is not the literal word of God, while halakhah is a human creation and has to adapt to changing times. Reform also stressed that Jews are a faith, not a people.

Seder (Heb. "order"). Ritual meal, including the retelling of the Exodus story, eaten during the first, and in the Diaspora second, eve of Pesach.

Sephardic (From Heb. *Sepharad*, lit. "Spain"). Usually denoting the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15th century. Many Sephardic Jews subsequently established new communities around the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere.

Sabbath (Heb.). Seventh day of the week, Saturday, observed by many Jews with special prayers, foods, rituals, and rest.

Shabbas, **Shabbat**. See **Sabbath**.

Shoah (Heb. "total destruction"). The Hebrew term for the Holocaust, used to designate the German Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II.

Shtetl (Yid. "small town"). A small town, which had a significant Jewish population or Jewish majority.

Solidarność (Pol. "Solidarity"). Polish

trade union, founded in 1980 in opposition to the communist regime, was the first independent labor union in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc. By September 1981, it had about 10 million official members, which constituted over one third of the total working-age population of Poland. Forcibly suppressed by the Communist government in December 1981, it reemerged in 1989 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a Soviet-bloc nation since the 1940s.

Taglit-Birthright Israel. Non-profit organization providing trips to Israel for Jewish young adults around the world. Known also as Birthright Israel or simply Birthright.

Talmud (Heb. "learning"). According to tradition, Jews received a written and an oral Torah. The latter was eventually written down and redacted as the Mishnah. Commentaries were also compiled as the Gemara. Together they make up the Talmud, in Babylonian and Jerusalem versions, which share the Mishnah but have different Gemaras.

Torah (Heb. "Instruction", "Teaching," or "Law") most specifically means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (hence also *Pentateuch* or five books of Moses). It is the most important religious text of Judaism.

TSKŻ. Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce (Pol. "Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland"). Founded in 1950 to ensure the development of Communist Yiddishist culture after all other Jewish organizations but the kehillah had been disbanded, it is currently the largest Jewish organization.

Umschlagplatz (Ger. "loading place"). The site at the northern edge of the Warsaw Ghetto near railway sidetracks and warehouses where Jews were loaded onto trains bound for the Treblinka death camp.

Va'ad Arba' Aratzot (Heb. "Council of the Four Lands"). A Jewish governing body (1580- 1764) that met to collect taxes to be paid to the royal treasury and to discuss other matters of importance to Polish Jewry. The four Lands were Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Ruthenia, and Volhynia. In 1623, the Jews of Lithuania established their own Va'ad.

Yad Vashem (Heb.). Israeli national institution located in Jerusalem that studies, documents, and exhibits the history of the Holocaust (Shoah). It also documents and publicly acknowledges the Righteous Among the Nations — Gentiles who, at great personal risk, saved Jews during World War II.

Yeshiva (Heb.), pl. **yeshivot**. Jewish religious secondary or higher educational institution.

Yiddish. An international Jewish vernacular, with a vocabulary based on medieval High German, Hebrew, and Slavic, and a grammar based largely on German, written in Hebrew characters with competing different spellings. It was the spoken language of Ashkenazi Jews. Enclaves of mainly Orthodox Yiddish speakers still exist in Jewish centers in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Yiddishkeit (Yid. "Jewishness"; "Jewish way of life"). A term referring to the "Jewish essence" of Ashkenazi Jews in general and the traditional Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern and Central Europe in particular. It can also refer to an emotional or cultural identification with the Jewish peoplehood.

Żegota. Polish codename for the Council to Aid the Jews. Established by the Polish underground in 1942, this joint organization of Jews and non-Jews from different political orientations was united by the common cause of saving Jews. Poland's Żegota was the only organization in all of Europe explicitly tasked with the rescue of Jews.

ŻIH. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Pol. "Jewish Historical Institute"). Established in Warsaw in 1947 to study the heritage and history of Polish Jewry and preserve its records and artifacts. Today called the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

Zionism (After *Zion*, *Tzion* or *Sion*, the Hebrew name for the Mount Temple in Jerusalem).

Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce) was established in Warsaw in 2009 with generous support from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture. The Taube Center is dedicated to enriching Jewish life in Poland and connecting Jews from around the world with their East European heritage, providing engaging educational experiences, including professional development programs, internships, educational heritage study tours, publications, and partnerships that extend throughout Poland and internationally. The Center contributes to Polish Jewish literacy, the development of leadership and Jewish institutions, and increases global Jewish engagement in a living Polish Jewish heritage.

The Taube Center's Educational Programs

In 2012, the Taube Center created **Mi Dor Le Dor** (Heb. from generation to generation), a nationwide program for young professionals and academics involved in the promotion and preservation of tangible and intangible Polish Jewish heritage. With support from the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe and Taube Philanthropies, the program, which concluded in 2016, graduated four cohorts. The graduates currently work for various partner organizations, among them the POLIN Museum and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and the JCCs in Warsaw and Krakow. The Taube Center is currently planning to model the program for other European Jewish communities.

The Taube Center responded to a growing demand for targeted professional development programs in Polish, specifically designed for Polish Jewish communities and drawing on local experts, by launching **Yerusha** (Heb. inheritance) in 2019. The two-semester program is funded in part by a grant from the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. The cohorts represent Jewish organizations and institutions from around the country.

The **Exploring Poland/Polin Heritage Study Tour** (2014-2016), supported by a grant from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Senate, was a heritage education program that brought American university students of Polish and Polish Jewish descent to Poland. It was a unique opportunity to explore Polish history, rediscover the country and their shared heritage, and strengthen the participants' identities through connection with their Polish roots.

The Taube Center offers up to three one-month **Libitzky Family Foundation Internships** each year for undergraduates and post-graduates from the United States with a special interest in Polish Jewish history, heritage, culture, and tradition. The one-month program can be scheduled according to the candidate's academic or work schedule.

Taube Center Publications

The Taube Center's **Sefarim Book Publishing Project** provides support for the writing, translation, and publication of non-fiction works in Polish Jewish studies, making them accessible to academia and the wider Polish public.

The Project, initially supported by grants from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, provides seed grants for high-caliber works of Polish Jewish interest that reflect a broad range of issues and contribute to the field of Polish Jewish studies for domestic and international readers.

Through its own signature publications — *Field Guide to Jewish Łódź; Field Guide to Jewish Warsaw & Kraków; Deep Roots, New Branches: Personal Essays on the Rebirth of Jewish Life in Poland Since 1989; and A Timeline: 1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland* — the Taube Center provides resources that enrich an understanding of Jewish Poland, past and present, from both historical and



TAUBE JEWISH HERITAGE TOURS

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours (TJHT), the flagship program of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, invites people from around the world to explore Polish Jewish culture and to connect with the country's enduring Jewish legacy, which has shaped modern-day Israeli and American Jewish societies and permeated all facets of Western culture. Taube Jewish Heritage Tours is committed to strengthening the bonds between Poland and Jewish communities worldwide.

The mission-driven, on-the-ground Jewish educational tour program designs customized journeys for families, community organizations, students and faculty, VIP delegations, and individuals from the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and Europe. The TJHT professional team of academics, guides, educators, and community leaders provides meaningful and participatory explorations of Poland's multicultural landscape, infusing each encounter with illuminating personal stories and insights from those engaged in Polish Jewish life and committed to the preservation of Polish Jewish heritage.

»

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours offers:

» TJHT's full-service operation oversees travel logistics, offers special rates at five- and four-star hotels, and partners with land providers in the U.S. and Israel.

» TJHT guides are scholars and educators who have been trained to present Poland's multicultural narra-

» tives in stimulating, informative tours and workshops.

TJHT tours are available in English, Hebrew, French, German, and Spanish.

» TJHT provides orientation programs and educational resources in advance of the journey, as well as post-tour opportunities to remain connected.

»

TJHT works with an array of partner institutions in the United States, Israel and Poland, as well as in Europe.

TJHT has extensive experience in organizing educational and community group tours, family genealogy excursions, and VIP delegations and can work with groups of all sizes, types, and ages.

Revenue from the nonprofit Taube Jewish Heritage Tours supports publications, educational programs, and cultural and public events that enrich Jewish communal life, promote civil society, ensure the continued transmission of Polish Jewish history, and strengthen connections among Poles, Polish Jews, and Jews from around the world.

TJHTalks, with an international reach, is the Taube Center's newest educational heritage program. This series of ZOOM-based conversations about Polish Jewry and global Jewish concerns features world-renowned scholars, authors, and journalists, and community leaders who contribute to the Taube Jewish Heritage Tour program. The program brings an array of topics to a worldwide audience, exploring both the past and the present, and engaging our participants in contemporary Polish Jewish life. «

For more information about TJHT, please visit:
www.taubejewishheritagetours.com



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BACK COVER PHOTOS

(from left to right)

First Row

Julian Tuwim by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz • Emanuel Ringelblum, Icyk Manger, and Rachela Auerbach • King Kazimierz III the Great from Artur Szyk's *Statute of Kalisz* • Rabbi Baruch Steinberg speaking in front of the Warsaw's Great Synagogue during the memorial roll call organized by the Union of Jewish Participants in the Fights for Polish Independence in 1924

Second Row

Post stamp with the logo of ŻKS Makkabi Kraków issued before 1918 • Ride of the Living 2018 participants reaching the finish-line at JCC Krakow

Third Row

Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

Fourth Row

The synagogue in Narowla (Naroulia) by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz • Works on recreation of Gwoździec's synagogue ceiling paintings displayed in the POLIN Museum • Icchok Lejbusz Perec (Isaac Leib Peretz) by Władysław Wajntraub • POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews


















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1,000 Years *of* Jewish Life in Poland

A TIMELINE

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1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland

A TIMELINE

Published by the
Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

with the support of the
Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture

and the
Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area

Categorically Jewish, distinctly Polish: Polish Jewry was authentically and intimately linked to the Jewish past as well as interconnected with contemporary Jewry over the world over. It was also leavened with characteristically Polish features.

- Moshe Rosman

Dear Readers:

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation is pleased to present you with this new, third edition of one of our primary publications, *1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland: A Timeline*.

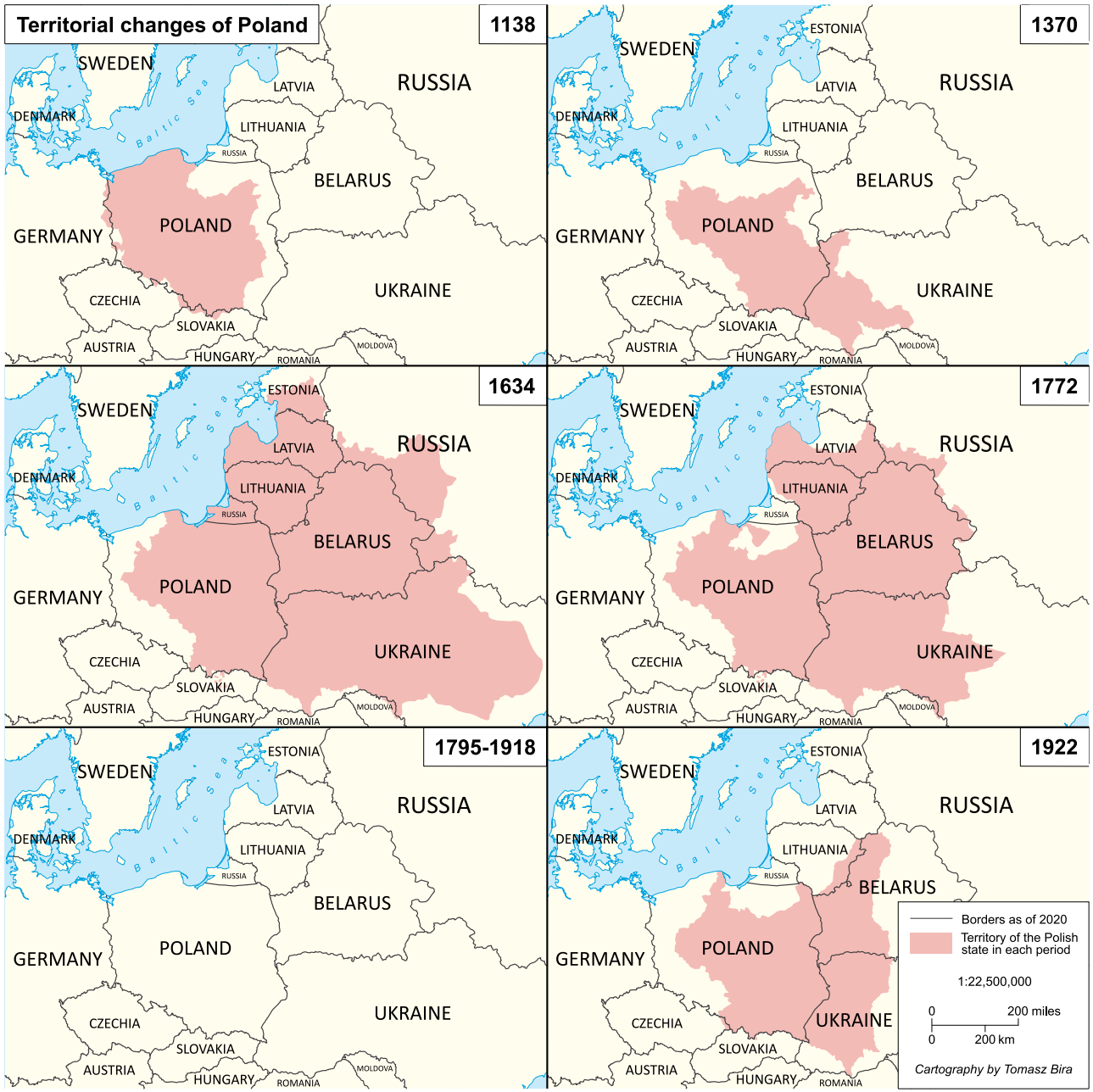
This new edition offers you an opportunity to explore a millennium of the Polish Jewish experience: From the first appearance of Jewish merchants at the time of the creation of the Polish state in the 10th century, through the 16th century's Golden Age and Jewish communal autonomy, 123 years of a partitioned Poland, on to the transition into modernity and the rebirth of a free Poland in 1918, World War II and the tragedy of the Holocaust, decades of Communist rule, all the way through today's revival of Jewish life in Poland.

It is said that there is no Polish history without Jewish history and there is no Jewish history without Polish history. We have, therefore, maintained an integrated balance, introducing major events, trends, and historical figures that have contributed to the diversity of Polish Jewish culture, tradition, and politics and left a lasting impact on the Ashkenazi Jewish world.

To more fully appreciate the development of Polish Jewish life over almost 1,000 years, we have enriched this edition with illustrations and maps, bringing the Timeline to life and placing the historiography in a clear geographical context. With the first two maps on the pages to follow, we demonstrate the insta-

bility of Poland's borders and perception of what are or were "Polish lands" throughout history. This factor has had a significant impact on how Jews identified with Poland as their homeland, trends in Jewish religious observance and cultural expression, and the shaping of Polish nationhood, memory, and the country's role in contemporary Europe.

Engagement in Jewish life was not monolithic. Jews reflected the politics and social norms of the day, especially after the move into modernity in the 19th century, when the more cloistered life of the small town, often referred to as a shtetl, gave way to the challenges and opportunities of urban life and mobility. Poland's Jewry produced unique religious and social movements, among them Hasidism and Bundism, which brought Jews into national politics and divided the religious world. Although records of women's contributions appear already in the Middle Ages, it is not until the end of the 19th century that women begin to assume a more recognized and equal position in Polish society. As we sought greater gender parity in presenting this historical narrative, many under-acknowledged


Territorial changes of Poland
1138
1370
1634
1772
1795-1918
1922
SWEDEN
DENMARK
GERMANY
POLAND
RUSSIA
BELARUS
UKRAINE
LITHUANIA
LATVIA
ESTONIA
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
MOLDOVA
Baltic Sea
Borders as of 2020
Territory of the Polish state in each period
1:22,500,000
0
200 miles
0
200 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira


Historical Regions in Polish and Adjacent Lands
Baltic Sea
Livonia
Courland
Semigallia
Samogitia
Lithuania
White Ruthenia
Prussia
Sudovia
Pomerania
Podlachia
Black Ruthenia
Polesia
Kuyavia
Greater Poland
Mazovia
Lesser Poland
Silesia
Red Ruthenia
Volhynia
Severia
Left-bank Ukraine
Right-bank Ukraine
Podolia
Zaporizhia
Sea of Azov
Black Sea
Borders of contemporary Poland
Carpathian Mountains
Sudety Mountains
Pripyat Marshes
1:9,500,000
0
150 miles
0
150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

I. POLIN: JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN POLAND 965-1569

The Polish state was formed out of territories of several Lechitic (West Slavic) tribes during the course of the 10th century by local dynasty – the Piasts. The most formative events of the Polish state were the Christianization of Poland in 966 (in the Western, Latin rite) and the establishment of the Polish Kingdom in 1025. From its very beginnings Jews were present in Polish history, first as travelers and merchants crossing the Polish lands, and later as settlers. Already by the 11th century, Jews were recorded as living in Gniezno, the capital at the time. The turbu-

lent period of the Crusades sparked anti-Jewish riots in the Rhineland prompting the first large wave of Jewish migrants to come into Polish lands. Jews were welcomed here, served as middlemen, fostered commerce and trade, and brought administrative innovations and technical novelties from the West. When the last king of the Piast dynasty, Kazimierz the Great, died in 1370, the Jewish community in Poland was already

965 A Sephardic Jewish merchant from Moorish Spain, Ibrahim ibn Yakub, travels to Slavic lands in Central Europe and writes the first descriptions of the Polish state.

During the 11th-13th centuries, Jewish merchants and artisans settle in Poland with the first big wave of migration mentioned by the chronicler, Cosmas of Prague coming around 1100. Persecuted and expelled from Western Europe in the times of the Crusades, Jews find refuge and a safe haven in Poland under the benevolent reign of



Early Polish coin with Hebrew

1206 the Piast dynasty.

Early **Polish coins** are minted during the reign of Duke Mieszko III the Old. Some bear Hebrew-character inscriptions in Knaanic (an extinct Judeo-Slavic
1237 language), as the mint masters are Jews.



Illuminated illustration by Arthur Szyk, inspired by the Statute of Kalisz.

1264 The Jewish settlement in the city of Płock is the first to be mentioned in written records.

The **Statute of Kalisz** is issued by Duke Bolesław the Pious. The Statute, a general charter of Jewish liberties in Poland, establishes a legal foundation for a Jewish presence in Poland. Subsequently, Jews are granted special status subject directly to the king or the duke and are excluded from munic-
1267 ipal jurisdiction. Jews assume positions in commercial and economic life, becoming merchants, money lenders, tax collectors, and innkeepers.

The Catholic Council of Wrocław, the capital city of the province of Silesia, creates a segregated Jewish district. Jews are ordered to wear special emblems and are banned from holding public offices higher than those held by Christians. While these measures prove largely ineffective, they are repeated in subsequent years.

The first recorded mention of a *kahal* ("community"



Kazimierz the Great visiting Esther (painting by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, 1870).

in Hebrew) in the city of Kalisz. The *kahal* collects taxes, oversees communal services, enforces Jewish law and is responsible for the education and social welfare of its members. ›

King **Kazimierz the Great** extends the Statute of Kalisz throughout Poland and broadens Jewish privileges. According to medieval chronicler Jan Długosz, the king had a love affair with a Jewish woman named **Esther** (Polish: *Esterka*). This legend will reverberate through Polish folklore over the ages.

1364 Waves of migrations from Western Europe bring more Jews to Poland after a plague – known as the Black Death – for which the Jews are blamed. Anti-Jewish riots are perpetrated in Silesia and later in Poznań and Kraków.

A Jew from Olkusz named Lewko, a personal banker and financier of King Kazimierz, is entrusted with administration of the saltworks in Wieliczka and Bochnia, among the primary sources of royal income. Lewko also oversees the royal mint.

Between the 11th and 16th centuries, Jews from communities along the Rhine in Germany, known in Hebrew as *Ashkenaz*, migrate east, settling in today's Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine. In the Polish lands, some of them serve the king, as well as members of the Polish aristocracy, as tax collectors, becoming merchants and innkeepers. They bring with them Jewish religious practices and political and commercial experience, as well as Yiddish, a German-based language with a Hebrew component, written in Hebrew letters. Yiddish, with its geographical nuances and range of dialects, becomes the *lingua franca* among Ashkenazic Jews in Eastern Europe. Yiddish will preserve the richness and vibrancy of Eastern European Jewish culture and heritage, despite many shifts in national borders and changes in political regimes.

The Kingdom of Poland forms a personal union with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania through the marriage



The Old Synagogue in Kraków.

of Poland's Queen regnant Jadwiga to Władysław Jagiełło (Lithuanian: *Jogaila*), the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The descendants of Jagiełło, members of the Jagiellonian dynasty, will rule over Poland and Lithuania until 1572. In 1388, Jagiełło extends the provisions of the Statute of Kalisz to all the lands of

1414 the Grand Duchy.
Anti-Jewish riots in Kraków, the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. Jews, for the first time, are expelled from the city. They start to settle in Kazimierz, a separate town located outside the city walls of Kraków. The construction of the **Old Synagogue** (Polish: *Stara Synagoga*) on Szeroka Street begins.

Documentation confirms that Jews first lived in Warsaw, between Wąski Dunaj and Piekarska Streets, in Warsaw's Old Town, with a synagogue on the corner of Jewish (Polish: *Żydowska*) and Dunaj Streets. The community numbered approximately 120.

Jews, expelled from Warsaw, are permitted to live outside the city limits. The expulsion order, although largely ineffective, is nevertheless repeated in subsequent years.



Kazimierz (left) and Kraków (right) according to Hartmann Schedel's „Nuremberg Chronicle" from 1493.

1504 Jews are expelled again from Kraków. The capital is granted the royal privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis* ("to not tolerate Jews" in Latin). King Jan Olbracht designates a Jewish inhabited part of **Kazimierz**, as *Oppidum Judaeorum* ("Jewish Town" in Latin), an official settlement for Jews, with the parallel right de non *tolerandis Christianis* ("to not tolerate Christians" in Latin).

1509 King Alexander I Jagiellon allows his court Jew, Rachela Fiszel, to buy a property and settle in Krakow. Rachela, a widow to Jewish banker Moses Fiszel, became the banker of four subsequent Polish kings, for her loyal services to the crown, she was given exemption from the ban on settlement for Jews in Krakow restricting them to reside in the Jewish quarter in Kazimierz. Rachela, an important

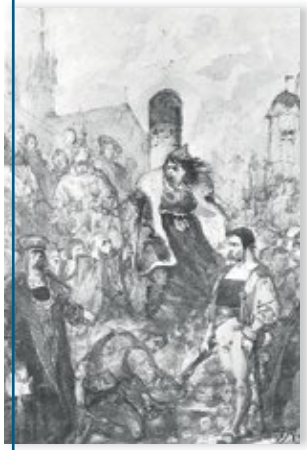
1525 figure in the Jewish community, was instrumental in establishing Jacob Polak, her son-in-law, as the rabbi of Krakow.

Rabbi Jacob Polak sets up a yeshiva ("Talmudic academy" in Hebrew) in Kraków, which introduces the methodology of *pilpul* ("sharp analysis" in ›



Michał Ezofowicz (engraving by Michał Elwiro Andriolli, 1879).

1534 Hebrew), which becomes the standard method of Talmudic and Jewish textual studies in the Ashkenazic world.



Katarzyna Weigel being burned at the stake (drawing by Jan Matejko, 1859).

1539

King Zygmunt I for the first and only time knights a Jew, **Michał Ezofowicz,** without requiring his conversion. Jewish converts to Catholicism, until the partitions of Poland, were usually granted noble status.
Jews are again expelled from Warsaw, after the Duchy of Mazovia is re-incorporated into the Polish Kingdom.
The first book printed in Yiddish in Poland, a biblical concordance by Rabbi Asher Anshel, is published in Kraków.
On April 19 **Katarzyna Weigel** (nee Zalasowska), an alderman's widow from Krakow is burned at the stake at the age of 80 (after ten years of imprisonment) under the charges of apostasy and conversion to Judaism, when she refused to recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Weigel was involved in the sectarian protestant movement, known as Judaizers, who



Prewar panoramic view of the Jewish district of Lublin.



Page of an early Hebrew text printed in Poland.

1547 endorsed adopting Jewish law and customs based on the Old Testament as a base for the reform of Christianity. They were especially active in Lublin and eastern parts of Polish and Lithuanian lands.

II. THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH 1569-1795

During the first century of the Commonwealth, often referred to as the Paradisus Judaeorum ("Jews' Paradise" in Latin) or the Golden Age, Jewish life in Poland flourishes.

The overwhelming majority of Ashkenazic Jewry live in the Polish and Lithuanian lands, now forming the center of the Ashkenazic Jewish world. Granted relative autonomy, Jewish communities enjoy economic growth and stability. Jewish culture thrives with the opening of Talmudic academies and centers of learning, as well as a proliferation of Jewish literature, secular and religious. Tensions between the king and the nobility, however, provoke instability, with many parties vying for power. Embroiled in wars with Sweden, Russia, and Turkey, the Commonwealth begins to deteriorate. Growing poverty and discontent give rise to


Conflicts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-17th century
Territories occupied by:
Khmelnytsky Uprising 1648-1654
Muscovite Invasion 1654-1667
The Swedish Deluge 1655-1660
Directions of movement:
Cossack armies
Russian armies
Swedish armies
Important centers of Jewish life
Va'ad Arba Aratzot Meeting Site
Fiefs of Poland-Lithuania
1:9,000,000
0 150 miles
0 150 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
TSARDOM (RUSSIA) OF MUSCOVY
KINGDOM OF DENMARK
ELECTORATE OF BRANDENBURG
HABSBURG EMPIRE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE
Baltic Sea
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Dorpat
Pskov
Riga
Duchy of Courland
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Grand Duchy of Lithuania
Kovno
VILNA
(Capital of the Grand Duchy)
Königsberg
Duchy of Prussia
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
Navahrudak
Rahachow
Gomel
Gdańsk
Elbląg
Tykocin
Łomża
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Płock
Poznań
Kalisz
WARSAW
(Royal capital after 1596)
Brest
Pinsk
Czernihów
Owrucz
Kiev
Połtawa
Lublin
Breslau
Częstochowa
Oppeln
Pińczów
Zamość
Łuck
Żytomierz
KRAKOW
(Royal capital until 1596)
Tarnów
Jarosław
Lwów
Przemyśl
Kingdom of Poland
Kamieniec Podolski
Bracław
VIENNA
Kassa
Buda
Pest

The Union of Lublin creates the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, also known as the Republic of the Two Nations, with a unified federal system and an elective monarchy. It is one of Europe's major political and cultural powers.

Warsaw obtains the privilege *de non tolerandis Judaeis,* which remains in force almost until the end of 18th century. Jews are forbidden to settle within two miles of the city limits, except when the Sejm



Rabbi Moses Isserles matzeva in Kraków's Remuh cemetery.

1572 (Polish term for the Polish Parliament) is in session.

Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as the ReMa (or Remuh) and author of the "Mapa" ("Tablecloth" in Hebrew), the fundamental Ashkenazic commentary on the Sephardic "Shulchan Aruch" ("Set Table" in Hebrew), dies in Kraków. The "Shulchan Aruch" is the fundamental codex of *halakhah*, Jewish law, and is still considered authoritative. His grave is in the Kazimierz district of Kraków in the cemetery adjoining the synagogue that bears his name.

1576 Recently renovated, the synagogue continues to serve Kraków's Jewish community.

King **Stephen Báthory** issues decrees forbidding blood-libel accusations, effectively preventing such trials during his lifetime. They will resume, however, after his death in 1586.

From the late 16th to the mid-18th century, Polish Jews were governed by the *Va'ad Arba' Aratzot* ("Council of the Four Lands" in Hebrew): Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Lithuania, and Ruthenia. The Va'ad's primary function was to levy and collect taxes among Jewish communities. The Council, made up of delegates from the different Jewish communities and recognized



King Stephen Báthory (painting by Martin Kober)

1580 by the king, becomes the central body of Jewish self-government, the only institution of its kind in the history of the Jewish Diaspora.

1587 The first session of the Va'ad Arba' Aratzot is held in Lublin.

According to popular legend, after King Stephen Báthory's death, his "court Jew" Saul Wahl (actual-

1588 ly Saul Katzenellenbogen, 1541-1617) is elected king of Poland for one night until the procedure for electing a new king is put into place.

The first Jewish community in **Zamość** is established by Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean Basin ›



The synagogue in Zamość built in 1610s.

1609 (originally from Spain and Portugal). By the 17th century, with migrations from Western Europe, Ashkenazic Jews become the majority. Zamość's Jewish character will later again be transformed, reflecting the influences of the *Haskalah* ("enlightenment" in Hebrew).

1618 'Meynekes Rivke" ("Rebecca's Nursemaid" in Yiddish), an erudite work by Rivke Tiktiner of Tykocin is a guide for married Jewish women and is published posthumously in Prague. Her work, the first known publication in Yiddish by a woman in Poland, will be

1622 re-published in Kraków in 1618.

The Thirty Years' War (1618-48) brings the last major wave of Jewish refugees from Western Europe to Polish lands.

1623 'Tzena U-Rena" ("Go Out and See" in Hebrew), a commentary on the Pentateuch for women written by Rabbi Yaakov Ashkenazi and one of the most important works in Yiddish to date, is published in Kraków and Lublin.

1648 The Va'ad of Lithuania is established as a separate entity from the Va'ad of the lands of the Crown Lands of the Kingdom of Poland, to administrate issues of Lithuanian Jewry.

King Władysław IV Wasa of Poland forbids anti-Jewish books and publications.

1654 Bohdan Chmielnicki (Ukrainian: *Bohdan Khmelnytsky*), a Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Orthodox Christian petty nobleman rebels against the magnates ruling the Ukrainian lands that belong to the Polish Kingdom. He leads Zaporizhian Cossacks and the local Orthodox Christian peasantry in an uprising against Polish or Polonized gentry, the Jesuits, and the Jews. Tens of thousands of Jews and Catholics fall victim to the massacres. Many Jews were sold into Turkish and Tatar slavery and were later ransomed by a multinational fundraising campaign for *pidyon shvuyim* ("redeeming the captives" in Hebrew) among Jewish communities throughout the Four Lands and reaching as far as Amsterdam.

The Khmelnytsky Uprising ends with Muscovite intervention and the subsequent war with the Tsardom of Muscovy (1654-67) that brings destruction to the eastern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the decline of its influence and the rise of Russia as the main power in the east of Europe. The Jews are expelled from Russian-conquered Kiev in 1654 (the ban will be lifted in 1793). The next year in Wilno (Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), the Tsar's forces massacre tho-



Swedish troops pillaging Polish village
(painting by Henryk Pilatti)

usands of civilians, with Russian Cossacks destroying the Jewish district and killing most of its inhabitants.
The Khmelnytsky Uprising and the war with Muscovy prompts the Swedish king to invade Poland. The destructive war with Sweden, known as the "**Swedish Deluge**," lasts until 1660 and ravages the western part of the Commonwealth. The war brings pogroms, as Jews are occasionally accused of being in complicity with the enemy.

In the second half of the 17th century, Jewish communities, in spite of being shaken by the ferocity of the attacks and crippled by the heavy loss of life and property, move to re-establish themselves as quickly as possible when the period of destructive wars and wartime-associated epidemics is over. Although the destruction and massacres, first and foremost those perpetrated by Khmelnytsky's forces, are remembered by Polish Jews as the *Gezerah* (the "Evil Decree" or "Catastrophe" in Hebrew), they mark the end of the golden age not only for the history of Polish Jews but for the overall history of Poland as well.

The Polish Va'ad condemns Shabbetai Tzvi, the false messiah from Ottoman Turkey. His activities, which attract many of those who survived Khmelnytsky's atrocities, will influence Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a Polish-born false messiah preaching against the Talmud and claiming to be Shabbetai Tzvi's successor.

The 18th century sees the birth of the Hasidic movement, founded by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov. While its tenets are embraced by many in the Ukraine and Central Poland, it is criticized by the *Mitnagdim* ("opponents" in Hebrew) as being incompatible with traditional rabbinic Judaism. These tensions create new frictions and factions within the growing Jewish world. At the same time, the Commonwealth slowly turns into a failed state, with flawed government and a weak army, a country torn apart by the private interests of powerful magnates. Growing intolerance and Catholic bigotry increase religious tensions. By mid-century, the Commonwealth becomes a de facto Russian protectorate.



Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's synagogue in Medzhybizh, Ukraine, destroyed by the Germans in 1941.

1720 **Israel Ba'al Shem Tov**, known as the Besht, is born in Okopy in southeastern Poland (now in Western Ukraine). Hasidism, stressing spontaneity over observance and spirituality over learning, represented a direct challenge to the Jewish religious and communal establishments.

1749 A blood libel accusation and the resulting trial of members of the Jewish community in Sandomierz, end with expulsion of the city's Jews in 1712 at the order of King August II and the execution of several of the accused the following year.

The Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman, is born (d. 1797). Although he held no official ›

1757 position, he was regarded as the spiritual leader of the Mitnagdim. The Mitnagdim reaffirmed study, ritual observance and *halakhah* as the cornerstones of Jewish life.

Polish aristocrat Count Walentyn Potocki, after converting to Judaism, is allegedly burned at the stake in Wilno for renouncing Catholicism. The story
1758 of Potocki, known among Jews as Abraham ben Abraham or *Ger Tzedek* ("righteous proselyte" in Hebrew), has not been confirmed in historical sources so far, but became a popular Jewish legend about a representant of one of the wealthiest and most powerful magnate families of the Commonwealth voluntarily
1759 choosing to become an observant Jew.
The Bishop of Kamieniec in Podolia (now Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine), Mikołaj Dembowski, instigates



Szmul Zbytkower (fragment of a painting by Bernardo Belloto)

a debate between Jacob Frank's followers and Orthodox rabbis, counting on conversion of the schismatics to Catholicism. The debate in front of the consistory court ends with the Frankists being condemned and declared accursed by the rabbis. In reprisal, the burning of the Talmud is ordered by the court.

The Polish Va'ad sends an emissary to Pope Benedict XIV with a petition from Polish Jews asking for protection against multiplying accusations of ritual murder. The Pope condemns the accusations. The last blood libel trial takes place in Olkusz in 1787.

1764 An estimated 500 Jewish families, followers of Jacob Frank, convert to Catholicism and join the ranks of the Polish nobility.

Warsaw's east bank suburb of Praga, which will become a district of the city in the 19th century, is exempted from the *de non tolerandis Judaeis* law. The Praga Jewish community develops as a center of commer-
1768 ce and Jewish life, largely due to the efforts of **Joseph Samuel Sonnenberg,** commonly called Szmul Zbytkower, a merchant and developer, and protégé of the last Polish king Stanisław August. Szmul Zbytkower and his wife Judyta contribute toward building of the communal synagogue and the Jewish Cemetery in Praga's neighborhood of Bródno.

The Commonwealth's Parliament (Sejm) abolishes the Va'ads on the grounds that they are no longer capable of collecting taxes effectively. With the abolition of the Va'ads, a census of the Jewish population is taken. According to the figures, there were 748,968 Jews over a year old in Poland-Lithuania: 548,777 in Poland and 201,191 in Lithuania. It is estimated that
1768 at least 20% of Jews, afraid that the results would lead to heavier taxation, do not participate.

The de facto Russian protectorate over the Commonwealth combined with tensions between traditionalist nobility and the reformist king Stanisław August, supported by his political allies, the Czartoryski family, spark a nobles' revolt known as the Bar Confederation and a subsequent civil war in the Com-
1772 monwealth. The rebellious nobles claim to defend internal and external independence, the Catholic faith, and patriotic values, accusing the king of being

a Russian puppet. Fighting ends after four years, with Russian military intervention, leaving the Commonwealth extremely weakened. The civil war provides the surrounding powers of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, with a pretext for partitioning the Commonwealth to eradicate what they call "the Polish anarchy."

1790

Simultaneously to the Bar Confederation, during the so-called *Koliyivshchina* rebellion, provoked by Russia, thousands of Jews, Catholic Poles, and Ukrainian Uniates are massacred in the city of Humań (now Uman' in Ukraine) by Cossack rebels, known as haidamaks. The rebellion spreads across the Ukraine. After claiming at least 100,000 Catholic, Uniate and Jewish victims, it is suppressed by intervening Russian troops.

1791

The first partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Austrian Habsburg monarchy.
The Vilna Gaon puts Hasidim in herem (Hebrew for "the ban"; describes an exclusion from the community). The conflict intensifies between the Mitnagdim and Hasidim.

1791

Death of Leah Horowitz (born ca. 1720) from Bolechów (now Bolekhiv, in Ukraine), the author of „Tkhinne imohes" (Supplication of the Matriarchs), an eight-page, trilingual prayer for the Sabbath before the New Moon for women. Leah, a rabbinic and kabbalistic scholar born into a famous rabbinical family and daughter of the Rabbi of Brody, one of the most important centers of Jewish life in the Commonwealth, wrote her work in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish showing great erudite skills, praised by her contemporaries. She was also strongly promoting women's participation in daily prayers, as well in Halachic and Talmudic studies.

1792

1793

On May 3rd, Poland becomes the first European country with a modern codified constitution in an attempt to reform and save the country from further partitioning by aggressive neighboring monarchies. One of the bills following the new constitution passed by the Sejm in 1792 grants Jews personal inviolability.

1794

Empress Catherine the Great of Russia establishes the Pale of Settlement, restricting Jewish settlement in the Russian Empire to the lands that were annexed by Russia in the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Pale includes parts of present-day Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Jews in the Russian Empire, with very few exceptions, are forbidden to reside outside the Pale's borders.



Berek Joselewicz
(painting by Juliusz

1795

Russia starts a war with the Commonwealth, as reforms in Poland endanger its domination over the country. The last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, seeks a diplomatic solution against the advice of military leaders.
The second partition of the Commonwealth, by the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, creates new territorial divisions.

III. POLAND PARTITIONED 1795-1918

By 1795, as a result of the third partition of Poland, the country is essentially erased from the map of Europe until it regains independence in 1918 at the end of World War I. During the partitions, the population falls under the domination of one of the three empires: Russian, Prussian or Austrian. Polish Jewish families find themselves on different sides of the borders, serving in different armies, and integrating different cultural traditions. It will become difficult to define Polish Jewry as a monolithic entity.

The Jewish population in the territories of the former Commonwealth experiences a demographic explosion in the course of the 19th century:

for example, the number of Jews living in the Pale of Settlement grows at least fivefold during this century. Before the mass emigration to the United States and other Western countries starts in the 1880s, roughly 80% of world Jewry lives in the partitioned Polish lands. The Haskalah ("Enlightenment" in Hebrew) begins to take root in the Polish lands during the 19th century. Maskilim, the followers of the Haskalah, introduce the notion of Jews as citizens of Europe, encouraging assimilation and engagement in secular life. The Haskalah quickly becomes a common enemy of the Hasidim and Mitnagdim. The latter half of the 19th century sees the spread of Yiddish culture and increasing Jewish involvement in


Partitioned Poland in the 19th Century
The Volozhin Yeshiva
Major hassidic centers
Borders of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772
Congress Kingdom of Poland 1815-1915 (autonomy 1815-1832)
Austrian Partition (Galicia)
Prussian partition
Russian partition
Free City of Krakow in 1815 (annexed by Austria in 1846)
Maximum extent of the Pale of Settlement (1791-1917)
1:10,500,000
0 250 miles
0 250 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
PRUSSIA
AUSTRIA-HUNGARY
KINGDOM OF ROMANIA
Baltic Sea
Black Sea
Sea of Azov
PETERSBURG
Revel
Dorpat
Pskov
STOCKHOLM
Kalmar
Riga
Dynaburg
Polotsk
Vitebsk
Lubavitch
Smolensk
Kovno
Vilna
Volozhin
Minsk
Grodno
Danzig
Königsberg
Stettin
Thorn
Łomża
Posen
Warsaw
Pinsk
Stolin
Rogachev
Gomel
Bryansk
Kursk
Chernigov
Kharkov
Kiev
Poltava
Zhitomir
Lutsk
Zamość
Amshinov
Ger
Biala
Kotsk
Aleksander
Pshiskhe
Izhbitsa
Lelov
Belz
Lizhensk
Pshevorsk
Bobov
Sanz
Rimanov
Zidichov
Berditchev
Skver
Mezhbizh
Breslov
Kamenets Podolskiy
Breslau
Kattowitz
Krakow
Lwów
Brünn
VIENNA
Kassa
Vizhnits
Budapest
Debrecen
Graz
Agram
Brasso
Kishinev
Odessa
Zaporozhye
Danube
Tisza
Mures
Drava
Sava
Oder
Warta
Vistula
Bug
Narew
Neris
Dvina
Dniester
Pripyat
Seym
Psel
Donets
Don
Desna
Sozh
Berezina
Prut
Siret

The Warsaw Jewish Community is recognized by the Prussian government.

By the turn of the century, rabbi Shneur Zalman (1745-1812) founds the Chabad Hasidic movement. Now known as Chabad-Lubavitch, it has become the largest and most influential of the Hasidic movements.



The Volozhin Yeshiva in the early 20th century.

The **Volozhin Yeshiva,** one of the most important centers of Talmudic learning in the 19th century, is established. The yeshiva will be re-established in Israel after World War II. Other yeshivot, including the Mir Yeshiva, are also re-established in Israel and in the United States after the Shoah.



Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw.

The first progressive synagogue in Warsaw, influenced by the German enlightenment, is opened on Daniłowiczowska Street.

The Warsaw Jewish community is granted permission to establish a **cemetery on Okopowa Street** then outside the city limits. With approximately 250,000 graves, the cemetery, still in use today, is one of the largest in Europe. The other Warsaw Jewish cemetery, established in 1780 in Bródno on the right-bank side of the city, has a similar number of burials. Some of the *matzevot* ("headstones" in Hebrew), though badly damaged, can still be found in the Bródno cemetery.

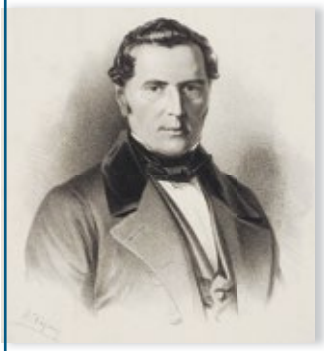
The constitution of the Duchy of Warsaw, a short-lived and semi-independent Polish rump state set up under Napoleon from parts of the Prussian and Austrian partitions, grants Jews equal rights. Despite the suspension of this ruling in 1808, Jews begin to integrate into the wider society.

> Jews living under Prussian rule are granted full equal rights in 1812, under Austrian rule in 1867, and under Russian rule only after the fall of the Tsars in 1917. Each regime requires that Jews take on hereditary surnames for purposes of tax collection and the draft.

Jews living in Prussia and the Prussian partition are given equal rights and granted full citizenship according to the Edict of Emancipation by Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III.

Following Napoleon's defeat, as a result of the Congress of Vienna's stipulations, the Congress Kingdom of Poland, with Warsaw as its capital, ›

functions as an autonomous Polish rump state in personal union with Russia through the rule of the Russian emperors as Polish kings. It grants Jews limited rights and the ability to work in banking and industry.
The Congress Kingdom abolishes the institution of the *kahal*, replacing it with Jewish community boards with limited powers.



Antoni Eisenbaum (lithography by Maksymilian Fajans)

1826 The first Jewish newspaper in Poland, founded by Antoni Eisenbaum, the weekly "Dostrzegacz Nadwiślański/Der Beobachter an der Weichsel" ("The Vistula Observer"), is published in Polish and strongly Germanized Yiddish.



Jewish City Guard (engraving by Friedrich Christoph Dietrich)

A rabbinical school, the first such institution accredited by the government of the Congress Kingdom, is established in Warsaw. The institute is directed by a radical *maskil*, **Antoni Eisenbaum.** The institute will be closed by Russian authorities in 1864, following years of Polish patriotic agitation there.
During the year-long and ultimately unsuccessful November Uprising in the Congress Kingdom against the Russian Tsar Nicholas I, Jewish militias and volunteers take part in fighting, mainly in the defense of Warsaw where the over 1,000 men strong

1832



The Poznański Palace, now housing the City Museum of Łódź.

1833 **Jewish City Guard** (Polish: *Gwardia Miejska Starozakonna*) is active. The failed uprising brings the end of Polish autonomy and the emigration of the elite.

Influential Polish émigré Joachim Lelewel issues an appeal from Paris encouraging Polish Jews to support the Polish national cause.
Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański is born in Aleksandrów Łódzki. Poznański (d. 1900), who built a textile empire in Łódź, is remembered as a pre-eminent entrepreneur and philanthropist. The **Poznański palace** now houses the City Museum of Łódź.

In the course of the 19th century, a town of Łódź (Yiddish: *Lodsh*) undergoes fast industrialization and grows from a small town into a city of over half a million inhabitants, populated by Poles

(Catholic and Jewish), Germans, and Russians. It becomes the largest center for textile manufacturing on the continent, the so-called "Polish Manchester." Jewish manufacturers and industrialists were a major driving force of the Polish economy, especially in Russian Poland. Many among them, like Izrael Poznański, were also major philanthropists, contributing to worthy Polish and Jewish causes, creating public housing and hospitals and founding museums and schools. These successful entrepreneurs were frequently referred to with the German-derived term Lodzermensch.

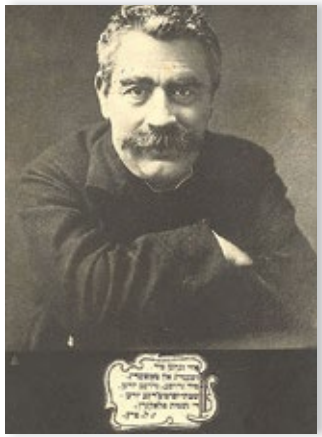
1835

1843

The Round Synagogue is built in the Praga district of Warsaw.

The first Jewish confirmation ceremony for girls is celebrated in Warsaw.

A failed Polish uprising against the Austrians in Kraków is supported by local Jews, who decide to support Polish aspirations for independence and are subsequently accused of treason by Austrian authorities.



Isaac Leib Peretz

A failed Polish uprising against the Prussians in Poznań is not supported by local Jews, who decide to support the Prussian authorities instead and are subsequently accused of treason by the Poles.

Isaac Leib Peretz (d. 1915), known as one of the fathers of Yiddish literature, is born in Zamość. The cultural association *Hazomir* ("The Nightingale" in Hebrew) he founded becomes a center of Yiddish life in Warsaw. In 1951, a street in Warsaw where he lived from 1888 until his death is named after him. He is buried in Okopowa Jewish Cemetery in the "Tomb of the Three Writers" alongside Yakov Dinezon and Shimon An-ski.

1859



Unveiling of the plaque dedicated to Michał Landy in Warsaw, 2018.

1861

Samuel Orgelbrand, a Warsaw-based printer and publisher, begins work on what will become the first modern Polish encyclopedia (in 28 volumes). Among many works published, Orgelbrand also prints a 20-volume edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

Several Polish newspapers in Warsaw, for the first time, initiate an antisemitic campaign.

Jews in the Kingdom of Poland participate in the Polish national movement against Russian rule. **Michał** ›

Landy, a rabbinical student in Warsaw, is killed by Cossack fire during a patriotic demonstration, having picked up a cross that a slain Catholic protester had been carrying. Landy represented a significant number of Jews with pro-Polish sympathies.

Polish conservative politician Margrave Aleksander Wielopolski is appointed as the civil governor of the Kingdom of Poland and starts a series of reforms, trying through cooperation with the Tsarist author-



Henryk Wohl

1863

ities to restore autonomy and cool down rebellious moods among a younger generation longing for independence. One of his reforms is the emancipation of Jews. A law is introduced that gives them equal rights and allows them to reside outside designated settlement zones.

"Ha-Zefira" ("The Siren" in Hebrew), the first Hebrew-language newspaper printed in Warsaw, was founded by Chaim Zelig Słonimski, a prolific inventor, rabbi and government advisor. "Ha-Zefira" offered both secular and religious perspectives. Słonimski's grandson Antoni will become one of the major Polish poets of the 20th century.
Wielopolski's conciliatory policy fails, he resigns and goes into exile. Triggered by a decree instituting mass conscription, the ill-fated January Uprising against Russian rule lasts through two years of guerilla fighting. A talented Jewish financier and Polish patriot, **Henryk Wohl,** becomes a highly effective head of



Dov Ber Meisels

the finance department in the clandestine Polish National Government, for which later he is deported by the Russians to Siberia. Heroic, but poorly armed Polish fighters, among them also Polish Jews, have little chance against the modern Russian military. The end of the uprising brings with it the liquidation of the last remnants of autonomy, a brutal and coercive Russification in the Kingdom of Poland, and its unification with the rest of the Russian Empire.

During the January Uprising, Chief Rabbi of Warsaw **Dov Ber Meisels,** a political activist in the fight for Polish independence, is arrested and deported from Warsaw and moves, temporarily, to Kraków, located in the Austrian partition.
After losing wars with France and Prussia, the Habsburg monarchy reforms itself, through the so-called *Ausgleich* ("Compromise" in German), into the dual state of Austria-Hungary. Poles in Galicia (the colloquial name for the Austrian partition) gain a high level of autonomy, which enables modern Polish political life in the region. The language of administration and education reverts back to Polish. Jews in

Austria-Hungary are granted full citizenship and civil rights. In Galicia, many will choose to fully assimilate into Polish society. Looking back from the perspective of the tragic events of the first half of the 20th century, although not quite rightly, the lengthy reign of emperor Franz Joseph of Austria (1848-1916) will appear to posterity as a period of peace and prosperity, religious tolerance, and harmonious coexistence of various nationalities under the rule of the Habsburgs.



Naftali Hirsch Imber

1878

Prussia unites Germany after the victory over France. In the decades to follow, forced Germanization becomes the official policy toward the population of the Prussian partition. The local Jews, now citizens of the German Empire, undergo an accelerated process of assimilation into German culture, as Polish culture and language are suppressed by the German authorities.

Mendele Moicher Sforim's "Di Kliatche" ("The Mare" in Yiddish) is published, which is a milestone in the development of Yiddish literature.

Jan Jeleński publishes "Żydzi, Niemcy i my" ("The Jews, the Germans, and Us" in Polish) the first manifesto of modern Polish antisemitism.

Naftali Hirsch Imber from Austrian Galicia pens the words of "Hatikvah" ("The Hope" in Hebrew), which becomes the Zionist anthem and, subsequently, the national anthem of the State of Israel in 1948.



The Great Synagogue of Warsaw.

The **Great Synagogue of Warsaw,** designed by Leandro Marconi, a progressive synagogue that seated 2,200 people, is dedicated on Tłomackie Street. While the prayers are conducted in Hebrew, the sermons are given regularly in Polish.

Samuel Gelbfisz, born in Warsaw, emigrates to the United States in 1899. He will become known as Samuel Goldwyn, co-founder of one of Hollywood's leading film studios, Metro Goldwyn Mayer. The Wonsal brothers, four cinema entrepreneurs originating from Krasnosielc in Mazovia, will be other Polish Jews who make their mark on the film industry, known worldwide as the Warner Bros.

1884

Pogroms in the Pale of Settlement follow the assassination of the reformist Tsar Alexander II. As a result of Russian law, which forbids Jews to move east of the Pale, thousands of Russian Jews flee to the west, many settling in Warsaw and Łódź, with many others making their way to Prussian Poland, and the ›

1887 United States.

Between 1881 and 1914, in the face of pogroms, rising antisemitism, and increasing economic hardship, more than one and a half million Jews emigrate from the Pale of Settlement and Galicia to the United States and elsewhere. The question of whether to stay or to leave will come up frequently as Jewish communal identities and political movements change.



Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof

1891 The first conference of *Hibbat Zion* ("The Love of Zion" in Hebrew) organization, a forerunner of Zionism, is held in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*) in Prussian Silesia. Zionist ideology takes root and begins to spread.

The Yiddish play "Shulamis" by Abraham Goldfaden, known as the "father of the Yiddish theater," is performed for the first time in Warsaw.

Dr. **Ludwik Zamenhof** publishes his treatise on Esperanto, a constructed language he devised, titled "Lingvo Internacia: Antaŭparolo kaj plena lernolibro" ("The International Language: Introduction and Complete Textbook" in Esperanto). He believed that a common language would facilitate co-existence among different cultures. Esperanto is still spoken by millions of people worldwide. Zamenhof dies in Warsaw in 1917 and is buried in the Okopowa cemetery.



Pua Rakowska (center)



Hipolit Wawelberg (painting by Kazimierz Pochwalski)

1895 Identifying herself as a "revolutionary Jewish woman," **Pua Rakowska** (Puah Rakovsky) becomes the director of a modern Jewish elementary school for girls in Warsaw. In 1893, she establishes a Hebrew high school for Jewish girls and soon after becomes a leader of the women's Zionist movement in Poland.

Many Jewish women receiving secular educations begin to seek new avenues for expression and social equality, often leaving behind their

traditional religious roots. Overcoming discrimination, Jewish women become community activists and gain recognition in Jewish political movements such as the Bund and Zionism and in social welfare, education and, later, in the cultural and political arenas.

Industrialists and philanthropists **Hipolit Wawelberg** and Stanisław Rotwand establish a prestigious mechanical and technical college, which will eventually become the Warsaw Polytechnic.



Regina Liliental

1898 Helena (Chaja) Rubinstein, born in 1872 to a family of Polish Jewish shopkeepers in Krakow's Kazimierz, migrates to Australia seeking new opportunities. Starting from scratch, she will go on to establish a lucrative cosmetics empire, becoming the first self-made female millionaire in the world.

The *Bund* ("Union" in Yiddish), or by its full name, the General Jewish Workers Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, is founded. The party's ideology is based on the tenets of socialism and a commitment to Yiddish language and culture. It will become one of the most important Jewish political parties in interwar Poland.

Delegates from Poland's partitioned lands participate in the first Zionist Congress in Basel.

The early 20th century ushers in a new era of Jewish political expression and national aspirations in partitioned Poland, which find their expression through the Bund or the many different Zionist movements ranging from religious to Marxist in ideology.



Barricades in Łódź, 1905.

1905 **Regina Liliental** (1875-1924, née Gitla Eiger), a pioneering ethnographer and folklorist, publishes her first work "Przesądy Żydowskie" ("Jewish Superstitions" in Polish), one of the earliest publications about Polish Jewish folklore.

The Nożyk Synagogue, funded by Zalman and Rywka Nożyk, is dedicated in Warsaw. The synagogue, which continues to serve the Warsaw Jewish community, was among the more than 400 Jewish houses of worship in Warsaw prior to World War ›

II.

While Zionism is banned by the Tsarist authorities, the religious Zionist movement Mizrachi (an acronym for Hebrew *Merkaz Ruhani:* Religious Center) is established in Wilno (Yiddish: *Vilna*).

1905 The founding conference of the Zionist-Socialist movement *Poalei Zion* ("Workers of Zion" in Hebrew) is held in Kraków. Among the delegates is Dawid Grün, born in Płońsk in 1886. He leaves for Palestine in 1906 and, as David Ben Gurion, becomes Israel's first prime minister in 1948.

1905 During the mass unrest in the Russian Empire, which was sparked by the costly and unsuccessful war with the Empire of Japan (1904-1905), a wave of strikes, demonstrations and protests, usually suppressed with bloody violence by the tsarist regime, sweeps across the country, in the event later named as the Revolution of 1905. In Łódź, between June 18-25, Polish, Jewish, and German workers of the textile industry, led by Socialists from PPS (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*, "Polish Socialist Party" in Polish) and Bund, clash with the tsarist police and military, building barricades and taking control over large parts of the city, during the so-called **Łódź Uprising**. The regime manages to quell the insurrection, with the official death toll reaching 151 civilian casualties (55 Poles, 79 Jews, and 17 Germans), and the unofficial as high as 800 dead and 2,000 wounded. Many other incidents of lesser scale take place in all of the Russian Partition. The outcome of the 1905 revolution is the relative relaxation of absolutist rule of tsars and establishment of the first parliament in Russia, the *Duma*.

1910 The failed revolution incites another wave of pogroms in Russia, mostly in the Pale of Settlement but also in the Congress Poland. Pogroms are usually provoked by the infamous Tsarist Russian secret police - the *Okhrana*, and supported by the authorities. The bloodiest take place in Odessa, Kiev, and Białystok. Before the elections to the *Duma*, designated for March 1906, a boycott of Jewish businesses is organized in Warsaw by Polish nationalists as Jews refuse to endorse their candidate.

The Bund organizes an armed attack on Warsaw's brothel district near Grzybowski Square. Many of the brothels at that time were owned by Jews. The Bund attacks them in the name of the "defense of the dignity of the Jewish woman." Tsarist police side with the mobsters and suppress the attackers after a gun battle that lasts several hours.



Former Dom Sierot at 92 Krochmalna St. with Janusz Korczak memorial in front.

Mathias Bersohn, an active philanthropist, donates his private art collection to the Jewish community of Warsaw. The community establishes a Jewish museum next to its headquarters on Grzybowska Street, which will be looted by the Germans during

World War II.

The mass-circulation Yiddish newspaper "Haynt" ("Today" in Yiddish) is launched, followed by "Der Moment" ("The Moment" in Yiddish) in 1910.

The Old People's Home Association (Hebrew/Yiddish: *Moshav Zkenim*) is established in Warsaw, with Adolf Peretz as its president.
The first Yiddish films, among them "The Hasidic Woman and Apostate," are produced, inspiring many full-length features and documentaries. Twelve new Yiddish-language films will be produced before World War I.

Agudat Israel ("Union of the Jews" in Hebrew), or Agudah, an Orthodox Jewish political party dedicated to preserving rabbinic authority, is founded in Katowice (German: *Kattowitz*). The union will have seats in the Polish parliament during the interwar years as the leading political representation of the Polish Jewry. After the War, the Agudah will serve as an umbrella organization for many Orthodox Jews in the United States representing the vast majority of members of the traditional Orthodox world, sometimes known by the old label of *mitnagdim,* as well as several of the Hasidic dynasties.



Jewish Writers and Journalists' Union membership card of Isaac Bashevis Singer.

A Jewish orphanage (Polish: ***Dom Sierot***) opens on Krochmalna Street in Warsaw, directed by Janusz Korczak (born Henryk Goldszmidt). He becomes the most famous inter-war Polish pedagogue and author of popular children's books that are still read by Polish children.



Girls from Beis Yaakov school in Ostrów Mazowiecka, 1928

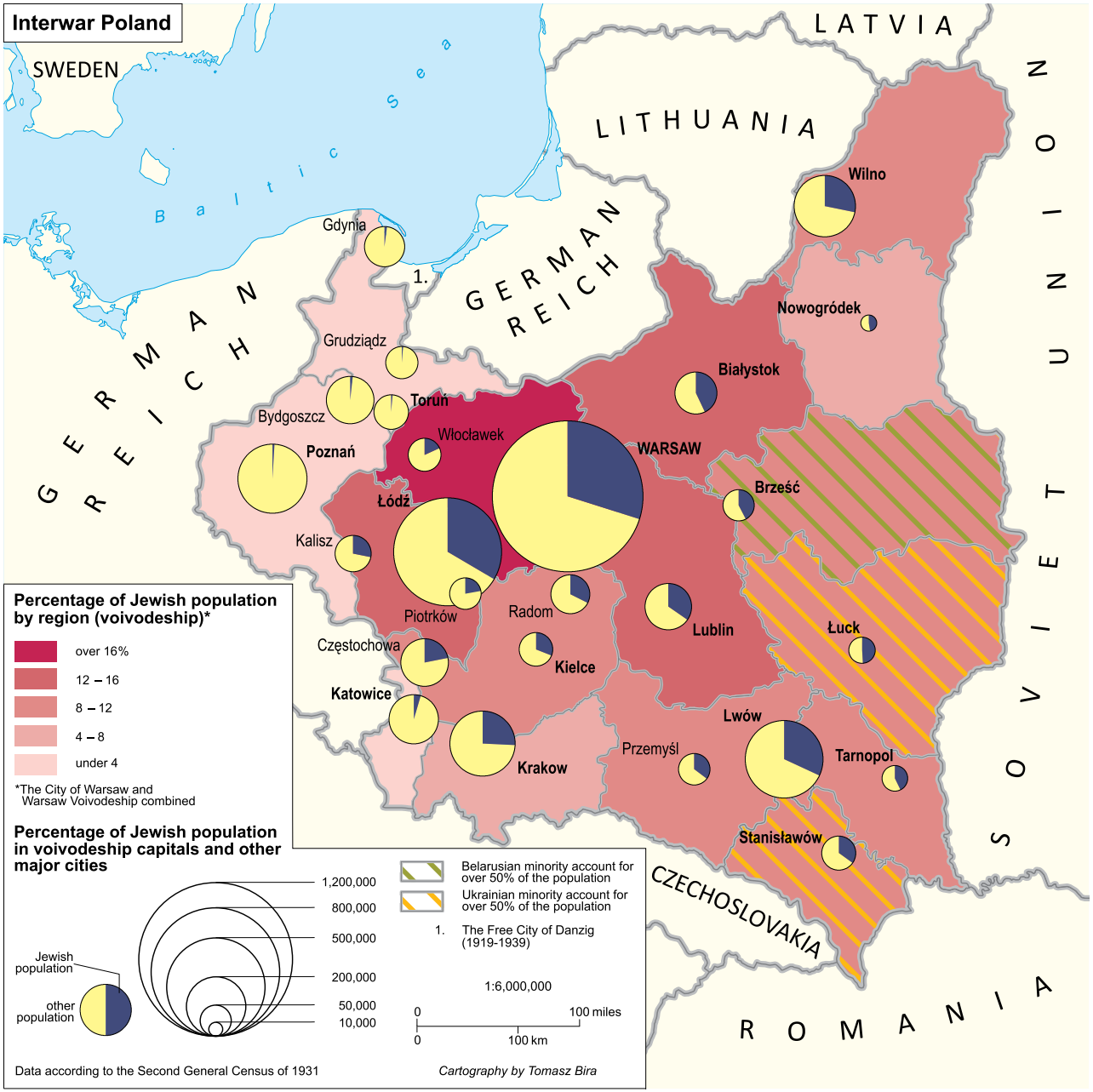
Hashomer Hatzair ("The Young Guard" in Hebrew), a Zionist-Socialist youth movement, is established in Galicia.

The First World War breaks out in the summer of 1914, with Austria and Germany (the so-called Central Powers) fighting against Russia (allied with the United Kingdom and France in an alliance known as the *Entente*). The war between the partitioning powers, brings hope for a restoration of some sort of independent Polish state. Nonetheless, the war is a disaster for inhabitants of the Polish lands of all faiths. Drafted men serve in each of the imperial armies, with family members sometimes fighting one another. As the eastern front gradually moves to the east, destruction and collateral damage brought by four years of heavy fighting leave many towns and villages in ruins. If

IV. INDEPENDENT POLAND: INTERWAR PERIOD 1918-1939

Poland regains its independence in the fall of 1918, when all of the three partitioning empires, Russian, Austrian and German, collapse by the end of the First World War.

Many ethnically mixed areas are claimed at the same time as national territories by different nation states emerging in the lands of central and eastern Europe. The newly reborn Polish state is involved in border conflicts with almost all of its neighbors. The Jewish population suffers from collateral damage and war-related violence, including pogroms committed by almost all belligerents. Some of the Polish forces are involved in antisemitic actions. The most well-known is the infamous November 1918 pogrom in Lwów, followed by pogroms in Pińsk, Lida, and Wilno in


Interwar Poland
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
GERMAN REICH
GERMAN REICH
SOVIET UNION
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
ROMANIA
Gdynia
1.
Grudziądz
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Włocławek
Poznań
Łódź
Kalisz
Piotrków
Radom
Częstochowa
Kielce
Katowice
Krakow
Lublin
WARSAW
Białystok
Nowogródek
Wilno
Brześć
Łuck
Lwów
Przemyśl
Tarnopol
Stanisławów
Percentage of Jewish population by region (voivodeship)*
over 16%
12 – 16
8 – 12
4 – 8
under 4
*The City of Warsaw and Warsaw Voivodeship combined
Percentage of Jewish population in voivodeship capitals and other major cities
Jewish population
other population
1,200,000
800,000
500,000
200,000
50,000
10,000
Belarusian minority account for over 50% of the population
Ukrainian minority account for over 50% of the population
1. The Free City of Danzig (1919-1939)
1:6,000,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Data according to the Second General Census of 1931
Cartography by Tomasz Bira



Józef Piłsudski

1919

The core of pre-partitioned Poland is reunited in the Second Polish Republic. **Józef Piłsudski**, past leader of the struggle for independence and now the interim head of state, invites Jewish parties to participate in coalition talks.



Rosa Luxemburg

On January 15, **Rosa Luxemburg** and Karl Liebknecht are murdered by rightwing Freikorps troopers (nationalist paramilitary groups in a revolution-torn post-WWI Germany), after a failed Communist coup in Berlin known as the Spartacist Uprising. Rosa Luxemburg, born in 1871 as Rozalia Luxenburg in Zamość to a family of Polish Jewish merchants, was a prominent Marxist revolutionary, leading feminist, and activist of the European Socialist movement of the early 20th century. An advocate of the proletarian revolution, she was nonetheless critical of the policies of the Bolsheviks in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917, on the grounds of defending democratic Socialism.

The Committee of the Jewish Delegations represents Polish Jewry at the Versailles Peace Conference. The conference obliges the newly independent countries, including Poland, to sign a treaty guaranteeing minority rights.

The first parliamentary elections, held on January 26th, give seats to Jews in the Sejm and the Senate. As Polish women gain the right to vote already by 1918, Róża Pomerantz-Melzer, a member of a Zionist party, is the first woman to be elected to the Polish parliament.

Bela Szpiro-Nissenbaum is elected to the City Council of Lublin. An active member of the Bund and a devoted fighter for women's rights, the poor, and the working class, Bela gained wide popularity. Concerned about the condition of Jewish children and their education, Bela became a co-founder of CISZO (Central Organization of Jewish Schools) and the Icchok Lejbusz Peretz House of Culture. She will be elected to the city council five more times before 1939. During the war, active in the underground, Bela will be arrested by the Gestapo in 1942 and will perish in the German concentration camp Ravensbrück two years later.

About 17,000 Polish Jewish army volunteers during the Polish-Soviet War are interned by Polish authorities as "potential Bolshevik supporters" at the peak of the Red Army's offensive. The move brings huge protests from centrist, left, and Jewish parties. Detainees will be released after 25 days when the

Bolshevik troops will be in full retreat after losing the Battle of Warsaw in mid-August.

Following two years of bitter war and a strategic Red Army defeat at the gates of Warsaw, the Polish-Soviet peace treaty is eventually signed in Riga in March. The Polish-Soviet border is drawn to the east of **Lwów** (a city now in Ukraine, Ukrainian: *Lviv,* Yiddish: *Lemberik*) and Wilno (a city now in Lithuania, Lithuanian: *Vilnius*, Yiddish: *Vilne*), two major cities and important centers of Polish and Jewish culture in the so-called *Kresy* region (Polish term for the eastern Borderlands, roughly equaling to today's Lithuania, western Belarus, and western Ukraine). Thousands of Jews from the territory located east of the new border, in particular shopkeepers and professionals forbidden to work in the Soviet Union, move to Poland and are eventually granted citizenship.

The period of post-WWI conflicts in the region ends by the end of 1921. With its deep legal, administrative and cultural differences, the unification of the three parts of the partitioned country into one nation is a challenge to the Polish state. Combined, numerous ethnic and religious minorities constitute almost one-third of the Second Polish Republic's population. For the first time in 123 years, Jews like other minorities, are to be governed by one set of laws that protected their rights as equal citizens of Poland.

The redrawn map of Poland creates the largest Jewish population center in Europe. Despite massive unemployment, antisemitic incidents and pogroms and growing tensions between a multicultural Polish society and increasing nationalism, Jewish life and culture flourish in the interwar period. Synagogues, schools, youth movements, sports clubs, theater, cinema, literature and the press, all develop exponentially to meet the needs of the growing Jewish population and the diversity of Jewish expression.

The Polish Constitution of March 17th grants legal



Lwów

equality to all citizens of Poland.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) appoints Yitzhak Gitterman as its first director in Poland. During World War II, he will be active in the Jewish underground in the Warsaw Ghetto, and he will die during the first episode of armed struggle in the ghetto in January 1943.
Polish Jewish historian Szymon Askenazy is elected as Poland's representative in the League of Nations in Geneva, an interwar predecessor to the United Nations organization.

The first Polish national conference of the Hebrew-language Tarbut educational network convenes in Warsaw, attended by 178 delegates. The number of Jewish schools proliferates to include secular, Yiddish-language and religious schools, as well as Polish schools called *szabasówki*, which offer classes on Sundays rather than on Saturdays.

Poland's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, elected by the political center, left, and minority voters, including Jews, is assassinated in the gallery ›

of the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts „Zachęta" on December 16 by a nationalist fanatic just five days after his election.



Street stand with Jewish press.

1925

The first issue of "Nasz Przegląd" ("Our Review" in Polish), the largest and best-known Jewish daily in Polish, is published in Warsaw. The **Jewish press**, which appeared in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish, provided entrées into different Polish Jewish milieus, often serving as bridges among the assimilationists, the Bundists, the Zionists, and the more traditionally religious communities. "Nasz Przegląd" will be published until September 1939.

Due to an economic downturn, which Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Władysław Grabski was trying to overcome with restrictive economic policies, thousands of Jewish businessmen make *aliyah* to Palestine feeling threatened by difficult economic environment – a phenomenon known as the "Grabski aliyah" or "the fourth aliyah."

According to the resolution of the conference of Jewish cultural institutions in Berlin, the *Yidisher Visnshaftlikher Institut* (YIVO) or Jewish Scientific Institute, the first secular Jewish research institution, is created. Housed in Wilno , it will study and document Jewish life and promote Yiddish language and culture until the outbreak of WWII. Its work is continued today by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York.



Ester Rachel Kamińska



The funeral of Jewish soldiers killed in the Coup of May 1926.

The "mother of Yiddish theater" **Ester Rachel Kamińska** dies in Warsaw. At this time, there are many Yiddish theaters in the city.



Mojżesz Kusewicki

Marshal Józef Piłsudski seizes power in a **military coup in May 1926** and institutes a quasi-authoritarian government in order to settle the political and social situation in Poland. A promoter of a multicultural Poland, envisioning it as a greater federation of different ethnic and religious groups as a counterbalance to Soviet Russia, he earns the nickname of "Grandpa," widespread also among Polish Jews.

The Polish government expresses its official support for the Balfour Declaration which calls for the creation of a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. Polish support for Zionism will increase over the years.
Hazzan (cantor) **Mojżesz Kusewicki** (Moshe Koussevitsky), hired away from Wilno's Great Synagogue, becomes the chief cantor of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw, contributing to the growing canon of Jewish liturgical music created in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Institute for Judaic Studies is established in Warsaw. The languages of instruction are Polish and Hebrew. The founding committee included Rabbis Markus Braude, Ozjasz Thon, and Mojżesz Schorr, members of the Polish parliament and committed Zionists.

By 1930, the world Jewish population is estimated at 15,000,000 — with 4,200,000 in the United States, 3,000,000 in Poland and 2,500,000 in the Soviet Union. Despite waves of emigration, the Jewish population in Poland increases to an estimated 3.5 million by 1939. Jews constitute almost one-tenth of the population in Poland and provide one-half of all the lawyers, one-third of all the doctors in Warsaw and one-quarter of all the university students



The Mausoleum of Three Writers

in Poland.

Assimilated Polish Jews make significant contributions to Polish culture in the 20th century. Educators such as Janusz Korczak, painters such as Henryk Berlewi, poets such as Julian Tuwim, writers such as Bruno Schulz, musicians such as Artur Rubinstein, and a host of others contribute new content and form, which enrich Polish culture. Many Polish-born Jews who emigrate make significant contributions to Jewish life, literature, science, the arts and the humanities around the world: Rabbis Joseph Ber Soloveitchik and Israel Meir Lau, Nobel Prize laureates author Isaac ›

Bashevis Singer, physicist Joseph Rotblat, and politician Menachem Begin, businesswoman



The Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva



A picket organized by nationalist Polish students demanding implementation of bench ghettos at the Lwów Polytechnic in the 1930s.

1931

Helena Rubinstein, artist Artur Szyk, and architect Daniel Liebeskind, to name but a few.

Abraham Ostrzega designs a monument of Ludwik Zamenhof for Białystok. Ostrzega, born in 1889, was considered the greatest Polish Jewish sculptor, specializing in sepulchral art. A large collection of matzevot and tombstones carved by Ostrzega, including the "**Mausoleum of Three Writers**" (i.e. Peretz, Dinezon, An-ski) is located in Warsaw's Jewish Cemetery on Okopowa Street.

1933

The opening ceremony of the ***Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin*** ("Yeshiva of the Sages of Lublin" in Hebrew) takes place in June. It is founded by Rabbi Meir Shapiro, the creator of *Daf Yomi* – the daily regimen of learning Talmud and its commentaries, which is still practiced worldwide. The Yeshiva becomes a major center of Orthodox learning until the outbreak of World War II.

1934

Clashes at universities in Wilno and Lwów between antisemitic National Democratic Party (the so-called *Endecja*) supporters and Jewish students leave one Catholic student dead, as tensions and calls for the imposition of quotas at universities increase.

Jewish artist Arthur Szyk, born in Łódź and living in Paris at the time, publishes 45 illustrations for the thirteenth-century "Bill of Rights" for Polish Jews, the "Statute of Kalisz" (**see illustration, page 8**). A committed Polish patriot, political activist and



Zuzanna Ginczanka

prolific artist, his contributions to the art world in Europe and the U.S. span several decades.

At the first worldwide Maccabiah in Tel Aviv, Poland sends the largest delegation with 66 members. Between World War I and World War II, more than 100

Jewish sports clubs were registered in Warsaw alone.

Mieczysław Kaplicki, born Maurycy Kapellner, becomes the first mayor of Kraków of Jewish origin.

Shimon Peres, born as Szymon Perski in Wiszniewo in 1923, moves to Palestine with his family. He will go on to serve Israel in a variety of government positions, including prime minister and president, and will win the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1994. Peres dies in 2016 and his funeral in Jerusalem is attended by more than eighty heads of state from all over the world.

1936

1936 The Museum of Jewish Art opens in Lwów, organized by Wiktor Chajes, the chairman of the Jewish community, and deputy mayor of Lwów.

Polish poet **Zuzanna Ginczanka** (born Gincburg) becomes a member of "Skamander," a group of avant-garde poets created, among others, by Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski. Tuwim and Słonimski, along with Jan Brzechwa and Bolesław Leśmian, all assimilated Jews, are still beloved authors in Poland, having made significant contributions to Polish literature.



Students of the Institute of Judaic Studies near the side entrance to the Main Judaic Library (now JHI building).

1936 Józef Piłsudski dies on May 12, marking a dramatic change in the life of Jews in interwar Poland and the beginning of a rise in state-sanctioned antisemitism. Memorial services for Piłsudski are held throughout the country, including in Warsaw's Great Synagogue. After Piłsudski's death, the ruling *Sanacja* (semi-authoritarian regime closely tied with the military), having no definite leader, will start to drift into nationalism.

1936

The prime minister and Catholic primate endorse an economic boycott, proclaimed by the extreme right, of Jewish businesses and shops, yet condemn

1936 physical violence against Jews.

As violent boycotts of Jewish businesses become commonplace, Jews sometimes organize in self-defense. On March 9, in the small market town of Przytyk, members of one such group attack an organized antisemitic group, killing one member. A riot ensued, in which a Jewish couple extraneous to the incident is murdered. Members of both the Jewish self-defense and the antisemitic group are subsequently sentenced, though the latter are treated with lenience. Boycotts and antisemitic riots, sometimes with fatalities, continue to occur elsewhere in Poland of the late 1930s.

1936

The **Main Judaic Library** and the Institute of Judaic Studies move into a new building designed by Zachariasz Eber, adjacent to the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street in Warsaw. One of the few Jewish edifices in Warsaw to survive World War II, the building is now home to the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

1936

First congress of Polish "Progressive" Judaism is held in May in Warsaw and the *Centralny Związek Synagog Postępowych* ("Central Union of Progressive Synagogues" in Polish) is established.

Zionist Revisionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky (born in Russia as Vladimir Zhabotinsky), calls for at least ›

750,000 Jews to be evacuated to Palestine over the next ten years in the wake of growing antisemitism in Europe and particularly the rise of Nazi Germany.



"Yidl mit'n fidel" advertisement poster from 1937.

The so-called "evacuation plan" is largely rejected by Jews, but the Polish government strengthens ties with the Revisionists, while considering other "solutions to the Jewish question," including emigration to Madagascar. Jabotinsky starts cooperation with the Polish government and members of right-wing Zionist militias are to be trained by the Polish army before going to Mandate Palestine.

Right-wing extremist leader Adam Doboszyński and his followers organize the so-called March on



Lili Liliana in „The Dybbuk."

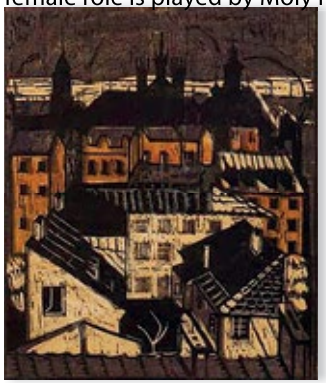
Myślenice, on June 23, occupying the town south of Kraków, arresting local authorities, plundering Jewish shops and attempting to set fire to the syn-



University ID card of a Jewish student with a "bench ghetto" seal.

1937 agogue. Doboszyński is arrested and sentenced to three and a half years in jail.

The Yiddish language musical "**Yidl mit'n fidel**" ("Yiddle With His Fiddle" in Yiddish, Polish title: "Judeł gra na skrzypcach") premiers in Warsaw on September 1936 in Warsaw to become a blockbuster in Poland, and subsequently in the United States. It tells the story of an impoverished klezmorim, Jewish musicians, a father and his daughter disguised as a young boy, Yiddle. The leading female role is played by Moly Picon, born as Małka



„The Old Town of Warsaw," a xylograph by Aniela Cukier.

1938 Opiekun in New York City to Polish Jewish parents, recent immigrants to the United States. Moly Picon

(1898-1992) became the first worldwide star of the Yiddish-language film.

1938 The Sejm introduces a draft law restricting *shechitah* (Hebrew term for kosher ritual slaughter) to only religious purposes, generating heated debate. Attempts will be made again in 2014 and 2018 to introduce such a provision.

1938 Colonel Adam Koc, spokesman of the *Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego* (OZN, "Camp of National Unity" in Polish), the official political representation of the ruling *Sanacja* regime, officially declares anti-semitism as part of its political platform in a political program published in the daily "Gazeta Polska".

"**The Dybbuk**," Michał Waszyński's (born Moshe Waks) feature film based on Shimon An-ski's play, premieres in Warsaw to critical acclaim. It will become one of the greatest hits of Polish Jewish cinema.

The so-called "**bench ghettos**" (separate seating for Jewish students) are introduced in a majority of Polish universities with the start of the new academic year in October. Some universities also introduce the *numerus clausus* ("quota" in Latin), limiting the number of places for Jews, based on their percent-



Herszel Grynszpan

1938 age of the country's population (10%). The first unsuccessful attempt to introduce this provision took place in 1923. While those moves are opposed by the democrats and by members of academia, the right and others demand a *numerus nullus* ("null number" in Latin), i.e. the total exclusion of Jews.

1939 An exhibition of artworks, mostly paintings and wood engravings by **Aniela Cukier**, opens at Instytut Propagandy Sztuki (The Art Propagation Institute) in Warsaw. Cukier was one of the leading female artists of the artist colony in the town of Kazimierz Dolny.

1939 On March 31, the Sejm passes a law stripping Polish citizens who have resided abroad for more than five consecutive years of their citizenship.

Nazi Germany in the course of the so-called *Polenaktion* ("Polish action" in German) brutally deports



Jewish recruits of the 20th Land of Kraków Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army taking military oath at the Wawel Castle in the 1930s.

17,000 Polish Jews in October to the border crossing at Zbąszyń. They will initially be denied admission and forced into a transfer camp. In spite of official protests in Poland, the situation in Zbąszyń deteriorates, provoking widespread outrage among the Jewish

V. THE WAR AND THE HOLOCAUST 1939-1945

Although the early Nazi policies of antisemitism and racism in Germany were becoming widely known and with antisemitism on the rise in Poland and elsewhere throughout Europe, the enormity of the tragedy of the Shoah could not have been foreseen. Germany's "Final Solution," the plan for complete extermination of the Jews, was implemented primarily in the occupied Polish territory, because it was where the largest European Jewish population lived. The loss of 90% of Polish Jewry meant the near-end of the Ashkenazi civilization that had developed and thrived on Polish lands for almost a millennium.


Poland During Second World War (1939-45)
SWEDEN
Kalmar
Baltic Sea
Latvia
Riga
Rumbula Forest
Daugavpils
Šiauliai
Klaipėda
Lithuania
Vitebsk
Smolensk
Katyn
9th Fort
Kaunas
Wilno
09.1943
Ponary
Königsberg
Danzig
Köslin
Allenstein
GERMAN REICH
SOVIET UNION
MALY TROSTINETS
Minsk
Lida
Grodno
Białystok
08.1943
Słonim
Bronna Góra
TREBLINKA
08.1943
Bydgoszcz
Poznań
KULMHOF
04.1943
Warsaw
08-09.1944
Międzyrzec Podlaski
Siedlce
Brześć
Pińsk
Mazyr
Kalisz
Łódź (Litzmannstadt)
Tomaszów Mazowiecki
Piotrków
Radom
MAJDANEK
Majdanek (Aktion Erntefest)
SOBIBOR
10.1943
Trawniki (Aktion Erntefest)
Kowel
Sarny
Breslau
Radomsko
Poniatowa (Aktion Erntefest)
Częstochowa
06.1943
Kielce
Izbica
Łuck
Górka Polonka
Mizocz
10.1942
Zhytomyr
Kiev
Babi Yar
Berdychiv
BELZEC
Będzin
08.1943
AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU
10.1944
KRAKÓW
(Capital of the GG)
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Lwów
Tarnopol
Janowska
Nowy Sącz
Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia
Žilina
Prešov
Košice
Munkács
HUNGARY
Stanisławów
Kołomyja
Chernivtsi
Kamianets Podilskyi
ROMANIA
Northern Transylvania (Hungarian from 09.1940)
Territories annexed into the Soviet Union (1939-1941)
Territory of the German Reich prior to September 1, 1939 (including territories annexed before the war)
Bezirk Bialystok (annexed into the German Reich from July 22, 1941)
Territories annexed into the German Reich (1939-1945)
General Government (1939-1945)
District of Galicia (incorporated into the GG from August 01, 1941)
Borders of Poland on August 31, 1939
Range of the Soviet occupation to June 22, 1941
Borders of the Greater German Reich (1941-45)
Ghettos over 100,000 people
Other large ghettos
Largest mass executions of Jews
Major killing centers
Ghetto and camp uprisings (with dates)
1944 Warsaw Uprising (Polish Home Army)
1940 Katyn massacre
1:6,500,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

Germany invades Poland on September 1. Subsequently, the Soviet Union invades on September 17, following the secret German-Soviet pact signed by Ribbentrop and Molotov on August 23. After one month of desperate fighting, the last units of the Polish army surrender in early October. Poland never officially capitulates and a new government and army start to form in exile, first in France and, after it falls in June 1940, in the United Kingdom.

When the last Polish units are defeated, Germany annexes directly into the German Reich western parts of Poland including Poznań, Katowice, and Łódź. Central Poland, with Warsaw, Kraków, and Lublin, is located in the German occupation zone renamed the "General Government for the Occupied Polish Territories." Eastern Poland, in accordance with the German-Soviet pact, is taken over by the Soviet Union, which annexes the area respectively to Soviet Belarus and Soviet Ukraine. Immediately thereafter, German Nazi and Soviet terror targeting Poles and symbols of Polishness,

1939 including Polish intelligentsia and clergy, begins.

In the areas of Poland taken by Nazi Germany, the Nazis target Jews from the very beginning with the introduction of antisemitic laws. The new laws include the confiscation of private property, limitation of travel, freezing of bank accounts, forced labor and restrictions on which jobs Jews could hold. Mandatory white armbands with the Star of David (in the General Government) and yellow badges in the shape of the Star of David (in territories annexed to the Reich) are imposed.

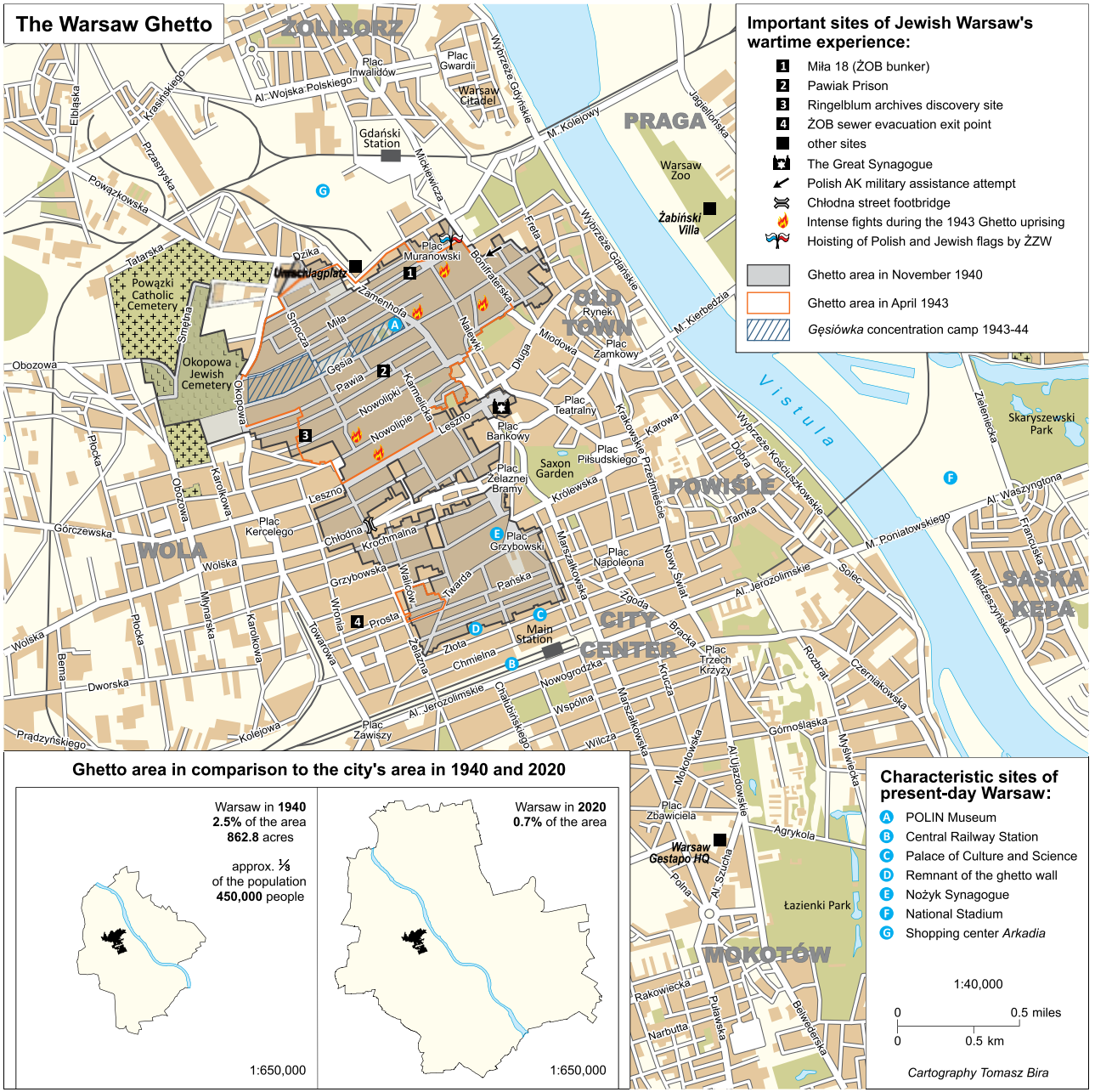
Prominent Bund leaders **Wiktor Alter** and Henryk Erlich, both with a symbolic grave in Warsaw's Jewish cemetery, are arrested by the Soviet authorities



Wiktor Alter

1939 in October to be released in 1941. They are re-arrested as "German spies" three months later and executed.
The first of approximately six hundred ghettos in occupied Poland is established by the Germans in Piotrków Trybunalski on October 5.

The **Warsaw Ghetto**, the largest ghetto created in German-occupied Europe, is sealed on November 16, 1940. While several thousand Jews manage to remain illegally outside of the closed area and others manage to flee with the help of non-Jews, the vast majority of the city's Jewish population is forced into the ghetto. Many Jewish communal and religious institutions and cultural organizations are re-established in the so-called Jewish Residential District. Schools, hospitals, orphanages, and theaters are set up. The Judenrat, an administrative body set up the Germans, tries to reconcile submission to the Nazi authorities with protection of the welfare and interests of the Jewish population. Underground activity, including the publishing of newspapers, begins almost immediately. Of the Warsaw Ghetto's population of approximately 450,000 at its peak in April 1941, 100,000 will die of cold, hunger and disease. Over 300,000 will be gassed in Treblinka. ›


The Warsaw Ghetto
Important sites of Jewish Warsaw's wartime experience:
1 Miła 18 (ŻOB bunker)
2 Pawiak Prison
3 Ringelblum archives discovery site
4 ŻOB sewer evacuation exit point
other sites
The Great Synagogue
Polish AK military assistance attempt
Chłodna street footbridge
Intense fights during the 1943 Ghetto uprising
Hoisting of Polish and Jewish flags by ŻZW
Ghetto area in November 1940
Ghetto area in April 1943
Gęsiówka concentration camp 1943-44
ŻOLIBORZ
PRAGA
OLD TOWN
POWIŚLE
WOLA
CITY CENTER
SAŚKA KĘPA
MOKOTÓW
Vistula
Umschlagplatz
Okopowa Jewish Cemetery
Powązki Catholic Cemetery
Warsaw Citadel
Gdański Station
Warsaw Zoo
Żabiński Villa
Rynek
Plac Zamkowy
Plac Teatralny
Plac Bankowy
Saxon Garden
Plac Piłsudskiego
Plac Żelaznej Bramy
Plac Grzybowski
Plac Napoleona
Plac Trzech Krzyży
Main Station
Plac Zawiszy
Plac Zbawiciela
Warsaw Gestapo HQ
Skaryszewski Park
Łazienki Park
Ghetto area in comparison to the city's area in 1940 and 2020
Warsaw in 1940
2.5% of the area
862.8 acres
approx. ⅛
of the population
450,000 people
1:650,000
Warsaw in 2020
0.7% of the area
1:650,000
Characteristic sites of present-day Warsaw:
A POLIN Museum
B Central Railway Station
C Palace of Culture and Science
D Remnant of the ghetto wall
E Nożyk Synagogue
F National Stadium
G Shopping center Arkadia
1:40,000
0 0.5 miles
0 0.5 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira

Zionist Ignacy Schwarzbart joins the Polish National Council in London, the Polish parliament-in-exile. Poland is the only country in occupied Europe to have a form of parliament-in-exile.
The YIVO Institute relocates its headquarters from Wilno to New York City.

In February, Soviet authorities begin the first of four mass deportations of Polish citizens from the Soviet occupation zone to the east of the Soviet Union,



Katyń Memorial in Jersey City, NJ.

mostly to Siberia and Kazakhstan. The third wave of deportations of May-June 1940 primarily targets Polish Jews, with 80% of the deportees being Jewish. By 1945, at least one and a half million Poles will become target of the Soviet repressions. Approximately 150,000-200,000 of them will lose their lives.

From April through May, the Soviets murder approximately 21,500 captured Polish Army and police officers, members of the Polish intelligentsia and social elite. Their bodies are buried in **Katyn** forest, near the Russian city of Smolensk, and in various other locations in the western Soviet Union. Roughly 8-10% of the victims were Jews, among them Chief Rabbi of the Polish Army Baruch Steinberg.

Witold Pilecki, a Polish cavalry captain and veteran of the Polish-Bolshevik war, now a member of the Polish underground, volunteers to be sent to Auschwitz (by allowing himself to be caught by German police in a roundup) in order to gather information about the camp from the inside and to start resistance there. Pilecki also delivers the first report on the mass murder of Jews in Auschwitz. After two and a half years in Auschwitz, he successfully escapes. Then, he fights in the Polish underground army. After the war in 1948, targeted as dangerous



Auschwitz concentration camp photo of Witold Pilecki.



Emanuel Ringelblum

to the new Communist regime, he is arrested, tortured, and sentenced to death in a show trial and subsequently executed.

Oneg Shabbat ("The Joy of the Sabbath" in Hebrew), a clandestine network founded in the Warsaw Ghetto, is established by **Emanuel Ringelblum** to document Jewish suffering during the German occupation. The members, including historians, writers, artists and
1941 teachers, are charged with researching each aspect of life and death in the ghetto. What they collect will form the Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, now known as the Ringelblum Archive.

In secret radio messages, the Polish Prime Minister-in-Exile, General Władysław Sikorski, warns the Polish population against participating in German atrocities against Jews.

Nazi Germany invades Soviet Russia on June 22.
1941 Germany occupies former eastern Poland in the wake of its invasion codenamed "Operation Barbarossa." The Nazi *Einsatzgruppen* ("Special Operations Groups" in German) – the killing squads of the SS, in cooperation with local Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian auxiliary forces, murder approximately one million Jews in Eastern Poland,



Gravestones of Jewish soldiers at the Monte Cassino Polish war cemetery.



Menachem Begin wearing Polish Army uniform, Tel Aviv, December 1942.

1941 Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Western Russia as the German offensive moves towards Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow.

In the first days after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, following accusations of the Jews supporting the Soviets during the past two years of occupation, local Poles murder their Jewish neighbors in the small town of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland. It is the largest such massacre, among similar other cases, to take place in occupied Poland.
The Polish Army-in-Exile is set up in Russia under the command of General Władysław Anders. The almost eighty thousand men strong Anders' Army will eventually be evacuated in 1942 through the Middle East to fight at the Italian front (among other battlefields at **Monte Cassino** in May 1944). Anders' Army, with approximately 4,000 Jewish soldiers, also evacuates thousands of civilians from Soviet Russia, including many Polish Jews. General Anders, despite the death
1941 penalty for desertion, tacitly allows 3,000 Jewish soldiers to stay in Palestine and join the ranks of the *Haganah* ("The Defense" in Hebrew, a Jewish military organization that later will become the Israeli army). Among them is Mieczysław Biegun, later known as **Menachem Begin**. A 1935 graduate of Warsaw ›

University's law faculty, born in Brest (Polish: *Brześć*, Yiddish: *Brisk*) in Eastern Poland (now in Western Belarus), in 1977 Begin will become Israeli prime minister and will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978.

1941

The death penalty is introduced by German authorities for Jews leaving ghettos without authorization. Thousands of Jews are executed as a result. Unlike in other German-occupied countries, the death penalty is also introduced by German author-



Abba Kovner (standing, center) among FPO fighters, 1943.

1942 ities for Poles providing any help for the Jews. Hundreds of Poles who helped Jews escape or hide are summarily murdered along with their families and neighbors.

The first German death camp is set up in December in Kulmhof (Polish: *Chełmno nad Nerem*), prior

1942 to the infamous Wannsee Conference of January 1942, where the Final Solution policy will be confirmed. The Jews of Koło are the first victims. All of the German death camps (Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibór, Bełżec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Chełmno) are located in occupied Poland.

1942 The **United Partisan Organization** (FPO – from Yiddish *Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye*) is set up in the Wilno Ghetto by Abba Kovner and Yitzhak Wittenberg. Similar armed-resistance organizations are set up in Warsaw, Kraków, Białystok, and elsewhere.

The first transport of Jews following the Wannsee Conference reaches Auschwitz, originally set up in



Tosia Altman

1942 1940 as a concentration camp for the Polish intelligentsia, clergy, and members of the resistance. Auschwitz-Birkenau will claim about 1.1 million victims from Nazi-occupied Europe, 90% of them Jews.

The British BBC airs a program about the ongoing extermination of Polish Jews by the Germans. Emanuel Ringelblum writes on that day in his diary: "The *Oneg Shabbat* group fulfilled in this way its great historical mission: it alerted the world to our fate and maybe saved hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews from extermination (…). We struck the enemy with a strong blow. We have exposed his diabolical plan to murder all Polish Jews secretly."
The so-called *kashariyot* become a crucial element in the activities of Jewish underground in the German-occupied Eastern Europe. The term refers to a group of Jewish female couriers who, under false identities, establish and maintain connections

between isolated ghettos, as well with the non-Jewish resistance. The group's name comes from the



Janusz Korczak and Stefania Wilczyńska

1942 Hebrew word for "connection"—*kesher*—as these brave women, smuggling weapons and money, fake documents and medicine, constitute a network between the ghettos, a lifeline that provides rare news and information from the outside world. The leader of the group is **Tosia Altman**, a member of Hashomer Hatzair before the war, serving now as a liaison between the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for the Polish: Żydowska Organizacja



Gela Seksztajn

1942 Bojowa) and the Polish Home Army (AK, for the Polish: Armia Krajowa). She will perish during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising on May 26, 1943, at the age of twenty-three. Her friend Chajka (Haika) Grossman, another *kasharit*, will survive the war and become an Israeli politician and member of the Knesset.

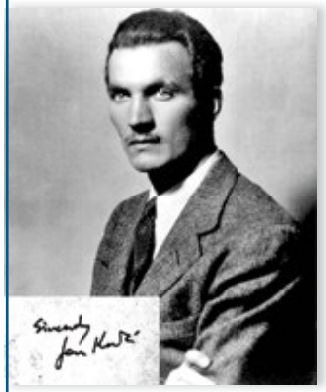
Mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, codenamed in German *Großaktion Warschau* ("Great Action Warsaw" in German), begins on July 22, 1942. Judenrat chairman Adam Czerniaków commits suicide, unwilling to enact the German orders. Treblinka ultimately claims 850,000 Jewish victims over the 14 months of its existence. Among those deported and gassed are **Janusz Korczak** and **Stefania Wilczyńska**, who



Irena Sendler

1942 refused to abandon the children of their orphanage.

On the thirteenth day of the great deportation, Izrael Lichtensztajn, a member of the *Oneg Shabbat* and close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum, together with his two students, Dawid Graber and Nachum Grzywacz, hide the first cache of the Ghetto archive in the basement of the Ber Borochov school in the Warsaw Ghetto. Izrael's wife, **Gela Seksztajn**, also working with *Oneg Shabbat,* was a Polish Jewish artist and painter, whose works were included in the secret archive. The second cache of the archive is hidden in January 1943 and the alleged third ›



Jan Karski

1942 cache on the eve of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Out of approximately 60 *Oneg Shabbat* collaborators, only three survive the war, Rachela Auerbach, and Bluma and Hersz Wasser, with the latter being the last person alive to know the location of the hidden documentation.

Żegota, the Polish Underground Council to Aid Jews, s set up by the Polish Government-in-Ex-ile on September 27. It is the only underground state-run organization in German-occupied Europe created solely to help Polish Jews. Its initiator, Catholic writer Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, publishes an appeal in the underground Catholic press condemning Allied and Pol-

1942 sh inactivity in the face of the Holocaust two weeks after the beginning of the great deportation. At least several thousand Jews were saved by *Żegota*, among them almost 2,500 children rescued by *Żegota's* chil-

1942 dren's section, including over 200 saved by **Irena Sendler** (leading the section from October 1943) and her colleagues.

After secret visits to the Warsaw Ghetto and the transfer ghetto in Izbica Lubelska, the Polish Government-in-Exile courier and emissary **Jan Karski** (born Jan Kozielewski), successfully arrives in London in November. He delivers the first eyewitness account of the mass murder of Jews to the Polish, British, and American governments, including to the Prime Minister of Great Britain Winston Churchill and the President of the United States of America Franklin D. Roosevelt. However, they do not undertake any action in response. Karski, together with another emissary Jerzy Lerski, will later be recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.



1943 The Polish National Council (PNC) in London launches an appeal to the Allies to prevent what it calls "the German attempt to murder all the Jews in Europe."

1943 On November 19, the writer **Bruno Schulz** is shot by a German Gestapo officer in the Drohobycz ghetto. The eastern Galician city of Drohobycz (today Drohobych in Ukraine) had become a booming center of the oil industry in the late 19th century, growing rapidly and attracting many Jewish entrepreneurs. Into one such merchant family of assimilated Polish Jews, Bruno was born in 1892. During the interbellum period he published two collections of short fiction, while also establishing himself as a painter and illustrator and art critic. Blending comedy and tragedy, the quaint and the grotesque, his works depict his personal obsessions and sketch out the uneasy mood of the interbellum period. A unique-

ly gifted fabulist, Schulz is now seen as one of the greatest authors of Polish prose of the 20th century. On December 10, Poland addresses an official Note to the Governments of the United Nations entitled „The Mass Extermination of Jews in German-Occupied Poland" calling on them to speed up military action and intensify international help to the remaining Jews.

1943 The next wave of deportations to Treblinka is halted for three months when, in January 1943, shots are fired on German wardens from among the deportees walked to the Umschlagplatz. It is the first act of armed struggle instigated by the Jewish under-



Prewar photo of Mordechaj Anielewicz (standing, right) with Hashomer Hatzair members, Warsaw

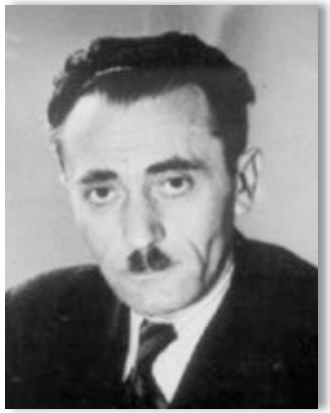
1943 ground in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Resistance in the ghettos took on different forms: cultural, intellectual, physical and spiritual. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Szapira, Piaseczner tsaddik (Hassidic spiritual leader), during the war was known as the "Preacher of the Warsaw Ghetto," who recorded his weekly sermons, addressing the difficult questions of faith and religious observance in the face of increased suffering in the ghetto. In January 1943, prior to being trans-

1943 ported to the sub-camp of Majdanek in Trawniki, where he will be killed ten months later, Rabbi Szapira gave his writings to *Oneg Shabbat*, together with a letter to his brother and Hasidim in Palestine. His work was later published in Israel in 1960 under the title "Esh Kodesh" ("The Holy Fire" in Hebrew).

1943 As the tide of the war shifts, a new Communist-dominated Polish Army is set up in the Soviet Union under the command of General Zygmunt Berling. It is largely commanded by Soviet officers and includes many Polish Jews in its ranks.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, beginning on the eve of



Szmul Zygielbojm

1943 Passover, April 19, is the largest act of Jewish armed resistance in German-occupied Europe to date, triggering smaller uprisings in the ghettos in Białystok, Częstochowa, and Będzin. Different organizations and factions operating in the Warsaw Ghetto, among

1943 them the Jewish Fighting Organization (ŻOB, for Polish: *Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*) led by **Mordechaj Anielewicz** and the Jewish Military Union (ŻZW, for Polish: *Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*) led by Paweł Frenkel. Combat rages on for several weeks and ›

1943 sporadic fighting continues into June.
Anielewicz and most of the leaders of the Jewish Fighting Organization die in their besieged bunker at 18 Miła Street on May 8, 1943. A group of fighters, led by Marek Edelman and Szymon Rathajzer (Simcha Rotem), manage to escape the bunker and, with the help of the Polish underground, flee to the other side of the ghetto wall through the sewers. They join the Polish underground and continue to fight the Germans in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising.

Soviet partisans, allegedly among them also Jews from



Samuel Willenberg

1943 the Bielski brothers' squad, kill 129 Poles during a raid on Naliboki in Belarus. The villagers were falsely accused of collaborating with the Germans. On January 29, 1944, another massacre perpetrated by the Soviet partisans will be committed in the village of Koniuchy.
On May 11, **Szmul Zygielbojm**, the Bund representative to the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile in London, commits suicide in an act of protest to the world's indifference to the mass murder of Jews in Poland.

1943 To mark the end of the Ghetto uprising and to proclaim that Europe's largest Jewish community had been exterminated and Warsaw made *Judenrein* ("cleansed of Jews" in German), on May 16, the Germans blow up the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street.

1943 On July 11, the "Volhynian Bloody Sunday" marks the peak of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Ukrainian UPA partisans in the region with the help of Ukrainian locals. A series of bloody massacres, from February 1943 through the end of 1944, are now commonly known as the "Volhynian Slaughter." In its course, approximately 100,000 Poles, among them many hiding Polish Jews, are killed by Ukrainian nationalists in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia (both nowadays in Western Ukraine). In reprisal, Polish partisans kill sev-



Rachela Auerbach

1944 eral thousand Ukrainians. The genocide will continue to this day to sour Polish-Ukrainian relations and provoke ongoing fervent debate about the events.

Prisoners in the Treblinka death camp stage an uprising on August 2, attacking the Germans and auxiliary Ukrainian guards. Among the over 300 who manage to escape is **Samuel Willenberg**. He will later join Polish underground and will fight in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. After the war and emigration to Israel, he will become a famous sculptor

and painter. He will be also active in reviving Polish-Israeli relations after the fall of Communism, considered as a war hero by both nations. The last survivor of Treblinka, he passes away in 2016.

Prisoners of Sobibór death camp stage an uprising on October 14. In the outcome, twelve SS staff members are killed and, of the over 500 Jewish prisoners, three hundred manage to escape.

1944

After uprisings in Treblinka and Sobibór, the Germans decide to close all killing centers, apart from Auschwitz-Birkenau, and to liquidate the remaining Jewish population in other camps. In the process of the so-called *Aktion Erntefest* ("Operation Harvest Festival" in German), that takes place on November 3-4, approximately 43,000 Jewish inmates of Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki camps are shot. Afterwards, the district of Lublin is declared *Judenfrei* ("free of Jews" in German) by the Nazis.

1944

In the aftermath of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, Rachela Auerbach writes an essay titled "Yizkor" (*Yizkor* is the Hebrew word opening the memorial prayer for the dead recited on the most solemn Jewish holiday, *Yom Kippur*, The Day of Atonement), describing the destruction of Polish Jewry. **Rachela Auerbach**, born in 1903 in Podolia, a prewar journalist and poet writing both in Polish and Yiddish, during the war finds herself imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto. She runs a soup kitchen on Leszno street, and is a close co-worker of Emanuel Ringelblum. One of the only three members of the Oneg Shabbat group to survive the war, Aurebach becomes a custodian of the memory of the destroyed Jewish community and works at the Jewish Historical Institute on retrieval of the Ringelblum archives and documentation of German Nazi crimes. In 1950 she immigrates to Israel, where she works at Yad Vashem, before passing away in 1975.

1944

In the course of the spring offensive, the Soviets take control of eastern Poland, including the city of Lublin and the concentration camp of Majdanek, the first concentration camp to be liberated. The evidence and the extent of German atrocities there



Marek Edelman



Zivia Lubetkin

1944

is discovered.

An unelected, Communist-dominated government – The Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN, Polish: *Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego*) is set up on July 22 by the Soviets



Liberated prisoners of Gęsiówka, August 1944.

1944

in Lublin reconquered by the Red Army and Polish Army under General Berling. It has a separate bureau for Jewish affairs in its structure. The PKWN's policy of equal rights for Jews attracts many of them and some receive high positions in the new regime. The conflicting opinions about the Soviet-installed government oppose many Jews to the non-Jewish majority rejecting the enforced Sovietization of Poland. The situation strengthens Polish popular antisemitism and the stereotype *of Żydokomuna* (literally: "Judeo-Communism" in Polish; an antisemitic presumption, dating back to Polish-Bolshevik war, which states that most Jews universally support the Soviets and thus are against Polish independence), already widespread in the interwar period.

1944

Hundreds of Jews, who had previously been hiding in Warsaw during the German occupation, among them the veterans of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, including **Marek Edelman**, Antek Zuckerman and **Zivia Lubetkin**, and other Polish fighters and civilians, participate in the Warsaw Uprising that begins on August 1, triggered by



Resettlement of Jews into the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, March 1940.



Róża Robota

1944

German panic retreat in the last days of July. It is intended to chase out German forces from the city as the Red Army approaches from the east and to install sovereign Polish authorities in the liberated capital to counter the Lublin government (PKWN). Despite general Jewish support for the uprising, some 50 Jews are murdered by members of various right-wing Polish units.

1944 On the fifth day of the uprising, soldiers of Polish Armia Krajowa (the "Home Army" in Polish) elite unit "Zośka" liberate 348 Jewish prisoners held in the German concentration camp "KL Warschau" on Gęsia street, the so-called ***Gęsiówka***, established on the ruins of the former ghetto. Most of the liberated prisoners join the fight.

1944 The German forces regroup and begin to brutally quell the uprising, murdering tens of thousands of civilian Varsovians while advancing into the heart of the city. With Western allies providing no significant support and with Stalin's decision to halt the Soviet offensive on the east bank of the Vistula and wait for the uprising to be crushed by the Germans, the ill-fated 63-day-long battle is eventually lost and the insurgents surrender on October 3. The battle leaves the capital in ruins, with approximately 150,000 civilians and 16,000 Polish military killed, leaving no significant Polish forces to oppose the future Sovietization of the country. After the fall of the uprising, the Germans expel the remaining population (many are taken to concentration camps), and subsequently raze what has left of the city to the ground. The Vistula River that divides Warsaw from its east-bank district of Praga becomes a frontline for the next four months.

1944 The last 60,000 Jews from the **ghetto in Litzmannstadt** (Łódź, renamed by the Germans and annexed into the *Reich*), the longest existing ghetto in occupied Europe, are deported to Auschwitz by August 29, as the eastern front nears.

1944 On October 7, a Jewish underground organization in Auschwitz-Birkenau stages an unsuccessful uprising upon learning that the *Sonderkommando* workers (prisoners forced to work in the crematoria) were selected for imminent killing. The



Władysław Szpilman

1945 underground managed to secure some arms, explosives, and gunpowder brought in secretly by female inmates, including **Róża Robota**, from the Monowitz chemical factory (part of the camp's industrial complex known as *Auschwitz III - Monowitz*). In the revolt, three SS guards are killed and a dozen are wounded but almost all of the *Sonderkomanndo* workers are murdered, with Róża and three other women being hanged by the SS in January 1945.

As Soviet forces drive German forces out of eastern Poland, in August the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (Polish: *Centralny Komitet Żydów Pols-* ›



The gate of Auschwitz I concentration camp.

1945 *kich*, CKŻP) is organized in Lublin. Nearly 300,000 Jews will eventually register with the CKŻP, which organizes aid programs, providing food, housing, education, medical assistance, employment and



Righteous Among the Nations medals and diplomas handed over during a ceremony in the Polish Senate on 17th April 2012.

1945 vocational services, as well as cultural activities and providing help in finding and tracing survivors. A "Committee to Help the Poles," which will eventually provide material assistance to dozens among those Poles who saved Jews during the war, is also set up.

The Bund becomes the first of eleven Jewish political parties to re-establish itself in the part of Poland already taken from the Germans. Three of them, including Agudat Israel, do so illegally. All active Jewish organizations support the Communist government, which they see as the sole bulwark of their security in the face of growing antisemitism. The majority of the population is vehemently opposed to the government, as it is illegitimately introduced by the Soviets against popular will. Jewish Communists become prominent in the new State apparatus, including the dreaded secret police. As suspected opponents of the new regime are jailed and deported, clashes bordering on civil war break out.

The Central Jewish Historical Commission (Polish: *Centralna Żydowska Komisja Historyczna*, CŻKH), the first institution in Poland to collect Holocaust documentation, survivor testimonies and evidence of war crimes, is established in Lublin.

The Red Army, having camped on the right bank of the Vistula River since September of 1944, takes the core of Warsaw in the course of the 1945 Winter Offensive. Close to 85% of the city lies in ruins. Out of the prewar population of over one million, only a few hundred men and women are living in hiding amid the ruins of the city's left bank since the end of the 1944 uprising. Among them are many Jews, including famous pianist **Władysław Szpilman**. On the day of liberation, January 17, those so-called "Warsaw Robinsons" re-emerge from their hide-outs scattered around the sea of rubble, to greet the Soviet and Polish Berling Army forces entering Warsaw.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is liberated by the Soviet Army on January 27. In 2005, the UN will declare the date as the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.
On May 8, the war in Europe ends after 2,190 days.

Almost six million Polish citizens perished in World War II. Of these, three million were Polish Jews murdered by the Germans in death and concentration camps, ghettos, and execution sites. This constituted 90% of pre-war Poland's Jewish population. While some Jews trying to survive under the German occupation received help from the Poles, there were also some Poles, the so-called *szmalcownicy*, who blackmailed

VI. POST-WAR COMMUNIST POLAND 1945-1968

The war ended in stages as the Soviet army advanced from the east in 1944, with Auschwitz and Warsaw only liberated in January 1945. Withal, initiatives to rebuild the country begin immediately. The map of Poland, along with much of Central and Eastern Europe, is once again redrawn, this time based on the tripartite Roosevelt -Stalin-Churchill 1943 Teheran and 1945 Yalta conferences' agreements. Poland is to be shifted westwards, the Soviet Union, which will dominate the region until 1989, annexes the eastern half of prewar Poland, incorporating the cities of Lwów and Wilno, and the majority of the Belarussian and Ukrainian minorities. According to the stipulations of the Potsdam Peace Conference, Poland receives territorial "compensation" from the defeated Germany in the north and west with the cities of Breslau (Polish: *Wrocław*), Stettin (Polish: *Szczecin*), and now fully incorporated Free City of Danzig (Polish: *Gdańsk*).

After the genocide of Polish Jews, the expulsion of Germans and of the remaining Ukrainians, Poland's population becomes almost homogeneous.

A Communist-led government is imposed on the country against popular will. More than one and a half million Poles from the former eastern Poland, now part of the Soviet Union, are resettled within Poland's new borders. Many of those rendered homeless by the war, particularly residents of Warsaw, must find new homes as well. The remnants of the Jewish community, made up primarily of those who survived the war in the Soviet Union, begin to rebuild Jewish communal life. Some choose to affiliate with Jewish communities around the country, others opt to assimilate, while the majority choose to emigrate. Thousands of others, along with those who had been hidden as children during the war with no inkling of their Jewish roots, make their lives in post-war Poland.


Postwar Poland (1945-49)
SWEDEN
Baltic Sea
Lithuanian SSR
Belarussian SSR
Ukrainian SSR
SOVIET UNION
EAST GERMANY
BERLIN
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
PRAGUE
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
Dresden
Brno
Žilina
Košice
Debrecen
Békès
Cluj-Napoca
Bacău
Suceava
Baia Mare
Mukachevo
Stanislaviv
Stanisławów
Ternopil
Tarnopol
Lviv
Lwow
Rivne
Równe
Lutsk
Łuck
Kovel
Kowel
Brest
Brześć
Pinsk
Minsk
Vilnius
Wilno
Kaunas
Klaipėda
Šiauliai
Brasław
Kaliningrad
Koenigsberg
Suwałki
Hrodna
Grodno
Navahrudak
Nowogódek
Olsztyn
Allenstein
Elbląg
Elbing
Gdańsk
Danzig
Słupsk
Stolp
Koszalin
Köslin
Szczecin
Stettin
Piła
Schneidemühl
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Grudziądz
Łomża
Białystok
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Poznań
Konin
WARSAW
Siedlce
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Grünberg
Leszno
Kalisz
Łódź
Głogów
Glogau
Sieradz
Radom
Lublin
Chełm
Legnica
Liegnitz
Wrocław
Breslau
Kielce
Częstochowa
Zamość
Walbrzych
Waldenburg
Dzierżoniów
Reichenbach
Opole
Oppeln
Tarnobrzeg
Gliwice
Gleiwitz
Katowice
Kraków
Tarnów
Rzeszów
Przemyśl
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Nowy Sącz
3.5 million
0.2 million
0.5 million
1.8 million
Borders of Poland in 1939
Curzon Line
Curzon Line "B"
Territory of Poland in 1946
Recovered Territories (acquired from Germany)
Territories lost to USRR
Lower Silesian cluster of Jewish Settlement
1:6,000,000
0 100 miles
0 100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira
Cities with a larger Jewish population in 1946
20,000 – 30,000
15,000 – 20,000
10,000 – 15,000
5,000 – 10,000
Resettlement of:
Germans
Poles
Ukrainians and Belarusians
Polish Jews
1945-47 Emigration of Jews from Poland to the West (150,000)

1945 The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities. Some 200,000 Polish Jews begin returning from the Soviet Union. Many are met with growing hostility. Most resettle in the former German territories in what is now western Poland including the cities of Wroclaw and Szczecin. The town of **Dzierżoniów** (formerly German *Reichenbach*) with several other nearby localities in Lower Silesia, will become, for a short time, a center of Jewish life in Poland.



Jewish settlers in Dzierżoniów, 1960s.

1945 The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is granted the right to function in Poland anew. It is largely the Joint that will finance the reconstruction of post-war Jewish life, but it will be forced to discontinue its work temporarily in 1949. JDC will later return and will continue to support Jewish communal life.

1945 The Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw, used as a stable and storehouse by the Germans, is reopened. It becomes a meeting point for Jewish survivors looking for relatives and friends. The only other synagogue to survive in Warsaw, although also damaged, is the **Round Synagogue** in the Praga district.



The Round Synagogue

1945 The first post-war pogrom takes place in Kraków on August 11, in the course of which at least one person is killed. Other pogroms will follow. In a climate of post-war lawlessness and growing internal political conflict, the total number of victims of anti-Jewish violence in Soviet-dominated Poland is estimated at between 500 and 2,000 in the period 1944-47.

1945 The Polish Communist government signs a border treaty ceding to the Soviet Union the area located to the east of the so-called Curzon Line, being almost all of the Polish territories previously occupied by the Soviets under the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement. As a result, approximately 1.8 million Poles eventually are resettled westward into Poland's new borders, mostly to the lands recently acquired from Germany. Officially, the formerly German area is proclaimed to be "Recovered Territories," as Communist propaganda tries to portray the border change as an act of historical justice, enacted through the return of Poland to its borders from the medieval times of the Piast dynasty, roughly six centuries earlier. Polish Jewish survivors from the eastern borderlands, who decide not to take Soviet citizenship, resettle into post-war Poland along with other Poles. At the same time, the remaining

1945 German population of the "Recovered Territories" is deported to areas within Germany's new borders.
The Jewish Religious Congregations are recognized by the new government, but denied the right to claim



Sholem Aleichem Jewish School in Wrocław.

1945 pre-war communal property, as they are not considered successors of the pre-war Jewish communities.

Jewish schools are established in the larger cities in which Jews settled or were resettled after the war. By 1950, the Jewish school in Warsaw is closed and the remaining schools are nationalized. The curriculum is divested of Hebrew and Jewish history and, while Yiddish often remains part of the program, Polish studies are increased as Stalinist policies take hold. The I.L. Peretz School in Łódź and the **Sholem**
1945 **Aleichem School** in Wrocław will eventually be closed by the end of the 1960s, following the forced emigration of Jews in 1968.

The Communist government issues a decree about the nationalization of industry in Poland. The new authorities' general policy was gradually to nationalize all private and communal property. The return of pre-war Jewish communal property, in spite

1946 of a 1997 ruling, remains an issue which is being addressed by the Jewish communities in Poland and the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODŻ), as well the World Jewish Restitution Organization.
The first edition of "Folks Sztyme – Głos Ludu" ("People's Voice" respectively in Yiddish/Polish), an official Yiddish-language periodical sanctioned by the
1946 authorities and following the propaganda line of the Communist party, is published for the first time on April 19, 1946 in Łódź as a monthly journal. In 1949, it will be moved to Warsaw and will be issued weekly up until 1991.

One of the world's first Holocaust memorials, designed



The funeral of Kielce Pogrom victims.

1946 in the shape of a manhole cover with a sculpture of a sprouting plant and the letter "bet" signifying *bereshit* ("in the beginning" in Hebrew, the first word of the Torah), is dedicated in Warsaw by members of the Polish Jewish community on the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Ghetto Uprising.

The **Kielce Pogrom** on July 4, provoked by a blood-libel rumor, claims at least 40 victims, including three non-Jewish Poles who tried to ›

stop the killing. It is the largest post-war pogrom in Poland. Attempts to provoke similar pogroms also occur in other cities. The pogroms are condemned by the liberal intelligentsia, but the Catholic Church largely keeps silent or expresses only general condemnations of "all violence." The primate of Poland, speaking to American journalists,

1946 says that the pogrom, though deplorable, is a result of Jews having too much power in the Communist government. Nonetheless, in subsequent show trials, several members of the mob are sentenced to death. The pogrom was widely suspected by Poles of being a provocation of the Communist regime to divert attention from the Communist power grab, but this has not been proven.



Ringelblum Archives discovery in 1946.

1946 Following the Kielce Pogrom, the Communist government unofficially allows mass Jewish emigration and permits the creation of armed Jewish self-defense units. The emigration of Jews from Poland accelerates. In the following months, tens of thousands of Polish Jews leave Poland heading to the West, first to DP

1947 (Displaced Persons) camps in Allied-occupied West Germany, then further on to America or Palestine.

The first cache of the buried **Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in the summer of 1942, is recovered from the ruins on Nowolipki Street in Warsaw on September 18. The collection includes diaries, documents, leaflets, newspapers, posters and paintings collected by the members of *Oneg Shabbat*.

1947 In the early months of 1947, the policy of the government changes and the borders are sealed. In the course of the so-called *Brichah* ("The Flight" in Hebrew; also a name of the clandestine Jewish organization supporting the mass emigration of Jews from post-Holocaust Europe to Palestine), out of some 250,000 Polish Jews who survived the Holocaust, over 150,000 leave the country in the period

1947 between 1944 and 1947. The remaining Polish Jewish population is estimated at about 100,000.

Inspired by former prisoners, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is established at the site of the



The Jewish Historical Institute in the 1960s.

1947 camps by an act of the Polish Parliament. It is to commemorate "the martyrdom of the Polish and other nations." Jewish suffering is consistently underplayed throughout the Eastern Bloc. This will be corrected only after the fall of Communism in 1989.

A *Haganah* training camp, set up in the Lower Silesian town of Bolków under Polish Army auspices, provides military training for several thousand

1947 Zionist volunteers who then move to Palestine to fight for Israel's independence.

The **Jewish Historical Institute** (JHI; Polish: *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH*), successor to the Central



The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes in the 1950s.

1948 Jewish Historical Commission, is established in Warsaw and housed in the former Main Judaic Library of the Great Synagogue. The Institute, which holds the Ringelblum Archives, is the largest repository of Polish Jewish material heritage in the world, with collections of wartime testimonies and survivor records, a vast collection of artwork and Judaica,

1948 pre-war press, books, and documentation.

Poland actively supports the UN resolution on the partition of Mandate Palestine into Jewish and Arab territories.



Vladka Meed

1949 Amidst the sea of rubble that was once the Warsaw Ghetto, the **Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes**, designed by Polish Jewish sculptor Natan Rapoport, is unveiled on the fifth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. A replica will be put up at Jerusalem's Yad Vashem Memorial in 1976.

The State of Israel is proclaimed on May 14. Poland recognizes the new Jewish state on May 19. The first Israeli diplomatic mission opens in Poland, initially housed in Warsaw's Hotel Bristol.

A survivor of the Warsaw ghetto, **Vladka Meed** (1921-2012, born Feigele Peltel), publishes in Yiddish a recollection of her war experiences titled "Fun Beyde Zaytn Geto-Moyer" (English title: "On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto"). Vladka (after her Polish wartime pseudonym *Władka*), one of the *kashariyot*, during the German occupation served as a liaison between ŻOB and the Polish Home Army, and as a smuggler of weapons and explosives into the ghetto prior and during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 1946 migrates with her husband to the United States where she will become one of the founders of the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) and the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Her book becomes one of the most important first-hand accounts and resources on the history of Jewish resistance in Warsaw, and was subsequently translated into English in 1972, Polish, German, and Japanese.

As Stalinism grows more severe, the Bund and other Jewish parties are disbanded. Bundists and members of other leftist parties are strongly encouraged to join the recently created, unified Communist party (Polish: *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza,* PZPR, "Polish United Workers' Party"). Emigration to Israel is restricted. Independent Jewish organizations and institutions are closed down. ›



Review of the second cache of Ringelblum Archives, 1950.

1950

Polish Radio starts regular programs in Yiddish that will be continued up to 1958.

The government sets up the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association (Polish: *Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów*, TSKŻ) to replace Jewish organizations which have been officially dissolved. The Union of Religious Congregations is the only other recognized Jewish organization. TSKŻ and the Union support Jewish communal life throughout the Communist period, but only a few Jewish cultural, social and educational activities are permitted to continue.

A **second cache of the Ringelblum Archives**, hidden in February 1943, is recovered on December 1. The archives, which have been listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register since 1999, are housed in the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw.

The *Jidysz Buch* ("Yiddish Book" in Yiddish) publishing house starts printing mass editions of Yiddish classics. The publishing house will be active until 1968.

1955

A new Communist constitution is adopted on July 22, the eighth anniversary of the establishment of the first Communist government. Poland is renamed the Polish People's Republic (Polish: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL). The new constitution marks the high point of Stalinism in Poland.

Józef Światło (born Izaak Fleischfarb), a high-ranking official of the Ministry of Public Security supervising the torture of prisoners, escapes to the West. In a series of interviews broadcast in December to



"The Dybbuk" by S. An-ski at the State Jewish Theater in Warsaw, season 1956/1957.



Władysław Gomułka addresses hundreds of thousands of people during a demonstration in Warsaw on October 24, 1956.

Poland by Radio Wolna Europa (Polish: Radio Free Europe) and the Voice of America, he describes in detail the use of torture and other crimes committed by the Communists. These revelations shake the Polish Communist party, already disturbed by

the death of Stalin in March.

The **State Jewish Theater** is formed through the merger of the Jewish Theater of Lower Silesia established in Wrocław in 1946 with the Jewish Theater in Łódź opened in 1949. The theater is directed by Ida Kamińska (Ester Rachel Kamińska's daughter) and settles permanently in Warsaw. Yiddish-language plays are still performed today, as interest in Polish Jewish and Yiddish culture continues to grow.

1957

De-Stalinization in Poland is in progress. Władysław Gomułka becomes the new leader of Communist Poland during the so-called "Thaw" period **mass protests taking place in October**. The loosening of the regime brings both increased popular antisemitism and new repatriations of Jews from the Soviet Union. Almost 20,000 Jews arrive from the Soviet Union, however most of them, around 13,000, will soon migrate farther to the West. The JDC is once more permitted to operate. An aliyah known in Israel as "Gomułka's Aliyah" starts with another wave of Jews numbering up to 50,000 emigrants leaving Poland in the years 1956-60. By 1960, approximately 45,000 Jews still live in Poland. There are seven active Jewish State Schools, in: Łódź, Wrocław, Dzierżoniów, Wałbrzych, Legnica, Szczecin, and Katowice.



Front cover of the 1957 edition of Piechotkas' book Bóżnice Drewniane (Wooden Synagogues).

A Polish-language addition to "Folks Sztyme" entitled "Nasz Głos" ("Our Voice" in Polish), directed to Polish-Jewish youth, is published for the first time with 24-year-old Szmul Tenenblatt as its chief editor.



Wojciech Jerzy Has.

First edition of ***Bóżnice drewniane*** ("Wooden Synagogues" in Polish) is published. Co-created by Maria and Kazimierz Piechotka, the book is a pioneering work on the architecture of Baroque wooden synagogues that were characteristic of territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

After a three-year-long renovation, a branch of the Kraków City Museum opens in the Old Synagogue in Kraków's district of Kazimierz.

The Round Synagogue, located on Warsaw's right-bank district of Praga, the only other synagogue in Warsaw to survive the War apart from the Nożyk synagogue, is demolished after being partially ruined since the war, due to the combination of ›

1968

ll will of the authorities and a lack of Jewish communal funds for renovation.

The premiere of "Samson," a film by future Academy Award winner Andrzej Wajda, telling the story of the Holocaust experience. Wajda is a representative of an informal group of Polish film directors and screenwriters whose activity between 1955 and approximately 1963 is described as the "Polish Film School." Among the most important topics treated in their works is World War II and the Holocaust. Artists of Jewish origin such as Roman Polański, Janusz Morgenstern, and **Wojciech Jerzy Has** were prominent members of the group. Polish directors will continue to raise important issues about Polish Jewish history through film works in the decades to come.



Workers' meeting organized by the Communist party, with banners saying in Polish "Zionists to Israel," during the 1968 antisemitic campaign.

Opening of the Jewish Socio-Cultural Association's Youth Club Babel in Warsaw.

The Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council issues a breakthrough declaration "Nostra Aetate" on relations with Judaism, opening opportunities for dialogue between the two religions.

In the wake of the Six-Day War, following the Soviet lead, Poland breaks off diplomatic relations with Israel. Most Poles, including non-Jews, cheer Israel's victory in the war, going against the official line of the Communist party that supports the Arab countries in the conflict.

With Gomułka still at the helm during the late 1960s, control of the government is gradually taken by Communist hardliners flirting with Polish nationalism. During this year of worldwide youth unrest, student strikes and demonstrations in support of democratic socialism erupt in many Polish universities in early March. They are suppressed by the regime with police force.

Many of the so-called **March'68** activists are identified as Jews, triggering the Communist regime's so-called anti-Zionist campaign in Poland. About 15,000 Polish Jews are pressured into emigration, their Polish citizenship revoked. Jewish schools around the country are closed. Remaining Jewish organizations are largely prevented from functioning. The Jewish Historical Institute, TSKŻ, and the State Yiddish Theatre in Warsaw are the only secular Jewish institutions that will continue to function, apart from the religious congregations. «

VII. JEWISH LIFE IN THE POLISH PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (PRL) 1968-1989

The expulsion of Polish Jews in 1968 is one of the most passionately debated issues in contemporary Polish Jewish history. While some Jews who remain in Poland go further underground, others begin to clandestinely explore their Jewish roots. During this period, several Jews create "the Flying Jewish University," following a Polish tradition of underground study during political repression. It is from this group that the founders of the revival of Jewish communal life after the fall of



Kniefall von Warschau, Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 1970.

Willy Brandt, Chancellor of West Germany, during a state visit in Warsaw on December 7, kneels in front of the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in a famous and symbolic gesture of penitence.

Mass protests in the port cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia, Elbląg, and Szczecin against the rise of state-controlled prices of food, when they begin to evolve into a revolt against the regime, are suppressed by the army. Brutal suppression leaves 42 civilian protesters dead. Eventually, Gomułka is forced to resign. A new Communist government is formed by Edward Gierek. Under his rule, Poland anxiously opens to the West, as the regime is relatively moderate in comparison with those in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc.

150 artists, writers and Jewish activists meet in Śródborów, a TSKŻ retreat outside of Warsaw, to celebrate the 25 anniversary of *„Folks-Sztyme."*

Zew Wawa Morejno of Łódź, the last rabbi in Poland, is forced to emigrate.

1976 Poland, like most of the Eastern Bloc countries, votes in favor of the UN's "Zionism is Racism" resolution.

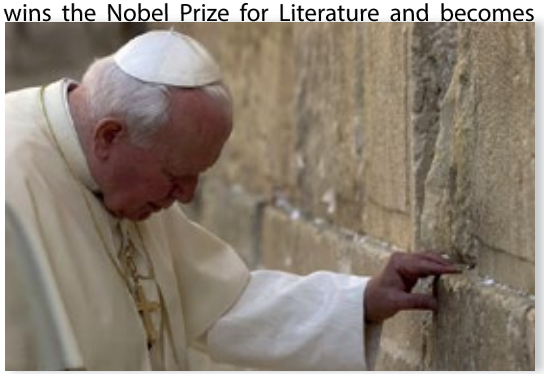
Hanna Krall, hidden child survivor and a well-known Polish author, publishes an exclusive interview with Marek Edelman "Zdążyć przed panem Bogiem" (English title: "Shielding the Flame"), which will be listed as required reading in Polish high schools.

Renovation of the Nożyk Synagogue begins, it having been closed since 1968. Religious services are held in the adjacent community building.



Isaac Bashevis Singer

Polish-born Yiddish writer **Isaac Bashevis Singer** wins the Nobel Prize for Literature and becomes widely published in Poland in Polish translation.



Pope John Paul II by the Western Wall during his visit to Jerusalem.

1978 Kraków Cardinal Karol Wojtyła is elected pope. As **John Paul II**, he will spearhead a breakthrough in

Catholic-Jewish relations by clearly and consistently calling antisemitism a sin and seeking out ties with Jews as Christians'"elder brothers in faith."

In the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a pavilion commemorating Jewish victims is opened.

Pope John Paul II makes his first official visit as Pope to Poland in June. The visit galvanizes the nation in opposition to the ruling Communist party, eventually leading to the creation of the Solidarity movement.

1979

The Polish socialist economy falls into structural crisis and public dissent against Communism grows. As a result, the democratic opposition formalizes by the mid-1970s. One of its aspects is the creation of the unofficial "Jewish Flying University," set up in 1979 in Warsaw by, among others, Konstanty Gebert and Stanisław Krajewski. In the future, they will become intellectual and communal leaders of the revival of Jewish life in Poland.



Lech Wałęsa and the famous „Solidarity" logo.

The Solidarity movement is established after a victorious strike, led by **Lech Wałęsa**, in the Gdańsk shipyard, with subsequent strikes erupting in support throughout the country. The story will later be told by the European Center of Solidarity in Gdańsk, which will be opened in 2014.

Solidarność ("Solidarity" in Polish), in a year's time becomes a 10,000,000-strong trade union, with one in three adult Poles being its member, campaigning for human rights and political self-determination. *Solidarność* condemns antisemitism, although some expressions of antisemitism reverberate within its ranks. Many assimilated Jews will be at the forefront of the movement. After 1989, Polish Jewish members of Solidarity and underground activists will lead the revival of Jewish communal institutions.


Jan Jagielski (center)

1981

The Citizens' Committee for Jewish Cultural Monuments is set up. It focuses largely on the preservation of cemeteries. It is the first organization dedicated to Jewish heritage preservation legalized since 1950. One of its co-founders is **Jan Jagielski**, who will become the head of the heritage documentation section of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. For his work, he receives a number of awards and honors, including the Irena Sendler Memorial Award in 2009.

The Polish Communist military stages a coup and declares **martial law** on December 13, to defend the Communist regime and, allegedly, to prevent Soviet military intervention in Poland. Some 5,000



Polish People's Army tanks on the streets during martial law.

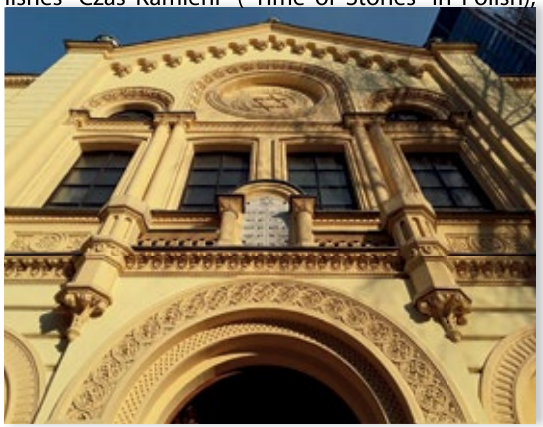
Solidarity activists are interned without trial and the trade union is eventually banned. Though about 100 people will be killed in the years following the coup, nonviolent responses to the military take-over will eventually lead to the fall of Communism eight years later.

1981

The Polish government authorizes the JDC's re-entry into Poland.

As Poland remains internationally isolated following the military coup of 1981, the Communist authorities invite Jews worldwide, including some from Israel, to participate in the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Former uprising deputy commander and Solidarity activist Marek Edelman calls on visitors to boycott the official ceremonies, yet his appeal goes unheeded. Unofficial ceremonies, organized by the Jewish Flying University, are disrupted by police. The anniversary is covered in both the official and underground press and spurs a publishing boom of books of Jewish interest, which will continue unabated.

Artist and photographer Monika Krajewska publishes "Czas Kamieni" ("Time of Stones" in Polish),



Nożyk Synagogue

a book about abandoned and forgotten Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and other Jewish material heritage in the country. It is the first publication to document and discuss the state of neglect and oblivion of Jewish heritage in Communist Poland and to educate readers about symbolism in these artifacts of material heritage.

The **Nożyk Synagogue** in Warsaw is reopened after six years of renovation. The city's only synagogue serves in the 1980s a small community of mostly elderly Jews, but it will become a center of Jewish life after the fall of Communism. An iconic symbol of Jewish continuity in the country's capital, it continues to serve the growing Warsaw community.

Sigmund Nissenbaum, a Holocaust survivor born in Warsaw, establishes the Nissenbaum Family Foundation, which will finance the restoration and pres-

ervation of many Jewish cemeteries and cultural monuments in Poland.

First informal contacts between the Polish and Israeli governments since 1967 are established.

1986 A Carmelite convent is set up near the site of the Auschwitz I concentration camp and is met with international protests.

The first conference on the history of Polish Jews is held at Somerville College in Oxford, England. Several Polish historians participate. The conference launches the Institute of Polish-Jewish Studies **1986** (IPJS) at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and leads to contacts between academics in Poland, the U.S., and Israel.

An abbreviated version of Claude Lanzmann's documentary "Shoah" is shown on Polish State TV.



Collegium Casimirianum, the seat of the Center of Polish Jewish Studies of the Jagiellonian University.

Debate in the official and underground press ensues. The full version is subsequently shown in cinemas.

The first volume of "Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry" is published in Oxford. By 2018, there will be 31 volumes.

Poland and Israel establish interest sections in the Dutch Embassy in Warsaw and in the Polish PKO Bank's Tel Aviv branch.

The **Center for Polish Jewish Studies** opens at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. By 2018, Jewish studies departments are opened at major universities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Łódź, and Lublin.

1987 The Polish Episcopate's Commission for Dialogue with Judaism is initiated.

The first major public discussion on wartime



Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

Polish-Jewish relations is triggered by the publication in Catholic opposition weekly "Tygodnik Powszechny" of an essay by Jan Błoński "Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto" ("The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" in Polish), stating that Poles, as witnesses to the Shoah, bear a moral responsibility which they have yet to acknowledge.

The Catholic Church and Jewish organizations sign an agreement stipulating that the Carmelite con- ›

vent at Auschwitz will be moved in 1989.

1988 In Kraków, Janusz Makuch and Krzysztof Gierat organize a series of events presenting Polish Jewish culture, which will eventually become the world-famous **Kraków Jewish Culture Festival**. From a modest local event, the festival has grown into one of the most important cultural events in Poland, drawing performers and presenters from around the world. Each year, the festival features more than 300 events during 10 days of programs and draws more than 25,000 participants from Poland and around the world.



The Umschlagplatz memorial

A direct air link between Warsaw and Tel Aviv is established.

The March of the Living is held for the first time in Auschwitz-Birkenau.



Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz

A worldwide invitation is extended by the Polish government to Jews to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The anti-Communist opposition, boycotting the large official ceremony as it was seen as propaganda, commemorates the anniversary with its own ceremony at The Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes. The authorities this time do not intervene.

1988 The Memorial Route to the Struggle and Martyrdom of the Jews is created between the Ghetto Uprising Memorial and a new monument erected on the site of the **Umschlagplatz**, from which Jews were transported to Treblinka in 1942-43.

1988 **Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz**, a Polish-born Israeli and Auschwitz survivor, becomes Poland's first Chief Rabbi after a two-decade-long hiatus.

A summer Jewish educational retreat which focuses on Jewish tradition and observance is organized outside of Warsaw by a small group of Polish Jews. It will lay the foundations for the creation of future Jewish educational initiatives.

The first post-war Jewish kindergarten, started by a small group of Jewish families, opens in a private apartment in Warsaw.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation begins operating in Poland. The RSLF and the JDC will finance the rebuilding of much of Poland's Jewish communal infrastructure in the 1990s. «

VIII. THE REBIRTH OF JEWISH LIFE IN POLAND 1989-present

In 1989, Poland becomes the first Soviet Bloc country to dismantle its Communist system. Following groundbreaking negotiations, semi-free elections are held in June and the first non-Communist government is formed under Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a former political internee. Jewish communities, suppressed for decades under Communism, begin to re-emerge and to re-establish Jewish communal institutions. The revival of Polish Jewish life, with its spiritual leaders, Polish-born Rabbi Chaskel Besser and American-born Rabbi Michael Schudrich, was initially supported by American Jewish foundations in the United States, such as the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, as well

as significantly by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and other organizations worldwide. Since the start of the 21st century, philanthropist Tad Taube, born in Kraków, has become one of the largest American Jewish patrons of Poland's Jewish cultural renaissance and works in concert with donors such as Sigmund Rolat, Victor Markowicz, David Mitzner (z"l), and Irene Pletka, and foundations such as the JDC, the Rothschild Foundation, the Koret Foundation, Hanadiv Europe, the Dutch Humanitarian Fund, the Shavei Israel Foundation, and others. The generations coming of age in post-Communist Poland are moving the Jewish community toward sustainability and a vibrant future.


Jewish Experience in Contemporary Poland
Baltic Sea
RUSSIA
Kaliningrad
LITHUANIA
Kaunas
Nemen
Slupsk
Gdynia
Gdańsk
Koszalin
Tczew
Elbląg
Sejny
Suwałki
Ełk
Olsztyn
Hrodna
GERMANY
Szczecin
Grudziądz
Piła
Bydgoszcz
Toruń
Vistula
Noteć
Oder
Gorzów Wielkopolski
Inowrocław
Włocławek
Płock
Łomża
Tykocin
Białystok
Ostrołęka
Narew
Orla
Bug
BELARUS
Poznań
Warta
Konin
WARSAW
Siedlce
Biała Podlaska
Zielona Góra
Leszno
Głogów
Krotoszyn
Kalisz
Łódź
Sieradz
Pilica
Wieprz
Włodawa
Pripyat
Bóbr
Ostrów Wielkopolski
Radom
Kazimierz Dolny
Przysucha
Piotrków Trybunalski
Lublin
Kovel
Legnica
Wrocław
Szydłowiec
Chełm
Kamienna Góra
Wałbrzych
Częstochowa
Chęciny
Kielce
Szczebrzeszyn
Zamość
Szczekociny
Chmielnik
Opole
Tarnobrzeg
Pińczów
CZECHIA
PRAGUE
Elbe
Gliwice
Katowice
Dąbrowa Tarnowska
Rzeszów
Markowa
Oświęcim
Krakow
Tarnów
Lviv
Ostrava
Bielsko-Biała
Bobowa
Przemyśl
Rymanów
Lesko
Dniester
UKRAINE
Žilina
Prešov
Váh
SLOVAKIA
Mukachevo
Zvolen
HUNGARY
Seats of Jewish communities
Selected historic synagogues
Selected historic cemeteries
Lauder-Morasha School
Jewish Community Centers
Jewish studies
Jewish press
Theaters
Major festivals
Museums
Hillels
Taube Center
1:4,300,000
0
100 miles
0
100 km
Cartography by Tomasz Bira

On June 4, the first elections since the end of World War II to include opposition parties bring the anti-Communist opposition to power.

Poland replaces Hungary as the main transit point for Soviet Jews moving to Israel. Tens of thousands transit through Warsaw without incident.

1990

The Polish Council of Christians and Jews is established.

1990

Poland becomes the second ex-Communist country, after Czechoslovakia, to re-establish diplomatic



Agnieszka Holland in 2017

relations with Israel.

The historical drama "Europa Europa," directed by **Agnieszka Holland**, premiers on November 14. The film wins the 1991 Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film and is nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. It is one of the first films about the Holocaust in post-Communist Poland, and so is not subject to the censorship of the state. Holland, herself Jewish, is a leading Polish film director of the post-war generation who has portrayed the Holocaust in several internationally celebrated films.

Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa is elected president. His use of antisemitic innuendo against his rival Tadeusz Mazowiecki is condemned by a large segment of public opinion.

Polish delegates participate in the First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II in New York City. They return to Poland and establish the Association of the Children of the Holocaust.

1991

Many of the "hidden children," saved and raised by non-Jewish Poles, begin to seek out their Jewish roots and become active in Jewish communal life, as do many of their children and grandchildren.

1991

The Catholic Church publishes a pastoral letter deploring antisemitism.

President Lech Wałęsa visits Israel. In a speech to the Knesset, he asks forgiveness for wrongs committed against Jews by his country throughout history.

"Menora" is the first kosher restaurant in 30 years to open in Warsaw.

1992

Chaim Herzog, President of Israel, visits Poland. It is



A meeting of ZOOM, the Polish Youth Organization.

the first Israeli state visit to Poland. Polish-Israeli ties will continue to develop and strengthen.

Poland co-sponsors the repeal of the UN's "Zionism is racism" resolution.

1992 The Polish Union of Jewish Students (Polish: *Polska Unia Studentów Żydowskich*, PUSZ) is founded. It will be succeeded by **ZOOM**, the Polish Jewish Youth Organization, in 2007.

1993 TSKŻ begins to publish "Słowo Żydowskie – Dos Yiddishe Vort" ("The Jewish Word" in Polish/Yiddish) in Yiddish and Polish. It is the successor to "Folks-Sztyme".

Under pressure from Pope John Paul II, the convent in Auschwitz finally relocates.

The 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is commemorated with the participation of Polish President Lech Wałęsa and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.



The Lauder-Morasha School

The Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland is recognized as the legal successor to pre-war Jewish communities. The Union currently represents and serves Jewish communities in Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków, Łódź, Lublin, Szczecin, Katowice, Bielsko-Biała, Poznań, Legnica, Gdańsk, and Białystok.



"And I Still See Their Faces"

1995 The **Lauder-Morasha School**, the first primary school under Jewish auspices in Warsaw since 1949, opens with a first grade of 18 students. In 1999, Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek will participate in the dedication ceremony of the school's permanent home, quoting the Talmud in his remarks.

1995 "**And I Still See Their Faces**," an exhibition of prewar photos of Jews and Jewish families collected from the public at large by the Shalom Foundation, is enthusiastically received in Warsaw and around the world. Its catalogue sells out immediately.

The Polish Association of Jewish Studies is launched in Kraków.

An international commemoration marks the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Inside Poland, it fosters public discourse and Holocaust education, shedding light on the history of the Nazi death camps and the extermination of Europe's Jewry – a history that had been distort- ›

ed or denied during the Communist era.

At a commemoration for the 50th anniversary of the



"Midrasz"

Kielce Pogrom, Polish Prime Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz expresses contrition.

The Sejm passes a law governing relations between the State and Jewish Religious Communities allowing, among other things, for the partial restitution of pre-war Jewish communal property seized by the State. To date, there is no law regulating the restitution of private properties of Jews or other Polish citizens.
"**Midrasz**" magazine is launched. Founded by Konstanty Gebert, it is the first Polish-language Jewish monthly published in decades. The annual Jewish Book Festival is inaugurated a year later.

The Conference of the Episcopate of Poland declares an annual "Day of Judaism" to be celebrated by the Catholic Church and parishes around the country on January 17 each year.

The Forum for Dialogue Among Nations is created. The Forum's educational and leadership development initiatives foster Polish-Jewish dialogue, promoting tolerance and understanding through exchange programs, publications and school-based educational programs.

Beit Warszawa, a Reform congregation and a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, is founded in Warsaw.



The Auschwitz Jewish Center

Professor Bronisław Geremek, survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and at this time Polish Foreign Minister, signs accession of Poland to NATO.
The publication of Jan Gross' book "Sąsiedzi"



Shevah Weiss

("Neighbors" in Polish), documenting the July 10, 1941 wartime massacre of local Jews by local Poles in the town of Jedwabne in northeastern

Poland, sets off anguished public debate about the involvement of some Catholic Poles in the Holocaust.

The **Auschwitz Jewish Center**, now affiliated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, opens in the renovated Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, comprised of an educational center and a museum presenting the Jewish history of the town of Oświęcim (German: *Auschwitz*, Yiddish: *Oshpitzin*).



Memorial to the victims of the 1941 pogrom in Jedwabne.

2001 **Shevah Weiss**, former Israeli Knesset Speaker, becomes Ambassador to Poland. Weiss, rescued by a Polish Catholic family during the war, becomes one of the leaders of the Polish Jewish dialogue and he is awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland in 2004 and the highest Polish medal, the Order of the White Eagle, in 2017.

2002 Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, at a 60th-anniversary commemoration in **Jedwabne**, expresses contrition for the wartime massacre, marking the first official apology by a Polish head of state for crimes against Jews committed by non-Jewish Poles during the Holocaust. Local residents boycott the ceremony, as does the Catholic Church – which, however, held an earlier penitential service of its own, attended by half of Poland's bishops.

2003 The first post-war edition of the Torah with Polish translation is published in Poland by Pardes Lauder, followed by the publishing of a prayer book and a Passover *Haggadah*, as well as other Jewish texts.

2003 The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (Polish: *Fundacja Ochrony Dziedzictwa Żydowskiego*, FODŻ) is established by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) to preserve Jewish heritage sites in Poland and to promote awareness of the history of Polish Jewish communities.

2003 Two Jewish film festivals (the Warsaw Jewish Film Festival and the Jewish Motifs Film Festival) are launched in Warsaw and draw large crowds during each of their editions.

The Jewish Agency for Israel in Poland assumes responsibility for Taglit-Birthright Poland. By 2018, it will have sent more than 800 participants on ten-day tours of Israel.



Rabbi Michael Schudrich

2004 The Jewish Heritage Initiative in Poland (JHIP), ›

2004 established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life



The Galicia Jewish Museum

& Culture, is created to support and promote Jewish culture and education.

The Professor Moses Schorr Foundation, named in memory of the last rabbi of the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street, is established to support the expanding adult education programs of the Moses Schorr Center in Warsaw. The Center, Poland's largest Hebrew-language program, also offers lecture series and seminars, an intensive summer school, and an e-platform "Mikledet."

2004

2004

Rabbi Michael Schudrich is appointed Chief Rabbi of Poland. Rabbi Schudrich previously served as Rabbi of Warsaw and Łódź.
Poland joins the European Union on May 1.
The **Galicia Jewish Museum**, created by photographer Chris Schwartz and Professor Jonathan Webber, opens in Kraków. The museum celebrates and commemorates Jewish life in Polish Galicia.

The Warsaw Rising Museum, commemorating the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, is established with a section on the Jewish participation in the armed revolt.

"Czulent," a Jewish youth and student group, is created in Kraków.



Tad Taube

2007 The first annual "Singer's Warsaw" festival, a celebration of Yiddish culture and I.B. Singer's writings, is organized in September by the Shalom Foundation in Warsaw.

2007 Chabad-Lubavitch opens a center in Warsaw, followed by a center that opens in Krakow the following year.

Polish-born Rabbi Maciej Pawlak, ordained in the U.S., becomes principal of the Lauder-Morasha Jewish Day School in Warsaw.

2007 **Tad Taube**, founder and chairman of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, is named Honorary Consul of the Republic of Poland in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews is held in Warsaw's district of Muranów, facing the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes.

The Polish State Radio's "Kol Polin" ("Voice of Poland" in Hebrew) service starts broadcasting in Hebrew. It will continue to broadcast until 2014.

2008 The long-neglected building of the Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin is renovated. The former lodging



One of the Ghetto Wall markers.

2008 rooms of the students now serve as a hotel, while the synagogue maintained by the Warsaw Jewish Community is reopened and rededicated. An accompanying museum about the Yeshiva and its founder, Rabbi Majer Szapira (Meir Shapiro), opens in 2017.

Lech Kaczyński becomes the first Polish President to visit a synagogue and light Hanukkah candles in the Presidential Palace. This tradition of presidential Hanukkah candle lightings continues to this day.

The commemorations of the 40th anniversary of the March 1968 ant-Zionist campaign, begin a discussion on the restitution of Polish citizenship to



Jewish Community Center in Kraków.

2008 Jews who were expelled. In the following years, hundreds will receive Polish passports. Among them is well-known Israeli author Etgar Keret.

The Polish Year in Israel, a nationally-sponsored cultural promotion program, is celebrated.

The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the City of Warsaw and the Jewish Historical Institute create the "Ghetto Borders" installation in Warsaw. The project consists of **21 markers** erected at different points along the borders of the former ghetto and signs in Polish and English embedded in the sidewalks marking the former Ghetto Wall. An additional, twenty second marker will be put up on Sienna Street in 2010 at the initiative of students of the Henryk Sienkiewicz Public High School.

As a result of a visit from Prince Charles of Wales, the **Jewish Community Center in Kraków** is opened with the support of World Jewish Relief, the JDC and the Jewish Community of Kraków. It serves ›



The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute

2009 the city's growing Jewish community.
Righteous Among the Nations honoree Irena Sendler dies at age 98. Sendler, a social worker and a member of anti-Nazi underground organization „Żegota" which rescued about 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto, had been previously nominated by
2009 the Polish government for the Nobel Peace Prize.

A premiere of the first ever Polish-Israeli film coproduction, "Spring 1941" (Polish title: "Wiosna 1941"), takes places on December 1. The story of an Israeli violinist who comes after many years to Poland to play concert, and relives her war trauma and the loss of her family during the Holocaust, is based on a book by awarded Polish-born Israeli writer, Ida Fink, a Holocaust survivor herself.

The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center,
2009 is established as a department of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. It grew from a project dating back to 1994 created by the Lauder Foundation. The Center, which helps Jews with Polish roots and Poles with Jewish roots explore their family heritage, assists in finding documentation, reconstructing family histories and reuniting lost family and friends.

The **Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute** (formerly the Jewish Historical Institute) is formally established by Poland's Minister of Culture and National Heritage at the initiative of JHI's director Dr. Eleonora Bergman.

The Irena Sendler Memorial Award is established by the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture to honor Poles who contribute to the preservation of Jewish life and promote Jewish culture in Poland.



Marek Edelman and Alina Margolis-Edelman

2009 Janusz Makuch, creator and director of the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, is the first recipient.
Future honorees will include Jan Jagielski, director
2009 of the Jewish Historical Institute's Historical Documentation Department, former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and Magdalena Grodzka-Gużkowska, honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations in 2009, who worked
2009 with Irena Sendler, helping save Jewish children from the Warsaw Ghetto.

2010 Marek Edelman, deputy commander of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, veteran of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, well-known cardiologist and an active and important member of Solidarity, passes away in Warsaw and receives a state funeral in the Warsaw Jew-

ish Cemetery with full military honors. A year earlier he is widowed by **Alina Margolis-Edelman**, also a Holocaust survivor and a veteran of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Although Marek Edelman decided not to leave Poland during the antisemitic campaign in 1968, Alina with their children was forced to migrate to France, where she was later involved, cooperating with Bernard Kouchner, in the *Doctors Without Borders* initiative and later the *Doctors of The World*,

2010



Inside the Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory Museum in Kraków.

2010 as well in providing help to political dissidents in Poland in 1970-80s. In 2011, an award named in her honor was established to recognize those who work to protect children.

Beit Kraków, a Reform congregation, is established in the city.

2010

The Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture establishes the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Polish: *Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce*) in Warsaw.

2010

Ec Chaim, a progressive community, is opened in Warsaw under the auspices of the Jewish Community. Stas Wojciechowicz is selected as its rabbi.

2010

By 2010, rabbis, with the support of the Union of Polish Jewish Communities, Shavei Israel, and other organizations, serve communities in Warsaw, Kraków, Katowice, Łódź, and Wrocław. The rabbis, along with students from Warsaw's Kollel, provide religious and spiritual outreach and Jewish learning opportunities in smaller communities, including Gdańsk and Lublin.

The Yiddish Culture Center is opened in Warsaw by the Shalom Foundation, joining the Foundation's Open Jewish University and University of the Third Age.

2012 The Polish Association of Yiddish Studies is launched in Warsaw.

A branch of the Kraków City Museum in the former **Schindler factory** opens in Kraków. The Museum documents the fate of the inhabitants of Kraków during the Nazi occupation with a special focus on



Alina Szapocznikow

2012 the destruction of Jewish Kraków.

The Second Generation Association, children of survivors, is created by and for Jews raised during the Communist period. This is the first initiative of its kind in Poland.

›

A memorial service is held by the Jewish community in the Nożyk Synagogue for the Polish President Lech Kaczyński, First Lady and 94 other victims of



POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

2013 the Smoleńsk plane crash of April 10, 2010.

The Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków celebrates its 20th year with more than 25,000 attendees from all over the world.



The glass bimah in

2013 The Bauman family establishes the Janina Bauman Prize, for publishing a dissertation addressing an area of "significant ethical or moral relevance," which was the main area of interest of Janina Bauman, a Polish Jewish writer, and the wife of a one of the most important philosophers and sociologists of the latter half of the 20th century, Zygmunt Bauman. The Baumans were both Holocaust survivors who left Poland in 1968, settling eventually in Leeds, with part of their work focused on tracing connections between modernity and the Holocaust.

The first March of Remembrance commemorating the July 22, 1942 deportations of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, is organized by the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute with the walk



Postage stamps commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.



Simcha Rotem (left) in 1943.

2013 starting at the Umschlagplatz and ending at the site of Janusz Korczak's *Dom Sierot* ("Orphans' House" in Polish).

An art exhibition titled "Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955–1972" opens at the New York's Museum of Modern Art contributing to rediscovery of sculptress' artist work. **Alina Szapocznikow** (born 1926 in Kalisz), a holocaust survivor of Pabi-

2013 anice and Litzmannstadt ghettos, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, and Theresienstadt, after the war studied at Parisian École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, becoming one of the leading European surrealism, *Nouveau réalisme*, and pop-art artists working mainly in bronze and stone.



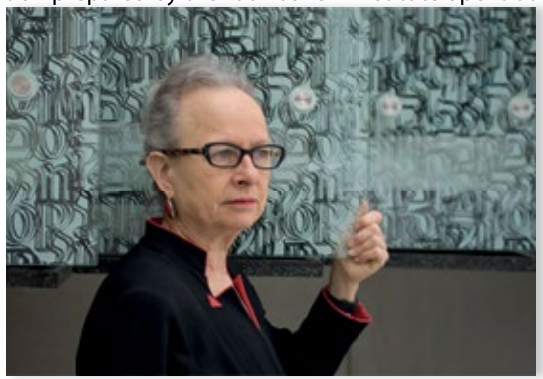
Jewish Community Center in Warsaw.

The construction of **POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews** is completed. The building, designed by Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamäki and located next to the Ghetto Heroes' Monument in the heart of Warsaw's Muranów, is made accessible to the public.
The Museum & Educational Centre "Świętokrzyski Sztetl" is inaugurated in the town of Chmielnik, a former shtetl. Housed in the town's renovated synagogue, the center becomes famous for its **glass *bimah***, inspired by the 18th-century original platform that was destroyed during the war.

2014

The **70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising** is widely commemorated by Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, with a state ceremony held by the Monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Heroes, during which the last surviving veterans of the uprising, **Simcha Rotem** and Havka Folman-Raban (d. 2016), give a memorable speech. Bells toll in the churches of Warsaw and ecumenical prayers are recited during the public commemoration.
On June 13, a renovated Jewish national exhibition prepared by the Yad Vashem Institute opens at Block 27 in the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

2014


Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett

In the Polish capital, the **Jewish Community Center in Warsaw** is opened. Located in the center of the city, it is a project of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), and the Taube and Koret Foundations.

2014

The Makabi Warsaw Sport Club is officially relaunched by young Polish Jews after a 74-year-long hiatus. Makabi continues the pre-war tradition of the Makabi organization established in 1915 in Warsaw.
The Ride for the Living, an annual fundraising event organized by the JCC Kraków under the patronage of Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich, is inaugurated. The 55-mile bicycle ride from the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum to the Kraków JCC follows the route of 10-year-old Auschwitz survivor Marcel Zieliński. After liberation by the Red Army, he walked all the way from the camp to Kraków in a search for his mother, with whom he reunited ›

2015

eventually in August 1945. The ride draws participants from Poland and around the world and the funds raised support Jewish life in Kraków.



Władysław Bartoszewski

The Marek Edelman Center for Dialogue in Łódź opens in its permanent space in the Park of Survivors.

2015 The POLIN museum's Core Exhibition, created by a team led by chief curator **Dr. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**, opens on October 28. It is funded by a unique public-private partnership among the Polish Government, the City of Warsaw, the Jewish Historical Institute Association and individual and institutional donors worldwide. The Museum will transmit, through state-of-the-art and virtual exhibits, the 1,000-year long history of Polish Jews. It quickly becomes a focal point on the map of contemporary Jewish Poland.

2015 *Hashomer Hatzair* renews the activity of the group of Polish-Jewish teens.

2016 The director of the Taube Center, Helise Lieberman, is awarded the prestigious Bene Merito Medal "for a friend of Poland, in recognition for contributions made to the promotion and strengthening of the Republic of Poland on the international arena," by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. The fellow honorees were Chief Rabbi of Poland, Rabbi Michael Schudrich, and Executive Director of the JCC Kraków, Jonathan Ornstein.

The Museum of Independence Traditions opens an exhibit and memorial at the former Radegast Station in Łódź commemorating the victims of Ghetto Litzmannstadt.



The Ulma Family Museum of Poles Saving Jews in World War II in Markowa.

2016 **Władysław Bartoszewski**, prisoner of KL Auschwitz, soldier of the Home Army, activist of the Council to Aid Jews *Żegota*, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, **2016** Plenipotentiary for International Dialogue, with a special responsibility for the development of post-war Polish-German relations and contacts with the Jewish diaspora and Israel, dies in Warsaw at 93.

2017 Miriam Gonczarska of Poland is the first European woman who graduates from Yeshivat Maharat in New York and receives the title of *Maharat*.



Children from „Frajda" kindergarten at the Krakow JCC's Taube Family Playground.



"What we were unable to shout out to the world" exhibition.

2017 Margalit Kordowicz graduates from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and becomes the first Polish-born woman rabbi.

The Upper Silesian Jews House of Remembrance is opened in the restored pre-burial house at the New Jewish Cemetery in Gliwice.

On February 19, Samuel Willenberg, last survivor of the Treblinka prisoners' revolt, dies at 93. After participating in the heroic revolt and setting "hell on fire," Willenberg joined the Polish resistance and fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising against the Germans, later becoming an artist in Israel after emigrating in 1950.

The **Ulma Family Museum** of Poles Saving Jews in World War II is opened in Markowa by Polish president Andrzej Duda. During the German occupation, despite poverty and the threat of the death penalty, the Ulma family gave shelter to eight Jews beginning from late 1942 through March 1944. Turned in by a Polish policeman, Józef Ulma, his pregnant wife Wiktoria, and their eight children, together with the Jewish families Goldman and Szall whom they were hiding, were all executed by the German police. In 1995, Wiktoria and Józef Ulma are posthumously awarded the "Righteous Among the Nations" title.



Former Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital

2018 Hillel International opens Hillel Warsaw. It is the first operation in Poland of Hillel International to better serve the needs of its growing Jewish population.

2018 The American Jewish Committee (AJC) opens an office in Warsaw that serves as their center for ›

Central and East European countries.

2018 A Jewish student association in Kraków, "Gimel," named after the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet to represent the third post-war generation, re-opens as Hillel Kraków.

The JCC Kraków opens "**Frajda**," the first post-1968 Jewish kindergarten in the city.

2018 The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw opens its new permanent exhibition "**What we were unable to shout out to the world**" which includes artifacts and selections from the Ringelblum Archives collected by the clandestine network *Oneg Shabbat*.

The Polish Sejm passes an amendment to the bill establishing the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) that penalizes public accusation of Polish involvement in German Nazi crimes. The new legislation stirs much controversy internally and abroad, especially in the US and Israel, as its wording provides a legal platform for whitewashing any involvement of individual Poles in crimes against Jews during the war and attempts to quell any public discussion of the subject. After several months of international protests and the eruption of the largest crisis in Polish-Israeli relations in the post-1989 era, the section about punishment is removed from the controversial legislation.

2018 Polish Ministry of Culture announces plan to create the Warsaw Ghetto Museum with an exhibition opening in 2023, on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After completion of renovation works, the museum will be housed in the former **Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital**, which in 1941-42 acted as one of the few medical facilities of the Warsaw Ghetto, and one of the very few buildings connected with its history to survive the war.

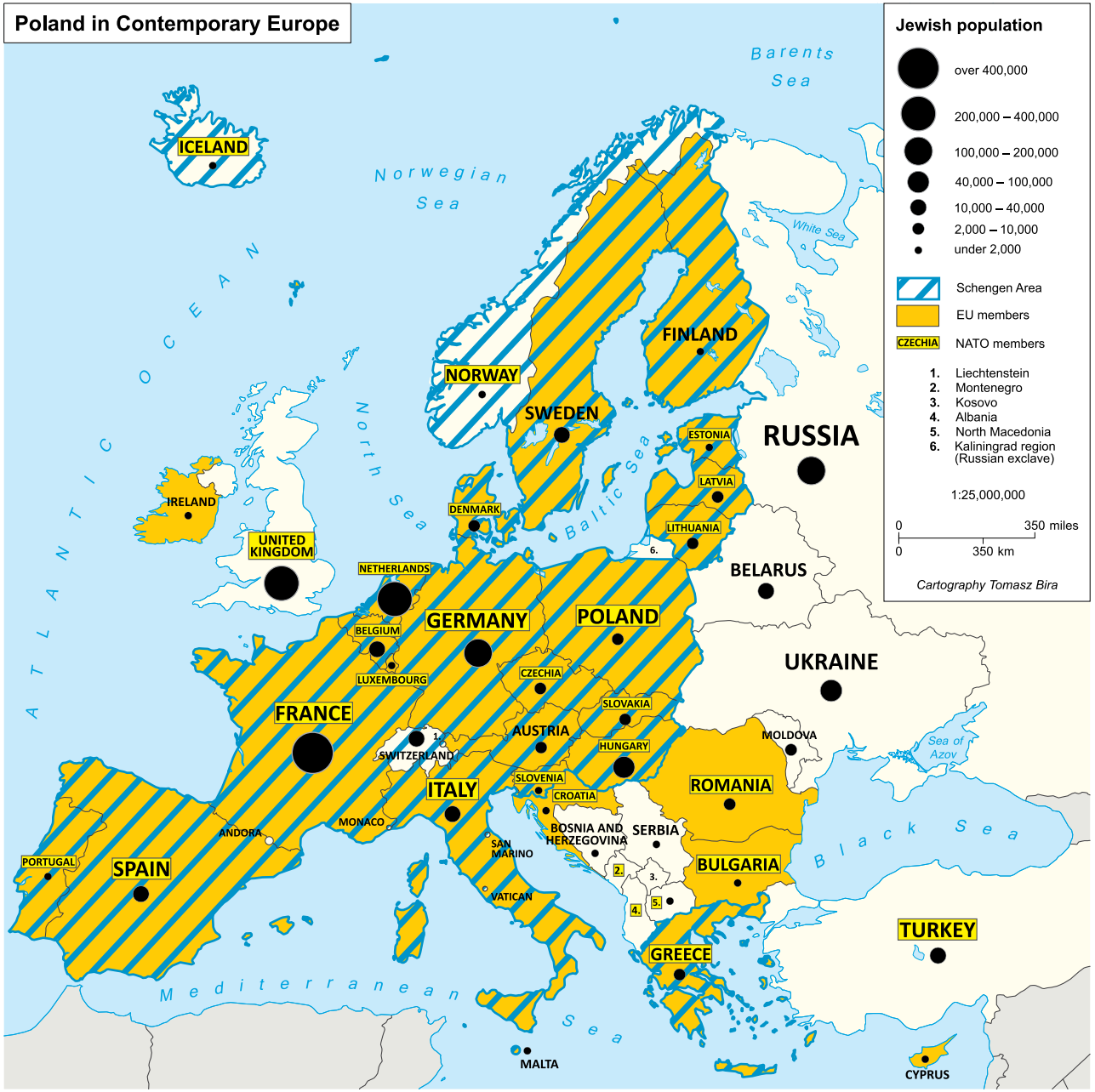


The former Majer Wolanowski's tenement at 14 Próżna Street.

2019 A temporary exhibition entitled "Estranged. March'68 and Its Aftermath," about the 1968 student unrest, the infamous antisemitic campaign and the forced emigration of Jewish Poles that followed, opens at POLIN. It becomes the best attended temporary exhibition in the history of Polish museums and an important voice in the discussion about what happened and the resulting repercussions in Polish-Jewish relations on the 50th anniversary of the events.

Warsaw and Poland commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising with guests coming from around the world to the Polish capital. Sirens are sounded across the city with a moment of silence in a similar manner to the annual commemoration of the outbreak of the Warsaw Rising of 1944 on August 1.

The first Polish showing of "Who Will Write Our History?," a docudrama based on Dr. Samuel Kassow's book about the Oneg Shabbat group, takes place at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish to honor the


Poland in Contemporary Europe
Jewish population
over 400,000
200,000 – 400,000
100,000 – 200,000
40,000 – 100,000
10,000 – 40,000
2,000 – 10,000
under 2,000
Schengen Area
EU members
CZECHIA
NATO members
1. Liechtenstein
2. Montenegro
3. Kosovo
4. Albania
5. North Macedonia
6. Kaliningrad region (Russian exclave)
1:25,000,000
0 350 miles
0 350 km
Cartography Tomasz Bira
Barents Sea
Norwegian Sea
White Sea
ATLANTIC OCEAN
North Sea
Baltic Sea
ICELAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND
RUSSIA
ESTONIA
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
IRELAND
DENMARK
UNITED KINGDOM
NETHERLANDS
BELGIUM
LUXEMBOURG
GERMANY
POLAND
BELARUS
UKRAINE
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
MOLDOVA
Sea of Azov
SWITZERLAND
SLOVENIA
ITALY
CROATIA
ROMANIA
MONACO
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA
SERBIA
ANDORA
SAN MARINO
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
BULGARIA
Black Sea
VATICAN
TURKEY
GREECE
Mediterranean Sea
MALTA
CYPRUS

Glossary of Terms, Phrases, and Organizations

Please note that there is no single, universal system for representing Hebrew and Yiddish words in English. The Glossary offers common spellings, which in some cases may differ from what you are accustomed to seeing.

Aram. = Aramaic Ger. = German
Heb. = Hebrew Pol. = Polish Yid. = Yiddish

AK. Armia Krajowa. (Pol. "Home Army"). An underground army in occupied Poland during World War II, loyal to the Polish government-in-exile in London.

Ashkenazi. The term derives from a Hebrew name "Ashkenaz", a biblical figure mentioned in Genesis. Ashkenaz was later associated with a region where Jews lived in the Middle Ages along the Rhine River in parts of France and Germany, from where they had fled to the East to avoid growing persecution. Eastern Europe became the center where Ashkenazi life and culture of the Yiddish-speaking Jewish populations flourished in the lands of contemporary Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, until the outbreak of World War II. The Eastern European Jews constituted majority of the Holocaust victims. Survivors live now in Ashkenazi communities dispersed throughout the Jewish world.

Bimah (Heb.). Elevated platform inside the synagogue from which the Torah is read during prayers.

Bund (Yid. "league" or "union") or **Jewish Labor Bund.** Established in 1897, was a Jewish Socialist party active in Poland until 1948. The party promoted political, cultural and social autonomy of Jewish workers, fought antisemitism, and was generally opposed to Zionism, believing that Polish Jews belong into the Polish lands.

Cheder (Heb. "room"). Jewish religious elementary school.

Chevra Kadisha (Aram. "holy society"). A group of community members dedicated to the ritual preparation of bodies for burial according to Jewish tradition and to conducting funerals. It is one of the most important organizations of the kehillah.

Conservative. One of three main religious streams of contemporary Judaism. It began as a reaction to Reform Judaism. Among other characteristics, it affirms the divine inspiration of the Torah and the authority (if not immutability) of the body of Jewish law (see **halakhah**).

General Government (often abbreviated to **GG**). A separate administrative and territorial unit of Nazi Germany established by Adolf Hitler in the German occupied Polish territories not annexed directly into the Third Reich, after the conquest of Poland by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, at the beginning of World War II. It had its capital in Kraków and existed until the Soviets took Polish territories in 1944-1945

Gmina (Pol. "Community"). See: **kehillah**.

Haggadah (Heb. "telling"). A Jewish text that presents the order of the

Passover Seder. Reading the haggadah at the Seder table is a fulfillment of commandment to retell the Jewish liberation from slavery in Egypt as described in the Book of Exodus.

Kahal (Yid. "community"). See *kehillah*.

Halakhah (Heb.). The body of Jewish law as derived from the (written) Torah, debated in the Talmud (oral Torah), and codified by the rabbis; or a particular law drawn from these sources. Also the portions of the Talmud dealing with legal issues.

Hanukkah (Chanukah) (derived from the Heb. *Chanah*, "to dedicate") Eight-day festival starting on the 25th of the Hebrew month Kislev (usually December) to commemorate the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration and the Maccabean revolt (2nd century B.C.E.).

Hashomer Hatzair (Heb."Young Guard"). Left-wing Zionist youth organization founded in 1913.

Hasidism. From hasid (Heb. "pious"). A religious movement started in Polish lands in the 18th century by Rabbi Israel ben Eleazar Baal Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name). Hasidism stressed joy, spirituality, and mysticism and denied that learning is the only way to God. Opposed bitterly throughout the 19th century by the mitnagdim, Hasidism developed into sects centered on spiritual teachers, known as tsaddikim (tsaddiks) or rebbeim, and their descendants. Today, the Hasidim and their erstwhile opponents constitute the two main branches of Orthodox Judaism. See **mitnagdim**.

Haskalah (Heb. "Enlightenment"). An assimilationist intellectual and social movement among Central European Jews in the 18th and 19th centuries that advocated the adoption of European culture, language and mores, while maintaining a Jewish identity. Its followers were called maskilim.

JCC. Jewish Community Center. Jewish communal institution that provides pluralistic social, cultural, and educational programs under one roof. Originating in the United States, the JCC model is becoming popular in Central Europe.

Judenrat (Ger. "Jewish Council"). The Jewish administrative body that the Nazis imposed on ghettos to implement their policies. Its authority was enforced, in part, by the Jewish Ghetto Police.

Kaddish (Aram.). The traditional prayer recited in memory of the dead in the presence of a minyan.

Kehillah (Heb. "community"). The organization regulating daily life in a Jewish community. A kehillah is generally governed by a board of elected and honorary officials who hire rabbis, conduct tribunals, maintain ritual baths, administer interest-free loans, provide social relief and kosher food, and supervise Jewish education. In Polish, the corresponding term is *Gmina* or *Gmina Żydowska*.

Lodzermensch (Yid. and Germ. "a man of Łódź"), was a popular term to describe the wealthiest and most successful manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and businessmen of the late 19th and early 20th century Łódź. Used as a pejorative or ironical epithet when referring to their ruthlessness, moral ambiguity, and pursue for power and money.

Maskil (Heb. "scholar," "follower of the Haskalah"), pl. **maskilim**.

Matzevah (Heb. "sacred pillar") Plural: matzevot. Jewish tombstone ritually marking a grave.

Menorah (Heb. "lamp"). Seven-branched candelabrum made of gold that stood in the Temple in Jerusalem. Though a symbol of Judaism and an emblem of Israel, it is not used in Jewish ritual outside the Temple. The type of menorah used for Hanukkah (called a *hanukkiyah*) has eight main branches, plus the middle ninth lamp set apart, which is used to kindle the other lights.

Mezuzah (Heb. "doorpost"), plu- ›

ral, mezuzot. A crafted container, attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home, which encases a parchment bearing specific citations from the Torah (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21). The verses include the biblical commandment to "affix these words to the doorposts of your home" (Deut. 6.9).

Midrash (Heb. "commentary" or "interpretation"). An interpretative commentary on the biblical texts.

Mikveh (Heb. "ritual bath"). A place for Jewish women and men (separately) to immerse themselves in water from a natural source to meet the requirements of ritual purity.

Minyan (Heb. "quorum"). The minimum number of Jews, 10, necessary for the recitation of certain prayers, including Kaddish (prayer for the deceased) and the public reading of Torah.

Mitnagdim (Heb. "opponents"). Adversaries of Hasidism who sought to maintain traditional rabbinic Judaism and were especially prevalent in Lithuania.

Oneg Shabbat (Heb. "Joy of the Sabbath"). The underground group of historians and researchers, led by Emanuel Ringelblum, established in the Warsaw Ghetto to document daily life. Its meetings were disguised as Sabbath observances, hence the name. The group's collections, found after the war and preserved at the Emanuel Ringleblum Jewish Historical Institute, are known as the Ringelblum Archives.

Orthodox. One of the three main streams of contemporary Judaism, based on the belief that the Torah is the literal word of God and halakhah is ever binding and cannot be changed (though it may be amended). Orthodoxy developed in response to the Haskalah's perceived threat to Jewish continuity.

Pesach (Heb. "Passover"). An eight-day festival starting on the 14th of the Hebrew month of Nisan to commemorate the Exodus of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt.

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. A confederation of Poland and Lithuania between 1569-1795, ruled by a common monarch who was both the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. It was one of the largest countries of 16th- and 17th-century Europe.

Rebbe (Yid. "rabbi"). Often used to designate a Hasidic leader.

Rebbetsin (Yid.). Wife of a rabbi.

Reform. One of the three main streams in contemporary Judaism. Reform arose in opposition to Orthodoxy and taught that Scripture, while possibly divinely inspired, is not the literal word of God, while halakhah is a human creation and has to adapt to changing times. Reform also stressed that Jews are a faith, not a people.

Seder (Heb. "order"). Ritual meal, including the retelling of the Exodus story, eaten during the first, and in the Diaspora second, eve of Pesach.

Sephardic (From Heb. *Sepharad*, lit. "Spain"). Usually denoting the descendants of Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15th century. Many Sephardic Jews subsequently established new communities around the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere.

Sabbath (Heb.). Seventh day of the week, Saturday, observed by many Jews with special prayers, foods, rituals, and rest.

Shabbas, **Shabbat**. See **Sabbath**.

Shoah (Heb. "total destruction"). The Hebrew term for the Holocaust, used to designate the German Nazi genocide of Jews during World War II.

Shtetl (Yid. "small town"). A small town, which had a significant Jewish population or Jewish majority.

Solidarność (Pol. "Solidarity"). Polish trade union, founded in 1980 in opposition to the communist regime, was the first independent labor union in a country belonging to the Soviet bloc.

By September 1981, it had about 10 million official members, which constituted over one third of the total working-age population of Poland. Forcibly suppressed by the Communist government in December 1981, it reemerged in 1989 to become the first opposition movement to participate in free elections in a Soviet-bloc nation since the 1940s.

Taglit-Birthright Israel. Non-profit organization providing trips to Israel for Jewish young adults around the world. Known also as Birthright Israel or simply Birthright.

Talmud (Heb. "learning"). According to tradition, Jews received a written and an oral Torah. The latter was eventually written down and redacted as the Mishnah. Commentaries were also compiled as the Gemara. Together they make up the Talmud, in Babylonian and Jerusalem versions, which share the Mishnah but have different Gemaras.

Torah (Heb. "Instruction", "Teaching," or "Law") most specifically means the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (hence also *Pentateuch* or five books of Moses). It is the most important religious text of Judaism.

TSKŻ. Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Żydów w Polsce (Pol. "Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland"). Founded in 1950 to ensure the development of Communist Yiddishist culture after all other Jewish organizations but the kehillah had been disbanded, it is currently the largest Jewish organization.

Umschlagplatz (Ger. "loading place"). The site at the northern edge of the Warsaw Ghetto near railway sidetracks and warehouses where Jews were loaded onto trains bound for the Treblinka death camp.

Va'ad Arba' Aratzot (Heb. "Council of the Four Lands"). A Jewish governing body (1580- 1764) that met to collect taxes to be paid to the royal treasury and to discuss other matters of importance to Polish Jewry. The four Lands were Greater Poland, Lesser Poland, Ruthenia, and Volhynia. In 1623, the Jews of Lithuania established their own Va'ad.

Yad Vashem (Heb.). Israeli national institution located in Jerusalem that studies, documents, and exhibits the history of the Holocaust (Shoah). It also documents and publicly acknowledges the Righteous Among the Nations — Gentiles who, at great personal risk, saved Jews during World War II.

Yeshiva (Heb.), pl. **yeshivot**. Jewish religious secondary or higher educational institution.

Yiddish. An international Jewish vernacular, with a vocabulary based on medieval High German, Hebrew, and Slavic, and a grammar based largely on German, written in Hebrew characters with competing different spellings. It was the spoken language of Ashkenazi Jews. Enclaves of mainly Orthodox Yiddish speakers still exist in Jewish centers in the Diaspora and in Israel.

Yiddishkeit (Yid. "Jewishness"; "Jewish way of life"). A term referring to the "Jewish essence" of Ashkenazi Jews in general and the traditional Yiddish-speaking Jews of Eastern and Central Europe in particular. It can also refer to an emotional or cultural identification with the Jewish peoplehood.

Żegota. Polish codename for the Council to Aid the Jews. Established by the Polish underground in 1942, this joint organization of Jews and non-Jews from different political orientations was united by the common cause of saving Jews. Poland's Żegota was the only organization in all of Europe explicitly tasked with the rescue of Jews.

ŻIH. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (Pol. "Jewish Historical Institute"). Established in Warsaw in 1947 to study the heritage and history of Polish Jewry and preserve its records and artifacts. Today called the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute.

Zionism (After *Zion*, *Tzion* or *Sion*, the Hebrew name for the Mount Temple in Jerusalem). A political and national movement

Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation

The Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation (Fundacja Centrum Taubego Odnowy Życia Żydowskiego w Polsce) was established in Warsaw in 2009 with generous support from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture. The Taube Center is dedicated to enriching Jewish life in Poland and connecting Jews from around the world with their East European heritage, providing engaging educational experiences, including professional development programs, internships, educational heritage study tours, publications, and partnerships that extend throughout Poland and internationally. The Center contributes to Polish Jewish literacy, the development of leadership and Jewish institutions, and increases global Jewish engagement in a living Polish Jewish heritage.

The Taube Center's Educational Programs

In 2012, the Taube Center created **Mi Dor Le Dor** (Heb. from generation to generation), a nationwide program for young professionals and academics involved in the promotion and preservation of tangible and intangible Polish Jewish heritage. With support from the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe and Taube Philanthropies, the program, which concluded in 2016, graduated four cohorts. The graduates currently work for various partner organizations, among them the POLIN Museum and the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, and the JCCs in Warsaw and Krakow. The Taube Center is currently planning to model the program for other European Jewish communities.

The Taube Center responded to a growing demand for targeted professional development programs in Polish, specifically designed for Polish Jewish communities and drawing on local experts, by launching **Yerusha** (Heb. inheritance) in 2019. The two-semester program is funded in part by a grant from the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. The cohorts represent Jewish organizations and institutions from around the country.

The **Exploring Poland/Polin Heritage Study Tour** (2014-2016), supported by a grant from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Polish Senate, was a heritage education program that brought American university students of Polish and Polish Jewish descent to Poland. It was a unique opportunity to explore Polish history, rediscover the country and their shared heritage, and strengthen the participants' identities through connection with their Polish roots.

The Taube Center offers up to three one-month **Libitzky Family Foundation Internships** each year for undergraduates and post-graduates from the United States with a special interest in Polish Jewish history, heritage, culture, and tradition. The one-month program can be scheduled according to the candidate's academic or work schedule.

Taube Center Publications

The Taube Center's **Sefarim Book Publishing Project** provides support for the writing, translation, and publication of non-fiction works in Polish Jewish studies, making them accessible to academia and the wider Polish public. The Project, initially supported by grants from the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture and the Dutch Jewish

Humanitarian Fund, provides seed grants for high-caliber works of Polish Jewish interest that reflect a broad range of issues and contribute to the field of Polish Jewish studies for domestic and international readers.

Through its own signature publications — *Field Guide to Jewish Łódź; Field Guide to Jewish Warsaw & Kraków; Deep Roots, New Branches: Personal Essays on the Rebirth of Jewish Life in Poland Since 1989; and A Timeline: 1,000 Years of Jewish Life in Poland* — the Taube Center provides resources that enrich an understanding of Jewish Poland, past and present, from both historical and personal perspectives. The materials can be used by individuals and groups in both field and formal settings.



TAUBE JEWISH HERITAGE TOURS

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours (TJHT), the flagship program of the Taube Center for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland Foundation, invites people from around the world to explore Polish Jewish culture and to connect with the country's enduring Jewish legacy, which has shaped modern-day Israeli and American Jewish societies and permeated all facets of Western culture. Taube Jewish Heritage Tours is committed to strengthening the bonds between Poland and Jewish communities worldwide.

The mission-driven, on-the-ground Jewish educational tour program designs customized journeys for families, community organizations, students and faculty, VIP delegations, and individuals from the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, and Europe. The TJHT professional team of academics, guides, educators, and community leaders provides meaningful and participatory explorations of Poland's multicultural landscape, infusing each encounter with illuminating personal stories and insights from those engaged in Polish Jewish life and committed to the preservation of Polish Jewish heritage.

Taube Jewish Heritage Tours offers:

- TJHT's full-service operation oversees travel logistics, offers special rates at five- and four-star hotels, and partners with land providers in the U.S. and Israel.
- TJHT guides are scholars and educators who have been trained to present Poland's multicultural narratives in stimulating, informative tours and workshops.

» TJHT tours are available in English, Hebrew, French, German, and Spanish.

» TJHT provides orientation programs and educational resources in advance of the journey, as well as post-tour opportunities to remain connected.

» TJHT works with an array of partner institutions in the United States, Israel and Poland, as well as in Europe.

TJHT has extensive experience in organizing educational and community group tours, family genealogy excursions, and VIP delegations and can work with groups of all sizes, types, and ages.

Revenue from the nonprofit Taube Jewish Heritage Tours supports publications, educational programs, and cultural and public events that enrich Jewish communal life, promote civil society, ensure the continued transmission of Polish Jewish history, and strengthen connections among Poles, Polish Jews, and Jews from around the world.

TJHTalks, with an international reach, is the Taube Center's newest educational heritage program. This series of ZOOM-based conversations about Polish Jewry and global Jewish concerns features world-renowned scholars, authors, and journalists, and community leaders who contribute to the Taube Jewish Heritage Tour program. The program brings an array of topics to a worldwide audience, exploring both the past and the present, and engaging our participants in contemporary Polish Jewish life. «

For more information about TJHT, please visit:
www.taubejewishheritagetours.com



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BACK COVER PHOTOS

(from left to right)

First Row

Julian Tuwim by Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz • Emanuel Ringelblum, Icyk Manger, and Rachela Auerbach • King Kazimierz III the Great from Artur Szyk's *Statute of Kalisz* • Rabbi Baruch Steinberg speaking in front of the Warsaw's Great Synagogue during the memorial roll call organized by the Union of Jewish Participants in the Fights for Polish Independence in 1924

Second Row

Post stamp with the logo of ŻKS Makkabi Kraków issued before 1918 • Ride of the Living 2018 participants reaching the finish-line at JCC Krakow

Third Row

Children playing next to JCC Warsaw during Sunday *Boker Tov* brunch (credits: JCC Warsaw) • Prewar view of the Alte Szil (Old Synagogue) in Łódź

Fourth Row

The synagogue in Narowla (Naroulia) by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz • Works on recreation of Gwoździec's synagogue ceiling paintings displayed in the POLIN Museum • Icchok Lejbusz Perec (Isaac Leib Peretz) by Władysław Wajntraub • POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

















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